Review Article

Reflections on Bordering, Micropolitics and Everyday Life in Peacebuilding Processes: Revisiting the Lingering Legacy of the 1949 Armistice Agreements

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This article analyzes the United Nations mediated 1949 Armistice Agreements that initially drew the borders of the state of Israel and continue to be at the center of contentions concerning those boundaries. We highlight the potential of a micropolitics of peace that engages with the material effects of conflict and bordering in everyday life. We argue that while such interventions alone may not be sufficient to address the complex dimensions of an ongoing conflict comprehensively, they are a tool for challenging the manifestations of state power continuously reinforcing identities sustaining discord, especially around borders, and a necessary step for building peace. We review the diplomatic process that led to the 1949 Agreements to acknowledge their abiding significance as well as their limits. We employ the contributions of the local turn in peacebuilding scholarship and the borderlands and borderscapes literature to explore how strategies of peace-making may occur through everyday engagements. We focus particularly on how autoethnography has explored such encounters along conflict borders in East Jerusalem. We conclude by highlighting emerging quantum social science scholarship and Massumi's affect theory to underscore the abiding political relevance of micro-practices of emotional recognition and narrative shifting for building peace (Barad 2007; brown 2017; Massumi 2002; Zanotti 2018).

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Note to Readers

The present (October 2023) tragic conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza has only reenforced our view that vital though international agreements may be, they are no substitute for micro-scale interventions and interactions for the long-term prospects for peace in this troubled region. Ultimately, peace will be attained only with the development of norms that support and sustain it and those, while not exclusively, are surely created and maintained when population groups interact and have opportunities to understand the needs, interests and perspectives of others affected by common border and territorial quandaries.

 doi.org/10.32388/HoXJGO

Introduction, Analytical Aims and Relevant Literature

The United Nations (UN) mediated the Armistice Agreements signed in 1949 between Israel and Egypt, Jordan (and as proxy, Iraq), Lebanon and Syria after months of conflict in Palestine triggered by the end of the British Mandate and formation of the State of Israel. However, the parties to the conflict attributed alternate political meanings to the Agreements that have never been formally resolved, and, as a result, those differences continue to foment contention among the countries involved. We use the Armistice Agreements as our touchstone and propose to 'shift the scale' for imagining peacebuilding from the macropolitics of diplomacy and mapping, to a micropolitics that examines closely the consequences that conflict and bordering produce on the landscape, and that seeks to address the emotions and epistemic claims of those affected by those outcomes. Feminist political geographer Lucy Jarosz (2011) has argued that scale is key in defining sociopolitical issues and their solutions. As she has observed, 'scale is one way of representing reality in the service of sought-after political and economic intervention, thereby legitimating, or challenging dominant representations or commonly accepted interpretations' (120). We seek to change the scale for assessing bordering processes and their relevance for conflict resolution from the macro, i.e., diplomatic initiatives and formal state agreements, to the micro. We employ the local and everyday turn in peacebuilding as well as borderscapes and borderlands scholarship, to contend that borders are not separation lines, but instead assemblages where practices of state power, the differential conduct of everyday life and practices of resistance converge. We highlight Löwenheim's (2014) autoethnography of his life along a share of the Armistice border to explore illustratively how the boundary that resulted from the Agreements has become the space around which state practices have since shaped the land, fostered opposing narratives of identity and configured security and everyday life for Israeli and Palestinians differentially along conflict borders in East Jerusalem.

The local turn in peacebuilding scholarship has examined the limitation of liberal international peacebuilding strategies and conceptualized alternative possibilities for 'local' political engagement (Ljungkvist and Jarstad, 2021). For these analysts the local is not simply an entity, but also a concept that highlights the limits of peacebuilding as a normative institutional project. Hughes et al. (2015), for example, have argued that focusing on the 'local' offers avenues for thinking differently 'about the relationship between power, agency and freedom' (819). In this view, the 'local' is not a geography category, but a highly contested term, 'inherently relational, defined through its relationship to other political scales, primarily the national and the global' (818). This scholarship offers, 'new opportunities for examining "the local" as the product of personal experience rather than through a cartographic gaze-as a lived experience that connects different spatial and temporal points and networks of individual and human agency' (821). Richmond (2010) has likewise explored the complexity of the concept of peacebuilding and problematized the essentializing and colonial gaze of dominant international doctrines (such as, for example, the Responsibility to Protect), while bringing to the foreground the everyday or quotidian processes of building peace. He has argued that conflict resolution initiatives, 'have been diverted away from individual and community conditions of peace in the context of the international and the local, to sovereign peaces organised around states and their territories' (667). Further to this analytical thrust, Richmond has advocated for research approaches that neither essentialize 'the local' or idealize the state as tools for addressing conflicts, but instead explore how 'hybrid everyday agencies renegotiate the liberal peace' (672). Meanwhile and relatedly, Ware et al. (2014) have suggested that international peacebuilding too often stops when 'negative peace,' i.e., the absence of active conflict, is achieved. Instead, they have

argued, peace is something to be cultivated through conflict transformation and that attaining that possibility requires 'reforming the political, economic and legal system' (14).

