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Historicizing the settler-colonial paradigm

Der Essay formuliert die These, dass eine rein Siedler-koloniale Beschreibung des zionistischen Projekts auf einem reduktionistischen Verständnis moderner jüdischer Geschichte, der israelischen Gesellschaft und des arabisch-israelischen Konflikts beruht. Während koloniale Elemente des Zionismus kritisch reflektiert werden müssen, sollte das dogmatische Verständnis des Zionismus als Siedler-Kolonialismus als Bestandteil der Geistesgeschichte des arabischen Nationalismus und des jüdischen Anti-Nationalismus historisiert werden. Als Gegenmodell zum Narrativ von Israel als dem „inneren Okzident" des Vorderen Orients integriert der Beitrag jüdischen Nationalismus und israelische Staatlichkeit in die Prozesse von Staats- und Nationenbildung der Region.

While a long line of Zionist thinkers have recognized the colonial dimension of the Jewish resettling of the Land of Israel/Palestine, this essay argues that the settler-colonial paradigm in Israel Studies is characterized by a reductionist understanding of modern Jewish history, Israeli society, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Instead of perpetuating the Cold War narrative of Israel as the "internal Occident" of the Middle East, both Jewish nationalism and Israeli statehood should be studied as integral elements of Middle Eastern state formation. In contrast, the settler-colonial paradigm deserves to be historicized as a crucial element of the intellectual history of Arab nationalism and Jewish anti-nationalism.

Introduction

The resurgence of the settler-colonial paradigm in Israel Studies[1] would have been a pleasant surprise for Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the Russian-Jewish founder of Revisionist Zionism. In his two essays, *The Iron Wall* and *The Ethics of the Iron Wall* (1923), he famously argued that the Jewish community in the Land of Israel/Palestine would have to rely on the logic of military force precisely *because* of the colonial dimension of the Zionist project: "Natives, be they cultured or uncultured, have always stubbornly fought against colonizers, be those cultured or uncultured. ... Every people struggles against colonizers, as long as there is at least a spark of hope for getting rid of the threat of colonization"[2]. While Jabotinsky highlighted the colonial dimension of the territorial conflict as a rhetorical weapon against bi-nationalists and "Arabo-philes"[3] alike, he refused to concede that this insight about the institutional means of Zionism (colonization) could in any way

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[1] For a recent example, see Greenstein, Ran: "Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity: The Case of Israel/Palestine," in: Medaon – Magazin für jüdisches Leben in Forschung und Bildung 11 (2017), 20, pp. 1–14.
[2] Jabotinsky, Vladimir: On the Iron Wall (1923), in: Kaplan, Eran/ Penslar, Derek Jonathan, eds.: The Origins of Israel, 1882-1948, Madison 2011, pp. 257–63, here 258 and 259.
[3] Jabotinsky, Iron Wall, 1923.

be deployed in order to delegitimize the movement's political goal (Jewish sovereignty): "The principle of self-determination does not mean that if someone has seized a stretch of land it must remain in his possession for all time, and that he who was forcibly ejected from his land must always remain homeless. Self-determination means revision – such a revision of the distribution of the earth among the nations that those nations who have too much should have to give up some of it to those nations who have not enough or who have none, so that all should have some place on which to exercise their right of self-determination"[4].

Although Jabotinsky recognized the ambivalent nature of Zionism as a state project with both national and colonial characteristics early on, his principled defense of colonization would sound increasingly problematic after the historical shift towards decolonization in the 1960s. The Palestinian national movement in particular would invest considerable effort in depicting the State of Israel as the epitome of coloniality: The Palestine National Charter of 1968 defines the Zionist movement as "essentially fanatical and racialist; its objectives involve aggression, expansion and the establishment of colonial settlements, and its methods are those of the Fascists and the Nazis"[5].

