From Land to Labor How Governance Sustains Territorial Maximalism Despite Peace Processes

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Abstract. This manuscript does not aim to resolve ideological, historical, or religious claims over territory. Instead, it examines how contemporary forms of power shape protracted conflict through governance mechanisms that regulate land, labor, and resources. Drawing on conflict transformation theory, political economy, and critical governance studies, the article argues that dominant peace frameworks—centered on territorial partition, security coordination, or economic cooperation—are structurally limited because they leave asymmetric governance arrangements intact. These arrangements enable control without political integration, allowing domination to persist even in the absence of formal annexation. By reframing territorial maximalism as a governance project rather than a purely ideological aspiration, the study demonstrates how expansionist ambitions are operationalized through regulatory authority over space, mobility, and economic life. The case illustration of Jericho shows how localized stability and development initiatives can coexist with deep structural dependency when governance authority is not shared. Economic activity and administrative capacity, often interpreted as indicators of progress, may instead stabilize unequal power relations. To address these limitations, the article advances the concept of cooperative territorial governance as a pathway for conflict transformation independent of final-status agreements. By institutionalizing shared authority over labor regulation, land use, and resource management, this framework challenges governance-based domination and offers a pragmatic foundation for transforming the structural conditions sustaining modern territorial conflicts.

Keywords:Conflict Transformation; Cooperative Governance; Israel–Palestinian Conflict; Modern Colonialism; Structural Violence.

1. BACKGROUND

The Israel–Palestine conflict has long been recognized as one of the most enduring and politically complex conflicts in modern international relations (Khalidi, 2020; Roy, 2017; Galtung, 1969). Despite decades of diplomatic engagement, peace negotiations, and international mediation, the conflict continues to generate recurring cycles of violence, political stalemate, and humanitarian decline. From early partition proposals to later frameworks such as the Oslo Accords and subsequent peace initiatives, attempts at resolution have consistently revolved around territorial division, security arrangements, and questions of sovereignty (Quandt, 2001; Khalidi, 2020). The persistence of the conflict despite these efforts raises a fundamental question: whether territorially centered approaches are adequate for addressing a conflict whose sustaining dynamics increasingly operate beyond the formal control of land. While territorial claims remain symbolically and politically significant, the lived realities of the conflict are increasingly shaped by systems of governance that regulate everyday life. Restrictions on mobility, access to employment, control over trade, and the administration of land and resources have produced patterns of economic dependency and institutional fragmentation that extend far beyond contested borders. International monitoring bodies have repeatedly documented how these governance arrangements affect livelihoods, economic

stability, and social cohesion within Palestinian society (United Nations, 2022; World Bank, 2023). These dynamics persist irrespective of changes in diplomatic rhetoric or negotiation frameworks, suggesting that the endurance of the conflict cannot be explained solely by unresolved territorial disputes. The evolving nature of power in the contemporary international system further complicates traditional understandings of the conflict. Historical forms of colonial domination were characterized by direct territorial conquest, settlement, and overt political control (Fanon, 1961; Mamdani, 2020). In contrast, modern systems of domination increasingly rely on indirect mechanisms, including regulatory authority, economic integration under asymmetrical conditions, and the management of labor and resources (Foucault, 2007; Harvey, 2005). Such mechanisms allow control to be exercised without formal annexation, blurring the distinction between occupation, governance, and economic administration. In the Israel–Palestine context, this shift has reshaped how power is experienced on the ground, with governance structures playing a central role in shaping political agency and economic opportunity.

