



Foreign Policy for Ecological Justice or Ecological Colonialism? Troubling US and German Eco-Militarized Relations with Israel

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Published as part of debate #2 of the SALAM project, Summer 2023

Foreign policies rely on a set of hegemonic narratives that too easily become naturalized and depoliticized. Narratives around security and national interest often parade as policies for people and planet, while really responding to reductive state, military and corporate concerns. The interventions from SALAM Debate #1 elucidate this well¹, crystallizing how the normalization of war preparation and making as foreign policy strategies operate to present bilateral relations based on militarism as diplomacy.² Going further, what are the opportunity costs of the overreliance on weaponry as security for the promotion of social and ecological (eco-social) justice in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region?

In this memo, I reflect on European and North American relations with Israel, focusing on the United States (US) and Germany as Israel's top arms suppliers and key guarantors of Israeli energy security, as an example of how militarized interstate relations enable ecological forms of warfare and occupation³. The US and German simultaneous promotion of weapons-based national security and colonial energy security in Israel – what I call eco-militarized foreign policy – serve to undermine and delegitimize Palestinian eco-social relations and justice struggles. Through promoting a militarized colonial green transition in Israel, US and Germany directly impede efforts toward a just transition in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Such efforts are key manifestations of the opportunity costs of basing foreign policy on weaponry as security. By contrast, foreign policies inspired by intersectional environmentalism could help promote energy democracy, food sovereignty and a just eco-social transition in the OPT. Amid global war and global warming, it is imperative to challenge militarized policy approaches both to national security and climate change, along with their depoliticization as normalized policy positions.

Linking Arms Trade and Energy Security in the Eco-Militarization of Interstate Relations

Israel enjoys a “special relationship” with both the US and Germany, closely cooperating on myriad issues from democracy and development to energy, international trade and science and technology.⁴ At the heart of these special bonds is cooperation and assistance

1 PRISME SALAM Debate #1 (2023) <https://prismeinitiative.org/projects/salam/salam-debate-1-the-role-of-the-arms-trade/>. See also Andrew Miller and Richard Sokolsky, ‘What has \$49 billion in foreign military aid bought us? Not much’, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (27 February 2018) <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/27/what-has-49-billion-in-foreign-military-aid-bought-us-not-much-pub-75657>

2 Nancy Okail, ‘Rethinking arms transfers to MENA’, Prisme Initiative (2023) <https://prismeinitiative.org/blog/rethinking-arms-transfers-to-mena-nancy-okail/>

3 Such as ecological colonialism and apartheid, which I will expand upon further down.



related to “security, peace and regional stability”⁵ – in short, military relations. Both nations are vital to Israel’s security state, and its position and capacity as a regionally superior military power.⁶ Israel also remains the US’ closest strategic partner – or “staunchest ally”⁷ – in the MENA region. Germany’s policy approach has long espoused that it has a “special responsibility for Israel’s security”⁸, while the US sticks unequivocally to supporting Israel’s “right to defend itself.”⁹

As key importers of Israeli military materials, the US and Europe, including Germany, are vital to Israel’s national military-industrial complex, which generates the world’s eighth largest arms exports.¹⁰ The US and Germany are also Israel’s foremost weapons suppliers. As Israel’s biggest supplier, the US has exported weapons to Israel every year since 1961. In 2016, the nations signed a third 10-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on military aid, yearly providing Israel with \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing in addition to \$500 million to prop up Israel’s missile defense systems.¹¹ A majority of these funds must go to purchasing US-made weapons.¹² Germany is Israel’s second largest