In contrast, this essay argues that the settler-colonial paradigm produces a reductionist understanding of Jewish history, Israeli society, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Reading the Zionist project through the lens of French Algeria or South African Apartheid ignores the ethno-religious nature of the Jewish Diaspora, erases the agency of Middle Eastern Jews, and absolves the Arab states (as well as the Palestinians) from their shared responsibility for the disastrous outcome of the partition of Mandatory Palestine. As an alternative to the settler-colonial straitjacket, the essay presents the case for exploring Jewish nationalism and Israeli statehood as integral elements of Middle Eastern state formation. While the colonial dimension of Zionist state formation needs to be studied in detail, the settler-colonial paradigm in its rigid orthodoxy deserves to be historicized as a crucial element of the intellectual history of Arab nationalism and Jewish anti-nationalism.

Contested indigeneity

The settler-colonial paradigm revolves around the "indigenous-settler issue"[6], defined as the conflict between "a cluster of societies in which colonial rule – the overseas extension of Europe-based states – was combined with large-scale immigration of metro-politan settlers" and "indigenous groups, slaves and other people marginalized through this form of colonial rule"[7]. For a number of reasons, this framework appears woefully ill-equipped to capture the complex history of Jewish nationalism and Israeli state formation:

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[4] Jabotinsky, Vladimir: The Ethics of the Iron Wall (1923), Jewish Virtual Library, online: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/quot-the-iron-wall-quot [2018-01-10]. See also: Gans, Chaim: A Political Theory for the Jewish People, Oxford 2016, pp. 107-111.

[5] Article 22 in: Palestine Liberation Organization: The Palestine National Charter, in: Rabinovich, Itamar and Reinharz, Jehuda, eds.: Israel in the Middle East. Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations. Pre-1948 to the Present, Hanover 2008, pp. 243–46.

[6] Greenstein, Settler Colonialism, p. 12.

[7] Greenstein, Settler Colonialism, p. 1.

- The Zionist project was not designed as the extension of a "Europe-based state" but, rather, as a colonization project based on the return migration of an ethnic group subjected to a form of internal colonialism. In this regard, it was similar to the "Back-to-Africa" movement which came to shape the "Black Zion" of Liberia[8].

- Describing Jewish immigrants and refugees as "metropolitan settlers" fails to capture the deeply ambivalent relationship between the Zionist project and European culture[9]: While some Ashkenazi Jews came to the Land of Israel/Palestine to establish a decidedly *Western* state[10], many Middle Eastern Jews (as well as the predominantly Ashkenazi bi-nationalists) explicitly made the case for a close integration into the region, a case that included an emphasis on the Arabic language and Arab culture[11].

- In sharp contrast to European settler-colonialism as a mere "overseas extension", the Zionist project aimed at creating a national culture in a national language, namely Hebrew. In terms of language revitalization alone, the case of Hebrew seems more closely related to Māori than to the colonial *lingua franca* of English[12].

- While the Jewish resettlement of the Land of Israel/Palestine would have been impossible without the British Mandate, Zionism did not aim at establishing a form of "colonial rule". On the contrary, as a form of Diaspora nationalism (similar to the Greek and Armenian example), Zionism aimed at restoring Diasporic communities to their ancestral homeland[13].

Consequently, the Zionist project stands beyond the facile dichotomy of "settler colonialism" and "indigeneity". According to Derek Penslar, the Zionist project could best be described as "historically and conceptually situated between colonial, anti-colonial and post-colonial discourse and practice"[14], resulting in a curious combination between the colonial projection of power and population, an anti-colonial struggle for national liberation, and the quintessentially postcolonial belief in high modernism[15].

The limited analytical value of the settler-colonial paradigm for the Arab-Israeli conflict stands out in particular when it comes to the question of contested indigeneity[16]. As Barnard points out, indigeneity (or primo-occupancy, the doubtful privilege of being the first settler) is "not really an anthropological concept, or at least not a very good one" – after all, "claims to it follow a western social construction of 'indigenous' authenticity"[17].

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[8] Jenkins, David: Black Zion: The Return of Afro-Americans and West Indians to Africa, London 1975.

[9] Reinharz, Jehuda/Shavit, Yaacov: Glorious, Accursed Europe. An Essay on Jewish Ambivalence, Waltham, MA 2010.

[10] Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon: The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective, in: Kalmar, Ivan Davidson/Penslar, Derek Jonathan, eds.: Orientalism and the Jews, Waltham, MA 2005, pp. 162–81.

