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Gershon Shafir. *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017. 296 pp. \$26.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-29350-2.

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June 2017 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Israel seized these territories after its swift victory over Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War. East Jerusalem was quickly annexed, a move that was not recognized by the United States or the international community.[1] Syria's Golan Heights were also captured during the war and annexed by Israel in 1981. Over the past five decades, Israel's occupation has pervaded Palestinian society at all levels. It determines how, where, and if Palestinians are born. Israel's occupation rules how Palestinians live, work, and die. Even the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the putative self-governing body of the Palestinians created after the 1993 Oslo Accords, exists at the behest of Israel and the United States. Currently led by Mahmoud Abbas, whose legal term in office ended in 2009, the PNA's limited authority only extends over small parts of the West Bank. Meanwhile, the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007, but its borders are controlled by Israel and Egypt.[2] Yet the anniversary of the occupation passed with resignation more than consternation or anger. After all, the occupation persists and there is no end in sight.

In *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict*, sociologist Gershon Shafir admirably attempts to understand why Israel's occupation has continued for so long and how it can be ended peacefully. In an intriguing approach, Shafir divides the book into three parts. Part 1 explores the question, "What is the occupation?" The second part inquires, "Why has the occupation lasted this long?" Shafir con-

cludes by examining, "How has the occupation transformed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?"

The first part of *A Half Century of Occupation* is the strongest. Shafir details the differing legal regimes Israel applies to Palestinians under occupation as well as the status of the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) under international humanitarian law. He also examines the growth of Israeli colonies in the OPT and the outsized influence of the settler movement on Israeli politics and policies. He cautions that "the colonies' prospects, depending as much on Palestinian resistance as on Israeli potentials and intentions, and on international interests, are far from certain, and their future is yet to be written" (p. 83). Yet the present reality that Shafir depicts does not suggest that Israel's settlement policies will be ended anytime soon or even curtailed. Indeed, he contends that "the occupation is dragged out by the Israeli desire to continue its state building by colonizing and subsequently annexing parts of the OPT." Shafir adds, "The dynamic of this process is made manifest by Israel's preference for colonization over peacemaking, and even security, at each point when the possibility of the diplomatic resolution of either the Israeli-Arab or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has arisen" (p. 84).

Although Shafir's approach to examining the occupation is creative, there are limitations. This is most apparent in Shafir's sweeping discussion of the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel. The importance of Washington's expanding support for Israel from 1948 to the present cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, Shafir relies on a thin set of secondary

sources and his analysis is too conventional. He ignores how the special relationship grew during the Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and John Kennedy administrations. By emphasizing the post-1967 period, Shafir neglects the emotional and ideological ties between the United States and Israel as well as the diplomatic support provided by Washington over two decades that established a foundation for the evolution of the special relationship. His discussion would have benefited from a more thorough examination of works by diplomatic historians as well as declassified American and Israeli diplomatic and national security documents.[3]

Similarly, Shafir's discussion of the decision by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to accept the Oslo Accords also relies on a conventional approach. A number of scholars have demonstrated that the PLO was far more eager and willing to engage in negotiations and prepared for significant concessions nearly two decades before the Oslo Accords were signed.[4] Exploring these works would have confirmed Shafir's contention that Israel prefers colonization over peace.

Throughout *A Half Century of Occupation*, Shafir argues that the possibility for a negotiated two-state solution still exists. Yet the evidence he provides of Israel's settlement and negotiation policies, coupled with other discussions of the fruitless peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, reveals a very different reality.[5] Indeed, Shafir details how Israel's settlement policies in the OPT have precluded any possibility of achieving a two-state solution. The reality is a de facto one-state solution. In detailing Israel's military rule over the Palestinians, Shafir writes, "There are two laws for two peoples in the OPT. *Apartheid*—racial in South Africa and national in Israel—is the best term we have for describing the coexistence of two legal systems in one territory that allocates legal rights and adjudicates disputes on the basis of different identities" (emphasis in original, p. 227). However, Shafir finds calls for a permanent one-state solution based on equality between Israelis and Palestinians to be wanting. He respectfully engages with works that advocate a one-state solution and argues that the hurdles will only lead Israelis and Palestinians to revisit territorial partition.

