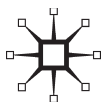


CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

POPULAR RESISTANCE AND MARGINALIZED
ACTIVISM BEYOND THE
ARAB UPRISINGS

EDITED BY
FAWAZ A. GERGES

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CONTENTIOUS ECONOMICS IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

Ala'a Tartir

INTRODUCTION

The case of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) constitutes a prime example from which to explore and expand the dynamics of contentious politics and social movement theories, both from a historical and contemporary perspective. As an occupied, fragmented, ethnically cleansed, dispossessed, and resilient nation, Palestinians could be seen as part of a social movement society. By resisting different forms of dominance, military occupations, and repressive authorities for several decades, Palestinians accumulated multiple cycles of contention and engaged in contentious collective actions to give birth to the Palestinian revolution (*Al-Thawra Al-Filstiniya*). This revolution and its characteristics have changed dramatically over the years, particularly with the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993. At that point, the Palestinian liberation movement declared the beginning of the end for the Palestinian national project.¹ The revolution's institutions transformed gradually into the bureaucracy run by the nascent and nonsovereign governing body, the Palestinian Authority (PA).

These institutions suffered from a profound identity crisis, impacting their functionality. But despite this, their mere existence induced changes to how the colonization of Palestinian land is understood and how social and resistance movements are constructed. The PA's pragmatic political position, the absence of a vision for a self-reliant economy, and the prioritization of the Israeli security demands resulted in a number of outcomes: a gradual erosion of the PA's legitimacy, a complete dependency on international aid, a forced dependency on the Israeli economy, and an authoritarian trend in the PA's character and in the operations of its security forces. Therefore, the authority's institutions became a burden on the Palestinian people and added

another layer of repression. The Palestinian people were further alienated and marginalized from the national decision-making process while a handful élite, largely undemocratic and illegitimate, claimed the representation. A combination of these factors formed a base for cycles of contention over the last two decades.

The process of alienation and marginalization was entrenched in the era of Fayyadism.² Fayyadism, in reference to the former Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad, is the term used to describe the style of governance and state building in the West Bank from 2007 until the present time. Fayyadism is a strategy for state building through good governance and an outcome for the status of aid dependency, the weak PA, and the limited political options that Palestinians have. Fayyadism is homegrown, even though it is an externally funded and sponsored paradigm, one which has been deeply influenced by donors' prescriptions and funds.³ It is aimed at establishing a Weberian monopoly of violence in the security sphere and a post-Washington Consensus neoliberal agenda in the economic sphere. Both are seen as fundamental pillars for the Palestinian state, despite the existence of the Israeli occupation and the intra-Palestinian fragmentation.

The PA, Israel, and the international community have decided that the best and only route for state building is through the four pillars of security sector reform and enforcement of the rule of law; building accountable PA institutions; provision of effective public service delivery; and achievement of private sector-led economic growth in an open and free market economy.⁴ In the words of Fayyad himself, Fayyadism is about "focusing on establishing solid institutions, guided by the principles of good governance, respect for human rights, rule of law, and the efficient and effective delivery of public services."⁵ Some celebrate Fayyad's reforms and argue that the improved performance of the PA has contributed to peace building and enhancing Palestinians' lives,⁶ while others argue that it has sustained the occupation, reengineered parts of the Palestinian society, created a new élite and revised the national goals.⁷

During this Fayyadist era, particularly in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, Palestinians have hardly been able to mobilize and act collectively en masse, and in instances where they have been able to do so, their collective actions were unsustainable.⁸ This is largely attributed to the authoritarian transformation of the PA's security forces, but is also due to a set of reasons, including the Israeli occupation, the political divide between Gaza and West

Bank, the lack of legitimate representative leadership, the consequences of the neoliberal economic agenda, and the failure of international aid. However, as argued by Adam Hanieh, despite the relative success of the neoliberal Fayyadist project in demobilizing social movements,

it would be wrong to assume its permanent ability to pacify the Palestinian population. In many ways, these neoliberal structures act to undermine their own conditions of existence. Most notably, they have clarified the role of the PA to a degree not previously witnessed in the West Bank.⁹

The emergence of the youth movement in 2011 is just a case in point that directly confronted the policies of the PA and the dire economic conditions. The exposure of the real roles of the authorities through the collective actions of the opponents is in keeping with the theories of contentious politics.

Multiple common political and economic challenges exist between Palestine and the Arab world. These challenges came to be correlated or causally linked following the 2011 Arab uprisings,¹⁰ but Palestinians remained largely silent and failed to gather in masses against the regime, the layers of oppression and repression, or the neoliberal economic policies. Inspired by the theoretical underpinnings of contentious politics presented next, this chapter therefore argues that in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings, Palestinian political and/or economic protests constituted cycles of contention, but failed to effectively transform into a social movement. In particular, protests against the economic policies of the PA, the international aid industry, and the economic framework of the Oslo Accords all constitute a form of contentious collective action where different actors join forces to confront and challenge the authorities and the élite around their claims to represent. These contentious collective actions were triggered by political opportunities and constraints or threats that urged those actors lacking in resources to act. However, the actions were not “backed by well-structured social networks [nor] galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols,”¹¹ and therefore did not allow this form of contention to lead to a sustained interaction with the opponents. In other words, it did not develop into a social movement for political and economic rights.

Consequently, in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings, the protests against the repressing authorities in the OPT indicated that a movement was in the process of formation; however these protests failed to draw on the social

networks, common purposes, or cultural frameworks, and failed to build solidarity through connective structures and collective identities to sustain the mounting collective challenges and actions. According to the theoretical framework of contentious politics developed by Sidney Tarrow, the protests failed to transform into “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.”¹²

At the theoretical level, this chapter aims to use the case of Palestine to expand the dynamics of the contentious politics theories through engaging with the notion of contentious economics. At the empirical level, this chapter aims to discuss the implications of the neoliberal paradigm during the Fayyadism era and problematize them as root causes for contention. Additionally, this chapter will provide a critique for the international aid industry in the OPT, which forms a source of contention, through engaging with scholarly literature and also through activism at the street level. Finally, this chapter will propose the notion of resistance economy as a model that is based on the concepts of contentious politics and the exercise of the contentious collective actions. It is a model that challenges the repressive authorities and faces the multiple layers of oppression in order to reverse the cycles of de-development and fulfill economic rights in an ultimate expression of self-determination. It is argued here that the marriage of the concepts of contentious politics theories with the empirical dimensions of the resistance economy model constitutes the original contribution of this chapter to scholarly work. This is operationalized through the initial effort, presented here, to engage with the concept of contentious economics.

