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The Geopolitics of Social Reproduction and Depletion: The Case of Iraq and Palestine*

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Abstract

This article explores the relationships between social reproduction, depletion, and geopolitical processes, drawing on two case studies—Iraq and Palestine. It underlines the importance of social reproduction to geopolitical processes and of particular geopolitical contexts to how states intervene in social reproduction, with differential implications for depletion. It argues that Iraqi state measures targeting social reproduction have sought to *organize and instrumentalize* the life of Iraqi citizens in the service of postcolonial state building and war-making, whilst, by contrast, Israeli state measures targeting Palestinian social reproduction have largely sought to *erase* Palestinian life in line with a settler colonial logic.

Introduction

Feminist scholars of international political economy have long highlighted the crucial role of women's unpaid reproductive labor in the maintenance of global capitalism as well as the negative repercussions of this on women's health and wellbeing. Yet, until now, there has been little attention paid to the relationship between geopolitics, social reproduction, and depletion. We define social reproduction to include: 1) biological reproduction; 2) unpaid production of both goods and services within the home and/or the community; and, 3) cultural, social and ideological reproduction (see Rai et al. 2014: 87). Meanwhile, depletion through social reproduction (DSR) is the *harm* that occurs in the form of a deterioration in the health and wellbeing of individuals, households, and communities. This harm may occur as a result of insufficient resources in support of social reproduction, for example, as a result of the state's declining social provisioning for social reproduction in a context of economic restructuring (Rai et al. 2014: 88, see also, Gill and Bakker 2003) or of crisis, such as during and in the aftermath of conflict or natural disaster (on disaster specifically see Tanyag 2018). In light of the existence of protracted violent conflicts, the Middle East is an important case through which to investigate the impacts of war and violence on social reproduction and DSR.

This article contributes to the feminist literature on social reproduction in two ways. Empirically, the article examines two case studies from the Middle East—Iraq and Palestine—in order to illustrate the significance of social reproduction to geopolitical processes of colonialism, postcolonial state building, regime consolidation, war-making, and anticolonial resistance, and the gendered implications for DSR over time. Theoretically, it explores the importance of identifying different geopolitical contexts, namely postcolonial versus settler colonial, in understanding the differences in how states intervene in processes of social reproduction for specific populations, with differential implications for DSR. It argues that

Iraqi state measures targeting social reproduction have sought to *organize and instrumentalize* the life of Iraqi citizens in the service of postcolonial state building and war-making, whilst, by contrast, Israeli state measures targeting Palestinian social reproduction have largely sought to *erase* Palestinian life in line with a settler colonial logic. Meanwhile, whilst both cases point to the crucial role of the state in not only shaping the conditions and organization of social reproduction but also in mitigating DSR, in the Iraqi case, depletion is a product of state weakness and war, whilst, in the Israeli case, it is a product of the settler colonial logic of Israeli state building and resistance to it.

The first section of this article situates our study in relation to the existing literature on social reproduction and then discusses the concepts of social reproduction and depletion in relation to geopolitical processes of nation-state building and conflict, drawing on literature from Middle East women's studies. In this regard, we highlight the different ways in which states intervene in social reproduction—through laws governing marriage, residency, and nationality, through regulating access to infrastructure and other provisioning necessary for social reproduction, and through the promotion of particular gender norms. These state measures, we argue, have served to support state building and national identity construction.

Following on from this, we present our first case study, which is Iraq. In this section, we chart the ways different Iraqi regimes from the 1980s onwards have intervened to shape social reproduction through legal and administrative measures, including family laws and state feminism, as a means of consolidating regime authority. We also consider the ways in which state violence, war, and conflict exacerbate social depletion, which, in turn, is naturalized through dominant gender ideologies valorizing the 'Iraqi mother.'

The next section examines the case of Palestine. Here, we document the way in which the Israeli government constrains Palestinian social reproduction through a mixture of bureaucratic

measures limiting Palestinian mobility and residence as well as other discriminatory policies that privilege Jewish-Israelis in terms of access to land and water. In this case, the undermining of social reproduction is not merely an effect of conflict and violence but is integral to the logics of Israeli settler colonialism, which seek to ensure a Jewish demographic preponderance across historic Palestine. We also consider depletion and how it relates to Palestinian resistance to settler colonialism, specifically through gendered notions of '*sumud*' or 'steadfastness'. In the conclusion, we bring together the findings of the Iraqi and Palestinian cases and highlight their implications for how we can bring geopolitics into research on social reproduction and social depletion.

The Geopolitics of Social Reproduction and Depletion

Existing feminist scholarship has tended to focus on the significance of women's unpaid social reproductive labor to the functioning of the global economy and the consequences of this for individuals, households and communities (amongst others, Bakker 2007; Bakker and Silvey 2008; Elson and Pearson 1981; Gill and Bakker 2003; Pearson 2014; Rai et al. 2014). Whilst this literature takes the state into account, it treats it as a player amongst many in the global economic processes that link the household to the international, despite its importance in mediating and facilitating these relationships (Elias 2013, Pearson 2014). Until now, there has been little consideration of the state's direct interest in social reproduction and the significance of social reproduction to the reproduction of the state. In contrast, feminist scholarship on the Middle East illustrates that social reproduction has been a site of state intervention not only for economic reasons but also for geopolitical reasons.

