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Anders Persson (ed.)

The Occupation at 50:

Consequences for EU-Israel/Palestine Relations?

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Theorising Normative Power in European Union-Israeli-Palestinian Relations

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The article provides a theoretical perspective on the question of how EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations should be conceived 50 years after the occupation. The article sets out how a critical social theory of normative power could be seen as a way of both analysing and changing these relations. According to Craig Calhoun, critical social theory should be seen as an ‘interpenetrating body of work which demands and produces critique... [that] depends on some manner of historical understanding and analysis’ The normative power approach represents a critical social theory in that it seeks to be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time. The article suggests how these criteria may be applied to the study of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations and their consequences, 50 years after the occupation.

Keywords: European Union; Israel; Normative Power; occupation; Palestine

Introduction: Theorising Normative Power

On the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the EU will work closely with the Quartet, the Arab League and all key stakeholders to preserve the prospect of a viable two-state solution based on 1967 lines with equivalent land swaps, and to recreate the conditions for meaningful negotiations. The EU will also promote full compliance with European and international law in deepening cooperation with Israel and the Palestinian Authority.¹

The 2016 *Global Security Strategy* boldly stated a policy of no change in European Union (EU) relations with Israel and Palestine. The strategy was primarily about normalizing the European External Action Service (EEAS) as a diplomatic actor, using the language of Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon's 'principled pragmatism' to promote international compromise.² It is argued here that understanding European Union-Israeli-Palestinian Relations over the past 50 years would benefit from theorising these power relations through the concept of 'normative power' in order to both analyse and potentially change these relations. The article concludes that a normative power approach encourages a move beyond accepting the status quo of power relations by using critical social theory to open thinking space beyond occupation.

The Normative Power Approach (NPA) originates in post-Cold War rethinking of the conceptualisation of power in global politics. The mind set of 19th Century great power politics, with its adulation of military violence and coercive force in international relations, clearly worsens

¹ European External Action Service (2016) *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* (Brussels: European External Action Service), pp. 34-35

² Ian Williams (2006) 'Annan's Principled Pragmatism', *The Nation*, 28 December; The Economist (2007) 'The Spirit of Principled Pragmatism: Ban Ki-moon suggests three priorities for the world in 2008', *The Economist*, 15 November.

the prospects for improved EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations rather the providing a means for thinking beyond occupation. The approach is concerned with understanding how conceptions of normal can be shaped in normatively justifiable and sustainable ways.³

Theorising normative power involves taking five steps, each of which will be accompanied by a reflection on EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations in this article. The first step will be to set out critical social theory as the context for theorizing normative power. The second step will be to situate the NPA within critical social theory and how this approach addresses normative, explanatory, and practical questions in global politics. The next three steps clarify: what the NPA brings to the normative study of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations; how the NPA provides explanation and understanding of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations; and finally how the NPA raises practical considerations of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations. The article concludes by arguing that if the 100th anniversary of the occupation is not to look very similar to the 50th anniversary, then critical questions must be asked about how theorising EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations may or may not encourage movement beyond accepting the status quo of power relations.

Critical Social Theory

Critical social theory is an ‘interpenetrating body of work which demands and produces critique... [that] depends on some manner of historical understanding and analysis’.⁴ A broad understanding of critical social theory includes historical materialism, critical theory, poststructural theory, feminist

³ Ian Manners (2011) The European Union’s Normative Power: Critical Perspectives and Perspectives on the Critical, in Richard Whitman, ed., *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (London: Palgrave), p. 230.

⁴ Craig Calhoun (1995) *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History, and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell), p. 35.

theory, and postcolonial theory.⁵ Since the earliest works, the NPA has been clearly located within critical social theory, including engagements with Gramscian historical materialism, Frankfurt critical theory, Hallian cultural studies, Derridean poststructural theory, Butlerian feminist theory, and Fanonian postcolonial theory.⁶ In this context, a normative power approach aims to contribute to a better understanding of what principles actors promote, how they act, and what impact they have by attempting both to analyse and to judge their normative power in global politics. The idea that political actors could be both normative and powerful at the same time may strike many as a contradiction in terms, if one reads normative power as a primarily self-empowering exercise.⁷ However normative power is justifiable and sustainable only if it is felt to be legitimate by those who practise and experience it.⁸

⁵ Ian Manners (2007) 'Another Europe is Possible: Critical Perspectives on European Union Politics', in KE Jørgensen, M Pollack & B Rosamond (eds.) *Handbook of European Union Politics* (London: Sage Publications), pp. 77-95. Ian Manners (2016) 'A Critical Copenhagen Reflection on the European Union as a Global Actor', in A. Franck and F. Söderbaum (eds.) *The EU as a Global Actor: 'A Force for Good' in the World?* (Gothenburg: Centre for European Research, CERGU), pp. 75-90.