The continued emphasis on territorial resolution in both policy discourse and academic analysis has contributed to a narrow conceptual framing of the conflict. Peace processes have often treated economic arrangements and administrative coordination as secondary or technical components to be addressed after political agreements are reached (Paris, 2004; Pugh, Cooper, & Turner, 2008). However, this sequencing overlooks the extent to which economic and governance structures actively sustain asymmetry and limit the conditions necessary for meaningful political engagement. As a result, even periods of relative calm have failed to produce substantive improvements in living conditions or reductions in structural inequality, reinforcing cycles of frustration and instability. This conceptual limitation is particularly evident in the treatment of labor and resource management within peace frameworks. Labor markets, access to land, water distribution, and trade regimes are frequently discussed in instrumental terms, rather than as central arenas of power. Yet these domains directly shape daily life and influence how individuals and communities experience security, dignity, and opportunity. By marginalizing these issues, territorially focused approaches risk overlooking the mechanisms through which control is exercised and reproduced in non-territorial forms. This manuscript does not seek to resolve ideological, historical, or religious claims over territory, nor does it aim to propose a definitive political settlement. Instead, it advances a reframing of the analytical lens through which the conflict is examined. The focus shifts from land as a symbol of sovereignty to land as a governed space embedded within broader systems of labor, resources, and institutional regulation. This shift allows for a more nuanced

understanding of how contemporary power operates and how conflict dynamics are sustained in the absence of territorial change. By adopting this perspective, the article explores how modern forms of governance may also create alternative entry points for conflict transformation. Cooperative arrangements over land use, labor regulation, and resource management do not require consensus on existential claims, yet they have the potential to reduce structural asymmetries and mitigate everyday forms of violence. Such arrangements, while limited in scope, can influence material conditions and institutional relationships in ways that shape the broader conflict environment. The concept of cooperative territorial governance is introduced in this manuscript as an analytical framework rather than a prescriptive policy solution. It emphasizes shared management, functional coordination, and institutional cooperation as mechanisms through which conflict dynamics may be gradually transformed. This approach recognizes the constraints imposed by deeply entrenched political positions while seeking to identify spaces where pragmatic cooperation may still be possible. In doing so, it aligns with broader debates in conflict transformation that emphasize process, relational change, and the reduction of structural violence over the pursuit of immediate final settlements. Situating the Israel–Palestine conflict within this framework contributes to ongoing discussions on the nature of modern colonial power and the limitations of traditional conflict resolution models. By foregrounding governance, labor, and resource relations, the manuscript aims to expand the analytical toolkit available for understanding protracted conflicts shaped by contemporary forms of domination. Rather than offering a solution to the conflict itself, the study seeks to clarify how alternative modes of engagement may alter the conditions under which the conflict persists, thereby opening space for more adaptive and sustainable approaches to peacebuilding.

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

The scholarly literature on the Israel–Palestine conflict constitutes one of the most extensive and contested bodies of work in contemporary conflict studies. Early academic contributions largely framed the conflict as a territorial and nationalist dispute arising from competing claims to land, sovereignty, and political recognition (Khalidi, 2020; Quandt, 2001). Within this paradigm, conflict resolution was primarily conceptualized as a process of negotiated settlement between political elites, with success measured by the achievement of formal agreements on borders, security arrangements, and statehood. This approach dominated both academic analysis and policy practice throughout much of the late twentieth century. However, the limited success of such frameworks has prompted sustained critical reassessment

within the literature. Empirical analyses of peace initiatives, particularly those following the Oslo process, indicate that negotiated territorial arrangements failed to produce durable political stability or meaningful social transformation (Roy, 2017; Khalidi, 2020). Scholars examining post-Oslo realities observed that while territorial authority was partially redistributed, underlying power asymmetries remained largely intact. These findings challenged the assumption that territorial compromise alone could resolve a conflict shaped by deeper structural dynamics. In response, political economy perspectives emerged as a significant corrective to territorially centered analyses. Drawing on longitudinal data and institutional assessments, scholars demonstrated how economic regulation, labor dependency, and restrictions on mobility function as central mechanisms of control within the occupied Palestinian territories (Roy, 2017; Pugh et al., 2008). Research published in leading Middle East studies and development journals documented how economic integration under asymmetrical conditions constrained Palestinian productive capacity while reinforcing dependency on external markets and regulatory authorities. These studies emphasized that economic arrangements were not neutral byproducts of conflict but constituted active instruments through which power was exercised and maintained. Reports by international organizations reinforced these academic findings by providing systematic empirical evidence of structural economic vulnerability. United Nations agencies and the World Bank consistently documented how limitations on trade, access to land and water, and labor market restrictions produced chronic underdevelopment despite substantial international aid flows (United Nations, 2022; World Bank, 2023). Importantly, these reports highlighted that economic stagnation persisted even during periods of reduced violence, suggesting that instability was rooted not solely in security conditions but in enduring governance structures. This evidence strengthened scholarly arguments that conflict dynamics could not be adequately understood without close attention to institutional and economic factors.