Governments in the MENA region have sought to support and regulate social reproduction for the purpose of nation state building (amongst others, Bier 2011; Hasso 2011; Pollard 2005). This has taken the form not only of social provisioning for social reproduction but also laws

and policies regulating marriage and divorce as well as gender ideologies promoting particular norms of femininities and masculinities in support of the gendered division of labor within the family. Social reproduction, aside from performing a necessary yet often invisible economic function, is crucial to the construction and reproduction of the nation state. This link between social reproduction and nation-state building may be even more pronounced in anticolonial and postcolonial contexts in which the family and the private sphere are simultaneously constructed as the repository of ‘authentic’ culture against Western intervention and domination (Chatterjee, 1993: 26), whilst being targets of reform in the name of improving the quality of the national population and modernizing the nation (El-Shakry 2007; Pollard 2005).

Rai et al.’s three-part conceptualization of social reproduction in terms of biological, affective, and cultural reproduction (2014) can be considered in light of feminist literature on national and state processes in order to understand the relationship between women’s reproductive labor and the nation-state. In particular, women play a central role in the biological and cultural reproduction of the nation-state, by giving birth to and raising its future citizens (Yuval-Davis 1997). In this respect, motherhood is highly valorized not only as a woman’s ‘biological destiny’ but also as a national duty, particularly in contexts of conflict and colonial domination (for the case of Palestine, see Kanaaneh 2002 and, for the case of Iraq, see Al-Ali 2007). The idealized mother is the one who sacrifices for her family, in the face of hardship, with dignity and courage (for example, see Ali 2018). In this way, DSR is naturalized through particular notions of gender (see also Tanyag 2017). However, it is also necessary to be attentive to the ways in which women may also deploy these subjectivities in ways that empower them in the public and political spheres. Motherhood is also a political identity that is mobilized to make demands for rights and resources (for the case of Palestine, see Richter-Devroe 2018).

In order to ensure the social reproduction of the nation state, governments regulate women's sexuality through an array of state laws and measures. These may include laws governing who women may marry and whether women may pass on their nationality. These laws seek to determine who is a member of the nation in highly gendered ways. In several countries in the Middle East, nationality is only passed on through the man. Therefore, a woman who marries outside of the national collective is unable to pass on her nationality to her husband or her children, who, therefore, remain foreigners and, consequently, do not have access to free education, health care, and other rights afforded to children of fathers who are national citizens. Such laws serve to reproduce the nation through female bodies, who are effectively punished if they fail to fulfil their biological duty by marrying a foreigner. Women's sexuality is also regulated through laws on adultery as well as societal attitudes. For example, the scope of the crime of adultery is often wider for women than men, and social attitudes towards what is deemed women's violation of sexual propriety are also much harsher than equivalent behavior amongst men, even resulting in the murder of women by their relatives in so-called crimes of honor. It is also more difficult for women to initiate divorce proceedings and social conservatives have opposed reforms to empower women to obtain divorce on the grounds that such a move would lead to the dissolution of the family and the social fabric (Welchman 2007). However, men's behavior is also a concern with elites viewing unregulated male sexual and marital conduct as threatening to social stability and order, as Frances Hasso finds (2011).

As far as state officials are concerned, marriage is the basis for stable family life and the foundation of a stable and modern national order (Hasso 2011). The constitutions of almost every country in the Middle East state that the family is the foundation of society and must be protected by the state. In the post-independence period, governments have actively intervened to safeguard the family and family cohesion through legal and administrative reforms as well as 'pastoral projects' seeking to 'cultivate' ideal family life (Hasso 2011). State feminist

projects have sought to encourage women's entry into the workforce whilst simultaneously supporting their reproductive role within the family, such as through laws granting maternity leave alongside the mandatory provision of crèches in large companies (Al-Ali 2007, Bier 2011, Hatem, 1992). In addition, in many countries, governments have provided free health care and education and subsidized goods, such as essential foodstuffs (Ayubi 1995). This has not only been crucial to supporting social reproduction but also was integral to the 'social contract' between regimes and citizens.

The gendered division of social reproduction within the family is enshrined in family laws. In all Middle East countries, family laws are based on religiously-derived laws and they constitute the only part of the legal system not to be secularized. Family laws cover marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. In majority-Muslim countries, Muslims are governed by laws derived from sharia, whilst Christians and other religious minorities are governed by laws derived from their respective religions. Even in Israel, a country that projects a Westernized image of itself, family laws are also derived from religion, with different laws governing Jews, Muslim, Christians, and other religious minorities. In all cases, men and women have differential rights and responsibilities. The husband is required to provide for his wife and, in return, the woman's role is to obey her husband. In many cases, the law deems the man to be the 'head of the household' (Welchman 2007). In this respect, family laws are part of shoring up dominant gender norms, with the husband as the main breadwinner and the woman as the main carer. In addition, the preservation of religiously-derived family laws itself operates as a symbol of cultural difference, usually vis-à-vis the West, and are defended on the basis of national 'culture' and religion.