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- 4 US Department of State, ‘Creation of Israel 1948’ (n.d.) <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>; Marta Mucznik and Carmiel Arbit, ‘EU support is crucial for Israel’s liberal democracy’ European Policy Center (24 March 2023) [https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac001](https://www.epc.eu/en/publications/EU-support-is-crucial-for-Israels-liberal-democracy~4f3b34#:~:text=While%20Israel%20is%20neither%20an,for%20the%20rule%20of%20law.&text=The%20EU%20Israel%20relationship%20has%20been%20a%20highly%20complex%20one; Felix Berenskoetter and Mor Mitrani, ‘Is it friendship? An analysis of contemporary German-Israeli relations’ International Studies Quarterly 66:1 (March 2022) <a href=)
 - 5 US Department of State, ‘U.S. relations with Israel’ (30 January 2023) <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-israel-2/>
 - 6 Phyllis Bennis, ‘U.S.-Israel Policy’ Institute for Policy Studies (01 November 1996) https://ips-dc.org/us-israel_policy/; Berenskoetter and Mitrani, ‘Is it friendship?’; Kali Robinson, ‘What is U.S. policy on the Israel-Palestinian conflict?’ Council on Foreign Relations (12 July 2023) <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-us-policy-israeli-palestinian-conflict>
 - 7 Michael B Oren, ‘The ultimate ally’ The Embassy of Israel to the United States (June 2011) <https://embassies.gov.il/washington/Relations/Pages/The-Ultimate-Ally.aspx#:~:text=Israel%20is%20America's%20staunchest%20ally,friendships%20are%20never%20disagreement%2Dfree.>
 - 8 Angela Merkel, ‘Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Dr Angela Merkel vor der Knesset’ (18 March 2008) <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/redevon-bundeskanzlerin-dr-angela-merkel-796170>; Berenskoetter and Mitrani, ‘Is it friendship?’, p. 2.
 - 9 Al Jazeera, ‘Timeline: How US presidents have defended Israel over decades’, Al Jazeera (16 May 2021) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/16/timeline-how-us-presidents-have-defended-israel-over-decades>; William Roberts, ‘Why is the US unequivocal in its support for Israel?’ Al Jazeera (18 May 2021) <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/18/short-answer-why-is-the-united-states-so-pro-israel>
 - 10 States from the Asia-Pacific region are the foremost buyers of Israeli arms, followed closely by Europe. See: Emanuel Fabian, ‘Israeli arms sales doubled in a decade, hit new record of \$12.5 billion in 2022’, The Times of Israel (14 June 2023) <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-arms-sales-doubled-in-a-decade-hit-new-record-of-12-5-billion-in-2022/>; Frank Andrews, ‘Arms trade: Which countries and companies are selling weapons to Israel?’, Middle East Eye (18 May 2021) <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-which-countries-companies-arming>; Yoram Gabison, ‘U.S. approves \$3.5 billion sale of Israeli missile defense system to Germany’, Haaretz (17 August 2023) <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-08-17/ty-article/u-s-approves-3-5-billion-sale-of-israeli-missile-defense-system-to-germany/0000018a-01f5-dbc5-a59f-51ff23ef0000>
 - 11 US Congress, ‘U.S. foreign aid to Israel’.
 - 12 Frank Andrews, ‘Arms trade’.



supplier, providing arms every year since 1994.¹³ Indicative of the military aid offered to Israel, German arms sales often include significant government grants and subsidies.¹⁴

Parallel with the (over)reliance on military assistance as a foreign policy tool, the US, Germany and Israel also cooperate on climate-related issues, helping to advance each nation's energy security – another foreign policy approach intimately linked with the nations' military interests. The US-Israeli “close partnership on energy issues”, including the US-Israel Energy Center, fosters scientific research, testing and development of capabilities related to cybersecurity for energy infrastructure and renewable and fossil energy, promoting “strong bilateral ... energy policy collaboration.”¹⁵ The US' use of sustainability as a tool for strengthening regional security and leveraging strategic relations with the MENA region is well captured by Project Prosperity, a UAE-brokered MOU between Israel and Jordan signed in the presence of the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. Set to begin implementation after the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), the “water-for-energy” deal lets Israel buy solar-energy from Jordan (Prosperity Green), while Jordan buys desalinated water from Israel (Prosperity Blue).¹⁶ Overseen by the US as a climate-offshoot of the Abraham Accords, the deal is meant to increase regional cooperation on climate action and resource use, promoting climate-related security and economic development.¹⁷

Similarly, Germany and Israel are key partners at the UN Climate Change Conferences pledging to cooperate on various green energy initiatives. In 2022, they agreed on an energy partnership “for climate protection” in which the nations join forces to find solutions for combating climate change.¹⁸ This is envisioned foremost through expanding and fast-tracking renewable energy production, innovation and trade in and between the nations, including the false-solution renewables of natural gas and hydrogen.¹⁹ Meeting “the challenges posed by climate change together”, the nations are fostering “cooperation between Germany as a pioneer of the energy transition and the sunny startup nation of Israel.”²⁰ Germany is also highlighting Israel as a key solution to reducing European states' dependency on Russian natural gas supplies in the wake of the war in Ukraine.²¹ Finally, as a member state of the European Union, Germany is part of the multi-billion dollar “energy-highway” project called EuroAsia Interconnector, ensuring the energy security of

13 Ibid.

14 Reuters, ‘Germany subsidizes sale of four warships to Israel’, Reuters, (11 May 2015) <https://www.reuters.com/article/germany-israel-warships-idUSL5N0Y21IL20150511>; The Times of Israel, ‘Israel signs scandal-ridden \$3 billion deal’.

