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**Kashmir and Palestine: itineraries of (anti) colonial solidarity**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the itineraries of anti-colonial solidarity between India & Palestine and argues for placing Kashmir's anti-colonial struggle for sovereignty in these itineraries. Examining routes of solidarity through transnational and translocal assemblages, the essay highlights the need for critical reflection on anti-colonial solidarity. The paper is also an argument for the need for anti-colonial solidarity with Kashmir and Palestine to take account of the context of contemporary geopolitical alliances within global capitalism, which indicates a (settler/post) colonial formation.

**Keywords:** Colonialism; Transnationalism; Solidarity; India-Israel relations; Kashmir; Palestine

## **Introduction**

Since 1947, the year of Indian independence from British colonial rule, India's state as well as scholar/activist solidarity with Palestine has been perceived to be based on a spirit of shared anti-colonialism and decolonisation (Gopal 2014). Yet, an argument for scholarly/activist solidarity with Kashmiri struggle for self-determination<sup>1</sup> as solidarity with an *anti-colonial* struggle is yet to become a dominant discourse in India or amongst its diaspora. Phrases like India's occupation of Kashmir,<sup>2</sup> Indian colonialism, and the inauguration of settler-colonialism in Kashmir, however, have now begun to circulate in the international media in a significant manner in the wake of India's unilateral annexation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019.<sup>3</sup> This shift in discourse follows the nullification of Article 370, the basis for Kashmir's autonomy hollowed out since its 1954 adoption in the Indian Constitution (Noorani 2011, 2 -3). Executed through a constitutionally questionable act of nullifying Article 370,<sup>4</sup> the annexation has attempted to transform Kashmir's status as an international dispute between India and Pakistan into a domestic issue. The annexation took place while the entire state of Jammu & Kashmir was placed under an unprecedented lock-down with no access to communications (landlines, internet access, mobile connectivity, television and radio), and the deployment of thousands of troops in addition to the half a million troops already stationed there (Hussain 2019).

While the annexation has once more raised the issue of Kashmir's right to self-determination based on United Nations resolutions and charters,<sup>5</sup> it has also significantly drawn attention to India's engagement with Kashmir as a colonial project, currently mutating into an Israeli-style settler-colonial one.

Over the last couple of decades, scholarship in Critical Kashmir Studies has been mapping the ways in which India's relationship to Kashmir constitutes an occupation, that is colonial or imperial (Duschinski et. al. 2018; Osuri 2017; Anand 2012; Kaul 2011). Alistair Lamb called India's relationship with Kashmir 'a terminal colonial situation' (1991, 322). Mohamad Junaid (2013) has teased out the political and military phases of India's occupation of Kashmir. Duschinski and Ghosh describe India's constitutional relationship to Kashmir as 'occupational constitutionalism' (2017, 5). Kamala Visweswaran had argued that postcolonial theory does not account for 'how the overthrow of European colonialism resulted in the next cycle of settler-colonialism', and suggests that the 'silence among postcolonial theorists on India's ongoing military occupation of Kashmir, Manipur and other parts of Northeast India is as deafening as the protests over Israel's occupation of Palestine are loud' (2012, 442). This paper seeks to contribute to these arguments by exploring India's engagement with Kashmir as colonial and now settler-colonial through an exploration of the India/Israel alliance.

The India-Israel alliance involves billions of dollars' worth of arms trade, and counter insurgency training (Global *Research* 2008; Aronheim 2017; *Middle East Monitor* 2019). Israel's reputation as a global arms manufacturer, trader, and counter-insurgency trainer is based on its settler-colonial occupation<sup>6</sup> of Palestine, and the use

and testing of arms against the Palestinian resistance (Kennard 2016; Schivone 2018). Israel's support for India's military occupation of Kashmir (Kashmir is one of the world's most densely militarized zones) is material in these terms. An exploration of the implications of this alliance is worth further analysis as it demonstrates India's location in current settler/colonial occupational networks. The insight that India is colonial is also instructive in any solidarity with Kashmir's anti-colonial self-determination struggle. I begin this paper by reflecting on my solidarity journey with the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination.

