

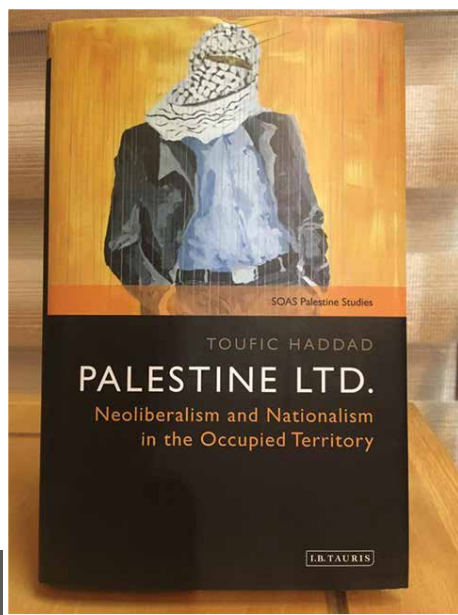
## PALESTINE LTD.

### Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory

By Toufic Haddad

I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London - New York, 2016, 288 pages

Reviewed by Mariam M. Shahin



*Palestine Ltd.* explores how Palestine as a place, society, and nation has been mutilated almost beyond recognition by the overlapping and divergent layers of neoliberal policies of Western donors, Israel, and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) throughout the Oslo peace process.

In a complex work of 288 pages, Toufic Haddad documents how the international community planned to end the “Israeli-Palestinian conflict” through a remodeled economy that was to be managed by newly established institutions and social reformations. “Palestinian statehood” and the aid nominally provided toward this end became the carrot used to implement a series of damaging changes that reorganized Palestinian relations with their occupiers, their leadership, and the international donor community.



The economic and political models favored by donors and the PNA gave preferential treatment to diaspora Palestinian mega capitalists, whose investments were supposed to lead to a version of trickle-down prosperity and peace. Instead, these investors monopolized profitable sectors of the Palestinian economy, while a previously emerging “de-development” of the Palestinian economy, caused mainly by the Israeli occupation, became further entrenched. The new arrangements now required an artificial atmosphere of cooperation with Israel as a prerequisite to aid and the “promise” of economic growth. The PNA became increasingly dependent on the donor community, while pre-Oslo medium-sized and cottage industries in cities such as Hebron, Nablus, and Gaza, together with the agriculture sector, were marginalized and/or made largely unproductive.

When the Palestinians did not play the statehood game according to Western donor and Israeli plans, the carrot eventually became a stick. Frozen aid became a means to leverage additional “changes” from the Palestinian leadership through “good governance reforms.” In the meantime Israel imposed additional wide-reaching geopolitical transformations across the occupied territories in the form of land confiscation, settlements, and the building of walls. Between the two, a regime of heightened control was established over Palestinian life,

leadership, and cause, taking the emancipatory dream of Palestine and transforming it into a nightmare.

*Palestine Ltd.* tracks the complex interactions between donors, Palestinian political and economic elites, and Israel since Oslo. It analyzes the tools created to “manage” the new Palestinian reality of dependency, indebtedness, consumerism, and “vulture capitalism.”

To further cement Palestinian understanding of the new reality, donors gave Israel free military reign over Gaza to set an example to those who were non-compliant, and believed it was possible to declare independence from the Oslo Accords framework.

*Palestine Ltd.*’s exploration of the neoliberal aspects of the Oslo peace process highlights how donor aid added new colonial dimensions to the existing Israeli settler colonial project. The policies further entrenched disenfranchisement rather than liberate Palestinians.

Haddad’s work is his PhD thesis, but also the result of over 20 years of primary-source research. *Palestine LTD.* relies on a set of previously unexplored archival and classified documents from the World Bank, Wikileaks, and the Palestine papers, amongst others, that provide new, critical, and sometimes shocking insights into the history of the Oslo process and the particular role of the donor community and its often undeclared intentions that had disastrous consequences.