School of Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities

Assess the Applicability of the Development – Security Nexus in The Complicated Political and Security Landscape of the Occupied Palestinian Territories – The Case of Security Sector Reform.

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Dissertation which was submitted for obtaining a Master of Science in International Relations, Strategy and Security at Neapolis University

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Examiners Committee

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Validity Page

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DECLARATION

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The Declarant

Anas Ashqar

Acronyms

oPt	The Occupied Palestinian Territories
PA	The Palestinian Authority
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
WB	West Bank
GS	Gaza Strip
SS	Security Sector
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SDN	Security-Development Nexus
PASF	Palestinian Authority Security Forces
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
EU	European Union
USSC	US Security Coordinator
EUPOLCOPPS	EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MDLF	Municipal Development & Lending Fund
APLA	Association of Palestinian Local Authorities
LGUs	Local Government Units

Summary

The ongoing conflict between Palestinians and Israelis attracts international donors to devise further support to the Palestinians, responding to their humanitarian needs and security and economic advancements. Yet, instability and violence in the oPt underpins the international donor development interventions in the occupied Palestinian territories in which it relates to the main question of the research. The conditional policies of international donors further impede achieving security and sustainable development in the oPt.

Furthermore, the conditional policies of international donors providing humanitarian, economic and security assistance has often capitalized on their strategic interests and serving the national interest of Israel without addressing the real needs of the Palestinians. This leads to a distorted and ineffective Palestinian political and security governance, resulting in posing a threat to both Palestinian and Israeli security alike, in which it further complicates efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region. Thus, the key question of the research is formulated around 'assessing the applicability of security-development nexus in the complicated political and security landscape in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly focusing on the security sector reform'.

The research however utilizes a descriptive, qualitative approach counting on reviewing available existing literature and analysis of secondary data from academic and research articles, policy documents, and reports. The research further outlines the significance of the research topic that was not addressed before through crafting a theoretical framework that highlights the evolvement of the security-development nexus indicating the necessity to address both concepts without further jeopardizing the other. This concludes the fact that development requires environments boasting stability, and thus ensuring security require further developing the socio-economic status of a nation.

The research comes to conclude that the international assistance interventions in the oPt are conditional and politicized, habitually responding to the geostrategic interests of donor countries. Consequently, the development and security interventions do not address the real needs of the Palestinians – leading to implementing ineffective development programs that lack bolstering real stability and development.

Ultimately, the research argues that the security-development nexus in the complicated context of the oPt is troubled with several challenges, predominantly stemming from the enduring Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, internal fragmented political divisions, as well as the securitized nature of international assistance. The research also emphasizes the necessity to reassess the donor policies and intervention strategies to ensure alignment with real developmental needs of the Palestinians.

Limitations imposed by the timing and current political and security circumstances underpins the recommendation for further empirical research utilizing the mixed approach in future research for the purpose of obtaining the perceptions of international donor community, Palestinian security forces, and the Palestinian public. This mixed methodology will give evident, authentic, and illustrative outcomes on the applicability of the nexus within the intricacies of the Palestinian context.

Keywords: Security-development nexus (SDN); PA Security Forces (PASF); security sector reform (SSR); security; development; international aid in oPt

1. Introduction

The historical Palestinian – Israeli conflict and its unique twists and turns has drawn high attention of the international community to put more focus on the Palestinian security sector. Therefore, the international aid to the Palestinian National Authority started right after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. In the early beginnings of the international support to the PNA, it focused on consolidating the relationships between Palestinians and Israelis and supporting the transitioning of the PA into a full autonomous authority. The path to security sector reform has come to realization by the international community and Israel following a weak, fragmented security governance that was adopting the one-man chain of command – yielding in a plethora of propagation and exploitation of power by the Palestinian security forces. Consequently, threatening the Israeli security thesis and the maintenance of peace and stability in the region (Tartir 2015, 2-10).

Nonetheless, the international aid in the oPt is mainly trifold, humanitarian, economic development, and security support. Various international donors are operating in the oPt. The biggest donor for the Palestinians is the European Union, followed by the U.S. support in the second place, coupled with other major individual countries also provide support to the Palestinians (Shaban, August 4, 2022). Generally, international aid to the recipient nations does not come without a price tag. This price tag could be jeopardizing national interests of the recipient nation against serving the interests of donor countries (Baranyi and Desrosiers 2012, 448-9). The occupied Palestinian territories are no exception.

It is imperative for a nation to foster economic growth that it shall boast a secure and stable environment to ensure thriving development. Therefore, development requires stability to prosper and sustain. Conversely, underdevelopment could lead to instability and begets violence (Saidy 2014). For this, the connection between security and development is significant and constitutes necessity to work on both for the sake of achieving developmental goals of a country (Wilderman 2018, 5). On one hand, development programs could be securitized – serving the interests of the donor nations – which leads to underdevelopment, and severely impacting the socio-economic position of the recipient nations (Ibrahim and Beaudet 2012, 493).

Consequently, this is a clear indication of the inapplicability of the security and development aid in the oPt because it bluntly puts forward the interest of Israeli security against the real needs of the Palestinian people. The intricate landscape of the oPt makes it even worse to maintain security at the expense of development, and the other way around, begetting real developments in uncertain, vulnerable, and delicate environment. In other words, the Palestinian – Israeli conflict leads to a unique set of challenges that complicate efforts to reach sustainable development while preserving security. Therefore, understanding these dynamics – distorted political system, intra-conflict and the Israeli occupation – is crucial for assessing the efficacy of international aid and intervention strategies particularly in the occupied Palestinian territories, and in the region in general.

Notwithstanding, the research problem is centered around the evident disjunction between the objectives of the international donor community and the realities faced by Palestinians on the ground. To analyze this incoherence, this research follows an analytical, qualitative approach to navigate the research questions, aiming at illuminating the intricacies of the nexus between security and development, specifically in a context where both concepts are undistinguishably interlaced.

1.1. Research Problem

The international support to the Palestinian security sector spans over nearly three decades – yet it was interrupted on several occasions due to deteriorated political and security developments on the ground (Dunning and Iqtait 2023, 173-74). Still, the intended objective of having a transparent, good administered, well-operating security forces has not yielded to maintaining security for the Palestinian people, as well as preventing fierce acts by Palestinian militant groups which hinders attaining peace and stability (Speri January 24, 2024). For this, the research intends to assess the applicability of the security-development nexus in the complicated political and security landscape of the occupied Palestinian territories, with a focus on the Palestinian security sector reform.

1.2. Research Questions

To address the main research problem, this research is guided by the following questions:

- What is the historical background behind implementing the approach of development-security nexus in the oPt?
- How were the security sector reform interventions in the oPt effective and relevant? How it affected the economic and social development of the Palestinian people?
- What are the key obstacles and limitations for implementing a sound security sector reform programmes in the oPt?
- What are the key challenges and implications for sustainable development that result from the current development-security approach in the oPt?
- What is the role if international and regional players and their policies in determining the development-security nexus in the oPt?
- How implementing development and security strategies can be better incorporated to encourage comprehensive and reasonable economic and social development in the oPt?

1.3. Research Assumptions

The research assumptions are crafted as follows:

- International donor policies and approaches (interventions) hinder the achievement of sustainable development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- International SSR model does not fit the case of Palestine being under the Israeli occupation.
- Securitization of development programs in the oPt has implications on the socio-economic outlook, as well as destabilizing/distorting the national political and security landscape.