In the final section, Shafir examines the call by Palestinian civil society for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel and compares it to a similar movement that challenged the apartheid regime in South Africa. Shafir is critical of the BDS movement for failing to make significant allies among Israeli Jews. However,

he concedes that Israel's peace movement is no longer viable. Shafir states that the small Israeli nongovernmental organizations that focus on human rights and rely on foreign funding "cannot fill the gap left by a mass peace movement with clear political goals" (p. 196).[6] Nor does he discuss the dramatic growth in membership of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) over the past decade. JVP has been a prominent advocate for BDS in the United States. Considering the close ties between the American Jewish community and Israel that Shafir discusses, the growing disenchantment with Israel's occupation as evidenced by JVP's increased membership on college campuses warranted some reflection.[7] Shafir also challenges the BDS movement's support for the right of return of Palestinian refugees and antinormalization efforts. Instead, he contends that the BDS campaigns targeting Israel's occupation have been the most successful. Yet Shafir appears to be conflating principles with tactics.

Despite these flaws, Shafir deserves credit for exploring how Palestinians and Israelis can find a path to achieve peace, equality, and justice. His analysis and suggestions deserve to be assessed and debated widely.

Notes

[1]. Shafir notes that when East Jerusalem and more than two dozen West Bank villages were annexed by Israel, the Palestinian residents "were not given automatic citizenship," because "Israel did not wish to increase the size of its Palestinian Arab population" (p. 16).

[2]. In early November 2017, Hamas transferred control of Gaza's border crossings to the PNA as part of a unity agreement with Fatah, the leading Palestinian political party. However, Israel and Egypt still determine if and when Palestinians may leave Gaza. See Peter Beaumont, "Hamas Hands Control of Gaza Crossings to Palestinian Authority," *The Guardian*, November 1, 2017.

[3]. A brief sampling of relevant works that offer a more nuanced approach to the evolution of the US-Israeli special relationship includes Stephen J. Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984); David Schoenbaum, *The United States and the State of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Lawrence Davidson, *America's Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2001); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media,*

and *U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2002); Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Peter Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, 3rd edition (Berkeley, Washington: University of California Press, Brookings Institution, 2005); Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View the Jewish State as an Ally* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006); Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007); Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations: 1820-2001* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010); and John B. Judis, *Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014). In addition, the relevant volumes in *The Foreign Relations of the United States* series were published over three decades beginning in 1971. See United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, The Near East and Africa, Volume V* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1971).

[4]. See Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*; Seth Tillman, *The United States in the Middle East: Interests and Obstacles* (Bloomington: Indiana University

Press, 1982); Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kai Bird, *The Good Spy: The Life and Death of Robert Ames* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2014); Osamah Khalil "The Radical Crescent: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the Lebanese Civil War, 1973-1978," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, no. 3 (2016): 496-522, and "Oslo's Roots: Kissinger, the PLO, and the Peace Process," Al-Shabaka.org, September 2013, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/oslo-roots-kissinger-plo-and-peace-process/>.

[5]. For an exhaustive account, see Ahron Bregman, *Cursed Victory: A History of Israel and the Occupied Territories, 1967 to the Present* (New York: Pegasus, 2016). On the failure of the Annapolis process, see Elliot Abrams, *Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For insights into the failed initiative by Secretary of State John Kerry, see Ben Birnbaum and Amir Tibon, "The Explosive, Inside Story of How John Kerry Built an Israel-Palestine Peace Plan—and Watched It Crumble," *The New Republic*, July 20, 2014.

[6]. For recent attempts to target Israeli human rights organizations, see Peter Beaumont, "It's being done to intimidate us': Israeli anti-occupation groups face crackdown," *The Guardian*, October 24, 2017.

[7]. For an example of the anxiety over JVP's growth, see Philip Weiss, "Why did the Brookings Institution hold a secret panel countering BDS?," *Mondoweiss.net*, December 15, 2012, <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/12/brookings-institution-counter/>.

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