

## The Interaction of Discursive and Non-Discursive Fields in the Construction of Racial Violence in Israel/Palestine

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### Introduction

Israeli policy towards the Palestinians has been described as 'becoming murderous, with no reservation, no self-consciousness, no restraint' (Goldberg, 2009: 143). This essay examines how individual Israelis and Israeli society more generally is able to perpetrate racial violence whilst retaining a conception of itself as just, moral and democratic. In particular, it focuses on the interaction between the discursive and non-discursive fields, and their relationship to those features of modernity outlined by Zygmunt Bauman (2000): bureaucracy, distance and hierarchy. It wedds the discursive dialectical construction of the Other and the manifest material realities of racial oppression with an understanding of the economic rationality behind this relationship, exploring how these elements interact to both produce and legitimise the current racial order.

In order to do this, the essay begins with an elaboration of the theories, methodologies and resources chosen. In particular, it utilises the set of IDF soldiers' testimonies collected by the NGO *Breaking the Silence*, as they provide a critical insight into the discursive analysis of processes of racialisation, as well as how bureaucracy, distance and hierarchy function practically to maintain, conceal and legitimise this system. The essay continues through an assessment of the role that modern technology plays in facilitating and intensifying these problems, and argues that through the increasing reliance on the rationality of technology, Israeli society is becoming trapped in a Weberian 'iron cage', as its means become progressively detached from its aims resulting in the shift from conflict management to conflict resolution. Finally, after acknowledging the need for nuance in describing this system and explicating instances of localised violence, it highlights the necessity for any discussion on the role of technology and modernity in processes of racialisation to occur alongside an analysis of discourse, arguing that the discursive and non-discursive are in fact entangled. As such, it moves on accordingly to give a detailed assessment of the contemporary discursive construction of the Palestinian Other.

An Orientalist image of the Palestinians has for a long time permeated Israeli historiography, painting them as homogeneously primitive, backwards and wicked (Gerber, 2003), working to entrench a view of Zionist superiority which necessarily labelled any resistance to this colonialism as 'extremism' (ibid, 24). This association between the Palestinians and barbarism is not merely an artefact of historiography, early Zionist leadership was actively complicit in the construction of such an image. Theodore Herzl, often seen as one of the founding fathers of Zionism, referred to the Zionist project thusly: 'we should there form a part of a wall of defence for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism' (cited in Sa'di, 2004: 135). A continuity can then be drawn between the historic discursive construction of the Palestinians at the end of the nineteenth century and the stereotyped image still prevalent today, as studies continue to find 'a stereotyped image, paternalistic and demonizing at the same time, of the Arab as fatalistic and primitive, possessing a tribal sense of hospitality but cruel, immoral, thieving, and bloodthirsty' (Cypel, 2006: 104) permeating textbooks and children's stories. This research will critically analyse how this discursive construction has been transposed into a contemporary setting, particularly through the abstraction of the Gaza Strip as an Other which is always a legitimate target of violence, incapable of the exercise of democracy, not-modern and not-free.

Having established the centrality of the Self/Other dialectic, this essay aims to show how this dialectical construction both validates, and is validated by, a ubiquitous Israeli military occupation and blockade. That the shift away from conflict resolution to conflict

management, within which bureaucracy and hierarchy work to shield moral ramifications of the conflict from individual Israel psyches, attests to the necessary and entrenched complimentary relationship between the discursive and non-discursive. The actualisation of this dialectic subjects Palestinian society to an unjust and immoral material condition, which undermines their ability to organise (politically, economically and socially) and thus (re)produces a *seemingly a priori reality* that works to entrench this particular strand of the racialised Self/Other dialectic. This dialectic, in which a counter-intuitive Israeli conceptualisation of itself as moral, free and modern, is upheld by interactions with an opposite Other in the West Bank. In this way, conflicting policies in the West Bank and Gaza help to reinforce one another in a complex negotiation of racialised boundaries and their material effects. The processes of racialisation and racism in Israel and Palestine provide a key case study, demonstrating the mutually constitutive ways in which racialised discursive constructions are entangled with material facts.

