

Pushing Boundaries: Smuggling Against Policy in Israel/Palestine

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for a degree of

Master of Arts

University of Washington

2020

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Near Eastern Languages and Civilization

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Abstract

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This paper investigates the development and current practices of smuggling networks operating between Israel and Palestine. Specifically, this study looks at the smuggling of food items and SIM cards which smugglers transport bi-directionally over the border. By defining the system of Israeli checkpoints throughout the West Bank and around the Gaza Strip as the “border” between Israel and Palestine, this research discusses the reasons for and responses to smuggling operations. The many small-scale unorganized smugglers in the region violate the porous border between Israel and Palestine in order to make additional income and supply certain markets. The Israeli and Palestinian governments restrict the trade of certain goods, creating a demand that only smugglers can meet. In smuggling goods such as food items and SIM cards, smugglers delegitimize the Israeli security apparatus and question the Palestinian political parties’ ability to control their territories. This work seeks to complicate the current narrative of the Israel/Palestine conflict by highlighting illegal economic interactions.

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Introduction

Six years ago, in March 2013, Emad al-Malalha, the groom, stood in an illegally made underground smuggling tunnel in the Gaza Strip. With much anticipation, he saw his bride-to-be, Manal Abu Shanar, approaching through the tunnel already in her white wedding dress. Shanar, an Egyptian national, travelled to the border, prepared for her wedding, and met her smugglers. The smugglers guided her through the tunnel complex where she emerged on the other side for her nuptials. Her family-to-be greeted her with ululations that could be heard through the streets. After the ceremony, the new wife was brought back to an unsuspecting building hiding a tunnel which carried her out of the blockaded Gaza.¹ These tunnels linking Gaza to Israel and Egypt are one piece of a much larger system of smuggling between Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and their neighbors. Goods from medicines and vegetables to drugs and weapons commonly cross these borders illicitly. Therefore, Manal Abu Shanar is not a rarity, her story is a piece of the smuggling networks around Israel and Palestine that people utilize to make their lives easier despite the governmental policies.

The smuggling of goods and people is by no means a new phenomenon in the region. Prior to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, early Zionist settlers made *Aliyah* (Jewish immigration to the Holy Land) in the Ottoman region of Palestine joining the autochthonous Jewish community. The new members of the Yishuv, or Palestinian Jewish community, developed new cities which fostered different interactions with local Arabs. With growing tension which later erupted into full scale war, the Jewish community relied on smuggled goods and people to bolster their fighting force, aiding in their eventual victory in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

¹ Reuters Staff, "Smuggling a Bride under Gaza," *Reuters* March 21, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/smuggling-a-bride-under-gaza-idUSRTR3FAN6> (accessed March 7, 2019).

At the beginning of the 21st century, after many wars and increased tensions between the Israeli and Palestinian communities, the Israeli government began the construction of a barrier that the Israeli Ministry of Defense claimed would reduce violence. The security barrier (also referred to as the Apartheid Wall in Arabic or Separation Fence in Hebrew) is a series of walls, fences, and security technologies which divide Palestinian and Israeli communities. Paid for by the Israeli government, yet built by private contractors, the security barrier separates Israelis from Palestinians but also Palestinians from Palestinians and Israelis from Israelis. The existence of both communities on either side of the separation barrier allows for the exploration of economic partnerships formed in various ways, including those through illicit means.

Yet despite all the security in place, humans are often willing and able to break institutional and social laws to live how they would like. Smuggling is one key tool that humans use to achieve the life they want when political, social, or economic factors hinder them. While examining smuggling networks between Israel and Palestine, many journalists prioritize the transfer of weapons and drugs while only briefly mentioning the smuggling of daily goods. The media's focus on weapon and drug smuggling is rational as these items are alarming and create sensational stories, but they comprise only a fragment of the smuggling operations between Israel and Palestine. For example, the Palestinian Authority (PA) announced that it seizes between 600-1000 firearms every year within its area of control.² Yet, 2017 alone saw the apprehension of 55 tons of vegetables smuggled across the border.³

² Ahmad Melhem, "Israel dismantles weapons cell in West Bank," *Al-Monitor*, March 6, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/03/israel-arrest-weapons-production-west-bank-security.html> (accessed March 17, 2020).

³ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, "Ministry of Agriculture Inspectors Foiled Attempt to Smuggle 13 Tons of Vegetables from the West Bank" March 29, 2018. https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/Publications_18/Pages/smuggled_veggies_west_bank.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020).

At the same time, smuggling is not inherently dangerous to established political systems. As a practice, it rejects established national institutions leading to vilification by state governments, spawning operations to tackle and eliminate illegal importation or exportation. On the one hand, smuggling at the micro level refers to operations between individuals for consumer desires or needs. On the other hand, at the macro level, smuggling can challenge nationalist sentiments by dismantling imagined concepts in nationalism by exposing a mutual economic reliance between nations despite power inequalities.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how smuggling operations reveal a hidden economic relationship between Israelis and Palestinians in the wider framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This study challenges typical connotations of smuggling as inheritably nefarious or dangerous. While there exists a myriad of smuggling operations into Israel and Palestine involving weapons, drugs, or soldiers, this paper places such malicious trading into a secondary role. Although smuggled goods can destroy lives and harm communities, they can also benefit economies, permit a greater level of individual freedom, and supply people's consumer desires. Therefore, this research seeks to reverse this formula by using the smuggling of the mundane as the primary means of investigation.

This study tells the story of how daily goods smuggling occurs between Israel and the Palestinian Territories, the governments differing and complex relationships with smuggling, and what the smuggling operations tell us about Palestinian-Israeli economic relations in the context of conflict. Specifically, it will look at the smuggling of food items and SIM cards, or Subscriber Identification Module cards that are small removeable circuits placed in most cell phones, between Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the 21st century. While smugglers illegally transport many mundane products such as cigarettes, fertility medicine, animals, and prescription

drugs, by focusing on SIM cards and foodstuffs, this study can analyze the smuggling of goods produced in Israel/Palestine that smugglers transport in both directions. The production and usage of these two types of goods are also tied to land usage in the region. Since both the access to and control over land in Israel/Palestine remains so contentious in the negotiations for a long-term peace deal, we can look at the smuggling of products tied to land to expose consumer level interactions that defy current policies.

People who produce food are anchored to the land on which they produce their goods. Whether they raise livestock for slaughter or plant and harvest of fruits and vegetables, food producers require access to land and water. SIM cards, on the other hand, are less directly related to the land on which they are produced, i.e. factories. SIM cards instead rely on landed infrastructure to function properly. The SIM cards that unlock most functions of a smartphone are only as powerful as the closest telecommunications tower. While the functionality of the SIM card is grounded in the landed connection tower, the card in turn allows the phone user to traverse landed space and transgress borders by connecting to the internet.

Evidence shows Palestinians living on lands well-guarded by the Israeli government produce food for Israeli consumption, and simultaneously, Palestinian consumers digitally transgress the imposed security barriers by using Israeli SIM cards that allow access to Israeli cellphone towers. With this in mind, I argue that the smuggling of food items and SIM cards in Israel/Palestine delegitimizes both the State of Israel's matrix of control by revealing the porousness of its security apparatus and the non-state of Palestine's desired international image as a nation capable of enforcing effective law due to its inability or unwillingness to stop smuggling operations within its limited area of control. The Israeli and Palestinian smugglers that create such challenges for their governments show a high level of agency in forging

economic ties between the two communities on both sides of the separation barrier despite both Israeli and Palestinian governmental initiatives to present separate economies. The smugglers reveal that the Palestinian and Israeli economies do not function independently, but in fact, provide for each other's supply and demand markets of certain consumer goods.

To achieve this argument, after a general review of the existing scholarship, chapter one explains the development of smuggling in the Israel/Palestine region beginning around the start of the 20th century. This analysis will not be an in depth look into various aspects of these communities but rather will show how their populations became localized in certain areas, what economic networks existed prior to 1993, and how Israeli and Palestinian legal institutions developed their modern frameworks to respond to smuggling.

The year 1993 proves an important transitional point in the recent timeline of Israeli-Palestinian relations for the analysis of regional smuggling as it marks the arrival of large amounts of Jews from the former Soviet Union and satellite states. This influx of inexpensive Jewish labor made Israeli's question their dependence on Palestinians as unskilled laborers. As such, in 1993, the use of Jewish immigrant labor eliminated a key function of Palestinians in Israeli society. Without the need for the Palestinian labor market, the Israeli economy could financially justify future separation practices and led Palestinians to finding alternative ways to engage with the Israeli economy.

Complicating the story of smuggling in Palestine is the division of power between the rival Palestinian political parties of Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. This political structure makes it impossible to discuss a singular Palestinian governmental response to smuggling. Both Fatah and Hamas benefited in some ways from smuggling such as through procuring essential building materials, yet their public responses differ. Hamas, infamous for the

use of their tunnels connecting Gaza with Egypt and Israel, is often accused of sponsoring smuggling. While Hamas benefits greatly from the illegal importation of weapons with which they assert their political control, they do not have a unified response to the smuggling of the mundane. Some items such as SIM cards or even Israeli foodstuffs are prolific in Gazan markets despite Hamas' rhetoric against Israeli goods. This can be due to Hamas officials turning a blind eye to certain smuggling operations if they are not deemed a threat, or even to widespread corruption in the management of the smuggling tunnels. Fatah, on the other hand, in efforts to appear more established as a governmental body to the world stage, condemn smuggling operations. Yet with their limited ability to police their borders, Fatah's efficiency to enforce anti-smuggling measures is limited to policing gray or black markets after goods are already transported into their territory.

The second chapter will investigate the common food smuggling operations between Israel and Palestine. Meat smugglers, for example, extend the scope of their operations as much of the meat smuggled into Israel originates across the Atlantic Ocean. After the trans-Atlantic journey, the smuggled meat crosses the separation barrier between Israel and Palestine multiple times. An Israeli agricultural official highlighted the national security risk that such illegally imported food creates. Similar to Palestinians using Israeli SIM cards, Israelis continue to purchase illegal food items because, when politics are removed from the purchase condition, smuggled items remain the more price effective option.

Chapter three will begin the consumer good based analysis of smuggling between Israel and Palestine starting with SIM cards. Cell phone companies use SIM cards to identify phones as belonging to one of their subscribers, and thus enables the full operation of the cellular device. Many Palestinians, both in Gaza and the West Bank, use illegally smuggled SIM cards made in

Israel as the Israeli SIM cards offer faster connection speeds than those produced in Palestine. Both Fatah and Hamas labeled the rampant Israeli SIM card usage in Palestine a national security risk due to the possibility that Israeli companies can track these SIM cards. Despite these warnings, Palestinians continue to use Israeli SIM cards which are smuggled from Israel, costing the Palestinian economy millions in lost tax revenue. The smuggling of daily goods between Israel and the Palestinian Territories displays an extensive network of people on both sides of the separation barrier willing to defy national policies for economic and consumer benefit.

Literature Review

In order to investigate smuggling and its impact on nation-building practices in the context of Israel and Palestine, this study will utilize published scholarly materials from the fields of economics, political science, and the humanities to produce a theoretical framework. Different methodologies employed in these fields combine to form a theory which appropriately conceptualizes smuggling as an economic action in friction with political sovereignty demarcated and manifested by territorial borders.

Political theorist Wendy Brown explores how states resort to militarized hard borders such as patrolled concrete walls when faced with their own limitations. Brown argues that the global trend of border wall construction is a testament to the deterioration of state legitimacy rather than an enforcement of power as nation-states rely on physical boundaries to assert sovereignty in areas where governance failed.⁴ Drawing on Brown's understanding of the relationship between border walls and nation-states, it may be argued that smuggling reveals the

⁴ Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, (MIT Press, 2010), 24.

waning authority of Israel and Palestine who struggle to stop smugglers from illegally transcending physical boundaries and engaging illegally with the extraterritorial digital sphere.

The concept of the border between Israel and Palestine, both literally and figuratively, challenges normalized perceptions of international borders. While Brown's analysis of the walling of states along their borders applies to the current situation in Israel/Palestine, the physical separation barrier discussed above does not constitute the legal border between the two political entities. Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir argue that the political apparatus that rules the Palestinian territories is part and parcel of the political regime of Israel and is therefore a single governmental apparatus rather than two completely distinct bodies. According to this argument, the Israeli government rules the State of Israel directly and the Palestinian Territories indirectly through their ability to restrict and manipulate the effectiveness of the Palestinian Authority.⁵ If one is to understand that the Israeli ruling apparatus controls the entirety of both the State of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, then the idea of an internal border separating the two entities is illogical. When utilizing Brown's theory in conjunction with Azoulay and Ophir, this paper views the Separation Fence as a visual manifestation of Israeli insecurity in effectively creating policies for a political solution to the conflict. The Separation Fence itself does not constitute the border between Israel and Palestine, but a series of checkpoints operating as extensions of the fence form the penetrative security apparatus.