As already highlighted, state laws and measures in support of social reproduction have differential gendered effects. Family law has also long been a focus for women activists

because of the ways in which its provisions can lead to emotional and financial harm for women. Women's rights activists have sought to mitigate some of the most damaging aspects of family laws for women, such as efforts to limit the man's right to unilateral divorce and his automatic right to child custody once children reach puberty (for example, see Bier 2011, Hasso 2011). Women's rights activists have, in general, paid less attention to the impacts of structural adjustment policies and economic restructuring on women and their families, which have led to a reduction of state expenditure on social provisioning, with disproportionate impacts on low-income families. Still less attention has been paid to the impacts of conflict and violence on social reproduction. Whilst women from low-income strata of society and women in conflict zones demonstrate significant creativity, commitment, and resilience in ensuring the wellbeing of their families in adverse political, economic, and security conditions, nonetheless, feminists should be concerned about the cost of this to women's emotional, physical, and psychological health. It is thus clear that the concept of depletion is significant for how we understand harm towards women, as well as how we think through feminist activism and transformation.

In this article, we seek to demonstrate how a social reproduction and depletion framework can be applied to the Middle East region in order to understand the geopolitical significance of women's reproductive labor as well as the ways in which geopolitical processes such as nation-state building and war and conflict shape DSR. Applying the framework of depletion to specific sites within the MENA region leads us to foreground intimate relations, the family, the household, and the community as significant units of analysis in academic research on war and violence. Given the extent of war and violence in the MENA region, including protracted conflicts such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, it is essential to examine further social reproduction and depletion and its effects on individuals, households, and communities as a means of understanding wider geopolitical processes as feminist issues. However, we advocate for attentiveness to the specific geopolitical contexts in which DSR occurs, including the nature

of the state and how notions of motherhood and gendered divisions of reproductive labor relate to specific political struggles or processes. We must examine the ways in which women's roles in reproduction and their experiences of depletion may be naturalized or even valorized through nation-state building efforts, anticolonial struggle, or other geopolitical processes. Rather than romanticizing these roles however, applying the DSR framework allows researchers to better situate women's reproductive work in a discussion that clearly highlights the impact this role has on the state, on community wellbeing, and most importantly of course, on women themselves.

Iraq

This section examines the case of Iraq after 1958—the year in which a military coup deposed the monarchy and, thereby, ended British influence in the country. It demonstrates the significance of social reproduction to postcolonial state building and the consolidation of different Iraqi regimes, with a focus on the Ba'th regime and the post-Ba'th period. It also highlights the implications of different episodes of war and violence for social reproduction and DSR. The timeframe examined here encompasses the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-1988, the Gulf War of 1990-91, the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi state between 1991 and 2003, and the US-led invasion of 2003 and its aftermath. The Iraq case study enables an examination into the ways in which state building and war-making are dependent upon particular patterns of social reproduction and particular gender ideologies as well as illustrating the implications of militarization, dictatorship, conflict, and its aftermath for DSR. Throughout this period, successive Iraqi regimes have sought to organize social reproduction and gender norms in support of their respective visions of state power, economy, and violence, through enacting specific laws and policies. Three key areas highlight this thematic: family laws, social provisioning by the state, and state-sponsored gender ideologies.

Family Laws and the State (Personal Status Laws)

Family Law, or personal status law (PSL), makes up an important part of our analysis of the role of the state in matters of social reproduction in the MENA region. Whilst personal status laws have been a major concern for activists seeking to advance women's rights in the region, viewing such laws through the framework of social reproduction also enables us to understand how they serve as a mechanism to mediate state-society relations in support of particular visions of state building. The 1959 Iraqi Personal Status Laws (PSL), promulgated soon after the army coup that brought an end to the monarchy and British influence, and the 1978 reforms that followed, are largely viewed as relatively progressive with regards to women's rights and were the result of sustained lobbying by women activists (Ali 2018; Al-Ali 2007; Efrati 2005). While women's groups and feminist activists in Iraq worked hard to achieve these gains, they have also served to construct and reproduce a vision of a 'modernized' Iraq with a united national identity. The significance of the Iraqi PSLs is that they codified and unified personal status matters for Sunni and Shiite Iraqis, thereby eliminating any differentiation in civil status on the basis of religious sect and replacing the authority of religious institutions with that of state-appointed judges (Efrati 2005: 579). This served to open the way for intermarriage between Sunnis and Shi'a, particularly amongst the middle classes, thereby strengthening a unified Iraqi identity at the expense of tribal, religious and sectarian allegiances (Ali 2018; Al-Ali 2007). Moreover, codified personal status laws aimed at consolidating state power (Joseph 1991) in addition to entrenching the nuclear family as the foundation of a modernized Iraq (Omar 1994).

Following the US-led invasion of Iraq and the fall of the Ba'th regime in 2003, the newly empowered religious parties sought to overturn the personal status laws of 1959. Article 41 of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, whilst not repealing the 1959 laws, allowed for the reintroduction of different family laws according to different religious sects, with the possibility of multiple

interpretations according to particular religious clerics (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009: 112; Efrati 2005).[1] More recently, there have been further efforts to abolish the unified personal status laws and replace them with sectarian personal status laws, referred to as the ‘Jaafari Law’ amendments (Ali 2018).[2] The struggle over personal status laws has been integral to the struggle over identity and authority in the post-2003 Iraq. The Shi‘i religious political parties who have dominated the post-2003 political scene have been pushing to replace the unified personal status code, which they view as symbolic of the pre-2003 state in which they were persecuted, with a conservative sectarian family law in line with their political-religious identity. Moreover, sectarian family laws further serve to institutionalize communal, sectarian, and ethnic identities and divisions in Iraq, which are integral to the communally-based political system that benefits the Shi‘a parties. In this way, the personal status code has been ‘part of a “social contract” that traded communal autonomy for women’s rights’ to consolidate a post-Ba‘ath regime (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009: 115).

