Governing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process: The European Union Partnership for Peace

İşleyen, B.

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Beste İşleyen
University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Abstract

This study applies a governmentality approach to analyse the European Union's civil society promotion in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process through the EU's Partnership for Peace instrument. Contrary to a widespread conviction in earlier academic research, it argues that the EU engagement with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has political substance, and the Partnership for Peace provides a good illustration of this. The governmentality perspective highlights the power of the technical in guiding civil society towards particular visions, activities and goals. It brings to light a set of supposedly neutral definitions and technical instruments related to project applications and project selection that sort out, promote and link together civil society action in a way that manages and reinforces the existing dynamics of the peace process. The technical brings with it a particular idea of civil society, which is encouraged to assume functions that focus on the management of the outcomes of the conflict rather than striving for a transformative vision of peace based on political deliberation and fundamental change. The use of the governmentality approach not only aims to provide a better understanding of the nature of the Partnership for Peace programme, but also contributes to debates over the theoretical merits of governmentality by applying the approach to peace and conflict research.

Keywords

Civil society, European Union, governmentality, Israeli–Palestinian peace process, Partnership for Peace

Introduction

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is one of the world's most intractable conflicts, and numerous state and non-state actors are actively involved in bilateral, regional, and international dimensions of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process (Kaufman et al., 2006; Peters and Newman, 2013). Besides moves at the high-diplomacy level to bring the two conflict parties together to achieve a negotiated solution, international attempts also take place at the societal level through engagement with civil society (Pardo and Peters, 2012; Jamal, 2012). The European Union (EU) provides a noteworthy example in this regard. Since the initiation of the formal peace talks in the 1990s, the EU has

Corresponding author:
Beste İşleyen, University of Amsterdam, Oudezijds Achterburgwal, 237, Amsterdam, 1012 DL, Netherlands.
Email: B.Isleyen@uva.nl

sought to establish close contacts with both sides of the conflict and developed multifarious projects and programmes to play a part in Israeli–Palestinian reconciliation efforts. The EU's activities range from bilateral economic exchanges between the conflict parties to intercultural dialogue and cooperation on regional issues, such as transport, energy, and water (Kelley, 2006; Cavatorta and Tonra, 2007). Another area of concentration has been Palestinian state- and institution-building, which commenced with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority following the commencement of the Oslo Process in 1993 (Bouris, 2014).

The prevailing view, however, is that the EU's engagement with the Israeli–Palestinian peace efforts has been largely declaratory, with limited – if any – political substance (see Stetter, 2007; Hollis, 2012; Whitman and Juncos, 2013). The contention is that the EU merely utilizes technical tools, such as training activities, and that it does not pursue a political approach to promote the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians (Youngs, 2004). Drawing on Michel Foucault's (2008, 2009) concept of governmentality, I argue that the EU *does* pursue a peace agenda with respect to the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, and that the so-called technical instruments that it employs are not power-free but follow particular logics with significant political effects. The argument is illustrated through the case study of the EU Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, which was launched in 2002 to reinforce civil society organizations in Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority.[1] The crux of my argument is that the PfP is illustrative of the process through which the technical works as a power instrument to 'govern' civil society action. Relying on a post-structuralist understanding of 'depoliticization' (Methmann, 2013), the article demonstrates the power effects of the technical integral to the PfP in moving civil society activities away from key political questions related to the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. The supposedly neutral logics and technical instruments of project application and selection produce distinct forms of inclusion and exclusion in terms of the conception of peace and civil society promoted by the Partnership. Projects funded by the PfP distance themselves from conflict transformation and increasingly concentrate on the *management* of the outcomes of the conflict in a depoliticized manner. The inevitable implication is that civil society organizations under the PfP focus on capacity-building and service-provision activities that support and inevitably feed into existing asymmetries and exclusionary conditions of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. The PfP thus becomes an art of governmentality that promotes non-political civil society practices rather than challenging prevailing peace politics towards structural change and transformative peace agendas.

The central consideration that informs the case selection is the empirical significance of the PfP. The Partnership was created with the explicit objective of fostering civil society engagement with the peace process. The PfP declares that its aim is to 'provide a solid foundation at the civil society level for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East by strengthening and increasing direct civil society relationships … between communities affected by the conflict'. The goal is 'to support practical actions at building mutual trust, building capacity for conflict resolution, launching joint development initiatives, empowering marginalized groups' (Partnership for Peace, 2012a: 4). Accordingly, the PfP is an important case for an examination of the political underpinnings of EU policy towards the Israeli–Palestinian peace process.

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality allows us to see EU civil society promotion in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process in ways that cannot be highlighted by other perspectives. Stetter (2007), for instance, suggests that the content and level of EU action in the peace process are intimately tied to the institutional weaknesses, the consensual decisionmaking process, and the highly complex functional and administrative practices of EU foreign policymaking. What the institutionalist approach overlooks is that institutions within which governance develops do not belong to a 'material realm' independent of normative schemes and ideational factors. Nor are they

simply mechanisms in which predetermined strategies are implemented (Walters, 2012: 62). Instead, like the EU's democracy-promotion policies in its neighbouring countries (Kurki, 2011; Tagma et al., 2013) and the EU enlargement process (Walters, 2012), the institutions and alleged contradictions in EU behaviour in relation to the Israeli–Palestinian peace process are integral to and illustrative of specific imaginations and strategies through which the EU fosters civil society of a particular type and towards particular directions.