### *Theory and Methods*

In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman elaborates a theoretical framework for understanding the ways in which the 'inner essence of modernity' (2000: 223) was fundamental in orchestrating such an extensive genocidal campaign. He asserts that modern civilisation is unable to guarantee the 'moral use of the awesome power it brought into being' (ibid: 111). Pointing to bureaucratic systems, and particularly the hierarchies within them, Bauman demonstrates how in certain situations they draw upon an individual's instrumental rationality to facilitate immoral results. He goes on to show that one's ability to act cruelly is tied to the devolution of moral responsibility to a (scientific) authority as well as sufficient distance from the effects of one's action, singling out bureaucracy as particularly problematic as it increases 'the physical and/or psychic distance between the act and its consequences... [which] quashes the moral significance of the act' (2000: 25).

Given the longevity and ubiquity of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, this essay seeks to understand the ways in which those characteristics of modernity outlined by Bauman play a critical role in the continual process of racialisation of the Palestinians, in order to subjugate them under a protracted military domination, as a social practice related, established and bound up with discourse. As such, it seeks to ascertain whether Israel can guarantee the moral usage of the powers modernity imbues it with (from bureaucracy to new weapons technologies) when viewed in tandem with this discursive reality.

An important resource that I will be turning to in order to analyse the effects of bureaucracy, hierarchy and distance, are the testimonials of ex-soldiers collected by the non-governmental organisation *Breaking the Silence*. Since 2004 the organisation has collected over 950 testimonials, providing an invaluable insight into a highly secretive organisation (Beaumont, 2014). In addition to an online database, *Breaking the Silence* have organised these accounts into a book (2012) as well as ten publications which correspond to the various military campaigns and geographic outposts of the Israeli military (2004, 2009a, 2009b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e, 2012, 2014). The data encompass a large cross-section of the army, covering various levels of seniority, as well as including different roles such as administration, intelligence, border control and combat. Despite their obvious potential for important insight into the construction and implementation of racialised social categories, these testimonies remain critically under-highly detailed study by Saree Makdisi (2010) does draw upon them in order to recount the realities of the occupation, however his study remains largely descriptive. Analysing them alongside an examination of the discursive construction of racial categories, as well as how this interacts with the non-discursive, will offer new lines of flight in studying the conflict.

In order to reflect critically on this data, this essay will draw upon critical discourse analysis in line with the methodological approach of Fairclough (2003), differentiating between the discursive and non-discursive so as to fully reflect on how they inform one another. As such the research attempts to draw out the main themes and patterns of thought present

in these testimonies, as well as relating this to other levels of discourse - such as that of politicians and Israeli weapons technology marketing firms - through a process of interdiscursivity (Kristeva, 1986). Addressing the discursive element in which the social field is 'constructed, defined and articulated' (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 59), does not mean to suggest that there is not a *materiality* to racism, as the above methodology and subsequent study has hopefully made clear. Instead, it suggests that understanding the linguistic constructions of reality must accompany the study of its manifest materiality, as the two are necessarily entangled and mutually constitutive (ibid).

The research also recognises that the 'interview' is, in and of itself, a discursive act in which the interviewer and interviewee interact creatively to unearth an artefact which does not lie in an objective outside space from which one could levy a critique of society (Van den Berg et al., 2003). As such it understands this process to be an 'opportunity' (ibid) to create new discourses. *Breaking the Silence* (website, 2014) view their own work in a similar fashion, as an attempt to create a discursive shift and therefore *affect* reality. With this in mind, this essay does not use the testimonies as 'objective facts' against a hidden and obscured reality, but instead situates them within a complex and multifaceted discourse, in which they are able to help shift our understanding of reality.

#### *Bureaucracy, Distance and Hierarchy*

The racialisation of Palestinians by an occupational power begins at birth, with the bureaucratic procedure of birth registry. A Jewish baby born in an illegal Israeli settlement, unlike a Palestinian baby born in the Occupied Territories, is automatically the recipient of both a birth certificate and a state identity number, a 'key to life in Israel' (Makdisi, 2010: 113). Makdisi offers a comprehensive study of the ways in which Palestinians must navigate a vast network of bureaucratic barriers for even the most basic of tasks, distinguishing them from their Israeli counterparts (including settlers).

The extensive system of 'application forms, title deeds, residency papers and other permits' is characterised by Žižek as an 'occupation by bureaucracy' (2009: unpaginated). Parsons and Salter detail how Israeli strategies of biopolitics have enforced a system of 'closure' upon Palestinian society, in which the Oslo Accords have worked to entrench the bureaucratic nature of the occupation (2008: 705).