[11] Behar, Moshe/Benite, Zvi Ben-Dor, eds.: Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought. Writings on Identity, Politics and Culture. 1893-1958, Waltham, MA 2013; Hermann, Tamar: The Bi-National Idea in Israel/ Palestine: Past and Present, in: Nations and Nationalism 11 (2005), 3, pp. 381–401.

[12] Spolsky, Bernard: Conditions for Language Revitalisation: A Comparison of the Cases of Hebrew and Maori, in: Wright, Sue, ed.: Language and the State: Revitalization and Revival in Israel and Eire, Clevedon 1996, pp. 5–50.

[13] Smith, Anthony D.: Diasporas and Homelands in History: The Case of the Classic Diasporas, in: ed. Gal, Allon/Leoussi, Athena S./Smith, Anthony D., eds.: The Call of the Homeland: Diaspora Nationalisms, Past and Present, Leiden and Boston 2010, pp. 3–26.

[14] Penslar, Derek Jonathan: Israel in History: The Jewish State in Comparative Perspective, New York 2007, p. 91.

[15] Becke, Johannes: Beyond Allozionism: Exceptionalizing and De-Exceptionalizing the Zionist Project, in: Israel Studies 23 (2018), 2, pp. 168–93.

[16] Frantzman, Seth J./Havatzelet, Yaheland/Kark, Ruth: Contested Indigeneity: The Development of an Indigenous Discourse on the Bedouin of the Negev, Israel, in: Israel Studies 17 (2012),1, pp. 78–104.

While most ethno-territorial conflicts are shaped by "sons of the soil" arguments[18], the settler-colonial paradigm tends to take sides in the nativist outbidding between Jewish and Palestinian Arab nationalism: The anxious Palestinian denial of Jewish peoplehood and the insistence on ultra-indigeneity would have surprised the Arab conquerors of the Land of Israel/Palestine, who probably could not have imagined that their descendants would one day claim to be "the proud son of the Netufians and the Canaanites"[19].

Historically, the Palestinian claim to be "10.000 years old"[20] can be explained as a form of "Palestinian Zionism"[21]: When Jewish nationalists claimed to restore the "eternal people" (*am-'olam*)[22] to a land from which it had been exiled 2.000 years ago, Palestinian nationalists had no choice but to present the historical counterclaim of yet *another* eternal people (*sha b al-khulūd*)[23] whose formation dated back at least 3.000 years (if not more). In the ensuing struggle over archaeology, history, and terminology, both sides have repeatedly fallen prey to believing their own nationalist historiographies, invariably representing the other side as temporary intruders and articifial collectives who do not share a common sense of fate.

From an analytical perspective, this irredentist outbidding should be treated with caution. Weiner famously described the fixation with history and territory in ethnic conflicts as the "Macedonian syndrome"[24], an obsession with authenticity, victimhood and "unredeemed" lands which rarely contributes to conflict resolution. For both the Jewish and the Palestinian national movement, the pathos of timelessness in particular belies the modern nature and contingency of territorial nationalism: Throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, Zionism represented one of *many* political solutions to the entangled crises of modernity, assimilation, and antisemitism that plagued the Jewish world – and perhaps not always the least quixotic. Large numbers of Jews seemed more interested in becoming American, Soviet, Iraqi, or German patriots than in settling in a somewhat unappealing province of the Ottoman Empire, where Zionist enthusiasts struggled with the desert, the Arabs, and the Hebrew language. At the same time, it is highly doubtful that Palestinian nationalism would ever have turned into a force of its own without Zionist claims to the Land of Israel/Palestine: Based on a shared history, culture, cuisine, and dialect, the Arab inhabitants of the territory between the River and the Sea might gladly have joined a political entity covering all of Greater Syria or *bilād al-shām*.

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[17] Barnard, Alan: Kalahari Revisionism, Vienna and the 'Indigenous Peoples' Debate, in: Social Anthropology 14 (2006), 1, pp. 1–16, 7.

[18] Weiner, Myron: Sons of the Soil. Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India, Princeton 1978.