Governmentality also differs from the governance approach that conceives civil society as representing an 'idealised normative model' based on pluralist action, inclusiveness, voluntary participation and shared understandings acquired through socialization, networked coordination, and horizontal modes of exchange and interest mediation (Swyngedouw, 2005: 1994). The liberal account of governance investigates how and through which logics norms, rules, and institutions are transferred from the EU to target countries through consensus, negotiation, and learning (Lavenex, 2004). Governmentality is suspicious of the act of deeming governance benevolent and assuming that it is communitarian. It is, rather, a critical method of analysis that focuses on tensions, inequalities, discriminatory tendencies, illiberal techniques, and 'normative biases' in international and transnational governance (Walters, 2012: 65; Favarel-Garrigues et al., 2011). The contradictory nature of EU civil society promotion in Israel and the Palestinian Authority has been emphasized by previous research that points at domestic politics of exclusion in the Palestinian Authority (Jamal, 2012) or the prioritization of 'reform-minded' individuals (Kelley, 2006: 40) as points of criticism of EU civil society promotion in the region. The approach adopted here examines the governmental nature of this policy by reflecting upon the instrumental role of the technical inherent in the PfP in turning civil society into a sphere that reflects the governmentality of empowerment. To put it differently, the PfP is characterized by political technologies that encourage civil society to participate in the peace process and guides them at the same time towards depoliticized conduct. As a result, the PfP becomes an instrument of empowerment around a set of performative and administrative routines that leave structural politics unchallenged.

I understand depoliticization in relation to governmentality based on a post-structuralist view of society as being divided between the 'social' and the 'political'. Accordingly, the social involves 'the sedimented structures of a given regime of practice which are taken for granted', without significant discursive battles challenging the deeply engrained and prevalent order (Methmann, 2013: 75). The political, on the other hand, is the sphere of conflicts, controversies, and discursive struggles that counter and strive to alter the foundations of the existing order. In this respect, depoliticization refers to the combination of tactics and instruments that aim to protect the sedimented social sphere from any challenges directed at the foundations of the social order. Depoliticization within governmentality works through strategies and techniques that tame struggles, manage inconsistencies, and disrupt contestation moves, as a result of which the social order and its deep-rooted practices are left unchallenged (Methmann, 2013).

When applied to the EU's PfP in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, depoliticization functions through technical instruments of definition, project application, and project selection. The technical is productive of civil society action that fulfils a set of depoliticized tasks, such as capacity-building and service provision. Through the technical instruments of definition, application, and selection, the Partnership turns into a governmentality act that promotes civil society exchanges, but only insofar as they do not touch upon significant political questions of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. The Partnership thus inevitably reinforces the existing dynamics and practices of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, and the technical contributes to the depoliticization of PfP civil society promotion rather than supporting processes of political deliberation, contestation, and fundamental change.

Liberal governmentality and the study of civil society

Governmentality is 'the conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1983: 220), with the term referring to a specific form of power directed at the regulation of behaviour and population-related processes 'at a distance' (Vrasti, 2013: 52). Governmentality rests on particular 'rationalities' and 'technologies' that seek to guide individuals and organize the social through activities that go beyond 'the sphere of formalized or centralized material sites of power' (Kurki, 2011: 352; Joseph, 2010). Through its emphasis on the productive effects of rationalities and technologies within micro-level power processes of governing, the concept of governmentality advances existing peace and conflict studies in a number of ways and offers a novel perspective on EU civil society support in Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

To start with, the governmentality approach accentuates the technical. Previous studies consider EU engagement with civil society actors in the conflict region as a reflection of strategic calculations (Youngs, 2004) and label this policy area as a soft instrument characterized by technical instruments and lacking a coherent approach to peace (Hollis, 2012). An alternative view of the technical is emphasized in the literature known as the 'critique of the liberal peace' in relation to international peace- and state-building (Chandler, 2010). The critiques of the liberal peace relate the failure of international peacebuilding practices, including those of the EU, to the prioritization of a 'governance as peace' approach (Richmond, 2005). In other words, peacebuilding fails as practices are dominated by technocratic interventions that seek to alter administrative and technical practices within the governance institutions of the target countries (Richmond, 2011). Neither of these perspectives, however, can account for the multifaceted ways in which the technical acts in diffuse ways and generates its own subjects, linkages, relationships and meanings (Hindess, 2005). Contrary to the realist approach, the governmentality analysis here highlights how EU civil society promotion in Israel and the Palestinian Authority is not immune to politics, and how the supposedly 'soft' instruments are indeed political, as they follow and promote particular understandings of good and proper conduct as regards peace and civil society. Similarly, while the critique of the liberal peace attributes the lack of success of international peace- and state-building interventions to the primacy of a technical approach, the governmentality approach attaches great importance to the technical. Accordingly, the supposedly neutral technical instruments in peace promotion are not free of power but produce significant political effects in terms of making particular understandings of peace visible, while concealing alternative visions, as well as empowering certain actors, forces and relationships at the expense of others (Munro, 2012). The concept of governmentality thus moves existing peace and conflict studies forward by problematizing the technical. It looks at the productive effects of technical instruments, such as benchmarking, graphs, tables and indicators, in terms of constituting new forms of subjects, relationships, behaviour and routines at the expense of others.

