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THE SLOW CREEP OF SETTLER COLONIALISM: EXPLORING WATER  
CONTROL IN PALESTINE

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

In

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by LINA ABU AKLEH

May 1, 2020

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the  
members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree.

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Date



## Abstract

This thesis analyzes the Israeli-Palestinian water issue using a settler colonial framework. It highlights the contributions made to this field under the often used framework of hydro-hegemony to understand water issues in Israel-Palestine. Using a settler colonial framework helps to better describe the issue and highlight the slow creep of settler colonialism over the years. It also helps to see beyond the power dynamics and its relationship to domination and consent to understand the realities that Palestinians face on the ground. In addition, this thesis will help build towards exploring resistance to water control under settler colonialism. Therefore, this thesis uses the village of Bardala, located in the northern part of the Jordan Valley, as a case study to examine Israel's control over water resources, and the restrictions it has placed on accessing water for Palestinians. Through interviews and secondary sources, this thesis shows how settler colonial policies disrupt the entire fabric of Palestinian society. These policies consolidated Israel's control over the water resources through various tools such as the permit regime which was established under the Oslo Interim Agreement of 1995, prevention of developing and constructing water infrastructures, attacks on water facilities and confiscation of agricultural equipment. In return, Palestinians have been engaging in various forms of everyday resistance methods to remain steadfast and continue to exist in the face of occupation. Therefore, using a settler colonial framework shows how the control over water resources is part of a greater settler colonial framework aimed at accessing territory and eliminating Palestinians from their lands through various processes and structures.

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<sup>1</sup>“Sources-EWASH:United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(OCHA)” [Israel: Water as a tool to dominate Palestinians](#)

<sup>2</sup> Google Map Screenshot.

<sup>3</sup> Zeitoun and Warner 2006 p. 445.

<sup>4</sup> Prepared by the author.

<sup>5</sup> Prepared by the author.

<sup>6</sup> Bt’selem. 2013. “Area C land off-limits to Palestinian use, September 2013”

<sup>7</sup> Note: “The map shows the various categories of land off-limits to Palestinian constructions and development: Areas under the jurisdiction of settlements’ Local and District Councils, state land, firing zones, nature reserves and national parks. “

<sup>8</sup> Google Map Screenshot.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians have been suffering from severe water shortages due to Israel's control over water resources and water management. Since then Palestinians have been deprived from their right to access their natural resources. A major factor that contributes to this conflict is Israel's ever growing illegal settlement project and its settler colonial policies of dispossessing Palestinians from their lands. This has been an ongoing struggle of the Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley who are restricted from accessing their water resources. Water control in Israel-Palestine is not a new subject, and extensive research has been conducted on this topic. Most people study this issue using the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony, a power-dynamic framework used to explain hegemony at the river basin which is achieved through consolidated control over water resources through various strategies and tactics. Though this is helpful, and illuminates many of the power dimensions at play in Israeli-Palestine water relations, it may not give a full picture of these dynamics. Moreover, other ways that people look at this conflict is not simply through power-dynamics, but as a settler colonial project. This thesis attempts to show what is gained from using a settler colonial framework to understand water conflict in this basin.

The aim of this research is to go beyond hydro-hegemony's focus on power and its relationship to domination and consent. It looks at how water control under settler colonialism has operated and changed over time. Adopting a settler colonialism framework, which is viewing Israeli actions around water control not just as domination, but as a step in the direction of eviction and erasure, opens up new ways of interpreting water conflicts in Palestine. With a

clearer understanding, this would help others to then organize around that understanding of what is happening on the ground.

It also helps to better understand forms of Palestinian resistance to the ever growing control over water. Importantly this framework can be helpful in answering the following research questions; What is gained from thinking about this issue- not simply as power play between peoples who share the same water resource, but as part of a broader settler colonial project?; How can natural resources under settler colonialism - in this case water and land - can be used as tools to dispossess and enact eviction and erasure measures?

Specifically, I explore water control in the Palestinian village of Bardala, in the Jordan Valley using a settler colonial framework. I seek to understand how Israeli settler colonial policies have used water as a tool to consolidate their control over the water resources in Bardala and restrict the community from accessing their equitable share of water. Unlike other scarce resources, water is the main source of fueling all aspects of society. Yet today, water in Palestine has not only been commodified, but is also being used as a weapon to threaten peoples' livelihoods. The slow creep of Israel's settler colonial policies and the tools to control the water resources in the Jordan Valley are related to controlling Palestinian lands and restricting Palestinian development, with a greater aim of dispossession and annexation. Despite these conditions, Palestinians in Bardala have been engaging in everyday forms of resistance to not only show resilience and steadfastness, but to also survive as a group and counter the settler colonial notion of eliminating the native.

Considering the acute water problems that Palestinians face, the issue continues to be neglected in political discourse. The importance of water impacts every aspect of society,

whether that is health, agriculture, economy, sanitation, and to some, even dignity. In a region where water is a scarce resource, it has received little to no attention oftentimes. Although water may not be the “sole motive for war,” in many cases it has been a result and a victim of wars and a weapon of control.

Israel laid control over the main water resources that are located in the West Bank in 1967 following the Six Day war when it occupied the West Bank, Golan Height, Sinai, and Gaza. Hence, since 1967 Palestinian populations living in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem have been struggling to access and have control over their water resources. During the 1993 Oslo Accords peace process, the first phase of Oslo did not set the rights of water, this was done in the second round, Oslo Accords II in 1995. The Oslo II, an interim-agreement signed in 1995 by Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the issue of water was set to be discussed in the final status negotiations in 2000. The Oslo Accords II set the provisions by which water should be managed by both parties and it established the Joint Water Committee to oversee the management of water supply. The Interim Agreement also stipulated the allocation of 80% of the water resource, Mountain Aquifer in the West Bank, to Israel, with the remaining 20% to the Palestinians as seen in Figure 1 below.<sup>9</sup>

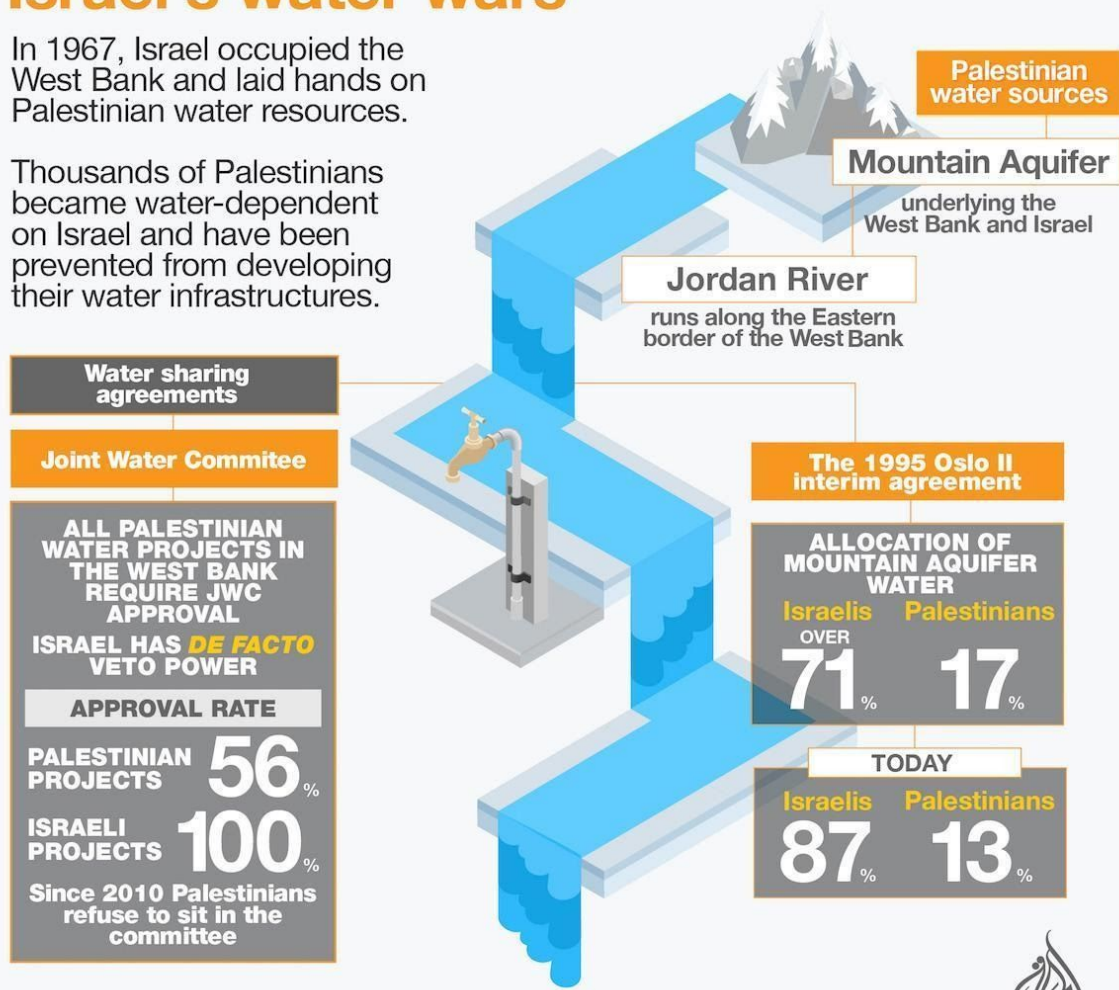
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<sup>9</sup>(Trottier, 2007: 118)

## Israel's water wars

In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and laid hands on Palestinian water resources.

Thousands of Palestinians became water-dependent on Israel and have been prevented from developing their water infrastructures.



Sources: EWASH | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)



ALJAZEERA

Figure 1: "Israel's Water Wars" OCHA Infographic

It is important to note that the main source of water in the West Bank is derived from the Mountain Aquifer. The water resources are all shared with Israel and other neighboring countries. There are surface waters such as the Jordan River and Wadi Gaza in addition to groundwater resources, such as aquifers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The final agreement over water, however, was not solved because it was set to be discussed in the permanent status

agreement. In addition, the cooperative agreements were established based on an asymmetrical power relations which gave Israel the upper hand. Yet for the past 25 years there has not been any negotiations between both parties and the issue of water, among the many other issues continues to be neglected in the political discourse. More importantly, these agreements have further consolidated Israel's control over the water resources.

Even though this paper will not extensively address the legality aspect of the issue but it is important to note that water under customary international law is a fundamental principle that ensures the equitable and reasonable utilization and allocation of water. The right to water was also identified in the Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers of 1966. In addition, in the General Comment No. 15 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights it states,

Water is a limited natural resource and a public good fundamental for life and health. The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights....<sup>10</sup>

The right to water under Comment No. 15 is defined as follows: "Right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses." Therefore, water is a right and not a commodity and Palestinians today continue to be deprived of their most basic human right. This also contributes to water insecurity as Palestines consume between 30 to 100 liters for domestic use per person, while the Israeli per capita consumption is approximately between 240 and 300 liters daily. This means Palestinians consume the minimum liters required by the World Health Organization.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> U.N.ECOSOC, 29th Sess, Agenda item 3. U.N Doc E/C.12/2002/11, OHCHR.

<sup>11</sup> Zeitoun (2008) p. 14

Given this brief contextual background in this study seeks to show that while hydro-hegemony highlights the power dimensions, settler colonialism moves to include longevity and the process with a particular end goal. Following my visit to Bardala, I was able to engage in various conversations with the residents of the community and understand the impact of Israeli water control on their livelihood as well as the modes of resistance that they engage in. I will be addressing the historical context of this issue to show the initial stages of the slow creep of settler colonialism and how it has evolved over the years in the Jordan Valley and specifically in Baradala, with regards to water control. To provide an in-depth understanding of this issue, I acknowledge the importance of providing a conceptual understanding of hydro-hegemony and settler colonialism in addressing water issues. Moreover, to establish a comprehensive analysis I conducted interviews and participant observation during my fieldwork in Bardala, in addition to analysis of secondary sources. Therefore, my research highlights the importance of using a settler colonial framework to understand the realities Palestinians experience on the ground with Israel's ever growing control over water and the forms of resistance they practice to counter the occupation.

## **Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology**

The primary goal of this research is to use a settler colonial framework to understand water issues in Israel-Palestine and to help better understand forms of Palestinian resistance. To be able to get a clearer understanding of how the struggle over access to water is experienced at the local level, I conducted fieldwork, interviews and participant observations in Bardala, a Palestinian village the northern part of the Jordan Valley. Another element of this research was carried out by analyzing secondary sources. The fieldwork was conducted over two trips, July 2019 and December 2019. The thesis is divided into three sections, the literature review, which provides a conceptual review of all the scholars who have studied hydro-hegemony, specifically in relation to Israel-Palestine water issues, settler colonialism, and everyday forms of resistance, a background section which provides a historical context on Israel's policy in the Jordan Valley, and lastly a case study on Bardala which includes data from my fieldwork in addition to analysis from my reviewed literature. This method was intended to understand the Israeli-Palestinian water issue not only from a top down approach of power dynamics but from the local perspective.

### **Methods**

To proceed with the research, I used a qualitative method to gather data. These approaches were the following: semi-structured interviews while conducting field work in Palestine; secondary sources, textual data obtained from official documents, news articles, previous research papers, scholarly articles, and reports from non governmental organizations; participant observation when I went to the village. In addition, the data collected was in English

and Arabic, which I translated. The documentary research assisted in helping me ask particular questions to the interviewees. Furthermore, I analyzed the data by relating it to concepts which go hand in hand with this case.

The participants of the study were chosen through snowball sampling. I interviewed a total of 11 people, three of my interviews were conducted over the phone and the rest were face to face. Before going to the field site I reached out to a former acquaintance whom I knew was from Bardala. I conducted a semi-structured interview with him and inquired about the water situation in Bardala. This interview was helpful as it provided me with an initial understanding of Bardala, the history they had with Israeli control over the water resources, and the current situation. Specifically I inquired about how water control has changed over time and what alternatives do the residents seek in accessing water. His detailed answers helped me raise more questions and come across new information. After this interview he helped me set a time to go to Bardala. His family were my contact person in the village. Knowing Arabic gave me an advantage of familiarity with the residents of the village. All of my interviews with the residents in Bardala were conducted in Arabic.

The interviews I conducted in Bardala were informal interviews and participant observation where I spent two full days at the village over two trips, one in July 2019 and one in December 2020. Upon my arrival to Bardala I was welcomed by the initial interviewees brother who gave me a tour around the village and showed me where the water reservoirs are located, the water networks that are connected to Bardala and the water networks that are connected to the Israeli settlements nearby. From both of my trips I spent a total of 18 hours in Bardala. Upon my second trip I was introduced to five residents from the village, five of whom are

farmers. The following were my initial questions and after these questions it became an informal conversation where everyone was contributing.