### **(Post) anti- colonial solidarity: scholarship & affect**

My journey of solidarity with the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination began when I first came across the large-scale human rights violations in Kashmir through my research on Hindu nationalism. The *Structures of Violence* report by the International People's Tribunal of Kashmir with the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons lists these violations in the following manner: 'over 10,000 enforced disappearances, reports of 7,000 mass graves, more than 70,000 deaths (including extra-judicial killings), rape, torture, and detention in Kashmir' (2015, 3). While I was horrified at the scale of atrocities in Kashmir, I became simultaneously interested in the issue of Kashmiri sovereignty because I had drawn on the theoretical trajectory of the concept of sovereignty to discuss the violence of Hindu nationalism in previous research (Osuri 2013). In order to understand more about human rights violations in Kashmir, I began co-organizing colloquiums and conferences, inviting scholars, filmmakers and well-known human rights voices from Kashmir to learn more about the struggle. One of these voices is that of Parveena Ahangar (whose son Javaid Ahmad Ahangar was enforced disappeared in 1990), co-founder and chair of

the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, Kashmir. Parveena Ahangar has built a collective struggle against enforced disappearances. For her, and for many Kashmiris, witnessing and memory play an all-important role in ensuring that the *zulm* (cruelty and oppression in Urdu) of the Indian state will never be forgotten; this witnessing takes place in the context of a self-determination struggle (Ahangar 2017).

Recalling the Spivakian question, 'Can the Subaltern Speak', Nitasha Kaul and Ather Zia stipulate that the question should not be 'Can the Kashmiri women speak?', but 'Can you hear them?' (2018, 35). In such a context, listening to Parveena Ahangar, and to many Kashmiri scholars, filmmakers, poets and activists has become a scholarly project, not in some abstract sense, but through an affective solidarity.

Drawing on Sara Ahmed (2004) and Lauren Berlant's (2007) work, Claire Hemmings (2012) has usefully traced the theorization of affective solidarity through a distinction between ontology and epistemology. In affective terms, as Hemmings suggests, 'politics can be characterised as that which moves us, rather than that which confirms in us what we already know' and so solidarity is also a matter of the relationship between ontology and epistemology (2012, 151). In this sense, a feminist epistemology allows for 'challenging the status of the expert, considering the importance of shared epistemic claims from below, thinking outside one's own initial investments in the desire for clearer more accountable knowledge' (Hemmings 2012, 151).

An account of the relationship between my epistemological quest regarding colonialism and my ontological self is instructive in understanding Hemmings' theorization. I had been researching and publishing about colonialism, imperialism

and their legacies in a post 9/11 context in the US and in Australia. Through my research on Kashmir, I felt a sense of complicity in the Indian nationalist project by *only* engaging in a leftist ‘anti-colonial’ discourse regarding the ‘West.’ I felt a sense of shame. This shame involved not being able to see or think earlier about the ways in which (post) colonial nation-states have through nationalism and an anti-colonial discourse against the west inaugurated their own colonial and imperial projects. Speaking of white subjects in the Australian settler-colonial context, as Aboriginal historian and writer, Tony Birch has put it, shame ‘is not a negative emotion. It is a realisation of honesty that has the potential to bring about change’ (2001, 22). In the spirit of this honesty, this paper is an exploration of the ways in which the India/Israel capitalist geopolitical alliance as well as routes of anti-colonial solidarity between India and Palestine might be instructive in mapping the layered and changing configurations of colonialism in our time. Furthermore, this argument demonstrates the necessity for reflection regarding our itineraries of solidarity.

The activity of solidarity in this ‘inventory of traces’ (Gramsci 1999, 324) through an embodied and affective scholarly journey is not only an ontological shift but an epistemological one as well. It foregrounds the theoretical, political, affective and activist questions about the routes of solidarity as well as the link between solidarity and the kind of sovereignty struggle that I have been witnessing in Kashmir. While solidarity can be an affective process, it also requires attention to the relationship between ontology and epistemology as Hemmings (2012) suggests. For Hemmings, feminist epistemology involves ‘thinking outside one’s own initial investments in the desire for clearer more accountable knowledge’ (Hemmings 2012, 151). I would differ with the assumption of *thinking outside* the initial investment in the quest for

