



**Book Review — *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World*, by
Antony Loewenstein.**

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Anthony Lowenstein’s *The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World* carefully analyses how Israel uses its occupation of Palestinian land as a testing ground for developing weaponry and surveillance technology, which it then markets and sells to other states. The book is divided into seven chapters, each exploring a different aspect of the “Palestine Laboratory”. The first chapter focuses on Israel’s arms trade, emphasising the sale of “battle-tested” weapons to regimes, regardless of their human rights records. The second and third chapters explore how the post-9/11 War on Terror created new global markets for Israeli security products, with ongoing conflict serving to continually test and promote these technologies. The fourth and fifth chapters examine how other governments are adopting Israeli methods of surveillance and control as models for their own security systems. The final two chapters delve into the export of Israeli cyber-surveillance tools—originally deployed in the occupied Palestinian territories—to monitor journalists, activists and political opponents worldwide. These practices also extend to social media platforms, where content moderation often disproportionately censors Palestinian voices, revealing a broader system of digital control.

Against the backdrop of renewed turmoil in the region, Loewenstein’s book, which was published earlier in the same year as the Hamas attack on October 7th, gains increasing relevance. It is among the few contemporary studies that offer an in-depth analysis of Israel’s actions in Palestine through its defence industry and its far-reaching global impact. The author combines on-the-ground reporting with past investigations. He also draws upon interviews, including with Israeli activist Daniel Silberman, who has

persistently pushed for transparency regarding Israel's involvement with the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (1973–1990) (p. 26). Throughout the book, the author skilfully links Israel's military-technological industry to racism, the repression of Palestinians and censorship implemented by social media platforms.

The Palestine Laboratory exposes how the global export of Israeli military and surveillance technology supports a lobbying apparatus that helps to legitimise and sustain the ongoing occupation. It uniquely illuminates how the West Bank and Gaza are a military laboratory for the Israeli military-technological complex, encompassing surveillance systems, devastating military operations, home demolitions, indefinite detention and the deployment of high-tech lethal weaponry. The author argues that the global network of arms trade has expanded through military alliances with both authoritarian regimes and democratic governments, several of which have been implicated in war crimes using Israeli weapons. His analysis reveals the global nature of this arms trade including countries in South and Central America, the USA, Africa and West, East and South Asia. He observes that the military relationship between Israel and these governments is mutually beneficial, as Israel secures strategic alliances and constant arms deals, while the governments gain access to advanced weaponry. Plus, these regimes seek to emulate Israel's violent tactics against their own populations, while Israel maintains its settler-colonial system over Palestinians. Loewenstein contends that Israel is exporting what he terms "politicide" (p. 69), a strategy aimed at undermining the social, political and economic existence of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, the book explains how Israel has exploited its relationships with repressive governments in an opportunistic manner, leveraging crises such as September 11th and the COVID-19 pandemic to market its weapons. The sixth chapter, 'Israeli Mass Surveillance in the Brain of Your Phone', demonstrates how the COVID-19 pandemic allowed Israeli surveillance companies to expand their operations and provide additional control technologies to other countries. These included tools and systems to monitor, manage or suppress populations, such as real-time facial recognition in public spaces and remote access to smartphones using spyware. The chapter also highlights how these companies engaged in

espionage, primarily targeting European and American nations. These measures were initially employed to control the lives of Palestinians.

Loewenstein also shows how Israel uses social media to surveil and suppress Palestinian voices, describing the censorship of Palestinian content as digital orientalism (p. 173). He demonstrates how Meta and Twitter comply with Israeli government requests to remove content critical of Israel or presenting the Palestinian perspective. This censorship undermines Palestinian human rights by restricting free expression, obstructing advocacy and solidarity and impeding justice by removing crucial evidence. This is especially evident now, as platforms like Instagram have repeatedly removed accounts, stories and posts that reference or depict the crisis in Gaza (Shankar, Siddiqui and Bhutto, 2023).

While the book offers a strong empirical foundation, it lacks an analytical framework that situates Israel's weapon testing on Palestinians—and the broader occupation—within the global political-economic system. Israeli military industries exploit colonisation and occupation to sell weapons, but like all military industries, they are driven by both finance capitalism and capital accumulation and use repressive structures to maximise profit. In addition to profit motives, these industries are accountable to shareholders, creating structural incentives to sustain or even manufacture conditions of conflict and repression. Without addressing capitalist dynamics and government complicity, our understanding remains incomplete; a full understanding requires confronting the global forces shaping military industries.

Similarly, Loewenstein's discussion of digital orientalism would benefit from placement within a broader framework of manufacturing consent, an indispensable strategy Israel uses to rationalise its military power over Palestinians. Historically, selective language and biased narratives have been used to justify violence against entire groups and continue to be weaponised against Palestinians (Chomsky and Herman, 1995). The author should have emphasised the historical dehumanisation of Palestinians by Israel, its European allies and the US, which fuels the continuous violence and oppression. Mainstream officials from these governments employ dehumanising language when referring to Palestinians to absolve Israel of responsibility, legitimising attacks on civilians, religious sites and hospitals as testing-grounds for Israeli, US and European weapons. This

manufacturing of consent contributes to global militarisation and corporate surveillance, perpetuating Palestinian oppression. Incorporating these perspectives would have strengthened the author's ability to provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamics that sustain Israel's and its allies' profit-driven defence network.

In conclusion, this book is among the few which expose trade of deadly weapons. It examines case studies, including the use of the Pegasus spyware against individuals like Jeff Bezos and Jamal Khashoggi, weapons sold to the Myanmar military used to kill of thousands of Rohingyas and the use of drones by the European Union, with Frontex and the European Maritime Safety Agency, to monitor refugees in the Mediterranean. The book highlights how Israel has emerged as a global leader in surveillance technology and defence hardware, which has fuelled some of the world's most brutal conflicts. Throughout the seven chapters, the author posits that Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands has not only influenced its domestic policy decisions but has also served as a comparable model of subjugation that other states have sought to emulate in their efforts to establish analogous systems of control. This book is essential reading for both academics and general audiences concerned with human rights, liberation and justice, as it sheds light on the troubling intersection of capitalism, militarism and Palestinian oppression.

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Works Cited

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