1. In cases where you are unable to afford buying water what other alternatives do you have to access water?
2. Do you feel there is a decrease in distributing water in the winter versus the summer?
3. Have you seen a decrease by the Israeli authorities in the amount of water distributed to the Palestinians in this area?
4. Do you have any farms? How do you manage to distribute the water between domestic and agricultural purposes?
5. What are some alternatives you seek to access water?
6. What are some everyday forms of resistance that you engage in to counter Israel's control over the water resources.

In addition, I interviewed one person from the Palestinian Hydrology Group, a Palestinian NGO focusing on water and sanitation issues. I chose PHG because they monitor the changes that take place with regards to access to water. Since my research has the element of time as a factor of analysis this NGO fit my research question. Before going to my interview I looked at the projects and research they had conducted whether in the Jordan Valley or other places in the West Bank. This was helpful in starting the conversation. I had begun by stating my research purpose and research question and from there he provided me with information regarding the Israeli policies in the Jordan Valley, and ways that the Jordan Valley could be

utilized for the benefit of the Palestinians. Following that meeting I interviewed a Palestinian government official. One theme that emerged with both of these interviews is that they both explained how water is being used as a tool to dispossess the Palestinians from their lands. This helped me shape my argument and build towards that understanding. I also conducted an interview with a Palestinian journalist from Jerusalem who had a clear understanding of the water and agricultural situation in Bardala. My interviews with her helped me gain a better understanding of certain elements that were not discussed by others. The Palestinian government official helped explain to me the water issue from a policy perspective. In addition, I also interviewed an expert on the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. My questions to him were about the settlements in the Jordan Valley and how they have increased over time. This interview helped me understand the history of the settlements in the Jordan Valley, specifically I learned about the history of the settlement near my field site.

Moreover, a timeline was created to show the major events that took place in Bardala. The data was compiled from the research in the following sections in addition to reading news reports, specifically those released by the Palestinian NGO, the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem.

One of my aims is to understand how throughout the years the control over water resources has been impacting the Palestinian communities and how the local population are experiencing change of local power because using a hydro-hegemony framework does not fully explore that. Understanding how the structure of settler colonialism has been impacting the livelihoods over the years is beneficial in providing a more robust analysis of the power dynamics.

## **Field Site**

The Jordan Valley is rich in abundant natural resources and natural water resources, and most importantly it is a vital part of the future State of Palestine. The Jordan Valley has a great potential for agricultural and industrial development which can contribute to boosting Palestine's economy. Specifically, I have chosen Bardala, a village in the northern Jordan Valley (See Figure 2 below), as my field site because it is a microcosm of the struggles Palestinians face with accessing water. Residents of the village lost control of their wells in 1968 and the first illegal Israeli settlement, Meholá, that was established in Jordan Valley is located a few kilometers away from Bardala. Bardala is a farming village where the residents depend on agriculture for their livelihood and they have and with the establishment of Meholá, it deprived the residents from their right to equitable water.



*Figure 2: Location of Bardala<sup>12</sup>*

In addition to the north of Bardala lies 1949 Armistice Agreement Line which is the internationally recognized border between Israel and the occupied State of Palestine. This is crucial because Israel uses this to justify its seizure of lands and declaring lands as “closed military areas” on the basis of security reasons. Therefore, Bardala represents an example of how

<sup>12</sup> The dotted line on the map is the 1949 Armistice Agreement Line.

the ever growing settler colonial policies continue to use water as a tool to dispossess them from their lands. These are efforts aimed at further annexing the land for settler use.

I will be building a historical understanding of the area but more specifically how control over water resources and access to water in the Palestinian communities of the Jordan Valley has changed over time. The importance of examining time is crucial because the effects of settler colonialism are ongoing, they do not happen in a single event. Therefore understanding the slow creep of Israel's settlement enterprise as a structure can help better explain the power dynamics. Dispossession does not necessarily occur through forceful displacement, but through the theft and exploitation of the natural resources of the indigenous population and these are part of the structure of settler colonialism. To further understand this, I will be presenting a historical context of Bardala and the settlement of Mehola .

### **Limitations and Challenges:**

While this thesis provides a contribution to the field of water politics , however it does pose some other limitations such as gender bias, as all my interviewees were male except for one female. I spent only two days a total of 18 hours at Bardala, while I did gain a comprehensive understanding of the struggles they face in accessing water, spending a longer time there would have given me a better insight into how they deal with water on a daily basis and not just overall. In addition to how other groups of people, not necessarily farmers are experiencing water. Since I do not drive yet, finding transportation was very challenging. Logistical issues such as the distance and no public transportation to there was a factor that made it difficult to go to the village multiple times. Other reasons that also contributed to that was due to Israeli military

closure, which took place on the exact day that I had planned to go to the village and stormy weather in the winter made it quite impossible to find transportation. With regards to documenting the main events that occurred on the timeline I was unable to find events that occurred for some of the years, this might mean that there were either no more demolitions, confiscations of water infrastructure or agricultural equipment reported or there no more infrastructure left to demolish. Nevertheless, for the past few years there have been records of demolitions and this means that the residents of Bardala were rebuilding regardless of obtaining permits for construction. However, including all the demolitions on the timeline was not feasible.

### Chapter 3: Literature Review

There has been wide range of literature examining the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict and these bodies of literature study the conflict using different conceptual frameworks. Yet most of the literature tackles the issue from a top-down approach which analyses international law and the human rights aspect to water. My conceptual framework stems from looking at settler colonial framework to better understand the current hydropolitical conflict – and specifically how water control and subsequent resistance to those changes evolve over time. Cooperative agreements do not always secure the equitable access of water resources to both sides due to their asymmetrical framework and their underpinning power relations and power structure.

Therefore, for this thesis, the literature review will focus on existing and widely used literature such as hydro-hegemony, settler-colonialism, environmental colonialism and everyday forms of resistance. Over the decades, various scholars have examined the Israeli and Palestinian water conflict using the framework of hydro hegemony, yet once aspect that has not yet been explored is resistance to the ever growing control over water resources. By using the term *sumud*<sup>13</sup> which means steadfastness and resistance-- and often times used in relation to resilience-- to the Israeli occupation, I apply this to the Palestinian resistance and steadfastness to the growing control over water resources with an aim of building towards an understanding of *sumud* in the context of water.

#### Hydro-Hegemony, and Cooperative Agreements

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<sup>13</sup> Fields, Gary. “‘Sumud’-The Will to Resist.” UC Press Blog, July 18, 2019.

This section will examine the framework of hydro-hegemony by looking at previous works of literature. It aims to define hydro-hegemony and examine how it is used to explain current transboundary water conflicts. It is crucial to keep in mind that while the hydro-hegemony framework is useful, it is ultimately insufficient to fully describe the phenomenon of water control in Palestine. In addition, there has not been enough literature exploring counter-hegemony or modes of resistance to water control.

Scholars such as Fredrick Frey (1993), Peter Gleick (1993) and Miriam Lowi (1993) were the first to study control over water resources beyond water wars and instead examined it from a power relations framework<sup>14</sup>. This section will look at Freys (1993) work to provide an understanding of the emergence of hydro-hegemony. Building off from the hegemonic stability theory (HST), in the article “The Political Context of Conflict and Cooperation Over International River Basins,” Fredrick Frey (1993) acknowledged the urgent need of “a predictive theory of conflict and cooperation over transnational rivers.” This was due to the fact that he viewed the drastic increase in economic development and population growth as future causes to increase in demand for water<sup>15</sup>. Several models and theories of power are reported in the literature to address this issue, however Frey’s urgency for a more coherent theory is successfully explored in the remainder of the sections in his article. Therefore, Frey (1993) presents a power-analytic framework theory to showcase its applicability to transnational river systems. He views this model as an effective tool to understand the root causes of violent transnational river basins and to predict potential conflicts between riparians.

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<sup>14</sup> Menga, Filippo. 2016. “Reconceptualizing Hegemony: The Circle of Hydro-Hegemony.” *Water Policy* 18 (2): 401–18.

<sup>15</sup> Frederick W. Frey (1993) *The Political Context of Conflict and Cooperation Over International River Basins*, *Water International*, 18:1, 54-68

Frey (1993) succeeded in revealing three factors that would be essential for this predictive model which are as follows: “The importance of water to each actor, the relative power primarily military of each actor and the respective riparian positions of the actors.”<sup>16</sup>. He also looks at the underlying motivational factors that influence the actors’ power relations at a riparian position. Furthermore, he acknowledges the emergence of new actors within the transnational water politics, more importantly he emphasizes the emergence of actors at the local level. One factor that he examines is the “instrumental use [of] water as a political weapon—employing water as a means for reaching other goals...”<sup>17</sup>. He also shed light on the dominant power to exploit their position and “use water for political purposes” which in return results in a strong resistance from the downstream riparian. Frey does not go further to explain the modes of resistance used by the downstream riparian, or the weaker state, to counter the hydro-hegemonic tactics used to control the water resources. Frey’s contribution to this field opened up a space to view water conflicts from a power relations dynamic and this resulted in the conception of the Framework of Hydro Hegemony (FHH) by Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner (2006)<sup>18</sup>. This shaped the discourse on ‘water wars’ and allowed authors such as Zeitoun to build off from Frey’s (1993) power analytic framework.

In the article, “Hydro-hegemony – a framework for analysis of trans-boundary water conflicts” the FHH has been explored by Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner where they define hydro hegemony as “hegemony at the river basin level, achieved through water resource control

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p 61.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p 63.

<sup>18</sup> Zeitoun, M. & Warner, J. (2006). Hydro-hegemony – a framework for analysis of trans-boundary water conflicts. *Water Policy* 8(5), 435–460.

strategies such as resource capture, integration and containment.”<sup>19</sup> Under the FHH, power is the central factor in analyzing riparian relations and this is achieved by combining the three pillars, of hydro politics, which was stated above, and by looking at how the hydro-hegemon, that is characterized as the upper riparian with relatively more power than the downstream riparian, controls the water resources in transboundary water conflicts.

They look at how the control over water resources is achieved through “power related tactics and strategies” but they also reveal two important theoretical issues that need to be addressed. The first is acknowledging that transboundary water cooperation are oftentimes lauded for their success, but in reality the absence of water wars, does not amount to the absence of water conflict and this is due to the underlying asymmetric power relations. Second, they reveal that power relations should be a major factor in analyzing the relations between two riparians in a water conflict<sup>20</sup>. They acknowledge that the riparian position is important when looking at exploitation of water resources, but looking at this from a power relations perspective is a major element in providing a more nuanced analysis.

Zeitoun and Warner distinguish themselves from previous scholars in that they conceptualize and theorize “hydro-hegemony” and build off from previous scholars’ approaches to water conflict and combine their work into the FHH, specifically Frey’s (1993) power analytic framework. Moreover, Zeitoun and Warner (2006) move past predictions to stress on “the *dynamics* of water conflict” and reveal the tactics and strategies that are used under hydro

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 435.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 436.

hegemony but also of counter-hegemony<sup>21</sup>. The Figure below outlines the water resource control strategies.



Roman numerals relate to Lustick's (2002) classification of increasingly efficient compliance-producing mechanisms: (I) coercion, (II) utilitarian exchange, (III) instigating normative agreement and (IV) inducing ideologically hegemonic beliefs. The list is non-exhaustive.

**Figure 3:** “Water Resource Control Strategies and Tactics”<sup>22</sup>

Looking at these strategies and tactics, it is significant to note that settler colonialism also engages in some of these tactics to consolidate its control and achieve its greater goal. Yet that is done over time and the goal of settler colonialism is to eliminate the native and access lands.. Furthermore, they reveal that resorting to violence in water politics is a very rare occurrence. Zeitoun and Warner (2006) also stress on the disguise of the cooperation agreements that are signed between the two riparians. Both authors indicate the power asymmetry that arises from such “cooperation” and reveal the areas where these asymmetries can be seen apparent. Such as “structural inequalities, the lack of control over decisions and an inequitable allocation of the

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 437.

<sup>22</sup> Zeitoun and Warner (2006), p. 445.

resource or its benefits”<sup>23</sup>. In light of this they conclude that this type of dominant form of hydro-hegemony is characterized by the dominant’s power to deny water rights for the weaker state.

A more in depth analysis of the power structures that are prevalent in cooperative agreements which contribute to the hydro-political nature of water conflicts have also been examined. In Jan Selby’s, “Cooperation, Domination and Colonisation: The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee” (2013) he addresses by stating that cooperation can sometimes be disguised as hegemony and power and the creation of such transboundary water management does not thereby bring an end to the conflict<sup>24</sup>. He does so by providing an analysis of the Joint Water Committees record since 1995-2008 and following that with a comprehensive interpretation of the interests and powers that have been the foundation of the overall water regime. Selby succeeds in addressing how Oslo II revealed the ambitions of Israel to colonise the lands in the West Bank and expand it’s settlement enterprise. This form of cooperative agreement is in reality a containment strategy that has subtly forced the Palestinian Authority “assent to its own colonisation.”<sup>25</sup> Selby notes three important interests and policies that Israel used in Oslo II, specifically the structure of JWC and its permit regime, to ensure the limit of Palestinian participation but also the creation of an agreement that clearly reflects Israeli preferences. He addresses the water supply crisis that Palestinians in the West Bank face due to Israel’s purposeful restriction of Palestinian development of the Mountain Aquifer. The

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 439.

<sup>24</sup> Selby, J. 2013. Cooperation, domination and colonisation: The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water committee. *Water Alternatives* 6(1): 1-24

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 21,

discourse on water in the realm of politics goes hand in hand with transboundary water conflicts, water wars and water cooperation and management. reproach

Filippo Menga, a professor and a researcher at Reading University conducts interdisciplinary research exploring the interplay between humans and the environment, in his article titled “Reconceptualizing hegemony: the circle of hydro-hegemony,” argues that there needs to be a more extensive analysis centered around the interactions of power and hydro-hegemony. He does acknowledge the importance of the tools and analysis that is provided by the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony, but he also addresses the limitations of FHH and views that the representation of power through the three pillars, power, riparian position and resources, does not provide a comprehensive analysis of hegemony. Therefore, Menga proposes the Circle of Hydro-Hegemony (CHH) where he views the riparian position, the ideational power, and bargaining power intertwined with hydro-hegemony. Menga also emphasizes the importance of expanding the discourse and research on counter hegemony. While he does succeed in addressing this he does not explore counter hegemony. However, he sees the CHH as a model that could address that further. According to Menga, “CHH could be employed to examine the continuous process through which a hegemonized basin riparians attempts to challenge and contest a disadvantageous status-quo.” He concludes suggesting a comparative study to look at the various counter hegemonic tactics employed by different riparians.