CONCEPTUALIZING CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Contentious politics can be defined as “what happens when collective actors join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents around their claims or the claims of those they claim to represent.”¹³ It is triggered by “changing political opportunities and constraints [which] create incentives to take action for actors who lack resources on their own.”¹⁴ Contentious politics occurs “when threats are experienced and opportunities are perceived, when the existence of available allies is demonstrated, and when the vulnerability of opponents is exposed.”¹⁵ Repressed people resist and contend through locally built repertoires of contention, which are expanded through innovation and

technologies of networking. Contentious politics, based on these repertoires of contention, lead to sustained interaction with opponents and to social movements when they are “backed by well-structured social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols.”¹⁶

According to the theories of contentious politics, the basis of social movements, protests, and uprisings/intifadas is contentious collective action. Collective action can be “brief or sustained, institutionalized or disruptive, humdrum or dramatic”;¹⁷ however it becomes contentious when “it is used by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities.”¹⁸ In particular, contentious forms of collective action “bring ordinary people into confrontation with opponents, elites, or authorities.”¹⁹ These contentious collective actions could be upgraded to the level of a social movement if they involve mounting collective challenges; drawing on social networks, common purposes, and cultural frameworks; and building solidarity through connective structures and collective identities to sustain collective action.²⁰

Therefore, as argued by Sidney Tarrow, “rather than defining social movements as expressions of extremism, violence, and deprivation, they are better defined as collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.”²¹ With the change in the political opportunities and constraints or threats, people engage in contentious politics by

strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, creating new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention. When their struggles revolve around broad cleavages in society; when they bring people together around inherited cultural symbols; and when they can build on—or construct—dense social networks and connective structures, these episodes of contention result in sustained interactions with opponents in social movements.²²

This highlights that contentious politics are “culturally inscribed and socially communicated.”²³ It also reflects the centrality of the notion of the repertoire of contention and social movements as repertoires of knowledge of certain routines in a nation’s history and traditions.

Other than the way social movements are embedded in the theories of contentious politics, the concept of cycles of contention is another crucial

element and building block. Beinin and Vairel credit Tarrow for inventing this term and define it as “a structured process by which social movements formed, mobilized, and declined due to political opportunities, innovations in forms of contention, successful articulation of collective action frames, coexistence of organized and unorganized activities, and increased interaction between challengers and constituted authority.”²⁴

However, these concepts of contention are also disputed theoretically and empirically. Most recently by the edited volume *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* edited by Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel. They argue that Tilly’s notion of repertoires of collective action best links the logics of actions and the logics of context, and they argue that the concept of repertoire “also assumes a universe of shared meaning, prior to mobilization.”²⁵ It includes “routines that are learned, shared and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice.”²⁶ The repertoire is also a “‘tool kit’ of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.”²⁷ But perhaps most importantly, Beinin and Vairel argue that “analysing repertoires allows us to examine anticipations, perceptions, and self-definitions of contentious actors and how they take up a position in the political field.” Finally the notion of repertoires leads to a dynamic perspective on collective action and “facilities adopting a relational perspective on contentious politics. It is all the more important in authoritarian situations where activists feel more heavily the authorities’ arbitrary behaviour and violence.”²⁸ This is the case in Palestine, particularly in the era of Fayyadism, with the entrenchment of authoritarian transformations in the character, practices, and policies of the Palestinian Authority.²⁹

In these authoritarian contexts, it is crucial to look at the “politics under the threshold” as argued by Steven Heydemann.³⁰ This implies a better understanding of the configurations and transformations of the authoritarian regime and how collective action functions; where “contention faces huge constraints, the collective dimension of protest is far from given, and the security apparatus are omnipresent.”³¹ This conceptual expansion and critique confirms that “repertoires of contention, social networks, and cultural frames lower the costs of bringing people into collective action, induce confidence that they are not alone, and give broader meaning to their claims.”³²

Beinin and Vairel and the contributing authors to the edited volume mentioned earlier provide a constructive critique to the ideas of and

conceptualization offered by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly. They expand these authors' ideas using empirical evidence from the Middle East in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings. They rightly argue that Tarrow,³³ McAdam, and Tilly's revised conceptual model is "far better suited [for] studying social and political mobilizations and contestations in the Middle East and North Africa than classical SMT and PPM [Political Process Model]."³⁴ Their justification for this overarching conclusion is based on a number of reasons: (1) most of the social movements in the Middle East operate in the interstices of persisting authoritarianism that subjects them to varying degrees of coercion and offers them few openings for mobilization; (2) many of social movements have limited resources and are weak formal organizations; and (3) social movements typically rely on informal networks and innovative repertoires to mobilize. These remarks resonate in the case of Palestine, particularly in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. This chapter argues that the Palestinian case adds a further dimension to the dynamics of contentious politics theories through the additional particularity and complexity of colonial conditions and the multiple layers of oppression and repression that Palestinians have been, and continue to be, exposed to. Additionally, the case of Palestine emphasizes the importance of a perceived collective threat, rather than an "opportunity," as the impetus for action.³⁵

The case of Palestine is positioned within this broader Middle Eastern context and its interaction with contentious politics theories. As Adam Hanieh argued, the question of Palestine "cannot be reduced to a purely 'humanitarian' issue or simply an issue of national liberation; it is an essential component of the broader struggle against the uneven development and control of wealth across the Middle East."³⁶ The utilization of the classical concepts of the Social Movements Theory (SMT) in the case of Palestine-Israel, can be found in the work of Amal Jamal,³⁷ Eitan Alimi,³⁸ Elisabeth Marteu,³⁹ Julie Norman,⁴⁰ and Wendy Pearlman;⁴¹ however their major shortcoming as cited in Beinín and Vairel is their failure to engage critically and take a step back from the classical concepts of the SMT. In addition, the social movements and the movements for self-determination are not homogenous, and their subjugation to a colonial actor adds a further layer of complicity that is still not absorbed sufficiently by the classical dynamics of the SMT.

This chapter argues that the concepts, dynamics, processes, and tools of contentious politics are also applicable to the economic domain. Political protests have their own political economy dynamics, and economic reasons

are often cited for the emergence of political contention. The intrinsic relationship between politics and economics is particularly explicit in the trajectory of the Arab uprisings. Protests based on economic justification also are a contentious form of collective action that principally clashes with the authorities, the elite, and their economic policies, which have political underpinnings and implications that have a profound effect on the everyday lives of people. Changes in the trajectories of repression, rather than opportunities, could trigger the contention. The contentious collective actions that make up a form of resistance are not merely protests against, for instance, privatization policies, tax laws, inflation, or high unemployment. Rather they have their own political bases that challenge, among other issues, the effectiveness of the ruling authorities, and the policy prescriptions proposed or dictated in the majority of the cases by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) through their "reform agendas." The economic neoliberal packages adopted by the Arab governments prior to the Arab uprisings had been one of the major reasons for the emergence of the uprisings themselves with their political, economic, and social demands. Therefore, the centrality of the political economy dimension in the theories of contentious politics sheds light on another form of contention in the economic domain, which I refer to in this chapter as contentious economics.