Within conflict studies, these insights intersected with broader critiques of traditional conflict resolution models. Scholars associated with conflict transformation theory argued that settlement-oriented approaches prioritized short-term political agreements at the expense of addressing relational and structural conditions that sustain violence. Johan Galtung's concept of structural violence proved particularly influential in this regard, offering a framework for understanding how social and economic systems generate harm without direct physical coercion (Galtung, 1969). Applied to Israel–Palestine, this perspective illuminated how inequality, restricted mobility, and institutional fragmentation constituted forms of violence embedded in everyday life. ubsequent scholarship expanded on these ideas by emphasizing the

temporal and relational dimensions of conflict. Rather than viewing peace as an end-state achieved through agreement, conflict transformation literature conceptualized peace as a process involving gradual changes in social structures, power relations, and institutional practices (Lederach, 1997; Paris, 2004). This approach resonated with analyses of protracted conflicts, where formal negotiations often coexist with persistent patterns of domination and exclusion. However, while conflict transformation theory offered valuable conceptual tools, critics noted that it often remained abstract and insufficiently grounded in empirical political economy. Parallel to these developments, literature on colonialism and settler colonialism further reshaped scholarly understandings of the conflict. Early colonial analyses focused on land dispossession and settlement patterns, emphasizing the material and symbolic importance of territory. More recent scholarship, however, has shifted toward examining governance, law, and administrative practices as central sites of power (Mamdani, 2020; Wolfe, 2006). Scholars working within this tradition argue that contemporary forms of domination rely less on overt territorial conquest and more on regulatory control, bureaucratic fragmentation, and economic management. In the Palestinian context, this literature highlights how land, labor, and resources are governed through complex legal and administrative regimes that structure access and participation. Studies examining land use policies, labor permits, and trade regulations demonstrate how these mechanisms shape everyday life while limiting political agency. Importantly, this body of work challenges binary distinctions between occupation and sovereignty by revealing how power may persist through institutional arrangements even in the absence of formal annexation. Such insights complicate conventional narratives of decolonization and statehood. Despite significant advances across these strands of literature, notable gaps and tensions remain. Conflict resolution scholarship often acknowledges economic and institutional factors but continues to privilege political agreements as the primary drivers of peace. In contrast, political economy and colonial studies provide detailed analyses of governance and dependency but frequently stop short of engaging explicitly with theories of conflict transformation. As a result, these bodies of literature often operate in parallel rather than in dialogue, limiting their collective explanatory and normative potential.

This fragmentation is particularly evident in discussions of cooperation and shared governance. Policy-oriented literature frequently frames economic cooperation initiatives as confidence-building measures or post-conflict development tools. Yet empirical evaluations suggest that such initiatives are often constrained by existing power asymmetries and institutional limitations. Without addressing underlying governance structures, cooperative projects risk stabilizing unequal arrangements rather than transforming them. This critique has

been echoed by scholars examining donor-driven development programs in the Palestinian territories, which have sometimes mitigated short-term hardship while entrenching long-term dependency (Roy, 2017; Pugh et al., 2008). Moreover, the literature rarely examines cooperation as a site of power rather than a neutral mechanism. While shared economic or administrative arrangements are often presented as inherently beneficial, critical analyses highlight how cooperation under conditions of asymmetry may reproduce domination. This insight underscores the need for a more nuanced analytical framework that distinguishes between cooperation as a technical instrument and cooperation as a contested political process embedded in broader systems of governance. The absence of such a framework constitutes a significant gap in existing scholarship. While scholars have extensively documented the economic and institutional dimensions of the conflict, and others have theorized the importance of structural change for sustainable peace, few studies systematically connect these insights to examine how cooperative governance might function as a mechanism of conflict transformation. In particular, the relationship between modern colonial governance and cooperative arrangements over land, labor, and resources remains underexplored.