Selby and Mark Zeitoun are in conversation in the majority of their works, building from each others’ arguments and furthering the debate and discourse on hydro-hegemony, domination, and cooperation. Hence, hydro-politics is crucial in understanding how these conflicts came to emerge and how these treaties were created based on power relations. The works of Mark

Zeitoun (2008) and Aaron Wolf have been instrumental in the field of hydro-politics as their bodies of literature seek to examine the underlying factors which give rise to hydro-political and transboundary conflicts in which both authors build off from each other in their works. Aaron Wolf's work on showing how treaties between parties or states do not necessarily amount to cooperation.<sup>26</sup> Unequal distribution of water resources has been one of the driving forces towards hydro-politics and this is characterized by the asymmetric relation, which can be defined as hydro-hegemony.

In his book, *Power and Water in the Middle East: The Hidden Politics of the Palestinian-Israeli Water Conflict*, Mark Zeitoun (2008) uses social power theorist Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony—use of a dominant ideology, coupled with force to maintain hegemony over the masses—to provide a clearer understanding of his notion of hydro-hegemony. In his work, Zeitoun builds off from his previous work (2006) and uses the Israel-Palestine water conflict as the main case study, seeking to examine the “Hidden Politics” of the water conflict. Power asymmetry, the economic and strategic value of water, in addition to ‘virtual water’ are the three reasons Zeitoun provides that explain the absence of water wars<sup>27</sup>. Due to the asymmetric relation between the weaker downstream state and the stronger upper stream state water wars are least likely to occur considering the fact that the weaker state does not have the power and capacity to challenge the upper state<sup>28</sup>. Zeitoun emphasises this in length by referring to the Palestinian-Israeli case, where asymmetry was apparent in the 1995 Oslo Accords which was “structured to limit Palestinian participation”<sup>29</sup> Building off from his work,

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<sup>26</sup> Wolf, Aaron T. 2007. *Shared Waters : Conflict and Cooperation* / Aaron T. Wolf.

<sup>27</sup> Zeitoun (2008) Page 4

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Page 7

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Page 8

Zeitoun reiterates that the absence of war does not amount to an absence of conflict, hence, water in such situations is used as a weapon or a target<sup>30</sup>.

Zeitoun's work addresses the issue from a hydro-hegemonic approach and notes the underlying root causes of the Palestinian-Israeli water conflict. While he succeeds in taking into account the disparity between the supply of water to the Palestinians versus the Israeli settlers and the "hydrological apartheid" structure that contributes to this unequal distribution and control over water, he does not explicitly stress on the concept of settler colonialism. Zeitoun acknowledges how the growing Israeli settlement enterprise plays a major role in this "hydrological apartheid." This is especially seen when referring to the Israeli settlement industrial and agricultural farms that are supplied with greater quantities of water than the Palestinian farmers noting that "the big conflict is over agricultural water."<sup>31</sup>

While the current available literature succeeds in providing a comprehensive conceptualization of hydro-hegemony and examines the power asymmetry that is evident between riparians, it does not look at water issues from a settler colonial perspective. Using a settler colonial framework to address water issues, specifically Israeli-Palestinian water issues has not been previously addressed in length. Looking at how water control changed over time is not a factor that is analyzed under hydro-hegemony. Nevertheless, when examining the role of Israel as a hydro-hegemon the available literature does illuminate the tactics and strategies that Israel uses to engage in water control but it does not go beyond to examine its actions as a result of being a settler colonial state and how its tactics and strategies have intensified over time.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Page 7

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Page 14

## Settler Colonialism

Settler Colonial Studies has been a crucial disciplinary field that contributes to the understanding of the policies and frameworks underlying settler-colonialism, in addition to providing a comparative analysis with other forms of colonial projects. It emerged as a result of the existing structural inequalities between indigenous people and their counterparts, the settler.<sup>32</sup> Using a settler colonial framework to serve as a foundation to distinguish colonialism from settler colonialism, it also seeks to answer the differences between both. Even though both are intertwined, yet certain elements stand out as separate and or different from colonialism overall. Scholars such as Lorenzo Veracini (2011) have been at the forefront in introducing settler colonial studies and he has coined the term settler-colonialism.<sup>33</sup>

There has been rich body of literature examining the Israeli-Palestinian water conflict and these bodies of literature study the conflict from various concepts. The overall Israeli occupation of Palestine is seen as a settler-colonial project which differs from colonialism. Settler-colonialism, as a practice, is aimed at replacing the indigenous people with settlers and eliminating their traces through violence and oppression. On the other hand colonialism is aimed at colonizing the land and using the indigenous for labor. Settler colonialism in the case of Israel-Palestine is a form of settler colonization which colonizes the land and forms what Patrick Wolfe refers to as “settler society.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations.” 2014. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, no. 2

<sup>33</sup> Lorenzo Veracini (2011) *Introducing Settler Colonial Studies*, 1:1, 1-12,

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Wolfe (2006) *Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native*, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4, 387-409

One important factor that distinguished settler colonialism from other forms of domination and control frameworks is time. In his book on *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnograph Event (Writing Past Imperialism)*, Wolfe's (1999) oft-quoted statement in settler colonial literature, "settler invasion is a structure, not an event" emphasizes the prolonged existence of settler colonialisms effects from the past to present. This is significant because it shows the longevity of settler colonialism and the way its process develops over time and expands. It is not a single event, it is a slow creep that is guided by the "logic of elimination." Domination and control under settler colonialism does not happen over a single event, on the contrary, it's effects can be seen over time.

Veracini's article, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies" (2011) he studies colonialism and settler colonialism as two concepts and distinct structures, that being, settler-colonialism has an aim of not only exploiting the local indigenous population but also eliminating them from their lands. While colonized people experience domination and exploitation and engage in "unequal labor relations" as a mode of survival and a way to preserve their "distinct groups." They also view the local population as an obstacle to the formation of their state. He further goes on to analyse the various modes of resistance through the use of anti-colonialist rhetoric aimed at decolonization.

Nevertheless, in his article "Containment, Elimination, Endogeneity: Settler Colonialism in the Global Present, Rethinking Marxism" Veracini (2019)<sup>35</sup> not only builds off from Wolfe's work but he opens a space aimed at providing an analogy between the present global structure

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<sup>35</sup>Lorenzo Veracini (2019) Containment, Elimination, Endogeneity: Settler Colonialism in the Global Present, *Rethinking Marxism*, 31:1, 118-140

that is characterized by neo-liberal capitalist accumulation and the historical policies of settler colonialism. Veracini goes back to say that settler colonialism is not interested in the indigenous labor, but interested in indigenous land. Furthermore, Veracini views containment as elimination and inherently related to settler colonialism. Looking back at the Framework of Hydro Hegemony, Zeitoun and Warner (2006) address containment as a water control strategy to achieve hegemony at the river basin level. The overlaps of these strategies show that a link can be drawn from FHH and settler colonialism, but that is insufficient since both have different goals to achieve.

In “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native” Wolfe (2006) examines past colonial cases to build his argument, he explores the link between genocide and settler colonialism which he refers to as “logic of elimination.”<sup>36</sup> This article, among the other articles which have contributed to the vast body of literature on settler colonialism, is widely cited by other scholars. He notes the relation of race to genocide and settler colonialism pointing out that race is made up when a particular group of people are targeted, such as the racialization of blacks as slaves.<sup>37</sup> Hence, Wolfe shows that race is not the basis of elimination, but “access to territory” is. He provides a comparative analysis of settler colonial cases on Australia, Israel-Palestine, and the United States. The underlying premise of settler colonialism is centered around the idea of land and the elimination of the indigenous people. In addition, this genealogy of colonialism provides a comprehensive understanding of the emergence of many states today. Wolfe’s (2006) argument thus attempts to show how settler colonialism has the potential to be the driving force

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<sup>36</sup> Patrick Wolfe (2006) Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8:4, 387-409.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 388.

behind a genocide, yet he emphasises that settler colonialism is not a form of genocide, since genocides can take place without the occurrence of settler colonialism. However, the commonality it has with genocide is that “it strives for the dissolution of native societies” if the actions of a settler-colonial state intensifies and is neglected by the international community.

Relating Patrick Wolfe’s literature to Mark Zeitoun’s (2008), there is a clear correlation between the data on the Israeli settlement as a “resource-consuming project” and Wolfe’s emphasis on agriculture as being “inherently sedentary”<sup>38</sup> in the context of settler colonialism and its expansion through continuous grab of native lands. This is significant as it shows how both their works compliment each other, and Zeitoun succeeds in providing a case study that proves the impact of settler colonialism on every sector of society.

It is important to expand on hydro-hegemony to acknowledge that settler colonial states who engage in water control and behave as hegemons are not only trying to achieve the mere goal of consolidating control over water resources but it is one of the tools they use to achieve their greater goal of eliminating and erasing the native from their lands.

### **Environmental Colonialism and Injustice**

Kyle Whyte, on the other hand focuses on settler-colonialism as a form of ecological domination resulting in environmental injustices towards the indigenous people. Literature such as Whyte’s *Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice* (2018)<sup>39</sup>, helps broaden the research in this field by focusing on one of the consequences of settler-colonialism, environmental and ecological domination. This provides a greater understanding of

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<sup>38</sup> Wolfe (2006)p. 395

<sup>39</sup> Whyte, Kyle. 2018. “Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice.” *Environment and Society* 9 (1): 125.

settler-colonialism by showing the impacts of its policies which target every aspect of the natives' society. In his *Indigenous Experience, Environmental Justice and Settler Colonialism* (2016), Whyte argues that environmental injustices inflicted upon indigenous people is due to the “development of settler nations” through various means such as military invasion, capitalist exploitation and anti-indigenous policies.<sup>40</sup> He refers to Canada’s Aamjiwnaang First Nation, and the United States as examples. In line with Veracini and Patrick Wolfe, Whyte emphasizes settler colonialism’s injustice towards the natives. Not only does he look at it as a form of elimination of the native’s society, but “robbing another society of its capacities to experience the world as a place of collective life.”<sup>41</sup>

In this work and in related references it was observed that settler colonialism is not only exploiting resources in the territories they colonize but also sending the profits and resources to the metropolitan, capital city. Whyte’s (2018) contribution to this field is the inclusion of environmental injustice as a result of settler colonialism that interferes and erases the socioecological experience of the indigenous population. Whyte also focuses on the concept of domination from an ecological standpoint. He emphasizes on the ecological domination of an indigenous people by the settler population is aimed at creating ecologies of their own at the expense of the indigenous.

Relating this back to Patrick Wolfe’s literature, there is a clear correlation between Zeitoun’s (2008) data on the Israeli settlement as a “resource-consuming project” and Wolfe’s

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<sup>40</sup> Kyle Whyte *Indigenous Experience, Environmental Justice and Settler Colonialism*, 2016, page 2

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

emphasis on agriculture as being “inherently sedentary”<sup>42</sup> in the context of settler colonialism and its expansion through continuous grab of native lands. This is significant as it shows how both their works compliment each other, and Zeitoun succeeds in providing a case study that proves the impact of settler colonialism on every sector of society. Therefore, my contribution to the existing literature will be to explicitly intertwine the concept of settler colonialism and hydro hegemony as an attempt towards building an understanding that aims at showcasing the negative impacts of settler colonialism in the field of the environment on the indigeneous population.

### **Counter-Hegemony, Sumud, and Everyday forms of Resistance**

While these authors succeed in providing a comprehensive analysis of hydro-hegemony, the concept of counter-hegemony or resistance to hegemony was not extensively explored, specifically in the Jordan River basin, considering that it is one of the most studied transboundary water conflicts. Looking at resistance to hydro- hegemony is crucial in understanding how local populations are impacted by the power dynamics. While this is not extensively written about, using a settler colonial framework will help to build an understanding of how Palestinians at the local level engage in resistance to counter Israel’s settler colonial policies. My contribution to this section and to the available literature is to explore the everyday forms of resistance that Palestinians engage in against Israel’s control over the water resources.

Zeitoun and Warner (2006) highlight the urgency to further explore the “anti-hegemonic resistance tactics” they specify the areas that need to be explored such as “effect of time, of silence, the “cost of no agreement” and methods of issue de-securitization.”<sup>43</sup> Since time is an important factor in settler colonialism, using it as a framework of analysis towards understanding

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<sup>42</sup> Wolfe (2006)p. 395

<sup>43</sup> Zeitoun and Warner (2006) P. 455

Zeitoun and Warner's (2006) point on exploring the "effect of time" can be helpful in understanding how resistance to hydro-hegemony changes over time.

Joseph Ivanka Wessels, visual anthropologist and human geographer, also addresses the limited empirical research that has been conducted with regards to counter-hegemony and agency at local level in the Jordan River basin. In her article "Challenging hydro-hegemony: hydro-politics and local resistance in the Golan Heights and the Palestinian territories" (2015)<sup>44</sup> she presents a comparative case study of two different border communities, the occupied Golan Heights and the West Bethlehem Villages in Area C of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). She explores these communities who are "living under Israeli military occupation and experiencing the impact of hydro politics in everyday life." One aspect that stands out in Wessel's work is her focus of analysis which is centered around the local level rather than state level. This is significant due to the little research done on the local impacts of hydro-hegemony. She addresses agency and resistance to military occupation at the local level in the Jordan basin. Another area that Wessel explores, which was not present in the previous literature discussed, is "how colonial logics are expressed in hegemonic praxis and counter-hegemony."<sup>45</sup> However, she does not use a settler colonial framework to address that, but she does acknowledge that Israeli colonial policies in the Jordan Valley are aimed at a total annexation on the basis of security.<sup>46</sup> She also emphasises that the lack of recognition for either citizenship and nationality are some of the main factors that drive the communities to engage in counter hegemonic modes of

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<sup>44</sup> Wessels, Josepha Ivanka. 2015. "Challenging Hydro-Hegemony: Hydro-Politics and Local Resistance in the Golan Heights and the Palestinian Territories." *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 72 (4): 601–23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 606.

<sup>46</sup>

resistance. Wessel views this as a manifestation of Israeli colonial logic and a further consolidation of hydro- hegemony in the Jordan River basin. This type of analysis is important in understanding the power dynamics beyond the three pillars of the FHH and to understand how the power established from this position is exerted to the local level. In addition to how the power of the “weaker state” or the power of the hegemonized is channeled back through various modes of resistance.