This chapter uses the case of Palestine, particularly in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, to operationalize and expand the notion of contentious economics as an integral but distinctive feature in the theories of contentious politics. It uses existing empirical evidence to contribute to the expansion of the theoretical debates. Therefore, this chapter defines the notion of contentious economics through the concept of resistance and a steadfast economy (resistant and steadfast economy)⁴²—an alternative model that is emerging as an output of the cycles of contentions and contentious collective actions.⁴³ This model, as discussed later in the chapter, is based on confronting neoliberalism as a panacea for solving economic deterioration and de-development.⁴⁴ This model advances the concepts of freedom and dignity as integral parts in exercising self-determination and in fulfilling and acquiring economic rights. Therefore, in essence, this model is based on confronting the multiple authorities of repression, oppression, and authoritarianism. This model and the concept of contentious economics are not exclusive or particular to the case of Palestine. In fact, comparable experiences can be found in other parts of the world, for instance the notions of solidarity and self-reliance in

the economies of Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, and even villages in Spain. Of particular interest are the alternative economic models developed by liberation or social movements that demand for political rights. The dynamics and processes of contentious economics are particularly vivid in such settings.

The application of the theories of contentious politics to the Palestinian case in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings can be depicted in figure 19.1 based on the theoretical elaboration developed by Sidney Tarrow. Figure 19.1 visualizes the theoretical framework of this chapter. On the one hand, Palestinian society can be seen as a “social movement society” in a permanent state of confrontation with the authorities and occupying forces lasting for at least the last century. On the other hand, the Palestinian context is characterized by the existence of multiple cycles of contention over the decades. Either way, contentious collective actions were always present in the Palestinian case and were played out in different ways and approaches to express the contentious feature of these collective actions. These cycles of contention and contentious collective actions, however, have to be put into the historical context of the legacy of the Palestinian liberation movement, the ongoing Israeli military occupation, and the colonization of Palestinian land.

As indicated earlier, the accumulation of contentious collective actions and the continuation of cycles of contention lead to the emergence of social

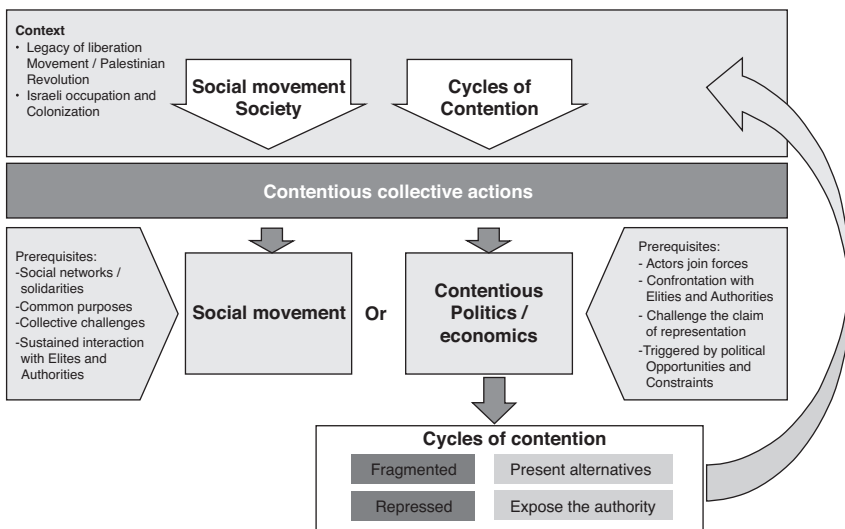


Figure 19.1 Application of the theories of contentious politics.

Source: Prepared by the author, based on the theoretical foundation of Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 2012.

movements or a state where elements of contentious politics are expressed. The latter took place in Palestine in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, when contention in the economic domain was featured. This provides the reasoning for the use of the contentious economics concept. However, the expressions of contention were either repressed or fragmented in Palestine's case and therefore failed to emerge as a social movement, as they did in other parts of the Arab world. Reasons for the failure to create a social movement include a repression by the authoritarian tendencies of the PA and the continuous oppression by Israel. Alternatively, they were fragmented as a result of internal Palestinian politics, lack of leadership, the absence of a unifying strategy, or a bleak horizon for the future, among others. Either way, cycles of contention were the output and result of the fragmentation and repression trajectories and dynamics. This does not mean an absolute negativity or a failure of the opposition front. In fact, and in line with the theoretical underpinnings, the cycles of contention were successful in exposing the vulnerabilities, fragilities, and failures of the authorities and in clashing with them at the intellectual, policy, and strategy levels, as well as at the street level—a clash that illustrated the changing political opportunities and threats. The local-level initiatives on the ground, coupled with the intellectual efforts to develop the notion of a resistance economy, as opposed to neoliberalism, the failed aid industry, and the rejection of the economic policies of the PA are ultimate expressions of contentious economics.

Figure 19.1 depicts the application of the theories of contentious politics to the Palestinian case in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings based on the theoretical elaboration developed by Sidney Tarrow.

EXPLAINING THE ROOTS OF CONTENTIOUS ECONOMICS: NEOLIBERALISM WITH A PALESTINIAN FLAVOR

The signing of the Oslo Peace Accords and the establishment of the PA two decades ago gave rise to the roots of economic neoliberalism as a defining feature of the Palestinian economy and development process. Therefore, the roots of contentious economics in the OPT are political. The Oslo economic framework implied that the PA had to adopt neoliberalism as its leading and defining ideology in both the political and economic spheres.⁴⁵ Article 21 of the Palestinian Basic Law specifies that “the economic system in Palestine shall be based on the principles of a free market economy.”⁴⁶ This secures the leading role of the private sector and the capitalist élite through offering them

monopolies and political influence.⁴⁷ In addition, the international community was assured that such an adoption was inherent in the PA's structure and in its state of dependency on aid.

The philosophical rationale of the Oslo economic framework was to improve Palestinians' standard of living, encourage them to participate in the peace process, and to sustain peace by cashing in on peace dividends. The mantra for this model was a linear equation: invest more money to make Palestinians feel better economically to make it easier for them to compromise politically.⁴⁸ This notion of peace dividends is a derivative of the economic peace framework that seeks economic solutions for political problems and for normalcy between the colonizers and the colonized through joint ventures, cooperation, and collaboration.⁴⁹

By adopting such a model, the PA failed to play a crucial developmental role as a state-like body and operated within a framework characterized by a complex network of corruption, nepotism, and a personalized style of governance that adopted a rent and rent-seeking economic model.⁵⁰ This distorted neoliberal economic model suppressed the indigenous calls that any form of economic thinking must acknowledge that the dynamics of the free market are dictated by the dynamics of the real power. By ignoring this demand, the PA helped, directly and indirectly, in achieving one of the aims of the colonial power through realizing individual richness for few and national impoverishment for all.