Within the West Bank, a dynamic and unpredictable system of both static and ad hoc checkpoints and militarised zones operated by Israeli Defence Force personnel restricts the free flow of people and their produce (Korn, 2008; Parsons and Salter, 2008). This system lies in contrast to Israel's approach towards the Gaza Strip, which involves less human interaction (Tawil-Souri, 2012). Israeli policy in Gaza is more concerned with the enforcement of extremely static and stagnant borders, leading many to compare Gaza to a prison camp (Cameron cited in Watt and Sherwood, 2010: unpaginated).

The flexible nature of Israel's ever-changing borders within the West Bank works to disrupt the Palestinian economy, social fabric and psyche (Mbembé, 2003; Parsons and Salter, 2008; Weizman, 2006). Despite the documented inhumanity of this project, the system continues to be upheld by bureaucrats, individual soldiers and Israeli society generally. Many of the testimonies demonstrate how soldiers often justified their actions at the time by their position within a hierarchical bureaucracy, or through assuming that there was 'intelligence' to suggest that their actions were necessary. The very term 'intelligence' carries a weight of associations with rationality (and therefore justification):

We were not sure it was the right car, but we had intelligence on it, and we *had* to blow it up too (*Breaking the Silence*, 2014: 47).

I said that there had to have been some warning from intelligence. I tried to justify it to myself (ibid, 2012: 17).

This is the most revolting sentence that, for me at least, has the most negative connotations in the world, and you'll hear almost every soldier speak: "I'm a soldier and I'm just following orders" (ibid, 2004: 15).

A significant proportion of soldiers point to hierarchies and bureaucracies as justification for their complicity in an unjust system (ibid). This bureaucratic dynamic also works to

silence critics, as individuals assume there is no way they could challenge an assemblage much greater than themselves. See for instance the reason given by one soldier when asked why he had kept quiet:

Right now I'm just a little cog in the wheel. I do my job and live from one furlough to the next, until my service is over (ibid, 17).

As the situation becomes normalised, or rather, as one becomes normalised to it, this feeling of insignificance is compounded by de-sensitivity to violence. This is evidenced by the testimonies of many soldiers who did not report incidents because they were seen as 'normal' (see for example 2004: 27; 2014: 55). The normalisation of violence plays a critical role in the construction of the Israeli identity and economy, to which I will return in a moment.

The interconnected issues of the uneven distribution of water and land are further examples of highly racialised policies enacted through bureaucratic institutions. For instance, Palestinian towns are often left with minimal amounts of water for basic needs, whilst adjacent Israeli settlements install swimming pools (Rouyer, 2003). Access to water is subsumed in the general system of enclosure that the Palestinians face. A Palestinian town's water supply can lie beyond the illegal separation wall, forcing the construction of expensive water pipelines which require lengthy permits (Amnesty, 2009). At other times, Palestinians have been refused permits to allow water tankers to cross the barrier (ibid). House demolitions, aimed to perturb Palestinian life (Breaking the Silence, 2004; 2012; 2014), are a complex bureaucratic affair in which each act is increasingly compartmentalised; from the signing of eviction notices, to the signing of demolition orders, to the organising of the demolition and the final act of destruction. Borrowing a phrase from Bauman, Gideon Levy (2013) notes that this racist occupational logic is made logistically possible by 'bureaucrats', in other words: 'good people who do bad things' (online, unpaginated). Such a system undermines individual protests as it is able to function independently of a single person, reducing them to a 'little cog in the wheel'. The nature of Israeli power wielded against the Palestinians has been elucidated in numerous ways. Some, such as Ghanem, have described the Israeli state as a 'textbook example of an ethnic state' (1998: 443). The utilisation of the term 'apartheid' along with comparisons to the South African system has been found to be justified by Glaser (2003). Despite some similarities the Israeli system may have to apartheid, for instance the system of segregated roads in the Israeli controlled West Bank and differential access to work, education and healthcare, and despite the utility of this comparison to the global *Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions* campaign, there are substantial differences which make the applicability of this term to the Israeli control of Palestine dubious. Firstly, unlike the injustices in the South African system, which took place under a unified state in which differential treatment was given to citizens of the same state, Israel and Palestine are not one state, one government or a single set of citizens. Furthermore, sections of the Palestinian population, such as those 1948 refugees living in other parts of the world, remain entirely outside of direct Israeli control, and Israel remains technically at 'war' with various Palestinian factions such as Hamas in the Gaza strip.