We rely on this body of literature to explore possibilities of conflict amelioration beyond institutional changes and strive to highlight languages and identities as those have been inscribed on the land, people's bodies, and ways of knowing that result in enduring tensions. More precisely, we explore the possibilities for making peace that emerge through micropolitics and autoethnography concerning an internationally crafted artifact, the Jerusalem Green Line. More broadly we question international strategies of peacebuilding that focus on tracing borders and establishing (temporary) 'negative peace' and contend instead that would-be peacebuilders must pay close attention to how the discourses of war become part of identities and landscapes and thereby shape the thinking and imagined possibilities, that is, the everyday lives of those they touch.

The borderscape and borderlands literature has challenged simplistic understandings of borders as separation lines. Appadurai's concept of borderscapes, for example, recognizes that boundaries are not simply dividing lines, but complex assemblages and sites of emergent constructions of 'novel (geo) political imaginations, social and spatial imaginaries and cultural images' (Appadurai, cited in Brambella et al. 2015, 2). For Anzaldua and Keating (2015), the concept of the borderland captures the personal dimension entangled with borders:

> In fact, the Borderlands are physically present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (19)

Laine (2016) has argued that borders are not merely political state-led creations. Instead, 'state borders are complex and dynamic multi-scalar entities that have different symbolic and material forms maintained by a multiplicity of bordering processes and practices' (466). As we have argued elsewhere (deleted for review), establishing boundaries (physical, virtual or administrative) elicits specific social relations practices, but does not ensure solutions to the underlying conflicts that spurred their creation.

As an example, Mandour (2013) has analyzed today's Israeli Separation Wall, a non-linear and growing barrier located in the West Bank that runs for more than 700 kilometers and which follows the Armistice Green Line along a share of its length. He has argued that the wall, also called a 'security fence', justified by Israel on the basis of a continuing and exceptional situation of insecurity, does not function mainly as a 'border' separating distinct territories, but as a device for controlling population movements, access to water sources and commercial transactions. It does not establish absolute divisions, but instead confers different degrees of access to petitioners based on Israeli-determined 'degrees of citizenship' (Mandour 2013). Thus, the Separation Wall represents the transformation of an architectonic figure of division (the wall) into a strategy to employ a variety of techniques to oversee, monitor and control population (especially, Palestinian) movements.

Transnational feminists, Women of Color feminists, decolonial theorists, and queer theorists have conceived of borders as spaces of life, imagination, and contradiction, and as places from which affected populations may forge resistance (Anzaldúa and Keating 2018; Davis 2016; Hernandez 2018; Icaza 2017). Borders are processual artifacts that embody efforts to construct state identities, and that are deeply entangled with the everyday life and emotions of the people who live near

them. They are assemblages where space and place bear the marks of politics, both of state building and of the contestation and conflict such practices elicit.

In the meantime, quantum social theorists have provided tools for conceptualizing micro practices of contestation and the how they may entail political effects (Barad 2007; Zanotti 2018). Quantum ontologies view the world as entangled and non-deterministic instead of atomistic and governed by linear relations of causality, as in Newtonian physics. For these scholars, ontologies and epistemologies are not separate. Ways of knowing do not leave reality untouched, but are instead performative, and therefore politically relevant. Drawing on quantum thinking, Karen Barad (2007), for example, has argued that causality is not linear, but diffractive. In other words, political agency produces actions that may either amplify or diminish other causal forces. In this sense, small actions may have important consequences.

By pointing to the effects individuals inevitably produce in the places they inhabit, entangled ontologies require radical assumption of responsibility. Relying on Barad and Foucault, Zanotti (2018) has contended that reimagining the world as entangled sustains and supports the political relevance of everyday practices and the need for contextual consideration and assessment when adjudicating ethical and political action. Relatedly, she has argued that, for Foucault, ethos is a practice of discovering possibilities for things being different from what they are. Parrēsia, or the constant and reflexive questioning of practices of power, is a political and ethical practice. While not determining results, micropolitical initiatives of interrogation and contestation foster ways of 'knowing differently', challenge established narratives and thereby mediate political outcomes and diffractively produce important effects. Black feminist theorist adrienne maree brown (2017) has developed one exemplar of such a conceptualization of agency and ethics that she has labeled, 'emergent strategy'. Emergent strategy is a holistic micropolitical ethical practice that requires examining constituent parts as well as the whole and exposing and exploring the connective-tissue among them. Brown has described emergent strategy as fractal, adaptive, decentralized, non-linear and iterative, resilient, and oriented to opening possibilities.

