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# Zionist hegemony, the settler colonial conquest of Palestine and the problem with conflict: a critical genealogy of the notion of binary conflict

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## ABSTRACT


Describing the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a 'binary conflict' is taken as a value-free and academically neutral depiction. This article challenges the objective nature of the notion of binary conflict. Contributing to scholarship that prioritizes subjugated knowledge, this article poses that the depiction of the situation entirely in terms of conflict – and the rigid alterity that such a perspective tacitly transmits – should be recognized as a paradigm with an inherently Zionist bias. A genealogy of the notion of conflict shows how early Zionist leaders consciously advocated a framework of binary conflict in order to counter accusations of settler colonialism and garner the support of non-Zionist Jews and other potential allies. This exposition draws out how the notion of binary conflict is instrumental in obscuring settler colonial dispossession and Palestinian lived experience; in forging the hegemonic unification of Zionist Jews; and in negating critique from third-party others. An understanding of how this perception of Israel–Palestine came about offers fresh insight into the strategies adopted by the early Zionist movement. Furthermore, acknowledging the power-nexus behind the binary conflict perspective has the potential to deepen our understanding of the discursive and oppressive mechanisms of contemporary settler colonialism.

## KEYWORDS

Zionism; hegemony; settler colonialism; Palestine; Israel; conflict; anti-colonial resistance; critical theory

## Introduction: should we care?

On 26 October 2014, Israel's Defence Minister, Moshe Ya'alon, issued a directive that banned Palestinians from travelling on Israeli-run buses in the West Bank.<sup>1</sup> This announcement immediately sparked debate in regular and social media, both within Israel and beyond. As such, prominent print newspapers such as *The Nation* and the *Washington Post* published articles and opinion pieces that likened the decision to apartheid and to the 'separate but equal' doctrine that enabled segregation in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Israeli

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politician, Tzipi Livni, demanded an immediate investigation into the matter by the Attorney General.<sup>3</sup>

Amidst these heated voices, an article by Mira Sucharov stood out. In a blog post, the associate professor at the Political Science department of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, wrote: 'So about those separate buses: Should we care?'<sup>4</sup> After a carefully articulated enumeration of settlement policies and checkpoint control systems that raises questions about the democratic nature of Israel's rule in the West Bank, Sucharov succinctly answers her own question 'not really'. In her view '[t]he buses are simply a function of the overall system of occupation that inherently denies Palestinians the basic human right of being ruled by the entity that represents them.'<sup>5</sup> With this argument, Sucharov reiterates Lori Allen's observation that the setting apart of Israel's military operations in Gaza as 'wars' has had 'the paradoxical effect of calling attention to only certain forms and levels of violence in Gaza, while obfuscating and normalizing the "everyday" violence of Israel's military occupation'.<sup>6</sup> Both authors indirectly, and in other instances also directly,<sup>7</sup> challenge the conceptualization of the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a binary conflict between two distinctly definable sides.

This is in line with the growing transdisciplinary debate, which can be encapsulated in the phrase 'thinking Palestine'. It refers to the body of knowledge produced by scholars who consciously and critically re-engage with the most basic question of what is going on in the territory that we currently depict as Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Aware of the formative power of words and conceptualizations in setting the parameters of what can be discussed or thought, scholars such as Taraki and Goldberg,<sup>8</sup> challenge what have been regarded as fixed truths. Instead they revisit the conception of Palestine as 'a dialectic experience positioned against its perennial other, Zionism'.<sup>9</sup> Through conceptualizations such as 'racial Palestinianization',<sup>10</sup> 'thanapolitics'<sup>11</sup> and the State of Israel as either in a permanent 'State of Exception'<sup>12</sup> or as 'a *Mukhabarat* [police] state',<sup>13</sup> these critical scholars aim to provide subaltern perspectives and revive subjugated knowledge in addition to highlighting and questioning the power relations behind the knowledge-making processes that are typically applied in relation to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Within this debate, the field of Settler Colonial studies has recently gained traction. As Bhandar and Ziadah<sup>14</sup> rightfully point out, the settler colonial framework should not be seen as a completely new point of analysis, but rather as part of the effort to 'historicize the colonization of Palestine as a process' as done, among others, by Swedenburgh,<sup>15</sup> Sayyigh,<sup>16</sup> Arruri<sup>17</sup> and Shehadeh.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, Salamanca, Qato, Rabie and Samour – the joint authors of *Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine* – assert:

the advantage of advancing settler colonialism as a relative interpretative framework for the study of Zionism is not only that it can offer conceptual and political possibilities for how we read Palestine today, but that it also dismantles deep-seeded [*sic*] analysis and assumptions sustaining claims of exceptionalism.<sup>19</sup>

One of the most intractable assumptions, already alluded to above in relation to Sucharov<sup>20</sup> and Allen,<sup>21</sup> is that regardless of one's position, framework or political convictions, the situation in Israel and Palestine constitutes one of binary conflict between Jews and Arabs. This article questions the neutrality of that perception. It suggests that the perception of the situation as a binary conflict, and consequent depictions of the conflict,

function simultaneously as an ideological distraction and an instrument to justify settler colonial practices.