more accountable knowledge (Hemmings 2012, 151). In fact, I would suggest that it is precisely a desire for accountable knowledge that can challenge our scholarly assumptions and generate an affective solidarity. This form of solidarity can also serve as a critical method for the nexus between scholarship and politics, as Alice Crary (2018) ruminates in the context of radical feminism, in listening to epistemic and political claims. The relationship between ontology and epistemology then enables reflection not only about how solidarity involves a kind of becoming, a transformation in thinking and action, but also about how we engage intellectually and politically in solidarity work (Salem 2018, 246). In the next section I examine some of the relevant scholarship on solidarity which references the issues involved in mapping solidarity networks, particularly transnational and translocal assemblages (Puar 2007). I discuss the need for a more critical and self-reflective approach to scholarly and activist translocal solidarity between India and Palestine.

### **Solidarity: transnational and translocal assemblages**

Building on and complementing Fuyuki Kurusawa's discussion of transnational solidarity as 'a lived culture' (2004, 235) which must pay attention to 'material forms of oppression' as Sara Salem states (2018, 264), I want to further understand solidarity through Inderpal Grewal's (2005, 25) understanding of transnationalism which explores connectivities and collectivities. These connectivities and collectivities can help us explore how postcolonial 'histories of colonialism and modernity' (Grewal 2005, 25) can, in fact, mask current forms of (post) colonialism. These explorations demonstrate that solidarity, often scalar (i.e., moving between pre-individual embodied affects,<sup>7</sup> technological connectivities, transnational collectivities

and geopolitical contexts), must be interrogated and recalibrated to take account of current networks of colonialism.

Scholarship on transnational solidarity yields important theoretical insights regarding its conceptual dimensions at the interface of the local and the transnational. Timothy Seidel's (2016) work on the #BlackPalestinianSolidarityMovement references transnationalism as a porous concept by citing Laleh Khalili's discussion about the "crucial interface between the local and the transnational" in discursive interrogations of the binaries between North/South and inside/outside (2016, 1655). Here, transnational discourses are "forged" and "transformed across borders," they "translate world-historical events into recognizable daily struggles" and "create a sense of sympathy if not kinship – and an imagined transnational community among people who, for the most part, ha(ve) never met and would never meet" (Seidel 2016, 1655). To describe networks across national borders more accurately, it may also be appropriate to hold the concept of the transnational in tension with the concept of 'translocal assemblages' (McFarlane 2009). McFarlane (2009) argues that the conceptual frame of translocal assemblages performs the labour required to think through the complexity of connections across different sites. Translocal assemblages are 'composites of place-based social movements which exchange ideas, knowledge, practices, materials and resources across sites' (McFarlane 2009, 562). These assemblages are more than connections between sites, they also signify performance and events rather than sole attention to place and space, and also describe the incipient emergences and instabilities of social movements (McFarlane 2009, 562). For example, the Black Lives Matter protests at Ferguson in August 2014 in the aftermath of the acquittal of a white police officer shooting Michael Brown constituted an event

in a translocal assemblage where Palestinian solidarity from Gaza was expressed in tweets on how to deal with teargas used by the police in the context of a 'transnational solidarity' as Angela Davis (2015) has pointed out.

Angela Davis (2015) further links the necessity for this translocal solidarity to the US Israel arms trade; the teargas cannisters used at Ferguson were made by Israeli arms trade manufacturers. The cannisters link the systems of policing and militarization between the US and Israel, as they do with other struggles in the US or elsewhere. In this sense, the teargas cannisters are metonymic not only of the global arms trade, but also of the interrelated system of colonial (colonial or settler-colonial) alliances between nation-states in a contemporary moment. Black Lives Matter protests are intricately linked in this sense to protests as well as sovereignty struggles by Palestinians or Native Americans at Standing Rock, Dakota, without conflating these resistance movements in relation to colonial, settler-colonial or occupational structures. This formulation of translocal assemblages between the US and Israel as discussed by Davis (2015), Seidel (2016), and Khalili (2007) appears to be as pertinent to the discussion of state and non-state solidarities expressed between India & Palestine.