1.4. Research Limitations

This research is being conducted to assess the applicability of the security-development nexus in the occupied Palestinian territories - specifically in the West Bank – covering the period from 2006 until October 2023. It focuses primarily on the PA-run West Bank only due to the fact there might be limited resources about the Gaza Strip due to current political and security developments on the ground, as well as the rapid changing environment of the Palestinian context. Another limitation attributed to

this research is that the analytical, qualitative methodology used does not target security and development sector actors to solicit their perspectives on the applicability of the security-development nexus.

1.5. Significance of the Research

This research examines a critical period of the political and security developments following the Palestinian – Palestinian internal division in 2006. Thus, preliminary literature review revealed that assessing the applicability of the security-development nexus in the oPt was not addressed before; and how it supported the operability of the Palestinian security apparatus, as well as its implications for the economic and social environments in the oPt. Moreover, the significance of this research lies not only in its academic contribution but also in its practical findings for policymakers, practitioners of the field, as well as the international donor community.

1.6. Presentation of Research Structure

This research is primarily structured in several parts where the first section includes the introduction, research problem, research questions, assumptions, research limitations, significance of research, and a short description of the research structure. In the following sections, the theoretical framework of the research is presented with a focus on the theories of development and security. In addition, previous literature related to development and security in the oPt, and the methodology utilized in conducting the research. In the remaining parts, a critical, descriptive analysis is presented concerning the political and security landscape of the oPt, international aid and actors of development and security in the oPt, the relationship between development and security aid, as well as the correlation between both concepts in the case of the oPt. In its final section, findings, conclusions and sound recommendations will be underpinned for policymakers, donor communities, and practitioners in the field.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Concept of Development

The concept of ‘development’ started to surface following World War II (WWII). It was initiated to rebuild the ruined European countries during the war (Gunaratna 2018a, 12). Later development evolved to support the needed countries of the world-

classified third countries. As the world was polarized between the fighting nations, there were neutral nations as well. In the aftermath of WWII and during the cold war, classification of world countries was presented in 1952 by the French demographer, Alfred Sauvy, dividing the world into three tiers; the United States and its Western allies as '*first world*', the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc as a '*second world'*, and the third world consisted of neutral countries – or remaining counties, or countries that were colonized. This classification was purposely crafted for serving geopolitical aspects – the rich countries influencing low-, to middle-income countries through financial support provided (Council on Foreign Relations, January 16, 2024).

Development as a '*Western*' term' (Gunaratna 2018b, 12) is arguably defined as a multilayered concept incorporating social, political and environmental attributes, yet it is simply coined towards bolstering economies of countries (Coccio 2019, 1). The concept of development has evolved over the years. In the 1960s, academics concerned about the environment started to emerge in the United States. As a result, heated discussions on climate change issues started to capitalize on the importance of environment – leading to shifting the thinking regarding development (Gunaratna 2018, 19).

Following the customary development modalities, the concept of sustainable development that focuses on using resources more sustainably while taking into consideration the human welfare and minimizing environmental impact started to surface (Council on Foreign Relations, January 16, 2024). As economic development has proven to be good for nations, it did not come without price. For this, the concept of development may not work for every nation. Meaning that development should be contextualized – looking at the local cultural and geographical aspects of the country. Thus, development in the developed, industrial countries does not mean the same in the developing countries (Baranyi and Desrosiers 2012, 448-49, Rabie 2016, 8-9).

2.2. Concept of Security

Security was for long an issue of military scholars, more specifically during the cold war. Thus, security has always been queried among scholars of the field (Baldwin 1997, 9). The concept of security is normally implied as to prevent or avoid threats that might destabilize states' political, economic, and social fabric. Thus, it is defined to

having a free-threatened states from risks and dangers that might disrupt nations' own security. Although in its essence the term *security* shares similar characteristics with the term *defense*; they both usually intend to prevent threats and risks to a nation or state (Brooks 2010, 226).

Interestingly, security evolved following several terrorist attacks occurred in the first decade of the twenty first century that hit different locations across the globe. Consequently, several countries adopted various rigorous security measure for the purpose of protecting their nations from potential threats. For example, Australian and European governments initiated several billions of dollars project to enhance security measures (Brooks 2010, 225-26).

According to Rohan Gunaratna (September 1, 2021), a major shift in the concept materialized after the 9/11 attacks on the US, where then-Bush Administration realized a drastic change in its security strategy – aiming to thwarting terrorism and bluntly declared its 'war on terror' strategy. It was recognized therefore that there were serious implications following such attacks and the US announcement of its strategy on 'war on terror', affecting the national and international security domain, as well as impacting international politics. The US and its allies initiated a military offense against Afghanistan in 2001 to eliminate the masterminds of the 9/11 attacks. This was followed by military interference in Iraq in 2003 to follow the expansion of the Al Qaeda arms. Yet, the entire world and international security have since been in the eye of the typhoon witnessing follow-up reactions.

As an eventual result according to Brainard and Unger (September 11, 2008), securitization of development programs since the beginning of the twenty first century intensified for the purpose of leveraging communities in recipient nations through implementing stabilization and de-conflicting areas of action.

3. Literature Review

This section presents existing literature relevant to the security-development nexus that relates to the complicated political and security landscape of the occupied Palestinian territories, and particularly the Palestinian security sector reform processes. This research therefore is going to mainly investigate previous scholarship of Melita Lazell & Ivica Petrikova, Alaa Tartir, Tahani Mustafa, and Nizam F. Salahat,

and among other scholars. Nevertheless, scholarship suggests that despite the talking about the nexus between security and development started to resurface during the 1990s as argued by Melita Lazell & Ivica Petrikova (2020, 324-25), yet there was an important linkage between security and development during the Cold War. This strong connection between both concepts was evident in the conflicted nations receiving and benefiting from international aid.

In the PA-run West Bank and following the 2006 elections, the concept of development mainly started to evolve under the government of former Palestinian Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad. The developments on the ground following major changes in the political and security spectrum and the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas, the PA and the international community were convinced to initiate a necessary reform process of the PASF. Fayyad's strategy was centered around restricting the security apparatus and creating the environment where the law rules; and restructuring the PA institutions to become more accountable and credible, which leads to providing professional services to the public; and lastly promoting the Palestinian private sector to lead on developing the economy of the Palestinians. Interestingly, this strategy was put into force despite the existing military occupation of the WB. Consequently, the accounts of locals regarding the international development assistance and security sector reform efforts indicated that they were unsuccessful and ineffective. In addition, opponents to the Fayyadist approach suggested that the adopted policies by the PA were not in favor of the people in need, rather making a small number of people richer at the expense of others (Tartir 2015, 480-82).

Furthermore, the international aid to the security sector in the oPt was not directed towards establishing a democratized policing, nor having a transparent security system. Contrarywise, the SSR in Palestine supported the creation of an authoritarian system, while overlooking to address the real needs of the Palestinian account. The specifics of the international donor intervention in the Palestinian context-like SSR therefore have led to further impeding the achievement of good governance and eventually yielding futile development. Relating this futility to the fact that the concept of security sector reform is designated to be implemented in countries suffered from conflicts – meaning the SSR is a post-conflict reform gismo. (Salahat 2022, 396-98). According to Stephen Baranyi and Marie-Eve Desrosiers (2012, 445), it is crucial to

address the residual factors hindering achieving development that is attainable in volatile situations i.e. Palestine.