Other assessments of Israeli power are somewhat more accurate, such as the assessment by Goldberg, in which he identifies the 'ethnoracial purging' character of the current Israeli state, which is subtly distinguished from ethnic cleansing in the sense that it involves relocation rather than annihilation (2009: 119). Such a power has been described in similarly damning terms as 'thanatopower' by Ghanim (2008), the '*management of death and destruction*' (2008: 67). Mbeme has gone further, showing Israeli power to be a form of 'necropolitics', that is the 'subjugation of life to the power of death' (2003: 39). However, these theories, though useful in their ability to introduce new prisms for viewing the realities of Israeli power, do not satisfactorily wed this with the formation of the identities which underpin a racial system, nor explicate how Israeli identities work to uphold such a discriminatory racial system whilst simultaneously viewing Israel itself as 'free', 'modern', 'moral' and 'democratic'.

Though an employee within an organisation such as the Civil Administration may be

horrified when confronted by the practical implications of their actions (for example the destitution of a family), the distance created between them and the effects of their actions helps explain how such an unjust system of racial subjugation prevails. Makdisi makes this point explicit, stating that the bureaucrats who deny permits and visas, or who sign demolition orders 'did not have anything personally against the families that they were pushing to the edge of dissolution. They were just doing their job - putting into practice a policy that was formulated by their superiors higher up along the military, and ultimately the political, chain of command' (2008: 5).

#### *New Technologies, Machines and the Other*

As Bauman has shown and as is evidenced above, immoral systems are most effectively upheld when there is distance created between an individual's actions and the effects of these actions. As one might expect then, the testimonies often appear to be motivated by the appeal to humanity that intimate encounters in the West Bank provided. However, this 'last barrier' of human interaction seems to be being completely erased in the insulated Gaza Strip, as a striking anecdote from Jon Snow makes clear. Writing for Channel 4 News about his attempt to cross the border during a recent trip to Gaza, he recounts: From entering the steel complex until I reach the final steel clearing room where I held the baby, I was never spoken to face to face, nor did I see another human beyond those who barked the commands through the bullet-proof windows high above me (Snow, 2014).

This *distance* is further enhanced by new weapons technologies such as drones, of which Israel is a major world manufacturer. Drones are being increasingly used against the Palestinians, particularly in the recent assaults on Gaza in which they were heavily utilised 'to provide critical surveillance and remote strike capability... [and were] the primary tools for executing strikes' (The Israeli Arsenal Deployed against Gaza during Operation Cast Lead, 2009: 176). The deployment of these technologies against a racially marked Other has devastating consequences, summarised by Wall and Monohan:

The drone stare further abstracts targets from political, cultural, and geographical contexts, thereby reducing variation, difference, and noise that may impede action or introduce moral ambiguity. In combination, these processes further normalize the ongoing subjugation of those marked as Other, those targeted for discriminatory observation and attack, those without comparable resources to contest the harmful categories within which they are placed.

Not only does the use of military drones destabilize identities and their representations in both combat and border zones, but conceptual categories as well are subjected to homogenization of radical difference as borders are refashioned as combat zones and combat zones are construed as ontological borders between 'us' and 'them', or 'civilization' and 'barbarism' (2011: 250 – 251).

This problem is further compounded by the discursive setting of both the targets of these technologies and the machines themselves. To their users, people become 'targets', death becomes 'elimination' and the act of killing itself becomes a 'strike' (ibid). In a wider discursive field, the machines are depicted as 'precise', 'smart', 'intelligent' and 'pin-point accurate'. See for instance the language in the marketing materials of Israeli weapons companies *Elbit Systems* and *Rafael Advanced Defence Systems*, the latter has the tagline 'Smart and to the Point'. This discourse is evidenced further still by the material broadcast by the official IDF blog (2014: unpaginated). This constructs a dangerous insurmountable 'iron cage', which appeals to the assumed instrumental rationality of the machines themselves thus bypassing the human actors in the system and becoming progressively detached from the values Israel purports to hold, for example recognising 'the supreme value of human life' (IDF Code of Ethics, 2014: unpaginated). In a Weberian sense, the rationality of the machines are implied and applied in the maintenance of an immoral asymmetric disproportionate and perpetual war, in opposition to purported Israeli aims and ends (e.g. the cessation of conflict) (Weber, 2001). This undermines necessary debates about their implementation and devolves moral responsibility in a dystopian

Deleuzian fashion to the machines and technologies themselves.