She concludes by showing the forms of nonviolent resistance that were used in both cases to address counter hegemonic praxis. Legal actions, non-violent popular resistance, were the methods that were used, in addition Wessel explores the notions of citizenship, cultural heritage and identities and states that “these form a strong basis for counter hegemony and human agency.”<sup>47</sup> She also views that the occupied communities continue to counter the Israeli colonial discourse and narrative through their mere existence and their identity serves as a social power.<sup>48</sup> This can be seen as counter hegemony and or resistance to the sanctioned discourse that Zeitoun and Warner (2006) had discussed.

Veracini (2019) explores “how oppositional movements in recent years have adopted recognizably indigenous modes of resistance” and he emphasizes on the importance of indigenous struggles. One of these modes which he discusses is place-based protests which is the connection to the place where a specific identity can be tied too. This can be related to Wessel’s emphasis on strong local attachment and identity that Veracini (2019) views as “a fundamentally indigenous mode of protest”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 619.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Veracini 2019, p 123

One of the major contributions to the field of resistance has been provided by James Scott. In his book *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance* (1985), he studies the peasant and slave societies and their everyday forms of resistance to domination<sup>50</sup>. He reveals the informal everyday forms of resistance that is common among the peasantry and lower class especially among those who are not politically organized. He sees peasant rebellions and revolutions as less likely to be successful, therefore he seeks to understand the everyday forms of resistance that peasants engage in. He defines this as “the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents and interest from them.” He also reveals the weapons used such “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertions, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so on.”<sup>51</sup> Scotts states that peasants in the Third World are less likely to confront the authorities, so instead they resort to other forms of disobedience, or non compliance.

Jeff Halper (2006), an anthropologist and the former coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), looks at the collective reaction implied by the Palestinians to counter the occupation as an effective strategy which has prevented “there Israeli military and colonial machine from defeating them”<sup>52</sup>. In his article “A Strategy within a Non-Strategy: Sumud, Resistance, Attrition, and Advocacy” Halper looks at the steadfastness (*sumud*) and resistance of the Palestinians peasants, working class and petit bourgeoisie to the Israeli occupation. He defines this as “resistance that takes forms of daily coping, an insistence on

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<sup>50</sup> Scott, James C. 1987. *Weapons of the Weak : Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p, xvi

<sup>52</sup> Halper, J. 2006. “A Strategy within a Non-Strategy: Sumud, Resistance, Attrition, and Advocacy.” *JOURNAL OF PALESTINE STUDIES -BEIRUT THEN BERKELEY-*. 45-51.

carrying on one's life and a refusal to be cowards, as well as active and intentional forms of struggle",<sup>53</sup>

Building off from Halper's view on *sumud* as an everyday form of resistance Philippe Bourbeau and Caitlin Ryan (2018) show how *sumud* is also a form of "resilient resistance" in their article "Resilience, Resistance, Infrapolitics and Enmeshment."<sup>54</sup> They address the different debates centered around *sumud* being either a form of resistance or not and they argue that *sumud* is a form of resistance. They also explain how *sumud* emerged as a result of the constraints that were placed on organized political struggle during the late 1970 and early 1980s. According to Bourbeau and Ryan "In the context of the ever shifting occupation, one can frame one's daily activities as *sumud*, particularly when those daily activities aim to make life 'normal' in the context of the 'abnormal' occupation" To show how that is applied in Palestine, they address the daily struggle of Palestinians in the West Bank to secure adequate water and the alternatives they seek to "get on" or "make life 'normal.'" Based on Ryan's fieldwork and interviews in a village in the West Bank they reveal the adjustments Palestinians have to make to secure access to water, such as filling water tanks on the roof. They view this as one example of the impact the occupation has on the daily lives of the Palestinians and the adjustments that Palestinians have to cope with are seen as forms of resistance "or defiance of the occupation forces."<sup>55</sup> Yet they emphasize that these forms of resistance should not be viewed as "giving in to the occupation." On the contrary, they state that *sumud* provides the Palestinians with

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Bourbeau, Philippe, VerfasserIn, (DE-588)1081280808, (DE-576)454095104, aut. 2018. Resilience, Resistance, Infrapolitics and Enmeshment / Philippe Bourbeau (University of Cambridge, UK), Caitlin Ryan (University of Groningen, Netherlands).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 234

“strategies” to adapt to the occupation and these should be seen as resistance and resilience and not as acceptance to the ‘abnormality’ of the occupation.

Abeer al-Butmerh et. al (2019) view resistance to settler colonialism as a struggle for environmental justice due to Israel’s pillaging of natural resources , exploitation and annexation of land and resource dispossession<sup>56</sup>.

## Contribution

After examining both frameworks it is evident that there is an overlap of the tactics and strategies between hydro-hegemony and settler colonialism that which states use to achieve their goals, and this is the area where both frameworks intertwine. (*See Figure 4* for a breakdown of hydro-hegemony, colonialism, and settler colonialism) Nevertheless, it is evident that more research needs to be conducted on counter-hegemony, therefore, using settler colonial framework will be helpful in understanding how occupied or hegemonized populations react to the ever changing modes of domination. Therefore, it is important to expand on hydro-hegemony to acknowledge that settler colonial states who engage in water control and behave as hegemonies are not only trying to achieve the mere goal of consolidating control over water resources, but it is one of the tools they use to achieve their greater goal of eliminating and erasing the native from their lands. This can be seen in the containment strategy, sanctioned discourse, and coercion pressure. Hence Israel's containment water strategy, which includes

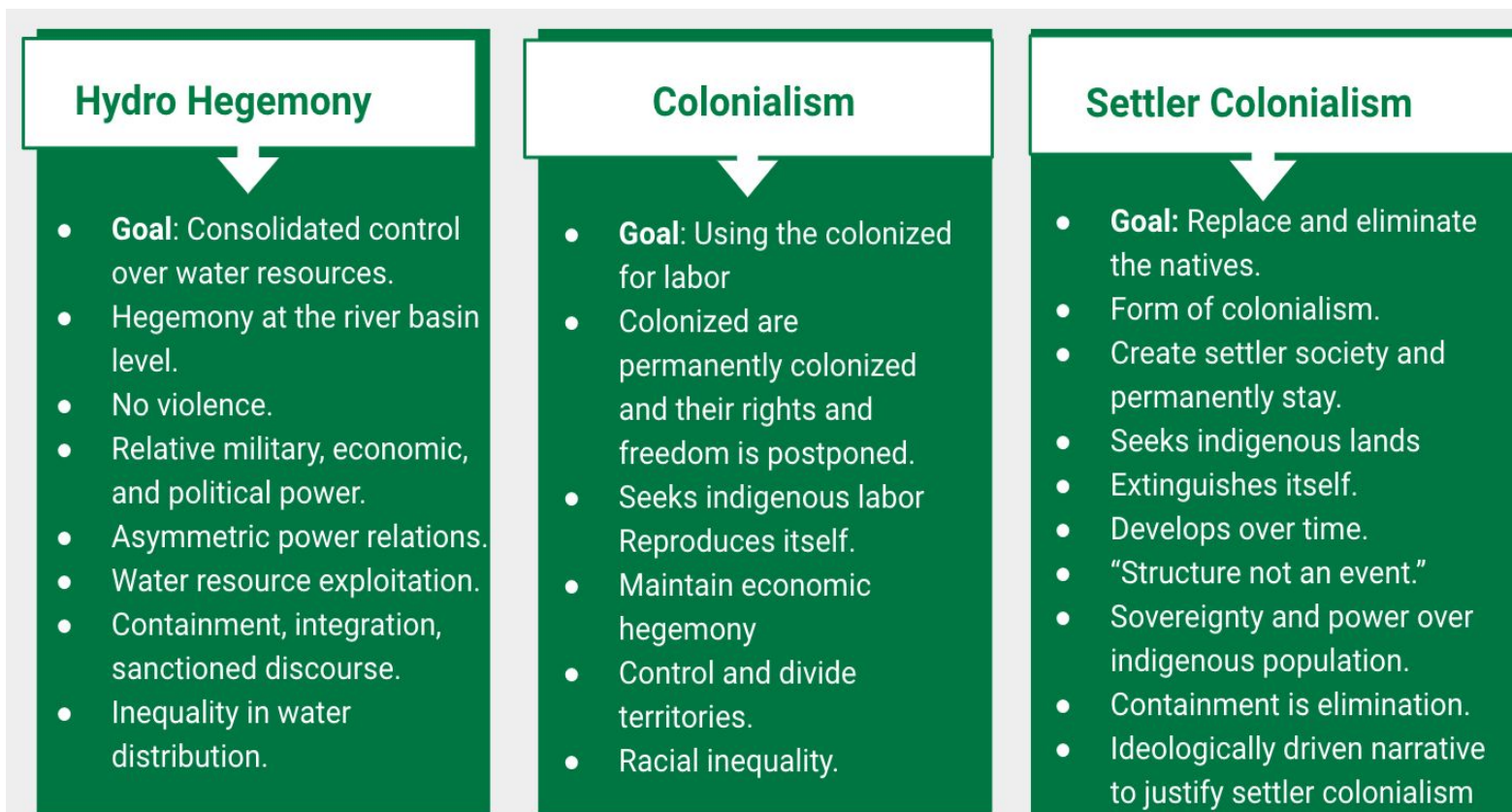
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<sup>56</sup> Al-Butmeh, Abeer, Zayneb Al-Shalalfeh, Mahmoud Zwahre, and Eurig Scandrett (2019). "The Environment as a Site of Struggle against Settlercolonisation in Palestine." In *Environmental Justice, Popular Struggle and Community Devt*, edited by Scandrett Eurig and Harley Anne, 153-72.

signing of treaties, should be viewed not just as a form of hydro-hegemony and domination but as a settler colonial strategy of elimination. As Veracini (2011) states “settler colonialism domination was instituted as a means to facilitate indigenous disappearances but the settler colonial would consider equality, recognition, provided that indigenous disappearances could be exacted otherwise.”<sup>57</sup> This is significant because the containment strategy, in addition to the sanctioned discourse, are all settler colonial tools that are part of a greater agenda of eliminating the native.

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<sup>57</sup> Veracini (2011), p. 8.



**Figure 4:** Chart comparing hydro-hegemony, colonialism, and settler colonialism.

## Chapter 4: Background

### The Zionist Movement and Political Ideology:

It is important to note that the water conflict in the region is not due to scarcity or lack of water, but it has been caused by the Arab-Israeli conflict. The underlying factors and root causes of this water crisis is a result of two reasons, the “politically induced” Jewish immigration to the region and the Zionists’ outlook and approach to the environment. Their political, economic, and military policies were shaped by their approach to the environment.<sup>58</sup> The Zionist ideology and their movement began in the late eighteenth century as a reactionary movement towards the rise of European nationalism,<sup>59</sup> and this political ideology aimed at establishing a Jewish national homeland in Palestine<sup>60</sup>. Returning to their ‘home,’ Eretz Israel or the Land of Israel was a move that encouraged Jews to migrate to Palestine.

The Zionist movement emerged as a result of pressure on Jews to either assimilate or continue being victims of persecution—since they were constantly being perceived as exiles. Assimilation went against the Jewish cultural and religious values thus giving rise to the Zionist movement and ideology. Hence, the emergence of Zionism in Europe occurred in two different ways<sup>61</sup>. In the Central parts of Europe it emerged as an intellectual conceptualization which was led by Theodor Herzl, and in Eastern Europe, it was as a solution to the Jewish plight.

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<sup>58</sup> Dolatyar, Mostafa, and Tim Gray (200) Water Politics in the Middle East : A Context for Conflict or Co-Operation? St. Martin’s Press, 2000. Chapter 4, page 87,

<sup>59</sup> Zunes (1993)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 96

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Israeli historian and activist, Ilan Pappé has argued that Zionism started as a national movement but acted as pure colonialism<sup>62</sup>. The colonization of Palestine was carried out by Zionist thinkers who claimed the territory through the use of biblical justifications. Dispossessing and eliminating Palestinians from their lands was openly talked about by Zionist leaders. This was seen in Hertzl's statement when talking about the Palesitnians saying: "We must expropriate gently the private property on the state assigned to us...Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly"<sup>63</sup>.

With numerous failed efforts to implant the Zionist settler communities in Palestine, this was accomplished following the Basel conference in 1897, which was the First Zionist Congress. Wealthy Jewish financiers funded institutions such as the Jewish National Fund—Keren Kayemeth Le Israel (KKL) to create Jewish settlements by taking control of Palestinian lands. JNF institution opened the door for the Zionist movement to make way in Palestine<sup>64</sup>. In addition, according to Gasteyer et al. (2012) they state that “early tours of Palestine by the JNF explicitly sought land that could yield a return on investment, and maps were developed to identify ideal locations in proximity to water resources for irrigation.”<sup>65</sup> Their ambitions of modernisation as a way to bring in more Jewish settlers prompted the establishment of the National Water Company, Mek0rot in 1937. Mekorot was established by the JNF, Histadrut-the Zionist labour organisation, and the Palestine Land Development Corporation (PLDC) to manag water.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Pappé, Ilan (2006). *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld.

<sup>63</sup> Veracini (2019). p.124

<sup>64</sup> Gasteyer, S.; Isaac, J.; Hillal, J. and Walsh, S. 2012. Water grabbing in colonial perspective: Land and water in Israel/Palestine. *Water Alternatives* 5(2): 450-468

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 458

<sup>66</sup> Currently referred to as the Israeli Land Development Corporation

### **Zionist Romanticization of the Environment: Justifications of Dispossession**

The foundational myths that is perpetuated by the Zionist discourse centers around the statement of “a land without people for people without land” and “making the desert bloom.” This philosophy is based on the dispossession of Palestinian indigenous people through various tactics and the colonization of lands.<sup>67</sup> Thus, ethnic displacement and dispossession were the main means of occupying land and forming the state of Israel in 1948.<sup>68</sup> Going back to when the Zionist movement started settling the Jewish migrants in Palestine, a large number of migrants settled in the Jordan Valley because access to water supply was a prerequisite to their settlement formation and part of their Zionist aspirations.