Consequently, the donors' programs are designed towards not achieving viable results in the oPt, rather they are justifying their presence and support for the Palestinians to keep the status quo (Taghdisi Rad 2015, 2). Additionally, it is argued that securitized development clearly negatively impacted the Palestinian society, which has led to creating divisions and instability (Mustafa 2021, 273-77, Hanieh 2016, 33). Evidently, Mustafa (2019, 20-21) also argued that the securitization of aid to the Palestinians – the case of the SSR in the oPt – has implications on the national political and security landscape. Conversely, the security sector model being implemented in the oPt proves to be unsuccessful – not yielding its desired results in creating peace between Palestinian and Israelis, nor bringing stability in the region. Presumably, there are impediments to achieving effective SSR in the oPt as argued by Brahim Saidy (2014, 102-119). He argues that the main risks to the SSR project to be effective and successful in the oPt relate to the occupation of the Palestinian territories, as well as the intra-conflict between the two main parties, Fatah Hamas. Saidy also discusses that any project of SSR-like should take into consideration the above two major foundational challenges it will encounter towards achieving its desired outcomes.

The international assistance in reforming the security sector in the oPt according to Tahani Mustafa (2015, 213-14) consolidated the dictatorship of the state – mainly transforming the PASF to become a centric power – rather than transforming the security apparatus into a reforming factor in the very complicated environment of the oPt. She also argues that the donor money poured into ameliorating the security sector in the oPt illustrates clearly the approach of securitization of development – in which it largely relates to the security-development nexus that considers attaching strings to development projects and interventions in the recipient countries and beneficiaries.

It is bluntly laid out that the security sector reform in the oPt by the international communities comes to serve international agenda in keeping stabilized territories. To this extent, it is argued that the PASF imposed a firm grip on the Palestinians which was evident upon the eruption of the Arab Spring during 2010-11, in which the oPt surprisingly remained calm. It was described by Tahani Mustafa as the '*marked break'* (2015, 212-3).

The connection between security and development therefore cannot be segregated. However, the impact of securitized development is apparent, especially in the case of the oPt. For instance, viewpoints of locals receiving assistance from the European Union concluded that the EU fund is driven by donors' political agenda, in which it lacks transparency, and peacebuilding efforts which are disconnected from reality for the purpose of achieving peace and security – thus eventually leading to creating weak governance and paralyzed and petrified rule of law system in Palestine (Mueller and Zahda 2017, 5-8, Tartir 2018, 2-3).

To that extent, what further impedes the achievement of sustainable development in the oPt is regarded to the existing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the internal Palestinian division that reflects the way the conflict is being steered and managed, and that the international aid mechanisms are of a core reason not to make development a success as they are seen to be adapting the appeasement approach of the Palestinians, and maintaining the status quo without further instigating real development works and measures on the ground (Ezbidi 2020, 604-17).

No matter the size of the donor is, the assistance it provides stems duly from its country's foreign policy. This is evident in the Canadian support to the Palestinian security development, although Canada is considered relatively a small donor in this respect. Still, such donors clearly get themselves involved to achieve geo-political, -strategic interest of their sending country. This is designated in the securitization of development programs they provide for the purpose of serving the donor's strategic interests. Consequently, this clearly indicates the international donors' politicized policies in providing security and development assistance to the Palestinians (Monaghan 2016, 125-43).

The reviewed existing literature raises the question of this research 'how applicable the security-development nexus in the intricate political and security landscape of the oPt'. It also shows the inevitability to further investigate the international development and security model in oPt, as well as its implications on the political, social, and security of the Palestinians – perhaps further assessing its implications on the entire region and the international security. Evidently, since the beginning of the international aid in the oPt the international donor community practiced fulfilling their geostrategic, geopolitical agenda – that is protecting Israel's national security at the expense of the development

of the Palestinians. This has even facilitated the process of the PA failing to commit to its mandate in providing professional, efficient services to its citizens. It has also led to making the exiting fragile context even worse. Notwithstanding, politicized international donor policies, the residual Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories as well as the Palestinian fragmented political outlook pave the way to not having an effective, well-reformed Palestinian security apparatus.

4. Methodology

This research follows an analytical, descriptive, qualitative approach to answer the main research question. Therefore, a thorough review and analysis of previous literature related to development-security nexus will be performed, including reports, recommendations, policy papers, previous research and relevant documentation.

The following research methodological approach will be followed:

- Investigating the historical setting and how the approach of development-security nexus evolved in the oPt, shedding light on security sector reform and the securitization of development programs, through performing a thorough literature review of the academic journals and publications on the evolvement of the development-security nexus in the oPt.

- Collection Phase: Secondary data will be collected from policy documents, strategic plans, project reports produced from international organizations, donor agencies, as well as from local Palestinian stakeholders. Additional secondary sources on development-security nexus, with a focus on reforming security sector in the oPt will be gathered such as academic literature. Findings and recommendations of these sources will be analyzed to serve the primary purpose and objective of this research.

- Analysis Phase: Critical analysis of the literature reviewed will be performed to assess the applicability of security-development nexus in the complicated political and security setting of the occupied Palestinian territories.

5. Security-Development Nexus in the oPt

As the world is rapidly changing, interconnectedness and overlapping in states' interests in international politics are becoming dire and pressing. Thus, the field of development and security is generally becoming even more intrinsic due to modern technological advancements (Gallagher and Navone, December 3, 2020). To achieve sustainable development according to Carl Bruch (November 6, 2021), security is critical to maintain it. The concept of security-development nexus however is defined as the significant linkage between ensuring security and sustaining development in a recipient nation. Both concepts are entwined as development needs to having well-functioned, good-governed security system to ensure stability for long-term developmental goals (Broecker 2022, 159).

Moreover, balancing between achieving developmental goals on the ground is sheerly pertinent to the availability of secure environment. Although the definition of the concept of development and the concept of security is subject to continual alteration, yet they both merely bond in nature. It is crucial to highlight that sustaining development requires creating conflict-free mediums. For example, conflicts such as in Yemen severely affected the humanitarian aspect of the country – leading to insecurity and eventually hampering development interventions (Hettne 2010, 33-6).

Interestingly, the connection between development and security was highly visible during the Cold War. Fast forward and during the 1990s, the talks about the SDN resurfaced, leading to immense discussions among scholars concerning the concentration on the securitization of development programs provided to the conflicted countries of the *Global South*. Referring to various global examples, development cannot go alone without security and stability – the other way around is crucially important to sustain development as well. The comeback of the securitization of development programs was highly guided by the assumption that instability and volatility in the Global South constitutes a security threat to the Global North (Lazell & Petrikova 2020,324-25).

Consequently, the intersection between the concept of development and security has witnessed heated discussions with regards to its applicability in the conflicted zones. In the unique context of the occupied Palestinian territories, however, the whole

concept is obscure. To that extent and according to Francesca Longo (2013, 178-9), the case of the oPt with regards to the SDN is heavily connected to the interests of the international donor community to destabilize and to maintain the status quo – even at the expense of the socio-economic development that relates to the well-being of the Palestinian people.

6. International Aid in the occupied Palestinian territories

International aid in Palestine started in 1948 following their loss of territories for the zionist movement to establish a state for Jews. As there was no government, the international aid was provided in the form of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The main purpose of the aid was geared towards alleviating hardships Palestinian refugees were facing (Brown 2018, 5-6). Yet, according to Jeremy Wilderman and Alaa Tartir (2021, 224) the major chunk of systemized international aid to the oPt started since the signing of Oslo Accords in 1993. Most of this aid came for enhancing the economic situation of the Palestinians. Conversely, they argue that the international development assistance to the Palestinians was programmed to achieve three main political objectives, that is a) achieving peace between Palestinians and Israelis that is just, b) building transparent, democratized Palestinian institutions, and c) realizing socio-economic development that is maintainable. Nonetheless, a great percentage of international aid to the Palestinians was provided through international donors (Shaban, August 4, 2022).