There has been a gradual widening of the category of 'legitimate target' during the Obama administration, from 'identified and known' instead to 'suspected' (Cloud, 2010: unpaginated), setting a dangerous international precedent with serious implications within the Gaza Strip. As the Israeli conceptualisation of a legitimate target expands from 'terrorist' to 'someone aiding a terrorist', to 'terrorist sympathiser' (as will be discussed in more detail below), this discursively constructs the entire Strip as enemy territory, evidenced by a declaration by the Israeli security cabinet that the Gaza Strip was an 'enemy entity' in 2007 (Jerusalem Post Online, 2007). Such a system (re)produces processes of racialisation, and the moral safeguards against the killing of a racially marked Other fall away. Israel's utilisation of drones is underpinned by 'the compression of the Palestinians into one homogeneous total category of "otherness" where every Palestinian is a potential terrorist. This process ultimately left no room for the category of civilian' (Ghanim, 2008: 67). This transformation of Palestinians into a general category of legitimate targets through the abstraction of the Gaza Strip, underpinned the Israeli military attacks of the last decade, and sheds light on the incredibly high civilian death toll despite the purported 'smart' and 'intelligent' design of the weapons used and the 'moral' and 'democratic' nature of the state which sanctioned their use.

A Deleuzian analysis can be taken even further as new technologies and strategies, often borrowing directly from the vocabulary and insights of Deleuze and Guattari (Weizman, 2006), seek to remove the human element altogether. In 2007, Wired magazine reported that Israel was developing 'closed-loop' systems, which eliminate the necessity for human interactions altogether.

For years and years, the Israeli military has been trying to figure out a way to keep Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip from crossing over into Israel proper. The latest tactic: create a set of "automated kill zones" by networking together remotecontrolled machine guns, ground sensors, and drones along the 60-kilometer border... The idea, ultimately, is to have a "closed-loop" system — no human intervention required (Shachtman, 2007).

Through the application of Bauman's insights in the Israel context, we have seen how features of modernity are being utilised in tandem with the dehumanisation of Palestinians to act as a moral blinker within Israeli society. As we have seen also from the testimonies, it is often this human interaction which provides the impetus for people to critique the system of which they are a part.

### *Localised Violence and Discursive Constructions*

The examples and analysis above clearly highlight the significance of bureaucracy and hierarchy in explaining how such a vast unjust and immoral system of occupation and military strategy against a racialised Other continues to be upheld, alongside a conflicting self-conceptualisation. They have also begun to indicate the necessity for a more thorough analysis of the discursive element at work beneath these institutions. However, also evident in the testimonies, demonstrating the necessity of a discursive analysis, are instances in which there appears to be a clear lack of hierarchy. The bureaucratic argument, although important in understanding system level effects on individual psyches, and the psyches of those who might clumsily be described as 'good people', does not explain localised violence, especially when these instances of racial violence do not always appear to be bureaucratically motivated, as the following quotes show. It's the Wild West and everyone... does whatever they want (Breaking the Silence, 2012: 23).

The ease in which you actually do whatever you want to do unsupervised, that is, enter people's homes, conduct random searches. Every officer, every commander can decide now I'm entering a home, ordering the family out, ransacking the house... I think that in Hebron, I was disturbed and frightened most of all by the unregulated and uncontrolled power, and the things it made people do (Breaking the Silence, 2004: 12).

And then I got it, a man who's been in Hebron one week, it has nothing to do with rank, he can do whatever he wants... everyone can do whatever they want, it's like there are no rules, everything is permissible (Breaking the Silence, 2004: 5). That whole checkpoint is the Wild West. Everyone does whatever he wants (Breaking the Silence, 2012: 133).