Indian activist solidarity with Palestine is part of this complex translocal assemblage. The transnational Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) is active in the Indian context. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017, the BDS movement announced on its webpages that the 16 million strong All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) had joined the BDS. AIKS was established in 1936, and is a national organization representing

farmers and agricultural workers. On the BDS page, Apoorva Gautam references India's historical anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine and states:

Grassroots movements in India, Palestine and beyond are working to defeat the violent wave of right-wing politics plaguing our world today. By joining the BDS movement, AIKS is saying no to the hateful politics of Prime Minister Modi, Netanyahu and Trump, and joining us to build a more free, just and equal world  
(BDS 2017).

Solidarity with the BDS movement, therefore, is based both on a historical reference to India's anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine, but also framed through the rise of right-wing politics in India. Similarly, during Prime Minister Modi's 2017 visit to Israel, Gautam condemned Modi's visit to Israel on the basis that India's relationship with Israel cannot be perceived as neutral toward Palestine: 'relations between occupier and occupied, the colonizer and colonised, cannot be neutral' (Najjar and Alsaafin 2018). In the aftermath of the annexation of Kashmir, the BDS (2019) has released a statement that asserts that Kashmir and Palestine are 'under military repression', and acknowledges that the Modi administration is drawing on Israeli style settler-colonialism for inspiration. However, the statement refrains from calling India's historical engagement with Kashmir as colonialism or occupation.

Indian and Indian diasporic scholar/activists reference their solidarity with the Palestinian struggle in terms of what I would call 'anti-colonial capital,' and express disappointment in the turn to right-wing politics. As Priyamvada Gopal had put it, 'India adhered to a policy of support for the 'inalienable rights' of Palestinians as a sovereign people engaged in a struggle against colonial occupation much like the one that led to its own hard-won independence' (2014). Scholars and journalists poignantly proclaimed their solidarity with Palestinians in the face of the

contemporary right-wing Hindutva nationalist geopolitical alliance with Israel. In *From India to Palestine: Essays in Solidarity* (Hariharan 2014), Sunaina Maira asked: ‘Are we going to move closer to Israel and the US, and deepen our alliances with warfare and police states? Are we going to end the normalization of relations with a settler-colonial apartheid regime? Solidarity with Palestine is not just for the sake of Palestine. It is a commitment to anti-imperial, anti-racist, and hopefully, progressive-left politics. So, where is India’s Palestine – and Palestine’s India –today?’ (2014, 182). This discourse appears to be shifting. Vijay Parshad (*Democracy Now*, 2016) and Nivedita Menon (*Times of India*, 2016) have used the term ‘occupation’ to describe India’s relationship to Kashmir. During the annexation of Kashmir, Priyamvada Gopal called for Kashmiri self-determination (*Channel 4 Newsreport* 2019). However, if occupation or annexation of Kashmir is only attributed to the rise of right-wing Hindutva politics, there is a risk of not acknowledging India’s history of a colonial engagement with Kashmir. Notable exceptions remain Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra (Ali et. al. 2011) who have explicitly spoken of India as a colonial and occupying power in Kashmir over a number of years.

### **Anticolonial solidarity with real (colonial) politik**

Indian state discourse regarding solidarity with Palestine mirrors that of scholarly discourse. Hence it is necessary to explore the Indian state’s historical and contemporary engagement with Palestine and Israel. The Indian state has continually referred to an anti-colonial historical archive when describing the relationship between India, Israel and Palestine. 1947 was significant not only for Indian independence, but also for the newly independent state’s support for Palestine – against its partition. For this reason, India did not recognize Israel as a nation-state

until 1950, two years after its establishment (Pant 2004, 61). As a founder member of the Non-Aligned movement and in the spirit of anti-colonialism, India publicly recognized the need for Palestinian independence and allowed the Palestinian Liberation Organisation to set up an office in New Delhi in 1974 (Sengupta 2010; Prabhu 2010). India's pro-Arab stance appeared to be based not only on the spirit of anti-colonialism, but a common experience of anti-colonial struggles across the Middle-East and Asia – at least in rhetoric.