In the meantime, affect theory has broadened what should be considered relevant political interventions. Brian Massumi (2002) has argued that human and political actions and practices are not only mental and rational, but also affective. For Massumi, 'affect exceeds individuality. It resides in, and circulates within, material bodies. As he has observed, "the impersonal and trans-individual dimensions of affect unsettle the notion of subject-centeredness, one that is traditionally seen as ontologically detached from matter' (2002, 10). Put differently, as individuals relate to the world and seek to shape it, that world designs them back (Escobar 2018). This view resonates with quantum social theorists' position that matter matters; it is not inert or incapable of producing change. Furthermore, that which is in process and indeterminate has ontological priority. That is, what-is 'is back formed from potential unfolding. But once it is formed, it also effectively feeds in' (Massumi 2002, 9). Considered in these terms, landscapes and borders are continuously shaped by the consequences of the interventions aimed at, and the emotions embedded within, them. Thus, micropolitical investigations can bring to light what has otherwise been obscured in bordering and thereby recognize the different political and emotional entanglements with the areas that have been, and are, subject to such processes. Bordering processes that shape the landscape are deeply related to the formation and maintenance of conflict identities. In consequence, scrutinizing such interventions can reveal possibilities for peace that otherwise would remain unexplored.

We note this shift in scholarship bears some resemblance to John Paul Lederach's (2003, 2014) conflict transformation construct. Lederach has called on scholars and diplomats alike to uncover the web of relationships that together constitute the context for continuing conflict. The scholars on whom we rely also suggest the necessity of such a turn. Both perspectives also demand an epistemic reorientation on the part of those in conflict, a dimension that requires a radical reordering of subjectivities. Lederach has long contended facilitators can encourage and guide such efforts. He has also pointed to the multi-level character of conflicts. We are here most interested in the personal and structural dimensions, in Lederach's formulation, of the persisting conflict addressed in the 1949 Agreements.

Based upon these insights into re-theorizing political agency, we contend that peacekeeping as a project must pay attention to the inscriptions of conflict identities on landscapes and include political imaginaries and emotions as key tools for contesting such identities. We showcase Löwenheim's (2014) autoethnographic work to explore the possibilities of peacemaking beyond diplomacy to highlight the need to rethink and recast the suppositions on which much formal diplomatic peacebuilding and conflict amelioration continues to be predicated. Löwenheim lives and works in East Jerusalem and his daily bicycle commute to his office takes him along the Israeli seam line (border wall demarcation), a frequently shifting territorial boundary characterized by physical barriers and military checkpoints. His work highlights the inherent limits of peacemaking by international organizations and statist diplomacy and invites its readers to examine peacebuilding as a continuing micropolitical engagement of illuminating, via close investigation, the emotions, pain, and life stories that are embedded in, and obscured by, bordering practices.

Seen through this lens, the Armistice Agreements stand as continuing testimony to the imperative not to consider diplomatic initiatives as the end goal of peacebuilders. Instead, these initiatives open the space both for the exertion and manifestation of state power and the redeployment of war narratives and identities, as well as for initiatives aimed at unveiling and contesting it. Löwenheim's everyday rides along the East Jerusalem 'border' constitute a micropolitical practice of peacebuilding. His daily journeys have encouraged him to question the landscape that both conflict and peacebuilding through bordering have produced in that space, the different access to it enjoyed by Israelis and Palestinians, as well as their diverging narratives and emotional ties concerning it.

An Overview of the 1949 Armistice Agreements: Diplomatic Action in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict or How a Temporary Initiative Became a Lodestone

We turn next to a brief profile of how the Agreements came about that at once suggests their abiding significance and reveals why those and later similar nationalist pacts have not created an Arab-Israeli peace and look increasingly unlikely to do so. The international community rightly recognized the 1949 Armistice Agreements as an important achievement. The Agreements represented an effort to end hostilities among those nations and a first step by the newly created State of Israel to secure acknowledgment of its existence by four of its neighboring nations. However, while attaining an end to violence in the former Mandate, the Agreements did not address the underlying causes of the conflict in Palestine nor were they designed to do so, as their Nobel Prize winning peace negotiator, Ralph Bunche, observed. In his Nobel Prize acceptance address, awarded in 1950 to honor his work on the Armistice Agreements, Bunche highlighted both the value and the limitations of diplomatic agreements and more broadly of the United Nations as an organization entrusted with making and

preserving peace (Ben-Dror 2019). While the United Nations may assist in limiting political violence, peace can only result from the willingness of the disputing parties to engage in processes that result in mutual recognition and understanding. These may be encouraged and facilitated, but they cannot be determined or ordained by diplomatic pacts or nationally determined boundaries. As Bunche (1950) noted,