The governmentality approach advances existing critical peace studies also in its conception of freedom. The critiques of international peace promotion practices assert that external civil society promotion has the effect of curtailing freedom in the target countries. Studies point to the top-down and patronizing manner in which international actors, including the EU, restrict local actors and impose criteria that are in tension with democratic and emancipatory politics (Chandler, 2010; Kappler and Richmond, 2011). Foucault has a distinct vision of freedom that mirrors the productive effects of governmentality in simultaneously promoting and managing freedom. For Foucault, governance is not about the prevention of freedom but rather concerns the creation of the right kinds of free action and societal freedoms through administrative and technical devices that interpret, sort out and normalize individuals, behaviour and practices (Rose and Miller, 1992: Walters, 2012).

Furthermore, the governmentality approach offers an innovative angle into subjects, subject formation, and domestic and international network establishment in peace processes. It is the issue

of subject creation that forms the basis for Foucauldian conceptualization of civil society through diffuse and micro-level exercises of governance (Kurki, 2011). Peace studies point out how international peace- and state-building operations rest on intimate and for the most part non-transparent alliances between external peacebuilding forces and local elites, including civil society. They contend that international forces align with a group of domestic elites in conflict and post-conflict societies to carry out hegemonic projects that barely represent locally sensitive politics (Chandler, 2010; Kappler and Richmond, 2011). While this strand of literature examines the convergence of the local and the international around predetermined interests and common political agendas, governmentality is anti-essentialist in its understanding of subject creation and network formation. For Foucault, governmentality is the attempt to construct particular sorts of subjects and linkages through subtle rationalities and technologies (Kurki, 2011; Vrasti, 2013). Civil society is the ideal field for subject formation through the insertion of ideas, values, and behavioural patterns in order to realize the proper and appropriate kind of subjects and societal relations. Thus, civil society exemplifies 'a permanent matrix of political power' (Foucault, 2008: 303) and needs to be formed and continuously guided to become the sort of subjectivity that is capable of managing the self and others in relation to particular objectives and imaginations (Sending and Neumann, 2006). A Foucauldian perspective draws attention to subject formation through the logics and technical instruments of civil society promotion rather than examining elite constellations relying on pre-acquired identities and interests. It focuses on how specific perceptions of peace, peacebuilding, and civil society activity in peace matters come into being at the expense of others, and questions the political implications of international support for civil society in conflict and post-conflict societies as regards the production of subjects and network reinforcement.

Governing Israeli and Palestinian civil society

The EU's Partnership for Peace programme was established to support civil society engagement with the peace process in the Middle East. The programme operates under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and is administered jointly by the EU Technical Office to the West Bank and Gaza, the EU Delegation in Israel, and the EU Delegation in Jordan. The annual budget is €5–10 million, of which each funded project receives between €50,000 and €500,000. A formal call for proposals is announced every year or two, and nearly 20 projects are offered the partnership grant through each call. The selection of project applications is carried out by a committee made up of officials from each of the three EU representations.[2]

The PfP recognizes the primacy of peace negotiations between the conflict parties, who have the ultimate say as to the multifarious political, economic, and social issues relating to the peace process. It is more interested in activities that take place at deeper levels of societal relations and encounters (Partnership for Peace, 2005). The funded civil society activities encompass a plurality of organizations, including youth associations, research centres, education institutes, nongovernmental organizations, business groups, international foundations, and women's organizations. The themes of projects supported by the PfP range from democracy and human rights to youth empowerment, education, health, the environment, water management, socio-economic development, gender equality, and tourism. There are also a number of projects on Israeli occupation and settlement activities in the Palestinian territories. A closer look at the civil society exercises under the PfP indicates the prioritization of activity-based projects that target institutional capacities, personal skills, information exchange, recreational practices, and training. Even those projects dealing with occupation and settlement issues are about monitoring, data gathering, and reporting, and do not necessarily consist of political advocacy that would involve a political engagement with structural peace matters. The same is true for PfP-funded projects on health, where the emphasis is on

the training of Palestinian health personnel rather than questioning the macro-level obstacles to socio-economic development in the Palestinian Authority.

What does a Foucauldian approach tell us about the nature of the PfP in the context of Israeli–Palestinian peace efforts? To answer this question, I examine the visions and mundane instruments that the PfP relies on to support Israeli–Palestinian civil society. I apply an interpretive method of discourse analysis that draws upon the Foucauldian governmentality framework. The analysis has been conducted in two main stages. First, I have collected primary data from two sources: official EU documents and qualitative interviews. Concerning the former, the central criterion for text selection has been the relevance of documents for the Partnership. Thus, I have analysed the PfP's call for grant proposals and guidelines for applications for each year starting from 2005. I have also incorporated EU documents on the concept note, the logical framework and the evaluation grids that provide guidelines for the preparation and assessment of PfP applications. Text selection has also included EU official documents on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the peace process that contain direct references to the workings of the PfP. In addition, I have analysed several qualitative interviews that I conducted with EU officials in the European External Actions Service and the European Commission, and with local civil society actors. Second, I have examined the governmentality of the PfP through a three-step interpretive reading and analysis of the collected data. I have inspected the *imaginary* that underlies the PfP by looking at the specific definitions and understandings of civil society and peace and the manner in which the two are being linked. The next step of analysis concerns the *purpose* of governmentality: that is, the setting of goals to be achieved through the PfP and the identification of specific expectations about civil society activities and the kinds of projects to be promoted by the Partnership. Lastly, I have focused on the *nature* of governmentality in the PfP's mundane practices of selecting and evaluating grant applications and managing civil society projects that are funded through the instrument.