Understanding the governing structure of Israel/Palestine as a single state as described by Azoulay and Ophir problematizes the idea of sovereignty and jurisdiction. In the West Bank specifically, the Israeli government divides the land into three regions called Areas A, B, and C. Area A comprises less than 20% of the West Bank and includes many of the large Palestinian

⁵ Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine*, (Stanford University Press, 2012), 12-13.

urban centers excluding East Jerusalem. In Area A, the Palestinian Authority has full civil and security control. The PA has full civic and shared security control with Israel over roughly a quarter of the West Bank that consists of Area B. Area C is often cited as the most controversial area because Israel manages full civilian and security control despite many countries in the international community recognizing the land as Palestinian. Many of the Israeli settlements, which international law labels as illegal, occupy Area C. This area is heavily restricted to Palestinian use despite it containing a majority of the West Bank's potential agricultural land. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), a political unit of the Israel Defense Ministry, controls the security operations in Areas B and C, reinforcing the concept of Israeli rule managing Palestinian space.⁶

With this complex web of jurisdiction and sovereignty in mind, in the context of this paper, the term "Israel" will refer to all land under direct Israeli jurisdiction. Therefore, "Israel" here will mean the State of Israel and Areas B and C of the Palestinian West Bank. Simultaneously, "Palestine" and "The Palestinian Territories" will refer to Area A of the West Bank and the entirety of the Gaza Strip. With these definitions, the "border" between Israel and Palestine can refer to spaces such as Israeli checkpoints between Areas A and C despite both areas existing within the West Bank. This is not intended to grant any sort of legitimacy to the Israeli government over land belonging to Palestine before 1967 nor is it intended to encourage a potential border in any future peace arrangement. Defining the terms "Israel" and "Palestine" in this way simply recognizes the current security and police jurisdictions as they pertain to criminal activities. Since this paper discusses the criminal act of smuggling, it would be an incomplete study to ignore examples of the Israeli police apprehending Palestinian or Israeli

⁶ Azoulay and Ophir, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine*,

smugglers within Area C of the West Bank since that land is currently *de facto* under Israeli police control. The definition of these terms is important to recognize that Palestinian governance is limited in their ability to apprehend smugglers or confiscate smuggled goods to Area A and the Gaza Strip. While the separation barrier does not constitute a legal border, it does form a physical border between lands that are majority Israeli and majority Palestinian.

As the Separation Fence does not constitute the border between Israel and Palestine defined in these terms, Israeli checkpoints form much of the “border” between the two entities for this study. New York University professor Helga Tawil-Souri argues that in Israel/Palestine, “checkpoints are becoming the new ‘centers’ on politically contested boundaries: spaces filled with social and economic relations.”⁷ In reference to “checkpoint economies,” Tawil-Souri notes that Israeli checkpoints become centers for the Palestinian economy as stores, street vendors, and drivers in the area surrounding checkpoints benefit from the grouping of Palestinians waiting to cross the checkpoints.⁸ The hundreds of checkpoints which constitute a border between Israel and Palestine also become economic hubs via smuggling. Israeli checkpoints in the region divide Palestinians cities from one another, meaning Palestinians travelling from one city to another might pass through a series of various stops. Checkpoints allow a level of flexibility that a border wall does not. While some checkpoints are sophisticated and well built, Israeli troops build others from mounds of dirt or create “flying checkpoints” by parking a military vehicle in the road to halt traffic.⁹ These Israeli checkpoints form an important border crossing in the exploration of smuggling between Israel and Palestine. Checkpoints’ imposing physical

⁷ Helga Tawil- Souri, “New Palestinian centers: an ethnology of the ‘checkpoint economy’,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2009): 224.

⁸ Tawil- Souri, “New Palestinian centers: an ethnology of the ‘checkpoint economy’,” 217.

⁹ Tawil- Souri, “New Palestinian centers: an ethnology of the ‘checkpoint economy’,” 220-221.

construction extends Brown's analysis on border walls to semi-permanent structures while introducing the flexibility of quickly installing new border checkpoints at Israel's will.

Secondly, Naomi Klein contextualizes the economics of Israel before, during, and after the construction of the separation fence. Klein employs the term *disaster capitalism* to refer to actions nation-states take to dramatically alter the economies of their areas of control after some type of unrest. Specifically looking at Israel/ Palestine, Klein illustrates how Israel took advantage of the former Soviet immigrant labor pool arriving in Israel after 1990 to begin socially, economically, and physically fencing off the Palestinian population under the guise of national security.¹⁰ Smuggling benefits from disaster capitalism, forming a unique relationship between the smuggler and the state. States build border defenses in response to either a legitimate or a perceived threat, thereby creating a need for smugglers. When smuggling practices are detected, however, states can use smuggling operations as a justification to increase border security. This in turn re-legitimizes the role of the smuggler thus perpetuating a cycle of perceived disaster that the nation-state can use for its own purposes. Such a continuous and cyclical form of disaster capitalism between smugglers and governments shapes physical borders, economies, and national policies.

In regard to economic theory, this study turns to Lochery in tandem with Norton who contextualize the economic power of smuggling as a delegitimizing force in both a global-theoretical (Norton) and practical-localized (Lochery) framework. Lochery focuses on the Israeli/Palestinian context, slightly overlapping with Klein, to argue that the Israeli border construction in the wake of the growing Jewish labor market was a shortsighted policy that will

¹⁰ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. 1st ed. (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2007), 431-433.

hurt the Israeli and Palestinian economies in the long term.¹¹ On the other hand, Norton created a new economic model for smuggling, specifically agricultural smuggling between Ireland and Northern Ireland, which expresses the ways a more restrictive border will increase contraband and extend the range of smuggler's connections on either side of the border.¹²

Placing this framework in conversation with scholarship on the historical relationship between smuggling and nation-states provides a rich analysis of the contemporary relationship between the state and illicit economies. Peter Andreas explored how smuggling aided in shaping and reshaping the border politics of America. As opposed to smuggling in history which involved evading high tariffs, Andreas claims that in the neoliberal economy "smuggling tends to shift from evading tariffs on legal commodities to evading prohibitions on commodities deemed undesirable."¹³ The smuggling of foodstuffs that are not regulated by the Israeli government still prove economically beneficial, and Palestinians use Israeli technology for the superior quality despite it undermining the Palestinian economy. Andreas argues that while nation-states create the demand that smuggling fills, smuggling remakes the state by transporting commodities.¹⁴ By the remaking of states, Andreas specifically details how both governmental policies change in response to smuggling and smuggling changes in response to governmental policies. Applying this theory to Israel/Palestine, smuggling was part of the motivation for the creation of the separation fence and various security apparatuses put in place by the Israeli government. The various security structures reconfigured the built environment of the area partially to stop

¹¹ Neill Lochery, "The Politics and Economics of Israeli Disengagement, 1994-2006," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 1 (January, 2007): 1.

¹² Desmond A. G. Norton, "On the Economic Theory of Smuggling," *Economica* 55, no. 217 (February, 1988): 116.

¹³ Peter Andreas, *Border Games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico Divide*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 17.

¹⁴ Peter Andreas, *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2-3.

smuggling. Additionally, both the Israeli and Palestinian governments altered trade agreements pertaining to daily items which created gaps in the market that smugglers continue to fill.

Simon Harvey argues that smuggling is always a political act that becomes geopolitical in the case of transnational goods smuggling. Harvey claims that smuggling is both rebellious and romantic. Here, smuggling is romanticized for its rebellious nature against established power structures. Generally, people who benefit from smuggling tell such a romanticized narrative, which directly contradicts the narrative of criminality that governments propagate.¹⁵ While this is true in both Israel and the Palestinian Fatah political party controlled West Bank, in Hamas controlled Gaza, political narratives about smuggling range from romantic and revolutionary to detrimental for the Palestinian cause. Governmental and individual's perceptions of smuggling add layers to the contested analysis of smuggling between Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Terrance Lichtenwald developed a three-tiered labeling system to describe various drug smuggling operations. While his work focuses on drug smuggling, other commodity smuggling operations which this paper discusses follow similar practices at the various levels. The three "phases" of smuggling operations are structured in a pyramid shape with Phase I forming the wide base. Phase I smugglers include short term, unorganized, and part-time smugglers who generally carry contraband themselves in order to create additional income or supply their personal or communal needs. Phase II smugglers generally operate in decentralized organizations which seek to make profits through smuggling operations. Smugglers in this group tend to function for a limited period of time before breaking apart due to a lack of organization leading to splinter operations. Lastly, on top of the pyramid sit the Phase III smugglers who consist of organizations we might refer to as international mafia families or large organized

¹⁵ Simon Harvey, *Smuggling: Seven Centuries of Contraband*, (Reaktion Books, 2016), 10-11.

gangs. Those at the bottom of the pyramid are most likely to be caught and simultaneously the least likely to use violence while smuggling contraband.¹⁶

Most of the smuggling operations that occur between Israel and the Palestinian Territories are conducted by Phase I smugglers who diffuse their smuggled goods into the legal market. By blending legal goods with illegal merchandise, vendors and wholesalers can feasibly deny knowledge of smuggled goods to avoid detection. Some of the smuggling networks between Palestine and Israel can also be described as Phase II operations. Both Phase I and Phase II smugglers in Israel and the Palestinian Territories sometimes practice Multi-Consignment Contraband (MCC) smuggling. Lichtenwald defines MCC smuggling as the smuggling of two or more different products at the same time.¹⁷ This form of smuggling generally shows a higher level of organization when conducted in large quantities. Since most smuggling operations between the Palestinian Territories and Israel consist of low-level unorganized smugglers, the Israeli border security matrix faces a large quantity of disorganized operations. While individual smugglers are easier to apprehend, the problem of smuggling cannot be contained by detaining a series of Phase I or II smugglers as there is no central figurehead whose arrest could disrupt the wider network.

When discussing the Israeli national security apparatus, understanding the directionality of terminology helps to illustrate potential power dynamics. Israeli political scientist Zeev Maoz referenced an apparent dichotomy within Israeli national security. He mentions the Israeli contradictory beliefs on peacemaking to be the “siege mentality” on one hand and the “policy of

¹⁶ Terrance Lichtenwald, “Drug Smuggling Behavior: A Developmental Smuggling Model,” *Forensic Examiner: National Criminal Justice Reference Society* 12, (2003): 9.

¹⁷ Terrance Lichtenwald, Frank Perri, and Paula MacKenzie, “Smuggling Multi-Consignment Contraband: Isolated Incidents or a New Trend,” *Inside Homeland Security*, (2009): 17.

arrogance,” adopting the term from Yehoshafat Harkabi, on the other.¹⁸ Some Israeli politicians and allies propagate the siege mentality concept with the image of Israel as a minor, singular Jewish state surrounded on all sides by larger Arab states intended on its demise, alluding to the David and Goliath story. Yet departing from Maoz’s analysis, this paper argues that the second piece of the dichotomy in debating Israeli national security is the notion of Israel as the separator.

In Hebrew, the security barrier apparatus is sometimes referred to as the *Homat Ha-Hafrada*, literally translating to the “separation fence.” While separation is inherently non-directional, it assumes a duality. Party A is separated from Party B, and as a result Party B is separated from Party A. A power dynamic is present in this concept, as the initiator of the separation has the power and resources to enact a separation. Sources such as the Israeli Ministry of Defense advocate that the separation is between Israeli citizens and terrorists,¹⁹ while Naomi Klein argues that Israel “built walls around the dangerous poor,” in reference to the Palestinians.²⁰ Although Klein used this statement to support her claim that Israel made itself into a “futuristic fortress” or a “fortified gated community” by engaging in disaster capitalism which would support the siege mentality outlook, her argument takes on new meaning when viewing Israeli agency in controlling the security apparatus in Israel/Palestine. Klein’s analysis is especially pertinent since the 2016 commencement of a fence along the Jordanian border effectively places the Israeli security apparatus around the perimeter of all Israel/Palestine.²¹

¹⁸ Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security & Foreign Policy*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006). 481-482.

¹⁹ Israel Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*, February 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20131003035621/http://www.securityfence.mod.gov.il/Pages/ENG/default.htm> (accessed October 1, 2019).

²⁰ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 442.

²¹ “Netanyahu: Jordan border wall to keep out ‘predators’,” *Al Jazeera*, February 10, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/netanyahu-jordan-border-wall-predators-160210055942587.html>, (accessed March 25, 2020).

Continuous wall expansions and the installation of more sophisticated checkpoints to Area C and Gaza present an Israeli separation *of* Palestine, not an Israeli separation *from* it. Israel's ability to exert power over both Israeli and Palestinian borders presents a power imbalance, multiplied by Israel's full control of Area C of the West Bank.