> In the final analysis, the acid test of a genuine will to peace is the willingness of disputing parties to expose their differences to the peaceful processes of the United Nations and to the bar of international public opinion which the United Nations reflects. ...
>
> It is worthy of emphasis that the United Nations exists not merely to preserve the peace but also to make change—even radical change—possible without violent upheaval. The United Nations ... seeks a more secure world, [in which]. ... the rights of those who at any given time may be in the minority—whether for reasons of race, religion, or ideology—are as important as those of the majority, and the minorities must enjoy the same respect and protection. (para. 49)

With this background in mind, we briefly outline the UN's involvement in the development of the Armistice Agreements. On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations recommended the partition of Palestine into two independent States, Arab and Israeli respectively, with Jerusalem placed under the aegis of an international regime assigned a special status, but not accorded sovereignty. The proposal stipulated that the new states and the specific international governance arrangement for Jerusalem would become effective two months after the evacuation of the armed forces of the Mandatory Power, the United Kingdom (UK), but no later than 1 October 1948.

Nissim Bar-Yaacov (1967) has summarized the United Nations 1947 plan for the territory:

> The Assembly's partition plan broadly reflected the intricate geographical distribution of the Arab and Jewish populations in the region at the time. As a consequence, Palestine was divided into six sectors—three Arab and three Jewish—in a chess board-like arrangement. Two points of intersection ensured the territorial continuity of the Arab State sectors. (14)

The General Assembly also created the United Nations Palestine Commission on November 29, 1947. In his posthumously published memoir, Bernadotte argued that the Commission was established, 'in light of the fact that the Secretary of the Arab League had warned the leading statesmen of Great Britain, the United States and other countries at an early stage that a partition of Palestine was certain to lead to war' (1951, 12). The entity was charged with administering the areas evacuated by the United Kingdom in the period between the termination of that nation's Mandate and establishment of the two proposed States.

The Assembly's goals for this effort were never attained. In consequence, Security Council members proposed creating The Truce Commission for Palestine on April 23,1948, to assist it, via mediation, with realizing its aims. The General Assembly convened in a special session between April 16and May 16, 1948, to address the future of Palestine at the close of which it formally embraced the Council's stance and established the Office of the United Nations Mediator on Palestine on May 14, 1948, to promote a peaceful adjustment of the future situation in the region in cooperation with the Truce Commission (The Avalon Project 2020). On May 20, 1948, just six days after the formal establishment of Israel, the Security Council

unanimously appointed Bernadotte Special Mediator, the first in the UN's history. United Nations Secretary-General Lie also asked Bunche, an African American and veteran of the world body's Trusteeship Council, to assist Bernadotte as his Chief Representative. Bunche was involved in all subsequent efforts to mediate the conflict occasioned by Israel's founding.

Meanwhile, fighting increased as the date for the United Kingdom's withdrawal drew near. The Security Council's members instructed Bernadotte and the Truce Commission to supervise observance of its call for a ceasefire among the various parties. The affected Arab States and Israel accepted the Council's resolution and the resulting break in fighting, usually referenced as the 'first truce', began on June 11, 1948.

Bernadotte set to work to create a more enduring agreement. During the course of the next four months, working with Bunche, he proposed two plans to resolve the ongoing conflict in Palestine: the Bernadotte Plan of June 28, 1948, and a revision of that effort on September 16. All of the parties involved rejected the mediator's initial design, especially its proposed changes in national divisions. In response, Bernadotte offered a second plan that shifted the proposed borders of the Arab and Jewish territories and placed Jerusalem under United Nations control. As before, this proposal emphasized the rights of displaced Arabs to return to their pre-conflict homes.

After members of a Zionist terrorist group assassinated Bernadotte and French UN Observer André Serot on September 17, 1948, the Security Council asked Bunche to assume full authority for the Palestine Mission (Marton 1994). In the meantime, fighting between Israeli and Egyptian forces in Palestine resumed, with Israel gaining new territory throughout the summer of 1948. As a result, the General Assembly abandoned the (second) Bernadotte Plan and the Security Council, in a resolution drafted by Bunche, demanded that the parties in the conflict reach an armistice through negotiations. However, as Beittenmiller has observed,

> Bunche soon encountered the limits of his new role as mediator. Alongside his ongoing efforts to mediate an armistice agreement, Bunche faced an increasingly troubling Palestinian refugee problem. It became immediately evident that the UN administrative machinery dedicated to prospective relief and resettlement was 'both inappropriate and inadequate' to the scale of this new challenge, resulting in 'gross inefficiency and wastefulness.' The refugee problem exposed the limits of the Mediator's authority, and the limits of UN efforts to protect the rights of an increasingly large number of displaced Arabs. (2015, 9)

Armed clashes between Israel and the involved Arab nations continued in the fall of 1948, especially in the Negev desert. Nevertheless, Bunche took advantage of diplomatic pressure provided by international players, including the United States, to encourage negotiations and he submitted a fresh proposal to Egypt and Israel that ultimately was successful. Israel too accepted his suggestion, which was included as Article 8 of what was to become a bi-lateral Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement.