[19] Miller, Elhanan: About That 10,000-Year History in Jericho, Mr. Erekat, in: The Times of Israel, 2014, online: https://www.timesofisrael.com/about-that-10000-year-history-in-jericho-mr-erekat/ [2018-04-29].

[20] Miller, 10,000-Year history.

[21] Al-Azm, Sadik J.: Palestinian Zionism, in: Die Welt des Islams 28 (1988), 1, pp. 90–98.

[22] The term was popularized by Peretz Smolenskin, see Barzilay, Isaac E.: Smolenskin's Polemic against Mendelssohn in Historical Perspective, in: Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research 53 (1986), pp. 11–48.

[23] A term from the Palestinian national anthem, see http://info.wafa.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=2353 [2019-04-29].

[24] Weiner, Myron: The Macedonian Syndrome: An Historical Model of International Relations and Political Development, in: World Politics 23 (1971), 4, pp. 665–83.

From Europe's "internal Orient" to the "internal Occident" of the Middle East

The settler-colonial paradigm not only projects a simplistic frame of "settlers" and "natives" onto a complex ethnic conflict, it also marks an important shift in the representation of Jewish difference: While 19th century Orientalism depicted the Jews as the "internal Orient" of Europe[25], 20th century Occidentalism portrayed the Jewish nation-state as the "internal Occident" of the Middle East. The mirroring effect between two processes of othering extends to the dimension of racialized discourse: While European antisemitism became obsessed with the ethnic origins of European Jewry in the Middle East[26], the settler-colonial paradigm seeks to portray Jewish return migration to the region as a settlement project of foreign, colonial, and decidedly *white* settlers who "look like other Europeans"[27]. While European antisemitism became obsessed with Jewish difference, classic Arab anti-Zionism anxiously sought to deny Jewish distinctness by insisting that "Judaism is a revealed religion; it is not a separate nationality, nor are the Jews a single people with a separate identity"[28].

The Cold War confrontation between "East" and "West" made it particularly appealing to portray Israel as the "internal Occident" of the Middle East. In this context, the most important element in spreading the settler-colonial paradigm to global audiences might have been the Six Day War and its consequences: Israel's settlement project in the occupied territories seemed to confirm the colonial nature of the Zionist project much more effectively than the writings of the PLO and its fellow travelers such as Maxime Rodinson[29]. The puzzling sight of Israel's large-scale colonization project in the very decade of Algerian decolonization seemed to settle the question about the true nature of Zionism once and for all, at least to Palestinian, Arab and Third Worldist eyes. In the words of Edward Said, after 1967 "on the ground so to speak, it was the contest between an openly colonialist movement (which Zionism had always been; now the colonialism was finally and ironically exposed to view before a post-colonial world) and a nationalist insurgency"[30].

The settler-colonial paradigm became particularly attractive as a blame-shifting maneuver: If Zionism was nothing but yet another form of European settler-colonialism, the Arab states could not be blamed for their futile rejection of a two-state solution in 1947, their defeat in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 and the subsequent herding of Palestinian refugees and their descendants into permanent camp cities. If Zionism was a colonial invasion, the Arab states could not be blamed for the almost total ethnic

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[25] Rohde, Achim: Der innere Orient. Orientalismus, Antisemitismus und Geschlecht im Deutschland des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts, in: Die Welt Des Islams 5 (2005), 3, pp. 370–411.

[26] See the chapter on the "Near Eastern race" ("vorderasiatische Rasse") by Günther: Günther, Hans F.K.: Rassenkunde des jüdischen Volkes, München 1930, pp. 22-40, encompassing "modern Greeks, Turks, Jews, Syrians, Armenians and modern Persians" (all translations by the author), p. 26.

[27] Massad, Joseph: in: Massad, Joseph A./Morris, Benny: History on the Line. Joseph Massad and Benny Morris Discuss the Middle East, in: Massad, Joseph A., ed.: The Persistance of the Palestinian Question. Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians, New York 2006, pp. 154–65, here p. 163.

[28] Article 20, Palestine Liberation Organization: The Palestine National Charter.