A thorough analysis of the testimonies reveals that there are hundreds of instances of localised violence that are not motivated by hierarchy or bureaucracy, but instead by the normalisation of violence and the dehumanisation of the Palestinian Other. One soldier's response, when questioned as to why he spat at Arabs but not Jews, illuminates the need to also analyse the discursive construction of the Palestinian Other as an integral part of both the functioning of institutions and their overall effects, and the individual instances of violence within them:

But they're like, Arabs... I don't know, it's true, the guy I spat on didn't do anything to me. I think he didn't do anything at all. But again, it was cool, and it was the one thing I could do to, you know, I can't go and arrest people and be proud that I caught a terrorist, and I can't kill a terrorist, and I can't go on some operation and find some weapons under some tile in their house. But I can spit on them and humiliate them and ridicule them (Breaking the Silence, 2012: 315).

Further accounts of non-hierarchically and non-bureaucratically incited violence include countless examples of the humiliation of Palestinians at checkpoints and during operations (ibid, 267), the arbitrary detention of Palestinians including children (ibid, 64), physical assaults on Palestinians (ibid, 243) and the permission of settler violence and humiliation of Palestinians (ibid, 318).

At first glance, these testimonies may seem to contradict earlier insights into the role of bureaucracy and hierarchy within a racial order. In order to resolve this contradiction, as well as turning to discourse which I shall explore more thoroughly in a moment, it is useful to turn to an analysis of the Deleuzian principles the army employs. Through an analysis of military tactics, Eyal Weizman has shown that in addition to its hierarchical superstructure, the army also encourages devolved power and decision-making to autarkic units in order to respond to the immediate tactical environment. This is tied to its wider strategy of 'swarming' (2006: 12). This paradigmatic shift, in which the bureaucratic structure of the army is replaced by a more complex and inter-relational hierarchy is also evidenced by Israeli military firms' marketing material:

Mobile ad-hoc networks are dynamic, loosely organised networks whose members or nodes arbitrarily enter, exit and move around the network architecture. Ideal for tactical operations and communications, Raphael's BNET leverages this arbitrary motion, and rapid unplanned changes in mesh-network typologies ideal... for highly mobile combat (Rafael Marketing video online, 2014).

Weizman quotes the director of the IDF's 'Operational Theory Research Institute', Shimon Naveh, as explaining that this 'form of manoeuvre is based on the break of all hierarchies... It's a wild discourse with almost no rules' (2006: 12). This sounds remarkably similar to many of the testimonies analysed above.

To understand the impact of these sophisticated tactics on processes of racialisation and racial based violence requires a much more sophisticated analysis. As such, I would argue that this quasi-hierarchical structure allows racial violence to become even more manifest in two ways. Firstly, the overall negative effects of the occupation on the racially marked Other are justified through the usual appeal to hierarchy in tandem with a discursive dehumanisation, as outlined by Bauman and as further evidenced in the soldiers' testimonies. At the same time however, a perceived lack of hierarchy, rather than imploring people to act more morally (i.e. refusing orders or showing kindness), actually achieves the opposite. That is to say, when combined with a poisonous discursive construction of the Other and the normalisation of violence, this increased freedom leads to greater instances of racial violence.

The above accounts, along with our new conclusions on quasi-hierarchical racial violence make clear that any analysis of the effects of modernity cannot be conducted 'within a

vacuum', that is to say, without assessing the local discursive constructions that make certain outcomes such as the occupation in the West Bank and blockade on Gaza acceptable to Israeli society, and which also make individual eruptions of racially motivated violence inevitable too. The investigation into the discursive construction and dehumanisation of the Palestinian Other necessitates a step back for a moment to a more theoretical level. An in-depth discussion of whether this Self/Other dialectic can be seen as a fundamental characteristic of modernity is beyond the limits of this essay, however a discussion of its place within the Zionist project is clearly warranted.

#### *The Zionist Project and the Self/Other Dialectic*

As Miles and Brown have highlighted, it is this process of racialisation (and differentiation), established through the historical dialectic of the Self/Other 'that is found at the core of all racisms' (2003: 85). Sa'di's insightful discussion of the roots of the Zionist project demonstrates how the Jewish Zionist (and later Israeli) 'self' was imbued with the racist Self/Other dialectic of European colonialism, as it emerged out of and alongside this process. Sa'di goes on to illuminate how during the birth of Israel, the nation had to choose between granting equal rights to all residents, or 'the reinforcement of the racial boundaries' (2004: 139), opting for the latter. This reinforcement of the racial boundaries now lies at the heart of the modern Israeli identity. The testimonies have highlighted how the *normalisation* of racialised actions undermines one's ability to perceive their own irrationality, legitimising outcomes at both the macro and micro levels (state policies and individual violence). This normalisation occurs at a more general theoretical level of *identity*; as Sa'di goes on to explain:

At the heart of this debate [about whether Israeli is an ethnic democracy] lies a fundamental assumption concerning the *normalisation of the regime*; namely, can the regime of a settler society secure the long term conditions of its existence without coming to terms with the collective rights of the natives? (my emphasis 2004: 141).