The Security Council formally endorsed Bunche's plan on November 16, 1948. Israeli officials strongly objected to both the boundary shift and the Council's endorsement as a 'sacrifice of its most fundamental national interests' (United Nations 1948). Thereafter, hostilities resumed, and Israel once again prevailed. Egyptian forces departed the western Negev and Israel occupied a portion of the Sinai. By the first days of 1949, the surrounded and defeated Egyptian forces pressed for a ceasefire and renewed talks under UN auspices (Shlaim 2014).

Bunche opened what would become known as the Armistice Agreement talks at Rhodes, Greece on January 13, 1949, by remarking:

> We are not holding a peace conference here. We are not expecting to settle the complicated political issues which bedevil this problem and to which the Conciliation Commission will soon direct its attention. There is a great and hopeful significance in your very presence here and in your willingness to sit down together and attempt to find a basis of agreement for armistice in the conflict between the armed forces of the governments which you represent. (Pappé 1992, 178)

The parties met at Rhodes for the remainder of January and well into February. After lengthy negotiations, the Armistice accorded Israel control of approximately three-quarters of the original post-1948 British Mandate. The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and Mixed Armistice Commissions have supervised the armistice lines established in Rhodes, known thereafter as the Green Line, since (UNTSO 1948). A follow-up Tripartite Declaration among the United States, Great Britain and France, negotiated in 1950, pledged that those countries would take such actions as necessary within and outside the United Nations to prevent violations of the national frontiers or armistice lines established by the 1949 accords (Caplan 1997).

While the signatories have never agreed to extend the reach of the Armistice Agreements, they were, as Sir Brian Urquhart, former Undersecretary-General of the United Nations for Special Political Affairs (1971-1985), has recalled, very significant nonetheless:

> He [Bunche] didn't get any further with the settlement business, but he also recommended to the General Assembly that there had to be some serious legal basis for peace in the Middle East, even if it wasn't a settlement. You had to have an armistice, which everybody had signed and which gave legal obligations to both sides. (Kreisler 1996, para. 12)

After decades of further conflicts and clashes, including the 1956 Suez Canal crisis and the Six-Day and Yom Kippur wars in 1967 and 1973, Egypt and Jordan signed Peace Agreements with Israel, recognizing it as a legitimate state in 1979 and 1994, respectively. However, Lebanon and Syria still consider the 1949 Armistice Agreements the basis for any formal negotiations with the Jewish state (Hof 2001). Notably, the Palestinians were not among the signatories of the Agreements in 1949, since they were not acting as a separate political entity at that time. Nonetheless, approximately 5 million Palestinian refugees now reside in the region as a stateless population (United Nations Relief and Works Agency 2019). A resolution of their situation acceptable to all parties will be key to any lasting accord that may be negotiated in the future. However, the continued standing and significance of the Agreements, and, more broadly, of the right to land and resources they treated, remain highly contested and deeply entangled with the internal (national) politics of the affected nations and with international politics. The sharply contrasting perceptions of the role that the Armistice Agreements should play in the peace process today are complicating the search for possible peace solutions for the region.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict that erupted into armed hostility once again in May 2021 was deeply rooted in these lingering disagreements. In May 2021, Israeli efforts to expel Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah (East Jerusalem) and that nation's police violence against people praying at the al-Aqsa mosque, triggered a new cycle of protests,

violence and retaliations that eventually escalated into a full-scale conflict. Hamas launched rockets at Israel, killing 12 people, including two children according to its medical service, and Israel bombed densely populated areas in Gaza killing 243 people, including more than 100 women and children, according to the Gaza health ministry.[1] Palestinians and their advocates have argued that the evictions are part of a wider strategy of reinforcing Jewish control over East Jerusalem, the area that Palestinians hope will be the capital of a future Palestinian state, and denounce Israel's actions as land grabs. Israeli right-wing activists and the Israeli deputy mayor of Jerusalem, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, have meanwhile embraced a radical nationalist position and advocated for the need to preserve Israel's 'Jewish character': 'This is a Jewish country,' she said. 'There's only one. And of course, there are laws that some people may consider as favoring Jews—it's a Jewish state. It is here to protect the Jewish people' (Kingsley 2021, A11). As we completed this article, deadly confrontations between Palestinian worshippers and the Israeli police once again erupted at the al-Aqsa Mosque, when hundreds of Ramadan worshippers barricaded themselves in the Mosque to stop a plan by Jewish extremists to sacrifice a goat for Passover at the hilltop site. The Israeli police eventually used stun grenades to clear the Mosque, with six Palestinians reported injured or killed. Following these clashes two Israeli women were killed in the West Bank and rockets were fired from the Gaza strip into Israel, to which Israel responded by launching air strikes on Hamas targets in Southern Lebanon and in Gaza. The current far- right Israeli government looks unlikely to seek to scale down these confrontations.