Water supply was of vital importance to the Zionists’ search for land and their aspiration towards settling in more lands than those that were ‘biblically promised’ to them.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, to ensure the survival of the Jewish national home, they needed an unrestricted access to water resources, this for them was a “non-negotiable prerequisite”.<sup>70</sup> Even going back to 1918, the Zionist delegation at the Peace Conference in Versailles lobbied towards including all the watershed of Jordan and Yarmouk River “within the borders of the national home for the Jews.”<sup>71</sup> In addition to also embracing all the Jordan Valley lands, they were aspiring to gain the lands of Syria and Lebanon. These, however, were failed attempts that were prevented by the French.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ahmad Huneity (2016) *Israel’s policy towards the Jordan Valley and its prospects*. Institute for Palestine Studies. [original in Arabic] Page 25

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid 94.

<sup>70</sup> Dolatyar, Gray (2000), p. 94 and Lowi (1993) p.40

<sup>71</sup> Dolatyar and Gray (2000), p. 95.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Within the Zionist movement there was a constant romanticization of the environment especially during the massive immigrant population. For them, these lands were exotic, the environment was unfamiliar, and were compounded by the harsh climatic conditions which they were not accustomed to.<sup>73</sup> Hence, the Zionist leaders responded to these concerns in two ways, romanticizing the environment and conquering it, but also to flourish it and make it “bloom.” The former led to the politicization of the environment through the use of ideological arguments, myths, and rituals to help them “overcome obstacles.” These were mere justifications used to assist them in integrating to the new ‘exotic environment.’<sup>74</sup>

In Edward Said’s “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims”, he argues that all these transformative projects which altered and eradicated the realities of Palestine were justified with arguments of “higher” interest of modernization and improving the pre-existing condition by making it better.<sup>75</sup> This was part and parcel of Said’s prominent concept of “the Oriental mind” connoting to the European, to the Western perception of “the other.” The Middle East, in particular Palestine, has always been a subject of the West’s “imagination and political will.”<sup>76</sup> This, he argues, is how modern Zionism originated.<sup>77</sup> The aspect of romanticization of the environment as exotic can be seen as a result of that. Especially since this contributed to the Zionist leaders glorifying the nature and perceiving it as a factor that strengthened if not renewed the relationship between the Jewish people and the soil.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p. 96

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Edward W. Said. “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims.” *Social Text*, no. 1 (1979): 7. p.8

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Dolatyar and Gray (2000), p. 97.

Therefore, as Avner de-Shalit, an Israeli political scientist, explains, it played a driving force in contributing to that sense of ‘returning to the homeland,’ to their original roots, and paved the way for the Jewish immigrants to become farmers and work on the lands of the Jordan Valley.<sup>79</sup> Resorting to agriculture was not only a coping mechanism to get accustomed to the new, alien environment but it was a strategy to create a bond with the land. Hence, the creation of settlements for Jewish immigrants in water rich areas was essential in expanding their presence from Jewish centers, such as Jerusalem and Safad, to rural areas.<sup>80</sup> Inhabiting in these lands was a way for the Zionist leaders to perpetuate the myth of “land without people” claiming that this was an uninhabited desert.<sup>81</sup> This argument not only undermines the severity of the catastrophe that Palestinians suffered but also provides room for denial and silencing of the Palestinian narrative and collective history. Such discourses were used to justify the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Even though other Zionist leaders were aware of the presence of Arabs in Palestine and in the valleys, they still emphasized on the notion of “technical superiority of their agriculture to that of the native farmers.”<sup>82</sup> Going back to Said’s point on “higher” interest, Jewish immigrants viewed their superiority as a tool to exploit agriculture and claimed that due to sovereignty and superiority they are more efficient than the Palestinians.<sup>83</sup> These were the initial steps towards environmental colonialism and injustice, the “development of settler nations.”<sup>84</sup> As Whyte

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<sup>79</sup> de-Shalit, Avner (1995) From the political to the objective: the dialectics of Zionism and the environment, *Environmental Politics*, 4 (11): 70-87. P. 73

<sup>80</sup> Dolatyar and Gray (2000), p. 97.

<sup>81</sup> George, Alan. (1979) “‘Making the Desert Bloom’ : A Myth Examined.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8 (2): 88–100. p.88

<sup>82</sup> Ibid p. 88

<sup>83</sup> George (1979) p.

<sup>84</sup> Whyte (2018)

(2018) argues that environmental injustices inflicted upon indigenous people is due to the “development of settler nations” through various means such as military invasion, capitalist exploitation and anti-indigenous policies. These were also the beginning steps towards erasing the sociological and ecological experiences of the indigenous people. Nevertheless, when Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, it executed a plan which resulted in the expulsion of the largest number of Palestinians. According to Ahmad Huneity, the expulsions in the Jordan Valley were the most systematic and deliberate.<sup>85</sup>

### **Policies of Israel in the Jordan Valley and the importance of Jordan Valley to Palestine**

The Zionist vision of the great Jewish state stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates, thus water is of strategic and ideological importance for Israel. They also claim that they have the right to the water in that entire region<sup>86</sup>. The Israeli interest in the Jordan Valley at the beginning of its occupation in the West Bank, was due to security reasons. It formed its security guard for Israel in the face of any Arab attempts to wage war.<sup>87</sup>

Immediately following its occupation of the West Bank in 1967, Israel took various measures to guarantee its control of surface and underground water found in the West Bank. Israel also issued several military orders guaranteeing its control over the water resources, including Resolution No. 98 of 1967 --- which gives the Israeli army full authority over all matters relating to water in the Palestinian territories, Mekorot<sup>88</sup>. It also prohibited Palestinian construction of water infrastructure without obtaining a military issued permit. Even after the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid p. 25.

<sup>86</sup> Huneity (2017) p. 37

<sup>87</sup> Huneity (2017). p. 16

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 37

1995 Oslo II Agreement, another military order was implemented on June 7, 1997 which states, "all the water resources that have been occupied again are the property of the state of Israel"<sup>89</sup>. Various measures and policies have been implemented to limit the access of Palestinians to water, it also enclosed several Palestinian springs by declaring the surrounding area as closed military zones or nature reserves.

As for the Palestinians, the addition of the Jordan Valley to Israel means the loss of the Palestinian state at least 30 percent of its area, and thus the elimination of any aspirations for Palestine to establish a state with that area. The Jordan Valley is of strategic and political interest For the future state of Palestine, the Jordan Valley constitutes the most vital area for the implementation of developmental projects.<sup>90</sup> According to a Palestinians government official the Jordan Valley is the space for a viable state, there is no viable state without the Jordan Valley. The Jordan Valley is viewed as the breadbasket of the future state of Palestine; it is the place where people can irrigate, a place where it can also enable other conflict solutions for refugees and water and solve them in the newly born state.<sup>91</sup><sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>State of Palestine Water Authority  
<http://www.pwa.ps/page.aspx?id=Yy1DfNa1609414323aYy1DfN>

<sup>90</sup> Huneity (2017) p. 57.

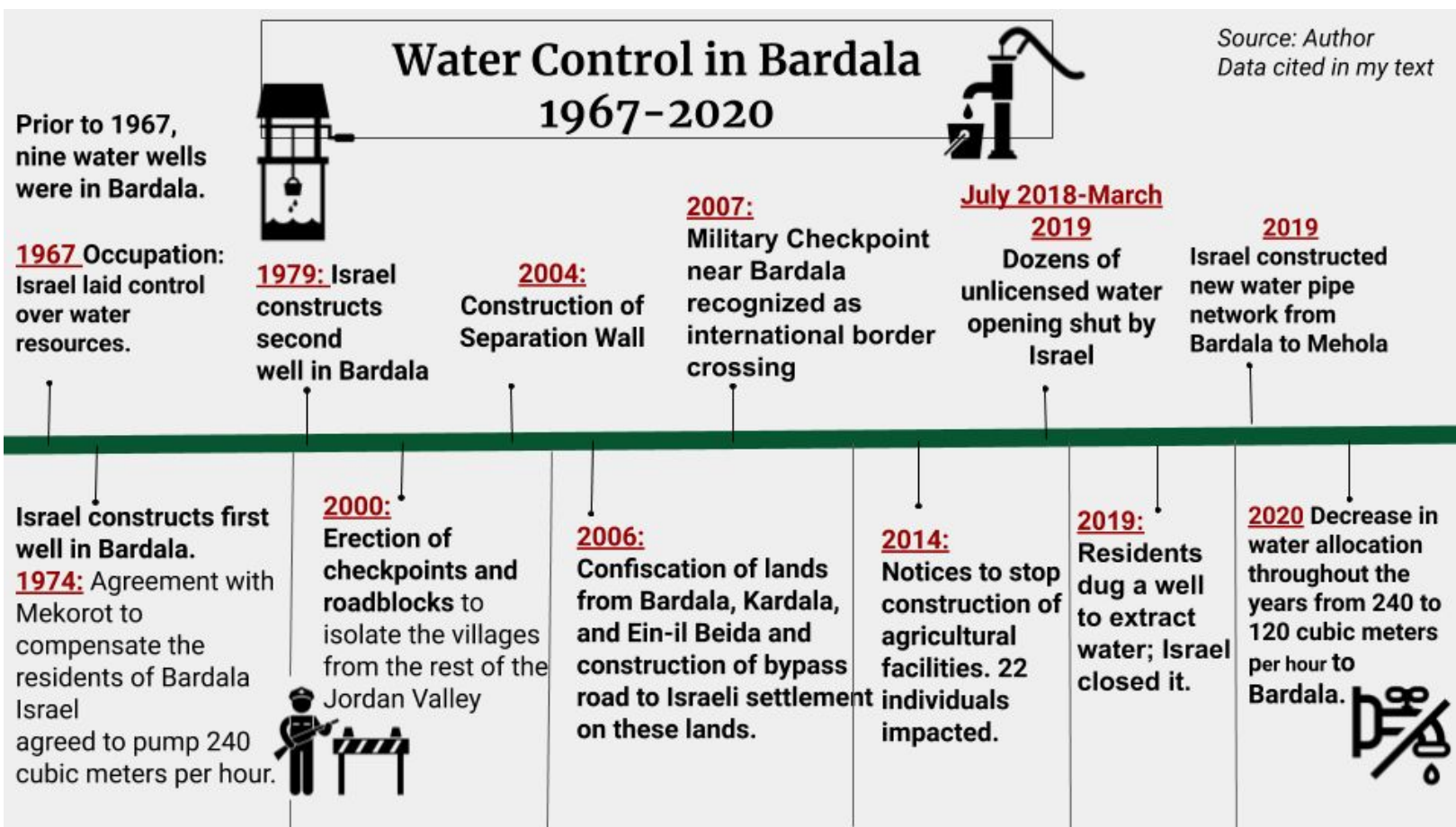
<sup>91</sup> Interview with a Palestinian government official

<sup>92</sup> Huneity (2017) p. 57-56.

## **Chapter 5: The Case of Bardala**

The village of Bardala is situated in the northern part of the Jordan Valley and in the North Eastern corner of Tubas Governorate located thirteen kilometers northeast of Tubas and twenty eight kilometers northeast of Nablus. As mentioned previously, the process of dispossessing the Palestinian inhabitants from the Jordan Valley was not limited to refugee camps in the city of Jericho, but dozens of villages were destroyed and large number of its populations were displaced. The permit regime, attack on water facilities, and control of water resources are all part of the greater settler colonial policies used against Palestinians. Therefore, to gain an understanding of this, and relating it to the bigger conflict, this chapter provides a case study of the village of Bardala and analyzes the data collected from the research to show how the growing settler colonial policies have been impacting the way Palestinians in the village experience water on the ground.

Through semi-structured interviews and participant observation with some of the residents from the village I was able to understand the situation first hand. The data obtained from the interviews and secondary sources displayed the intensified settler colonial policies that are not only discriminatory by nature but constitute grave violations and breaches to human rights law and international law. A timeline was also prepared to show the major interventions in Bardala, see Figure 5 below.



*Figure 5: Timeline of major events in Bardala*<sup>9394</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Data compiled from ARIJ news reports.

<sup>94</sup> ARIJ. 2014: [Two Families From Bardala Receive Notices to Stop Construction of Their Agricultural Facilities](#) (Original text in Arabic)

According to a fact sheet published by Ma'an Center for Development in 2013, in their efforts to shed light on the systematic efforts of Judaization in the Jordan Valley, and the forced displacement against the Palestinian population through a gradual control of land, house demolitions and theft of natural resources<sup>95</sup> they reported that 30 villages including pastoral ruins and plains were destroyed during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Among these, was the Ka'oun plain<sup>96</sup>, located near the Green Line, which was destroyed in 1948 and its inhabitants were forcefully displaced to Jordan, the city of Toubas, and some settled in the village of Bardala.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, during the 1967 Six Day War, Bardala had a population of 500 inhabitants who were divided among fifty to sixty families. Following the war, only ten families remained.<sup>98</sup> Today Bardala has a population of 1,637 inhabitants.<sup>99</sup> Majority of the inhabitants in the village depend on agriculture as their source of income and livelihood, yet since 1967 Israel has systematically controlled the most basic necessity and the main natural resource that the inhabitants need to sustain, water.

In efforts to isolate the Palestinian communities from the rest of the Jordan Valley, starting in the early 2000's Israel began erecting military checkpoints and roadblocks near Bardala. This was within the Israeli plan to isolate the Jordan Valley from its Palestinian surroundings, and then gradually annex it to Israel after emptying its Palestinian residents. This

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<sup>95</sup> Ma'an Development Center, <http://www.maan-ctr.org/old/pdfs/FSReport/Aghwar-Episods/ep7.pdf>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Huneity (2017). P. 26

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Community Profile: Bardala 2019.

was further intensified in 2007 when Israel transferred the military checkpoint near Bardala to “international crossings.” According to a Palestinian journalist<sup>100</sup>,

Recognizing military checkpoints as international crossings means you are crossing from country to country and since Bardala is on the border of the Green Line, this means crossing from a Palestinian territory to Israeli occupied territories past the Green Line.

Hence, stricter security procedures

Such efforts can be seen as settler colonial policies have systematically targeted Palestinians in efforts to prevent the development of Palestinian towns and to eventually dispossess them from their lands. In this context, water has been used as a tool and at the same time as a weapon to control and dominate the Palestinians.

### **The Slow Creep of Settler Colonial Structures and Processes**

The case of Bardala is a microcosm of the realities Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley experience on a daily basis. In this context, looking at settler colonialism Jamal<sup>101</sup>, a resident from the village, recalled how Bardala was always known for its natural springs and mineral water. He tells me how some families had their own wells which supplied them with water for agriculture and domestic use. According to a World Bank Report, even before 1967, eight Palestinian wells were built for domestic and agricultural purposes<sup>102</sup>. In addition there were 209 wells in the Jordan Valley prior to 1967. However, following the Six Day War, two

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<sup>100</sup> Interview conducted by author.