⁶ Ian Manners (2000) *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?*, COPRI Working Paper 38-2000 (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute); Ian Manners (2000) Europe and the World: the Impact of Globalisation, in Anne Stevens and Richard Sakwa (eds.) *Contemporary Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), pp. 182-201; Ian Manners and Richard Whitman (2003) The 'difference engine': constructing and representing the international identity of the European Union, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 10(3), pp. 380-404; Ian Manners (2006) European Union, normative power and ethical foreign policy, in David Chandler, and Volker Heins (eds.) *Rethinking Ethical Foreign Policy: Pitfalls, Possibilities and Paradoxes* (London: Routledge), pp. 116-136; Andrea Pető and Ian Manners (2006) The European Union and the value of gender equality, in Sonia Lucarelli and Ian Manners (eds.) *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge), pp. 97-113.

⁷ Ian Manners (2002) Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(2), pp. 235-258.

⁸ Ian Manners (2008) The Normative Ethics of the European Union, *International Affairs*, 84(1), pp. 65-66.

Critical social theories have been widely used to understand and inform EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations, for example Markus Bouillon's analysis of money and power in the 'peace business', and Oren Yiftachel's use of critical ethnographic theory in studying land and identity politics.⁹ More recent work, such as Giulia Daniele's feminist study of women, reconciliation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or Jess Bier's critical geographic information system study of mapping occupied landscape, also draw on critical social theories.¹⁰ Within academic journals, Jan Busse uses Foucauldian governmentality to understand the dynamics of order in Palestine, while Jaafar Alloul works within postcolonial theory in the study of signs of visual resistance in Palestine.¹¹

Within this special issue on 'The Occupation at 50', only Michelle Pace and Annika Berman Rosamond's contribution on 'Political Legitimacy and Celebrity Politicians' explicitly refers to the use of critical social theory in the form of critical discourse analysis.¹² However, as critical social theory makes clear, 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose', since 'theory constitutes

⁹ Markus Bouillon (2004) *The Peace Business: Money and Power in the Palestine-Israel Conflict* (London: I.B.Tauris); Oren Yiftachel (2006) *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press).

¹⁰ Giulia Daniele (2014) *Women, Reconciliation and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Road Not Yet Taken* (London: Routledge); Jess Bier (2017) *Mapping Israel, Mapping Palestine: How Occupied Landscapes Shape Scientific Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).

¹¹ Jan Busse (2015) Theorizing Governance as Globalized Governmentality: The Dynamics of World-Societal Order in Palestine, *Middle East Critique*, 24(2), pp. 161-189; Jaafar Alloul (2016) Signs of Visual Resistance in Palestine: Unsettling the Settler-Colonial Matrix, *Middle East Critique*, 25(1), pp. 23-44.

¹² Michelle Pace and Annika Bergman Rosamond (2018) Political Legitimacy and Celebrity Politicians: Tony Blair as Middle East Envoy 2007-2015, in Anders Persson (ed.) *The Occupation as 50: Consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations?*, special issue of *Middle East Critique*, 27.

as well as explains the questions it asks (and those it does not ask)'.¹³ Hence, all the contributions to this special issue are implicitly making theory choices which serve as the analytical foundation for their work. There are four examples of the theoretical underpinnings within the special issue, first in Anders Persson's study of 'The way Europe speaks about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed' it is implicitly assumed that the discourse of the *Bulletin of the EC/EU* is important to understanding European relations with Israel and Palestine during the 50 years of occupation.¹⁴ Second, in Alaa Tartir's analysis of European-Sponsored Securitised Peace it is explicitly argued that the neo-liberalism of donor-driven good governance approach and security sector reform is responsible for Palestinian authoritarianism, without making explicit the critical social theory of neo-Gramscian transnational capitalism implicit within critiques of neo-liberalism.¹⁵ Third, Daniela Huber's contribution on 'Resistance or Complacent to Normalisation' advocates an inductive approach to grounded theory based on the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research, which presumes that all theories are readily available to be discovered by the researcher.¹⁶ Fourth, Sharon Pardo and Neve Gordon's 'Euroscepticism as a Weapon of Foreign

¹³ Robert Cox (1981) *Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory*, Millennium, 10(2), p. 128; Catharine Hoskyns (2004) *Gender Perspectives*, in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds.) *European Integration Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 224; Manners, *Another Europe is Possible*, p. 78.