Despite the argument over the directionality of the power imbalance, both sides of the dichotomy present Israel as a well-defended *locus*. Israel uses technology and its defense apparatus as a short-term solution in lieu of continued efforts to find a permanent political solution to the conflict. Political economist Shir Hever notes that the Israeli expansion of security technology limits the direct human involvement of Israelis with Palestinians in regard to national security. He argues that the Israeli government uses the further separation of intercommunal interaction via technology such as cameras and biometric identification cards as a substitute for policy.²² Neill Lochery notes that this policy, which he calls Israeli “disengagement” from the Palestinians, damages both the Israeli and Palestinian economies in the long term. Such economic disadvantages can lead to greater unrest which invalidates the reason that Israel constructed the barrier in the first place. Lochery additionally notes in his introduction that the security barrier will likely not achieve a separation of Israelis from Palestinians.²³ Although he was talking specifically about the Separation Fence, the Israeli Ministry of Defense implements the same technology and separation strategies in checkpoints along the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank. By using smuggling as a tool of analysis, this study extends Lochery's argument to illustrate one way in which Palestinians and Israelis successfully circumvent their separation and find mutual economic benefit.

²² Shir Hever, *The Privatization of Israeli Security*. (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 161.

²³ Neill Lochery, *The View from the Fence: The Arab-Israeli Conflict from the Present to Its Roots*. (London; New York: Continuum, 2005), 1.

Anthropologist Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins explores part of the story of Palestinian-Israeli mutual economic benefit in her book *Waste Siege*. In her second chapter, she explains that the rubbish, or *rabish*, markets punctuated throughout the West Bank sell goods considered trash in Israel. Her informants described how they seek out Israeli goods, even second-hand goods, because of the superior quality of Israeli goods that can be found for low prices in the Palestinian Territories. Dr. Stamatopoulou-Robbins explains that illegal goods are smuggled between Israel and the Palestinian Territories commonly, in part by Arabs with Israeli citizenship who are not checked at borders as severely as non-Israeli Arabs.²⁴ With this in mind, she explains that the second hand and low-quality goods inundate the Palestinian market.

While the Israeli economic control of certain areas of Palestine is clear, both Israeli and Palestinian smugglers violate these economic controls for profit. There is a discrepancy between the average consumer in Israel and the Palestinian Territories since many Israelis can access the goods they want. Most Palestinians, however, rely on the goods that are brought to their markets, such as cheap products brought into Palestine from China or by smugglers. Although there are fewer consumer options for Palestinians, both Israeli and Palestinian smugglers enhance the market variety and add to material diversity in the various marketplaces. Because of this, the smuggling practice works against the Israeli economic control of the Palestinian Territories as smugglers violate the economic apparatus and fill consumer needs and desires. Yet, a direct result of the smuggling networks is a developed infrastructure of illegal trade that connects Palestinians “to Israeli experiences that are out of reach.”²⁵ While this is an aspect of the smuggling infrastructure between the two governments as seen in Israeli SIM card smuggling

²⁴ Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, *Waste Siege: The Life of Infrastructure in Palestine*. Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), 87.

²⁵ Stamatopoulou-Robbins, *Waste Siege*, 95.

to the Palestinian Territories, Palestinians also flood products such as foodstuffs into Israel especially during times of need. When viewing the SIM card and food smuggling between Israel and Palestine, the goods relieve droughts of certain needed products rather than flood physical goods ill fitted to the desires of the local consumers into marketplaces.

In short, smuggling is a rebellious political act which opposes the state superstructure. Nation-states, feeling pressured by smuggling and the inability to control their borders through policy, attempt to reassert their authority through methods of national defense. Historically, however, these efforts fail only to change the methods of smuggling. In the case of Israel, the smuggling networks challenge the ability of the government to control its borders and in the case of the Palestinian Territories, smuggling networks expose a gap in jurisdiction among the PA to regulate Palestinian controlled spaces.

Chapter 1 - Development of Smuggling Networks in Israel/Palestine

Smugglers in the Israel/Palestine region today rely on illegal trade networks that served the area since the early 20th century. Beginning with Jewish groups smuggling coreligionists into the Ottoman province of Palestine in the early 1900s, smugglers learned to subvert local authorities and avoid detection. When later Arab and Israeli smugglers entered the illegal market, they adopted many of the practices and routes that the Jewish smugglers used decades before. The same networks then fell into the purview of the Israeli mafia, mainly consisting of Russian Jews that immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, these Russian mafia members incorporated their transnational connections with other Eastern European criminal syndicates to dominate the illegal importation and exportation markets. Beginning in the late 1990s, the Russian mafia scaled down their operations, leaving the long established smuggling routes open to new entrepreneurs. Rather than a single organization filling the power-vacuum left by the mafia, a series of domestic Israeli gangs and crime families took to smuggling along the established networks. After the Israeli government put pressure on these gangs, a myriad of small-scale unorganized smugglers adopted the entrenched smuggling routes. Tracing the development of the smuggling routes in Israel/Palestine reveals their deep embeddedness in the Israeli/Palestinian market and explores how various smuggling organizations adapted their practices when political developments occurred around them.

In 1948, a man named Moša Pijade had an important conversation with Josip Broz Tito, the then leader of Yugoslavia. Moša was a Serbian-Yugoslav-Sephardic communist who served in various positions in the Yugoslav government. He convinced Tito to allow the Yugoslav Jews the ability to leave the country if they wished after the hardships they faced in the Balkans during

the Second World War.²⁶ Soon after, in November, over 3,000 Jews departed on the S.S. Kefalos towards the Holy Land followed by 3,700 more in December.²⁷ Moša, like his namesake, convinced a world leader to “let his people go,” yet remained in Yugoslavia himself, eventually becoming the President of the Parliament, but he allowed Yugoslav Jews a legal way to immigrate to Israel if they felt so inclined. Other Jews, however, were not able to travel legally and did not have support from their home governments. Despite the disadvantages, these Jews working in cooperation with other Jewish organizations all around the world, developed networks and institutions to assist in the immigration to British Mandate Palestine. These global networks that facilitated the smuggling of goods and people into Ottoman Palestine and British Palestine later adapted to market changes by smuggling other items. Israel is now the hegemonic power against which smugglers operate. While Israel maintains significantly more power in the region than any Palestinian political party, smugglers transgress both Israeli and Palestinian laws prohibiting the trade of certain goods.

Israel, as a state, built itself in part thanks to smuggling and now maintains itself through its vast security network. Before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Zionists in British Palestine relied on smuggling for goods, weapons, and manpower. For example, the abovementioned S.S. Kefalos (also called the S.S. Pinzon or Dromit), smuggled over 754 tons of military equipment from Mexico to what was then the Jewish community in British Palestine with some of the weapons bought in a dubious deal from the United States army.²⁸ The S.S. Kefalos’ journey relied on a network of Jews and Zionist allies throughout North America and

²⁶ "Jews of the Former Yugoslavia After the Holocaust," *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-the-former-yugoslavia-after-the-holocaust> (accessed October 2, 2019).

²⁷ Renato Barahona, *The Odyssey of the Ship with Three Names: Smuggling Arms into Israel and the Rescue of Jewish Refugees in the Balkans in 1948*. Occasional Papers Series (Reno. Center for Basque Studies: University of Nevada, 2014), 118.

²⁸ Barahona, *The Odyssey of the Ship with Three Names*, 67.

the Mediterranean to complete the journey while avoiding arrest and confiscation by international agencies. Only after the ship delivered the haul of military equipment to the Jewish community in Haifa did the “rust bucket” make two missions to Bakar, Yugoslavia to provide Jewish refugees passage to Palestine. This ship, which was both a transporter of refugees and war equipment, a story of life and death, is emblematic of the Jewish reliance on illegal importation.

Following these acts are later operations which illegally or covertly transported various Jewish communities to Israel in the post-war era. Military operations after the establishment of Israel like Operations Mural and Yachin in Morocco and Operation Magic Carpet in Yemen quietly removed Jews from nations with hostile climates. These are examples of human smuggling for the benefit of the smuggled, in which smuggling aided the Jewish community in Israel. The Jewish community in Israel then looked to its defense and began a construction project to separate the Jewish state from its Arab neighbors. The separation infrastructure, in part, served to detract smugglers in the region.

Despite the growing emphasis of separation infrastructure, various Israeli mafias became increasingly organized and dominated the smuggling market between Israel and Palestine. As these mafias rooted themselves in Israel, the border infrastructure with Palestine did not hinder most of their practices. Like similar mafias or organized illegal groups, the various Israeli mafias adapted their business ventures to consumer desires. Therefore, mafias operating in Israel that smuggled drugs, weapons, or people into the country at times also dealt in consumer goods when the price favored them. Mafias benefitted from pre-existing trade network infrastructure that they adapted to trade the commodity which they desired to smuggle. For example, a mafia

in northern Israel with international networks of trading ecstasy could transition their trading route to smuggle items like fertility medicine or ibuprofen.

The rise of mafiaism in Israel relates back to the influx of Eastern European immigrants in the early 1990s. Over 700,000 Russians entered Israel in a relatively short period of time after the fall of the Soviet Union. Among this group were several members of the Russian underworld. Russian mafiosos in particular found immigration to Israel an attractive option as the Israeli government passed a law in 1978 that provided immunity from extradition for any crime committed abroad before becoming an Israeli citizen.²⁹ Reporter Misha Glenny explains that Soviet criminal syndicates consisted of a disproportionately high percentage of Jews compared to the amount of Jews in the former Soviet Union.³⁰ These Jews then immigrated to Israel which expanded the global reach of their illicit trades. Former Soviet criminal organizations primarily orchestrated human trafficking networks which saw women from countries like Moldova and Ukraine sent to Egypt and then transported into Israel via Bedouins knowledgeable in the terrain of the Negev desert. In the mid-1990s, however, the Russian mafia in Israel began to abandon their criminal networks and violent tactics in favor of less visible crimes such as money laundering. The former Soviet syndicates did not want to jeopardize the Israeli Russian community's reputation in their new country by being associated with violent crime. International pressure from the West also took the bite out of many of the Russian mafia members. An Israeli intelligence officer speaking to Glenny said about the Russian-speaking

²⁹ Shelese Emmons, "Russian Jewish Immigration and Its Effect on the State of Israel," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 5, no. 1, Indiana University Press, (1997): 350.

³⁰ Misha Glenny, *McMafia: A Journey through the Global Criminal Underworld*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf Books: 2008), 112.

Jewish mafia in Israel, “Don’t worry about these guys shooting you, they aren’t that crude. They’ll just sue you to death.”³¹

While some of these Russian speaking Jews were associated with criminal organizations, most were lower-class Jews seeking a new life and freedom in Israel. The influx of Russian speaking Jews meant that they became the primary recipients of unskilled labor jobs which previously belonged to Palestinians.³² These newly arrived Jews also settled in Jewish settlements in the West Bank such as the city of Ariel. The increase in Russian Jews in both Israel and the West Bank meant that wealthier Jews could hire from this alternative work force instead of inexpensive Palestinian laborers.³³ Such a large Russian Jewish population in Israeli settlements in the West Bank also increased the number of connections between Israelis in Israel proper and in the West Bank. This separation of workforces further influenced the division between the Israeli and Palestinian populations. As the Russian mafia stepped back, Israeli gangs came forth to fill the power vacuum and brought with them violent practices.

Multiple Israeli crime families such as the Abergil, Jarushi, Rosenstein, and Mosli represent organized criminal developments in Israel but they also quickly began solidifying their respective territories. Many of these crime families consist of Mizrachi Jews who often faced discrimination in Israel for their North African or Middle Eastern heritage. The “othered” status of Mizrachi Jews in Israel echoes similar discriminated communities that form criminal organizations and smuggle goods to resist the dominant social structure and exercise their agency.³⁴ The Abergil organization for instance established itself in Lod while the Israeli-Arab

³¹ Glenny, *McMafia*, 114.

³² Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 441-442.

³³ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 436.

³⁴ For the various anthropological arguments about organized crime formation, see: Robert M. Lombardo, "Explaining Organized Crime," In *Organized Crime in Chicago: Beyond the Mafia*, 15-36. (University of Illinois Press, 2013).

Jarushi organization operates from Ramla. These Israeli mafia organizations quickly turned to violence to secure their operations and territories. Public shootings, targeted assassinations, and particularly, car bombings became increasingly popular strategies for Israeli mafias to target each other's interests. Some organizations such as the Zaguri family from Beer Sheva even use grenades and rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launchers to target opponents and the police.³⁵

Violent crime families such as the Jarushi and Abergil mafias established organized multinational smuggling networks to channel illegal items into Israel. The largest profits came from smuggling drugs into and out of Israel, but human smuggling also increased. These Phase III smuggling operations prove highly organized and expose gaps in the security matrixes on Israel's borders. After the practices of these crime families became more well known, Phase II smuggling organizations began to adapt the trade routes to serve their own purposes. An example of this adaptation is the appropriation of Jarushi ecstasy smuggling operations involving the port of Haifa by a smuggler who illegally imports frozen beef. When the porousness of the border is exposed by these smuggling networks and the police do not immediately begin to alter their monitoring practices, the same smuggling practices disseminate down to Phase I smugglers who operate on smaller scales but much more frequently. The SIM card and food smugglers of Israel/Palestine in the 21st century are a legacy of these former smugglers that also constantly negotiate changing political environments in the region.