The economic neoliberal agendas, as a major root for contention, were further entrenched during the Fayyadism era and gained momentum due to the political transformations in the aftermath of the intra-Palestinian divide between West Bank and Gaza. Under Fayyad's rule, the PA used the neoliberal ideology explicitly for packaging its state-building project and seeking the approval of the international community and a broad segment of Palestinian society.⁵¹ Fayyad was the right person to implement the renewed rules of the game (political conditionality) as dictated by the international community and Israel. The Palestinian economic vision according to Fayyad's plan

...is to have a diversified and thriving free market economy led by a pioneering private sector that is in harmony with the Arab world, is open to regional and global markets, and that provides the economic basis for a free, democratic and equitable society.⁵²

In addition, due to the condition of Israeli settler colonialism, Palestinian neoliberalism has its own flavor. Palestinians do not have basic pillars to implement the one-size-fit-all post-Washington Consensus neoliberal policies since they lack sovereignty, control over borders, national currency, independent trade policy, central bank, protection of property rights or freedom of movement for labor or goods.⁵³

Neoliberalism with its Palestinian flavour meant the superiority of the technocratic model over the national one, the accomplishment of the economic peace pillars through the private security led growth, the establishment of bureaucratic institutions for a liberation movement as a prerequisite for independence, the acceptance of normalcy of life under occupation, and the shift toward authoritarianism and securitized-development. In other words, and as was argued by Sobhi Samour,

The significance of the PA's neoliberalism—be it as an economic doctrine, discursive instrument, class project, or form of social engineering—consists not so much in its failure to build a state and its inability to deliver sustainable economic growth, or in the biting austerity measures that it has imposed and the rising number of indebted households. None of this is an aberration of neoliberalism. Its significance, rather, lies in its political implication in a context of an objective reality that remains an anti-colonial struggle...the outcome of the PA's neoliberalism is to erode further the basis of collective political power, the investment in and reliance on community resources, and the sense of solidarity among a people fighting for their freedom.⁵⁴

The technocratic government model, as opposed to the national one, became the synonym for peace-loving and moderate governments that denounce "terror" and view the world as a small village. They rely on Western governments and the US administration to speak their language, promote the trappings of democracy, and master the jargon of transparency and accountability. These technocratic governments were the panacea for the PA's reform, and they enjoyed the support of Israel as credible partners for peace. All this resulted in a further widening of the legitimacy gap between the Palestinian society and the ruling authority. Eroding legitimacy is a source of contention and a justification for clashing with the élite. Adam Hanieh argues that the term "technocrat" was used to convey a sense of neutrality, "describing someone allegedly disinterested in 'politics' and therefore a supposedly more

responsible leader.”⁵⁵ By extension, this meant that the development process had to be an apolitical one, despite Israeli settler-colonialism, which meant that Israeli settler-colonialism was “portrayed as merely a set of administrative regulations that may (or may not) ‘hinder’ Palestinian development.”⁵⁶ Therefore, the Israeli military occupation was framed “as a partner of Palestinian development rather than its antithesis.”⁵⁷

The prevalence of market dynamics was translated into benefits for the powerful actors, Palestinian capitalists, PA élite, and Israeli firms. These actors engaged in joint businesses either voluntarily or compulsorily as required by the economic peace framework. The rationale was that the economic benefits would trickle down from the stronger economy in Israel to the weaker economy in Palestine; however, the result was a subaltern Palestinian economy forcefully contained by the Israeli one. Therefore, as a consequence of the way the PA and its economic élite intersected and gained their power from the occupation and the Oslo Accords structures, a new élite has emerged. This chapter refers to this new elite as “the new entrepreneurs.” With the rapid accumulation of wealth, they transformed into the new rich category as a direct consequence of benefiting from the status quo. The failure of neo-liberalism to address the inequality gap meant the rise of a new category in the Palestinian society, referred to as “the new poor.” The profits calculus of economic viability, which meant the commodification of resources or services such as agriculture and education, that led the private sector in their operations was in many cases at the expense of the Palestinian national project. Hence, this had implications on the cycles of contention and the clashes with a powerful economic élite covered by the political leadership and peace-building arrangements.

In addition to Palestine’s complete dependency on international aid, the economic growth achieved during the Fayyadism era was fueled by easier access to credit facilities. The PA, with the support of the donor community, launched credit programs that came to be known locally as the “Americanization of the Palestinian society.” In 2010, the overall consumption in the West Bank and Gaza totalled US\$7.3 billion, while GDP was merely US\$5.7 billion. This meant that consumption as a percentage of GDP was 128 percent, making it one of the highest ratios in the world. Additionally, since 2006 the lending rate increased by 13 percent annually, while the growth in GDP per capita never exceeded 2 percent. Therefore, the ratio of the bank loans to deposits increased from 28 percent in 2008 to 45 percent in 2011. According

to the May 2013 data from Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA), loans to the agriculture sector did not exceed US\$10 million, while credit cards loans were around US\$45 million, consumption loans totalled US\$99 million, and car loans recorded US\$239 million.⁵⁸

From 2008 to 2011, the amount of credit extended for real estate, automobile purchases, and credit cards increased by a remarkable 245 percent.⁵⁹ Hanieh rightly warns that “these forms of individual consumer and household debt had a deep impact on how people viewed their capacities for social struggle and their relation to society. Increasingly caught in the web of financial relationships, individuals are taught to satisfy needs through the market—usually through borrowing money—rather than through collective struggle for social rights.”⁶⁰ Therefore, “much of the population became more concerned with ‘stability’ and the ability to pay off debt rather than the possibility of popular resistance.”⁶¹ This implication of neoliberalism accepts the normalcy of life under the military occupation and has a major impact on the social structures, not only in terms of class, but also in terms of enforcing the superiority of individualism over collectivism. If social movements require collective actions, then such neoliberal measures undermine a major pillar for mobility and for sustainable cycles of contention.