This manuscript seeks to contribute to this gap by synthesizing insights from conflict transformation theory, political economy, and studies of modern colonial governance. Rather than treating land solely as an object of sovereignty or identity, it conceptualizes land as a governed space embedded within systems of labor regulation and resource management. By foregrounding governance rather than territorial finality, the study aims to extend existing debates on peacebuilding and colonial power. The literature reviewed here thus provides both the empirical grounding and theoretical impetus for examining cooperative territorial governance as an analytical lens. This approach does not presume ideological convergence or political settlement but focuses instead on how shared management arrangements may alter structural conditions that perpetuate conflict. By integrating disparate strands of scholarship, the manuscript seeks to advance a more comprehensive understanding of how modern power operates in protracted conflicts and how incremental pathways for transformation might emerge within constrained political environments.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to examine how modern forms of governance shape conflict dynamics and possibilities for transformation in the Israel–Palestine context. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the manuscript's focus on institutional arrangements, economic regulation, and structural relationships rather than on

causal measurement or statistical generalization. The analysis is based on secondary data drawn from peer-reviewed academic journals, scholarly books, and reports published by internationally recognized institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank. These sources provide empirically grounded insights into governance structures, labor regulation, and resource management in the occupied Palestinian territories. In addition, credible international newspapers are used selectively to contextualize contemporary developments and policy debates, serving as supplementary material rather than primary evidence. Sources were selected using purposive sampling, prioritizing materials that directly address governance mechanisms, political economy, and conflict transformation. The analytical process involved close reading and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to structural inequality, economic dependency, and cooperative governance arrangements. By triangulating academic, institutional, and media sources, the study ensures analytical consistency and source credibility. As a qualitative descriptive study relying on secondary sources, this research does not aim to produce predictive claims or normative prescriptions. Instead, it seeks to clarify how governance and economic structures shape conflict dynamics and to provide an analytically grounded framework for understanding cooperative territorial governance as a pathway for conflict transformation.

4. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Territorial Maximalism and Governance as a Substitute for Annexation

This study finds that prevailing peace frameworks addressing the Israel–Palestine conflict systematically misdiagnose the locus of power (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2007; Kelman, 2011). Dominant approaches—ranging from the two-state solution to security-first paradigms and economic peace initiatives—continue to assume that territorial arrangements and political agreements constitute the primary drivers of conflict transformation. However, contemporary power in protracted conflicts increasingly operates through governance rather than formal sovereignty (Foucault, 2007; Barnett & Zürcher, 2009). This misalignment explains why repeated peace initiatives have failed to produce durable transformation despite extensive diplomatic engagement. The persistence of territorial maximalist visions, including those commonly associated with the concept of *Greater Israel*, illustrates this dynamic (Yiftachel, 2006; Weizman, 2017). While often framed as a project of territorial expansion rooted in religious or historical narratives, *Greater Israel* in its contemporary political manifestation functions less through formal annexation and more through asymmetric governance. Control is exercised through regulatory authority over land use, labor mobility, and resource allocation

without the extension of full political incorporation or demographic responsibility (Gordon, 2008; Roy, 2016). As a result, territorial claims remain operational even in the absence of continuous territorial conquest. Classical conflict resolution models struggle to address this form of power. The two-state solution, for instance, presumes that territorial separation will realign political authority and enable self-governance. Yet empirical evidence from semi-autonomous Palestinian territories demonstrates that political sovereignty without governance capacity produces only nominal autonomy (Khalidi, 2013; Le More, 2008). Regulatory dependence over labor, trade, water, and infrastructure effectively hollow out sovereignty, allowing territorial maximalist projects to persist beneath the surface of diplomatic compromise (World Bank, 2020; UNCTAD, 2019).