In order to respond to the changing crime patterns in Israel, the state developed a modern security apparatus. Since the 1990s, Israel grew its economy and international status in part by becoming an international technology hub. After the "dot com crash" in 2000, the Israeli

³⁵ Assaf Gur, translated by Liel Leibovitz, "A Field Guide to Israeli Organized Crime," *Tablet*, February 5, 2019, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/279808/a-field-guide-to-israeli-organized-crime> (accessed March 20, 2019).

government invested in security companies through its military spending budget which encouraged security and surveillance technologies. By 2006, Israeli defense exports reached \$3.4 billion and 60% of Israeli export earnings came from technology.³⁶

Part of the government's investment in security involved the construction of the Security Fence beginning in 2000. As of 2019, the security barrier cost Israel \$2.5 billion, the same cost as the digital monitoring network for the entire United States border with both Canada and Mexico.³⁷ Officially, the Israeli Ministry of Defense's stance explains that the barrier is a result of strategic planning and is not meant to function as a border.³⁸ From the Israeli military perspective, the claim that the security apparatus is temporary justifies its existence as purely defensive. The Ministry of Defense articulates their position in saying, "It is our hope that by building this fence its very function will become irrelevant and that one day it will be dismantled."³⁹ Yet after such a large financial investment and continued efforts to develop the security network further, the temporality of the wall remains questionable.

The barrier consists of concrete walls in more densely populated areas and fences in less populated areas. In addition, there are digital security apparatuses such as cameras, heat detecting cameras, infrared detectors, guard towers, checkpoints, and ground penetrating radar.⁴⁰ An elaborate system of checkpoints extends the image of the fence from the Separation Fence itself deep into the West Bank. Imposing Israeli manned and unmanned checkpoints monitor Palestinian and Israeli lives within the West Bank and form an integral part of Israel's matrix of control. The constant checkpoints and presence of cameras serves two functional purposes. At

³⁶ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 437.

³⁷ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 438-439. (note: This cost does not include security around Jewish settlements in the West Bank.)

³⁸ Israel Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*.

³⁹ Israel Ministry of Defense, *Israel's Security Fence*.

⁴⁰ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 438.

the base level they are used for surveillance and security, identifying potential threats or perceived threats while limiting human interaction. Checkpoints take the form of concrete structures, earth mounds, or even a strategically placed tank. Israeli soldiers can dismantle or construct checkpoints quickly according to their strategic purposes.⁴¹ They also manifest the power discrepancy between the two populations along the border and mentally reinforce to the Palestinians that their behavior is being watched, even within their own territory. The use of such surveillance infrastructure is reminiscent of Foucault's interpretation of Bentham's Panopticon manifested here on the Israeli-Palestinian barrier as the ever-vigilant Israeli soldier negotiating and dominating space over the Palestinian civilian or tourist.⁴²

Despite these hurdles, both Palestinians and Israelis discover ways to deceive the security apparatus and sneak goods across the border. Between the period of 1993-2005, much of the smuggling operations which crossed the Israeli-Palestinian border involved weapons or drugs. Such demand was due to heightened tensions between Palestinians and Israelis culminating in random acts of violence and ultimately, the first and second Intifadas. The Intifadas, meaning "shaking off" in Arabic, refer to mass uprisings against the Israeli occupation by Palestinian populations in the West bank and Gaza. The Second Intifada in particular saw widespread indiscriminate Palestinian attacks against Israeli citizens and violent police crackdowns on Palestinian protesters.⁴³ As a result the violence, many smuggling networks, including the crime families in Israel, trafficked guns from abroad into Israel and then into the Palestinian Territories. These gangs formed transnational networks with countries in Eastern Europe and Central

⁴¹ Tawil- Souri, "New Palestinian centers: an ethnology of the 'checkpoint economy'," 220.

⁴² Helga Tawil-Souri, "Surveillance Sublime: The Security State in Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 68, (2016): 57.

⁴³ James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, Third ed. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 2015.

America to profit from the demand for weapons.⁴⁴ The same networks also smuggled drugs and occasionally other items. While tensions remained high after the end of the Second Intifada in 2005, the level of violence shrunk considerably. With the decreased need for weapons after the Intifada, the smuggling networks and gangs involved sought alternative goods for income.

Near the end of the Second Intifada, another conflict shook up the political structure of the Palestinian Territories. Following the Palestinian election, the Hamas political party won the majority of votes in the Gaza Strip. When Fatah announced their victory and attempted to exert their control over both the Gaza Strip and West Bank, Hamas members in Gaza, with the public support, began a revolt to exercise their authority over Gaza. The Hamas members overran the Fatah headquarters building in Gaza City and effectively drove Fatah officials from Gaza after executing some who were captured.⁴⁵ By the end of the Hamas siege of Gaza and the end of the Second Intifada, most Fatah officials in the Strip either left the area or were arrested or killed in the fighting.

As a result of the disagreement between Hamas and Fatah over how to properly run Palestine and the violence seen in the siege of Gaza, the two political parties deviated further from one another. After many failed reconciliation attempts, Fatah and Hamas developed almost two forms of Palestinian nationalism, each with its own international resonance and relationship with Israel. Hamas, as an Islamist political party that also approved violence to achieve their political goals, maintains more strained relations with Israel and the West than Fatah. Because of Hamas's war-like rhetoric, the border between Israel and Gaza is heavily restricted, militarized, and monitored. The Israeli government only permits certain individuals such as day

⁴⁴ Gur, "A Field Guide to Israeli Organized Crime."

⁴⁵ Jonathan Schanzer, *Fatah vs. Hamas: The Struggle for Palestine*, (New York, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 107-109.

workers and those seeking specific medical treatments in Israel to cross the border. The border control policy even extends into the sea where the Israeli navy patrols Gazan waters to stop the unlawful movement of goods and people. In an effort to contradict these restrictions, Hamas appropriates a resistance narrative to their governmental approach. Hamas is less concerned with establishing an internationally recognized nation than they are administering authority within their borders and eventual expansion.

Fatah on the other hand, as the principal party of the Palestinian Authority, seeks to bolster their international prestige through negotiation and international trust building. Because of the difference in approach to achieving an internationally recognized state of Palestine, Hamas uses smuggling as a tool for their state building project as smuggling is a piece of their resistance struggle. In the West Bank, however, Fatah attempts to stamp out smuggling operations which reveal holes in their ability to monitor territory within their borders and protect their markets from illegal goods that can damage their international reputation.

The ideological split between Fatah and Hamas also resulted in the smuggling networks and operations into the West Bank and Gaza evolving uniquely. Hamas is infamous for its smuggling tunnels which transport everything from humans to zoo animals to cars into and out of the Gaza Strip. Hamas officials regulate these tunnels through which overseers manage the trade of specific goods. These overseers pay taxes to Hamas from their tunnels' revenue.⁴⁶ The smuggling tunnels connect the Gazan marketplace directly to Israeli and Egyptian markets as well as further economies through extensive trade networks. Due to their prevalence, Hamas propagates that the tunnels are the lifeblood of Gaza and necessary for their opposition to

⁴⁶ Terrance Lichtenwald and Frank Perry, "Terrorist Use of Smuggling Tunnels," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 2, (2013): 211.

Israel.⁴⁷ The Israeli government sees the tunnels as a constant problem and an immediate threat to Israeli communities as Gazan militants previously launched attacks into Israel through such tunnels.⁴⁸ While these tunnels are as controversial as they are complex, the smuggling which occurs through them is multifaceted.

After Hamas assumed authority of the Gaza Strip, it saw the strategic, political, and economic importance of the tunnels. With the smuggling tunnels in operation, Hamas and everyday Gazans received some of the items and products restricted by the Israeli blockade. Researchers estimated that in 2013, 25% of Hamas' operational budget came from taxing goods travelling through the tunnels. Examples of some of the taxes on smuggled items entering Gaza are an 8 cents tax on a box of cigarettes and \$15 for every ton of cement for construction.⁴⁹ These fines amount to around \$700 million a year. Hamas created offices to manage the taxation of the tunnels and manage the tunnel owners through the Tunnels Commission (formerly the Border and Crossings Authority).⁵⁰ Israel targeted Hamas bureaucrats who oversaw the smuggling networks in "anti-terrorism" operations such as the airstrike killing Osama Kadi in 2012.⁵¹ With such hostile stances towards the tunnel networks, the tunnels which carry goods between Gaza and its neighbors operate illegally in the eyes of both the Egyptian and Israeli courts. But, despite the illegal nature of smuggling, the Hamas-governed Gaza Strip, as a pseudo-state, created a regulating system and bureaucracy to legitimize the smuggling tunnel networks. As such, when Palestinians smuggle goods into Gaza that Hamas does not approve of,

⁴⁷ Nicholas Pelham, "Gaza's Tunnel Complex," *Middle East Report* 261, (2011): 33.

⁴⁸ Said Saddiki, *World of Walls: The Structure, Roles and Effectiveness of Separation Barriers*, (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 25.

⁴⁹ Lichtenwald, "Terrorist use of Smuggling Tunnels," 211.

⁵⁰ Pelham, "Gaza's Tunnel Complex," 30.

⁵¹ Lichtenwald, "Terrorist use of Smuggling Tunnels," 212.

the smugglers are trading illegally according to Egyptian/Israeli law and also illegally according to locally imposed law instituted by Hamas.

Despite Hamas's claim that smuggling is necessary for its resistance against Israel, the political decision to turn a blind eye to smuggling or attempt to stop it completely is complicated by each states' political needs. As stated above, although Hamas regulates and maintains the smuggling of certain items, the smuggling of Israeli goods such as SIM cards is banned due to a perceived national security issue. In Palestinian Authority controlled areas of the West Bank, a similar dilemma exists where although smuggling is naturally against the law, police sometimes ignore the smuggling of items necessary for Palestinians. Israel is not free of this type of accusation as well as professionals on trade in the region sometimes indicate that Israel turns a blind eye to smuggling if it is seen to benefit the state.⁵² An example of this would be the smuggling of Israeli SIM cards into the Palestinian Territories which the Israeli government can tax.

Criminal groups passed down the smuggling routes in Israel/Palestine, creating their present form. Each group appropriated their smuggling practice to their needs. The various groups slightly altered routes and operations to constantly avoid police surveillance. Through all these developments, the current smuggling network manned by hundreds of Phase I smugglers is both the least dangerous to inhabitants in the region and the most difficult for governments to fully eradicate. These smugglers focus on transporting mundane daily items such as food, SIM cards, medicine, domestic animals, and prescription medication. As low level day workers making a little extra money through smuggling, most Phase I smugglers fear the risk of carrying

⁵² Adnan Abu Amer, "Why do Palestinians opt for Israeli SIM cards?," *Al-Monitor*, October 7, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/10/oslo-palestinians-israeli-mobile-operators-sim-cards-pa.html> (accessed October 29, 2019).

items such as weapons or drugs across borders. That being said, the unorganized structure of the smuggling networks proves significantly more difficult to interrupt versus traditional mafias or criminal families. Without long-term trade agreements between the Israeli and Palestinian governing bodies, smugglers will provide access to goods restricted by national policies advocating self-sufficiency and economic nationalism.

Chapter 2 - Farm (to Border) to Table - Food Smuggling in Israel/Palestine

Food smuggling between Palestine and Israel primarily provides low cost alternatives to the regular legal market which generally becomes more expensive due to governmental policies. Whereas Palestinian consumers who opt to buy illegal Israeli SIM cards do so for the superior quality, Israelis purchase food from the Palestinian Territories primarily for the lower price. Governmental statistics show that food smuggling operations from Palestine into Israel surge around Jewish holidays when the demand for food items, such as meat, rises. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, also called the Israeli Agricultural Ministry, estimates that food smuggling attempts from Palestine increase 20% around Israeli holidays.⁵³ Most consumers in Israel buy food from Palestine without knowing its origin but choose the product for the price. The Israeli government labels such smuggled foodstuffs as a national security issue and an affront to the national Jewish identity of Israel because the food is often not prepared according to Jewish dietary laws. A second aspect of food smuggling into Israel which violates the religious based national image is common pork smuggling operations which feed groups in Israel such as Israeli Christians, foreign workers, and secular Jews. While many aspects of food smuggling into Israel differ from SIM card smuggling into Palestine as discussed in chapter 3, the reason for its success is that smuggling fills a gap in the market and a consumer need.