Finally, a more stultifying Palestinian authoritarianism was coupled with the execution of economic neoliberalism. Authoritarianism was manifested at the planning and economic thinking level, as well as in its pure (in)security-focused meaning. PA officials during the Fayyadism era were convinced that there was only one right way for economic planning, the one prescribed by the international financial institutions. This resulted in various clashes with the authorities and fueled protests in the West Bank, including those related to the income tax law, early retirement law, and water and electricity meters in 2012. In the pure security-focused sense, the whole development industry was securitized, with more than a third of international aid and governmental spending being allocated to the security sector as a pillar for the securitized-development approach. The operations of the Palestinian security forces and security sector reform, which were implemented as part of the aid conditionality and political decisions, resulted in an authoritarian regime that suppressed any form of contentious collective actions, including those in the economic domain. This is particularly the case in the aftermath of the post-2011 Arab uprisings. Nathan Brown argues that under Fayyadism, the maintenance of institutions was done “in an authoritarian context that

robs the results of domestic legitimacy. Hence, the entire program is based not simply on de-emphasizing or postponing democracy and human rights but on actively denying them for the present.”⁶² This is what distinguished the present PA authoritarianism from Arafat’s: being “regularized and softened” and “less venal and probably less capricious. But it is also more stultifying.”⁶³

To better contextualize this authoritarian transformation, the neoliberal Fayyadism linked Israeli security demands with Palestinian economic growth.⁶⁴ This exchange between the security of the colonizer and the economic growth of the colonized meant the economic (and military) dominance of Israel and the entrenchment of Palestinian authoritarianism to fulfill the Israeli security demand.

AIDING OCCUPATION: CRITIQUING THE AID INDUSTRY AS A SOURCE OF CONTENTION

The industry of international aid is a major source of contention, particularly in conflict-affected areas. The OPT is not an exception. But with the existence of the Israeli military occupation, aid was “as much aid to Israel as it was to Palestinians.”⁶⁵ Despite the US\$24 billion aid given to Palestinians over the last two decades, it has not brought peace, development, or security to the Palestinian people, let alone justice. Between 1993 and 2012, international aid disbursements to Palestinians totalled around US\$ 24.6 billion. Aid inflows increased from an annual average of US\$ 656 million between 1993 and 2003, to over US\$1.9 billion since 2004. International aid increased by 17 times overall between 1993 and 2009. To illustrate the intensity of aid dependency, from 2004 onward aid represented between 24 percent and 42 percent of GDP. Per capita aid for the same period averaged around US\$530 per year, ranging from a low of US\$306 in 2005 to US\$761 in 2009.⁶⁶

Yet despite the sheer volume of aid, the socioeconomic indicators show an ultimate failure in Palestine’s case. Using the consumption-based definition of poverty, 26.2 percent of the Palestinians lived in poverty in 2009 and 2010: 19 percent in the West Bank and 38 percent in Gaza. By using the income-based definition of poverty, the reality can be understood to be much worse, with 50 percent of Palestinians living in poverty in 2009 and 2010: 38 percent in the West Bank and 70 percent in Gaza.⁶⁷ According to the World Food Programme (2011), 50 percent of Palestinian households suffered from food insecurity: 33 percent were food-insecure and 17 percent were vulnerable to food insecurity. Unemployment has remained constant at around 30 percent

since 2009, with 47 percent unemployed in Gaza in 2010 and 20 percent in the West Bank. The unemployment rate for Palestinian youth under 30 is particularly alarming at 43 percent.⁶⁸ The income and opportunities inequality gap continues to widen not only between the West Bank and Gaza, but also within the West Bank.⁶⁹ Manufacturing and production capacities continue to erode,⁷⁰ while the vital agriculture sector remains sorely neglected.⁷¹ The celebrated economic growth of 7.1 percent in 2008, 7.4 percent in 2009, and 9.3 percent in 2010 was a jobless growth driven by aid with an eroded productive base, antipoor, and reflected an economy that was recovering from a low base.⁷²

The aid-development dilemma exemplifies outcomes of the de-development process, despite all international aid. Aid administered as a gap-filler and fire-extinguisher solution for persistent crisis⁷³ served as a major pillar to guarantee the existence of the PA and rescued the Palestinian society from further deterioration of living conditions. However, aid helped to sustain the status quo, subsidize the occupation, and contribute to the de-development process as a result of the diplomatic failures. These failures reflected an inability to understand or acknowledge the de-development process, an unwillingness to address the main problems for such de-development (the Israeli military occupation) and finally the adoption of an irrelevant postconflict conceptual framework.⁷⁴

At the scholarly level, four schools of thought can be identified to better understand the aid-related contention.⁷⁵ One group can be termed “instrumentalist.” This mainly includes the international financial institutions and many bilateral government donor agencies and argues that the fundamentals of the Oslo economic framework are sound and the model should be maintained but simply needs to be better applied. This group tends to sanitize the Israeli occupation and the settler-colonial nature of the Israeli state. It also lays a disproportionate amount of blame on the PA for the failure of aid to achieve results. A second group, the “critical instrumentalists,” does focus on the occupation as the main obstacle to peace and development, and they consider aid and politics to be intrinsically linked. They are not however very critical of the neoliberal normative values that define Palestinian aid. They believe the policy should be reevaluated and retooled, and they share the instrumentalist faith in the ability of policy to bring about positive change.

The third group consists of “critics” of the Oslo aid model. Many in this group assert that the aid model is itself a part of the occupation, because it

is designed in a way that subverts Palestinian development while reinforcing and subsidizing the Israeli occupation, along with long-standing Israeli policies dating back to the 1948 *Nakba* and beyond. For these critics, development is not a policy to be implemented, but domination to be resisted, because in the case of Israel-Palestine, the hidden intent behind development aid is to reinforce the occupation. The “critics” argue that economic integration benefits Israel at the expense of the Palestinian economy and they view policy as a rationalizing technical discourse that conceals a hidden bureaucratic power or dominance, and that this hidden reality is the true political intention of development.⁷⁶

A fourth group, which is not often considered when analyzing the impact of aid, is the “neo-colonialists,” who consider aspects of foreign aid to have been a success. Particularly in the West Bank, Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation has largely been mollified and Israel’s policy aims have largely been achieved. This perspective is highly influential, especially in the United States, and this can be seen in the approach of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy advocating an approach to aid. This approach provides economic incentives to Palestinians in return for them giving up rights. Also, the Congressional Research Service reports spell out the duty of aid to Palestinians: combating terrorism against Israel; encouraging Palestinian peaceful coexistence with Israel while preparing Palestinians for self-governance; and meeting humanitarian needs to prevent further destabilization.⁷⁷ Therefore, when aid to Palestinians is analyzed from a neocolonial perspective, it may not be failing at all.

This chapter argues that in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings, the debate and contention around the aid industry and donor policies in the OPT, and the PA economic policies, have moved beyond the scholarly and élite circles onto the Palestinian streets. As a result, there have been numerous protests, which, despite being small in size, constitute a form of contentious collective action. They formed cycles of contention and were one of the driving forces behind the resignation of Prime Minister Fayyad in mid-2013.