<sup>101</sup> Note: Names have been changed for the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of their identities.

<sup>102</sup> World Bank 2009. West Bank and Gaza Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development. *The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank*. p. 12

deep wells were constructed by Israel in Bardala, one in 1968 and the second one in 1979.<sup>103</sup>

According to B'tselem, a non-profit Israeli information center for human rights in the Occupied Territories,

The drillings, like those next to Bardala and Ein al-Beida', are located on the hydrologic channel of the Mountain Aquifer, between the recharge area of the aquifer in the central West Bank mountain strip and the aquifer's eastern outlet in the Jordan Valley

Furthermore, according to the World Bank (2009) The water level in the Palestinian wells dropped at the rate of 2 meters a year, and salinity increased<sup>104</sup>,” In addition to the drying of the majority local springs that Palestinians used. This was the beginning of the slow creep of settler colonial tools to control and exploit the water resources of the village. According to a Palestinian government official he stated “Israel is using water not only for consumption and agricultural uses but as a political issue and a way to control land.” This has been the case in Bardala and in many other Palestinian villages and communities where water is being used a political tool to occupy more lands. Frey (1993)<sup>105</sup> discussed this when he explored the power relations of riparians and viewed water as a political weapon that is used to achieve greater goals. In an interview with an expert working with the Palestinian Hydrology Group, an NGO focusing on water and sanitation issues, he explained to me how the water needs of the Palestinians are used to achieve non water interest. He added “The Israeli logic is as follows: ‘I give you water but I will take land, I will not give you water because I have a settlement to expand.’” In addition he acknowledges Mark Zeitoun’s emphasis on hydro-hegemony and its balance of powers, but he

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Frey (1993). P. 63.

states “this does not mean that due to the weaker position of the Palestinians that we have to let go of the other tools such as legal international law and humanitarian international law.” He said these are tools we have not used yet. He further adds “Yes, there is a political dispute over the water resources but there is a commitment and obligation from the international community as human beings towards this issue. Being under occupation does not mean we cannot have access to water”

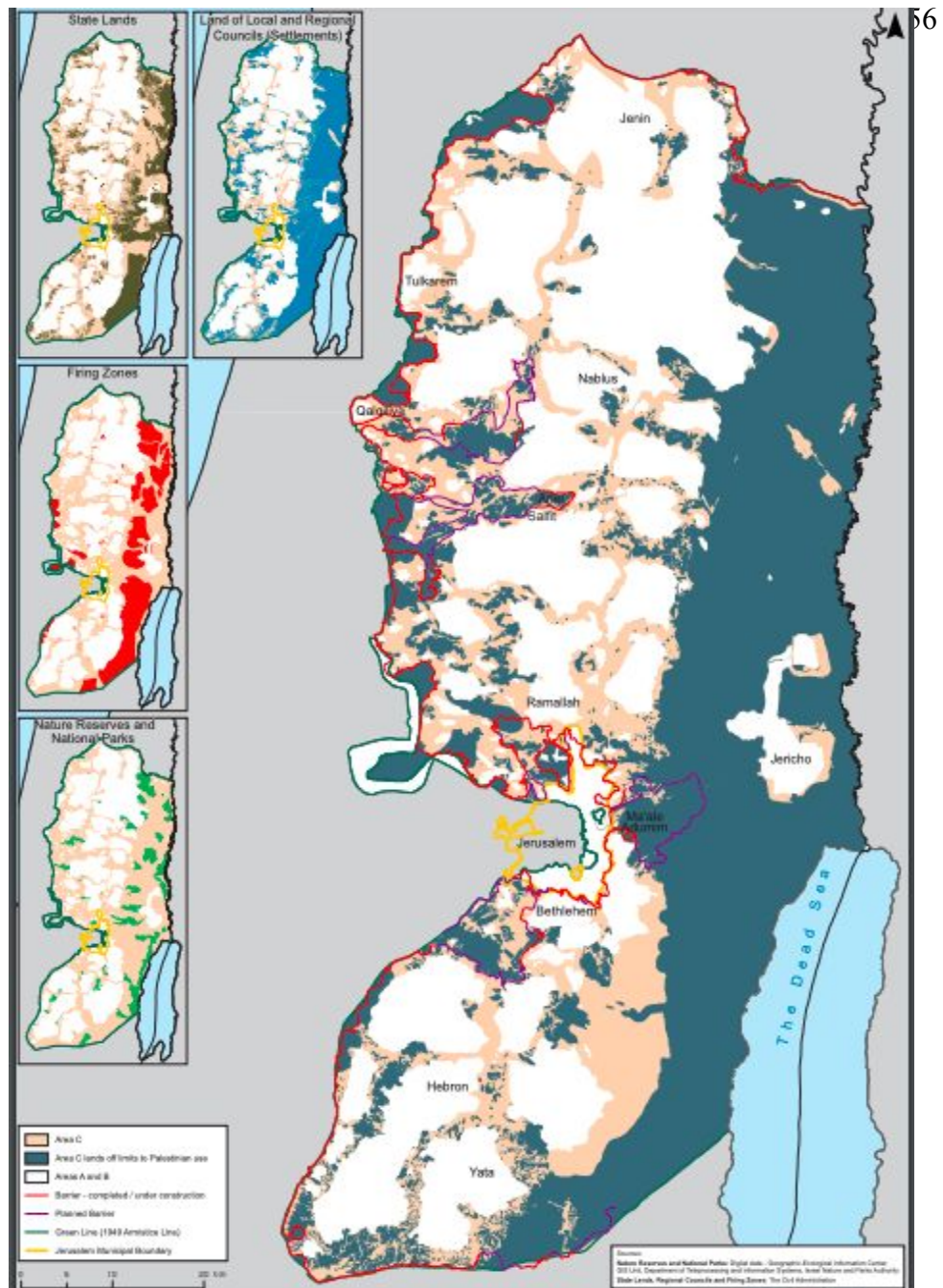
To further consolidate their control, according to the interviewees in Bardala, Israel and the residents of the village reached an agreement regarding the supply of water. One resident explained, “they told us ‘turn off the water you receive from your wells and we will supply you with water at its prime cost.’” Since then the Palestinian owners of the wells receive their allocation of water from Mekorot, the national water company of Israel that manages the water supply<sup>106</sup>.

Other tactics used by Israel to consolidate their control over the wells was through the 1995 II Oslo Accords that divided the occupied West Bank into three administrations. The area with the wells was designated under Area C, full Israeli civil and security control, however, the land around it was under Area B, Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control.<sup>107</sup> (See Figure 6 for a Map of Oslo Designated Areas, Area A, B, C and lands off limits to Palestinians).

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<sup>106</sup> WeWorld-GVC. “Rehabilitation of Bardala, ‘Ein el Beida, and Kardala Irrigation Systems” 2011. P. 3

<sup>107</sup> Interview with former minister of PWA.



- Area C
- Area C lands off limits to Palestinian use
- Areas A and B
- Barrier - completed / under construction
- Planned Barrier
- Green Line (1949 Armistice Line)
- Jerusalem Municipal Boundary

Figure 6 for a Map of Oslo Designated Areas, Area A, B, C and lands off limits to Palestinians

What has always been hailed as an ideal ‘cooperative agreement’ Selby critiques it by stating Oslo is “cooperation dressed as domination.”<sup>108</sup> This cooperative agreement is underpinned by an asymmetric relation between the hydro-hegemon and the hegemonised, in addition, the power asymmetry can be seen in the structure of utilizing the three main transboundary water resources, the Jordan River, the Coastal Aquifer, and the Mountain Aquifer. The groundwater from the Mountain Aquifer flows from the “heights of the West Bank towards Israel or eastwards into the Jordan Valley.” Furthermore, not only did Oslo II limit Palestinian participation, but it also created the “most intrusive transboundary policy coordination anywhere in the world”<sup>109</sup>, which was under the administration of the Joint Water Committee. This is seen in the Annex II, Schedule 8 of Oslo II 1995<sup>110</sup>:

- 1) a. All licensing and drilling of new wells and the increase of extraction from any water source, by either side, shall require the prior approval of the JWC.
- 1) b. All development of water resources and systems, by either side, shall require the prior approval of the JWC.
- 2) d. Plans for construction of new water and sewage systems or modification of existing systems require the prior approval of the JWC.

Under hydro-hegemony, Zeitoun and Warner (2006) view this power asymmetry as part of the tactics that a hegmon uses to consolidate its control over the water resources. They refer to this as the containment strategy where a hydro- hegemony contains the weaker state in an

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<sup>108</sup> Selby 2003

<sup>109</sup> Selby 2013 p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> Israel and PLO, 1995: Annex III, Schedule 8.

asymmetric position. Veracini (2019) equates containment to elimination and a form of dispossession. The bureaucratic and burdensome process of the permit regime is an example of militarization of control over the water resources and the implementation of settler colonial policies on indigenous people. Settler colonialism not only restricts Palestinians from their right to equitable access to water but it also results in creating new ecologies at the expense of the indigenous lands. Kyle Whyte (2018) states that settler colonialism “commits environmental injustice through the violent disruption of human relationships to the environment.”<sup>111</sup> Settler colonial measures to erase, disrupt, and eliminate the native does not only happen by force but also through the undermining of the self-determination of the indigenous people.

The power asymmetry is evident in the case of Bardala’s wells. As Zeitoun (2008) notes “deep wells are drilled where the powerful say they will be drilled” and this is what took place in Bardala.<sup>112</sup> The nature of this power asymmetry highlights the distinction between the dominant and the occupied. The villagers’ lack of agency over their resources, due to the ever growing militarized occupation, is the goal of settler colonialism, to consolidate their power over the Palestinians. The exclusion of Palestinian indigenous people through the use of water as an essential target is the process of eliminating the natives<sup>113</sup>. Selby (2013) notes that this intrusive structure of the water permit regime and of Oslo II “provided Israel with a means of continuing to restrict Palestinian consumption, and of maintaining its hegemony over the Mountain Aquifer.”<sup>114</sup> The restrictions placed on water by Israel has destroyed the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people whose livelihoods in the village were impacted by the drying of the

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<sup>111</sup> Kyle White, 2018 p.125

<sup>112</sup> Zeitoun (2008) p. 7.

<sup>113</sup> P. Wolfe (2006) p. 390.

<sup>114</sup> Selby (2013)p. 15.

Palestinian wells<sup>115</sup>. To restrict Palestinians from accessing water, they first restrict them from accessing land. In a report published by B'tselem titled Dispossession and Exploitation Israel's Policy in the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea, the author Eyal Hareuveni discusses how these restriction prevent "the movement of water to Palestinian communities outside the area"<sup>116</sup> In addition, Palestinians living in the Jordan Valley are prevented from accessing the springs because they are outside the lands of the Palestinian communities.<sup>117</sup>

Even though there was an agreement to compensate them, since 1970 the amount of water allocated to the communities of Bardala, Eid al-Baida, and Kardala has significantly been reduced by Israel.<sup>118</sup> At first, the residents of Bardala were provided with a million cubic meter per year, however during drought season the demand for water increased.<sup>119</sup> The residents were forced to over extract more than the limited supply. With every extra cubic meter extracted, Israel decreased that amount from the water supply of the following year. This is significant as it shows the way over time they began to decrease the supply of water to Bardala.

Jamal further explained this by saying "If we extracted one million and two-hundred thousand cubic meters of water this year, next year they will deduct two hundred thousand from the one million." Jamal and his brother, Kamal<sup>120</sup>, a resident and a farmer in the village, states that this is part of the settler colonial strategy to gradually limit the supply of water to the village and continue diverting excess amounts to the nearby settlements. The water allocated to the

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<sup>115</sup>"The Occupation of Water." Amnesty International, November 29, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Eyal. Btselem

<sup>117</sup> Ibid 23.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with a resident 2019.

<sup>120</sup> The name has been changed.

settlements has enabled them to develop intensive-farming methods and to work the land year round, with most of the produce being exported.

Wolfe's widely quoted statement, "settler invasion is a structure and not an event" is applicable here. Hydro-hegemony and the control over water resources is one aspect of that, because the end goal is dispossession from land and access to territory. To do so, it engages in an "inclusive, land-centered project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies" and in this case targets the one most important resource needed for survival.<sup>121</sup> One of the main ways to do that is through the interference with the way of life that the villagers have been practicing and passing down on to generations and most importantly the disruption of the "system of responsibilities" that water supports.<sup>122</sup> Water supports every aspect of a community, the people, the animals, crops, sanitation. etc. Hence, this interference is an example of environmental injustice that disrupts the way of life that a community has been accustomed to<sup>123</sup>. Whyte connects settler colonialism to ecological violence and environmental injustice, by defining settler colonialism in this context as:

Complex social processes in which at least one society seeks to move permanently onto the terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial places lived in by one or more other societies who already derive economic vitality, cultural flourishing, and political self-determination from the relationships they have established with the plants, animals, physical entities, and ecosystems of those places.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Wolfe 2006, p. 393.

<sup>122</sup> Whyte, 128

<sup>123</sup> Whyte, 128

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.135

In the case of Bardala, this began with the control over the wells and designating them under Area C which ‘eliminates’ the villagers’ power and agency over their own resources and creates a sense of reliance on the occupier for the allocation of their most basic need of water. The dependency on the occupier for “the mere fact that we have to buy our own water from them [Israel] continues to baffle me, even after all these years” explains Jamal. Yet, this is significant as it goes back to the logic of the Zionist ideology that was discussed previously. The ideological justification that the Jewish immigrants have the ability to use the resources better because of their ‘superiority.’ Nevertheless, this type of justification falls in line not only with the settler colonial ideology of dispossession but most importantly with the fact that “settler colonialism destroys to replace.”<sup>125</sup> The case of the wells is a clear example of how settler colonialism is not just about the physical settlement, or the settler society that is established, but the structured process of measures taken to reach to the phase of replacement with a desire of expansion of territory.

### **Impact on Agriculture**

In Bardala where agriculture is the main source of income and more than 95% of the residents depend on it for their livelihood, the restrictions and the control over water continues to have catastrophic impacts on their daily life.<sup>126</sup> From the early onset of the Jewish immigration, establishing settlements in water rich areas was the goal to sustain the settlements<sup>127</sup>. Hence, the reason Israel drilled two wells in Bardala was for the purpose of supplying water to the nearby

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<sup>125</sup> Wolfe 2006. P. 388.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Palestinian journalist from Jerusalem.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with expert on settlement activities in the West Bank.

settlement of Mehola.<sup>128</sup> The first settlement to be established in the Jordan Valley was in 1970, Mehola a moshav, which is a communal, agricultural, and a religious settlement, is located built south of the Palestinian village Bardala (See Figure 7)<sup>129</sup> with 471 settlers residing there. Majority of the settlements in the Jordan Valley have religious populations; and religious settlers are generally more radical and ideologically committed<sup>130</sup>.