Imagining civil society: The creation of free subjects

The PfP envisions Israeli and Palestinian civil society actors as fulfilling three central functions in relation to the peace process. The first function is that civil society organizations are to act as intermediaries providing channels for communication between the two sides of the conflict. The second role is capacity-building in the development and implementation of policies, strategies, and practices towards peacebuilding (Partnership for Peace, 2005). The third function imagined for Israeli and Palestinian civil society actors is the utilization of individual and institutional energies, capacities, and networks so as to increase the life standards of the local population in particular areas of specialization. All these three roles point to the desire of governing civil society around depoliticized action. Civil society is not regarded as a sphere that has its own natural dynamics of action and interaction independent of external interference, as it is understood under classical liberalism (Walters, 2012). Instead, what lies at the heart of the PfP is a governmentality approach that relies on acting upon the conceptions and practices of civil society organizations (Kurki, 2011). The Partnership encourages civil society organizations to engage in peace promotion efforts through projects that leave out political agendas and pluralistic visions with the potential of transforming the conflict and its asymmetric and exclusionary conditions.

To start with, civil society organizations should operate as a bridge connecting Israeli and Palestinian societies. 'They facilitate communication between the two parties' by assisting their respective communities in establishing inter- and intrasocietal 'contacts' and peace 'dialogue'. The PfP sees civil society organizations as 'effective messengers for peace "keeping the door for dialogue open" even during times of crisis' (Partnership for Peace, 2005: 2). The imagination of civil society as a mediator and a messenger corresponds to the Foucauldian concept of governmentality

in that the PfP no longer considers the state but instead civil society actors as key to seeking channels for societal dialogue and intercommunal contacts in the context of the peace process. Civil society actors are to be active in 'broadening support in the Israeli and Arab societies' (Partnership for Peace, 2005: 2), and this requires them to foster the existing peace process by network formation and intercommunal rapprochement (Partnership for Peace, 2013).

The ongoing peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, along with European Community policies with respect to the conflict region, are to guide the practices of the entrepreneurial civil society (Partnership for Peace, 2012a,b). That is to say, civil society represents the domain for 'goal-oriented' subjects (re)producing particular political frameworks rather than being 'the sphere of ongoing consultation through which solidarity and practices of coexistence develop' (Tagma et al., 2013: 383). Put differently, the essential function that the PfP ascribes to Israeli and Palestinian civil society is the reinforcement of the existing domestic, regional, and international framework of the peace process through the creation of platforms for communication and the generation of possibilities for closer exchanges within and among Israeli and Palestinian societies (Partnership for Peace, 2005). This turns PfP civil society promotion into a depoliticizing activity that leaves structural peace politics undisrupted. The Partnership encourages civil society 'to help re-create the conditions for re-launching the peace process' in line with the principles set by the Oslo Accords and the Road Map that was adopted by the Middle East Quartet (Partnership for Peace, 2005: 3) and 'put the Peace Process back on track' (Partnership for Peace, 2005: 2).

Particularly significant in this regard is the primacy of the 'two-state solution' in the PfP agenda. The focus of a number of PfP projects on the socio-economic development of the Palestinians and cross-border activities between the two conflict parties confirms the prominence of such an understanding (Partnership for Peace, 2007, 2009). The preference for a two-state solution carries with it an act of depoliticization, as it pushes aside schemes for Israeli–Palestinian coexistence other than those proposed by the PfP. The point here is not to downplay the two-state solution. Rather, it is crucial to note that the framing of civil society in certain ways and not others has particular governmentality effects. On the one hand, in calling for projects that advocate the realization of the goal of achieving two independent states – namely, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine – the PfP inevitably rules out positions that do not necessarily argue for a two-state solution but offer alternative options, such as a binational state (Ghanem, 2009). On the other hand, as the joint Israeli–Palestinian–Jordanian project on 'The Regional Implications of the Establishment of a Palestinian State' exemplifies, the focus is primarily on 'the implications that the establishment of a Palestinian state would have on the relations between the two states and throughout the region' (Pedatzur, 2013: 2). Despite references to the PfP's commitment to the formation of 'an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign and viable State of Palestine' (Partnership for Peace, 2013: 4), civil society organizations are asked to disseminate and work towards the idea of the two-state solution and are not necessarily encouraged to put into operation politically ambitious agendas to negotiate fundamental questions about the nature of democracy, socio-economic development, and the institutions of a future Palestinian state. Accordingly, civil society is regarded less as a political force producing and agreeing upon the concepts, norms, means, and arrangements relating to statehood through deliberation and contestation than as an actor using its skills to support specific logics of governance, that is, existing peace politics.