As the time passing, the oPt has witnessed major political and security instability that was characterized by the failure of the Camp David II peace talks in 2000s – leading to the eruption of the Palestinian second intifada – stands for ‘uprising’ – on September 13, 2000 (Council on Foreign Relations, October 3, 2024).

Since 2006 and onwards and according to OCHA reports, the oPt has been witnessing political instability, Israeli occupation practices, armed conflicts, as well as suffering from difficulties in achieving socio-economic development. Thus, international aid packages have been designed to respond to humanitarian needs (United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), reforming the security sector (Tartir 2015, 12-13), as well as implementing development programs (Wilderman 2018, 5).

Ultimately, the international aid in the oPt boasts a pivotal role in shaping the political and security landscape of the Palestinian territories. Donor countries provide support that is conditional to achieving strategic objectives (Mustafa 2021, 272). Nonetheless, it is also clear in Israel's strategy which bluntly indicates its preference in establishing economic ties with the Palestinians and Arab neighbors – attempting to advent the politics of economy in influencing nations (Shikaki 2021, 51-2).

7. Geopolitical Outlook of the Middle East

The Middle East region has always played a pivotal role in international geopolitical interactions due to its resonance in natural resources, its distinct cultural aspects, and intricate political accounts. Recently, the region has witnessed critical makeovers guided by several aspects, including the emergence of new regional powers, constant conflicts, and shifting in alliances (Milton, December 25, 2023). For example, Türkiye partnered with Iran attempting to counter their foes, as well as extending their influence in the region following the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria. In addition, Türkiye moved towards reinforcing its relations with Qatar. These interferences led to rising tensions with conventional centers of power such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (Haugom 2019, 212). In addition, Iran has been attempting to expand its influence in the region through its extensive support to its allied armed groups in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen (Raine, November 15, 2023).

Notwithstanding, the Palestinian outlook is not far from the influence of international and regional actors. With the PA-run government in the West bank and a de-facto government run by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, there are interested actors supporting both governments with finances. The PA government is supported by the US, EU, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Shaban, August 4, 2022), while the Hamas-run government in the GS is supported by Iran, Türkiye, and Qatar (Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018).

Moreover, other major powerful actors such as the United States and Russia are excessively influencing the geopolitics of the Middle East. The entire geopolitical landscape of the Middle East has drastically changed when Russia made a big-time comeback upon the requested support by the Assad regime. This positioned Russia to

become a major player in the region, in which it makes a rivalry for Israel's ambition to expand its influence (Rumer & Weiss, November 1, 2024).

Another major shift in Middle East geopolitics occurred in the successful signing of the Abraham Accord in 2020. The Accord is mainly dependent on normalizing Arab relations with Israel. However, four Arab countries signed the Accord, namely the UAE, Bahrain, followed by Morocco and Sudan (U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs). This move also according to Yoel Guzansky and Zachary Marshall (2020, 8) made a major, strategic shift in alliances and geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East.

As the Middle East constitutes a central focus of the international affairs, the instability and fragility of the region is massively significant. There has been however a geostrategic competition between regional rivalries over arming. This competition is foreseen between the Iranian-influenced alliance, including Iraq, Syria, oPt, Lebanon, and Yemen; and the Sunni-affiliated bloc led by Saudia Arabic, including Jordan, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and northern African countries (Eslami & Vieira 2023, 5-6). In other words, the Middle East sets on a heated ground that is fueled by internal, and regional conflicts which may result in rewriting the Middle Eastern politics, and eventually impacting the international political arena.

8. Political and Security Landscape in the oPt

8.1. Political structure of the Palestinian Authority (PA)

The political system of the PA has witnessed hardship after the parliamentary elections in 2006. The first-time ever Hamas running for elections won the governmental elections against the Fatah-led PA. As a result, the disagreement between the two biggest parties got even worse that led to Hamas taking full control over the Gaza Strip, while the PA governs the West Bank. Many attempts to bridge the gap between the two parties were initiated, yet all come to falling apart (Abusada, March 1, 2021). Following the internal Fatah-Hamas armed fight in Gaza which has led to the expel of the PA from the Gaza Strip, a new political environment set the tone for a more fragmented political landscape in the oPt. As a result, two political systems stemmed from the Palestinian – Palestinian division (Barron, June 25, 2019). Although the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, term was ended in 2009, the internal

division kept Palestinians deprived from their right to elect a new government (U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labor).

Following this critical period, the PA went through several transformative actions, in which it was characterized by ending violent, armed resistance against Israel and initiating the state-building process, as well as increasing security coordination with Israel through the adoption of the U.S. General Keith Dayton plan to reform the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF), the concentration of power in one hand – paving the way for establishing a centralized chain of command, in addition to that, the increase in political and factional commotion due to the contest over power among Fatah members (Hussein, March 7, 2023). Briefly, the political structure of the PA following the 2006 parliamentary elections was mainly characterized by fragmentation and vague political sight.

8.2. Security structure of the Palestinian Authority (PA)

Notably the creation of the Palestinian security structure or apparatus witnessed a three-phased effort. The first phase started upon the signing of Oslo agreement in 1993 and ended when the second intifada ‘uprising’ started in 2000. During this period, the PA security forces were mandated to upholding public order and ensuring the security of Israel as per the signed agreements. Less focus from regional and international actors has led to having non-transparent security forces infected with favoritism and lacking trust by Jordan and Egypt. The period between 2000 and 2007 was critical. It started with diminishing security forces premises during the second intifada – leading to the involvement of PA security forces in armed fight with the Israeli soldiers. For this, the international community raised a red flag and initiated efforts to start the reforming of the PASF to become professionalized and accepted (Dunning and Iqtait, 2023, 173-4, Tartir 2015, 2-10).

Nevertheless, the Palestinian security apparatus suffered from unstable conditions and fragmentation in its security governance. Following the 2007 Fatah-Hamas armed clashes, Hamas took control over the internal security forces under the Ministry of Interior in Gaza, which led the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, to initiate reforms in the West Bank security forces (DCAF Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, August 2023, 27). This is the third phase of reforming the PASF under

Fayyad 13th government. This reforming effort spanned from 2007 until 2013 (Tartir 2015, 11). It resulted in having the Palestinian president endorsed presidential decrees – yielding in clustering the Palestinian national security forces under the PA-run Ministry of Interior, naming them as internal security forces. Two of the PASF started reporting directly to the president, while the remaining clustered security agencies – namely five – were annexed under the umbrella of the PA Ministry of Interior. The U.S. has blessed these reforms, leading to creating a roadmap for security sector reform in the oPt (PASSIA, November 2021, 6).