15 Office of International Affairs, ‘U.S.-Israel’, US Department of Energy, (n.d.) <https://www.energy.gov/ia/us-israel>; U.S.-Israel Energy Center <https://us-isr-energycenter.org/>

16 Manal Shqair, ‘Arab-Israeli eco-normalisation: Greenwashing settler colonialism in Palestine and the Jawlan’, in Hamza Hamouchene and Katie Sandwell, eds., *Dismantling Green Colonialism: Energy and Climate Justice in the Arab Region*, (2023), London: Pluto Press.

17 Pooja Chandak, ‘Israeli minister Katz and US envoy Kerry unite for sustainability’, Solar Quarter, (06 June 2023) <https://solarquarter.com/2023/06/06/israeli-minister-katz-and-us-envoy-kerry-unite-for-sustainability/>

18 BMWK, ‘Germany and Israel agree on energy partnership’, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, (24 March 2022) <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Pressemitteilungen/2022/03/20220324-germany-and-israel-agree-on-energy-partnership.html>; The Media Line, ‘Israel, Germany sign energy agreement at COP27’, The Media Line, (13 November 2022) <https://themedialine.org/headlines/israel-germany-sign-energy-agreement-at-cop27/>.



Israel, Greece, Cyprus and the EU through a multidirectional flow of gas and renewable electricity sources.²²

Eco-Militarization and Israeli Ecological Colonialism

Emerging from the above is a hybrid form of foreign policy, simultaneously based on the promotion of militarism (national security through arms supplies) and climate action (energy security through renewable energy production and supply chains) – a foreign policy model that I regard as eco-militarized. What are the implications of eco-militarized foreign policies for the OPT?

Apart from aiding in active warfighting and bolstering everyday forms of policing and violence against Palestinians²³, through supporting Israel's military occupation of Palestine writ large, US and German eco-militarized policies also enable ecological forms of warfare and occupation. Israeli settler colonialism in the OPT is in essence a "land-based" project inseparable from ecological relations and conditions.²⁴ Indigenous philosopher and ecological justice scholar Kyle Whyte defines settler colonialism as "ecological domination ... a form of domination that violently disrupts human relationships with the environment."²⁵ Along these lines, Palestinian activist-scholars Manal Shqair and Mahmoud Soliman highlight how Israel "is waging a war on the environment as a tool to

19 Uniper, 'NewMed Energy and Uniper sign a non-binding MoU' Uniper press release (08 November 2022) <https://www.uniper.energy/news/newmed-energy-and-uniper-sign-a-non-binding-mou-to-explore-collaboration-options-for-the-delivery-of-natural-gas-to-europe-and-the-development-of-blue-hydrogen>; Regarding natural gas and hydrogen as problematic, see: Cara Bottorff, 'Hydrogen: Future of Clean Energy or a False Solution?', Sierra Club, (04 January 2022) <https://www.sierraclub.org/articles/2022/01/hydrogen-future-clean-energy-or-false-solution>; Valerie Volcovici, Kate Abnett and Matthew Green, 'Explainer: Cleaner but not clean - Why scientists say natural gas won't avert climate disaster', Reuters, (18 August 2020) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-gas-climatebox-explainer-idUSKCN25E1DR>.

20 Stefan Kaufmann and Gideon Friedmann, 'Tackling the Climate Crisis with Green Hydrogen', European Leadership Network, (26 July 2021) <https://elnetwork.eu/country/germany/climate-crisis-green-hydrogen/>

21 EC, 'REPowerEU', European Commission, (2022), https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/repowereu-affordable-secure-and-sustainable-energy-europe_en; Rachel Moore and Matthias Williams, 'Israel part of solution to Europe's gas woes, Lapid says', Reuters, (12 September 2022) <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/israel-part-solution-europes-gas-woes-lapid-2022-09-12/>.