Security-centered approaches similarly fail to disrupt governance-based domination. While security coordination may reduce immediate violence, it often reinforces asymmetric authority by delegating enforcement responsibilities without redistributing regulatory power. Scholars of negative peace have long warned that stability achieved through security management does not equate to justice or transformation (Galtung, 1969). In this context, security cooperation functions as a stabilizing mechanism for governance asymmetry rather than a pathway toward conflict resolution. Economic peace initiatives further illustrate the limits of existing frameworks. Development projects and labor integration schemes are frequently presented as pragmatic alternatives to political settlement. However, political economy research demonstrates that economic growth under conditions of regulatory control entrenches dependency rather than empowerment (Roy, 2016; Farsakh, 2005). Employment opportunities mediated through discretionary permit regimes bind livelihoods to external authority, transforming labor into an instrument of governance rather than a foundation for autonomy. This dynamic aligns closely with the operational logic of territorial maximalism, which prioritizes control without incorporation. Settler colonial scholarship provides a critical lens for understanding these dynamics (Wolfe, 2006; Veracini, 2010). Unlike classical colonialism, contemporary settler colonial projects emphasize permanence through governance rather than overt conquest. Territorial expansion is sustained by legal, administrative, and economic systems that normalize domination while minimizing political responsibility (Gordon, 2008; Weizman, 2017) From this perspective, *Greater Israel* should be understood not primarily as an ideological aspiration, but as an adaptive governance project that restructures space, labor, and resources to maintain long-term control.

Why Existing Peace Solutions Fail Structurally

Existing peace solutions fail precisely because they leave these governance structures intact .An additional limitation of existing peace frameworks lies in their normative reliance on territorial compromise as a proxy for justice. Diplomatic discourse frequently treats territorial withdrawal, land swaps, or border adjustments as evidence of concession, assuming that reduced territorial control equates to diminished power. However, governance-based power challenges this assumption by demonstrating that control can be retained, and even intensified, through regulatory mechanisms independent of formal territorial presence (Azoulay, 2012; Hanieh, 2018). As a result, territorial compromise may coexist with deepened structural domination, rendering conventional measures of progress misleading.

This miscalculation is particularly evident in responses to territorial maximalist projects. Concepts such as *Greater Israel* are often interpreted through a territorial lens, prompting counterarguments focused on legal borders, international law, or historical claims. While these debates are important, they overlook the operational reality that contemporary territorial maximalism increasingly functions through selective governance rather than continuous annexation. Control over planning permissions, population registries, movement, and economic activity allows territorial ambition to advance incrementally without triggering the political and legal costs associated with formal expansion. Peace initiatives that fail to confront this mode of power inadvertently legitimize it. By emphasizing negotiations over final status issues while postponing governance reform, existing frameworks enable asymmetric authority to consolidate during periods of diplomatic stagnation. This dynamic helps explain why prolonged negotiation processes often coincide with expanded control on the ground. The absence of governance constraints allows territorial maximalism to adapt, presenting itself as compatible with peace efforts while deepening its structural footprint. Furthermore, liberal peacebuilding approaches tend to depoliticize governance by framing it as a matter of capacity, efficiency, or institutional best practices (Richmond, 2011; Mac Ginty, 2011). This depoliticization obscures the distributive consequences of governance arrangements. When institutions are strengthened without altering who controls regulatory authority, reforms enhance administrative performance while leaving power relations untouched. Such interventions may improve service delivery but do not challenge the asymmetries that sustain territorial maximalism. In some cases, they contribute to its resilience by rendering domination more orderly and less visible.