¹⁴ Anders Persson (2018) *The way the EU speaks about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed – but how, when and why did this happen?*, in Anders Persson (ed.) *The Occupation as 50: Consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations?*, special issue of *Middle East Critique*, 27.

¹⁵ Alaa Tartir (2018) *European-Sponsored Securitised Peace: Security Sector Reform and Palestinian Authoritarianism*, in Anders Persson (ed.) *The Occupation as 50: Consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations?*, special issue of *Middle East Critique*, 27.

¹⁶ Daniela Huber (2018) *The EU and 50 Years of Occupation: Resistance or Complacent to Normalisation?*, in Anders Persson (ed.) *The Occupation as 50: Consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations?*, special issue of *Middle East Critique*, 27.

Policy’ engages with a variety of political explanations, actor understandings, and critical perspectives without making explicit their theoretical constitution and consequences.¹⁷ In sum, critical social theories demand that scholars of the consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations after 50 years of occupation historicise and make explicit the theoretical assumptions in their work.

Normative Power Approach

Working within critical social theory, the normative power approach should be *normative*, *explanatory*, and *practical*, all at the same time. In this respect the NPA is *normative* in arguing that agonistic, or radical cosmopolitical theory linking local politics with global ethics, provides a normative basis for critique in global politics. Second, the NPA is *explanatory* in approaching the EU as a ‘European communion’; a sharing of communitarian, cosmopolitan and cosmopolitical relationships that provide an explanation of the EU as an actor in global politics.¹⁸ Finally, the NPA argues for an analytical focus on the EU’s use of ‘normative justification’, rather than physical force or material incentives, which provides a *practical* guide for the practice of EU normative power in global politics. These three aspects of the NPA will be used to discuss EU-Israel-Palestine relations more extensively in the next three sections, but it is valuable to first reflect on the NPA in existing research.

The normative power approach has been extensively used to understand and inform EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations, as the work of Michelle Pace, Guy Harpaz, Ian Manners, Daniela Huber, Sharon Pardo, Patricia Bauer, and Anders Persson illustrates. Michelle Pace’s ground-breaking

¹⁷ Sharon Pardo and Neve Gordon (2018) Euroscepticism as a Weapon of Foreign Policy, in Anders Persson (ed.) *The Occupation as 50: Consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations?*, special issue of *Middle East Critique*, 27.

¹⁸ Ian Manners (2013) European communion: political theory of European union, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(4), pp. 473-494.

engagement with the normative power approach from the perspective of Middle East politics, including the paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean, and conflict transformation in Israeli-Palestinian relations illustrate the limits of EU normative power.¹⁹ Guy Harpaz's studies of the normative power approach from an Israeli perspective show how the problem of a legitimacy deficit can create an image of an 'illegitimate EUtopia'.²⁰ Ian Manners' work on 'European Union Normative Power in the European Neighbourhood Policy' suggests that the ENP might be seen as an open-ended process of socialisation, changing whether the ENP is 'as you like it' for both the EU and neighbours'.²¹ Daniela Huber's analysis of the 'EU's Foreign Policy of Democracy Promotion in the Palestinian Authority' found that while the EU perceives itself as wielding normative power and often acts accordingly, it is not necessarily perceived as such by the recipients; the EU's behaviour is altered if it perceives the recipient's identity as incompatible with its founding values.²² Sharon Pardo's extensive studies of the perceptions in EU's relations with Israel cover a wealth of factors, including historical relations, cultural filters,

¹⁹ Michelle Pace (2007) The construction of EU normative power, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 45(5), pp. 1041–1064; Michelle Pace (2009) Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits of EU normative power, *Democratization*, 16(1), pp. 39–58; Thomas Diez and Michelle Pace (2011) Normative power Europe and conflict transformation, in Richard Whitman, ed., *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (London: Palgrave), pp. 210–255.