22 <https://euroasia-interconnector.com/about-us/>

23 Most of the US' arms supplies to Israel are used for warfighting in the OPT, including airborne and ground-based bombing raids, missile attacks and shelling in the occupied Gaza Strip. Palestinian civilian casualties tend to outnumber Israel's with several hundred to one. See: AOAV, 'An examination of US and EU weapons used in explosive violence in Gaza, 2021', Action on Armed Violence (28 June 2022) <https://aoav.org.uk/2022/an-examination-of-us-and-eu-weapons-used-in-explosive-violence-in-gaza-2021/#:~:text=US%2Dmade%20Mk%2D84%20bombs,by%20the%20U.S.%20military%20directly>; Daniel Boguslaw, 'Israel used U.S. weapons to destroy US assets and aid projects in Gaza', The Intercept (19 May 2022) <https://theintercept.com/2022/05/19/israel-gaza-us-weapons-aid-projects/>; Jurah Adi Gross, 'IDF says it launched major offensive of dozens of rocket launch tubes in Gaza', The Times of Israel (11 May 2021) https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-it-launched-major-offensive-on-dozens-of-rocket-launch-tubes-in-gaza/; Sandy Tolan, 'The bombs raining down on Gaza? They're American' The Daily Beast (20 May 2021) <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-bombs-raining-down-on-gaza-theyre-american>.

24 Manal Shqair and Mahmoud Soliman, 'Rethinking the everyday domestic sphere: Palestinian women as environmentalist and anti-colonial warriors', Community Development Journal, 57:1 (2021): 40-51.



deprive Palestinians ... of what sustains life, land and natural resources.”²⁶ Settler colonialism is thus a form of ecological colonialism by which a settler colonial state damages indigenous communities’ relationship to the ecology of their traditional land and disrupts local eco-social relations in order to expand and strengthen its own occupation of the land.²⁷ Through practices of colonial ecological violence, the settler state and settler communities sever local communities’ ties to their lands either through directly cutting off their access to their land-based means of subsistence or through impeding cultural practices such as specific forms of herding, farming or ritual practice.²⁸ This is also known as ecological apartheid, referring to the ethnic or racial segregation of who has access to land (to sustain life, such as through farming), natural resources (such as energy and water), and other forms of ecological governance and conditions (such as waste and sewage management, greeneries and clean air).

Besides the direct bulldozing of Palestinian lands, trees²⁹ and houses beginning in 1948 to make way for settler homes, roads and infrastructure, since 1967 Israel has also moved many of its highest polluting industries, toxic waste facilities and mineral extraction projects to the West Bank. Similarly, the environmental aftermaths of the sustained blockading of and military assaults on the Gaza Strip continue to abound, including toxic and hazardous remnants of war, air, groundwater and soil pollution, and severe habitat and biodiversity loss.³⁰ Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza are living under “toxic occupation” such as generated by Israeli settlers’ wastewater and solid waste, while being denied the necessary permits to implement adequate waste infrastructure for their own communities.³¹

The overall dispossession of Palestinians from their land-based sources to sustain life also happens through “sustainability” initiatives such as the construction of recreational green national parks and afforestation projects. These have been central mechanisms for Israeli authorities to assert settler control of Palestinian territories, uprooting and replacing vast

25 Kyle Whyte, ‘Settler Colonialism, Ecology and Environmental Justice’, *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*, 9 (2018): 125-144, 125.

26 Shqair and Soliman, ‘Rethinking the everyday’, 40.

27 See: M. J. Bacon, ‘Settler Colonialism as Eco-Social Structure and the Production of Colonial Ecological Violence’, *Environmental Sociology*, 5:1 (2019): 59-69; M. J. Bacon, ‘Dangerous Pipelines, Dangerous People: Colonial Ecological Violence and Media Framing of Threat in the Dakota Access Pipeline Conflict’, *Environmental Sociology*, 6:2 (2020): 143-153; K. W. Mauer, ‘Unsettling Resilience: Colonial Ecological Violence, Indigenous Futurisms, and the Restoration of the Elwha River’, *Rural Sociology*, 86:3 (2021): 611-634.

28 Manal Shqair, ‘Israeli shepherd settlements - Ecological colonialism in the Jordan Valley’, *Transactions of the Jewish National Fund*, 2 (2022): 4-12.