[29] Rodinson, Maxime: Israel: A Colonial Settler-State?, New York 1973.

[30] Said , Edward W.: Introduction, in: Said, Edward W./Hitchens, Christopher, eds.: Blaming the Victims. Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question, London and New York 1988, pp. 1–19, here p. 8.

cleansing of Jews from Arab lands – clearly Zionist agents were somehow behind the sudden departure of hundreds of thousands of Middle Eastern Jews, frequently seeking refuge in the State of Israel. If Zionism could be studied via the lens of French Algeria or South African Apartheid, the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict became obvious: Decolonization in the form of mass ethnic cleansing (the Algerian model) or decolonization in the form of dismantling the self-determination of the settler-nation (the South African model).

While the depiction of Israel as a settler-colonial state or a "usurping entity" (*al-kiyān al-muġta ib*)[31] became entangled with antisemitic motifs over time, the settler-colonial paradigm finds its origins rather in Occidentalism than in anti-Judaism. In order to draw a sharp line between their energetic critique of the Zionist project and antisemitism, secular Arab nationalists in particular emphasized the fact that their principled stand against Zionism should in no way be confused or conflated with the ancient hatred of Jews and Judaism, frequently by relying on Jewish anti-Zionists to prove their point[32]. In hindsight, the critique of antisemitism by Arab nationalists (including Palestinian nationalists) deserves more recognition; however, the flight and expulsion of Jews from the Arab world made this important distinction between Jews and Jewish nationalism somewhat academic. For the Iraqi Jewish victims of the *Farhud* pogrom in 1941, it might not have made a substantial difference whether their attackers believed in a racial doctrine of antisemitism (imported from the West), the classic Islamic condescension towards Zionism as a "dhimmi rebellion"[33], or a form of radical Arab nationalism which suspected them of colluding with Western imperialism.

While the settler-colonial representation of Israel as an "imperialist base endangering the region"[34] contains elements of *völkisch* thought, the nativist jargon of Arab indigeneity and Zionist coloniality should not be misunderstood as an indicator that "blood-and-soil" Arab nationalism opposed the Zionist project because it was an island of liberal modernity and cosmopolitan enlightenment. Both Zionism and Arabism were profoundly influenced by European-style ethnic nationalism, including its irredentist and revisionist offshoots. At its core, the Arab-Israeli conflict might not be a confrontation between "natives" and "settlers", but rather an intransigent struggle between two indigenized versions of romantic German nationalism, with meta-narratives of language, peoplehood, and redemption instead of citizenship, civic religion, and secularism.

Beyond the settler-colonial straitjacket

While the colonial dimension of the Zionist project needs to be explored with a careful and sober eye, the settler-colonial paradigm might not be the ideal point of departure. Reducing the Arab-Israeli conflict to a mere struggle between "settlers" and "natives" appeals to Arab nationalists and Jewish anti-nationalists alike, but its analytical one-sidedness seems ill-equipped to decipher the multi-faceted nature of Israel as a "settler-

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[31] On the depiction of Israel as an "artificial" state, see Harkabi, Yehoshafat: Arab Attitudes to Israel, Jerusalem 1972, p. 72.

[32] Gribetz, Jonathan Marc: The PLO's Rabbi: Palestinian Nationalism and Reform Judaism, in: Jewish Quarterly Review 107 (2017), 1, pp. 90–112.

[33] Nisan, Mordechai: Minorities in the Middle East, 2nd. ed., London 2002, p. 268.

[34] Harkabi, Arab Attitudes to Israel, 1972, p. 70.

immigrant-indigenous society"[35]. The depiction of Israel as a colonial "villa in the jungle"[36] may correspond to an important leitmotif of Ashkenazi-Jewish self-understanding, both in Israel and abroad, but it ignores the crucial legacy of Middle Eastern Jewish culture as well as the ongoing and increasingly irreversible Levantinization of Israeli culture[37]. More importantly, the settler-colonial paradigm ignores the countless parallels between Israel and its neighbors – whether in terms of ethnic and ethno-religious nationalism, a deep-seated ambivalence towards Europe, or the process of postcolonial state formation.