However, even during the period of India's official anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine, India had ongoing military transactions with Israel. India bought arms from Israel in the 1962 war with China and the 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan (Sarkar 2014; Vanaik 2014; Bhattacharjee 2017). The story of Prime Minister Nehru's communications with Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion regarding a covert arms deal is telling: Nehru requested that the ship the arms were to be conveyed on should not display the Israeli flag; Gurion responded: 'No flag. No weapons' (Bhattacharjee 2017). Gurion had his way and the weapons arrived flying the Israeli flag. A conventional explanation for the necessity of a covert arms trade relationship with Israel since the 1950s has to do with India 'pandering' to minoritized Muslim communities through the Congress policy of secularism (Kumarasamy 2017; Sarkar 2014), but also to counter 'Pakistan's influence in the Arab world and of safeguarding its (India's) oil supplies from Arab countries' (Pant 2004, 61). Hence, contrary to an Indian scholarly or activist translocal discourse, Indian state anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine has always been expressed alongside secret diplomatic ties with Israel based on the arms trade. The history of India's official anti-colonial solidarity for Palestine as well as a realpolitik relationship with Israel is now being described by

Indian as well as Israeli media through the trope of a closet affair now publicly disclosed as a natural alliance. Or as David Rosenberg (2017) describes it, Israel was India's mistress, now acknowledged.

India-Israel ties have been celebrated since the 2014 election of the Hindutva nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, and the appointment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a member of the extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (known for its militant and terrorist Hindutva nationalism<sup>8</sup>). And, as cited earlier, India is Israel's biggest arms buyer. So how did India reconcile a discourse of anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine with its overt relationship with Israel? Prime Minister Modi's non-visit to Ramallah and the Palestinian Authority in July 2017, fueled speculation that this was a signal of India's change in policy toward Palestine despite reports that India's policy toward Palestine had not changed (Guha 2017). However, Modi visited Ramallah in February 2018, meeting Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, and affirmed support for 'an independent Palestinian state living in an environment of peace' (Najjar & Alsaafin 2018). This visit, coupled with Modi's visit to Israel, demonstrates that an India, Israel, Palestine transnational assemblage needs to be examined further.

The strategic vision for this assemblage appears to be India's policy of de-hyphenation or keeping relations with Israel separate from relations with India's relationship with Palestine (Keinon 2018). A Palestinian Authority foreign ministry official helpfully explained this 'de-hyphenation' strategy as India's tactic of keeping a diplomatic 'balance' in the Middle-East (Najjar & Alsaafin 2018). The de-hyphenation policy, however, suggests a more colonial strategic vision, one that can be gleaned from statements by the late Yosef Lapid, Deputy Prime Minister of Israel

during Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to India in 2003. Lapid explained to Indian reporters that an "'unwritten, abstract" axis had been created by Israel, India and the U.S.' (Sengupta 2010). Lapid stated that while there was no 'formal triangular agreement ... there is mutual interest of the three countries in making the world a more secure place for all of us' (Sengupta 2010). 'American support' was crucial 'for development of this unwritten axis', as Lapid relayed, and therefore 'in the abstract sense, we are creating such an axis' (Sengupta 2010). Discursively, the policies of mutual benefit to this fairly open yet unwritten axis have found their way in both scholarly as well as media comments on the India-Israel relationship; they speak to a colonial imperative characterised by three elements which could be said to form a transnational assemblage in the context of India's 'coming out' onto the world stage as a colonial actor.

The first justificatory discourse in this assemblage is that of India and Israel making an alliance in order to fight a US-led post 9/11 discourse of global Islamist terrorism. The global Islamist terrorism discourse makes the case that India and Israel are fighting terrorism in both Palestine and Kashmir; thus, they reference both Palestinian and Kashmiri struggles for self-determination, even as both struggles considerably predate a post 9/11 'war on terror' discourse. The second element involves a burgeoning arms trade between Israel and India, supported by the United States, as well as an exchange of counterterror knowledge and technologies. The third element exploits the historic transnational connectivity between India and Palestine that relies on an older archive of anti-colonial solidarity, but shows a shift from an anti-colonial solidarity to an aid-based relationship. These three articulations need to be discussed

in relation to each other in order to understand how they are part of a contemporary colonial formation.