This recurring violence suggests that while the United Nations may provide a space for political discussions to occur, that role alone may not be sufficient to address the underlying issues causing friction among the governments and populations involved (al-Hallaq 2021). Diplomatic agreements are open to continuous contestation and revisitation and do not themselves constitute the end of political processes. Today, the polarization of political discourses often reflects nationalist claims and fears and not the otherwise intertwined lived realities of affected populations residing along relevant borders. For example, many observers in Syria and Lebanon perceive the shunting aside of the original Agreements as a strategy of *divide et impera*, rather than an effort to build on Bunche's original effort to construct and consolidate a comprehensive long-lasting peace in the Middle East (Eschel 2000, 78; Hof 2009).[2]

This ongoing reality suggests the importance for the prospects of long-term peace of understanding how those residing in contested terrain comprehend their worlds. Grasping how residents view the artificially contrived borders along which they otherwise daily reside may help citizens develop possible paths forward that could move beyond ever more sharply militarized strategies of control and violence to mutually acceptable territorial demarcations.

We do not wish to contend that micropolitical initiatives alone can resolve the multifaceted concerns in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The lingering issues of illegal Israeli settlements, the unilateral expropriation of land and property, the denial of human and political rights of Palestinians, unresolved statehood-related disputes, international influences, the political fragmentation of Palestinians, the shortcomings of their political leaders, and the radicalization of their resistance are just some of the dimensions of the complexity of this struggle. While these matters will not be resolved through micropolitical peace initiatives alone, emotional healing cuts across all facets of this conflict. For this reason, we argue practices aimed at addressing such needs may diffractively contribute to bringing about peace.

Re-imagining Agency as Other Than High Politics

Löwenheim's (2014) analysis highlighted how human beings and their daily lives are marked by the disparate positions created by the geography of conflict. His study revealed the ongoing fault lines of the now 70-year-old conflict, evidenced in the Armistice Agreements, in the region in a way that today's national/ist actors' actions have tended to obscure. The Israeli scholar's examination demonstrated how micropolitical engagements and autoethnography may be used in a 'methodological, epistemological and theoretical exercise in opening one's political yes' to question the 'tendency of the Israeli state to eradicate and hide its contested history and controversial present' (20). His observations, gleaned as he traversed the "border" between east Jerusalem and the West Bank, constituted,

> an invitation to readers to reflect on *how* their daily environment is constructed and how politics plays a role in shaping their immediate surroundings, as well as politics' inputs in their proclivity and ability to even observe and interpret these surroundings from the outset. (20)

Asking *how* questions was central to Löwenheim's critical practice. This method is not only relevant for re-thinking the identity and space-making politics of the Israeli state, but more broadly, it encourages scholars and citizens alike to question what is considered obvious, as, for example, current national boundaries, and it does so as a form of critique. Through an exploration of *how* conflict, demarcated by territorial lines, has been modified to constitute a 'culture and a mechanism of control' and *how* such practices have shaped people's ways of relating to one another as well as to the landscape they inhabit, Löwenheim's analysis becomes 'a source of political knowledge and interpretation' (22). Actively reflecting on *how* one's identity is constructed and *how* conflict and violence produce 'persons who carry its violence and pain in multiple manners and in different geographic bodily sites,' becomes an instrument to critique conflicting parties' strategies of identity building (24). Such reflections are tools for making individuals aware of such constructed identities, for urging their reconsideration and reformulation, and therefore for opening agentic and peacebuilding possibilities otherwise unseen by investigations that focus only on inter-state politics and boundary making (24).

Mainstream International Relations continuing to ignore this scale of analysis may ultimately lead to indifference to the fate of people affected by ongoing discord as mere 'actors in a 'case study' rather than real human beings in real-life situations' (25). Löwenheim has suggested that analysts, responsible leaders and citizens more broadly, should instead recognize the suffering and doubts of all parties to conflicts by investigating, 'how *specific* political phenomena, practices, institutions and situations, take a toll that can perhaps be reduced or avoided altogether once we recognize the personal price they exact from us and other people' (26, emphasis in the original). Löwenheim felt 'the pain of the land' during his daily commute along the contested frontier, and in doing so he highlighted the costs of the protracted conflict on Israelis and Palestinians alike. His rides prompted him to recognize particularly the struggle of the Palestinians living and working near the 'border' and to question the way his own identity had been constructed by conflict discourses (39). Through an examination of how, specifically, the 'border' landscape he encountered daily is inhabited and experienced differently by Israelis and Palestinians, Löwenheim revealed the relational and entangled reality of conflict. He depicted his journey, as he reflected on his encounters, *'as a process of realizing that one 'side's' pain is necessarily the source of the other's pain too*' (46, emphasis in the original).