The discussion of food smuggled into Israel from the Palestinian Territories also evokes the tumultuous debate over land usage and control in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Israeli government restricts Palestinian agricultural productivity by allowing the construction of settlements and imposing direct Israeli control over the most fertile Palestinian areas such as the

⁵³ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, "In the run-up to the New Year Holidays, the Ministry of Agriculture detects a 20% increase in food smuggling and counterfeiting attempts," September 10, 2015, https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/Pages/havracha_en.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020).

Jordan Valley.⁵⁴ The Jordan Valley region is estimated to comprise approximately 60% of the West Bank's fertile land, yet the Israeli government fully controls the administration and security of the valley as it falls within Area C. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also announced his political intention to annex the Jordan Valley completely.⁵⁵ Tal Beeri, a researcher from the Israeli Alma Research and Education Center, explained that the large number of Israeli citizens in the Jordan Valley allows them relative ease in smuggling. These Israelis in the Jordan Valley can smuggle items from Jordan into Israel proper because they can easily pass Israeli checkpoints, but they can also smuggle items into Palestinian controlled territory because they have relatively free access to the Palestinian border. Israelis in Area C of the West Bank can approach the border with ease and throw parcels of smuggled goods to the other side.⁵⁶

Israel inhibits Palestine's ability to participate in the regional agricultural market by controlling land usage in much of the West Bank. The relative ease that Israeli smugglers have when smuggling into and out of Palestine further weakens the integrity of the Palestinian agricultural market. Despite this, the lure of higher selling prices in Israeli markets continually attracts Palestinian producers. In some ways, therefore, Palestinian managed land in the Palestinian Territories still benefits the Israeli market by feeding Israeli consumers, and at the same time, participation in the Israeli food market benefits many Palestinian producers. Palestinians do not only smuggle goods produced in Palestine into Israel, however, as some smuggling networks involve products that cannot be produced *en masse* in Palestine. Those smuggled products still economically benefit Palestinian businesses. In response, the Israeli

⁵⁴ Vito Intini et al., "Food Security and Conflict in the ESCWA Region," *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, (September 13, 2010): 37.

⁵⁵ Mohammed Daraghmeah and Aron Heller, "A look at the Jordan Valley Israeli PM vowed to annex," *Associated Press*, September 11, 2019, <https://apnews.com/2cf0c03c22fe43d28d16bdd92b7203ff> (accessed February 29, 2020).

⁵⁶ Interview with Tal Beeri, conducted on Zoom on March 20, 2020.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development works with other Israeli officials “exposing *daily* attempts to sell unsupervised fruit, vegetables, eggs, and meat, constituting a real and immediate threat to public health.”⁵⁷

In 2016, the Israeli police uncovered one of the largest known meat smuggling operations between Israel and Palestine. Israeli police, working in cooperation with the Agricultural Ministry, arrested nine people including the head of the operation, an Israeli Arab working in Jerusalem. The smugglers in this network purchased meat from South America which they then transported to Israel via the port of Haifa with the condition that the meat would not stay in Israel. The importation of meat into Israel that is directly transported to Palestine is not uncommon as many Palestinians rely on red meat from South America which is cheaper than local alternatives for an albeit substandard product.⁵⁸ According to the police, when the smugglers legally transported the meat into the Palestinian Territories, they then loaded the meat into hidden compartments in refrigerated trucks that drove back into Israeli administered Jerusalem. Upon returning to Israeli administered territory, the smugglers unloaded the illegal meat and repackaged it with fake Kashrut labels that signify the food is prepared in accordance with Jewish law and fake expiration dates.⁵⁹

This specific smuggling network sold the meat to stores and restaurants in Tel Aviv, including some high-end establishments. Reports show that celebrity chef, Haim Cohen, who

⁵⁷ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Ministry of Agriculture inspectors continue to operate in the village of Jaljulya with the aim of uncovering smuggled meat from the Palestinian Authority territory,” April 22, 2018, https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Central%20Investigation%20and%20Enforcement%20Unit/publications/Pages/smuggled_meat.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020). Emphasis added.

⁵⁸ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Inspectors of the Central Investigation and Enforcement Unit uncovered a meat smuggling network from the Palestinian Authority territories into Israel,” April 4, 2016, <https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/Pages/basaren.aspx> (accessed February 19, 2020).

⁵⁹ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Inspectors of the Central Investigation and Enforcement Unit uncovered a meat smuggling network from the Palestinian Authority territories into Israel.”

judges the Israeli version of the televised cooking competition *MasterChef*, purchased some of the smuggled meat. Mr. Cohen noted that he did purchase a small amount of the smuggled meat for his Tel Aviv restaurant, *Dixie*, but it was never served to customers.⁶⁰ Ultimately, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), with the Israeli Agricultural Ministry, seized and destroyed 30 tons of smuggled meat in this one operation of 2016.

While food smugglers to and from Palestine operate at higher levels in the West Bank, smugglers in Gaza also participate in the food trade. Before the Egyptian army began securing the Egypt-Gaza border in 2010, Gazan smugglers operated openly. Harriet Sherwood from the Guardian interviewed some of the approximately 50,000 Gazans who work in constructing or operating the underground smuggling tunnel systems. The owner of one smuggling tunnel told Sherwood, “Just give me a list of anything - literally anything - you want, and it will be here in two days.”⁶¹ She noted that besides most of the animals in the Gazan zoo arriving through smuggling tunnels, one tunnel system in particular primarily fulfilled orders made by Gazans for American based fast-food chain, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). When a Gazan placed an order online for a bucket of chicken and fries, an Egyptian in El-Arish would go to the local KFC and purchase the order. The Egyptian contact then drove the order to the border where a tunnel operator carried it to a driver on the Gazan side of the border who then delivered the chicken to the client. The entire process for a bucket of KFC chicken and french fries took approximately four hours and cost around \$27. A price tag such as this is very high for the average Gazan, and although Sherwood does not speak about the social standing of the consumer, she does mention

⁶⁰ “Jerusalem Uncovered: Scheme that Sent Smuggled Meat With Bogus Expiration Dates and Kashrus Seals to Israeli Restaurants,” *Vos Iz Neias*, April 4, 2016, <https://vosizneias.com/2016/04/04/jerusalem-uncovered-scheme-that-sent-smuggled-meat-with-bogus-expiration-dates-and-kashrus-seals-to-israeli-restaurants/> (accessed November 21, 2019).

⁶¹ Harriet Sherwood, “The KFC smugglers of Gaza,” *The Guardian*, May 19, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2013/may/19/kfc-smugglers-of-gaza> (accessed October 15, 2019).

that the smugglers are consistently busy with orders. While Sherwood notes that smuggling became more difficult after 2010, she mentions that one of the smugglers told her simply that “we’ll find a way.”⁶² While food production in Gaza is limited and a large percentage of food for the Gaza Strip is produced in Egypt or Israel and legally imported, Gazans still participate in both illegal food importation and exportation to obtain specialty products.

The 30 tons of smuggled beef and on-demand KFC represents only a fraction of smuggled food between Israel and Palestine. The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development stated that before Passover in 2015 alone, Israeli officials seized 183,233 tons of meat, 480,000 eggs, and 676 kilos of cheese that smugglers transported illegally from Palestine.⁶³ In many of these operations, smugglers used machines that print fake Kashrut labels on an industrial scale.

Vegetables are also a commonly smuggled item from the Palestinian Territories into Israel. Vegetable smugglers from Palestine primarily attempt to sell vegetables in Israel for higher prices. To transport their goods, vegetable smugglers generally operate in less organized structures and smuggle goods in small quantities. These Phase I smugglers then sell their produce to merchants who diffuse the illegal produce with legal vegetables to appear as valid. In some cases, small vendors and consumers might not be aware of the legal policies for the vegetable trade between the Palestinian Territories and Israel. For example, the Agricultural Ministry commonly notes in their memos that tomatoes and eggplants are the only vegetables

⁶² Sherwood, “The KFC smugglers of Gaza.”

⁶³ Sharon Udasin, “Increase in pre-Passover egg, meat, and cheese smuggling from PA,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 30, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Increase-in-pre-Passover-egg-meat-cheese-smuggling-from-PA-395620> (accessed February 10, 2020).

that the ministry inspects, thus indicating that a vegetable originating from Gaza that is neither a tomato nor an eggplant is illegal.⁶⁴

The Israeli government requires produce wholesalers to familiarize themselves with the rules and regulations surrounding the legality of selling vegetables that originate in the Palestinian Territories. When the Israeli police disrupted a shipment of five and a half tons of smuggled vegetables from Gaza with the intention of being sold to an approved Israeli wholesaler, the Ministry of Agriculture stated that such wholesalers would need to appear in court before having their vegetable marketing license revoked.⁶⁵ By December of 2019, the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development seized and destroyed 42 tons of fruits and vegetables that originated in Palestine.⁶⁶

As briefly mentioned above, eggs consistently rank as another commonly smuggled food item. Palestinian producers collect many of these eggs in the West Bank and then sell them to smugglers that illegally transport them into Israel where merchants sell them on the street or networks of peddlers market them door to door. The largest year for egg smuggling apprehensions on record is 2017 with over four and a half million eggs confiscated in a single year.⁶⁷ Smugglers transport eggs from the West Bank into Israel because there are no legal

⁶⁴ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Smuggled Veg Salad? We Strongly Advise Against It!” July 21, 2019. https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/2019/Pages/Vegetables_Smuggle.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020).

⁶⁵ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Ministry of Agriculture inspectors foiled an attempt to smuggle 5.5 tons of contraband vegetables from Gaza,” May 16, 2018, https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/Publications_18/Pages/smuggle_vegetables--.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020).

⁶⁶ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Untested strawberry fields: Ministry of Agriculture inspectors prevented an attempt to market 200 pallets of strawberry packages originating from the Palestinian Authority territories,” December 15, 2019. https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/Pages/strawberries_catch.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020).

⁶⁷ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Ministry of Agriculture supervisors uncovered an attempt to smuggle 4,200 eggs out of the Palestinian Authority to be sold in Jerusalem after being stored improperly,” December 27, 2017.

options for international egg sales in Israel.⁶⁸ The Israeli government banned international eggs to both prevent any contamination if eggs are not properly stored and boost local Israeli egg producers.

At the same time, Israelis also benefit from smuggling food into the West Bank. In November 2017, the Palestinian Authority confiscated over two tons of slaughtered and live chickens illicitly traded from Israel and created a smuggling prosecutor's team in response. Israeli smugglers, who originate from both Israel proper and Israeli settlements can afford to undersell Palestinian chicken markets by lowering their own profit margins.⁶⁹

Another large market for smuggled food in Israel is the illegal transportation of pork products. Similar to the development of mafias in the country, the influx of Russian Jews from the former USSR in the 1990s altered domestic consumer networks as they brought with them a large appetite for pork products. Since many of the Russian immigrants were not practicing Jews, they commonly sold non-Kosher food items in Russian majority neighborhoods.⁷⁰ The Russian Jews used the word "white meat" when discussing pork to not use the Hebrew word for pork openly.⁷¹

Prior to the Russian immigrants in Israel, the government addressed the raising of pigs on Israeli soil. Immigration and Health Minister Haim Moshe Shapira amounted the importation of pigs to a "national crime."⁷² The Israeli legislature held similar sentiments, and in 1962, they

https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/2017/Pages/havrachot_bitzim_4200.aspx (accessed February 19, 2020).

⁶⁸ Ahmad Melhem, "Smuggling from Israel plagues Palestinian poultry farmers," *Al-Monitor*, December 5, 2017, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/12/palestine-poultry-israel-market-sector-economy-smuggling.html> (accessed January 20, 2020).

⁶⁹ Melhem, "Smuggling from Israel plagues Palestinian poultry farmers."

⁷⁰ Emmons, "Russian Jewish Immigration and Its Effect on the State of Israel," 349.

⁷¹ Ronit Vered, "Prescribing Pork in Israel," *Gastonomica* 10, no. 3, University of California Press (2010): 22.

⁷² Shira Rubin, "Land of Pork and Honey," *Slate*, June 19, 2015. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/06/pork-in-israel-how-russian-immigrants-and-hipster-foodies-are-challenging-the-holy-lands-cultural-taboos.html> (accessed March 20, 2020).

banned the breeding and selling of pigs in Israel except for areas where Christian Arabs constituted a majority population. By 1994, with the arrival of the immigrants from the USSR, Israeli politicians also prohibited the importation of non-kosher meat. These bans on pork products in Israel, with the simultaneous increase in demand, led to a black-market system between Christian Arab pig farmers and former Soviet Jews.⁷³ As of 2020, the consumption and sale of pork products in Israel is legal and quite popular in more secular areas such as Tel Aviv.⁷⁴ Farmers can raise pigs in some parts of Israel under strict regulations, but the importation of any pork product remains illegal.⁷⁵ Despite the decriminalized nature of pork products in Israel, some of the so-called “white meat” illegally enters Israel from Palestine.