In an academic context, the first discursive element of a 'natural' alliance between India and Israel in the context of 'global terrorism' has been clearly outlined by Harsh Pant. It is not a co-incidence that a year after Ariel Sharon's visit to India in 2003, Harsh Pant published a piece that framed the Kashmir and Palestine sovereignty struggles as part of a counter-terrorism agenda for India and Israel, in making the case for a greater alliance between India and Israel: 'fighting terrorism is a major issue and challenge for both India and Israel' (2004, 62). Both India and Israel are 'democratic, pluralistic states with large domestic Muslim minorities', Pant argues, 'and both face the scourge of Islamist terrorism which is sponsored by their neighbors' (2004, 62). Pant argues that 'extremist mullahs' call for Islamic Jihad in India and Israel by using 'Kashmir' and 'Palestine' as incitement (2004, 63). This state of affairs, Pant suggests, has made India and Israel 'natural' allies: 'the search for strength in each other's inner reserves is natural for India and Israel in their quest for security and their fight against terror' (2004, 63). One of India's Kashmir 'experts', Navnita Chadha Behera, following a visit to the Brookings Institute in Washington, argued that the U.S. changed its strategic vision for South Asia following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the US. As Strobe Talbott, President of the Brookings Institution states in the foreword to *Demystifying Kashmir* (an Orientalist title), 'since 9/11 the area has become an important locus for waging the "war on terror"' (2006, vii). Talbott appears to accept Behera's conclusion that any self-determinatory aspiration amongst Kashmiris cannot be acknowledged due to the interests of India's territorial integrity. Behera represents the Indian state solely as a

victim, rather than a state with a gross record of human rights violations in Kashmir: ‘many countries have a better appreciation of India’s position on cross border terrorism in Kashmir, mainly because they have also been victims of international terrorism’ (2006, 233). Pant’s scholarship on Kashmir, like Behera’s, have resulted in U.S. foreign policy. In 2017, the frame of global counter-terrorism has been used by the United States to designate the Kashmiri leader of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Syed Salahudin or Mohammad Yusuf Shah, as a ‘global terrorist’, rather than placing this figure in the context of Kashmir’s sovereignty struggle, albeit with the aid of the Pakistani state (Naqash 2017). In a collection of solidarity essays, *Letters to Palestine* (2015), Vijay Parshad has said in defense of Hamas (designated as a terrorist group in the US), ‘Resistance is a doctrine afforded to all, but denied to Palestine’ (2015, 9). We could make the same argument about Kashmir.

The global war on Islamist terrorism also justifies the expansion of the Israel/India arms trade. Prime Minister Modi’s 2017 visit to Israel became an occasion to publicly celebrate the deepening relationship between India and Israel in the areas of defense, agriculture, technology, and knowledge & cultural exchanges. Meirav Arlosoroff (2017) writing in *Haaretz* noted that ahead of Modi’s 2017 visit, the Israeli cabinet had approved a budget of 280 million shekels or 79.6 million US dollars for scores of bilateral measures which involved 11 Israeli ministries. In 2017, Israel Aerospace Industries signed a \$630 million dollar deal with the Indian-owned ‘aerospace and defense company Bharat Electronics Limited’ (Ahronheim 2017). This arms deal also strengthens the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism between India and Israel set up in 2001 (Gupta 2014). As Sengupta (2010) writes, Israeli-trained Indian special forces are deployed ‘in the troubled region of Kashmir and India’s north-east areas.’

By 2018, the Indian multi-national Adani Global inaugurated Adani Elbit, its joint venture for manufacturing drones with Elbit, the Israeli arms and intelligence systems manufacturer (Lasania 2018).

The third element of this assemblage concerns India's de-hyphenated relationship with Palestine through a developmental aid policy. Development was a key word during Prime Minister Modi's 2018 visit to Ramallah. As he visited, he tweeted the following message: 'Friendship between India and Palestine has stood the test of time. The people of Palestine have shown remarkable courage in the face of several challenges. India will always support Palestine's development journey' (2018). The visit should be placed in the context of India's continuing aid policy in relation to Palestine since the 1990s (Najjar & Alsaafin 2018). And this 'development journey' continues to be anchored in Indian support for an independent Palestinian state.

The development discourse and India's aid to Palestine are visible in a few media reports. Chirag Dhara writes of a list of projects supported by Indian representation in Palestine:

"India has been extending various forms of economic assistance to the Palestinian people. Government of India supported the construction of Jawaharlal Nehru Library at the Al Azhar University in Gaza city and the Mahatma Gandhi Library-cum-Student Activity Centre at the Palestine Technical College at Deir Al Balah in the Gaza Strip. India provided a plot of land and constructed a chancery building for the Embassy of Palestine in New Delhi." (2018).