Furthermore, the PfP considers Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations to be significant actors in providing capacity-building for individuals, public institutions, decisionmakers, and non-state actors at the local, national, and regional levels so that the latter obtain the necessary skills and tools to deal with the conflict and participate in reconciliation efforts (Partnership for Peace, 2009). Capacity-building is integral to the governmentality concept of promoting entrepreneurial individuals who are to be encouraged and reinforced to generate their human capital and

use it to shape self-conduct and the conduct of others in line with particular political aspirations and programmes (Kurki, 2011; Tagma et al., 2013). The PfP exemplifies this rationality by affirming the centrality of capacity-building in policy development and the selection of projects aimed at stimulating 'peace from below' (Partnership for Peace, 2007).

This is reflected in the identification of the priorities of the partnership. The PfP emphasizes the primacy of capacity-building measures undertaken by civil society actors, including 'people-to-people cooperation' on 'environment, health, water management, municipality issues, community development, business', as well as 'education programmes' addressing 'local communities, grass roots organisations or movements, local governments, official and unofficial opinion formers, leaders, public persons, students, media, youth and women's organisations, non-violent movements, etc.' (Partnership for Peace, 2012b: 5). Civil society organizations are to draw upon their expertise, networks, and knowledge to facilitate processes that 'are likely to have an impact on people's everyday lives' (Partnership for Peace, 2013: 4). The noteworthy aspect of capacity-building from a Foucauldian viewpoint of governmentality is that, while being illustrative of the distribution of governance tasks to the micro level, capacity-building carries with it the depoliticization of civil society action in the peace process. The PfP stresses the instrumental function of capacity-building in strengthening individual capacities and raising awareness in the areas of education, democracy, economy, health, and minority issues (Partnership for Peace, 2009). This, however, has the implication that capacity-building confines civil society function in the peace process to activity-based projects that circumvent macro-level political questions related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Capacity-building is a form of depoliticized civil society action that refrains from direct engagement with the structural hindrances to democratization, development, and socio-economic improvement in the conflict region.

Besides capacity-building, the PfP envisages a further function for civil society organizations with regard to service provision, namely, the 'empowerment' of the 'marginalized' (Partnership for Peace, 2005: 3–4). Like capacity-building, service provision promotes a non-politicized and activity-centred function for Israeli and Palestinian civil society that manages existing asymmetries of the peace process, whereby structural change through the transformation of conditions producing such asymmetries is left out. The objective of capacity-building is to reduce social and economic inequalities, alleviate the daily effects of discrimination, and remove impediments to the participation of minorities, women, farmers, and youth in local and national policymaking and policy-implementation processes (Partnership for Peace, 2009). Being the third central objective of the PfP, the civil society function in service provision is mainly stressed with respect to the 'local practical and strategic needs in terms of socio-economic development and quality of life of the most conflict affected communities' (Partnership for Peace, 2013: 6). The PfP underscores the contribution of civil society to the improvement of the 'quality of life of the most conflict affected communities' through the development and implementation of practical solutions to problems concerning 'environment, health, water, local governance, community and human development, business, social rights, etc.' (Partnership for Peace, 2013: 6).

Such a vision promotes not only a particular view of the state–civil society relationship, but also a specific form of peace. The expansion of civil society responsibilities in service provision implies the withdrawal of formal political institutions from governance fields that fall increasingly into the hands of entrepreneurial subjects materialized in civil society (Kurki, 2011). To give an example, the PfP supported EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) to carry out the Community Geographical Information System (CGIS) project that targeted Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian youth, with the aim that the latter would 'actively engage in some of the most pressing environmental problems in the region'. The PfP action aims at 'increasing awareness about shared water issues in Jordan, Israel and Palestine and creating shared strategies to address environmental

challenges' (FoEME, 2010: 6). Activities include data collection, videoing, and preparing reports by youth participants to reflect upon challenges facing water sources in the region. The CGIS project exemplifies the depoliticizing nature of the Partnership in two ways. First, depoliticization occurred, as the PfP has encouraged civil society actors to use their skills and connections to address local needs and problems in water management, but this also means that the responsibilities of Israeli and Palestinian governance institutions in providing such services have been largely pushed aside in PfP exercises. By transferring water management to the sphere of civil society, the PfP in fact has avoided pushing formal Israeli and Palestinian authorities towards fulfilling their tasks and obligations in this policy field. Second, the CGIS project has depoliticized through the act of individualization. It has stressed 'the environmental impact of human activities on the region's shared water resources'. Water management has turned into an individual responsibility 'to implement more sustainable and effective environmental policies' as a result of which 'the communities can act together to solve cross border water and health problems' (FoEME, 2010: 7). The practice of individualization empties water management – a vitally important issue in the context of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict – of its political content. The PfP individual project support in water management and the regional governance of water resources demonstrates the encouragement of people's participation in negotiating peace issues, yet it distances the topic at the same time from the realm of high politics and debates over Israel's control of Palestinian natural resources as an occupying power and the effects of the occupation on the daily transfer of clean, safe, and sufficient water to the Palestinian side (Trottier, 2007).