doi.org/10.32388/HoXJGO

Löwenheim framed the ethos of conflict resolution as a process involving the shared knowledge, emotions and humanity of the people involved and not simply one inhering in the purported logic of map lines. He pointed to the critical significance of empathetic imagination and everyday practices of mutual recognition in such efforts. Such a process of consciousness-raising is not rooted in a certainty grounded in universal guiding principles or grand plans, cartographic or otherwise, but instead in the readiness to open oneself to a critique of how narratives and practices of power have been engrained in one's culture and landscape and those of one's putative enemies or opponents as well. In this view, peacebuilding is rooted in the ability to question how conflict narratives shape one's own motives, emotions, and actions. Different political possibilities emerge not because those engaged can gauge the end game of such reflexivity from the outset or because their behavior constitutes a 'true' guideline for managing or resolving conflict, but because its routine practice can reveal the effects of too often unquestioned and dominant social narratives for individual and collective values, attitudes, and behavior.

Viewed in this way, a peaceful resolution of the now more than 70-year-old Arab Israeli conflict is likely to result not from abstract universal plans or nationalist-driven solutions, but instead from the constant questioning of such proposals by analysts, officials, and residents. Such efforts may encourage all involved to become aware of the complexity of bordering practices, their entanglement with the building of state identities and their differential effects on individual and group everyday lives and political imaginaries. Put differently, a political agency in favor of peace cannot be limited to abstract justifications or universal principles, or even peacebuilding initiatives centered on institutional or social change, however elegantly framed. Bunche appears to have understood this and aligned it in his Nobel address, as we noted above, with the political willingness of affected nations to proceed with negotiations that foremost recognize the rights of minorities affected negatively by blinkered pursuit of nationalism and/or supposed national interests. An enforced displacement that refuses to recognize that fact and long-term claims linked to it, both material and immaterial, are very unlikely to result in a cessation of conflict. Indeed, such a stance looks set only to prolong it and to impose injustice as it does so, as Bunche suggested.

Re-theorizing Peacebuilding as Entangled Practice

Löwenheim's analysis of the effects of the border conflict in which he is situated requires that both analyst and reader be willing to wrestle with enduring and deep ambiguity. In direct contradiction, the political rationality of international intervention and its justifying narratives assume that reality can be driven mainly by a priori aspirations and planning strategies. Thus, decisions addressing the division of geographic space and establishing border demarcations are too often viewed per se as capable of resolving conflict. This construction also assumes that the 'how' questions that go along with implementing abstract aspirations are simply corollaries and only marginally relevant to efforts to determine the ethical and political rationale for what steps to undertake. Experience with the Armistice agreements and successive partial agreements that have occurred in its wake, and Löwenheim's analysis of their continued implications for the performance of the Israeli state political narrative and for the daily lives of residents living along those originally negotiated lines in East Jerusalem, highlight the shortcomings of this way of imagining border-making and peacebuilding.

We have suggested that quantum and black feminist theories of agency open possibilities for making a political difference in the world. Micropolitical interventions may diffractively encourage reconsideration of conflict identities by highlighting

possibilities for change, while not 'directing' those efforts. Such engagements can question dominant discourses and reveal political opportunities that may result in mutual recognition among otherwise conflicting parties, and thereby challenge the continued re-creation and reinforcement of identities constructed by denying and obscuring the pain and suffering of political 'others', as appears now to be occurring and recurring in East Jerusalem and Gaza, particularly.

This theoretical framing suggests that peacebuilding cannot stop with diplomatic efforts and the drawing of borders. Peacebuilding may not ignore the situated meanings that inhabitants of the region accord their power-partitioned landscape and their relationship to their understanding of their identities as well as their everyday lives. During his bicycle rides, Löwenheim discovered traces of Palestinian villages and narratives that testified to their residents' attachment to the place and space that was once their homeland and that has now become a border area, as well as the discrepant way that Palestinian workers experience the crossing of that boundary in their everyday lives. He also witnessed the divisions created by conflict narratives among his own family and friends. Importantly, the life experiences of which Löwenheim became acutely aware had otherwise been hidden in prevailing dominant public and political narratives. His daily journeys highlighted the inequalities that borders have created and maintained, exposed the Israeli state's dominant strategies for conflict-identity construction and uncovered possibilities for reconsidering those frames by exploring the physical spaces along the border and interacting with Palestinians and their stories of their lives as he did so. Löwenheim's rides revealed that the boundary was not simply a line on a map, delimited by fears or territorial aims, but a signal reality that shaped the way individuals' lives could be conducted, as well as a space in which those affected formed, consolidated, and contested different narratives and meanings. The people Löwenheim encountered constructed their world views together with others and those entangled processes were themselves at once dynamic, evolutionary, and rooted in past experiences, values, and traditions. Those beliefs likewise may create and animate agential possibilities aimed at contesting those seeking to construct and maintain social identities that encourage conflict and otherwise obscure commonalities and shared history among groups.