²⁰ Guy Harpaz (2007) Normative Power Europe and the Problem of a Legitimacy Deficit: An Israeli Perspective, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 12(1), pp. 89–109; Guy Harpaz and Asaf Shamis (2010) Normative Power Europe and the State of Israel: An Illegitimate EUtopia?, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48(3), pp. 579–616.

²¹ Ian Manners (2010) As You Like It: European Union normative power in the European Neighbourhood Policy, in Richard Whitman and Stefan Wolff, eds., *The European Neighbourhood Policy in Perspective: Context, Implementation and Impact* (London: Palgrave), pp. 29–50.

²² Daniela Huber (2011) *Normative Power Europe? The EU's Foreign Policy of Democracy Promotion in the Palestinian Authority*, Working Paper 98/2011 (Jerusalem: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung).

NATO issues, and the ‘power of the local’ in the Occupied Territories.²³ Patricia Bauer sets out how the contradictions between the ‘strong normative rhetoric’ of EU normative power and ‘poor outcomes’ of EU democracy promotion in the MENA countries were to be found in the perceptions of EU cooperation with ‘authoritarian Arab partner countries’.²⁴ Finally, Anders Persson’s work on the EU in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict demonstrates how normative power can work in shaping discourse and setting examples.²⁵

This special issue on ‘The Occupation at 50’ contains contributions from four of the previous scholars on normative power and EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations (Huber, Pace, Pardo and Gordon, and Persson). While only Tartir and Huber engage explicitly with normative power in their articles, all of the contributions implicitly deal with issues central to the normative power approach. Persson’s article, is clear is setting out how EU discourse is built around the achievement of ‘just peace’ reconciling ‘Israel’s right to exist’ in peace and security with the ‘legitimate rights of the Palestinians’. Questions of legitimacy, reconciliation, and recognition in Persson’s study are at the heart of the normative power approach.²⁶ Pace and Bergman Rosamond’s analysis of whether Tony Blair’s role as Middle East envoy was legitimate also engages with questions of celebrity

²³ Sharon Pardo (2015) *Normative Power Europe Meets Israel: Perceptions and Realities* (Lexington KY: Lexington Books); Neve Gordon and Sharon Pardo (2015) Normative Power Europe and the Power of the Local, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 53(2), pp. 416–427.

²⁴ Patricia Bauer (2015) The European Mediterranean Policy after the Arab Spring: Beyond Values and Interests, *Middle East Critique*, 24(1), pp. 27–40.

²⁵ Anders Persson (2014) *The EU and the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict 1971–2013: In Pursuit of a Just Peace* (Lexington KY: Lexington Books); Anders Persson (2017) Shaping Discourse and Setting Examples: Normative Power Europe can Work in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55(6), pp. 1415–1431.

²⁶ Manners, European communion.

legitimacy, peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestine, and recognition of the Quartet, Israel, and Palestine. Tartir addresses the normative power approach directly in his contribution with a discussion of donors' normative power and the need for donor realisation of the legitimacy of Palestine resistance to occupation. In her contribution, Huber also makes explicit the way in which local human rights organisations would like to see the EU using 'hard-normative power rooting its policy in principles of international law and legalisation'. Pardo and Gordon set out how negative perceptions of EU legitimacy have fuelled the rise of the far-right in Europe, and specifically analyse how Israel played on the 'Euroscepticism' of the nativist party Syriza in Greece to undermine EU sanctions against Israeli products from the Occupied Territories. Clearly, these questions of legitimacy in EU normative power are important, particularly as the rise of far-right parties and governments may present difficulties for EU-Israeli-Palestine relations. To summarise, the normative power approach is well known to all the contributors and whether discussed explicitly or not, its emphasis on legitimacy of principles, acts of recognition, and reconciliatory impact provides much of the language needed in relations between EU-Israel-Palestine after 50 years of occupation.