By contrast, the Kurdistan Regional Government has amended PSLs within its region to be supportive of women’s rights within marriage and divorce; restricting polygamy and strengthening the ability to prosecute in cases of honor killings (Kaya, 2017). This expansion of rights under the civil status umbrella serves to differentiate Iraqi Kurdistan from the rest of Iraq, highlighting the centrality of women’s rights in the nation-building project of Iraqi Kurdistan (Al-Ali and Pratt 2011). This should not discount the efforts of women’s movements to amend such laws or to detract from the success of legislating more gender-equitable civil status laws. Rather, the case of Iraqi Kurdistan reiterates our argument that personal status laws, as a major mechanism for organizing social reproduction, are integral to national and state processes, including the consolidation of different regimes in different periods.

The Provisioning of Social Reproduction

Iraq before the first Gulf War is often represented as a state of relative prosperity (with a flourishing middle class) with some of the best hospitals, schools, and universities in the MENA region, funded by Iraq's oil wealth (Omar 1994). This social provisioning was a key part of state-directed modernization efforts and complemented state feminist policies, which sought to strengthen the relationship between the individual and the state and weaken traditional authority (Al-Ali 2007, Joseph 1991). However, socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions greatly deteriorated as a result of the international sanctions imposed on the country following the first Gulf War, with significant implications for social reproduction and depletion. Existing scholarship shows the deep reliance on women's unpaid labor in the immediate aftermath of the first Gulf War. Louise Cainer's article discusses the effects of war and sanctions on Iraqi women, highlighting how, in the face of food-shortages and lack of access to health care, electricity, and other services, women took on the extra burden of meeting the gap as "nearly all life-support functions were effectively transferred to the household" (Cainkar 1993: 15). As economic sanctions continued in the 1990s, the situation further exacerbated the stress on communities, households, and women. The rising cost of food (like bread) and dependency on government rations, as well as damage to infrastructure like electricity and health-facilities made reproductive and care work for women more difficult and more taxing (Al-Ali 2005; Al-Jawaheri 2008). Meanwhile, the Iraqi state began to scale back employment of public sector workers (many of whom were women) (Al-Jawaheri 2008). As such, women were placed in economic precarity in two ways: losing access to paid employment as well as losing access to affordable goods/food.

In a context where women's access to paid employment as well as public space, including education opportunities, declined, women's dependency on informal structures and male family members deepened – creating a situation in which women's autonomy became

curtailed. This helped create to an environment more permissive of violence against women in its many forms. Alongside these societal trends, Saddam Hussein amended laws to allow so-called honor killings as a means to consolidate his waning power by appeasing more conservative voices in Iraq (Al-Ali 2007: 202).

The fall of the Ba‘th regime in 2003 hardly alleviated the economic situation for most Iraqi families. Ongoing violence and insecurity coupled with state weakness and political corruption prevented the rehabilitation of Iraq’s crumbling infrastructure and economy (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009). Until today, access to electricity, clean water, health care, and education continues to be an issue and was the primary cause for protests across southern Iraq (particularly in Basra) in late 2018. Women in many parts of Iraq continue to operate as a stop-gap between lagging government infrastructure and the needs of their families and communities. In light of war and violence, cases of extreme hardship are numerous in the post-2003 context, especially amongst female-headed households and internally-displaced women and their families. According to a report by a coalition of Iraqi NGOs in 2012, approximately 10.7% of households in Iraq were headed by women (NGO Coalition of CEDAW Shadow Report, 2015: 117). The report explains that this figure is the result of either imprisonment of the male head of household, of widowhood as a result of conflict or terror attacks, as well as increasing divorce rates. The effects of conflict and violence combined with the lack of social provisioning for social reproduction undoubtedly cause harm for many women. Unsurprisingly, rates of maternal mortality and other health problems related to pregnancy are high relative to the country’s wealth (Webster, 2013). Alongside this, the hollowing-out of the Iraqi state has further exacerbated the social-political fragmentation within the country (Al-Ali and Pratt 2009).

The Ideology of Motherhood

Women's substantial reproductive efforts are naturalized via dominant notions of femininity, particularly the notion of motherhood. Zahra Ali documents the widespread idea of the figure of 'al-hejiyya' (the elderly woman). This figure is sacrificial -- one who supports her children despite being illiterate or not having access to education herself, being a mother or widow of a man who lost his life in conflict, or is one who "saved the family from hunger during the sanctions period by working outside" (Ali 2018: 287). Here, there are parallels with the construction of the mother by the Ba'athist regime during the Iran-Iraq war, who was called upon to 'produce' more Iraqi citizens and future soldiers (Al-Ali 2005: 745). In fact, the state not only called on women to perform this biological role, but enacted policies and laws to ensure that women met their obligations: such as banning abortion and contraception, alongside the provision of maternity benefits and infant products (Al-Ali 2007; Ali, 2018). As Yasmin Al-Jawaheri writes, the Iraqi state shifted its view of women's roles as needed, and in the period leading up to 1990, women were encouraged to leave formal work and commit to producing a minimum of five children (2008: 21). Saddam Hussein himself communicated this to the Iraqi population in newspaper articles in which he is quoted as saying: "Every Iraqi family should have at least five children... Iraq's geographic location requires a larger population capable of defending the country" (cited in Al-Jawaheri 2008: 153). Yet, simultaneously, women were also encouraged to go out to work in order to replace the men who were fighting on the frontlines. Indeed, women were expected to do it all for the sake of the country.