Following on from the earlier discussion on the historically constructed image of the Other and the established necessity of a discursive construction in the implementation of racialised hierarchies, practices and violence, a critical discussion on the transposition of the 'primitive' and 'backwards' historical image of the Palestinian into its contemporary variant is in order. Examples of this shift, which began in the 1980s and evolved alongside the intifada, include the labelling of Palestinians as 'drugged cockroaches' in 1982 by Israeli chief of staff Rafael Eitan (Khalili, 2008: 112). Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin also infamously referred to the Palestinians as 'two-legged beasts' (ibid). Investigating the terminology in the 2006 Lebanon war, Khalili demonstrates how this shift also included a widening of the legitimate targets of violence:

More insidiously, "PLO infrastructure" often meant the homes and refugee camps housing Palestinians; "terrorist" was any Arab fighting the Israelis, but particularly Palestinians. Dov Yermiya writes about the Israeli soldiers who could not imagine the Arabs they encountered as anything but "terrorists" and for them, "their entire world is filled with terrorists" (ibid).

This resonates with Gerber's findings that historically all resistance was seen as 'extremism'. Applied to a modern context, 'extremism' is understood as 'terrorism' and this shift occurs in discursive fields not limited to historiography (although clearly this is an important field in which the contemporary Self is situated). In the Gaza Strip this problem was compounded after the election of Hamas in 2006, which as mentioned above, contributed to the homogenised view of Palestinians as terrorists. These sentiments surface time and time again in the testimonies, with soldiers often recounting how this homogenising view became paradigmatic not just within the army, but also in media reports on military operations. For instance one account recalls how deceased civilians were often dubbed as 'terrorists' in the media (Breaking the Silence, 2012: 34). Another account reveals:

They actually shot at whoever was walking around in the street. It always ended



with, "We killed six terrorists today." Whoever you shot in the street is a terrorist (ibid, 54).

In June last year, a member of the Knesset published an article written by Uri Elitzur, who was an associate, advisor and chief of staff to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (Sterman, 2014), which read:

Behind every terrorist stand dozens of men and women, without whom he could not engage in terrorism... They are all enemy combatants, and their blood shall be on all their heads. Now, this also includes the mothers of the martyrs, who send them to hell with flowers and kisses. They must follow their sons. Nothing would be more just. They should go, as well as the physical homes in which they raised the snakes. Otherwise, more little snakes will be raised there (Elitzur cited in Beinun, 2014: unpaginated).

Such a statement is not an anomaly indicating a fanatical section of Israeli society, as Elitzur recommendations are also indicative of the facts on the ground - the indiscriminate targeting of Palestinian homes and also often civilians (Breaking the Silence 2004, 2012, 2014). A report by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2012 expressed deep concern at the racist discourse found at the highest levels of public authority in Israel (United Nations General Assembly, 2012: 19).

Another recent example involves a statement made by a senior Israeli Middle Eastern scholar who claimed that 'the only thing that can deter terrorists... is the knowledge that their sister or their mother will be raped' (Kedar cited in Kashti, 2014: unpaginated). There are countless examples of such statements which work to discursively enlarge the legitimate targets of violence to include the families and homes of terrorists, and as Ghanim (2008) has pointed out, this corresponds to a view of the Palestinians generally. We can see how the same stereotyped image Cypel (2006) finds present in the 1980s endures today, its continual reproduction evidenced by the statements and sentiments of the highest and most influential echelons of Israeli society. As this image of the Palestinian Other becomes inextricably tied (and practically synonymous) with the term 'terrorist', it snowballs into a lethal combination which sees the Palestinian Other as always a legitimate target of violence. The genocidal nature of such a transmutation has been increasingly noted by scholars and political scientists alike.