Normative Theory

Originating in the post-Cold War context of the 1990s, one of the original aims of the normative power approach was to bring normative international theory to the study of the EU; something that was sorely missing in the aftermath of the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties.²⁷ Political theory is understood here as 'a commitment to theorise, critique, and diagnose the norms, practices, and organisation of political action in the past and present, in our own places and elsewhere', accepting

²⁷ Manners, *Critical Perspectives and Perspectives on the Critical*, pp. 226-227.

that ‘all theory in international relations is normative theory’.²⁸ In this respect the NPA is *normative* in arguing that agonistic, or radical cosmopolitical theory linking local politics with global ethics, provides a normative basis for critique in global politics.²⁹ In this sense the NPA is cosmopolitical in seeking to combine cosmopolitan ethics with communitarian politics; it is agonistic in its productive paradox of politics that both supports and critiques ‘world building’ institutions; it is radical in seeking democratic contestation as emerging from the bottom up.³⁰

Given the 50 year history of occupation, it is inevitable that research on EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations is normative theory as a few examples illustrate. Deiniol Jones’s examination of ‘Cosmopolitan Mediation’ as a case of conflict resolution in the Oslo Accords using critical and cosmopolitan international theory argues that Palestinian demands for national self-determination were illegitimately excluded.³¹ More recently, Peter Seeberg’s work on EU policies towards the Mediterranean, argues that the ‘Union for the Mediterranean’ represents pragmatic multilateralism and the depoliticisation of EU-Middle Eastern relations, that the EU’s democratisation agenda in the Mediterranean is not unidirectional and is influenced by the perceptions and actions of its MENA

²⁸ John Dryzek,, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Philips (2008) Introduction, in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 3–41; Molly Cochran (1999) *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 1.

²⁹ Manners, *Normative Ethics of the European Union*, p. 67; Manners, *European communion*, p. 483.

³⁰ Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larking (2011) *The Political Psychology of Globalization: Muslims in the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 92; Bonnie Honig (2006) Another Cosmopolitanism? Law and Politics in the New Europe, in Seyla Benhabib and Robert Post (ed.) *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 117; James Ingram (2013) *Radical Cosmopolitics: The Ethics and Politics of Democratic Universalism* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 18.

³¹ Deiniol Jones, *Cosmopolitan Mediation?: Conflict Resolution and the Oslo Accords* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

partners, and the post-Arab Spring challenges for the EU include a revitalisation of former normative approaches but which prevent the EU from adopting long-term strategies vis-à-vis the Middle East.³² Patricia Bauer's edited volume on the re-formulation of the ENP and EU democracy assistance towards the Southern Mediterranean reaches similar conclusions regarding the tensions between political, economic, and security concerns after the Arab uprisings.³³ Finally, Tariq Dana examines the long-term structural transformation that accompanied the changes just discussed, arguing that changing ideology, the changing political process, and financial conditionality led to changes and failures among Palestinian civil society.³⁴

Unsurprisingly, the contributors to this special issue also use a number of normative-theoretical approaches and arguments, most explicitly in Anders Persson's 'Introduction' setting out that the EU has played a role in the conflict, is part of the conflict, and is part of the conflict's changing dynamic.³⁵ Pace and Bergman Rosamond's article clearly sets out the 'one key normative claim of our paper' is that celebrities, whether politicians or Hollywood A-listers, can bring global attention

³² Peter Seeberg (2010) Union for the Mediterranean—Pragmatic Multilateralism and the Depoliticization of EU-Middle Eastern Relations, *Middle East Critique*, 2010, 19 (3), pp. 287-302; Michelle Pace and Peter Seeberg (eds.) (2013) *The European Union's Democratization Agenda in the Mediterranean* (London: Routledge); Peter Seeberg (2015) Regime adaptability and political reconfigurations following the Arab spring: New challenges for EU foreign policies toward the Mediterranean, *Middle East Critique*, 25(1), pp. 41-53.

³³ Patricia Bauer (ed.) (2014) *Arab Spring Challenges for Democracy and Security in the Mediterranean* (London: Routledge).

³⁴ Tariq Dana (2015) The structural transformation of Palestinian civil society: Key paradigm shifts, *Middle East Critique*, 24(2), pp. 191-210.