29 Since 1967 Israel has uprooted more than 2.5 million trees to facilitate Jewish settlements. See Shqair and Soliman, ‘Rethinking the everyday’, 41.

30 CEOBS, ‘UN report details environmental degradation in West Bank and Gaza’, *Conflict and Environment Observatory*, (08 June 2020) <https://ceobs.org/un-report-details-environmental-degradation-in-west-bank-and-gaza/>; MEMO, ‘Gazans are being poisoned slowly, as 97% of water is undrinkable, rights group says’, *Middle East Monitor*, (05 October 2021) <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20211005-gazans-are-being-poisoned-slowly-as-97-of-water-is-undrinkable-rights-group-says/>; Ramzy Baroud and Romana Rubeo, ‘Israel’s ‘environmental crisis’ is of its own making’, *Al Jazeera*, (07 July 2021) <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/7/7/israels-environmental-crisis-is-of-its-own-making>.

31 Visualizing Palestine, ‘Between a rising tide and apartheid’, *Visualising Impact*, (n.d.) <https://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/between-rising-tide-and-apartheid>.



amounts of diverse native trees³² and covering demolished Palestinian villages with an especially hostile non-native pine tree to inhibit the return of displaced Palestinians.³³ Moreover, the OPT is a solar-power paradise. Still, a majority of Palestinians, from Gaza to the Naqab desert to the Israeli-administered Area C in the West Bank, live under energy poverty and in “off-grid communities.” Meanwhile, Israeli settlers live with full access to stable electricity and alternative power sources.³⁴ Through the EuroAsia Interconnector mentioned earlier – also known as Europe’s “‘electricity-highway’ to Israeli war crimes”³⁵ – EU member states like Germany are part and parcel to ensuring this stable provision of electricity to settler communities.³⁶ At the same time, to assert settler control of Area C, Palestinians are being denied access to the area’s electricity grid while also being denied permits for the construction of solar panels. This leaves Palestinian communities to construct panels without permission, which are then systematically confiscated and demolished by Israeli authorities (or destroyed in bomb raids). Parallely, the Israeli solar energy sector is booming, powered in part by electricity generated from solar farms located in the West Bank and the Naqab desert.

These examples bear witness to how renewable energy projects serve as direct means of expanding occupation, forcing the continued displacement and ghettoization of Palestinian communities and entrenching their dependency on Israeli energy imports while boosting Israel’s energy independence, security and profits.³⁷ Instead of presenting a break with ecological colonialism, present-day renewable energy and green transition projects are reproducing existing practices and relations of green colonialism and climate apartheid.

32 Including 600 years old olive trees and other subsistence-trees like citrus, nut and almond, staples of the Palestinian diet. The preservation of these native species would have otherwise helped solve present-day issues of food insecurity and climate resilience.

33 The pine consumes large amounts of water, does not generate fruits and renders the soil inhospitable to other plants, effectively destroying native habitats and rendering the land vulnerable to ecocide. D.A. Jaber, ‘Settler colonialism and ecocide: case study of Al-Khader, Palestine’, *Settler Colonial Studies*, 9:1 (2018); Jonathan Cook. ‘Israel’s Jewish National Fund is uprooting Palestinians-not planting trees’, *The Mondoweiss*, (22 July 2020) <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/07/israels-jewish-national-fund-is-uprooting-palestinians-not-planting-trees/>: 1–20; Shqair and Soliman, ‘Rethinking the everyday’, 40-42; Visualizing Palestine, ‘Between a rising tide’.

34 Crystal Yeung, ‘The sun belongs to everyone’, *Al Haq*, (2017) https://www.alhaq.org/cached_uploads/download/alhaq_files/publications/The_Sun_Belongs_to_Everyone.pdf.

35 BDS, ‘The EuroAsia Interconnector: “electricity-highway” to Israeli war crimes’, *The Palestinian BDS National Committee briefing paper*, (n.d.) <https://www.eccpalestine.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/BNC-briefing-the-EuroAsia-Interconnector.pdf>

36 Ali Abumimah, ‘EU to supply electricity to Israeli settlements’, *The Electronic Intifada*, (07 March 2018) <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abumimah/eu-supply-electricity-israeli-settlements>.