Mention of India's anti-colonial struggle appear to be mentioned when these projects are inaugurated. In 2016, then Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj inaugurated the 'India-Palestine Digital Learning and Innovation Centre at the Al-Quds University' mentioning that 'India's support to the Palestinian cause is rooted in

our very own freedom struggle' (Chaudhary 2016). While official statistics regarding India's aid to Palestine are not easy to trace, according to Muralidharan (a journalist specialising on India-Palestine relations), 'the contribution is not likely to be very significant' (Najjar and Alsaaffin 2018). Muralidharan explains that 'aid for Palestine' may come out of monies kept for aid for 'other countries' which totals \$25 million' (Najjar and Alsaaffin 2018). For Muralidharan, this contribution would be considered 'minuscule when assessed against India's purchase of Israeli military hardware' (Najjar and Alsaaffin 2018). What a Palestinian state looks like as a neoliberal non-governmentalised entity is beyond the scope of this paper. For India's purpose, development aid in the guise of support for a Palestinian state provides an anti-colonial alibi whilst supporting Israeli settler-colonialism through the arms trade.

In the past couple of decades, India's anti-colonial support for Palestine has not extended to its United Nations voting patterns. For example, in 2015, following the UN Human Rights Council report regarding 'alleged war crimes' after the Gaza bombing of 2014, India abstained from voting on the United Nations resolution which called for 'accountability of Israeli officials' and the reference to taking Israel to International Criminal Court (Haider 2015). In fact, India had voted for the United Nations inquiry. But rather than face the accusation of a policy shift, India's position was that taking Israel to the International Criminal Court would be 'intrusive' (Haider 2015). India did, however, vote against moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv in 2017. This vote was considered 'principled' and proof of an exhibition of India's commitment to the Palestinian cause as Shairee Malhotra (2017) discusses it. Yet, I would suggest that the diplomatic play is that of an appearance of support for Palestine alongside India's support of Israeli settler-colonialism. In the current era, therefore, India's Palestine policy forms a strategic dance – a balance between

developmental aid, continual references to an archive of anti-colonial history, and abstentions from United Nations' votes that would overtly harm Israel. However, it is important to note that emphasis on developmental aid policy is, in effect, part of the shift in India's policy toward Palestine. Here, while an anti-colonial rhetoric is part of India's historical archive of a transnational connectivity with Palestine, the relationship between India and Palestine is that of a development donor than an anti-colonial ally.

What an analysis of these three elements that form a transnational assemblage between India, Israel, and Palestine demonstrates is the way in which India's official policy continues to celebrate its geopolitical alliance with Israel, attempts to retain 'an anti-colonial solidarity capital' with Palestine and actively supports the occupation of Palestinian territories. Such an assemblage demonstrates how the rhetoric of anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine is insidious, particularly as India's arms trade with Israel also supports India's occupation in Kashmir. This development donor relationship also appears to be a strategy for India's geopolitical ambitions of gaining a permanent seat in the United Nations security council. Mezan Shamiyeh's interview with *Al Jazeera* suggests that '[India] will stress its support for the two-state solution and a return to negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians' alongside presenting 'economic contributions to the Palestinian Authority that will be more than what it has offered in the previous years' (Najjar and Aslaaffin 2018). Such strategy reeks of bargaining for a United Nations Security Council permanent seat through development aid. India's Palestine policy is, therefore, a colonial policy, one that participates in a contemporary geopolitical colonial power formation alongside

colonial and settler-colonial nation-states such as the US and Israel whilst maintaining its anti-colonial solidarity as an alibi.

## **Conclusion**

For scholars of colonialism, it is essential to pay attention to the commonality of colonial capitalist interests between a (post) colonial nation-state and a settler-colonial one. If the Palestine issue is being discussed through the settler-colonial framework, what lens can we use to describe India's relationship to Kashmir? India's colonial occupation in Kashmir is currently mutating into a settler-colonial one. As Hafsa Kanjwal (2019) has pointed out, the annexation of Kashmir also means abolishing Article 35a which had enabled exclusive rights to Kashmiris regarding ownership of land and local employment. With these rights taken away, the Modi administration has set the scene for the arrival of Indian settlers into Kashmir and a demography change that could spell the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiris. The development discourse mobilised in terms of aid to Palestine is also an alibi for the deployment of this settler-colonial imperative. Plans for an Indian corporate take-over in Kashmir are already afoot as announced by Mukesh Ambani, dubbed the richest man in Asia (*Outlook India* 2019). During his visit to the United Arab Emirates in August 2019, Prime Minister Modi invited foreign investments in the name of developing Jammu and Kashmir (*The Print* 2019). Pointing out corporate collaborations, Azad Essa (2019) argues that states like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates are 'fully on-board' with this 'settler-colonial project.'

