

## BOOK REVIEWS

### Review 1

**Title:** The Impacts of Lasting Occupation. Enduring Challenges and Emerging Answers. By Bar-Tal, D. & Schnell, I. (Eds.), (2013), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 576 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-986218-4 (hardback)

**Reviewed by:** Ludo Abicht, University of Antwerp, Belgium.

Like the two editors, Daniel Bar-Tal and Izhak Schnell, both professors at the Tel Aviv University, most of the other twenty authors of this major analysis of the impacts of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories on the Israeli society are connected with major Israeli universities and academies, from Jerusalem and Haifa to Sderot and Netanya. Two of them are Palestinian Israelis, while all the others are Jewish. It is important to mention this, since the book title doesn't specify that the analyses presented here are consciously restricted to the impact upon Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens and their institutions, since there already exists a vast array of studies dealing with the impact of this occupation upon the Palestinians in the occupied territories. But even without this specification the title is sufficiently revealing: all of the contributors, including the American political philosopher Michael Walzer who wrote the incisive foreword, have chosen to use the term "occupation" over e.g. "liberation" or "temporary military conquest". Both "lasting" and "enduring" hint at the fact that this occupation has been going on for 45 years, out of the 64 years of the existence of the State of Israel, and with "emerging answers" the authors have expressed their hope for a peaceful resolution of the problem: "Wishing to conclude the argument with some sense of optimism, we believe that Israel will be pushed to end the occupation, thus providing an opportunity to rebuild the Israeli identity, regime, state apparatus, and society. We hope that this process will begin as early as possible." (Bar-Tal and Schnell in the concluding chapter).

The reasons for this hope, if not necessarily for the cautious optimism, become obvious as we read the different chapters, divided over four major parts (*I. Fundamentals of Occupation; II. Political Effects of Occupation; III. Societal Effects of Occupation; IV. Cultural effects of Occupation*). Since each of these contributions, complete with complementary, often qualifying footnotes and an elaborate list of references, is written by a scholar in the field, it would take equally specialized political scientists, psychologists, economists, cultural critics, geographers, historians and so on to respond in depth and in detail to the various facts and arguments presented here. At the same time this academic level publication is addressed at a large section of the Israeli society and beyond, as its in-

tended “lasting impact” is a genuine sea change of the prevailing general attitude toward the occupation, without which no change on the ground is imaginable.

After having unambiguously stated that this occupation, as far as the occupied Palestinian citizens is concerned, is both a mistake and a violation of international law and human rights, the authors argue from an Israeli, in many cases even Zionist viewpoint that is damaging for the occupying forces and the Israeli society as well, not only in terms of the position of Israel in the international context, but equally with regard to the economic, democratic, political, psychological and moral interests and values of the Israeli population. While most of them uphold the right to self-defence, e. g. to ward off terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, they make a distinction between measures of authentic containment of violence and, on the other hand, violent conflicts that are the predictable outcome of the occupation itself, such as the “creeping annexations” ostensibly caused by the “natural growth” of the settlement populations, but in reality instances of further encroachment on the fastly shrinking territorial rights of the Palestinians.

In an interesting chapter on “The Occupation and Its Effect on the Israeli Defense Forces” Reuven Pedatzur, who is also the Senior Military Analyst of *Haaretz*, bemoans the fact that the prolonged occupation has perverted the role and the self-image of the IDF: “These negative implications for the IDF were increased by the fact that it had been abruptly transformed from a fighting army into an army also sovereign over a conquered territory populated by 1 million inhabitants deprived of citizenship.” In a similar vein, Edward (Edy) Kaufman, University of Maryland and the Hebrew University, does not talk about the violated human rights of the occupied, but of those of the occupiers. In “Appealing to Enlightened Self-Interest: The Impact of Occupation on Human Rights within Israel” he warns against the moral deterioration caused by the occupation. At the end of his chapter he approvingly quotes Rabbi Haim Seidler-Feller: “Occupation is the greatest catastrophe to befall the Jewish people in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The settlers and the compliant Israeli governments that have supported them have succeeded in overturning two thousand years of a tradition of justice for ‘the other’ and in transforming the Jewish people into an oppressive occupier.”

And for those Israelis who are neither amused nor impressed by such idealized military or prophetic moral pronouncements, there is the pragmatic analysis of Shir Hever, “Economic Costs of the Occupation”, in which he succeeds in applying the profit-focused anti-imperialist Marxist interpretation of the occupation to the first phase (1967 to 1986), whereas the costs have overtaken the economic profits from the onset of the First *Intifada* in 1987 until today. For one thing, he stresses the extra subsidies that settlers enjoy and that ordinary Israelis do not receive, even though they pay for them through their taxes.

It should have become obvious that we are not dealing here with a pro-Palestinian or for that matter anti-Israeli publication, but with a strictly academic yet fully committed attempt at opening the eyes of the Israeli citizens to the negative implications of the lasting occupation for themselves. The occupation has brutally interrupted the evolution toward the establishment of a “Hebrew” identity (as in “full citizenship of the predominantly Hebrew, but secular and democratic state”) and replaced it with the project of establishing an exclusively “Jewish” state, in both a narrow ethnic and religious sense of these terms. In this sense the new project even deviates from the original Zionist dream, as expressed in the 1948 *Declaration of Independence* with its stress on “freedom, justice and peace ac-

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according to the vision of the Prophets of Israel". We may argue that this contradiction between ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism and democratic secular humanism had by that time already been exposed as a result of the *Nakba*, the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians between 1947 and 1949, but this does not in the least diminish the pertinence nor the urgency of the present compelling study.