This study diverges from previous scholarship by foregrounding governance not as a neutral instrument but as a primary arena of contestation. Governance-based power does not

merely accompany territorial control; it substitutes for it. This substitution allows expansionist projects to operate below the threshold of overt political confrontation. By maintaining ambiguity between autonomy and control, governance-based domination resists both legal challenge and diplomatic pressure. Territorial maximalism thus persists not through defiance of peace efforts, but through their procedural limitations. The implications for conflict resolution theory are significant. Approaches that privilege consensus, gradual confidence building, or economic interdependence underestimate the strategic use of governance asymmetry. Cooperation without authority-sharing becomes a mechanism for stabilization rather than transformation. This insight challenges optimistic readings of incrementalism and calls for a reassessment of what constitutes meaningful progress in protracted conflicts.

By exposing the governance logic underlying territorial maximalism, this analysis clarifies why existing peace solutions repeatedly fail despite broad international endorsement. They address the visible symbols of conflict while leaving intact the less visible systems that reproduce it. Until governance-based power is treated as a central object of reform, territorial compromise alone will remain insufficient. In this sense, the limitations of existing peace solutions are not accidental but structural, rooted in an outdated understanding of how power is exercised in contemporary conflicts. By focusing on borders, recognition, or economic incentives, they underestimate the capacity of governance-based power to absorb and neutralize reform. Territorial maximalism thus persists not because it is uncontested ideologically, but because the institutional conditions that sustain it remain unchallenged. Cooperative Territorial Governance as Structural Counter-Strategy:

Cooperative Territorial Governance and the Case of Jericho

Jericho as an Empirical Stress Test Against this backdrop, the framework of *cooperative territorial governance* offers a structural counter-strategy to governance-based territorial maximalism. Rather than confronting ideological or theological claims directly, this approach targets the institutional mechanisms that render such claims politically effective. By focusing on shared governance of land, labor, and resources, it seeks to disrupt the asymmetries that allow territorial control to function without political incorporation. Labor governance constitutes the most immediate site of intervention. Contemporary labor regimes operate through uncertainty and discretion, producing compliance through economic vulnerability rather than coercion. This arrangement is central to governance-based domination, as it allows territorial control to persist without extending political rights. Cooperative labor governance— through jointly administered frameworks, transparent criteria, and enforceable protections— would not eliminate security considerations but would constrain unilateral authority. By

transforming labor from a tool of leverage into a governed domain, the structural advantages underpinning territorial maximalism are weakened.

Resource governance represents a second axis of transformation. Control over water, agricultural land, and infrastructure defines the boundaries of economic and political life. Environmental peacebuilding literature often promotes shared resource management as a confidence-building measure, yet critics caution that technocratic cooperation can obscure inequality. This study advances that debate by emphasizing authority rather than efficiency. Cooperative governance requires institutions with real decision-making power, accountability mechanisms, and dispute resolution capacity. Without these elements, cooperation risks legitimizing domination rather than transforming it. Local governance plays a crucial but frequently overlooked role in this framework. Municipalities are often treated as administrative units rather than political actors. Jericho exemplifies this condition (World bank, 2022; UN Ocha, 2021). The city is frequently cited as a model of stability and economic potential, particularly in tourism and agriculture. Yet its development remains contingent on external regulatory approval, limiting long-term planning and investment. Economic activity substitutes for political agency rather than enabling it. Stability, in this context, reflects managed autonomy rather than empowerment. Reinterpreted through a governance lens, Jericho becomes a stress test for cooperative territorial governance. Existing coordination mechanisms—such as planning approvals, tourism regulation, and agricultural management—demonstrate the feasibility of cooperation. However, their limited authority reveals the constraints of managerial coexistence. Formalizing these mechanisms into joint governance institutions with defined competencies would redistribute authority without requiring resolution of sovereignty claims. Such reforms would incrementally erode the governance asymmetries that sustain territorial maximalism. Crucially, cooperative territorial governance directly undermines the practical logic of projects such as *Greater Israel*. Once governance becomes shared and discretionary control is constrained, territorial expansion without political incorporation becomes increasingly costly, administratively complex, and politically exposed. The ability to control land and resources without assuming responsibility for the population is diminished. In this sense, cooperative governance does not negate territorial claims at the level of ideology, but dismantles the governance conditions that allow those claims to function in practice.