37 For examples, see: Asmaa AbuMezied, ‘Israel’s occupation is eclipsing Palestine’s solar potential’, *New Arab*, (08 March 2023) <https://www.newarab.com/opinion/israels-occupation-eclipsing-palestines-solar-potential>; Gina Gambetta, ‘Renewable energy projects deepening conflict in Occupied Palestinian Territories, says Storebrand’, *Responsible Investor*, (17 June 2022) <https://www.responsible-investor.com/renewable-energy-projects-deepening-conflict-in-occupied-palestinian-territories-says-storebrand/>; Muhammad Shehada, ‘Israel’s profitable occupation, and the billion-dollar cost to Palestine’, *New Arab*, (03 December 2019) <https://www.newarab.com/opinion/israels-profitable-occupation-and-billion-dollar-cost-palestine>; see also details on the ENLT-NewMed projects in the OTP and Jordan (Shqair, ‘Arab-Israeli eco-normalisation’).

This paints a rather different picture of the consequences of Germany's and the US' energy cooperation with that "sunny startup nation of Israel."³⁸

Further, the US-administered Project Prosperity is another stark example of the Israeli greenwashing of its energy security policies and settler eco-colonialism. The deal gives Israel access to Jordanian land to produce solar power for Israel's water desalination plant (and beyond), strengthening Israeli solar and desalination sectors at once. While Jordan splits the proceeds from Israel's solar imports with a UAE state-owned energy company, the deal also denies Jordan access to any of the electricity generated by the new solar farm on its territory, instead entrenching Jordan's dependence on fossil gas imports from Israel. The deal furthermore reproduces Jordanian and Palestinian dependence on Israel for water, despite the fact that Israel is responsible for much of the region's water crisis from decades of occupying and draining vital water sources, such as diverting the water of the Jordan River from the West Bank and Jordan to Israeli settler communities.³⁹ Though Project Prosperity was initially conceived by Eco-Peace Middle East, an Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian non-governmental organisation, for the benefit of the three parties, the OPT has no part in the resulting deal.⁴⁰

The above examples capture the ways in which militarism, climate action, energy security and settler colonial occupation are intimately linked in Israeli practices in the OPT. The US and Germany's choice of foreign policies toward the region make them complicit in the reproduction of these links. Though steeped in the language of climate action, US and German energy partnerships with Israel, rather address energy security issues between each party. As such, they serve to boost both the false belief in industrial-scale green transition solutions – reproducing existing levels of extractivism and energy consumption – and Israeli practices of ecological colonialism in the OPT.

Intersectional Environmentalism: Towards a Foreign Policy of People-Planet Care and Justice

At the height of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, climate activist Leah Thomas coined the term intersectional environmentalism.⁴¹ The concept formalizes perspectives and practices developed across generations of indigenous and people of color's struggles against occupation and exploitation of their communities and lands.⁴² It is an inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for the protection of and justice for both

38 Kaufmann and Friedmann, 'Tackling the Climate Crisis'.

39 Shqair, 'Arab-Israeli eco-normalisation', 3-5

40 I have not been able to ascertain why the OPT has no role in the final deal. See the following for the original idea behind the agreement: <https://ecopeaceme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-Green-Blue-Deal-for-the-Middle-East-EcoPeace.pdf>

41 Leah Thomas, *The intersectional environmentalist: how to dismantle systems of oppression for people + planet*, Profile Books Ltd (2022).

42 Alexis Massol-González, *Casa Pueblo: A Puerto Rican Model of Self-Governance*, Ann Arbor: Lever Press (2022); Angele Alook, Emily Eaton, David Gray-Donald, Joël Laforest, Crystal Lameman, Bronwen Tucker, *The end of this world: climate justice in so-called Canada*, Toronto: Between the Lines (2023); Farhana Sultana, 'The unbearable heaviness of climate coloniality', *Political Geography*, 99 (2022); Malcolm Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, Cambridge: Polity Press (2022); Nick Estes, *Our History if the Future: Standing Rock Versus Dakota Access Pipeline and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, London and New York: Verso (2019); Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalisms of the Poor*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2011); Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Penguin (2020).



people and the planet, identifying and foregrounding “the ways in which injustices happening to marginalized communities and the earth are interconnected.”⁴³ Understanding social and ecological justice as inseparable, the concept ensures that issues of social inequity are considered as part of, and given equal weight to, the protection of the environment. This helps break with the kinds of environmentalism and conservation practices that function as handmaidens to racism, colonialism and militarism,⁴⁴ of which Israeli ecological colonialism in the OPT is an ongoing contemporary example.