Targeting the aid industry and donors’ policies, multiple protests took place between 2011 and 2013. There were mainly organized by the youth movements that emerged in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. USAID was the major target of the protests, particularly during the 2012 Obama visit to the OPT. “USAID go out,” “USAID is entrenching the occupation and hindering our development,” “we reject funding that undermines the exercise of

our self-determination” are a sample of the slogans that appeared in a protest against USAID on September 10, 2011, in Ramallah.⁷⁸ Posters critical of USAID were designed by youth activists and disseminated over social media, in activist circles, and among the public.⁷⁹ USAID was not the only target; the European Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS)⁸⁰ was targeted for its role in supporting Palestinian authoritarianism and because of the European Union’s “hypocritical and duplicitous positions towards the Palestinian people and rights.” The youth even warned that they would escalate their actions to include direct confrontation with those who facilitate the work of the occupation and normalization.⁸¹ The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)⁸² and the European Union were targeted for their role in supporting and organizing normalization activities and sponsoring joint Palestinian-Israeli projects. Even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was under criticism for not assuming its responsibilities in protecting Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Forms of protest included occupying offices (sit-ins) as in the case of ICRC; blocking entrances to offices and protesting at 7 a.m. in front of the EUPOL COPPS offices; waiting for USAID representatives with shoes in front of a conference they were sponsoring; holding slogans against USAID during Obama’s visit; and organizing a peaceful gathering in front of the Japanese embassy in Ramallah. A particular form of protest was designing posters and visuals to convey the message and spread it over social media. This proved to be a very influential tool to raise awareness among people and move the discussion about aid from the intellectual elite circles to the people in their homes in the form of a poster, a song, or a novel. Additionally, a number of youth-led initiatives were launched precisely to counter the status of aid dependency, promote concepts and practices of self-reliance, and revive the traditions of collective actions and voluntarism.

The protests were not only against the donor community and their policies and practices, but also against the PA’s neoliberal economic policies and the rising cost of living. People protested against the income tax law, the increase in the value added taxes, the prices of fuel and gas, and the early retirement law. Public servants protested for not receiving their salaries due to the financial crisis of the PA. Other economic demands of the protestors concerned price controls on basic goods, public investment, the protection of local producers, a cap on top earners in the public sector, and the introduction of minimum wage.⁸³ But most importantly, the overall Oslo economic framework

and Paris Protocol (the economic annex of the Oslo Peace Accords) were major targets of the protesters. This formed the ultimate exemplification of the marriage between political and economic protests. In September 2012 for instance demonstrations took place throughout the West Bank. Protests were characterized by road closures, tire burning, self-immolations or attempts to do so, peaceful demonstrations, stone throwing, clashes with the PA security forces, and workers' strikes.

In a major protest against the Paris Protocol on September 11, 2012, Palestinians for Dignity (the umbrella for the youth movements post-2011) stated in their press release and call for action that,

...building upon the popular anger that rejects being turned into beggars who are preoccupied with making a living instead of our national struggle, Palestinians for Dignity calls upon you to join a mass march to demand: Social justice and the termination of the Paris Economic Protocol...Let us all emerge from our silence and tolerance of the Palestinian Authority's dependence on the Occupying State, the rampant corruption in our institutions, and our leadership that no longer has options, only justifications.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, as was argued by the economist Raja Khalidi in 2012, "a series of sarcastic, graphic postings and humorous songs on Palestinian youth internet/Facebook networks depict a series of accusations against the PA encompassing grievances about Ministerial privileges, urban and rural poverty, runaway prices, and political dysfunction." In turn, the protests against the rapid increase in the cost of living could be summarized by the words of a protestor who told me during a protest in Ramallah, "we receive the salaries of Somalia and pay the prices of Switzerland." A poster that was widely circulated stated clearly that "subjugation will lead to a revolution."

The results and implications of these protests were mixed depending on their sustainability and regularity, demands' ceilings, repression, and co-optation attempts by the PA, and the political trajectories.⁸⁵ A notable example includes the protests against the income tax law in January 2012. As noted by Raja Khalidi, 'this Law is notable for being the most significant, if not first-ever, economic measure since 2005 to be rejected by public outcry. In January, the PA was obliged to announce its suspension and reformulation after a 'public dialogue.'⁸⁶ The protests against the Paris Protocol were not successful in

changing that protocol or dismissing it, but they accumulated enough anger for its rejection to become a popular demand.⁸⁷

Regardless of the final results, the cycles of contention and contentious collective actions over the last three years indicate that despite the demobilizing policies of Fayyadism and the authoritarian transformation, Palestinians remain able to clash with the repressive authorities and engage in contentious collective actions, albeit in very small numbers as compared to the past. As Sobhi Samour summarized it,

Within just a few days, the protests helped to counter the ubiquitous feeling of collective apathy, created a vehicle for widespread public discussion around the political economy of the Oslo framework, and produced initial victories by forcing the PA to reverse tax and price increases and its decision to table a proposal for a minimum wage law.⁸⁸

In this realm of contentious politics and economics, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations and contradictions of the contention. A major challenge for the cycles of contention in the OPT, discussed here, is to overcome their very own contradictions, and face collectively the attempts of the authorities to suppress and co-opt them. In the theories of contentious politics, Sidney Tarrow rightly reminds us that “although movements usually conceive of themselves as outside of and opposed to institutions, acting collectively inserts them into complex political networks, and thus within the reach of the state.”⁸⁹ This reminder is extremely relevant in the case of Palestine, particularly within the overall framework of Palestinian authoritarianism and Israeli colonization.

CHALLENGING AUTHORITIES: TOWARD A VIABLE RESISTANCE ECONOMY MODEL

Critics of the aid industry, donors' policy prescriptions, and the PA economic policies have not only passively critiqued but also actively provided contributions, albeit fragmented, to an alternative paradigm that moves away from neoliberalism. These attempts illustrate an ultimate challenge to the authorities and their dominant models. They are acts of resistance that fit into contentious economics and politics frameworks. These contentious actions lay at the heart of reclaiming economic rights both in theory and practice. And therefore, this chapter views these efforts as contributing toward building a model of a resistance economy.

This chapter defines the resistance economy, through a developmental lens, as a model that understands the development process as a cumulative, complementary, economic, social, and political one that fundamentally seeks to liberate human beings from dependency and humiliation. Philosophically, the concept of a “resistance economy” is a process that sets out to emancipate human beings by freeing them from poverty, inequality, fear, and oppression, empowering them to cultivate their lands, and expanding their options, capabilities, and potentials to ensure their happiness. As such, this socially inclusive model rejects economic unity with the colonizing power and resists attempts to sustain the status of asymmetric containment. In other words, the model is the opposite of the Paris Protocol, working at dismantling the regime of oppression and acting as a model that is socially inclusive, and that can ultimately play a role in ending the occupation and colonization of Palestine.