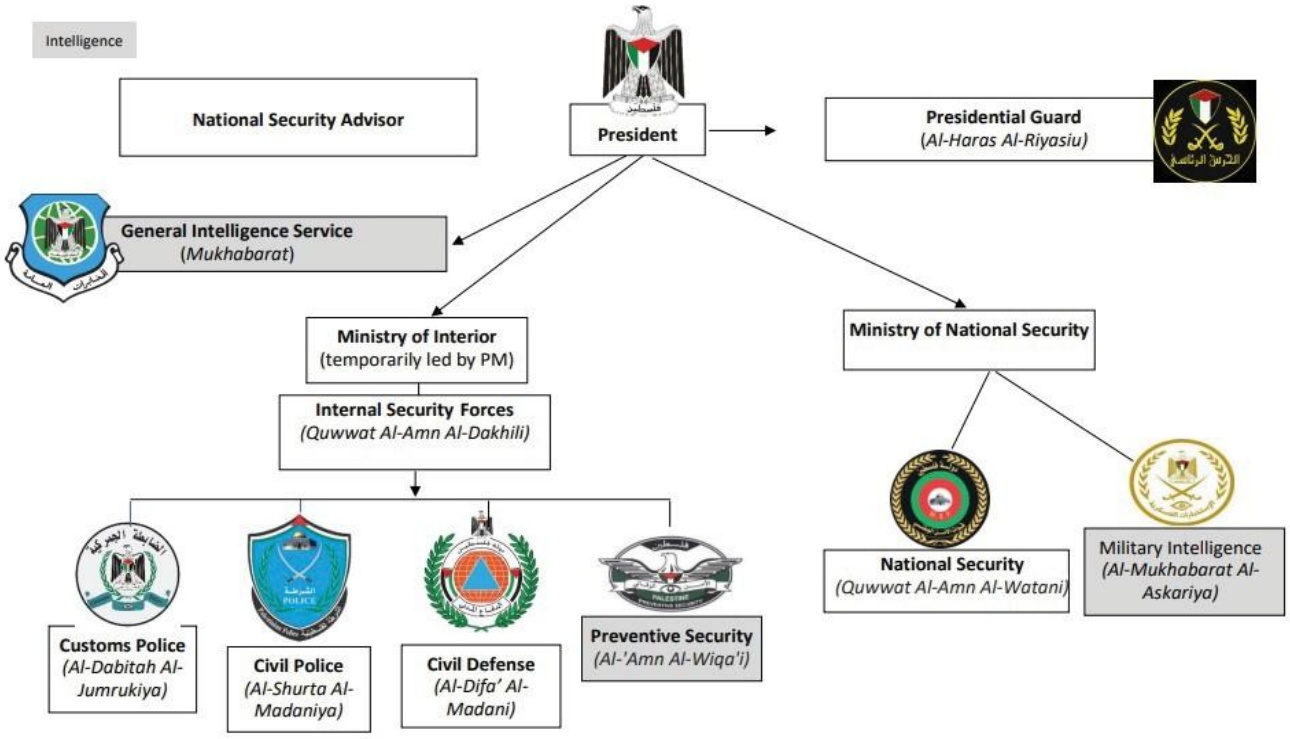

Diagram 1: Current PASF Chain of Command as of July 2021.

Source: The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), November 2021.

The diagram clearly displays the clustered PASF in the oPt. It also clearly shows the consolidated power of authority in the hands of the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas. It is crucial to mention that the Ministry of National Security is non-existent. Thus, following 2007 presidential decree No 323, the two security forces, National Security and Military Intelligence were referred under the MoI (PASSIA, November 2021, 7-8).

Unlike the political situation, the Palestinian security apparatus is not at better position. To this end, the security situation has rigorously declined in the West Bank in

the past over two years due to almost daily Israeli incursions into Palestinian cities and villages in area A – under full Palestinian administrative and security control. The Israeli forces claim that the deterioration of the West Bank security situation refers to the arouse of Palestinian militant groups. Thus, such military actions are necessary to curb down the violence and security threat to the Israeli national security. However, the Israeli military actions were seen justified due to the weakness of Palestinian security forces to prevent security threats and attacks against Israel (American Jewish Committee, July 6, 2023). In addition, the Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians has sharply increased according to Jeremy Bowen (December 6, 2023). All the aforementioned lead to a weakened Palestinian security presence and control in the Palestinian territories that fall under its jurisdictions, as well as a security situation that is excessively at a high ever declining levels.

9. Actors in the oPt and their role in development and security

Historically, the occupied Palestinian territories was compelling to international actors to offer security and development assistance (Brown, December 17, 2018). Hence, actors in the oPt can be divided into development and security aid actors, and describing their role in both sectors as follows.

9.1. Actors of the development sector

The peace process in the Middle East played a pivotal role in the focus on international actors to initiate development programs, serving geopolitical, geostrategic objectives of the donor countries. Thus, the oPt is a place that attracts various actors to provide aid to the Palestinians in the development sector (Taghdisi Rad 2015, 7). Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, a focus on the main international donors within the researched timeframe will be performed.

Importantly, all donor countries' development assistance programs are guided by the World Bank's development plan of 1993 – '*An Investment in* Peace' (Wilderman & Tartir 2021, 227). In this regard, the main donors operating in the oPt include the European Union (EU), the United States (U.S.), the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The EU, to start with, is considered the biggest development aid provider to the Palestinians. It provides development assistance in various areas such as education, economic development, institution-

building, health and social protection, resource efficiency and climate change, democracy, and rule of law and human rights (Bilquin and Kowald, December 2023).

Furthermore, the United States of America through the US Aid for International Development (USAID) provides billion of US dollars development assistance to the Palestinians in the WB and GS. This assistance in its essence is programmed to support improving health conditions of the Palestinians, building infrastructures, developing private sector, implementing stabilization projects, and SSR (United States Government Accountability Office, December 2023, 20). Although during the period from 2008 and 2023 as argued by Hope O'Dell (October 20, 2023), the U.S. assistance suffered unstable sending of funds to the Palestinians, in which the funding was entirely stopped during Trump administration.

One of the longest assistance programs in the oPt is the United Unitions Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP's mandate is generated based on the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978. The program mainly focuses on supporting Palestinians through projects scoped to improving their economic, social and living conditions (United Nations Development Programme).

Lastly, another major international donor in the oPt is the World Bank. Its assistance program had commenced in 1992. The World Bank however provides support to the Palestinians in various sectors, including health, education, private sector development, financial development, digital and greening (World Bank, updated May 11, 2023).

9.2. Actors of the security sector

The Palestinian security sector is always attractive to international actors. The sensitivity of the Palestinian Israeli conflict plays a pivotal role in directing international assistance into the security sector in the oPt. Thus, there are several actors providing immense, colossal support to the Palestinian security sector. One of the primary international supporters is the USA. Since the inception of the PA, the U.S. have provided support to the PA security agencies, mainly for the purpose of preserving order and countering insurgency (Zanotti, January 8, 2010, 1).

Following the death of late Yasser Arafat and the election of the current Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, in 2005, a new era of supporting the Palestinian security forces was initiated. In 2005, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice established the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) for the PA and Israel. Its main objective is to restructure, provide training and equipment to the PASF, in an attempt to capacitate them to provide professional security services. This commitment was guided by the agreement between Palestinians and Israelis that was closed in 2003, so-call '*Roadmap of Obligations*'. This Roadmap was centered around the comprehension on both sides that security is considered key in which the peace process clings on (Zanotti, January 8, 2010, 2-3).

Another big donor in the Palestinian security sector is the European Union (EU). The EU launched its mission to support the Palestinian police (EUPOLCOPPS) which was crowned by the commencement of its mission to oPt on 1 January 2006. Its main mandate is to provide support to the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) in the form of providing professional police advisories. EUPOLCOPPS is also mandated to support the PCP in its institutional development as part of the EU's commitment towards supporting the two-state solution, as well as building the institutions of the PA to becoming ready to operationalize and provide professional services to the Palestinian public while upholding human rights and rule of law (EUPOLCOPPS; Bouris 2012, 260).