However, not all Iraqi mothers were glorified in this way. As part of the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqi regime pursued genocidal campaigns against Kurdish populations (the Anfal campaign, 1986-1988), during which Iraqi forces used aerial bombing, including chemical warfare, ground offensives, mass detention, mass deportation, mass executions, as well as Arabization policies. By targeting Kurdish civilian populations in this way, the regime aimed to defeat Kurdish

fighters. As Choman Hardi details in *Gendered Experiences of Genocide*, women made up a significant portion of those imprisoned as part of this campaign, often experienced birth and motherhood in detention or in the aftermath of chemical attacks (Hardi 2011). The Iraqi state's understanding of the power of social reproduction and women's roles within it was violently and visibly used against Kurdish women even as it encouraged motherhood among Iraqi women to the south of the Kurdish region.

Palestine

We turn now to the case of Palestine and, specifically, how the Israeli state intervenes to shape social reproduction for Palestinians. Whereas in the Iraq case, the state largely intervenes to organize and support social reproduction for the sake of nation state building, in the case of Palestine, Israel implements a wide array of laws and administrative and security measures with the effect of constraining Palestinian family life and social reproduction — most often under the banner of ensuring Israel's 'security.' Yet, rather than viewing limits on Palestinian social reproduction as an unintended consequence of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, it should be viewed as integral to the logic of the Israeli settler colonial project, which seeks to dispossess and displace the indigenous Palestinian population to ensure Jewish demographic dominance within and sovereignty over historic Palestine (Pappé 2006, Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015). The process of dispossession and displacement was not a one-off occurrence with the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, which resulted in the expulsion of approximately half of the Palestinian population. As Patrick Wolfe (2006) has argued, 'elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence' (p. 388). Jewish-Israeli supremacy is enshrined in the 2018 Jewish Nation State law as well as the military laws governing the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In

other words, the depletion of Palestinian social reproduction is part of the settler colonial logic of elimination and it has particular gendered implications.

Specifically, we explore the ways in which 1) Israeli laws and administrative measures shape Palestinian family life; and 2) Israeli military and administrative measures prevent Palestinians from accessing social provisioning essential to social reproduction. Palestinians are geographically fragmented, living under different legal regimes, with different consequences for social reproduction. Broadly, there are three categories of Palestinians: Palestinian refugees, Palestinians living under military occupation, and Palestinians citizens of Israel. The majority of Palestinians are refugees and their descendants who fled Palestine during the 1947-48 war and were not allowed to return to their homes by Israel, despite the fact that in international law, each person has the right to leave and return to their place of residence. Some 5 million Palestinians are stateless or having ambiguous nationality status (Van Waas et al. 2015), of which 1.7 million live in poor conditions in refugee camps in neighboring Arab countries as well as in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (UNRWA n.d.). Meanwhile, Israel's 1952 Nationality Law effectively denationalized Palestinians, forcing those Palestinians who remained within Israel to prove that they were inhabitants of Israel after its creation, whilst granting the right of nationality to any Jewish person from anywhere in the world. Palestinians who remained within the borders of the Israeli state after 1948 and were granted Israeli citizenship make up approximately 20 percent of the Israeli population.

In 2017, almost 5 million Palestinians live in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, under Israeli military occupation (PCBS, 2017). However, these Palestinians are further fragmented between the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. In addition, the West Bank is further divided between Areas A, B and C. The nature of Israeli rule differs between these three areas.

We also consider the gendered effects of these measures in terms of shaping Palestinian gender ideologies and their implications for social depletion.

Israeli laws and administrative measures shaping Palestinian family life

A number of Israeli laws and administrative measures make it difficult for Palestinians to sustain a ‘normal’ family life and operate to encourage Palestinian displacement, thereby facilitating Israel’s annexation (contrary to international law) of certain areas of historic Palestine: namely, East Jerusalem, the Jordan Valley and areas along the ‘Green Line’ –that is, the boundary between Israel and the West Bank. In this regard, the section focuses on Israeli control of residency rights for Palestinians, control on Palestinian mobility, and measures leading to the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes.

Palestinian family life is affected by Israel’s control of who may or may not reside within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Over the years, it has deported some 1500 Palestinian residents of the OPT, in violation of international law (B’Tselem n.d.). Moreover, whilst foreign passport holders married to Israeli citizens have the right to residency in Israel and illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, foreign spouses of Palestinians in the OPT are not granted residency permits but rather temporary spouse visas, which are also not guaranteed of being renewed (Laub and Daraghmeh 2018). Consequently, ‘Palestinians and their foreign spouses are often presented with impossible choices – separation, emigration or life in the West Bank without legal status’ (ibid). The situation for Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, which Israel illegally annexed in 1967, is even more precarious. This is because Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem are treated as ‘permanent residents’ of Israel, whose residency may be revoked at any time. Some 14,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem have had their residency revoked by Israel between 1967 and 2014 (B’tselem 2015). They have no right to bring their West Bank or Gaza spouses to reside in East Jerusalem. However, if they move to

join their spouse in West Bank and Gaza, they risk losing their right to live in Jerusalem. A report by the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling on women in Jerusalem finds that:

The result of these provisions is that thousands of Palestinians are unable to live "legally" together in the city. This frequently results in one spouse remaining in East Jerusalem without the proper papers in order that the family can remain together. In effect, this means no legal possibility of work, no social welfare or healthcare and the constant fear of deportation to the West Bank (Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling 2015).