On this basis, this chapter argues that a resistance economy is a very real alternative that can, through a good system of collaboration and creativity, be implemented and maintained for a sustaining a progressive Palestinian economy. It begins by understanding economy as more than a monetary transaction for financial profit. Instead, economy should be understood and viewed as an extension of a people’s *mode de vie* that connects through the intersection of the global and local efforts. A resistance economy is an indigenious approach well-rooted in Palestinian history and in the pre-PA era, long before the monopolization of the Palestinian economy by the development-industrial-complex.⁹⁰

Put differently, the neoliberal Fayyadism model and the resistance economy model are based on fundamentally different rationales and lead different paths. Neoliberal Fayyadism is a top-down approach, while resistance economy is socially inclusive and built from below. Neoliberal Fayyadism is a model that is inherently unable and unwilling to clash with the occupying power, but rather cooperates and lives with it. Neoliberal Fayyadism is a local phenomenon sponsored externally, while resistance economy is an indigenious, locally rooted, and sponsored model. Neoliberal Fayyadism focuses on institution building while resistance economy is about the people. If Neoliberal Fayyadism is about standards and neoliberal governance, resistance economy is about rights and the national struggle. While one is centered on individualism, the other is focused on collectivism. Resistance economy then is not only about resisting the Israeli control of Palestinian economy, but also about being courageous enough to self-reflect about mistakes that are being made within the Palestinian socioeconomic environment.

Interestingly, the youth movement in the OPT provided its own definition for the resistance economy model and spelled out a number of its pillars. In their 2012 press release, mentioned earlier, they were asked: What is the solution? Is there really a solution? This is what they answered:

Of course there is an alternative. The alternative is an economic resistance that can achieve a redistribution of resources, social justice, and dignity for the Palestinian people. This is not just a slogan! The most important alternative steps we can take are: to start a comprehensive boycott of all Israeli products; to refuse to adhere to the Paris Protocol and to call on the Palestinian Authority to announce this explicitly; to impose high taxes on imported products in order to protect our national products and agriculture; to reclaim the Palestinian lands dubbed "Areas C" that comprise 60% of the West Bank, to unite these areas with the rest of the West Bank; to work together to plant these lands; and to establish agricultural cooperatives to fulfil local needs. Furthermore, there are many other ideas that Palestinian economists can put forth if there is only the political will to implement suggestions and rid ourselves of economic dependency.⁹¹

However, there are few prerequisites to ensure the viability of the resistance economy model. These prerequisites include, but are not limited to, the need to reinvent the aid industry practically; redefine development conceptually; utilize indigenous approaches for livelihood and governance; resist and reject the Israeli matrix of control beyond rhetoric; and resist and challenge any form of Palestinian authoritarianism. In other words, Palestinians need an economy that reinforces solidarity and social ties and accumulates social capital and national cohesion. This can be done through subjecting the market and its transactions and mechanisms to the principles of equality, justice, and local democratic inclusive participation in the decision-making processes. The economy should be placed within societal dynamics, rather than it restricting and containing the society through economic dynamics. The challenge remains on how to operationalize these prerequisites.

This alternative framework provides a different approach to the much-criticized aid industry that considers development as a technocratic, apolitical, and neutral process. Shifting toward a model that recognizes structures of power and relations of colonial dominance and rearticulates processes of development as being linked to the struggle for rights, resistance, and

emancipation requires problematizing the mainstream notion of development as one that is centered on free-market economy, toward shifting the focus into people-centered participatory democratic approaches and steadfastness/*Al-Summud* strategies.⁹² Such an approach also implies shifting the framework of the humanitarian assistance from “destroying agency” toward “promoting solidarity,” and problematizing the liberal notion of individualism that is associated with and reproduced through donor democracy schemes as an alternative to the grassroots participatory democratic forms and processes.⁹³ In other words, the alternative economic vision has to sit at the heart of the Palestinian struggle and follow a genuine bottom-up participatory citizen-centric development model. This model needs to be legitimate. Therefore there is also a need to think about how Palestinians can institutionalize and create a bureaucracy around a democratic people-driven development agenda.

These theoretical understandings and propositions were coupled with initiatives on the ground that aim to examine the viability of the resistance economy model and, by extension, the social mobilization that practices contentious economics. These forms of mobilization utilized different tools that are normally used in building social movements. Such tools include public awareness about certain issues; lobbying for change at the policy level; working with and mobilizing grassroots communities; working directly with neglected and marginalized actors; building different discourses through innovative media outlets, and finally publishing books, composing music, and using different forms of art and poster designs. What is vital about these initiatives, as far as contentious politics and economic theories are concerned, is their courageous determination to challenge and confront authorities while representing and empowering others.

These initiatives as a practice of contentious economics include for instance the work of the Bisan Centre for Research and Development on the importance of raising public awareness to create cycles of contention. In particular, the initiative they took against the neoliberal joint industrial zones in the West Bank is a case in point. The work of Dalia Association through engagement with grassroots communities and marginalized women groups in rural areas built the case for the importance of self-determination in the aid industry and development process. Other civil society organizations working in the agriculture sector, such as MA'AN Development Center and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, are particularly important in contributing to the building blocks of the resistance economy and the agriculture sector.

The research production of critical institutions such as the Center for Development Studies at Birzeit University was a crucial base for informing the alternative agenda. The policy-oriented production of *Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network* provided a cutting-edge analysis that informed activism in the streets, in addition to the impact at the public policy level. Finally, newly established media outlets, particularly by youth, such as Quds News Network, played an invaluable role in disseminating information and increasing public awareness. Media was not the only form of communication; artists and writers too devoted their efforts to this matter. Novels that protested the consequence of neoliberalism were under unprecedented demand. Poster designers who were among the youth activists were influential in their production to fuel activism, and the same goes for songs, films, and theater plays. Such microexamples constitute a component of the overall framework of the resistance economy. However, these cycles of contention are still fragmented, and the channels that allow them to contribute to the framework of resistance economy are still a work-in-progress that had accelerated in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

CONCLUSION

The entrenchment of the neoliberal economic policies during the Fayyadism era, backed by the international community and their financial assistance, triggered activism—despite limited—in the streets of the West Bank in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings. The policies of the neoliberal Fayyadism deepened the crisis of legitimacy, sustained the de-development process, and directly and indirectly entrenched the Israeli military occupation and the colonial condition. The fragilities, limitations, and harmful consequences of the Fayyadism paradigm pointed out to the need for a viable alternative that is able to start a process of reversing the de-development condition. Critical scholars and intellectuals, coupled with the work of a number of Palestinian institutions, initiated a process of operationalizing the concept of resistance economy.

Using the theories of contentious politics and social movements, this chapter aimed to understand the economic-related protests in the OPT in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. The analysis showed that these protests constituted cycles of contention but failed to transform into a social movement. However, these protests and the tools and approaches they used showed that they illustrated a form of contentious collective actions where multiple actors

joined forces to challenge and confront authorities of repression and oppression. Although protests were not backed by well-structured social networks or galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, they managed to challenge neoliberalism and suggest an alternative paradigm through intellectual efforts and actions on the ground, one that could build toward a model of resistance economy. The notion of resistance economy was used to reflect on the broader dynamics of contentious politics theories and contribute to its expansion through introducing the concept and practice of contentious economics.