While an important number of arguments have been raised against the settler-colonial paradigm in Israel Studies[38], the crucial challenge in the process of moving beyond simplistic dichotomies of "settler-colonialism" and "indigeneity" consists in developing alternative analytical frameworks. In this context, the most ambitious research agenda might consist in the systematic integration of Israel Studies into Middle East Studies: Recent comparative studies on Israeli expansionism and the settlement project have for instance focused systematically on comparative case studies in the region of the Middle East, exploring either Turkish rule over Northern Cyprus, Moroccan rule over the Western Sahara, or the establishment of 'Greater Lebanon'[39]. This research agenda links up to earlier attempts to study Israel in comparison with its neighbors[40], thereby achieving methodologically what could not be attained so far politically – Israel's integration into the region[41].

For this regional-comparative paradigm, both Zionism and Israeli statehood could be fruitfully integrated into a more inclusive discipline of Middle East Studies:

• The close link between ethnicity and religion in Jewish self-understanding calls for a structured comparison with other cases of ethno-sectarianism and minority nationalism in the region, including historical examples of (short-lived) statehood like the Druze State and the Alawite state[42]. In many cases, minority nationalism was actively encouraged by colonial authorities – a pattern with a number of intriguing parallels to British-Zionist relations at the time of the Mandate.

• Israel's ties to the Jewish Diaspora closely resemble other political projects in the region which are dominated by Diaspora politics[43], both in terms of state-Diaspora relations (Lebanon) and stateless Diasporas deeply involved in state-building projects (Kurdistan). Given the uniquely dispersed nature of the Jewish Diaspora and the limited Jewish presence in the Land of Israel/Palestine before state formation,

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[35] Becke, Beyond Allozionism, 2018, p. 183.

[36] Bar-Yosef, Eitan: Villa Ba-Jungel. Afrika Ba-Tarbut Ha-Israelit (Villa in the Jungle. Africa in Israeli Culture), Tel Aviv 2014.

[37] Kahanoff, Jacqueline: What about Levantinization?, in: Journal of Levantine Studies 1 (2011), 1, pp. 13–22.

[38] Aaronsohn, Ran: Settlement in Eretz Israel – A Colonialist Enterprise? ´Critical´ Scholarship and Historical Geography, in: Israel Studies 1 (October 1996), 2, pp. 214–29; Bareli, Avi: Forgetting Europe: Perspectives on the Debate about Zionism and Colonialism, in: Journal of Israeli History 20 (June 2001), 2–3, pp. 99–120; Becke, Johannes: Towards A De-Occidentalist Perspective On Israel: The Case of The Occupation, in: Journal of Israeli History 33 (2014), 1, pp. 1–23.

[39] Haklai, Oded/Loizides, Neophytos, eds.: Settlers in Contested Lands. Territorial Disputes and Ethnic Conflicts, Stanford 2015; Barak, Oren: State Expansion and Conflict: In And Between Israel/Palestine and Lebanon, Cambridge 2017.

[40] Migdal, Joel S.: Strong Societies and Weak States, Princeton, NJ 1988; Barnett, Michael N.: Confronting the Costs of War, Princeton, NJ 1993.

[41] Podeh, Elie: Rethinking Israel in the Middle East, in: Israel Affairs 3 (March 1997), 3–4, pp. 280–95.

[42] Rabinovich, Itamar: The Compact Minorities and the Syrian State, 1918-45, in: Journal of Contemporary History 14 (1979), 4, pp. 693–712.

[43] Ma'oz, Moshe/Sheffer, Gabriel, eds.: Middle Eastern Minorities and Diasporas, Brighton 2002.

Zionism clearly forms a special sub-type of diaspora nationalism[44]. Nonetheless, instead of understanding territorial expansionism exclusively through the settler-colonial lens, diaspora nationalism might be at least a helpful complementary approach: All three "classic diasporas" (whether Greek, Armenian or Jewish natio-nalism) developed a specific pattern of irredentism and territorial expansionism, resulting in both the Armenian and the Israeli case in entrenched ethnic conflict and long-standing military occupations.

