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Book Review/ Kitap Tanıtımı

The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel / Palestine

Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, Translated by Tal Haran, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Değerlendiren: Ramazan Oduncu*

Following the days of May 1967, Israeli occupation had created a huge catastrophic demographic and territorial dramatic change. The interrelation of the occupier with the occupied in the case of Israel and Palestine, has become a popular subject for academics for a while. Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir describes it as a state within a state, whose residents are living under exceptional conditions. To elaborate and reopen the subject for academic discussion, Azoulay and Ophir provide a framework starting from the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

The book falls into three parts and eight chapters. In the first part of the book, Azoulay and Ophir develop their argument regarding the uniqueness of the case in terms of the relation of the occupiers to the occupied. To do so, the book starts by giving the historical background of the 1967 war and its catastrophic effect following the first decade. While investigating these effects and the characteristic of the ruling apparatus, the authors highlight the judicial situation alongside, the management of life, colonization, suppression and collaboration under the occupation. In each situation, Palestinians struggled due to the lack of protection by any means of law or security. *“Palestinians in the Occupied Territories are not subject*

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to Israeli law and are not protected by international law.” (p.29) “The Palestinian were ruled as noncitizens but also as subjects whose activities had to be governed and their well-being cared for by the ruling apparatus, on condition that they respected it and gave up their existence as political beings.” (p.32)

Azoulay and Ophir identified the second decade of occupation starting with the rise of the Likud party in late 1970s until the outbreak of the First Intifada in December 1987. The distinctive feature of the period can be summarized as the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and settlements, sometimes even in spite of Israeli law. *“In October 1979, the High Court of Justice declared this expropriation illegal because the government failed to prove it was strictly justified for military needs. The occupation authorities responded by introducing a new model of land appropriation that facilitated colonization at a faster pace.” (p.50)* Following the subjugation and take over within the first two decades, Palestinians saw a glimmer of hope with the First Intifada. The last chapter of the first part analyzes the reasons and consequences of the Intifada, in accordance with the problematic and unique situation of Palestinians under the occupation. Even if Palestinians were widespread and managed to grow awareness in the global media and international public opinion, the ruling apparatus had greatly increased their military presence and imposed new sanctions to aggravate Palestinians. *“New restrictions were imposed on Palestinian movement, and overnight stays in Israel were no longer allowed.” (p.64)*

The following part is composed of two chapters and eight sub-titles. Azoulay and Ophir emphasize that, as subjugated noncitizens of occupied lands, the rights of Palestinians are violated not only politically, but also economically and judicially. *“According to the official Israeli doctrine, all Israeli mechanisms of violence active in the occupied territories fulfill “security needs,” namely, preventing direct Palestinian violence against Israeli citizens.” (p.108)* Analyzing the exceptional situation of the Gaza Strip, the authors describe the historical evolution of a piece of land to an open-air prison. To conclude “Abandoning Gaza” chapter, even after the withdrawal of Israeli physical existence from Gaza starting from August 2005; violation of human rights is still extremely perceivable in every aspect of life in the Gaza Strip whether it be economic, political or physically violent.

The first part of the last chapter starts with a conceptual investigation. Concepts such as ruling power, ruling apparatus, state, regime, sovereignty and political space are discussed in reference to political science. Although the state projects and the structural divisions were analyzed partly in the previous chapters, the authors prefer to spare a specific place for it in the last chapter. In their conclusion, the authors discuss the future of the occupation and provide some conflict resolution theories. Acknowledging the political and ideological roots of the conflict, Azoulay and Ophir believe in a solution being found only if the regime is changed in Israel.

Throughout the book, the authors make vital contributions to the ongoing discussions. Writing and reading such a book requires one to be skeptical. However, it can be facilely declared that the book stands in a side of the discussion and takes a very certain position. Personally, I do not believe in full objectivity of writers in any kind of social science book, neither consider it a necessity. However, providing the evidences and claims of the opposite side can answer some questions of the reader. Furthermore, the book includes too many repetitions. For example: the illegal settlement problem is mentioned in almost every chapter without making a new point. Indicating aforementioned points, the overall critiques and specific references to the discussion can be considered successful. As a summary from 1967 to the current date, the book can be very beneficial as an introductory book for those aiming to understand the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, researchers and students who are familiar with the conflict and debates can hardly learn any new information from this book. Lastly, as the longer version of the work was originally published in Hebrew and five years later translated into the English, it may be argued that the original work could potentially be more beneficial and inclusive.

In conclusion, almost half a century of Israeli domination and invasion, starting from 1967, is described by Azoulay and Ophir. In their work, they offer an analysis of such a combination of historical, political and structural structuring of Israel in the occupied territories. Not only the description, but also the analysis regarding the strategy of Israel to maintain this domination in the future, is elaborated in this book.