The approach also helps delink environmentalism and climate action from the false green transition narratives dominating public policy and multilateral negotiations which remain locked-in with corporate, military and political elite interests, perpetuating both environmental forms of racism and climate colonialism.⁴⁵ Intersectional environmentalism’s foregrounding of eco-social justice instead visualizes systemic harms, identifies root causes behind social and ecological crises and amplifies the voices of the communities at the frontline of these crises. The kinds of security envisioned in this approach (including human, collective and ecological) stand in stark contrast to the interests and priorities built into present-day national security doctrines, and the foreign policies modeled in their image to promote corporate, military and energy security – as seen in the US’ and Germany’s relations with Israel. These latter forms of security rely on and reproduce the kinds of extractive relations to both people and nature that built the global industrial society causing climate chaos, and the militarism enacted to preserve these relations.⁴⁶

Had states like the US and Germany adopted alternative foreign policies toward Israel, inspired by intersectional environmentalism, they could have reduced the external enabling of and thus inhibited Israeli ecological colonialism in the OPT. In turn, this could have helped strengthen Palestinian pursuits of eco-social justice, directly or indirectly. A key example illustrating wider possibilities of supporting local practices of both self-determination and ecological justice is eco-sumud. Coined by Manal Shqair, the concept of eco-sumud represents the everyday steadfastness of Palestinians in their efforts to stay on their lands, combined with...

... environmentally friendly ways of maintaining a strong attachment to the land of Palestine, covering the indigenous land-based knowledge, cultural values, tactics and tools Palestinians employ to fight back against the violent Israeli settler colonial disruption of their sustainable relationship with the land.⁴⁷

43 Fran Haddock, ‘What is intersectional environmentalism and why is it so important?’, Curious Earth, (08 October 2020) <https://curious.earth/blog/what-is-intersectional-environmentalism/>.

44 Friends of the Earth UK, ‘Anti-racism and the environment movement’, Friends of the Earth, (23 June 2023) <https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/resources/anti-racism-and-environment-movement>; Guillaume Blanc, *The invention of Green Colonialism*, Oxford: Polity Press (2022); Juan Corredor-Garcia and Fernando Vega Lopez, ‘The logic of “war on deforestation”: A Military Response to Climate Change in the Colombian Amazon’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 0:0 (2023): 1-19; Rachel Jones, ‘The environmental movement is very white. These leaders want to change that’, National Geographic, (29 July 2020) <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/environmental-movement-very-white-these-leaders-want-change-that>; Rosaleen Duffy, ‘War, by Conservation’, *Geoforum*, 69 (2016): 238-248.

45 See e.g.: Sultana, ‘The unbearable heaviness’.

46 See e.g.: Andrea Brock and Alexander Dunlap eds., *Enforcing Ecocide: Power, Policing and Planetary Militarisation*, Palgrave Macmillan (2022); Daniel Selwyn, ‘Martial Mining: Resisting extractivism and war together’, London Mining Network, (November 2020).

47 Shqair, ‘Arab-Israeli eco-normalisation’, 12.



Like intersectional environmentalism, eco-sumud acknowledges the mutual constitution of social and ecological crises. Accordingly, it understands the pursuit of a just agricultural and energy transition in the OPT as inseparable from the pursuit of Palestinian self-determination and social justice – and vice versa. Eco-sumud represents the antithesis to the militarized national and energy security interests and policies of Israel, the US and Germany, and offers a powerful counter-narrative and practice to Israeli ecological colonialism. By way of an empirical example, Manal Shqair looks at rainfed agricultural practice among Palestinian villagers in Dayr Ballut, the West Bank.⁴⁸ Ba’li, as it is known in vernacular Arabic, has facilitated the local preservation of agricultural land across a century of colonial occupation, water apartheid and land grabbing. It involves the preparation, planting, cultivation and protection of plants and soil without irrigation, utilizing instead natural soil moisture and the capture and preservation of water during rain seasons.⁴⁹ In Dayr Ballut, villagers, predominantly women, have combined this traditional farming method with diversifying the types of crops grown to reduce their vulnerability to water scarcity, climate shocks, and soil degradation.⁵⁰