10. Aid actors in the oPt

10.1. International and regional actors

There are several international actors operating in the oPt. They come from governmental and non-government backgrounds. For instance, the UNRWA has been active in the oPt since 1948, mainly providing humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees and their families. This assistance comes in providing necessary services in the field of education, healthcare, and social welfare (Brown 2018, 5-6).

Another major donor is the European Union. The EU is considered the biggest donor for the PA, thus enjoys multilayered policy in the oPt. The EU also is committed towards the two-state solution on the basis of the '*2003 Roadmap for Peace*'; therefore it is also an active member of the Middle East Quartet, alongside the United States,

Russia, and the United Nations. Moreover, the EU support in the oPt comes through providing technical, financial, and humanitarian support through the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department and OCHA. Additionally, the EU support extends to the Palestinian civil society sector. In a sum-up note, the EU is considered the most important donor to the PA and the Palestinians (The EU, August 8, 2021).

The United States of America comes in the second place as a substantial donor providing aid to the Palestinians (Shaban, August 4, 2022). The U.S. assistance serves various levels, such as humanitarian, economic development, and security sector as well (U.S. Department of State, March 26, 2021). The U.S. however has been the mediator of the peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis. Yet, the U.S. assistance is influenced by its role as a conflict mediator (Shaban, August 4, 2022).

Furthermore, the World Bank as a renowned financial institution is a large donor for the Palestinian economic development. Still, there a criticism about the World Bank economic assistance that is coupled with technical knowledge, in which it prepares the ground for donors' agenda to be adopted and integrated into the recipient nations (Shaban, August 4, 2022).

The Palestinians have not been forgotten by their Arab brethren. Accordingly, there are five main Arab donors to the PA since its inception. Saudi Arabia comes as the biggest donor, consecutively followed by the UAE, Algeria, Qatar, and Kuwait. Interestingly, they share similar profile of being major oil and gas producers (Shaban, August 4, 2022).

With regards to the Gaza Strip, it was prevented from receiving aid from the United State and the EU. Thus, there are other regional aid actors who channel funds into the Hamas-run Strip. Iran is one biggest aid actor to the Hamas government which provides financial and military assistance in a 100 million dollar pledged package. In addition, Turkiye and Qatar are considered major donors for the GS (Robbinson, October 17, 2024). Following the 2006 Hamas win in Palestinian parliamentary elections and the imposed embargo by the international community and after the failure of containing Hamas moderates, the yearslong Iranian support – although fluctuated – to the GS has soared (Skare, December 18, 2023). As a result, Hamas's military

brigades and among others were capacitated to initiate modern, sophisticated rockets against Israeli cities (Levy, June 1, 2021).

10.2. Private sector

Private sector is defined as the sector that is not represented by the government, nor the civil society (Khalidi, p. 1). It is considered critical country's share in its gross domestic production rate. Unlike other countries, the Palestinian economic landscape is uniquely shaped and influenced by the peace agreement signed in 1993. The signed Paris Protocol in 1994 clearly specified the Palestinian economic sector, in which it tied it to Israel – making it immensely reliant on the Israeli decisions and practices. Evidently, the Protocol clearly outlines the nexus between developing the Palestinian economy and ensuring peace and security (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 1994).

Importantly, the revenue collection system created by the Paris Protocol since 1994 is presumably used by the Israeli government as a pressuring tool to prevent from transferring the collected taxes on behalf of the Palestinians – as agreed upon in the Paris Protocol – in an attempt to exert pressure on the PA. Such Israeli actions leave the Palestinian economy suffer from important resources to bolster. Additionally, using the collected taxes against the Palestinians was manifested when the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) passed a law in July 2018, signifying that the government of Israel has the right to deduct equivalent amounts of the collected taxes – laying pressure on the Palestinian government not to transfer money to the Palestinians prisoners including their families, as well as the families related to Palestinians who sacrificed their lives. This is another example of Israeli actions violating the Paris Protocol, in which it yields negative impact on the economic and social situation of the Palestinians (United Nations, November 17, 2018, 4).

Interestingly, one of the major impediments to the improvement of the Palestinian economic situation is the ongoing construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the WB. This act allows Israeli goods produced in these settlements to enter the Palestinian market – eventually leaving the Palestinian economy stagnant due to avoidance in paying taxes and levies as per the Paris Protocol. The Israeli

violation of the Protocol therefore has weakened the Palestinian economic development over the time passing (AbdulKareem 2021, 9).

Adding salt to the open wound, the international model for development that was proposed by the European Union, coupled with the World Bank intervention in boosting the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories proved to be politicized and it tremendously represented benefits for the donor countries. Foreign policies of the donor countries favoring Israeli interests over the Palestinians' clearly makes the model of development assistance futile. They deemed for bolstering economic ties between Israelis and Palestinians, hoping for creating peace and security, thus, the Israeli actions on ground impede any economic development for the Palestinians (Wilderman 2018, 5-7).

Furthermore, in a World Bank report (April 2012), it is evident that there is a strong connection between development and security in the oPt. In the aftermath of the second Intifada and following noticeable development in the security situation in the WB, the Israeli government lift restrictions it imposed on the Palestinians, leading to augmenting the economic situation. This exemplifies the necessity for reaching a political solution, resulting in boosting the Palestinian private sector.

Lastly, it is argued by Alex Martin and Peter Wilson (2010 ,314-15) that the private sector in Palestine can play a critical role in supporting a professional reform of the Palestinian security sector. As such, it can exercise its well-rounded capabilities in bearing part of the responsibility to provide advisory to the PASF in certain areas that fall within its mandate, inter alia, strategic management and planning, policy development, and human resources management, procurement planning and management.

10.3. Civil society

Notably, the civil society is defined as the medium between the government and its citizens, in which it consists of charitable associations, community organizations, unions, and groups representing the various segments of the society (Keane 2010, 261). The importance of having unbiased civil society actors is that they come valuable in bridging gaps between the government and its citizens (Jezard, April 23, 2018). Hence, civil society in the oPt enjoys a critical role in promoting Palestinian rights and

needs. Particularly, the Palestinian civil society plays a vital role in building state institutions, as well as participating in the resistance against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Such involvement is crowned by its advocacy for ending the Israeli occupation, promoting Palestinians' civil rights, calling on freedom of movement, and freedom of speech. Additionally, the civil society in the oPt plays an important role in connecting people with the political affiliations during hardship times as argued by Samir Awad (2017, 160-61).

Furthermore, the Palestinian civil society sector is described to be functioning very well and strongly shaped. This sector is highly involved in providing various services to the Palestinian public, including raising awareness in legal matters, legal advisories, advocacy, as well as other civic-related issues. The Palestinian civil society however acquired its strength and trust by the Palestinian citizens due to its perpetual service providing before the establishment of the PA and continued its commitments after Oslo in 1993. Due to its professional competency, Palestinian civil society organizations play a key role in observing the Palestinian security institutions as well as delivering trainings to security forces on certain topics i.e. human rights (United Nations Development Programme).