*Figure 7: Map of Bardala with the Israeli settlement of Mehola*

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Peace Now

<sup>130</sup> Interview with an expert on settlements in the West Bank, 2019.

The settlement today continues to expand as settlers either build inside the settlement or construct outposts beside Mehola. An outpost, is an illegal Israeli settlement that was constructed without the approval of the Israeli government<sup>131</sup>. Around Mehola there are two outposts, Shirbat Hassabim, established in 2016 and Givat Sali't established in 2002 and is currently awaiting settlement construction<sup>132</sup>. Shadmot Mehola, is another settlement near Mehola which was established in 1979 and has 652 settlers.<sup>133</sup> Palestinian communities that are surrounded by these settlements and outposts are under constant threat of “house demolitions, denial of access to water, education and health.”<sup>134</sup> The outposts are constructed at strategic locations near the settlements, they are approximately a few miles away from the Mehola and this is a way to slowly expand their presence in that region by connecting all the outposts to create a larger ‘settler society’ in the near future.

According to an expert on settlement activities in the West Bank “[Israel] they wanted a block, a settlement, they needed to accumulate a bunch of parcels.” Hence, this expansion of outposts is part of the strategy of confiscating more land; and keeping in mind the number of settlers in the two above mentioned settlements, water in these settlements is available 24 hours a day and the water is allocated from the wells in Bardala. This accumulation of land, as Veracini (2019) explained can be seen as a form of ‘primitive accumulation’ in which land is appropriated and accumulated with no reproduction. In the article “Why Israel is Hoarding Water?” Mark Zeitoun and Muna Dajani (2020) address Israel’s fixated need on controlling and hoarding as

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<sup>131</sup> Settlements under international law are illegal.

<sup>132</sup> Peace Now

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> “New Building in Mehola Settlement” 2011. Jordan Valley Solidarity.

much water as possible even though they are the least ones who need it<sup>135</sup>. According to Zeitoun and Dajani “Israel controls more water than Palestinians and the Jordanians combined and more than double its entitlement when measured against the principles of the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention” in addition they address the failures of Israel to materialize the 1994 peace treaty on water with Jordan. In his earlier work on Israel-Palestine water issues, Zeitoun demonstrated how Israel facilitates hydro-hegemony by constantly exploiting and dominating the water resources. In this most recent article Zeitoun (2020) acknowledged Israel’s use of “water as an effective tool of colonialism or even ethnic cleansing.” This is significant and crucial as it affirms the argument being made in this thesis but also shows how the framework of hydro-hegemony in the case of Israel-Palestine should also be viewed as part of the settler colonial framework that is aimed at eliminating the Palestinians.

Various means have been used by Israel to take control of the land in Area C in efforts to dispossess and exploit the land with a greater goal, the total de facto annexation of the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea to Israel<sup>136</sup>. Some of these methods are done through declaring these lands state lands, closing land classified as nature reserves, minefields and lands used for military practice<sup>137</sup>. With regards to that, in one interview, a resident from Bardala expressed the difficulties they faced during the winter of 2020 due to Israel’s declaration of certain lands which belong to some of the farmers in Bardala as closed military zones. This prohibits Palestinians from entering and to do so they have a precautionary sign and other impediments, and accordingly no one is allowed to enter to cultivate their land. One farmer explained:

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<sup>135</sup> Zeitoun, Mark, and Muna Dajani. (December 19, 2019) “Israel Is Hoarding the Jordan River – It’s Time to Share the Water.” *The Conversation*,

<sup>136</sup> Interview with an expert on settlement activities.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

This winter, the situation was very difficult for us farmers because many of our agricultural equipment and tools were confiscated by Israel when we were working on our lands. The agricultural fields, which are declared as closed military zones belong to some of the farmers from Bardala who grow barley and wheat. This resulted in the confiscation of 5-7 tractors.

The denial of access to these lands can be seen as “accumulation by dispossession ” Veracini (2019) explains this further saying that this type of accumulation does not amount to physical dispossession of the indigenous but it is an “appropriation of physical and symbolic public spaces” In this context, accumulation of water is also applicable, since Israel systematically denies Palestinians from accessing water. Veracini views the denial of access and settler colonialism as both primarily focused on the suppression of “place-based” relations”<sup>138</sup>

According to a report published by Applied Research Institute (ARIJ) and Jerusalem Action Against Hunger (ACF), “The Separation Barrier surrounds and crosses through the land of some villages (Bardala and ‘Ein El Beida), isolating roughly 5,000 dunums on the other side of the Barrier”<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, they used methods used such as confiscation of lands in the Jordan Valley that were from Palestinian refugees which was in clear violation of military order, declaring lands as “state land” and according to B’tselem, “53.4 percent of that area, four time greater than pre-1967, is not deemed state land.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Veracini (2019). p.126

<sup>139</sup> “The Palestinian Agro-Production and Marketing System”. 2010. Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ) and Action Against Hunger (ACF)

<sup>140</sup> Btselem Eyal 15.

In an interview conducted with an expert on settlement activities in the West Bank he provides an understanding towards the lack of information regarding the establishment of Mehola.

Accordingly he stated:

The way they established Mehola was by taking people's private property, confiscating probably de facto without any official document and we don't have enough information about it. But we know the settlement was established by doing a series of what is known in Arabic as 'Tabdil'[land exchange]. Mehola, farther north, was established on land basically taken from dozens of families and we don't know exactly what belonged to whom and how it was done. Part of the reason we don't know is because Palestinian families and communities are not keen to cooperate. The whole issue of 'Tabdil' is very sensitive because what happened is that in many cases people lost their land and the way it worked was a wave of people fled from the West Bank, and what they [Israeli Civil Administration] did is that they mapped the absentee land, in return they engaged in land swaps with the Palestinians.. We don't know exactly how the land had been taken, legally speaking it was an extremely problematic mechanism which was used.

Farmers in Bardala expressed their frustration with the impediments that the settlements pose on the village with regards to water. Most importantly, the unequal distribution of water supplied to the settlement versus to the Palestinians in the communities nearby. Another farmer from the village, explained that the problem "is not the lack of water, but the unequal distribution of it."<sup>141</sup>

The village continues to suffer from water shortage due to Israel's refusal to increase the amount supplied. In a report published by Human Rights Watch in 2010, they conducted a fieldwork and

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<sup>141</sup>Interview conducted by author.

research on the Israeli water control in Bardala and according to their interview findings they revealed that when the settlement tanks were supplied with an adequate amount of water, pumping water to Bardala would stop.<sup>142</sup> The Palestinian wells used to pump 240 cubic meters of water per hour, currently the village receives 100 cubic meters of water per hour from Israel<sup>143</sup>.

Another farmer explained how the old water networks were ten centimeters in width, when Israel took control it cut the pipes in half and connected a pipe that was four centimeters. This meant that farm lands that were farther away did not receive water due to the low and weak pressure. Today, the well reservoir pumps 2000 cubic meter of water per hour to the Israeli settlements, but Mekorot provides 120 cubic meter of water to the Palestinian. He also added that this reduced the size of the farmland to almost a quarter, since the minimum cubic meters needed for farmers to irrigate their lands is about 300 cubic meter weekly. Other farmers such as Akram<sup>144</sup> who once used to cultivate 120 dunams<sup>145</sup> of land, today can only use 30 dunams due to lack of water. He further adds saying:

Before 1980, during the tomato season, trucks of tomatoes used to be exported to Jordan everyday, in addition to other seasonal produce. We also used to grow melons, watermelons, eggplants and carrots. Now we barely grow any crops due to the lack of water. The agricultural farms in Mehola are supplied with high quantities of water right from our village.<sup>146 147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Van Esveld, B. Malkin, N., Hijazi, S. (December 2010) "Separate and Unequal: Israel's Discriminatory Treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories" Human Rights Watch.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with a Palestinian journalist in Jerusalem.

<sup>144</sup> The name has been changed.

<sup>145</sup> Equivalent to 30 acres.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Akram 2019

Adding to that, it is important to note that the agricultural area in the settlements is much bigger than the built up area of the settlement and they are constructed strategically near water networks.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, Zeitoun states that “the agriculture sector in Palestine is stifled by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and its resource-consuming settlement project therein. The ratio of Israel–Palestinian agricultural water use is roughly 9:1” This goes back to settler colonialism where a whole range of various sectors motivate but also contribute to this enterprise. Thus settler colonialism as we have already established has an unending desire to take more land, therefore agriculture compliments that<sup>149</sup>.

Wolfe (2006) views agriculture as not only supporting the other sectors of settler colonialism but he notes that it is inherently sedentary, to that end it’s permanent. The Zionist movmenets’ aim from the start was to create the bond between the land and the people and the best way to do that was through agriculutre, but at the expense of native lands and livelihoods. This expansion of agriculture not only takes from the territories of the indiginous but Wolfe (2006) goes on to say that they accumulate and exploit the resources of the natives which results in the curtailing the modes of production for the indigneous people<sup>150</sup>. This has been the case of many farmers in Bardala and the case of many Palestinian communities who depend on agirculture for their source of income.

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<sup>147</sup> Abu Akleh, Lina 2018. “Raging Waters: Palestinians and Their Struggle to Access Water in the Jordan Valley” *Globus*. USFCA.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Etkes

<sup>149</sup> Wolfe (2006) p. 395.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

Only earlier this year, in February 2020, the Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett ordered the ban on Palestinian agricultural exports via Jordan.<sup>151</sup> This measure came as a result of the Palestinian Authority's decision to ban on imports of Israeli calves. Yet the measure taken by Israel will severely impact the national economy of Palestine considering the fact that according to Jack Khoury and Hagar Shezaf, "in 2019, the Palestinian Authority exported produce worth 502 million shekels." This is significant because the majority of the agricultural produce is from the Jordan Valley and this also adds to the proposed plan of the de facto Israeli annexation of the Jordan Valley. When I inquired about this, one of the farmers stated "We were prohibited to export produce to Israel for two months and this had a significant impact on the farmers because we have a specific season during February and March where specific produce is exported to Israel, such as zucchini and cucumber. Since we were not allowed to export to Israel this impacted our ability to sell the produce. This had a detrimental impact on us"

This is another tactic employed by settler colonialism to "dispossess the indigenous without labor" Veracini (2019) states that "indigenous peoples under settler colonialism are typically forced onto reservations, not into selling their labor; their labor remains a secondary consideration. " Hence this is significant here because this can be used as another tool of not only containment but of also accumulation. Therefore, viewing Israel's hegemony and containment over water resources only from a hydro-hegemony perspective undermines the severity of the conflict. Viewing these actions from a settler colonial perspective provides an understanding of how overtime Israel's control over water resources has been done through

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<sup>151</sup> Jack Khoury and Hagar Shezaf. February 2020 "Israel bars Palestinians from exporting produce via Jordan" *Haaretz*.

various tactics. These are done as a way to control and accumulate further resources such as land and water and deprive them from the Palestinians.

### **Attacks on Water Facilities: An example of militarization of control**

The burdensome and intrusive permit regime of the Joint Water Committee has prevented Palestinians from developing their water facilities and renewing their water pipelines. Prior to that in 1967, Israel issued Military Order No.158 which requires permits to be obtained for the construction or rehabilitation of water infrastructure and installation, therefore, lack of permits are subject to confiscation or demolition.<sup>152</sup> This also gave power to the Israeli military authorities to control the permit system. In 1995 this was further consolidated through Oslo II with the establishment of the JWC. In 1996, a year after signing the Oslo Accords, according to Selby (2013), “Eight USAID-funded production wells submitted in 1996 were not approved until 1999”<sup>153</sup>. Even if approval was granted by the Joint Water Committee, planning approval would take several years. In many cases permission excluded the renewal of well facilities and pipelines. In addition, the longest delays in approval were pertaining to wastewater treatment plans. Gaining approval and an implementation permit is what makes the process tedious and contributes to the ineffectiveness of the cooperative agreements. Therefore, the ineffectiveness of the JWC mainly as a result of Israel’s larger political and economic interest, and most importantly their means to continue restricting Palestinians from experiencing and controlling their own water, constituting a form of what Zeitoun refers to as hydro-apartheid<sup>154</sup>. This has resulted in Palestinians seeking other alternatives to accessing water.

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<sup>152</sup> Koek, p. 34

<sup>153</sup> Selby 2013. p. 13

<sup>154</sup> Zeitoun 2008. p. 15

Akram explained how residents of the village poke holes on the water pipes to access more water. He recalled how “Only a few days ago they [Israeli army and Mekorot] stormed our village, sealed up water holes and cut the water supply that provides the residents with water.” This constitutes an example of militarization of control, where the Israeli military uses water as a weapon of control and a tool to dispossess and to dominate. Which is also a way to “punish” the residents from ‘stealing’ water, but a common response that was shared among the farmers was that this is not stealing. Akram stated “They claim we are stealing the water, but how can they call it stealing when this is our water?” and another farmer stated “they don't steal for the mere purpose of stealing but because they are in need of water. When you have dunams of land, and you are only supplied with minimum water supply, and there are days where you don't have water the people start looking for alternatives.” This is done on the grounds of construction without Israeli permit. The demolition of water facilities and water infrastructure has been occurring for the past decade. According to a news article published by the Palestinian NGO, the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ) in 2007, they reported a demolition in Bardala of a pool that collects rain water with a capacity of 200 cups. This was done on the pretext that it was constructed without license and it violates Israeli laws since it is in Area C.<sup>155</sup>

In a publication released by the Al Haq Organization “Water For One People: Discriminatory Access and ‘Water Apartheid’ in the OPT, the author Elisabeth Koek sheds light on this hegemony and it shows that not only does it implement a burdensome permit regime but “the Israeli military authorities regularly target water collection systems for confiscation and

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<sup>155</sup> Applied Research Institute Jerusalem (ARIJ). 2007. “The Ethnic Cleansing Campaign of the Jordan Valley Intensifies”

destruction, including those provided by humanitarian organisations<sup>156</sup>.” To further maintain their hegemony and control, Israel has actively practiced the systematic denial of permits for the rehabilitation of water networks and infrastructure in the West Bank. Palestinians are required to obtain a permit from the Israeli Civil Administration, however, this does not apply to Israeli settlers. The institutionalized policies and practices are part of a system that has been aimed at maintaining domination and oppression of the Palestinians as a group. It perpetuated a system intended to segregate populations along racial lines. Therefore constituting a system of ‘water apartheid.’<sup>157</sup> This is seen in the practices, management, and the policies imposed on how Palestinians access water.