³⁵ Anders Persson (2018) Introduction: The Occupation at 50 – EU-Israel-Palestine Relations since 1967, in Anders Persson (ed.) *The Occupation as 50: Consequences for EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations?*, special issue of *Middle East Critique*, 27

to a particular conflict zone or ethical dilemma, but can also risk disabling ongoing (fragile) peace processes by conducting themselves in self-promotional practices rather than furthering the interests of local populations. Blair's involvement in the Middle East was clouded with a very strong focus on himself rather than the issues at hand.' Tartir makes a large number of normative claims, including the need that Palestinian democratic transition 'should be driven by a renewed approach and political will that is currently absent', that civil society 'should embrace and operationalize resistance ... as a way of living under occupation', and that increasingly insecure Palestinians 'should raise two questions for the policy makers to tackle' regarding the securitized development processes. In contrast, Huber's language is more careful, arguing that under the US-led Middle East Peace Process the 'normalisation of the occupation could continue as the "normal status quo" as in the past decades', but the EU's differentiation policy 'does not address the root of the problem, which only a strict non-recognition policy as applied in the case of Crimea could', while it 'could also be a way to "legitimise EU research cooperation and trade ties with Israel".' Finally, Pardo and Gordon demonstrate the risks of following Machiavelli's advice on the continent of Kant, with Israel's short-term use of diplomacy with 'Euro-sceptic' Greece leading to a longer-term EU normative goal of bringing Greece back within the EU foreign policy processes. This summary of the use of normative-theoretical approaches and arguments by the contributors demonstrates that the EU, Israel, and Palestine are all implicated in the normative processes and consequences of bringing equality and emancipation to the lives of ordinary people living in the region.

Explanatory theory

All critical social theories go beyond acting as normative frameworks in order to explain what is wrong with current social reality. Therefore theories are not only explanatory 'problem-solving

theory’, but also provide critical understanding of ‘the social and political complex as a whole’.³⁶ Thus, theory needs to be able to provide a historical understanding and analysis, as well as a rich explanation of the critical interdependence of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations. In this respect the NPA is *explanatory* in approaching the EU as a ‘European communion’; a sharing of communitarian, cosmopolitan and cosmopolitical relationships that provide an explanation of the EU as an actor in global politics. Within this explanation lies the agonistic cosmopolitics of the productive paradoxes between the EU as a constellation of communities; the EU as a cosmopolitan space; and the EU as an example of cosmopolitical co-existence.³⁷ This approach is not only applicable to the EU – both Israel and Palestine consist of constellations of communities, whether geographically, politically, or culturally constituted. They also represent potential cosmopolitan spaces where peoples of different histories, religions, and languages might share space and place. Finally, both Israel and Palestine are translocal political actors reaching from local movements and resistances to international law and global politics.

Attempts to explain and understand EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations are widespread, so only a few examples of this rich variety will serve to illustrate explanatory efforts. Elvira King argues that ‘effective explanation of the normative premise and lobby strategy of the ECI [European Coalition for Israel] is preconditioned by understanding why and how certain issues inform the European Christian Zionist discourse.’³⁸ Raffaella Del Sarto’s edited volume aims to ‘understand how the

³⁶ Robert Cox (1981) Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations, *Millennium*, 10(2), pp. 128-129; Martin Hollis and Steve Smith (1991) *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon).

³⁷ Manners, European communion.

³⁸ Elvira King (2016) *The Pro-Israel Lobby in Europe: The Politics of Religion and Christian Zionism in the European Union* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016).

Israeli-Palestinian-EU interconnectedness impacts on ... different sets of *bilateral* relations and policies', where the 'nature of borders as social constructions also explains their potential role as alternative expressions of power relations, particularly in protracted conflicts.'³⁹ Del Sarto's monograph looks at the politics of insecurity and the rise of the Israeli ne-revisionist right, explaining that the disappearance of debate and dissent over hardline policies have come at the cost of counterproductive politics and the risk of increasing international isolation for Israel.⁴⁰ Francesco Cavatorta argues that 'the insights of Marxism and in particular the political economy literature dealing with structural power can offer a convincing explanatory framework' for understanding the convergence of governance on liberal-authoritarian forms of rule.⁴¹ Finally, Sean McMahon uses Foucault to explain the function and performance of temporality in the discourse of Palestinian-Israeli politics, arguing that Palestinians are constituted as being without time.⁴²

The contributions to this special issue all seek to explain and understand the EU-Israeli-Palestinian relationship, despite the obvious differences in the language used to describe these thought processes. Persson concludes that 'there are many reasons for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Bulletin' [of the EC/EU], including the possibility of third-party mediation, the 'internal gains' for

³⁹ Raffaella Del Sarto (2015) *Borders, Power and Interdependence: A borderlands Approach to Israel-Palestine and the European Union*, in Raffaella Del Sarto (ed.) *Fragmented Borders, Interdependence and External Relations: The Israel-Palestine-European Union Triangle* (London: Palgrave).pgs. 4 & 6.