Consequently, the Palestinian civil society announced its refusal to the excessive interference in the training of the Palestinian security forces – mainly by the US. The justification for their refusal is guided by their belief that the PASF are trained to become more oppressing power in the hand of the political, ruling regime. For this reason, a Palestinian coalition of civil society organization are practicing their right to watchdog the actions of the PASF in human right violations, political arrest of Palestinians, as well as torturing of Palestinian prisoners (Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018). As a result, the Palestinian public has become cynical about the role of the PASF – believing that their role is to protect Palestinians from threats – including the occupier practices – and to safeguard their country against external threats. On the contrary, they believe that the PASF are just an extension of the occupation hand that comes from within (Robbinson, May 28, 2024).

10.4. Local Government Sector

The local government sector in the West Bank and Gaza Strip represented by local municipalities and village councils is considered a crucial and major pillar in providing public services to the Palestinian citizens and insuring their wellbeing. (Palestine Ministry of Local Government, November 6, 2019). Thus, the Palestinian local government sector is a multi-tiered structure presented as;

- Ministry of Local Government (MoLG): leading governmental body that is mandated to regulate the Palestinian local government sector (Ministry of Local Government, November 6, 2019).
- Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA): founded in June 1997 and is mandated to support all municipalities in the oPt to partner with local, regional and international counterparts through networking, advocacy and partnerships. It also provides local municipalities with technical support through implementing donor-funded development projects (Association of Palestinian Local Authorities, no date).
- Municipal Development Lending Fund (MDLF): a 2005 PA-established semi-governmental institution that is tasked with facilitating financial resources for all local government units (LGUs) and improving their accessibility into the markets. MDLF is also responsible for marshalling donor aid, consolidating government-to-government financial remittances, and supporting LGU's capabilities for emergency response, as well as bolstering economic development (Municipal Development & Lending Fund).
- Municipalities & village councils: established as per the Local Authorities Act in 1997, and the amendment decree in 2008. Municipalities are different in size relying on the number of population it falls under its jurisdiction. Thus, municipality and village council are distinguished by the population size they serve, as well as the services they offer to the public within their jurisdictional line of control. To that extent, municipalities and villages councils provide an array of services ranging from licensing of buildings, health monitoring, education and school controlling (in some areas), assisting in society development, to providing emergency response services (European Committee of the Regions).

Historically, the Palestinian local government sector plays a crucial role in the development and resilience of the Palestinian society since 1970s. The Palestinian LGUs boast previous experiences in running the Palestinian society with all its components, including international politics, bolstering economic development, and ensuring the resilience of the Palestinian society (Makky, October 2013).

Significantly, the Palestinian local government sector also plays a pivotal role in shaping the internal politics of the Palestinian outlook. During the elections in 2012 which was held only in the West Bank due to the separation of PA-run WB and Hamas-run GS, showed that the election of heads of municipalities were elected on the basis of party they represent and family connections. (European Council on Foreign Relations).

On the social and health level for instance, it is worth mentioning that the local government sector, represented by local municipalities, has tremendously helped the Palestinian government on the social and health basis through the COVID-19 pandemic. They encountered the spread of the virus within their jurisdictional localities and the consequences of the virus on peoples' health and social aspects. By doing so, it shows the importance of local government sector in making Palestinian society more resilient during hard times (World Bank Group, March 31, 2021,21).

In addition, the LGUs in the West Bank are undergoing a drastic reform job for the purpose of improving their governance structures and restructuring its collaboration and relations with the local population. Thus, the services provided by the local government authorities to the Palestinian public constitute a cornerstone in safeguarding their livelihoods through advocating for democracy and enhancing development (GIZ, March 2024)[1].

11. How development and security are intertwined?

As development for countries is indispensable, security to them is fundamental as well. Development cannot be sustained without stability and safe environments. Secure environments therefore construct the ground for doing developmental work and

[1] The Local Government Reform Programme III is a three-year intervention funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is implemented by the GIZ Palestine. The programme duration is from April 2023 to March 2026. It is main objective is to support municipalities and village councils in providing more inclusive, efficient, and effective services to the Palestinian public.

maintain it for the good of communities and people. Tossing the coin though, security too requires development to prevail in communities and for the people as argued by Frances Stewart (2-6).

In the case of the oPt as discussed by Sahar Taghdisi Rad (2015, 6-7), the international aid to the Palestinians was far from achieving its objective upon signing the Oslo Agreements in 1993. The interference of the World Bank – imposed by the U.S. administration – and its proposal of the developmental plan has guided all the international donors in the oPt. She argues that this plan was politically influenced in which it resulted in underdevelopment of the Palestinian territories over the maintenance of Israel's national security fears.

Exemplifying the connection between development and security, there are other live models of the pitch – showing the strong connection between both concepts. The EU model for development in the oPt is hugely connected towards the claim of donor countries to promoting economic situation of the Palestinians will lead to stability and peace with Israel. On the contrary, it proved to be ineffective due to the fact it was driven by the donor countries' foreign policy to benefit from it for their own economies and favoring the Israeli interests over the Palestinians'. In addition, the interference of the World Bank – an *American arm* – in the development efforts led to securitization of the development assistance in the oPt as argued by Jeremey Wilderman (2018, 3-6).

Moreover, huge investments were bestowed in security development programs following the American approach in training and equipping the Palestinian security forces – leaving behind undemocratic, non-transparent, autocratic regime. This led to overlooking investing more in development for security (Tartir 2015, 12). Nonetheless, the UN Millennium declaration of 2000 stresses the importance of ensuring security and peace as essentials to reduce poverty. As such, it signifies the critical connection between development and security – reaffirming that stagnant economies could lead to minimizing security, as well as uncertainty could compromise development (Milante, Suyoun, & Burt, 2015, 307-308).

Ultimately, the reiteration made by the United Nations concerning the strong connection between development and security is evident and enshrined in the Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) number 16 '*peace, justice, and strong*

institutions'; it indicates that the two concepts are inseparable. Focusing on one sector would result in hampering the other as discussed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

12. Characteristics of development-security assistance

As the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis continue, the international interventions in the development and security sectors continue to yield no major impactful outcome on the Palestinian society. International aid for the oPt however remains distorted as donors' interventions are perceived to be designed to serve the occupier, rather than to make socio-economic development for the Palestinians (Ibrahim & Beaudet 2012, 489-90). In addition, the international donor community policies are shaped by security concerns, thus development interventions are not on their priority agendas for the purpose of asserting a loop of reliance and underdevelopment (Longo 2013,178). Another important factor for hindering economic development and security in the oPt according to UNCTAD report (September 10, 2024, 21) is the Israeli occupation of the pre-1967 bordered territories.

Moreover, the development assistance to the oPt turns to be ineffective in maintaining stability, prosperity, and improving the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinians. Following long years of investing in the development sector yielded no major impact. On the contrary, the Palestinian economy declined, rates of unemployment sharpened, insecurity prevailed. This entails that a unique characteristic of the international aid in the oPt to becoming a politically used instrument and not fitted towards addressing the real needs of the Palestinians (Taghdisi Rad 2015, 7).

One major characteristic of the international development aid is that donor countries espouse the World Bank development approach that only focuses on economic prosperity without paying attention to finding a solution for the political standing issues between the Palestinians and Israeli. Thus, the separation between both paradigms leads to creating more conflicts in the recipient nations – as in the case of the oPt (Wilderman 2018, 5).

Another important distinguishing factor of the SDN in the oPt is that it is faced by the residual conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. The unsolved conflict and

instability severely impact the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people (Hilal 2022, 12).