These constraints on Palestinian family life also apply to Palestinians within 'Israel proper'. Since 2003, Israeli law prohibits Palestinian spouses of Israeli citizens from residing within the Green Line. This law disproportionately affects Palestinian citizens of Israel (Middle East Monitor 2015). Israel justifies this discriminatory law on the basis that Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip constitute 'security threats' to Israel. Palestinian couples with differential residency rights are forced to make a choice: to leave Israel and live together abroad/in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (leading to a risk that the Israeli spouse will lose their citizenship); to live apart; or to live together illegally.

Another 'security' measure that disrupts Palestinian lives is the existence of the West Bank separation wall. Whilst some attention has been paid to Israel's appropriation of Palestinian lands on which to build the wall, less attention has been paid to the impact on those Palestinians living between the wall and the Green Line, in what is called the 'seam zone.' They must obtain a permit to access the zone, even if they have lived and worked there long-term. Permits are difficult to obtain and it is estimated that less than 20% of those who seek access receive permits. Moreover, the seam zone is under a de facto curfew, limiting the hours during which

permit holders may pass the gates. This makes it difficult for families within the zone to visit their relatives beyond the zone. Farmers are also restricted in what machinery and tools they may take into and when they may access the seam zone, making it difficult to cultivate their land (Dana 2017). As Karam Dana (2017) argues, these physical barriers to Palestinian mobility impact upon the psyche of individuals and communities, hinder social interactions, and disrupt social continuity. Consequently, many families have moved out of the seam zone because life is unbearable (Reynolds and Alqasis 2012). As Simon Reynolds and Amjad Alqasis (2012) argue:

They are not isolated incidents, but rather represent a systematic pattern of discriminatory measures and apartheid policies by the occupying power which seeks to make life so difficult for those Palestinians present that they are left with little option but to relocate to other parts of the West Bank.

Israel also disrupts Palestinian social reproduction through the expulsion of Palestinian communities from their lands. This is a particular problem facing Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank as well as within Israel. In the West Bank, Israel has been trying to relocate Bedouin communities from the South Hebron Hills, Jordan Valley, and the environs of Ma'ale Adumin (an Israeli settlement adjacent to East Jerusalem) to urban areas to pave the way for annexing these lands. In so doing, they deprive these communities of their ability to continue their livelihoods of farming and shepherding (B'Tselem 2017a). Meanwhile, within Israel, the government shelved, in 2013, a plan to relocate around 40,000 Bedouin citizens of Israel from their ancestral homes in the Naqab (Negev) to designated towns following sustained opposition from members of the community and international criticism. However, the threat of forced relocation remains and Israel refuses to provide basic infrastructure to what it considers 'unrecognized' Bedouin villages (Adalah & NCF 2019).

The difficulties facing Palestinians are further exacerbated by the constraints on Palestinian mobility as a result of checkpoints, permits, Jewish-only bypass roads, and the separation wall. It is very difficult for Palestinians to obtain permits to travel between the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem and they may be revoked at any moment for ‘security’ reasons. Moreover, even if one obtains permits, there are only four checkpoints between the West Bank and Jerusalem that West Bank Palestinians may use, leading to crowds and long waiting times (Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling 2015). As a result, Palestinians are prevented from leading ordinary lives. They face difficulties accessing health care, their land, and their relatives and social networks, thereby disrupting the social fabric that sustains families and communities (Peteet 2017). As Peteet notes, ‘Obstructed mobility hinders the physical closeness necessary to sustain kin relations. Family support networks, sedimented in networks of reciprocity, are compromised by the inability to attend life-cycle events, marriages, births, deaths, celebrations, or even the simple but meaning-packed and emotionally satisfying visiting that nurtures ties with kin (2017: 160). One can leave the house in the morning not knowing if one will arrive at one’s destination on time or even be allowed to return home, making it difficult to plan ahead with any certainty (B’tselem 2017b). Moreover, the restrictions on Palestinian access to roads and checkpoints increase journey times considerably with an accompanying financial cost as well as physical and emotional cost.

Preventing access to resources essential for social reproduction: health care, water, electricity, employment, and housing

Access to resources essential for social reproduction differs greatly amongst Palestinians as well as between Palestinians and Israelis. The most stark example of how Israeli ‘security measures’ undermine access to basic resources necessary for social reproduction is in the Gaza Strip. Already in 2015, the UN warned that the Gaza Strip would be uninhabitable within a few years (UN News 2015). In February 2018, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory reported that residents of the Gaza Strip had electricity for only up to 8 hours per day. This has implications for economic activity, including food production, as well as the provision of clean water. Households receive piped water for only a few hours every 4 to 5 days and the desalination plant for producing potable water works at only 60% capacity. According to the OCHA OPT humanitarian needs overview for 2018, ‘90 per cent of people in Gaza rely on purchasing desalinated water from private trucking, posing a heavy financial burden on already impoverished families and health risks due to widespread contamination of that source’ (OCHA 2017).