Embodying at once a social, spiritual, cultural and material relation to the local ecology, facilitating both social justice and sustainable uses of the land, ba’li crystallizes the power and potential of eco-sumud to inform a just decolonial transition in Palestine. Following Manal Shqair, such a transition is premised on five pillars. First, it disrupts the internalization of the social construction of Palestinian knowledge and culture as inferior to their colonizers. Second, it foregrounds relationships with the land and its natural resources based on reciprocity and interdependence. Third, it promotes the collective sharing of land, water and knowledge rather than their monopolization and luxury commodification for the few. Fourth, it affirms that women are primary actors in the anti-colonial struggle for self-determination and ecological justice. Finally, it refuses the notion that Israeli settler colonialism is undefeatable, cementing instead the “invincibility of the burning desire of the colonized to determine their own destiny.”⁵¹

Conclusion

As the Palestinian human rights group Al Haq notes, “cooperation with Israel on climate without Palestinian self-determination entrenches the colonial climate vulnerabilities of Palestinians.”⁵² US and German eco-militarized relations with Israel are prime examples of this. While Israeli delegates at COP27 cite the US-brokered Abraham Accords and related initiatives like Project Prosperity as key avenues for enhancing regional security in part through pursuing “climate justice”, a sharp look at Israeli militarized practices of ecological colonialism and apartheid in the OPT tells of an opposite reality. Had their own military, energy and economic interests not been so bound up with the Israeli oppression of

48 Ibid, 12 - 14.

49 Omar Tesdell, Ysra Othman, and Saher AlKhoury, ‘Rainfed agroecosystem resilience in the Palestinian West Bank’, *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 21:39 (2018).

50 Women’s centralisation in farming has been a key mechanism to ensure food sovereignty in Dayr Ballut, mitigating the loss of Palestinian men to the Israeli labor market. See Shqair, ‘Arab-Israeli eco-normalisation’, 13-14.

51 Ibid, 14.

52 Al-Haq, ‘COP27: Cooperation with Israel on climate without Palestinian self-determination entrenches colonial climate vulnerability of Palestinians’, Al Haq, (20 November 2022) <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/20891.html>.



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Palestinians, states like the US and Germany could have opted for foreign policies with actual potential to aid in just transitions for the region. Instead, the premising of US and German foreign policies toward Israel on weapons-based national security and colonial energy security serves to greenwash arms-trade relations with Israel while exacerbating conditions of intersecting harms in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Through contributing to Israeli eco-militarized forms of occupation and colonialism, US and Germany are complicit in the realities of war, dispossession, energy poverty, water and food insecurity, and toxic occupation that mark Palestinian lives. These realities bear witness to the true local impact of European and North American bi- and multilateral relations that pride themselves on promoting regional security, stability and resilience in the MENA. By contrast, foreign policy doctrines adopting the principles of intersectional environmentalism could help promote energy democracy, food sovereignty and a just social-ecological transition in the OPT, spurring transformations toward demilitarization, decarbonization and decolonization across the region. The prospects of such a foreign policy shift seem little to none. Yet, unless we engage in exercises of re-imagination, of narrative world- unmaking and remaking, those prospects will grow slimmer still. We need only look to the steadfastness of Palestinian everyday anti-colonial resistance for inspiration in our attempts to disrupt the normalization of eco-militarization as the go-to option in the toolbox of interstate relations.



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PRISME Initiative

PRISME aims to redefine the conception of “security” in the Middle East and North Africa, as the starting point for strategic relations between MENA countries and their European and North American partners. It does so in pursuit of effective, collaborative approaches to ensuring a more peaceful and stable future. To this end, PRISME sponsors dialogue and debate between foreign policy professionals across diverse backgrounds and perspectives. These include individuals in governments, thinktanks and academic institutions located in the MENA region, Europe and North America, with a specific focus on engaging young and emerging thinkers and practitioners. Its goal is to re-define security in the Middle East, broadening the definitions of what it looks like, for whom, how it can be achieved, and how outside actors can contribute to it.

SALAM Project

SALAM (Sustaining Alternative Links beyond Arms and the Military) proposes to rethink the centrality of the arms trade in international relations with and among Middle East & North Africa (MENA) countries.

It fosters and amplifies ideas from a network of scholars and practitioners working in and with the Middle East. Issues they will address include the arms trade’s advertised role in cementing bilateral and multilateral ties between North America, Europe and the MENA region; the opportunity costs of over- or sole reliance on weaponry as security; and alternative modes of engagement that might redefine a shared strategic agenda.