• Israel's increasing cultural integration into the Middle East, while rarely acknowledged, calls for a comparative perspective on cultural hybridity in the region which no longer considers Hebrew-Israeli culture as a foreign, colonial entity: Israeli politics and culture need to be studied in their complex entanglement with the region, whether as a case of Creolization or as one particular facet of a complex and multi-ethnic region that cannot be subsumed under the labels of an "Arab Middle East" or an "Islamic Middle East".

Conclusion

The settler-colonial paradigm in its orthodox formulation fails to capture the historical origin of Jewish nationalism, the complex nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the multi-faceted nature of Israeli society. Nonetheless, it should not be discarded as though it is merely an increasingly irrelevant legacy of Cold War demonology[45]. The settler-colonial paradigm rather deserves to be historicized and deployed as a particularly rich *archive*. For instance, much of contemporary Arab writing about Zionist thought and Israeli history would have been unthinkable without a pattern described by Hassan Barari as Israelism, a form of academic or rather pseudo-academic discourse about Israel, "weighed down by biased projection, ideological deformation, predisposition and the need to expose rather than to understand or explain the 'other'"[46]. As Barari explains, Israelism assumes three features about the State of Israel – it is ephemeral (and bound to disappear), epiphenomenal (by serving the interests of Western 'imperialism') and exceptional (in other words, unlike any of its Arab neighbours). All three features are closely connected to the settler-colonial paradigm, and any study of contemporary Arab writing about Israel will have to be based on a nuanced reading of how exactly the relationship between colonialism and Zionism is being portrayed.

In addition, left-wing opposition to the Zionist project and the State of Israel was closely tied to an increasingly settler-colonial reading of Jewish nationalism. As the history of Matzpen shows[47], Israel's radical Jewish left became increasingly opposed to Zionism under the impact of Algerian decolonization, when a number of Israeli Jews came to understand themselves as colonial settlers in need of a radical rupture with both the West and their own national movement[48]. Matzpen's call for an all-encompassing "de-

44 Smith, Diasporas and Homelands, 2010.
45 Korey, William: Russian Antisemitism, Pamyat and the Demonology of Zionism, Chur 1995.
46 Barari, Hassan A.: Israelism. Arab Scholarship on Israel, a Critical Assessment, Reading 2009, p. 16.
47 Fiedler, Lutz: Matzpen. Eine andere israelische Geschichte, Göttingen 2017.
48 Blass, Jonathan: Imperialism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Revisions in Matzpen's Historical Perspective, in: Israel Studies 20 (2015), 1, pp. 134–58.

Zionization" of the Jewish nation-state, for instance, can only be conceptualized within the framework of the settler-colonial paradigm.

Given the long and rich legacy of Zionist reflection about settling, i.e. *colonizing* an inhabited piece of land, comparisons between the Zionist project and European settler-colonialism should in no way be reduced to Third Worldism, Arab anti-Zionism, and "Jewish Judaeophobia"[49]. As the case of Jabotinsky's spirited defense of the settler-colonial analogy shows, the recognition of the colonial dimension of Zionism does not necessarily result in anti-Zionism, quite the contrary: For Jabotinsky, only the honest recognition of the heavy price of Zionism for the Palestinian Arabs could form the basis for effective strategies of Zionist statecraft.

While the settler-colonial paradigm may not be the most helpful analytical tool in unraveling the colonial dimension of Zionist state formation, it has informed a rich and colorful archive of Arab nationalism and Jewish anti-nationalism, both in terms of ideological, scholarly, and artistic production. Over time, modern Arab nationalism, political Islam, Third Worldism, and Palestinian nationalism have produced a counter-historiography to Zionism, which deserves to be studied and critiqued in its own right. Once historicized as one of *many* approaches to reading the complex history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the settler-colonial paradigm's critical edge could contribute more fruit-fully to our understanding of Israel/Palestine than it could as a blunt instrument in the hands of ideologues and activists, whatever their persuasion may be[50].

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[49] Friesel, Evyatar: On the Complexities of Modern Jewish Identity: Contemporary Jews against Israel, in: Israel Affairs 17 (2011), 4, pp. 504–19.

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