Technologies of project application and project selection

The governmentality approach exposes two central categories of governmentality technologies within PfP practices promoting Israeli and Palestinian civil society involvement in peacebuilding. These are the technologies of project application and project selection by means of which the PfP's visions as to how civil society should operate in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process are implemented through tangible instruments. What is common to these technologies is that they not only express how civil society is to understand and execute its utility in peacebuilding, but also manage, make visible, empower, and integrate visions, exercises, and forces for the purpose of implementing PfP objectives and strategies on site.

Technologies of project application

The technologies of project application concern the formalized application procedure that Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations undergo in order to be considered for PfP funding. This happens through a decentralized two-step procedure (the submission of a concept note followed by a full application) administered by EU delegations in partner countries (Partnership for Peace, 2005, 2013). The PfP application practices are technologies of governmentality, for they put into practice market values of self-management, competition, and entrepreneurship so as to form behaviour in line with the PfP envisagement of civil society function in the peace process.

The PfP rests on the 'calculative technology' of 'inscription' that is about the insertion of economic rationality from 'above' into the thoughts and practices of civil society organizations interested in PfP funding by way of asking them to record and present information pursuant to particular norms and methods and subjecting these data to particular ways of assessment, calculation, and direction by a network of bureaucratic authorities, experts, and relevant calculation centres (Rose and Miller, 1992: 185–187). Inscription through the PfP works as grant applicants interpret their resources, skills, and capabilities, determine their goals and agendas, and construe their actions

according to the normative schemes and methodologies identified by the partnership instrument. Grant applicants act as entrepreneurial and self-managing subjects through their registration in PADOR, which is an online database in which they can open a profile to present information about their institutional design, administrative structure, and financial situation, thereby rendering themselves visible to the outside for evaluation of eligibility, selection, and contact (European Commission, 2008).

The 'concept note', which is a general requirement for civil society organizations to submit to the PfP prior to the full grant application, also introduces an economic rationality of inscription. It urges the candidates to understand the scope of their competitiveness and to represent the level of their eligibility for funding through a set of standards and tools (the 'relevance', 'effectiveness', and possible 'results' of the project) that are determined by the PfP and referred to in practices of categorizing, differentiating, and assessing the grant applicants (Partnership for Peace, 2012a: 19–20). Similarly, the preparation of grant proposals on the basis of the PfP-defined eligibility criteria rests on inscription (European Commission, 2007). In order to compete for funding and prove their self-management and entrepreneurship qualities, the applicants adopt PfP standards, guidelines, and routines. They devise the content of their proposals according to PfP 'objectives', including 'target groups' and 'final beneficiaries' prioritized by the partnership; check and demonstrate their 'experience' through fixed instructions about their finances, area and theme expertise, and organizational competences; and evaluate the 'effectiveness' of their projects through quantifiable standards of duration, activities, and outputs signifying desirable and necessary civil society exercise in the visions of the Partnership (Partnership for Peace, 2012b: 15–17).

Thus, the PfP moves behaviour towards the fulfilment of particular political objectives, since Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations need to accept the 'rules of the game' in order to get access to the Partnership's funding opportunities. The PfP is open to those who are willing to take on the functions foreseen for them and show readiness to be sorted out and calculated within the parameters set by the partnership instrument. This is clearly manifested in the requirement that grant applicants are to address at least one priority area of the PfP and to spell out their motivation to help attain the goals of the partnership instrument (Partnership for Peace, 2005, 2012a, 2013). The governmental nature of the eligibility criteria relates to its depoliticization of civil society action through the calculative technique of inscription (Methmann, 2013: 82). The technologies of application depoliticize civil society function in the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, for they grant a particular visibility to activities that manage the ongoing power asymmetries and tensions integral to the conflict. The eligibility criteria inevitably steer grant applicants to develop proposals in which they construe depoliticized roles in Israeli–Palestinian reconciliation efforts. These include capacity-building for the local communities, as well as service provision concentrating on the socio-economic development of the two communities through the organization of training activities on business, health and water management, the monitoring of local and cross-border practices in personal movement and property matters, and the creation of (dialogue) groups on sports, the environment, and tourism.[3]

To give an example, the PfP supports a project carried out by the Peres Center, an Israeli civil society organization, that seeks to augment business relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority by offering Palestinian companies capacity-building programmes in the areas of 'design', 'packaging', and 'logistics'.[4] This project is demonstrative of the governmentality attempt to build capacities through educational programmes and empowerment activities designed to produce particular political forms and construct certain visions and activities (Joseph, 2010). In other words, it seeks to foster the personal skills and institutional capacities of Palestinians so as 'to maximize the market entry potential of Palestinian products and their producers' and encourage 'participation in leading Israeli exhibitions which both provide a forum for networking with

Israel's leading companies as well as introducing Palestinian companies and products to the Israeli consumers'.[5]

What is interesting here is that, through its emphasis on capacity-building, the PfP empties peacebuilding of its political content, as it manages the symptoms of the conflict instead of transforming conditions to eliminate the asymmetries, tensions, and contradictions stemming from structural peace politics. The PfP project run by the Peres Center highlights procedural adjustments and regulatory improvements when defining the task of civil society in the advancement of regional business relations, yet structural matters pertaining to social and economic development in the conflict region remain invisible, including Israeli occupation and settlement activities in the Palestinian territories and the diverse restrictions Israel puts on Palestinian personal movement and trade activities. The PfP civil society promotion leaves untouched the relationship between domestic and regional dynamics of peace, and reduces problems of political and socio-economic development of the Palestinians to individual skills and institutional capacities.

