

Shir Hever, *The Privatization of Israeli Security*, (London: Pluto Press, 2018), pp. 256.

by Aide Esu

Shir Hever, an economic researcher of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, in the book *The Privatization of Israeli Security*, sheds light on one of the less explored questions of modern state transformations: the privatization of security. The author conducts a comprehensive analysis of this issue, questioning the Weberian concept of legitimate monopoly of force as one of the pillars of state constituency. Hever investigates the extent to which the security privatization process has weakened this classic interpretation of modernity. At the same time, he also demonstrates how in our late modernity the state does not collapse, but finds a new balance between public and private interests by outsourcing some functions, and new ways to exert control by reshaping the concept of defence and security. Israel is at the core of an international trend blurring the line between the public and private spheres in security, extending security issues from national defence to the security of individual persons. The book tries to demonstrate how in the past 50 years the allocation of resources and economic and political developments contributed to the role of Israel in the internal and international arena of security, and how because of its distinctive peculiarities Israel represents a fascinating case in the speed with which it has moved since the early 1990s.

The six chapters of Hever's book present a narrative following two tracks: a geographical one, from 1967 borders, through the Occupation of Palestinian Territories (OPT), to today where Israel is a player in the security global market, and a diachronic path on which Hever draws to perform a conversion from consideration of public security forces to a progressive privatization pattern.

The first chapter illustrates the theoretical grounds of the book; the economic Differential Accumulation Theory (DAT); Bourdieu's theory of social capital and securitization; the theories of Israeli occupation; and the culture of security. In spite of the dominant view of privatization as a sign of state weakness, the author prefers to foster the more complex view of porous relation between state and private elites, with technological solutions being given preference over diplomatic patterns. Therefore, Hever highlights the Israeli approach to conflict management of Palestinian resistance, in terms of the securitization and politicization of social problems, as preferred to diplomatic solutions.

Securitization and politicization, after the second Intifada, find in the occupation the ideal sphere in which to enact “privatization of the occupation,” by extension of the colonial bureaucracy model through the matrix of occupation, controlling Palestinian mobility through biometric power and outsourcing checkpoints, thus testing the first model of security privatization. The role of elites and the development of new social capital are crucial in this process; the modern version of Charles Right Milles’s power elite (well analyzed in chapter Five), associated with neoliberalism and the growing demand for security from several sectors of society, are the drivers of this process.

In Chapter Two, Hever illustrates the source and the methodology. The historical transformation of the Israeli military and Israeli security is drawn in the third chapter. Hever underlines the relevance of the military-security sector in the economy and the politics of the country. The analysis of neoliberal policies’ role in triggering and accelerating the transformation of securitization highlights the reshaping of public resources, the decline of public actors and the rise of private players. Examples, such as the Israeli police force or outsourcing the control of checkpoints in the OPT, substantiate this examination. The author considers that the decline of conscription (the book provides interesting data) into military service, associated with the rising importance of technological solutions, is a substantial argument for the privatization pattern. Technology neutrality is framed as easy to accept, and good for all, becoming the new face of political control; thus, the notion of military victory is replaced by the neoliberal conflict management concept.

Chapter Four addresses the process of privatization, illustrating primary case studies and analysing the three forms of privatization – sale (army industries), outsourcing (consultancy) and privatization by default, mobilization of the civilian population to create a string of “lone farms” – to prevent the return of Bedouins to retake the land. An analysis of failed attempts is also provided in the case of private prisons. In order better to understand the porous mechanism activated by the privatization process, Hever supports the interpretation by introducing scales of priorities in public choice, adopting the approach of core versus periphery. The successful privatization follows peripheral state interests; the core function, like prisons, airlines and security of natural resources, remains under state control.

Chapter Five examines a critical point related to the core-periphery dichotomy. The author analyzes the outsourcing of the occupation, illustrating the steps of

this process: 1) the counterinsurgency pattern, the case of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) and the formation of the Palestinian Authority to manage security operations in area A; 2) the rise of security companies in the homeland security sector, following the growth in demand after the second Intifada; and 3) the outsourcing of the larger checkpoints in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The author underlines how the outsourcing practices have developed in a political frame of occupation denial in which the task of occupation is considered peripheral to state functions. The political consequence is that outsourcing generates a third agent, to be responsible for acts committed in the name of security.

The last chapter discusses privatization of Israeli security in the global perspective. Economic data for changes in budget flows are provided, to draw a dynamic picture of US military aid as a trigger of change. Additional data on the contribution of the military and security export to national GDP provide a broader picture of the growing economic relevance of private military and security companies. International dimensions are extremely relevant, even if in Israel privatization grew later than in the US or the UK because of the role of militarization in Israeli society. The strong ties with US aid policies deeply impacted this process, driving the growth of Israeli private investors in the arms sector and downsizing the function of state companies. Israel's power in the international arms trade is proved by data on import-export made profitable by global security demand. War on terror was a fertile occasion, followed by the EU's growing demand for security. Israeli security companies capitalized on these opportunities by developing expertise in technologies, designing surveillance to control populations and becoming a world leader in producing items like the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). A data comparison of top arms exporters in terms of dollar value demonstrates Israel's leading position in per capita arms export, ranking Israel first (2008-11) with almost twice as many exports as the USA, which is second on the list.

In the final remarks Hever considers theoretical economic tools as quite poor in explaining the phenomenon of security privatization. Neoclassical theory considers security a public good, but at the same time, neoclassical economists promote the privatization of security and the adoption of business models in company management. Even militarization theory does a poor job of explaining security privatization, and disregards the fact that Israeli political and military authorities contemplate the OPT as a secondary question. Nonetheless the business model is useful to maintain military occupation by outsourcing

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management, in order to avoid involvement in colonial policing. The commodification of security transforms symbolic capital into a material one in the expansion of the world market for security, shifting the balance of capital from the public to the private sector and unveiling the crisis in Israeli security elites, wherein they have to reinvent themselves.

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