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Geopolitical Challenges, Complexities, and Future Uncertainties in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Land and Population's Perspectives

Hilmi S. Salem*

Abstract

Geopolitical challenges, complexities, and future uncertainties have greatly and adversely affected all aspects of life, as well as the well-being of the Palestinian citizens living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), comprised of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The OPT were militarily occupied by the Israeli forces in June 1967 and, since then, the Israeli military rules have been applied to the OPT. The demographic issues in the OPT have gained a great importance at the political, geopolitical, social, economic, environmental, educational, health-wise, and housing, as well as at other aspects of life. This is due to the fact that demographic issues, along with the land, are the main determinants of the Palestinian choices towards sustainable development in a future, sovereign, independent, stable, and secure state of Palestine to be established in the OPT, with East Jerusalem as its capital. So, because of the limited areas of land which Palestinians have access to; because of the limited natural resources that are available to them; and because of the narrowing of the political horizons and choices available to the Palestinians, the real Palestinian wealth in the OPT is the human being. This article investigates and analyses several geopolitical challenges, complexities, and future uncertainties in the OPT, with a focus on key demographic issues, including human trends and socioeconomic trends, which include marital status, housing, education, and health. Additionally, the article examines the historical background of the present situation. It also provides important recommendations and supporting elements towards developing Palestinian national policies related to the well-being of the Palestinian citizens and institutions within the OPT.

Keywords: Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT: West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip); Oslo Agreement, *Area A*, *Area B*, and *Area C*; Israeli Military Occupation; Israeli Settlements and Israeli Segregation Wall; Population and Socioeconomic Elements: Marital Status, Housing, Education, and Health; Geopolitical Challenges, Complexities, and Future Uncertainties.

Introduction

The Palestinian people have been continuously struggling and deeply suffering for more than 72 years now, i.e. since their home-country – Historical Palestine – was militarily taken away from them by the Zionist Movement in May 1948. As a result, the state of Israel was

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About the Author

Hilmi S. Salem is a multidisciplinary research scientist, professional engineer, academician, educator, consultant, and global expert, who has been involved in projects on water, energy, the environment, biodiversity, climate change, sustainable development, United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), geopolitics, and other areas as well. After he obtained his Doctorate degree from the Christian-Albrechts Universitaet (CAU) zu Kiel, Kiel, Germany, through a DAAD scholarship, Prof. Dr. Salem has worked at, and contributed to, academic, industrial, governmental, and nongovernmental institutions in the Middle East, North Africa, East Africa, and West Asia regions, Europe (Germany, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, UK, and others), Canada, the USA, and Australia, as well as to United Nations' (UN) organizations, such as UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, and WHO. Prof. Salem has authored and co-authored over 170 publications, including papers published in internationally peer-

reviewed journals, papers presented at international conferences, technical reports, books, chapters in books, atlases, and policy- and strategy-position papers. His published work has been relied on, cited, and referenced by thousands of research scientists, including graduate students in more than 120 distinguished universities, worldwide. Prof. Salem has also led large teams of research scientists, professional engineers, managers, and administrators, with respect to scientific, technical, managerial, personnel, financial, and institutional issues, as well as to research projects and programs at academic, industrial, governmental, and nongovernmental institutions in the scientific fields and geographic areas mentioned above. Prof. Salem was also asked, by international institutions and organizations, to evaluate research projects valued millions of US Dollars. Prof. Salem was honoured, by international organizations, some prestigious awards on his contributions to the international scientific community in the fields of natural sciences, engineering, and humanities (socioeconomics, politics, geopolitics, human rights, and environmental justice.)