Technologies of selection

The PfP entails a calculative regime of selection shaped by governmentality techniques of defining, classifying, differentiating, and choosing local partners. The evaluation criteria for the concept note which concentrates on the 'relevance' and 'design' of the grant proposals, and the 'evaluation grid' for full applications which looks at the 'financial and operational capacity' of the applicants, along with the 'relevance', 'effectiveness and feasibility', 'sustainability', and 'budget and cost-effectiveness' of the suggested projects, are power instruments operating in this direction (Partnership for Peace, 2012b: 16–17). They are utilized as power techniques towards the creation of calculable subjects with particular attributes in terms of resources, institutional capabilities, objectives, and practices (Dean, 1999; Munro, 2012). The evaluation grid, for instance, exposes grant applicants to a meticulous practice of grading and checks their thematic and organizational eligibility for the Partnership. It quantifies the organizations and their proposals and categorizes their capabilities, skills, and proposals through a points-based system within which each civil society attribute is given a score between one (minimum) and five (maximum) (Partnership for Peace, 2012a: 18–19).

The remarkable aspect about the calculative method of selection from a governmentality perspective is its utilization of the method of 'commensuration'. Commensuration stands for the practice of rendering individuals, objects, spaces, levels, and time periods 'comparable' by inventing 'common reference' points that help establish 'artificial' similarities, linkages, and distinctions (Methmann, 2013: 79–80). Within the PfP, the evaluation criteria and the evaluation grid are examples of commensuration. The priority themes set in the call for proposals, as discussed earlier, and the 'financial and operational capability' criteria in the evaluation of full applications illustrate how calculation renders organizations and activities governable. The usage of financial and operational eligibility serves the promotion of self-managing and self-sufficient subjects displaying 'sufficient experience of project management', 'sufficient technical expertise', 'sufficient management capacity', and 'stable and sufficient sources of finance' (Partnership for Peace, 2012b: 16). Yet the financial and operational criteria are not neutral categories for assessing and promoting Israeli and Palestinian civil society resources and capabilities. Instead, they are power technologies that translate civil society organizations into comparable entities with concomitant practices of illumination, association, and inclusion, as well as concealment, dissociation, and exclusion.

For instance, it is through the financial and operational capability criteria that the PfP qualifies in its selection procedures those individuals who are favourable to the principles of the Partnership. Commensuration based on financial and operational criteria enables the PfP to legitimize the aggregation of civil society organizations showing quantitative indicators of professionalism in

terms of activity, finances, competences, expertise, and management. This, accompanied by the relevance criteria, becomes an act of governing Israeli–Palestinian civil society participation in peace matters and represents a way of demarcating the borders of the Partnership by restricting funding opportunities to 'elite' civil society that is able to demonstrate research activity and institutional behaviour towards the realization of the PfP's ends.[6]

In this way, commensuration has 'depoliticizing' effects (Methmann, 2013: 80–81) in terms of PfP civil society promotion. On the one hand, the issue of thematic relevance as a measurement tool for determining eligibility is supportive of civil society function that praises activity-based practices while escaping from structure-oriented change. It leaves out civil society actors who are or might be interested in cooperating with the PfP but do not necessarily engage in network formation, capacity-building, and service-provision activities as anticipated by the Partnership.[7] This, as Kurki (2011) convincingly shows in relation to the EU democracy promotion through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, culminates in the dismissal of organizations with agendas that do not fit with the activity-centred orientation of EU civil society promotion. The PfP's requirement for grant applicants to prove their proposals' 'synergy' with and relevance for the objectives of the Partnership (Partnership for Peace, 2013: 6) disregards Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations that work in topics and policy fields devoted to political advocacy with respect to political rights and fundamental freedoms, minority issues and social protection, along with social engineering exercises.[8] The technologies of selection are particularly challenging for civil society organizations whose practices are driven by local realities of occupation, closures, restrictions, poverty, fragile democratic institutions, and social underdevelopment.[9] Through their reliance on the calculative technique of commensuration, the eligibility criteria evade the structural framework in which Israeli and Palestinian civil society activities take form and overlook the crux of the problem related to macro-level politics.

On the other hand, there is barely any resemblance between organizations continuing their activities under occupation and severe difficulties in terms of finances and physical mobility, on the one hand, and those members of the civil society with relatively better chances of contact with the PfP and enhanced linguistic capacities and financial resources, on the other.[10] Commensuration connects individuals that are identical regarding activities and qualities.[11] This, however, also means that civil society promotion offers uneven prospects for the two sides and further contributes to the unequal standing of Palestinian actors when it comes to networking with and benefitting from international donor institutions. Furthermore, the financial and operational capability requirement is at odds with representational and pluralist civil society action, as it limits from the very beginning the entry of non-professional groups into EU funding opportunities (Kurki, 2011). The professionalism criteria result in the allocation of PfP funds to civil society groups with international networks and close linkages established with the PfP through regular visits to and contacts with EU institutions.[12] Organizations lacking the quantitative measures of professionalism demanded for PfP funding remain for the most part outside.[13] For instance, Palestinian local groupings and communities based on Islamic traditions (both in terms of visions and in relation to their manner of functioning) operate at the local level in ways akin to civil society exercises in Europe, but do not have the institutional design and processes required to be qualified as 'professional' (Pace, 2010: 622). Such Islamic models of civil society are largely absent from the PfP.