This approach is not without risks. Cooperation under asymmetry can entrench inequality if institutions lack reciprocity and accountability. Critical peacebuilding literature warns against depoliticized cooperation that stabilizes domination. This study addresses that concern by defining cooperative governance as inherently political and conflictual. Its

objective is not harmony, but the redistribution of authority over time. A further analytical implication concerns the internationalization of governance-based domination and its role in sustaining territorial maximalism. External actors—including donor states, international organizations, and financial institutions—often engage the conflict through technocratic governance reforms and development assistance while avoiding direct confrontation with structural asymmetry. Although such engagement is frequently justified as pragmatic or neutral, it inadvertently reinforces governance arrangements that enable unilateral control. By financing infrastructure, service delivery, and institutional capacity without addressing regulatory authority, international interventions risk stabilizing domination under the language of peacebuilding. This dynamic exposes a critical limitation in mainstream peacebuilding practice. International actors tend to treat governance reform as an apolitical exercise focused on efficiency and capacity building. However, governance in protracted conflicts is inherently political. Capacity without authority does not empower; it disciplines. In the absence of shared decision-making power, improved administrative capacity can deepen dependency by enabling local actors to manage constraints more effectively rather than challenge them. This finding diverges from liberal peacebuilding assumptions that institutional strengthening naturally leads to autonomy and peace.

The proposed framework of cooperative territorial governance reorients the role of international actors from service providers to institutional guarantors. Rather than funding isolated projects, external engagement would be directed toward supporting shared governance mechanisms, legal frameworks, and enforcement capacities. International legitimacy and conditionality could be leveraged not to impose political outcomes, but to protect institutional reciprocity. This represents a shift from outcome-oriented diplomacy to process-oriented power redistribution. Such a shift directly challenges governance-based territorial maximalism by limiting the external insulation that allows asymmetry to persist.

Another underexplored dimension concerns temporal power. Territorial maximalist projects derive strength not only from spatial control but from their ability to manage time delaying political resolution while deepening governance entrenchment (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Pierson, 2004). Incremental governance reforms that lack structural ambition often become absorbed into this temporal strategy, creating an illusion of progress without altering long-term trajectories. Cooperative territorial governance confronts this temporal asymmetry by embedding change within institutions that accumulate authority over time. While the transformation may be gradual, its effects are cumulative rather than cosmetic. This temporal dimension is particularly visible in the case of Jericho. Short-term economic gains and episodic

development initiatives create cycles of optimism followed by stagnation. Each cycle reinforces adaptive behavior rather than structural challenge. By contrast, institutionalized cooperation in planning, labor regulation, and resource management would generate path dependency toward shared authority. Once institutional routines are established, reversing them becomes politically costly. This insight aligns with historical institutionalist perspectives that emphasize how institutions shape future possibilities through incremental change. The analysis also highlights an ethical dimension often obscured in policy debates. Governance-based domination allows control without accountability, separating power from responsibility. Territorial maximalism benefits from this separation by externalizing the social and political costs of control. Cooperative governance re-links authority with responsibility by requiring shared decision-making and mutual accountability. While this does not resolve questions of sovereignty or identity, it alters the moral economy of governance. Power exercised through shared institutions is exposed to contestation, negotiation, and public scrutiny.

Importantly, this framework does not assume symmetrical willingness to cooperate. Resistance is likely, particularly from actors benefiting from discretionary authority. However, this resistance should be understood as evidence of the framework's disruptive potential rather than its weakness. Unlike symbolic negotiations or economic incentives, governance reform threatens concrete mechanisms of control. This explains why governance-based solutions often face stronger opposition than territorial compromise, despite being less visible politically.