⁴⁰ Raffaella Del Sarto (2017) *Israel under Siege: The Politics of Insecurity and the Rise of the Israeli Neo-Revisionist Right* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press).

⁴¹ Francesco Cavatorta (2010) The Convergence of Governance: Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World and Downgrading Democracy Elsewhere?, *Middle East Critique*, 19(3), pp. 217-232.

⁴² Sean McMahon (2016) Temporality, Peace Initiatives and Palestinian-Israeli Politics, *Middle East Critique*, 25(1), pp. 5-21.

EC foreign policy, and strategic issues such as oil, trade, and US relations.⁴³ Pace and Bergman Rosamond conclude that ‘the Blair brand and celebrity style made no difference to the advancement of trust-building between conflict parties not to the economic improvement on the daily lives of Palestinians’. Instead, they argue that ‘rather than radically transforming international relations it would seem that celebrities, whether politicians or entertainers, are more likely to reproduce the current international order), an order defined by western privilege and Eurocentric visions of global politics’. Tartir explains how the understanding and analytical prism of the ‘relationship between security assistance and the processes of development, state building, governances reforms, and regional peace’ came to be understood as a linear technical equation analysed through security-driven frameworks that are not conducive to peace. Huber explains that by analysing the occupation from the perspectives of both local human rights organization and EU discursive and policy practices, it can be argued that ‘the EU has been at the same time complacent and resistant to the occupation and its role in the normalization of the occupation has, therefore, been ambiguous.’ Finally, Pardo and Gordon explain why and how ‘Euroscepticism’ has been ‘transformed into a weapon wielded by third parties to exercise power and achieve specific political objectives’, through short-term gains and the cost of long-term losses. This review of explanatory theory illustrates how critical and theoretically-informed scholarship both explains the immediate problems of current social reality, but also provides a crucial understanding of the historically-situated social and political complex.

Practical Theory

Being explicit about normative-theoretical considerations, and clear about explanation and understanding, are both clearly very important. But from a critical social theory perspective, they

⁴³ Persson, The way the EU Speaks.

are both inadequate if not accompanied by a ‘concern for reasonable conditions of life’ and the goal of human emancipation.⁴⁴ Critical social theory also seeks to present practical theory which identifies actors to change current social reality and practical goals for the future. In this respect, the NPA argues for an analytical focus on the EU’s use of ‘normative justification’, rather than physical force or material incentives, which provides a *practical* guide for the practice of EU normative power in global politics. Similar to explanatory theory, normative justification is and can be used by other actors in global politics, ranging from local activist groups to UN global governance institutions, and including both Palestine and Israel. The practical use of normative justification involves a tripartite approach with an emphasis on understanding the legitimacy of *principles* actors promote, how these principles drive external *actions* such as recognition of the other, and what *impact* these principles and actions have such as reconciliation of conflict parties. But rather than only seeing these processes as casual, where principles lead to actions lead to impact, the NPA also considers these as constitutive practices where reflections on impact shape changing actions which reinterpret principles.

There is now a rich field of practical studies of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations, including much of the work already discussed. For example, in one of the first books on EU-Israeli relations, Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters conclude that ‘Israelis and Europeans need to discuss not only what unites them but also what divides them’ in a dialogue ‘based on an open, honest and frank exchange of ideas, aimed at developing a deeper understanding of their differences and of their divergent

⁴⁴ Max Horkheimer (1972) Traditional and Critical Theory, in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Continuum), pp. 198-199.

values'.⁴⁵ On another side of the triangular relationship, Dimitris Bouris provides many practical lessons from the EU's role as a state-builder in the case of the occupied Palestinian territories.⁴⁶ Amr Nasr El-Din's analysis of the EUPOL COPPS and EUBAM Rafah security missions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict serve as lessons on why and how the EU could take a more active role in the Middle East Peace Process.⁴⁷ Benedetta Voltolini's study of Non-State Actors lobbying in EU foreign policy making in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shows how social interactions are vital to the understanding of practical steps that NSAs have and could take.⁴⁸ Finally, Mark Levine's theorising of revolutionary practice is important because of the way in which it highlights the importance of activist movement from the virtual to the physical world, particularly in the case of Gaza and Palestinian political life in the context of the Arab uprisings.⁴⁹