The focus of this chapter was not on the analysis of the reasons that contributed to the failure of cycles of contention to transform into a social movement in the OPT in the aftermath of Arab uprising. Rather, the roots and sources of such contention were explored through discussing the consequences of the neoliberal economic policies and the impact of international aid. The notion of a resistance economy was advanced as an ultimate expression of contentious politics and economics and as a framework that theorizes and operationalizes the cycles of contention in the era of Arab uprisings and Fayyadism. However, efforts to establish an alternative model in an ultimate expression of clashing with the repressive authorities remain fragmented or repressed. This is the reason why these contentious politics and economics in the OPT have not yet emerged as a social movement in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. But as a social movement society, for Palestinians, the pillars and roots of contentious economics are political in nature and are subject to social dynamics that, in instances of contention, are stirred by injustice and inequality.

NOTES

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31. Beinín and Vairel, *Social Movements*, 25.
32. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 33.
33. Tarrow's views on Palestine seem to be problematic, misguided, and fraught with contradictions. In the third edition of his *Power in Movement*, Tarrow views the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a "civil war between Jews and Arabs" (107), and views the first Palestinian intifada as a "phase of radicalization" (174). Further, the narrative about the 2010 Turkish-led flotilla to Gaza presented in the introduction of the book (1–4) is one-sided in support of the Israeli narrative, subjective, dismisses crucial facts, and contains major factual inaccuracies. These understandings completely dismiss the Israeli settler-colonial project and military occupation, and the ongoing process of ethnic cleansing by Israel taking place since 1948.
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- "Defeating Dependency, Creating a Resistance Economy." *Al-Shabaka Policy Brief*, February 2012. Accessed at: <http://www.al-shabaka.org/sites/default/files/policybrief/en/defeating-dependency-creating-resistance-economy/defeating-dependency-creating-resistance-economy.pdf>; A. Tartir and I. Shikaki, "Al-Tanmeya ka'ada llimuqawama wa althaharur" [Development as Resistance], in *Critical Studies in Development in Palestine*, ed. N. Shahin (Ramallah: Bisan Center for Research and Development, 2013), 13–40; CDS-BZU, *Public Debate on Alternatives to Aid and Neoliberal Development in the oPt* (Birzeit: Center for Development Studies, 2011); Dalia Association, *An Appeal by Palestinian Civil Society to the International Community to Respect Our Right to Self Determination in the Aid System*. Dalia Association, 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.dalia.ps/files/pAppealForRights.pdf>; Bisan, *Drasat Naqdiya Fi Waqi' Al-Tanmina Fi Filasteen* [Critical Studies in Development in Palestine] (Ramallah: Bisan Center for Research and Development, 2013); and Bisan, *Wahm Al-Tanmeya* [The Myth of Development] (Ramallah: Bisan Center for Research and Development, 2011).
43. Many scholars and practitioners, mainly from the mainstream domains, view the concept of resistance economy as a concept that implies negativity, violence, and aggression. They view it as a pessimistic, backward, and old-fashioned idea. They go further in viewing it as unrealistic, fantastical, and unviable in both economic and political terms. Additionally, they argue that it is merely a nostalgic concept to romanticize old indigenous approaches. However, I simply argue that the notion of resistance economy represents the complete opposite of what the counterargument proponents are proposing. It is an approach that has its roots in the local context and was built up to react to the realities of the ground through acknowledging the potential of the people and aiming to expand their capabilities. It is an approach that understands development as freedom and dignity. It is based on clashing with repressive authorities in the short term, but with an optimistic and strategic vision for the economic and political spheres. It is a concept that celebrates resistance through practice as the main source of achieving rights under colonial subjugation and authoritarian conditions. The legacy of this concept is based on the legacy of the resistance movement itself in the Palestinian context. Intellectually, it is also based on a rich legacy of a revolution-based research and knowledge production, as Faris Giacaman (2014) reminded us recently through the utilization of the concept of "militant researchers." Further elaboration on the notion of resistance economy can be found in the last section of this chapter.
 44. De-development is "the deliberate, systematic and progressive dismemberment of an indigenous economy by a dominant one, where economic—and, by extension, societal—potential is not only distorted but denied" (S. Roy, *Failing Peace, Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 33.). Therefore, de-development is a process that forestalls development by "depriving or ridding the economy of its capacity and potential for rational structural transformation [i.e., natural patterns of growth and development] and preventing the emergence of any self-correcting measures" (S. Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development* (Washington DC: institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), 128.). De-development "occurs when normal economic relations are impaired or abandoned, preventing any logical or rational arrangement of the economy or its constituent parts, diminishing productive capacity and precluding sustainable growth... Over time, de-development represents nothing less than the denial of economic potential" (S. Roy, Foreword, in M. Turner and O. Shweiki, *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy: De-development and Beyond*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), X.).
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83. Samour, "Promises and Limitations of Economic Protests," 72.

84. Palestinians for Dignity, "Mass March Calling for Social Justice on Tuesday Sept 11 at 5:00 pm in Ramallah," September 11, 2012. Accessed at: <http://on.fb.me/1beCkQM>
85. With the emergence of the economic protests in the OPT, the Israeli government voluntarily transferred an advance payment of PA tax revenues collected by Israel, and Israel also asked the EU and the United States to grant more funds to the PA. Additionally, they lifted a number of checkpoints in the West Bank and issued more permits for Palestinian workers to work in Israel and its colonies in the West Bank. This was due to Israeli fears that these economic protests could turn into an intifada against the PA and Israel and could threaten the overall framework of the Oslo Peace Accords.
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87. Put simply, the Paris Protocol institutionalized Israel's total control over the Palestinian economy and necessitated that the PA would follow the decisions taken by Israel in relation to taxes and prices. As summarized by Samour, the Paris Protocol "gave Israel the right to collect monthly trade taxes on the PA's behalf (thus seizing leverage over roughly two-thirds of the PA's total revenues); to set the PA's VAT rate at a level no less than 2 percentage points below that of Israel despite the enormous difference in the size of the two economies and personal incomes (so as to not threaten Israeli producers); and to force the PA to import fuel and electricity from Israel at Israeli consumer prices." (Samour 2014:72). For further elaboration, read Hiba I. Husseini and Raja Khalidi, "Fixing the Paris Protocol Twenty Years Later: Frequently Asked Questions for Diehard Reformers," *Jadaliyya*, February 6, 2013. Accessed at: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/10023/fixing-the-paris-protocol-twenty-years-later_frequ.
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