Finally, this expanded analysis situates cooperative territorial governance within broader debates on conflict transformation beyond Israel–Palestine. Protracted conflicts characterized by asymmetric governance—such as those involving contested autonomy, occupation, or external administration—exhibit similar patterns of control without incorporation. By foregrounding governance rather than sovereignty, this study contributes a transferable analytical lens applicable to other cases where territorial disputes mask deeper institutional asymmetries. In sum, this additional analysis reinforces the central claim of the manuscript: that modern conflict persistence is sustained less by unresolved territorial claims than by adaptable governance structures that normalize domination over time. By exposing the international, temporal, and ethical dimensions of governance-based power, the framework of cooperative territorial governance emerges not merely as a technical proposal, but as a structural intervention capable of challenging the sustainability of territorial maximalism, including projects such as *Greater Israel*, without engaging in ideological confrontation.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that the persistence of contemporary territorial conflicts cannot be adequately understood through the lens of territorial control alone. Instead, it has demonstrated that modern forms of domination increasingly operate through governance-based power: the capacity to regulate land, labor, and resources without the formal responsibilities or costs of sovereignty. By foregrounding governance rather than borders, this study offers an alternative analytical framework for understanding why existing peace initiatives repeatedly fail despite sustained diplomatic engagement and international support. The analysis has shown that dominant peace paradigms—whether grounded in territorial partition, security-first logics, or economic cooperation—remain structurally limited because they leave intact the asymmetric governance arrangements that sustain conflict over time. Territorial compromise, when decoupled from authority-sharing, does not necessarily diminish power; it often redistributes control into less visible but more resilient regulatory mechanisms. This insight challenges the assumption that peace progresses linearly through incremental concessions, revealing instead how periods of negotiation may coincide with deeper entrenchment of domination. By examining territorial maximalism through the lens of governance, the article has also reframed the concept of Greater Israel as an institutional project rather than merely an ideological or theological claim. This reframing does not seek to adjudicate competing historical or religious narratives. Rather, it highlights how expansionist ambitions can be operationalized through administrative, legal, and economic instruments that function independently of formal annexation. Such mechanisms allow maximalist projects to advance while remaining insulated from the political and legal costs typically associated with overt territorial expansion.

The case illustration of Jericho underscores the empirical relevance of this argument. Often portrayed as a space of limited autonomy or economic experimentation, Jericho exemplifies how partial self-administration without regulatory authority produces a form of managed dependency rather than meaningful self-governance. Development initiatives and economic cooperation, while generating short-term stability, fail to alter the underlying distribution of power. As a result, they risk stabilizing an unequal status quo rather than transforming it. This finding challenges optimistic interpretations of development-led peacebuilding and underscores the need to distinguish between administrative capacity and political authority. The central contribution of this study lies in its articulation of cooperative territorial governance as a pathway for conflict transformation that does not rely on resolving ideological or religious claims over land. Instead, it proposes a pragmatic yet structurally grounded approach focused on shared management of land use, labor regulation, and resource

allocation. By embedding cooperation within binding institutions rather than voluntary coordination, this framework directly addresses the governance asymmetries that sustain modern territorial conflicts. Importantly, it shifts the focus of peacebuilding from symbolic outcomes to durable processes of power redistribution. This approach also carries broader implications for conflict resolution theory and practice. It challenges the depoliticization of governance prevalent in liberal peacebuilding and calls for greater attention to how institutions distribute authority over time. Moreover, it redefines the role of international actors, not as neutral facilitators of technical reform, but as potential guarantors of institutional reciprocity and accountability. Such a shift requires moving beyond short-term stabilization toward long-term transformation rooted in shared governance structures. In conclusion, the failure of existing peace solutions is not primarily a failure of intent or diplomacy, but a failure of analytical framing. By treating territory as the central object of contestation, peace efforts have underestimated the adaptive capacity of governance-based domination. This article offers a reframing that neither dismisses territorial claims nor attempts to resolve them directly. Instead, it advances a governance-centered approach capable of constraining territorial maximalism, including projects such as Greater Israel, by transforming the institutional foundations upon which such projects depend. In doing so, it contributes to a more realistic and structurally informed pathway toward conflict transformation in protracted territorial disputes.

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