One notable bacon smuggling trade occurred between an Israeli of Romanian origin based in Tel Aviv and a Christian Palestinian based near Bethlehem during the 2000’s. The Israeli man raised pigs in I’billin, a Christian Arab town in northern Israel where the government historically permitted pigs. After he slaughtered the pigs, they were smoked in Holon, a community south of Tel Aviv. From Tel Aviv, the Israeli man illegally transported the smoked bacon in relatively large quantities in the trunk of his car to his Palestinian accomplice running a market in the West Bank city of Beit Jala. The Palestinian man noted that roughly 80% of his customers were journalists, embassy workers, or Israeli citizens who crossed into the West Bank and then illegally brought the bacon back into Israel proper.⁷⁶ Therefore, the bacon in this specific trade was smuggled twice across the border, first by the smuggling network and second by individual consumers.

⁷³ Rubin, “Land of Pork and Honey”

⁷⁴ Rubin, “Land of Pork and Honey”

⁷⁵ Vered, “Prescribing Pork in Israel,” 21.

⁷⁶ Noga Tarnopolsky, “Believe it or not, Israel has excellent bacon,” *Agence France-Presse*, May 2, 2014. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-05-02/believe-it-or-not-israel-has-excellent-bacon> (accessed October 15, 2019).

While both Judaism and Islam prohibit the consumption of pork under their dietary laws, Israeli consumers increasingly enjoy the “taboo” food. The smuggling of pork products and other foodstuffs with fake Kashrut labels shows that smugglers will provide in demand food items despite the Israeli government declaring Israel a Jewish state. Even with Israel’s deep connection with Judaism, there are Israeli consumers who continue to purchase items from smugglers which conflict with this religious based image. After Israel’s laws restricting the importation of pork and the later declaration of Israel as a Jewish nation-state, smugglers continue to transgress both government policies and national image to provide consumers their desired products.

The porousness of the border adapts with the fluidity of governmental policy changes. For example, the Palestinian Authority recently said it would not import beef from Israel in an effort to opt for local meat production and food importation from Jordan. Because this move financially disadvantages Israeli farmers who previously sold to the Palestinian Territories, the Israeli government retaliated by announcing a restriction on fruit and vegetable imports from Palestine which will in turn hurt Palestinian farmers.⁷⁷ Historically, as these types of policies change, the smuggling networks change with them to meet the new demand.

As Israeli and Palestinian officials engage with this tit-for-tat style trade war, the paradigm of smuggling changes slightly. Journalists publishing on smuggling between Israel and the Palestinian Territories focus on smugglers who are now moving fruit and vegetables from Israel into Palestine. One report explores the story of a Ramallah-based Palestinian grocer who owned a small fruit and vegetable store. After Israeli restrictions on legal fruit trade limited

⁷⁷ Yaniv Kubovich, “Israeli- Palestinian Trade War Looms as Cattle Dispute Lingers, Defense Officials Warn,” *Haaretz*, December 10, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/israeli-palestinian-trade-war-looms-as-cattle-dispute-lingers-defense-officials-say-1.8255430> (accessed January 27, 2020).

his inventory, he began meeting with a smuggler who carried the fruit from Israel into Palestine illegally so he could meet the demand of his customers.⁷⁸ This story reveals that instead of simply going without certain specialty food items, a small scale grocer is both willing and able to contact a smuggler that can provide the normal assortment of fruits and vegetables that his customers expect from his shop. Israelis and Palestinians will purchase many common items such as foodstuffs that are smuggled across their borders in order to not go without and to avoid paying higher prices than normal.

In order to not go without and promote their own economic nationalisms, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority attempt projects to become more self-sufficient in their food production. The Israeli government continually invests in large scale agricultural projects which generally are successful. Some of the largest projects which yielded positive results to the agricultural sector involve large farming operations in the Negev desert which became fertile through the use of innovative technologies.⁷⁹ On a similar note, the Palestinian Investment Fund began an initiative in 2019 to invest millions of dollars into Palestinian agricultural projects in an attempt to fill gaps in Palestinian food production over the next ten years.⁸⁰

The Israeli government also funds projects that boost the technological superiority of Israeli food producers through the use of military grade instruments. Despite the permeability of the border in Israel, the close link between the Israeli military and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development exposes Israel's effort to secure its agricultural sector. In 2019,

⁷⁸ Daoud Kuttab, "Palestinian-Israeli agriculture exchange hits a snag," *Al-Monitor*, February 20, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/02/palestinian-israel-stop-agricultural-products-imports.html> (accessed February 20, 2020).

⁷⁹ June Glazer, "Green Dreams: Innovative urban farm in Negev wins environmental prize," *Jewish National Fund*, (November 5, 2015), <https://www.jnf.org/blog/environment/green-dreams-innovative-urban-farm-in-negev-wins-environmental-prize>, (accessed April 15, 2020).

⁸⁰ Ahmad Melhem, "Palestine eyes agricultural boost," *Al-Monitor*, May 26, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/05/palestinian-agricultural-investment-projects-area-c-economy.html> (accessed February 24, 2020).

representatives from the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development attended the 8th annual UVID International Security Technology Conference. The UVID conference, also referred to as the Drone Tech conference, recently began “non-security” based events that promoted the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and drones for governmental organizations outside of the military. The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development purchased UAVs for the stated purpose of aerial photography of agricultural lands to monitor water management and plant conditions.⁸¹ These unmanned drones will monitor fields in both Israel proper and Israeli controlled sectors of the West Bank that contain agricultural land. Adding drones to the ministry’s operations in Area C exposes the link between agriculture in the Israeli administered West Bank and the Israeli military.⁸² With the ministry’s close ties with the Israeli police and military established in previously discussed operations to foil smuggling plots, now the Israeli Agricultural Ministry will add their UAVs to the already vast stock of military drones surveilling the West Bank.

Until Israel and Palestine are truly food self-sufficient, smugglers will continue to exploit cracks in the system to provide low cost food items to both Israelis and Palestinians. In April 2020, the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development announced an initiative to promote Israeli produce. While Israeli law already requires packaged food items to display its country of origin, the same requirements for signage do not apply to non-packaged items. Therefore, this initiative will recommend that all vendors advertise Israeli grown produce. The

⁸¹ Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, “Aerial (Agricultural) Superiority: Agriculture gains a footing in the security arena and makes its mark in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles in Israel and worldwide,” November 11, 2019, https://www.moag.gov.il/en/Ministrys%20Units/Spokesmanship%20and%20Publicity%20Department/publications/2019/Pages/kenes_rahfanim_english.aspx#skip (accessed March 13, 2020).

⁸² See: Stamatopoulou-Robbins, *Waste Siege*,

Ministry hopes that displaying products as originating in Israel will encourage Israeli citizens to buy local and thus support domestic growers.⁸³

While this initiative is similar to local agricultural movements in other countries, it will most likely fail to stop food smuggling from Palestine. An United Nations commission studying food security in the region said that “efforts to achieve food self-sufficiency and indiscriminate protection of inefficient domestic food producers can drain resources that could be more efficiently allocated for setting up appropriate safety nets or unleashing more internationally competitive agricultural subsectors.”⁸⁴ With such effective trade liberalization in the food sector between Israel and Palestine, smugglers serve as merchants of the prohibited. Smugglers already introduce food items that originate in Palestine to the Israeli market as local produce by diluting the illegal produce into the legal inventory. Given the contentious nature of land usage in Israel/Palestine and the continued Israeli appropriation of land in the West Bank for agricultural purposes, it can be argued that produce grown in the Palestinian West Bank is just as Israeli as food grown in the Israeli administered West Bank.

Israeli restrictions placed on both land usage and food trading between Israel and Palestine fuel Phase I smugglers to carry such food across the border. Any trade restriction placed on a desired commodity can lead to smuggling efforts. Smugglers in Israel/Palestine benefit from existing illicit trade networks which work equally well for the smuggling of drugs as they do for the smuggling of fruits. Foodstuffs crossing a border are not in themselves as conspicuous as dangerous goods such as weapons. The smugglers gain a sense of invisibility by

⁸³ Jerusalem Post Staff, “Agriculture Ministry new initiative encourages sale of Israeli produce,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 26, 2020. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/agriculture-ministry-new-initiative-encourages-sale-of-israeli-produce-625972> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁸⁴ Vito Intini et al., “Food Security and Conflict in the ESCWA Region,” *United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, (September 13, 2010): 62.

smuggling mundane products frequently but in small quantities. Smugglers of other small mundane goods are equally as elusive while transporting goods to the market that needs them. Other goods that smugglers easily smuggle in small quantities are prescription medication, small electronics, and SIM cards.

Chapter 3 - Can You Hear Me Now? SIM Card Smuggling in Israel/Palestine

Mobile cell phone users around the world value reliable connectivity and the fastest network speeds available. Due to this consumer desire, many Palestinians rely on smuggled Israeli SIM cards to power their smartphones. Palestinians who use Israeli SIM cards do so in part because Israel does not allow Palestinian telecommunications organizations to use the newest technology available. As a result, Palestinians use SIM cards made in Israel and thus subscribe to Israeli mobile phone operators. This negatively impacts the business of Palestinian phone organizations and eliminates millions in tax revenue from the Palestinian Authority.

Digital news at the end of 2019 revolved around the technological race to widespread 5G wireless networks. Israel, as a technological hub, boasted multiple technicians who aided in developing 5G technology after signing a partnership with India in 2013. Some Israeli phone operators already introduced their 5G capable devices and networks, although 5G services will not be widespread in Israel until 2022.⁸⁵ In Palestine, however, technological development grows at a slower pace due to Israeli imposed restrictions. For example, Israel denies Palestinian telecommunication organizations access to the latest network advancements. That being said, Israeli digital signals permeate the West Bank as Israeli settlements host their own phone towers. Therefore, whereas all Israeli consumers can connect to the 4G networks (and many to 5G), Palestinian phone companies in the West Bank offer 3G services. Israel tightened the services to the Gaza Strip even further where phone operators can only offer 2G connectivity. Palestinian telecommunications companies claimed that they have purchased the materials to install 4G towers in the West Bank, but the Israeli officials seized the necessary items.

⁸⁵ Eytan Halon, "Israel Launches race to build 5G mobile networks," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 14, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-launches-race-to-build-5G-mobile-networks-595637> (accessed January 9, 2020).

On a technical note, there exists a large difference in performance between 2G, 3G, and 5G technologies. The downloading speed over wireless networks measures the amount of data that the device can download per second. 5G services can reach a max speed of up to 10 gigabytes per second. 3G services can only download at a maximum of 7.5 megabytes per second and 2G at the meager 0.3 megabytes per second.⁸⁶ According to this data, a cell phone with 5G connectivity can reach a maximum speed over 1,000 times faster than a 3G connected phone. As a result of this significant departure in downloading speeds, many Palestinians use Israeli SIM cards illegally in order to access either 4G or 5G services.

Israel's ability to control Palestinian networks is due to the Palestinian telecommunication's dependence on Israeli routers. With this hold on power, the Israeli government can determine connection speeds for Palestinians, ban certain online services such as GPS mapping and banking services, and dictate the height of Palestinian network towers. Palestinian mobile phone operators, namely Jawwal and Ooredoo (formerly Wataniyah) pay "termination fees" to Israel in order to connect with the Israeli routers. Phone companies charge a standard termination fee when they host calls from a different operator, often applied when making international calls. But in the case of Israel/Palestine, Palestinian telecommunications companies have no choice but to route their services through Israeli networks. So anytime a Palestinian using a SIM card from Jawwal terminates his call, an Israeli telecommunications company such as Bezeq will charge Jawwal a fee for the call ending since it was routed through Bezeq's towers.⁸⁷ Therefore, Palestinian consumers who contract the Palestinian mobile phone

⁸⁶ ITU, "5G- Fifth generation of mobile technologies," December 2019. <https://www.itu.int/en/mediacentre/backgrounders/Pages/5G-fifth-generation-of-mobile-technologies.aspx> (accessed February 24, 2020).