Conclusion

The PfP is a good illustration of how EU involvement with Israelis and Palestinians rests on the invigoration of peace from below. The Partnership exemplifies the EU's attempt to encourage

and reinforce Israeli and Palestinian civil society engagement with peace matters, yet the programme is indicative of a governmentality strategy of impelling actions and interactions around particular visions of peace and civil society. The Foucauldian approach employed here underscores the powerful effects of the technical in supporting civil society activities and exchanges around depoliticized activities. In this respect, the governmentality approach tells a different story than past research that disregards technical instruments as being soft and insignificant tools. The PfP illustrates that the technical is decisive, as the practical instruments of definition, project application, and selection contribute to the guidance of Israeli and Palestinian civil society activities towards practices that avoid engagement with important political questions related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. By making funding conditional on particular priorities and objectives, the PfP unavoidably rules out civil society participation in large-scale political and legal reforms, institutional changes, and normative ordering towards the eradication of rising hostilities, armed conflict, and subjugation. This concerns both Israeli and Palestinian domestic politics and regional dimensions of the peace process. The PfP thus favours a vision of peace that is concerned with governing civil society activities within a depoliticized framework rather than backing up civil society action with the potential and objective of altering the existing national and regional status quo conditions characterizing the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Civil society is seen less as a force towards structural change and more as a sphere of activity-based and non-transformative agendas.

There are two further observations that follow from the governmentality approach. First, as the PfP's support for civil society activities increasingly concentrates on capacity-building, network formation, and service provision, there is a distancing of the EU from high-level peace diplomacy. By attributing to civil society tasks and responsibilities that are by their nature under the authority of public institutions, such as the provision of clean water, the PfP, in a sense, culminates in the externalization of peace promotion *beyond* the central political-bureaucratic apparatuses of the Israeli state and the Palestinian Authority. The PfP produces and empowers civil society actors that embrace and are ready to embrace the functions envisaged for them, yet this also implies a diversion of attention from a transformative vision of conflict resolution that would require an assertive and ambitious engagement of the EU with macro-level peace politics with a view to fostering structural change.

Second, since the PfP disregards non-activity-based and non-entrepreneurial civil society action, the Partnership instrument not only dismisses broader societal consensus on peace matters, but also fails to engage with wider segments of Israeli and Palestinian societies. Transformative peace is eroded, as the technical has the depoliticizing effect of leaving out diverse debates over peace, statehood, and other peace-related matters. EU civil society support activities increasingly focus on practices that operate within and reinforce existing peace politics, and this brings about the exclusion of political agendas and advocacy projects that propose ambitious visions of peace and offer ideas for structural change. For instance, Islam is fundamental to Palestinian societal life and shapes to a significant extent the various political debates on peace negotiations with Israel (Mullin, 2010; Milton-Edwards, 2013) and statehood, including democracy (Pace, 2010). Similarly, there are a number of Israeli civil society organizations having non-professional institutional structures and support positions that are not necessarily hostile to peace but do not show compliance with the priorities and goals of EU grants, such as conservative groups and non-professional organizations (Pardo and Peters, 2012). With its technical tools of definition, application, and selection, the PfP bypasses these local values, concerns, and expectations, and turns into a depoliticizing instrument that reproduces domestic and regional power asymmetries and concomitant conditions of isolation, exclusion, and inequality.

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Notes

1. Given the objectives and scope of this article, the empirical examination includes only Palestinian and Israeli civil society, while Jordanian civil society organizations are only analysed if they have any formal cooperation with the other two participants of the partnership instrument.
2. See http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=11&id_type=10 (accessed 12 September 2013).
3. Interview with local civil society organization, February 2013; see also Partnership for Peace (2013).
4. See http://www.peres-center.org/news_jun_2012_partners_peace (accessed 19 October 2013).
5. See http://www.peres-center.org/news_jun_2012_partners_peace (accessed 19 October 2013).
6. Interview with local civil society organization, February 2013.
7. Interview with local civil society organization, October 2012.
8. Interviews with local civil society organizations, October 2012 and February 2013.
9. Interview with local civil society organization, October 2012.
10. Interview with local civil society organization, February 2013.
11. Interview with official of the European External Actions Service, September 2011.
12. Interview with local civil society organization, February 2013.
13. Interview with local civil society organization, October 2012.

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Beste İşleyen is a postdoctoral researcher in the Amsterdam Centre for Contemporary European Studies, University of Amsterdam. She received her PhD in political science from the University of Tübingen in 2014. She is currently working on the European Union and security governance in the Southern Mediterranean. Her latest publication is 'The European Union and neoliberal governmentality: Twinning in Tunisia and Egypt', published (online first) by the *European Journal of International Relations*.