13. Correlation between development and security in the oPt

The ongoing conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis sets the cornerstone for ensuring development and security in the oPt. It is empirically evident that the Israeli actions in the occupied territories lead to underdevelopment of the Palestinian society. Notwithstanding, the international assistance in the development and security sectors in the oPt results in complicating the situation for the Palestinians, including weakening its governance – that is apparent in the division between the WB and GS, as well as increasing fragility and insecurity, and economic situation that wanes (Saidy 2014).

Historically, the Israeli development on the occupied land of the Palestinians – following the establishment of Israel in 1948 – deprived Palestinians to utilize their land, resorting to urban development projects by the Israeli government to establish a new situation that neither party can ignore. In addition, progressing with the Jewish settlements which sharply increased in the aftermath of 1967 war to impose a new reality has led to major security and violent incidents between Palestinians and Israelis (Schewe, May 19, 2021). Evidently, this demonstrates a strong connection between developmental works the Israeli government has been conducting, and the deterioration of the security situation in the oPt as an inevitable result.

Furthermore, political developments generate instability – leading eventually to a decrease in the socio-economic development of a country. When Hamas was elected in 2006, for instance, the Palestinian gross domestic production (GDP) sternly dropped at 7.8%, compared to the previous year 2005. The main reason behind this toothed drop in GDP in the oPt is donors cutting international aid due to Hamas presiding the government, accompanied by a general strike of the public employees (UNRWA, July 2008, 15-17). This shows another strong correlation between political instability and deteriorating economic position of the oPt.

Importantly enough, the Palestinian – Palestinian division plays a critical part in founding an unstable environment for development and stability. The division between the major Palestinian parties, Fatah and Hamas, fuels underdevelopment in the oPt due to the weakened governance and lack of coherent strategies geared towards

development. Moreover, the focus of the PA and the international donors is centered around allocating more financial resources to support the security sector at the expense of supporting promising development initiatives that contribute to the development of the Palestinian economy (Turner 2017, 107-108; and Congressional Research Service, May 24, 2023).

In another apparent connection between development and security, the U.S. administration made the decision to stop its financial support to the Palestinians in 2018 following a quivering relationship between the U.S. and the PA due to the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017 – leading to halting diplomatic relationship with the U.S. by the PA. It is evident that the bulk of the U.S. aid assistance to the Palestinians was geared towards economic bolstering and humanitarian purposes. Stopping this assistance package impacts the socio-economic situation of the Palestinian – leading to increasing tensions and instability in the region. Although the U.S. economic support to the PA was stopped, the U.S. non-deadly support to the PASF continued (Zanotti, December 12, 2018). It is therefore apparent that favoring security to serve national security interests over development leads to the assumption that international aid to the Palestinians was not generated on a real-need basis, rather over an interest-, - power game basis.

Conclusions

This research adopted the analytical approach in assessing the applicability of the security-development nexus in the oPt, specifically the case of security sector reform. It addressed an array of questions while navigating available relevant academic literature and policy documents, as well as verifying the assumptions posited at the outset of this research. The research has come to conclude that the historical context on the security-development nexus in the oPt is entrenched in the 1993 Oslo Agreements, which marked the beginning of a systemic international assistance geared towards creating an operational Palestinian Authority. For this, findings of this research can be outlined as per the following thematic areas:

- **Efficacy and applicability of security sector reform interventions**: the research shows that applicability and effectiveness of SSR interventions are twofold. On one hand, the international interventions in the Palestinian security

sector reform, particularly under the Salam Fayyad government, aimed at creating a transparent, responsible security apparatus. Hence, the research concludes that these interventions further reinforced authoritative practices and failed to respond to socio-economic challenges faced by Palestinians, rather focusing on safeguarding the Palestinian public. Thus, critical criticism of the SSR surfaced due to its focus on prioritizing the stabilization of the PA control, rather than fostering real community security and stability, thus leading to its ineffectiveness in improving socio-economic development.

Other key obstacles to producing effective SSR interventions in the oPt, on the other hand, include the Palestinians political fragmented system stemming from the division between Fatah and Hamas, the ongoing of the Israeli occupation of the pre-defined 1967 Palestinian territories, as well as the principal influence of international donors. Consequently, the PA's ability to operate as a sovereign entity is severely limited, while the intra-conflict leads to lacking a coherent policy guidance. In addition, the donor-driven agenda often sets priority for immediate security concerns rather than achieving long-term developmental goals, thus creating a distorted approach that dents the potential for effective, lasting reform.

- **Securitized development aid vs. sustainable development**: the research shows that securitization of development programs often results in focusing on immediate stability rather than long-term development. This approach has created a dependency on international external assistance, while disregarding local initiatives, and increasing socio-economic gaps among Palestinians. Sustainable development as showcased does require secure environment to pay off desired results for a nation. Stability is key in achieving lasting development.
- **International and regional actors and their role in the development sector**: both international and regional actors possess a key role in shaping the security-development nexus in the oPt. For instance, policies of countries such as the United States and the European Union countries which provide substantial support in the security and development sectors represent geopolitical, strategic interests rather than addressing the real needs of the Palestinians. This dynamic underpins the notion that development assistance is commonly coupled with political conditionality that may not align with the ambitions of the Palestinian

people. On the other hand, support from regional actors to different Palestinian factions further deepens intra-conflicts and hampers having unified governance in place – impacting negatively the achievement of desired sustainable development and reforms.

- **Integrated development and security strategies**: the research concludes that having effective development and security strategies specially designed for the oPt requires strategies that are cohesive and prioritize establishing a unified governance structures that are responsive to the real needs of the Palestinians and fostering a sense of ownership and participation. Underpinning Palestinian agency in both development and security engagements could lead to more fitted strategies that would cope with the experiences on the ground. In addition, balancing between development and security strategies, such as integrated interventions shall consider the Palestinian aspirations for real political, economic, and social augmentations, while minimizing the Israeli security concerns.

Dependent on the critical analysis of the nexus in the complicated political and security landscape within the oPt, this research underscores a number of recommendations and call-to-action policy proposals for international and regional donors, policymakers, and practitioners of the field.

1- It is imperative that donors' policies are revisited and modified to address the real needs of the Palestinian people. Capitalizing on international donors' interests – serving the Israeli national interests only – would lead to further instability and underdevelopment within the oPt. It is critical to minimize security threats to Israel through allowing inclusive, sovereign governance of Palestinians as per signed agreements.
2- The international security sector reform model is designed to be implemented in post-conflict environments to help creating democratic and accountable systems. Thus, in the case of the oPt, the SSR model does not fit the unique context in the presence of the Israeli occupation of the pre-defined 1967 Palestinian lands. Therefore, there is a critical need for a context-sensitive model to SSR that addresses the intricate and unique challenges the Palestinian security forces usually encounter on the ground.

3- It is a demanding necessity to put an end to the Palestinian – Palestinian internal division that would devise an inclusive, unified governance of the political, security and development landscape. This would result in a more cohesive governance – serving eventually the political, socio-economic developments for the Palestinians.
4- It is important to realize that practitioners in the field of SSR are well-informed of the current trends relevant to the local political, social, economic and security landscape. This will help formulating realistic, attainable project interventions that would benefit both the political and security structures, as well as the receivers of security and development – Palestinian citizens.
5- Further future research of the security-development nexus is recommended to obtain various perspectives of the international donor community, security aid recipients, as well as the perception of the Palestinian citizens. This will further scrutinize assessing the applicability of the security-development nexus. Doing so, the suggested research methodology is to follow a mixed methodological approach for gaining authentic, empirical results.

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