⁸⁷ Helga Tawil-Souri, "Digital Occupation: Gaza's High-Tech Enclosure," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 2 (2012): 31.

operators will share the expense of these termination fees, thus paying more for a substandard service.⁸⁸ For example, in 2017, Jawwal offered a monthly package for 20 gigabytes with 3G internet speed for \$28 while the Israeli company Cellcom offered a monthly package of 50 gigabytes with 4G internet speed for only \$20.⁸⁹

Because the political situations and Israeli control operations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank differ, the Israeli management of technological control is also different in the two Palestinian territories. As noted above, the physical separation fence between Israel and the West Bank is extensive and highly surveilled but it does not cover the entirety of the border. The Gaza Strip, however, is completely isolated from Israel in the form of a border wall. Helga Tawil-Souri maintains that Israel also operates a “digital occupation” of the Gaza Strip. She argues that the system of control imposed by the Israeli government over the Gazan digital sphere, which includes both restrictions and surveillance, amounts to a form of “soft” occupation through a matrix of unequal power dynamics.⁹⁰ While the Israeli government also undoubtedly exercises control over the West Bank’s technological sector, Palestinian telecommunication companies in the West Bank operate their own digital infrastructure, albeit one that is indirectly dependent on Israeli routers. But in the Gazan Strip following the 2005 Israeli population withdrawal from Gaza, Palestinian telecommunication consumers are directly dependent on Israeli infrastructure. Dr. Tawil-Souri notes that even a landline call that occurs between two Gazan cities, such as Khan Yunis and Gaza City, are wired through the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Simon Dawes, “The Digital Occupation of Gaza: An Interview with Helga Tawil-Souri,” *Networking Knowledge* 8, no. 2 (2015): 7.

⁸⁹ Rasha Abou Jalal, “Palestinians opt for illegal SIM cards smuggled from Israel,” *Al-Monitor*, July 6, 2018, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/07/palestine-west-bank-sim-cards-israel-telecom.html> (accessed April 24, 2019).

⁹⁰ Tawil-Souri, “Digital Occupation: Gaza’s High-Tech Enclosure,” 38.

⁹¹ Helga Tawil-Souri, “Digital Occupation,” 31.

Therefore, the idea of a “digital occupation” of Palestine, in both the partial occupation of the West Bank and total occupation of Gaza, involve both place and non-place. The internet is without place, known for allowing access across space regardless of political and physical boundaries, both of which separate Israel from Palestine. Palestinians who can access the internet and make cell phone calls interact with and on this non-space, thus connecting to the wider world despite travel restrictions or financial inhibitors. That being said, the ability to connect to the internet in this manner is grounded in physical space. A phone operator can only connect to the internet as well as the nearest digital infrastructure allows.

Israel regulates the location of network towers for Palestinian telecommunication operators and completely forbids the construction of such towers in Gaza through the prohibition of the necessary construction materials. Therefore, Palestinian phone users remain reliant on Israeli digital infrastructure built either around the Gaza Strip, in the Israeli West Bank settlements, or as the home routers for the Palestinian towers which dot the Palestinian Authority controlled West Bank. Either directly or indirectly, both Palestinians using legal Palestinian SIM cards and Palestinians using illegal Israeli SIM cards connect to the same infrastructure that the Israeli government builds exclusively on its controlled land. As such, Israel maintains a firm hand over the non-space of the digital sphere through regulating land usage in the Palestinian Territories.

Israel’s cellular network infrastructure is spread across the country and due to the short distance between many Palestinian and Israeli cities, most people in Palestine using Israeli SIM cards fall within the necessary distance to connect with Israeli phone towers. In this sense, Palestinians are able to transgress Israeli checkpoints and the security barrier simply through

digital signals because the cellular signals do not stop at political boundaries.⁹² They are both fixed to place and beyond place as they interact with the wider digital world through a network tower outside of their territorial borders. In 2005, the Israeli government partnered with the American company Motorola Solutions to enhance the digital infrastructure of the separation fence, the Israeli army offices, and create “digital fences” around Israeli settlements in the West Bank.⁹³ Because these Israeli settlements are dispersed around the West Bank and many have their own connectivity to the Israeli wireless network, the enhanced digital connectivity penetrates deep into the West Bank.⁹⁴ Similarly, due to the small nature of the Gaza Strip, residents who live furthest away from the Israeli border are still able to reach the signal of Israeli telecommunications towers. Whereas the pre-1948 physical telecommunications infrastructure helped define the then borders of the State of Israel,⁹⁵ an analysis of the digital sphere in Israel/Palestine gives the illusion that Israel is firmly in control of the entire area. Despite controlling the digital sphere, Palestinian consumers use smuggled SIM cards to access resources outside of Israel/Palestine.

SIM card smuggling is similar to other product-based smuggling operations in that the policing of the practice is determined by the governmental policy towards the product. In the case of Israeli SIM cards in Palestine, the Palestinian governing bodies voice the harshest criticism. The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza both call the use of

⁹² Helga Tawil-Souri, “Cellular Borders: Dis/Connecting Phone Calls in Israel-Palestine,” in *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, by Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski, edited by Dan Schiller, Pradip Thomas, and Yuezhi Zhao, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015): 160-161.

⁹³ Brett Wilkins, “UN Publishes List of Companies Profiting from Israel’s Illegal settlements in Palestine,” *Common Dreams*, February 15, 2020, <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2020/02/15/un-publishes-list-companies-profitting-israels-illegal-settlements-palestine> (accessed May 6, 2020).

⁹⁴ Helga Tawil-Souri, “Technology’s Borders: The United States, Palestine, and Egypt’s Digital Connections,” in *American Studies Encounters the Middle East*, edited by Lubin Alex and Kraidy Marwan M., 263-85. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016): 268.

⁹⁵ See: Fredrik Meiton, *Electrical Palestine: Capital and Technology from Empire to Nation*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019).

Israeli SIM cards amongst Palestinians a national security threat. They claim that the Israeli government can track cell phones which use the Israeli SIM cards and that the Israeli government can monitor Palestinian phone calls if they use the Israeli made SIM cards.⁹⁶ While the Israeli government can also track Palestinian SIM cards, the Israeli security forces have more direct access to the information stored and transferred directly through their domestic servers. Using a Palestinian SIM card more so provides the illusion of privacy from Israeli spying, rather than a fully effective privacy strategy.

Israel, on the other hand, does not restrict the smuggling of SIM cards into Gaza and the West Bank in the same manner, perhaps in part because each SIM card represents the potential for additional tax revenue to the State of Israel. Journalists that report on smuggling between Israel and Palestine point out that the Palestinian governing bodies are more angered by the lost tax revenue than the potential Israeli technological spying. The Palestinian minister of telecommunications explained that the lost tax revenue due to Israeli SIM cards totals between \$450 million to one billion dollars from 2013-2016.⁹⁷

Since the Israeli government has much to gain from Palestinians using Israeli SIM cards, the smugglers operate more carefully in the Palestinian Territories than they do at the Israeli-Palestine checkpoints. Between 2013 and 2017, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas both ran large campaigns attempting to purge the illegal Israeli SIM cards from the Palestinian market. The PA even created specific policies about the use of illegal telecommunications equipment such as Israeli SIM cards. According to Article 60 of the Palestinian Telecommunications Regulatory Authority Act of 2009, "Importation, illegal trade or holding of telecommunications

⁹⁶ Ahmad Abu Amer, "Israeli 3G SIM cards all the rage in Gaza," *Al-Monitor*, November 28, 2016, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/israel-phone-chips-gaza-3g-service.html> (accessed November 21, 2019).

⁹⁷ Abou Jalal, "Palestinians opt for illegal SIM cards smuggled from Israel."

devices violating the adopted standards and specifications or containing wrong information shall be punished by three months in prison at least, or one year at most, or fined 1,000 [Jordanian] dinars [\$1,410] at least, or 2,000 dinars [\$2,820] at most.”⁹⁸ While Fatah and Hamas achieved some success in apprehending illegal SIM card smugglers and users, the conveniences of better call quality and internet connectivity led Palestinian consumers to return to the Israeli SIM cards after the purge ended.

Palestinian journalist, Adnan Abu Amer, notes that around 17% of Palestinians in the West Bank use smuggled Israeli SIM cards,⁹⁹ which means over half a million active SIM cards that smugglers illegally carried into the West Bank. Palestinians who legally work in Israel and Israelis who illegally work in Palestine smuggled many of these SIM cards in small quantities at a time. For this study, a Palestinian independent researcher from the West Bank that will remain anonymous, was interviewed. The respondent claimed that many of these people who cross from Israel into Palestine are not career smugglers but instead day workers who use smuggling SIM cards as a way of making additional income.¹⁰⁰ Once in Palestine, they bring the SIM cards to markets and distributors who pay them for the cards with the intention to sell them to their Palestinian customers. This practice created a system of merchants and day workers who work together to plan small-scale SIM card smuggling operations.

When asked about the danger of smuggling Israeli SIM cards into Palestine, the respondent said, “the Israeli security does not consider the Palestinian possessions of Israeli SIM cards a legal or a security violation, but the Palestinian security may confiscate them from the Palestinians if any are found.”¹⁰¹ When asked why Israel takes a lenient stance towards SIM

⁹⁸ Ahmad Abu Amer, “Israeli 3G SIM cards all the rage in Gaza.”

⁹⁹ Adnan Abu Amer, “Why do Palestinians opt for Israeli SIM cards?”

¹⁰⁰ Interview with West Bank Palestinian researcher, conducted over email on February 12, 2020.

¹⁰¹ Interview with West Bank Palestinian researcher, conducted over email on February 12, 2020.

card smuggling into Palestine, the respondent expressed a fear of Israeli spying which the Palestinian Authority also propagates in reference to smuggled SIM cards as a national security issue. As for their perspective on the Israeli security opinion, the interviewee said, “Israeli security services are keen to pump large quantities of these SIM cards into the Palestinian territories in order to have easier contact with their spies. This makes it difficult for the Palestinian security services to wiretap them.”¹⁰²

Israel does not confirm that it permits SIM card smuggling to enhance its security abilities in Palestine, but the apprehension rates for SIM card smugglers into Palestine by Israeli forces are very low. Palestinian police in Gaza and Area C conduct most of the SIM card smuggling related arrests after the SIM cards already crossed into Palestine. Whether or not Israel intentionally avoids eradicating Israeli-made SIM card smuggling into Palestine, the Israeli government benefits economically from the illegal trade.

The loose smuggling network structure helps hundreds of thousands of Palestinians access better quality mobile services at the expense of the Palestinian Authority’s tax income and possible security threats. On the other hand, the Israeli government benefits from increased tax revenue, the Israeli telecommunication companies benefit from increased customers, the smugglers earn additional income outside of their primary occupations, and small-scale Palestinian merchants increase profits by selling SIM cards to Palestinian customers.

Palestinians also commonly use Israeli SIM cards in the Hamas administered Gaza Strip where Gazans similarly use them for their better quality. Due to Hamas’s more aggressive stance to the Israeli government compared to the PA, Hamas frames Gazans who use Israeli SIM cards as transgressors against their branded form of Palestinian nationalism. Despite this stance,

¹⁰² Interview with West Bank Palestinian researcher, conducted over email on February 12, 2020.

smugglers still continue to transport Israeli SIM cards into the Gaza Strip either through official border crossings or through small holes in or under the border infrastructure.¹⁰³

A second anonymous researcher, this time from Gaza, was interviewed for this study about the smuggling of SIM cards into the Gaza Strip. They explained that many of the daily items smuggled into Gaza from Israel are carried by Gazans that are permitted to travel into Israel. The respondent noted that this is very dangerous as the Israeli police at the border see all Gazans as potential security threats. Despite the dangers, many Gazans with entry permits to Israel return with items such as SIM cards because of their popularity amongst Gazan consumers. The researcher mentioned that the cost for Israeli 4G services are significantly less expensive in Gaza than the local 2G service. Smugglers also bring in other technological devices such as a circuit board that was used to fix one of Gaza's two computerized tomography (CT) machines.¹⁰⁴ Without the smuggler's ability to bring in the circuit board, Gaza's Ministry of Health would be limited to only one CT scanner for its entire population.

For the interview, the respondent unraveled the complex relationship between Hamas and smuggling. In the case of some items such as drugs, Hamas takes a firm stance in rooting out and imprisoning smugglers, as noted in a 2019 drug smuggling incident where Hamas officials discovered narcotic pills hidden in frozen meat and confiscated them before arresting the smuggler.¹⁰⁵ The respondent mentioned that at the same time there are some "commodities" that Hamas "turns a blind eye to" and there are other items that Hamas "requires merchants to smuggle... such as small electronics."¹⁰⁶ Once the items pass into Gazan territory, the

¹⁰³ Abu Amer, "Israeli 3G SIM cards all the rage in Gaza."

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Gazan researcher, conducted over email on September 10, 2019.

¹⁰⁵ "Al-qabadh alah taajar lahum bihuzitah kimia min al-mukhdarat 'abr mu'abr Beit Hanoun," *al-Wataniyya*, August 24, 2019. <https://www.watania.net/news/133166-ال-ضبط-كمية-كبيرة-من-ال-> (accessed April 2, 2020).

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Gazan researcher, conducted over email on September 10, 2019.

respondent noted that “everyone in Gaza can determine whether the merchandise is contraband or official.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, Hamas’s complicated relationship with smuggled goods created an environment where the understanding of what is smuggled and what is not disseminated to average Gazans.