Rhys Machold suggests that Israeli 'local practices and technologies involved in carrying out repression and dispossession are co-produced through ongoing "worldly encounters" with global capitalism' (2018, 91). As Machold (2018) argues, the

mobilization of the ‘laboratory’ metaphor in discussing the use of Israeli weapons in Palestine does not do the necessary labour of researching the effects of Israeli arms trade and ‘counterterror’ training whether in Kashmir or elsewhere in the world. To add to Machold’s (2018) point, we need to think about the ways in the ongoing repression and dispossession co-produced through state violence and global capitalism are also enabled by the nexus between settler and (post) colonialism. Here the easy divisions of western and non-western nation-states are perhaps not tenable as a new geopolitical order emerges. In this geopolitical order, the history and discourse of anti-colonial solidarity can become an alibi for colonial purposes.

It is necessary to note that Kashmiri scholars/activists demonstrate an anti-colonial solidarity with the Palestine’s sovereignty struggle as something that resonates with their own anti-colonial struggle against the Indian state. For Kashmiris, solidarity with Palestine is expressed through street protests, public statements, and graffiti (Falak 2014; Misgar 2018). Here, #Kashmir #Palestine concur through a daily stream of tweets, facebook posts and Instagram images. In the Kashmir-Palestine solidarity, state ‘counter-terrorism’ signifies colonial occupation, and the images of stone-pelting Palestinian and Kashmiri teenagers hurling the hard rocks of their land against the occupiers signify resistance. Speaking through the Kashmir-Palestine axis, Umar Lateef Misgar (2018) had warned Palestinians not to embrace Modi during his visit to Ramallah. What does Kashmiri solidarity with the Palestinian struggle signal to us about contemporary forms of colonialism and occupation? Kashmir is crucially significant in an analysis of the transnational and translocal assemblages between India, Israel and Palestine. Here Indian state alliance with Israel and a ‘development’ based anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine alerts us to its support for Israel’s settler-

colonial imperative in Palestine, and, in turn, its own colonial occupation in Kashmir. Mapping transnational and translocal assemblages of solidarity become crucial in this regard. Rather than locating India's anti-colonial solidarity with Palestine in its own anti-colonial history, the time has come to acknowledge India's colonial and imperial techniques of power against Kashmiris as well as Palestinians, as well other populations who have not ceded their sovereignty to the Indian nation-state.

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<sup>1</sup>For the case for Kashmiri self-determination, see Fozia N. Lone (2018). While Joseph Massad (2018) critiques the concept of self-determination for its appropriation for settler-colonial purpose, I use the phrase to indicate Kashmiri claims to decide their political future as part of their anti-colonial struggle.

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<sup>2</sup>I use Kashmir as a shorthand for describing the Kashmiri sovereignty struggle being waged against the Indian state. Kashmir references the erstwhile princely state of Jammu & Kashmir, part of the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. This state has now been annexed and bifurcated by the Indian government into two Union Territories as mentioned in the essay.

<sup>3</sup>See Hafsa Kanjwal (2019).

<sup>4</sup> See Deshmane (2019).

<sup>5</sup> See Bhan, Duschinski & Osuri (2019).

<sup>6</sup> See Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadeh (2016) for a nuanced account of the lens of settler-colonialism to frame Israel's occupation of Palestine.

<sup>7</sup> By pre-individual embodied affects, I refer to Brian Massumi's understanding of affect as 'openendedly social', i.e., before individuality (2002, 61). Here, as Patricia Clough explains it, emotion can be understood as narration of affect' (qtd. In Clough 2008, 3).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Leena Reghunath's (2014) story of the RSS's links to Hindutva terror.