Access to basic services such as health care remains a humanitarian concern. Due to electricity shortages, the waiting time for elective surgery can be up to a year. Meanwhile, supplies of medicines do not meet demand: ‘44 per cent of essential medicines and 28 per cent of essential disposables at the MoH’s [Ministry of Health] Central Drug Storage in Gaza were at zero stock, which is defined as less than one month’s supply’ (OCHA 2018). As already discussed, Israel’s permit system limits Palestinian access to health care facilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Israel. It is mothers, grandmothers, and sisters who are undoubtedly left to fill the gap between the lack of health care provision and the need to care for so many family members suffering from chronic illnesses exacerbated by poor health services as well as those injured and maimed as a result of multiple episodes of Israeli violence against the Gazan population, most recently during the Great March of Return (2018-19).

The dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is greatly exacerbated by the ongoing Israeli siege of the Gaza Strip (aided by Egypt), which prevents normal trade in goods and services, with some ‘dual use’ items being prohibited by Israel. This has impacted upon the ability to repair, rehabilitate, and maintain essential infrastructure damaged by war, including schools, hospitals, electricity, sewage treatment, and water treatment. In addition, thousands of

Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remain homeless as a result of the 2014 war, in which whole neighborhoods were destroyed: ‘as of November 2017 funding is lacking for the reconstruction of about 3,800 destroyed and over 56,500 damaged housing units from the 2014 round of hostilities’ (OCHA 2017: 7).

Whilst the challenges facing Palestinians in the West Bank are not as severe as those facing Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, nonetheless, Israeli occupation impacts upon access to health care (as mentioned above), including women’s ability to access reproductive health facilities. Some of the best hospitals are in East Jerusalem and Palestinians must have a valid permit in order to access them. Pregnant women are not exempt from this permit system. Pregnant West Bank women must apply for a permit to give birth in a Jerusalem hospital. However the permit may only be valid for three days. Therefore, a woman is under intense pressure to give birth within the ‘permitted’ window of time (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015: 155-56). Pregnant women are held up at checkpoints and, during the Second Intifada, were even forced to give birth there (Amnesty International 2005; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015: 162). Moreover, the permit system serves to separate Palestinians from their relatives, isolating Palestinians from important social support networks. Palestinian women are forced to give birth without the support of husbands or other relatives. As Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian’s work demonstrates, this is highly stressful for mothers, impacting on mental health, as well as endangering the health of the child (2015; see also, Electronic Intifada 2011).

Israel also controls access to water for Palestinians in the West Bank. Palestinian Water Authority figures for the West Bank, in 2015, recorded an average water consumption of 84.3 liters per person per day, which is far lower than the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization of 100 liters of water per person per day for personal and domestic use. Moreover, the figure of 84.3 liters not only includes water consumption for personal and

domestic use, but also for commercial and domestic uses (cit. in B'tselem 2017c). Palestinians in Area C are particularly vulnerable since Israel often prevents them from hooking up to the water grid and they are forced to purchase water privately from tankers at a much higher cost.

Access to housing is another major challenge facing Palestinian families and communities. Palestinians in Area C of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and East Jerusalem must apply to the Israeli authorities for building permits, which are almost never granted. This leads Palestinians to either build homes illegally and risk that they will then be demolished (as in the West Bank village of Khan al-Ahmar in Area C) or to move to other parts of the West Bank (Hass 2018). Through its permit system, Israel not only tries to prevent the building of new homes for Palestinian communities, but also the building of schools, farm buildings, and other forms of infrastructure necessary for development. Moreover, in its planning policies, Israel privileges the needs of Jewish Israelis over Palestinians. As B'Tselem observes:

Israel's policy in Area C is based on the assumption that the area is primarily meant to serve Israeli needs, and on the ambition to annex large parts of it to the sovereign territory of Israel. To that end, Israel works to strengthen its hold on Area C, to further exploit the area's resources and achieve a permanent situation in which Israeli settlements thrive and Palestinian presence is negligible. In doing so, Israel has de facto annexed Area C and created circumstances that will leverage its influence over the final status of the area (B'tselem 2019).

The Israeli practice of home demolitions is an acute form of attack on the family and household. In the West Bank (Area C) and East Jerusalem, Israel demolishes any building built without an Israeli permit. According to OCHA, more than a 1000 Palestinian homes and other structures demolished or seized in 2016, representing the highest number recorded since it began records

in 2009 (OCHA 2016). Israel also demolishes homes as part of security and military operations. In the Gaza Strip, home demolitions occur largely as a result of Israeli military incursions. In the 2014 Gaza War, Israel destroyed 12,600 homes, whilst another 6,500 were severely damaged and 150,000 housing units were rendered uninhabitable (Sousa et al. 2014). As previously noted, the rebuilding of these homes has been delayed by the ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip.

The loss of homes has a negative impact on family life and is particularly traumatic for women, who bear a disproportionate responsibility for caring for the family and reconstructing the household and family life. The loss of a home is a loss of security and autonomy. Women report anxiety, depression and other mental health problems as a result of losing their homes (Sousa et al. 2014; Kevorkian 2015: 82-115). In addition, they have to cope with the mental health problems of their children, who are traumatized by the experience of losing their homes.