The contributors to this special issue on 'The Occupation at 50' provide considerable practical theory and advice on EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations, starting with Persson's Introduction which set out 'how to change the EU's verbal commitment to end the occupation into a more practical commitment'. Pace and Bergman Rosamond show the practical importance of appointing skilled diplomats, negotiators, or mediators, instead of celebrity politicians. Tartir's contribution suggests

⁴⁵ Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters (2009) *Uneasy Neighbors: Israel and the European Union* (Lexington KY: Lexington Books), p. 4.

⁴⁶ Dimitris Bouris (2013) *The European Union and Occupied Palestinian Territories: State-building without a state* (London: Routledge).

⁴⁷ Amr Nasr El-Din (2017) *EU Security Missions and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (London: Routledge), p. 138.

⁴⁸ Benedetta Voltolini (2017) *Lobbying in EU Foreign Policy-making: The case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* (London: Routledge), pp.34-35.

⁴⁹ Mark Levine (2013) Theorizing Revolutionary Practice: Agendas for Research on the Arab Uprisings, *Middle East Critique*, 22(3), pp. 191-212.

that ‘Palestinian civil society organisations need to come up with implementation mechanisms and practical actions for their calls that aim to confront the continuous violations of rights and liberties’, and European donors need to bridge the gap between rhetoric and practice as ‘a prerequisite for effective and meaningful aid.’ Similarly, Huber’s article places considerable and repeated emphasis on the need for the EU to close the gap between discourse and practice related to the territorial and legal structures of control. Finally, Pardo and Gordon’s contribution sets out the practical importance of keeping EU member states within the rules and processes of external policy making, particularly within the Foreign Affairs Council. The final summary of this section makes clear the need for scholars of EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations to be able to differentiate normative from explanatory from practical theory and advice, for example through asking questions regarding what *should* political actors do? Why do they *act* in the way they do? And what can we *learn* from these actors and actions?

Conclusion: Normative Power in EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations

What is clear in this consideration of theorising normative power in EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations is that all three sides of Del Sarto’s triangle need to change, but while the angles between them may alter, they will still retain 180 degrees of interdependence. Thus, this article concludes by arguing that if the 100th anniversary of the occupation is not to look very similar to the 50th anniversary, then critical questions must be asked about how theorising EU-Israeli-Palestinian Relations may or may not encourage movement beyond accepting the status quo of power relations.

As has been discussed, the seven contributors to this special issue are now part of an emergent critical mass of scholars, including Peters, Del Sarto, Seeberg, Bauer, Bouris, and Voltolini, who now constitute the field of studying the EU-Israeli-Palestinian triangle. The article set out five steps

which the normative power approach has taken and which hold lessons for this field. First, the need to historicise and make explicit theoretical assumptions – a normative power approach to the triangle of relations would seek to use critical social theory as the basis for studying normatively justifiable and sustainable relations. Second, the importance of legitimacy of principles, acts of recognition, and reconciliatory impacts on conflict parties in the normative power approach where emphasised – but importantly this tripartite of factors must be realised at the grass-roots level of ordinary people and civil society as much as global political actors.

Third, the use of normative-theoretical approaches and arguments demonstrates the importance of making explicit the normative processes and consequences of both success and fail to bring equality and emancipation to the lives of ordinary people living in the region. A normative power approach to the triangle of relations would be radical in linking emerging democratic contestation from the ground up to the state and global realms of power, involving both support for progressive institution building and critique of politics that do not embrace the other as equal. Fourth, critical and theoretically-informed scholarship must both explain the immediate problems of current social reality, but also provide a crucial understanding of the historically-situated social and political complex. A normative power approach would, for example, seek to bring cosmopolitan and communitarian understandings to the triangle of relations, but primarily push for cosmopolitical explanations of all three actors. Finally, it is important to ask the most difficult questions, together and at the same time: what *should* political actors do? Why do they *act* in the way they do? And what can we *learn* from these actors and actions? A normative power approach would seek to keep the analytical focus on ‘normative justification’ in principles, actions, and impact, rather than falling too far into the 50-year old trap of overemphasising physical force or material incentives in EU-Israeli-Palestinian relations.

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