The demolition of livelihood related structures as a result of lack of Israeli issued permits has caused the displacement of hundreds of Palestinians. Specifically in Area C, the majority of those who have been displaced were impacted by the destruction of water structures, connections and wells. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHAoPT), “Between July 2018 and March 2019, the Israeli authorities shut down about a dozen unlicensed water openings serving farmers in Bardala, gravely affecting their livelihoods.”<sup>158</sup> Due to water scarcity and the limited access to water, Palestinians in the northern Jordan Valley who once used to cultivate around 15,000 dunums of land are now only able to cultivate about 8,000 dunumus. Constituting almost a 50 per cent decrease from the past years. Furthermore, OCHA notes that according to the Tubas

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<sup>156</sup> Koek, Elisabeth 2013. “Water For One People: Discriminatory Access and ‘Water Apartheid’” *Al- Haq*. p. 17

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 19

<sup>158</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. April 2019. “Demolitions in West Bank undermine access to water.”

governorate Israeli settlers in that area are allocated eight times more than the water that is allocated to the Palestinians per hour. The militiaztion of control and the destruction of water strucutres amounts to a clear case of ‘water apartheid.’ Koek provides the three pillars that the instutualized policies rests upon which result in ‘water apaartheid’ that are as follows<sup>159</sup>:

Israel has exerted considerable military and political efforts (1) to gain, maintain and consolidate exclusive access to Palestinian water resources, (2) to appropriate water resources for the sole benefit of Israelis, including settlers, and (3) to paralyse Palestinian water infrastructure development in the OPT, aimed at forcibly transferring Palestinian communities.

This type of institutionalized settler colonial policies are aimed to dispossess the Palestinians to ultimately annex the land and its natural resources. The system of domination that Israel has been practicing on the Palestinians since 1967 has only been further consolidated with any efforts made to revisit the allocation of water resources.

### ***Sumud*: Steadfastness of Palestinians in Relation to Water**

While there is not much literature discussing *sumud* or even resistance in relation to water, this section will briefly build towards that with an aim of creating a discourse on Palestinians’ modes of resistance towards control over water. Yet, in this context water and land are interrelated as one cannot exist without the other. Looking at the way settler colonialism disrupts ecological structures and the livelihoods of the Palestinians, specifically in relation to water, it is important to explore the ways in which the local population attempts in redistributing

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<sup>159</sup> Koek 2013. P. 90

the control and power. This section provides an analysis of the modes of resistance Palestinians in Bardala use to counter Israeli control over the water resources and their denial of access to water and land. It further seeks to show how the structure of power shifts from 'power over' the hegemonized and the colonised to 'power to' the hegemonized and colonised. This is helpful in looking at power relations not just at a state level but also at the local level.

The “distinct anti-colonial responses” that Veracini (2011) discusses can be characterized as *sumud*, in the case of the Palestinian,<sup>160</sup> which is an Arabic word which is translated to ‘steadfastness.’ “Existence is Resistance” an often used phrase that describes the Palestinians who continue to practice *sumud*, and their willingness to defy the daily struggles of the occupation. During the first *Intifada*, the uprising, in 1987, the word *sumud* became one of the symbolic words of the Palestinian national movement.<sup>161</sup> Selby (2003) notes that it represented the Palestinians’ “willful refusal to submit to [Israeli occupation] or be humiliated by it.” Therefore they were determined to establish an autonomy that to “get by, in spite of it.”

Often times the Palestinian resistance movement is perceived as the young men who throw stones, but *sumud* is getting past the daily struggles that Palestinians face. Veracini (2011) also adds that various modes or strategies of resistance can be combined for the colonised to respond. He notes that colonised people “develop distinct anti-colonial responses.”<sup>162</sup> In the interviews I conducted in Bardala, when I was discussing *sumud* in relation to water, an often repeated response was finding adjustments to counter the occupation as an act of *sumud*. One of

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<sup>160</sup> Veracini 2011. P 3

<sup>161</sup> Cochrane, Feargal, Rosaleen Duffy, and Jan Selby. *Global Governance, Conflict and Resistance*. Chapter 7: Governance and Resistance in Palestine: Simulations, Confrontations, Sumoud pages 118-134 Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

<sup>162</sup> Veracini 2011. P. 3

the respondents stated: “We have to continue to find alternatives to live, the Jordan Valley is known for its scorching heat, we cannot survive here without water. We as farmers need water for our agriculture, so we find alternatives to remain steadfast.”

Some other alternatives that the residents of the village have been using to adjust to the abnormality of the occupation were discussed by the interviewees. A year ago, some of the residents of Bardala dug a well to collect water without obtaining the necessary permit. Any construction or development of water infrastructure in Area C needs prior approval from the Israeli Civil Administration, since that is impossible to obtain, the residents proceeded to dig the well. However, this was met with defiance from the Israeli army who demolished the well and filled it with cement. According to James Scott (1987) this type of alternative is characterized as everyday forms of resistance or civil disobedience<sup>163</sup>. He views the peasantry as less likely to confront the authorities so instead they seek other forms of resistance. Furthermore and an important argument that Scott (1989) makes is that everyday forms of resistance does not constitute a form of collective action<sup>164</sup>. He views them as individual acts of “self help” that do not require the high level of coordination and organization as the other forms of resistance movements do. Looking at the case of Bardala, the residents' everyday forms of resistance can be seen when the residents poke holes in the water networks that connect to the nearby settlements. and create vents so they can access water. The residents explained to me that this has been one of the most common forms of resisting and it is an alternative to their current situation. This resistance however is countered by Israel who automatically seals the vents and issues a fine that

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<sup>163</sup> James Scott (1987).

<sup>164</sup> Scott, James, 1989. “Everyday forms of Resistance” *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*. Volume 4.

ranges from 4,000 NIS to 7,000 NIS which is equivalent to 1,000-2,000 US dollars. In addition to that, Israel constructed a new water network where the pipes were dug into the mountains, then passed through the neighboring village of Kardala and on to nearby Israeli settlements, pumping the town's supply of water<sup>165</sup>. While they are currently testing the new water network, the farmers are anticipating more water cuts, and less water supply to Bardala and the neighboring villages.

Nevertheless, when the aim is for the indigenous people to leave, then their persistence and survival is what's important. This is the case here, Israel's aim is to gradually dispossess and forcibly transfer the Palestinians, but Palestinians continue to remain steadfast and merely exist. Hence stems the phrase "existence is resistance." According to the findings of Joseph Ivanka Wessel, who explored counter-hegemonic tactics in two different border communities, the occupied Golan Heights and the West Bethlehem Villages in Area C of the occupied Palestinian Territories she revealed that "the occupied counter the occupier's discourse constantly by their mere existence and provision of alternative narratives built on historical and current, observable facts"<sup>166</sup>

Veracini emphasizes this stating "it is resistance and survival that make certain that colonialism and settler colonialism are never ultimately triumphant."<sup>167</sup> Palestinians for the past decades have been engaging in various modes of resistance as a way to show their resilience but also to survive as a group. This is where it is important to point out the distinction Veracini (2011) describes with regards to the different ways colonised people and colonised people react

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<sup>165</sup> Interview with a farmer conducted by the author.

<sup>166</sup> Wessel 2015. p.619

<sup>167</sup> Veracini 2011. p. 4

in the face of colonisation. While the latter may choose to leave on the ground of denying labour, the former may choose to “stay put, fulfill customary obligations, and survive as a distinct group” they also engage in unequal labor. These actions within themselves constitute acts of *sumud*. *Sumud* as a mode of resistance does not rely on coercion or public opposition. On the contrary it involves “practical ingenuity and improvisation.”<sup>168</sup> It is a mental state that rejects the statu quo and the governance structure. According to Selby (2003) what also makes it different is that it does not involve collective solidarity but the local and individual actions<sup>169</sup>.

*Sumud* in relation to water can be seen in the various ways where Palestinians, specifically farmers engage in to access water. Such as water theft where farmers disconnect the water meters at night to irrigate their lands, digging to extract ground water, and poking holes in the water pipes. While some of these activities can be seen as “illegal and sub-legal activities” they do so in order to survive and get by in the face of Israel’s evergrowing control over the water resources and continued water cuts to Palestinian villages and cities. Characterizing them as water theft though undermines the Palestinian right to access their own historic water. As we saw earlier from an earlier account of a farmer that he does not consider this as theft, or stealing because historically the water has been theirs. Selby on the other hand views this as a form of resistance to global governance and in this case it’s resistance to the water supply regime.<sup>170</sup>

Them engaging in acts of *sumud* can be seen as a form of regaining agency over their resources and having a sense of control over water even though they are aware of the consequences. It is also a matter of finding alternative sources of water and this could be done in

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<sup>168</sup> Selby p. 130

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Selby 2003. P. 132

various ways, such as different ways of collecting it, or storing in underground cisterns. Finding adjustments to the daily struggle of accessing water was also a common theme that Philippe Bourbeau and Caitlin Ryan (2018) revealed in their study.

Some of the farmers explained to me how they collect rainwater in underground cisterns so they can use it during emergency situations. One of them noted saying “It fills up to 60 cubic meters of water and even though cleaning the collected water is a tedious process we need to have a back up for days where we don’t have water, especially in the summer.” Upon my visit to their house, I observed how they fill up soda bottles with water when Israel supplies them with water. That is their way of making use of every drop of water, to ensure that they have enough. Selby thus views *sumud* as not only “a mode of resistance but also a mode of governance albeit one that is thoroughly out of sync with the international consensus on good governance in the field of water.” This is due to the fact that Palestinians have been able to manage their own water supply through alternative practices, and rationing of their needs. Their capacity to adapt and create new ways they can access water. Adapting however, should not be looked as Palestinians normalizing the occupation.

Another form of *sumud* which Palestinians engage in is simply their steadfastness and resilience to stay put on the land and not leave. While the goal of Israel’s settler colonial enterprise is to dispossess, Karim’s form of steadfastness is to continue farming and simply not leaving, this was a common mode of resistance among the interviewees. Karim said “One thing I know for sure, is leaving this land is not an option. We are staying here.” Palestinians choosing to remain on their lands is a symbolic vehicle of resistance. This type of resistance can be classified as place-based opposition where the indigenous people have a physical or symbolic

relation to the place where a specific identity can be tied too.<sup>171</sup> Their fight against settler colonization is seen in their rootedness and connection to their land. Because they know once they leave their lands, there is no return. Even though some residents of the village did leave for nearby urban cities, Akram said “Where would I go? My entire family lives here. We have a history in this land and a right to access our water.”

Both Akram and Karim’s families have been one of the indigenous families in Bardala who have been living there for generations. According to Wessel (2015) “the strong local attachment to cultural heritage and identity forms a strong basis for counter- hegemony and human agency against military occupation and colonisation.<sup>172,,</sup> Accordingly, the modes of resistance that are used between those who are under the domination of hydro-hegemony and those who are under settler colonial rule to counter water control, can be similar in terms of strategies and tactics.

However, indigenous people, like the Palestinians, that are facing settler colonialism, practice resistance because their struggle with domination is not just about accessing water, it is due to the fact that water is being used as a tool to facilitate their dispossession and elimination. Hence, Palestinians engage in everyday forms of resistance to maintain their presence on their lands and to continue adjusting to the daily impediments faced by the Israeli occupation. Therefore, while the Israeli-Palestine water issue is comprehensively explained under the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony, such important factors are not fully examined. Exploring it as such, paves the way for understanding the impacts of hydro-hegemony from the experiences of those on the ground, specifically people whose power and rights are limited. In addition to

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<sup>171</sup> Veracini 2019. p. 123

<sup>172</sup> Wessel 2015. P. 619.

understanding how resistance to water control under settler colonialism can be practiced. One of the farmers expressed his frustration with their situation and stated “We want the people to know what we are experiencing, and the struggles we have to endure as farmers without water. A village that is on the borders, and with a Separation Wall. The living situation continues to exacerbate, agricultural equipment continues to be confiscated and continue to run out of water” Hence, having to get by and get around the water regime is an act of steadfastness and resistance to settler colonial policies.

## Conclusion

Through this thesis I have explored the ongoing Israeli control over Palestinian water resources in the northern Jordan Valley village of Bardala using a settler colonial framework. The current literature examines this conflict using a hydro-hegemony framework and it illuminates crucial factors that contribute to hegemony and domination. Even though that is significant and highlights important elements that shape the power dynamics it does not provide a full understanding of the issue. Therefore a literature review was provided of comprehensive analysis on the framework of Hydro Hegemony, which has been used to explain water control, and water domination by riparians through a power relation understanding, and settler colonialism. While there are overlaps in the tactics and strategies that are used by hydro-hegemon and settler colonial states, they do however have different goals. While the former seeks consolidated control over the water resources, the latter uses water as a tool to achieve its political goal of eliminating the native.

This shows how Israel has been using water as a tool to dispossess, evict, and eliminate the Palestinians from their lands. The slow creep of settler colonialism and its control over water resources was evident in the stages prior to the creation of the State of Israel. Since 1967, when Israel laid control over the water resources in the West Bank, it has been systematically depriving Palestinians of their equitable share of water. Nevertheless, the Oslo Interim Agreement further consolidated this by its asymmetric power relations. Bardala is a village that is dependent on agriculture for its income and since 1967, they have been struggling to access water following Israel's control over their wells. The permit regime, attack on water facilities,

and control of water resources are all part of the greater settler colonial policies used against Palestinians.

A conceptual framework was also developed to understand modes of resistance to domination and hegemony. It was evident that there is little research on counter-hegemony and this is an area that needs to be further explored. Therefore, using a settler colonial framework helped in providing an understanding on how Palestinians in the village cope with the ever changing control over the water resources. Yet these modes of resistance should not be seen as normalcy to the occupation, these are methods used to maintain their presence on their lands. Therefore, I examined Palestinian resistance to water control through everyday forms of resistance and by remaining steadfast or practicing *sumud*. To conclude, this research provided a comprehensive analysis of how settler colonial framework can be helpful in studying water issues beyond the power dynamic relations on the riparian position and to understand how power at the local level is channeled back through various forms of resistance to colonial powers. The importance of studying this issue from a settler colonial perspective helps illuminate the greater goal that Israel is pursuing and that is the total de facto annexation of the Jordan Valley and the West Bank and the dispossession of Palestinians. Hence, it is crucial to not only examine FHH when studying the Israeli-Palestinian water issues but to go beyond that.

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