Social reproduction as a site of Palestinian resistance

In the face of Israel's policies and measures of displacement and dispossession, Palestinians demonstrate resilience and continue to resist, whether in overtly political ways, such as protests, or through everyday resistance (Dana 2017, Richter-Devroe 2018). Yet, we do not know at what cost families are able to maintain this resilience and the extent of emotional and caring labor, particularly by women, that is required in this regard. As Julie Peteet argues, 'The emotional landscape of occupation and closure is one of chronic micro-aggression, insecurity, and fear, fertile ground for anxiety and depression' (2017: 158). This emotional landscape is highly gendered. Whilst men and women both suffer the indignities of Israeli measures that control where they live, with whom they live, and how they live, it is often women who have disproportionate responsibility for the emotional labor in the family and community.

The logic of settler colonialism renders social reproduction as highly politicized and as a site of resistance. This is best exemplified by the concept of '*sumud*,' meaning 'steadfastness,' -- a political philosophy or strategy that emphasizes remaining on the land of Palestine despite ongoing threats and hardships. The symbol of '*sumud*' is often a mother -- a pregnant woman -- and the imagery of the 'steadfast mother' is central to political culture (Richter-Devroe 2018: 86). '*Sumud*' is also gendered in terms of the reproductive labor that underpins it. Whilst Palestinian fertility rates have dropped somewhat in the last decades, the average is still above four children per woman. Whilst feminist scholars generally view social reproduction as a burden on women, Palestinian women also frame their reproductive labor as part of their political activism (Peteet 1991: 175-203; Richter-Devroe 2018). However, the politicization of social reproduction in this way, serves to solidify gender roles in ways that render Palestinian women more vulnerable to gender-based violence as the 'frontliners' in this conflict (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009; see also, Amnesty International 2005).

Conclusion

This article has argued for the importance of understanding the role of social reproduction in particular geopolitical contexts and its implications for DSR. The cases have demonstrated the different ways in which states intervene in social reproduction --through laws governing marriage, residency, and nationality, through regulating access to basic infrastructure and other provisioning necessary for social reproduction, and through the promotion of particular gender norms. These state measures, we argue, have served to support geopolitical processes including state building, national identity construction, war-making, and settler colonial projects. However, the choice of measures and their implications for DSR differ between geopolitical contexts as well as historical periods. Whilst Iraqi state measures targeting social reproduction,

particularly in the initial decades of independence, have largely sought to *organize and instrumentalize* the life of Iraqi citizens in the service of postcolonial state building and war-making, by contrast, Israeli state measures targeting Palestinian social reproduction, have largely sought to *erase* Palestinian life in line with a settler colonial logic. Hence, whilst both cases point to the crucial role of the state in not only shaping the conditions and organization of social reproduction but also in mitigating DSR, in the Iraqi case depletion is a product of state weakness and war, whilst, in the Israeli case, it is a product of the settler colonial logic of Israeli state building and gendered resistance to it.

The article has also considered ways to measure DSR. Levels of depletion may be measured in terms of mental and physical health and gender-based violence. In both Iraq and Palestine, poor health indicators for women reflect the lack of access to health care and other social provisioning as well as the emotional and mental toll of ongoing violence and insecurity. Moreover, in such contexts, women are rendered more vulnerable to gender-based violence. Women's NGOs and international agencies have tried to capture some of these dynamics through collecting statistics related to women's health and testimonials of women's daily lives. More work is needed to shed light on the relationship between state failure of social provisioning and depletion in specific geopolitical contexts through linking social, economic, and health indicators, personal narratives, and state policies.

Finally, we have considered the ways in which DSR is naturalized through dominant gender norms that are also central to geopolitical processes—particularly the norm of motherhood. In the case of Iraq, the figure of the mother sacrificing for her family has also been extended to the nation in order to mobilize women's productive and reproductive labor for war. However, during 'peace' times, norms of motherhood also serve to mobilize women's productive and reproductive labor to fill the gap between the lack of social provisioning and actual needs on

the ground. In the case of Palestine, Israel's targeting of Palestinian social reproduction renders social reproduction a site of resistance, or '*sumud*.' Whilst many Palestinian women embrace the identity of motherhood in their everyday resistance to Israeli settler colonialism, nonetheless, dominant gender norms operate to naturalize or romanticize the gendered division of social reproduction, in which women face additional pressures as the 'frontliners' in this conflict (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009). As such, we advocate for further research on social reproduction and depletion that is attentive to the ways in which geopolitical processes and resistance to them rely on particular gender norms, embodied in particular types of women's reproductive labor, and to the different consequences of these for women's wellbeing.

Notes

[1] Article 41 allows Iraqis to commit to personal status laws according to their religion or sect, which negates the universality of the 1959 Iraqi Personal Status Laws. Meanwhile, according to the 2005 constitution, personal status laws may be devolved to the regional level, thereby enabling further fragmentation of family laws (see Al-Ali and Pratt 2009: 114-115).

[2] The Jaafari Law is an amendment to the 1959 Iraqi Personal Status Laws. Activists have highlighted the concerning aspects of the laws, including a lowering of the legal age of marriage to nine for girls and fifteen for boys, permitting polygamy without conditions, as well as allowing marital rape.

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