While smugglers transport most SIM cards from Israel into Palestine, there are some Palestinian SIM cards which are illegally carried into Israel. Palestinians in Israeli prisons prove a primary consumer base for illegal foreign SIM cards. Many of these prisoners use Palestinian or Egyptian SIM cards smuggled into Israel via the Israeli border with Egypt or via Gazan tunnels.¹⁰⁸ Palestinian family members or friends then smuggle entire phones or SIM cards into prisons when visiting a prisoner. The prisoners use foreign SIM cards because the Israeli prison guards can tap into calls made from within the prison if they are using an Israeli phone carrier.¹⁰⁹ Analogous to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza who use Israeli SIM cards to digitally transgress the borders that restrict their movement, Palestinian prisoners in Israel use illegal Palestinian SIM cards to traverse both the prison walls that surround them and the Israel/Palestinian borders to connect with friends and family members.

The smuggling of Israeli SIM cards in the region also involves a more nefarious element. As the Egyptian military launched an offensive against Islamic State linked militants operating in the Sinai Peninsula in 2016, they found that the militants were using Israeli SIM cards to evade Egyptian surveillance. Smugglers perhaps transported some of these SIM cards into Egypt directly from Israel but the trade smuggling networks operating between Israel and Sinai more

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Gazan researcher, conducted over email on September 10, 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Lior Akerman, “Mobile device smuggling is a serious security problem,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 29, 2016, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Mobile-device-smuggling-is-a-serious-security-problem-476932> (accessed February 9, 2020).

¹⁰⁹ Ben Lynfield, “Brother of Palestinian terrorist arrested in cellphone smuggling case,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 27, 2016, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Brother-of-terrorist-arrested-in-connection-to-cellphone-smuggling-case-476632> (accessed February 9, 2020).

commonly cross the Gaza Strip. As this seems likely, the Egyptian government also suppressed the Gaza smuggling tunnels because the Egyptian government claimed that Hamas smuggled weapons and people from Gaza into Egypt to support the militants.¹¹⁰

Militants using Israeli SIM cards in their phones even created a brief sovereignty conflict between Egypt and Israel. In an attempt to stop the militants from communicating using the Israeli SIM cards during the military offensive, in 2018 the Egyptian government blocked Israeli signal towers which operated near the Egyptian border with Israel. As a result, Israelis in southern Israel, Gazans with Israeli SIM cards, and the Sinai militants all lost phone connectivity for a day.¹¹¹ People in the south of Israel blamed the Israeli government for not stopping Egypt. Many southern Israeli citizens explain that they feared the failed reception signaled an imminent attack¹¹² This situation highlights the confusing nature of borders and digital sovereignty which surround the smuggling of SIM cards as infractions against a nation's sovereignty sometimes do not involve violations against another country's physical territory. Also, if the Islamic State was in fact using Israeli SIM cards to avoid Egyptian detection, they would be sponsoring Israeli phone companies. In cases of Israeli SIM card smuggling, smugglers physically cross the border with the SIM cards, and as a result, civilians who use these SIM cards can digitally transgress the border to access Israel's telecommunication signals without leaving their homes.

The flow of SIM cards through the porous borders allows for increased Palestinian access to the wider world through enhanced online capabilities. The future of SIM card smuggling between Israel and Palestine faces an uncertain future. Firstly, the inevitable roll out of 5G

¹¹⁰ Shoshanna Solomon, "Egypt army said to jam Israeli SIM cards used by Islamic State," *The Times of Israel*, March 14, 2018; <https://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-army-said-to-jam-israeli-sim-cards-used-by-islamic-state/> (accessed February 17, 2020).

¹¹¹ Dan Williams, "Egyptian jamming of Sinai insurgents disrupts phones in Israel, Gaza," *Reuters*, March 7, 2018; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-egypt-telecoms-idUSKCN1GJ1K3> (accessed February 17, 2020).

¹¹² Shoshanna Solomon, "Egypt army said to jam Israeli SIM cards used by Islamic State."

services will complicate the ability of Palestinians to access Israeli phone towers. This is due to 5G towers operating on a shorter wavelength, meaning that while the towers process data at much faster rates, many more 5G towers are needed than their 4G counterparts for the same coverage. Therefore, Palestinians who live further away from Israeli settlements or the Israeli border might struggle to access the enhanced services.

Secondly, international communication resolutions call for changes in Palestinian access to wireless services. In 2019, the World Radiocommunication Conference, organized by the United Nations special agency called the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), met in the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh. The United Nations organizes this event every four years to discuss updates to international communication laws and the international regulation of radio frequency usage. Conference attendees universally passed Resolution 12 which reaffirms the commitment of the ITU to ensure that every sovereign nation has the ability to implement telecommunication services as they see fit as long as they do not violate the governing international laws. The resolution “resolves to urge” member states of the ITU to assist with the importation and development of “4G and 5G for the Palestinian operators” within a reasonable time.¹¹³ If the United Nations is able to follow through with this resolution, it is possible that the West Bank would be able to install both 4G and 5G towers in the near future. There is little hope among Palestinian telecommunications organizations, however, as the United Nations approved five resolutions supporting the construction of Palestinian telecommunication infrastructure since 2002 with little actual change occurring. If Palestinian operators are allowed to begin managing their own frequency services, the most probable outcome would be an immediate widespread 4G rollout and thus, a reduction in SIM card smuggling. While 5G technology remains fairly new,

¹¹³ ITU Publications. “World Radiocommunication Conference 2019: Provisional Final Acts,” 210.

there would be a slow implementation of 5G services installed in the most densely populated centers of Palestine given the massive cost to completely retrofit the Palestinian digital infrastructure. If Palestine is able transition from its current 3G services to 5G availability, Palestinian telecommunications would quickly catch up to other countries in the realm of digital capabilities. If the average Palestinian consumer could access regionally competitive telecommunication services through his or her domestic company, the rates of SIM card smuggling would fall.

Conclusion

This study investigated how Israeli and Palestinian smuggling operations of mundane daily goods, specifically food items and SIM cards, affect the lives of the people involved and why their governments respond differently based on their situations. With this, we examine the deep economic relations that smugglers create between Israel and Palestine and the ramifications of such goods smuggling in the wider framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the months preceding the election for Israel's next prime minister in 2019, incumbent candidate Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that Israel would annex the West Bank if he is reelected. Specifically, when questioned if he would annex certain Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Netanyahu responded that he would "ensure that we [the Israeli government] will control the territory west of the Jordan River."¹¹⁴ On January 28, 2020, the Trump administration released their report entitled "Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People." White House senior advisor Jared Kushner led the team which published the report that Netanyahu referred to as the "Deal of the Century." While Netanyahu and the Israeli right praised the plan, the Arab League, UN, and EU opposed the proposal either in part or entirely. In the document, the United States government recognizes Palestine as a state but approved Israeli annexation of the Jordan Valley and 97% of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Kushner's team also repeatedly mentions in the document that the primary consideration for decisions made in the plan was the security of the State of Israel. According to this peace plan, the State of Israel will manage the security of the State of Palestine's borders, will control

¹¹⁴ David M. Halbfinger, "Netanyahu Vows to Start Annexing West Bank, in Bid to Rally the Right," *New York Times*, April 6, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/06/world/middleeast/netanyahu-annex-west-bank.html> (accessed April 15, 2020).

the airspace of the State of Palestine, and will maintain control of the “electromagnetic spectrum west of the Jordan river.”¹¹⁵

With Israeli control of both the Palestinian border and the entirety of the electromagnetic spectrum as proposed in the peace plan, the smugglers discussed in this study would not see a significant difference to their trade. Both Israeli and Palestinian smugglers violate the Israeli security apparatus by illegally transporting goods across Israeli manned borders. If the Israeli government continues to restrict Palestinian connection to new telecommunication equipment, we can assume that smugglers will also continue to smuggle SIM cards into Palestinian areas. Similarly, if such a plan was implemented and Israel annexed the Jordan Valley and most Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Palestinian access to agricultural land will be even further restricted. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia even stated in a report that “with regard to Palestine, the biggest obstacle [to food security] is occupation and externally imposed factor immobility.”¹¹⁶ As this study shows, however, when access to goods are restricted in Israel/Palestine, smugglers find a way to supply for the demand.

According to the peace plan, the territory of Palestine would be larger than the current Area A under Palestinian control. The plan links the disconnected territory by a series of bridges, tunnels, and roads so Palestinians travelling between Palestinian territorial pockets would travel over or under Israel, rarely through it. Israel will manage the security of all border crossings between Israel and Palestine, even for Palestinians travelling between two non-contiguous Palestinian areas.¹¹⁷ Both Israeli and Palestinian smugglers are already adept in traversing the patchwork of Israeli checkpoints and security apparatuses.

¹¹⁵ “Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People,” Appendix 2B, www.whitehouse.gov/peacetoprosperty/ (accessed April 15, 2020).

¹¹⁶ Vito Intini et al., “Food Security and Conflict in the ESCWA Region,” 108.

¹¹⁷ “Peace to Prosperity,” 11-12.

The Peace to Prosperity plan also gives Palestinians living in annexed Israeli territory Palestinian citizenship with the “option to remain in place unless they choose otherwise.”¹¹⁸ When these Palestinian nationals want to travel to the State of Palestine, they would be subject to multiple Israeli border checkpoints. In terms of travel experience, the only difference between a Palestinian making this journey now and making the journey under the proposed peace plan is that the Israeli checkpoints would be official internationally border crossings rather than military occupation. For smugglers, transporting goods across a military checkpoint versus transporting goods across an international border crossing is not a significant departure. As the disjointed nature of Palestine under the peace plan would create pockets of Palestinian nationals in Israel, these Palestinians can easily form economic relationships with other Palestinian nationals. If the States of Israel and Palestine could not achieve successful trade agreements, the various clusters of Palestinian nationals in Israel could understandably turn to smuggling mundane items to live lives more akin to their co-nationals.

The smuggling routes between Israel and Palestine are not limited in their directionality nor are they fixed in space. As discussed above, smugglers in the region adapt to governmental policies by constantly shifting their methods. In doing so, the smugglers find new pores in the Israeli security apparatus that they can penetrate with their goods. Such smuggling networks ignore the authority of both the Israeli and Palestinian governances that claim the smugglers are jeopardizing the sovereignty and security of their respective territories. In reality, these smugglers are providing a service that is unmet due to the failure of the Palestinian and Israeli governments to negotiate mutual cooperation based on shared respect. When these governments fail to negotiate, they create both policies and infrastructure which attempt to stop smugglers but

¹¹⁸ “Peace to Prosperity,” 12.

when these initiatives also fail to stop smugglers, we see the extent of the governments' inability to effectively manage their territories.

The sheer scope of the food and SIM card smuggling in Israel/Palestine exposes economic ties that permeate the border. Both Israel and Palestine boast initiatives that present their economies as independent and in no way reliant on the other. Despite this, Palestinian consumers and smugglers benefit from Israeli made goods. When a Palestinian in Ramallah purchases an Israeli SIM card, he accesses superior internet connectivity while an Israeli phone company receives a new client. Simultaneously, when an Israeli woman in Tel Aviv purchases twelve eggs, a kilo of beef, and a few tomatoes, she might unknowingly be supporting Palestinian producers in the West Bank while thinking she received a good deal on food costs. When the governments of Israel and Palestine restrict economic cooperation, smugglers reveal the close economic ties between the two territories.

Any potential change of borders of official territory in Israel/Palestine that might occur in the near future most likely will not diminish the effectiveness of the smugglers in the area. The sheer amount of Phase I smugglers that interact with the Israeli security apparatus every day creates an illegal trade network that proves almost impossible to completely eradicate. As noted in this study, the smugglers mainly consist of ordinary people, working class laborers who benefit from their invisible status. Even when the Israeli/Palestinian police arrest one, there will be others to fill the demand in the market. A series of unorganized merchants from Gaza, Israel proper, the Israeli administered West Bank, and the Palestinian administered West Bank make it impossible to "cut the head off the snake."

The most effective strategy for the governments in the area to stop smuggling is to agree to the legal trade of goods such as SIM cards and food items. But given the contentious

relationship and power imbalance currently present, as well as the difficult discussion over land usage rights, a permanent trade deal seems out of reach. In the meantime, smugglers will continue to provide Palestinian produced food for Israeli housewives to cook their Shabbat dinners and provide Israeli SIM cards to Palestinians so they can stream YouTube videos faster than before. The smuggling of banal commodities like food and SIM cards in Israel/Palestine reveals the complex symbiotic economic relationships that developed between the two bodies in direct opposition to their political stances as rivals. Smuggling is a product of need and want. As long as there is no legal way to access certain Palestinian goods in Israel or vice-versa, smugglers will work to meet the consumer needs.

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