Given such a climate, the publishing by a major newspaper (*The Times of Israel*) of an article entitled 'When is genocide permissible?' becomes much easier to understand. The article concludes that:

If political leaders and military experts determine that the only way to achieve its goal of sustaining quiet is through genocide is it then permissible to achieve those responsible goals? (Gordon cited in Vale, 2014: unpaginated).

When considering the discursive construction of the Palestinian Other as always a legitimate target of violence, alongside the entrenched system of bureaucracy and hierarchy, the logic of such a seemingly irrational, immoral and racist statement is laid bare.

In *Freedom* (1998) Bauman elaborates a Foucauldian reading of Bentham's panopticon, assessing that the apparent freedom of the inspector is constructed relative to the bondage of the inmates, echoing the dialectic outlined above. This is played out physically in the West Bank, in which a soldier on duty, through the comparative power that she wields, may feel 'free' despite the obvious restrictions acting upon her (a sentiment often alluded to in the testimonies). In this way, the construction of the dangerous 'Other' which necessitates occupation perversely helps to solidify the Israeli self-conception of a 'free' society.

Above the level of the inspectors there is the 'contractor', who oversees their work in a similar manner of 'seeing without being seen'. Importantly, at the highest levels of this model, which Bauman compares with society as a whole, an actor is motivated by 'his own calculation' (1998: 17), that is to say, through his instrumental rationality calculated within economic terms. This again echoes the structure of the Israeli economy, which is driven by a high-tech military industrial complex. Turning to the high levels of corruption along with

the permeability between senior actors within the IDF, the Knesset and private weapons companies (Klein, 2007), one is able to see how such a continual conflict continues to be 'economically rational' and hence set in motion.

As this continuous system of (re)racialisation relies on the inter-relation of discourse and reality to (re)create Palestinian subjugation, it necessarily has no end-game, end-point nor origin. This helps explicate why Israel appears not to be interested in peace (Levy, 2010), and the turn in Israeli policy to conflict *management*, rather than conflict resolution (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2007; Bar-Siman-Tov et. al., 2007).

Israel thus pursues a two-pronged mutually reinforcing policy towards the two Palestinian territorial entities. Towards Gaza it has favoured a bureaucratised closed-loop system, which eliminates the need for direct human interaction thus constructing the strip as a hostile abstraction in which the Palestinian 'Other' is always potentially dangerous and a legitimate target of violence, producing a more explicitly genocidal policy than in the West Bank. This policy has shifted towards conflict management which fuels both the Israeli economy and identity, both of which now necessitate perpetual violence and victim-hood as well as the idea of freedom and democracy.

Towards the West Bank Israel pursues a direct occupational approach, in which the elimination of human interaction is currently impossible. This acts as a 'venting' ground for Israeli hostility and anger towards a dehumanised Palestinian, thus continually fermenting violence and strengthening the divide of 'us' and 'them'. This venting space is necessary to deflect the anxieties produced by fear of the Other, which may otherwise manifest itself in a mania and undermine Israel's ability to identify itself as a liberal democracy. For instance, the appeasement of settlers has been seen by some as a way of deflecting violence by religiously motivated Israelis from the Knesset, instead to their more immediate Palestinian neighbours.

### *Conclusion*

This study has demonstrated the necessity of analysing both the discursive and nondiscursive fields within racism and processes of racialisation, and their interrelated effects upon one another. In doing so, through an analysis of the *Breaking The Silence* testimonies and other discursive fields, one is able to better account for the complexity of the current racial order in Israel and Palestine. In particular, it has been argued that features of modernity such as hierarchy, bureaucracy and distance interact with a discursively constructed Other to help legitimise and facilitate racialised oppression at both the macro and micro levels, in which the Other is always a legitimate target of violence and thus the recipient of a harsh racialised policy. This works to further entrench the Palestinians in a system of poverty and desperation which feeds back into the relational discursive construction of Israel as free, democratic and modern and the Palestinians as non-modern, not-free and dangerous.

By drawing on the paradigm offered by Bauman, and relating this to the nuances of the Self/Other dialectic, as well as the economic rationality underpinning Israeli policies, the analysis has been able to account for the contradictory conception Israel holds of itself, as well as to explicate the continued and perpetual nature of the conflict. As a corollary, it holds that due to the interrelation of the discursive and the non-discursive fields, if progress is to be made towards the cessation of racial violence, this will also have to occur at the level of discourse, in which a shift to a more humanised and just representation of the Palestinians is required.

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