Conclusions

We first became interested in writing on this subject as we were exploring the question of agency in development, peacebuilding, and international politics more generally, in light of the turn to the local in that scholarship and a burgeoning literature concerning borders. Encountering Löwenheim's autoethnography of his time spent along the Israeli Separation Wall in and around East Jerusalem and considering his insights concerning how the decades-long conflict in that region has now become a fabric of its landscape and peoples, provided another prompt to reflect actively on what the combination of these interests might yield for prevailing political conceptions of boundaries and peacebuilding.

As a first response to this theoretic and analytic challenge, we have offered three contentions. First, while formal pacts, such as the Armistice Agreements, surely matter in peacebuilding efforts, and are certainly necessary, they are never, as Bunche contended concerning those initiatives, sufficient nor encompassing of the conditions they both create and reflect. Conflict continues in the Middle East because the parties have developed ways of knowing that now suffuse not only their norms and values, but also their expectations and, as Löwenheim has suggested, their very ways of living with and on the land and, especially, and saliently, along Israel's borders. The Agreements still hold for some parties, but Israel, and now also many in

the U.S., today contend they should not, and largely due to the growing nationalism and fears of their respective populations. Accordingly, the Armistice promises and the different ways their signatories today regard them, offer continuing testimony to the need to rethink how to encourage actors to consider their most basic epistemic and ontological assumptions and values as an integral part of constructing peace. The continued relevance and conflict concerning those Agreements also suggests the wisdom of relentlessly questioning the manifestations of state power that reinforce sharply conflicting identities by shaping land, lives, memories, and their accompanying narratives.

Second, we have argued that current theorization and empirical analysis suggest that scholars and peacebuilders alike should turn to developing peacebuilding strategies that account for the contextual complexity of the ethically freighted terrains, relationships, and peoples they treat. We have argued that quantum, borders, and black feminist and affect theorists have deepened the explorations of 'local turn' studies in peacebuilding by re-framing political agency. They have included emotions as politically relevant and reframed ethical action as a diffractive practice of questioning through micropolitical actions what is otherwise taken for granted. Löwenheim's autoethnography demonstrated that such practices may offer opportunities for nurturing peace, precisely because he sought explicitly to recognize the lived experiences of those subjected to existing borders, and more importantly, the embodied emotions, that sustain them.

Finally, as an exploration of the ongoing history and continuing influence of the Armistice Agreements shows, diplomatic peacebuilding efforts are unlikely to succeed unless they also include practices that actively and persistently question war identities. Delimiting borders entangles imagined national, personal, and collective identities. Bordering has specific effects on the daily lives of individuals who are separated or united with one another and with their past and current identities thereby. Addressing such concerns in peacebuilding must be nurtured with initiatives that extend well beyond efforts to create or to maintain boundaries. They must also involve practices that may encourage shifts in the epistemic assumptions prevalent among state officials, peacebuilders, and affected populations. Those changes should challenge the narratives of conflict inscribed in the land and relevant populations through existing bordering processes. Unless such beliefs, norms and values change, the present imbroglio exemplified by the continuing conflict in Jerusalem and Gaza is only likely to continue and deepen. While this task is daunting, it is also, in our view, necessary and well demonstrated by the by now long and storied history of the Armistice Agreements of 1949.

Footnotes

[1] Israel claims instead to have killed 225 militants via its bombing. For journalistic coverage of the conflict, please see BBC News, "Gaza-Israel Conflict in Pictures: 11 Days of Destruction," *BBC*, May 21, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-57205968.; Patrick Kingsley, "Evictions in Jerusalem Become Focus of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *The New York Times*, May 7, 2021. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/07/world/middleeast/evictions-jerusalem-israeli-palestinian-conflict-protest.html; Adam Shatz, "Ghosts in the Land," *London Review of Books* 43, no. 11-3 (June 3, 2021). https://doi.org/https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n11/adam-shatz/ghosts-in-the-land; "Lexington," *The Economist*, 439 (9246), May 22, 2021: 38.

[2] As we worked on this article (late 2021), Israel's Prime Minister announced a major escalation in the development of settlements in the Golan Hights, a territory that Israel has occupied since the 1967 war, but that has never been recognized

by the United Nations as part of that state.

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Declarations

Funding: No specific funding was received for this work.

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.