It will do so through a critical genealogy that traces the conceptualization of Israel–Palestine in terms of binary conflict from the establishment of the political Zionist movement in 1897 to the declaration of independence of the State of Israel in 1948. While this genealogy focuses on the early years of the Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel, it should be noted that settler colonialism is an ongoing process.<sup>22</sup> The exposition will show that early Zionist leaders consciously advocated the perception of binary ethno-nationalist conflict in order to counter accusations of settler colonial conquest. This perception of rigid alterity functioned concurrently in multiple instrumental ways. Primarily it conflated Palestinians with Arabs in general and therewith denied Palestinian indigenous claims to the country in which they lived, and obscured their own particular experiences. Thereby, it functioned as an integral part of what Patrick Wolfe calls the ‘elimination of the native’ which he sets out in his 2006 article, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’.<sup>23</sup> The carefully advocated perception of binary conflict between Arabs and Jews thus functioned to obscure another binary; between settler colonists and the indigene. However, it should be observed that settler colonial studies does not create binaries not does it aim to simply replace one by another.<sup>24</sup> Rather, genealogies such as the one presented in this article, challenge and unpack the power relations behind binaries established by settler colonial regimes. As such, Lorenzo Veracini asserts that settler colonialism ‘establishes inherently triangular relations [...] compromising three different agencies: the settler coloniser, the indigenous colonised, and a variety of differently categorised exogenous “Others”’.<sup>25</sup> The framework of binary ethno-nationalist conflict was thus not only intended to undermine the legitimacy of the colonized Palestinians, but to rally support from third parties, such as Mandate Britain, and also to persuade non-Zionist Jews to join the new Zionist imagined collective.

In acknowledging that a conceptualization of rigid binary conflict is a paradigm rather than a fact, and as such that it can be challenged, we stand a better chance of gaining a broader perspective about the past and furthering our understanding of the mechanisms of present day settler colonial dispossession. Furthermore, it may stimulate critical reflection on the politics of representation in academic writings on settler colonialism in general, and Palestine–Israel in particular.

### **Genealogy, Zionist hegemony and subjugated knowledge**

In proposing a critical genealogy of the interpretation of the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in terms of binary conflict, this article does not aim to provide an alternative history<sup>26</sup> or claim to present a complete overview of the complex and ambiguous relationship between Zionism and its discontents. Following Foucault, who in turn was deeply influenced by Nietzsche,<sup>27</sup> genealogy is taken to be a deconstructive means to investigate ‘force relations’ behind interpretations of history within the power-knowledge nexus. Or, in the words of Talal Asad, genealogy is ‘a way of working back from our present to the contingencies that have come together to give us our certainties’.<sup>28</sup> As such, this article traces how the conceptualization of Israel–Palestine as binary conflict grew to be perceived as a neutral description, in other words how it became an integral part of Zionist hegemony and dominant discourse.

Following Jean and John Comaroff's anthropological exegeses of Gramsci's original concept, hegemony is 'that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – drawn from a historically situated cultural field – that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it'.<sup>29</sup> While this definition adequately captures the often unconscious realm of hegemonic processes, it deviates from Gramsci's original conceptualizations in two ways that are particularly relevant to this study. First, while it does acknowledge agency within the process of hegemony, it does not prioritize the role of traditional intellectuals<sup>30</sup> as 'agents who tend to represent and direct the interests of those in power'.<sup>31</sup> Second, the Comaroff definition does not explicitly uphold Gramsci's analysis of domination and hegemony as dialectical manifestations and complementary practices in the leadership of complex political formations. Or, as Kurtz effectively paraphrases Gramsci<sup>32</sup> on the interaction between domination and hegemony:

domination, is used for coercion and force against those who resist its authority and power. [Hegemony] is used as [an] intellectual device[s] to infuse its ideas of morality to gain the support of those who resist or may be neutral, to retain the support of those who consent to its rule and to establish alliances as widely as possible to enable the creation of an ethical-political [*italics in the original*] relationship with the people.<sup>33</sup>

In the context of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, these central aspects of Gramsci's conceptualization – the role of traditional intellectuals and the complementary interaction between domination and hegemony – are important because, as will be argued below, Zionist traditional intellectuals very consciously adapted Zionist practice and ideology to create and sustain moral, cultural and political hegemonic leadership over Jewish Israelis and possible international allies, while from the onset excluding Palestinians from the Zionist hegemony. In relation to Palestinians, these early intellectuals relied on domination, in the form of coercion and force, to dispel, dispossess and exclude Palestinians from any Zionist endeavours and later from the Israeli state. As has been extensively argued, including by some Israeli historians, such as Ilan Pappé and Simha Flapan,<sup>34</sup> this dispossession entailed deliberate efforts to exclude Palestinian narratives and experiences from incorporation into Israeli collective consciousness and history. Building on this stream of theoretical and empirical data, it is argued that the constructed framework of binary conflict put forward by early Zionist leaders functioned to discount the idea that the Palestinian experience could be described in terms of subjugation and settler colonialism. Concurrently, from the perspective of early Zionists, the Palestinians were seen to be and portrayed as automatically biased against Israel, radical, politically motivated and simply dismissible as wrong.

It can be argued that these conceptualizations have been successful in legitimizing Zionist practice to Israeli society and diaspora Jews, and, to an extent, also in supporting metropolises such as Britain and the United States. It should also be noted that the portrayal of Palestinians as a permanent and implacable enemy 'other' created a central paradox: while the perceived presence of 'a permanent terrorist other' may function to legitimize Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestine and rally support for Zionist ambitions and practice, it also prevents the full realization of the Zionist movement objective. Or, as Lorenzo Veracini, argues:

while the occupation is the absolute precondition for the settlements' establishment and ongoing existence, its success (like that of colonial rule) depends [*sic*] on its ability to maintain the sharp division between colonizer and colonized – the very division that prevents the realization of a successful settler colonial society.<sup>35</sup>

Understanding the role of alterity, and more specifically how the perception of binary conflict functions, may thus not only enhance our understanding of the endeavours of past Zionist movement but also further our understanding of current Israeli settler colonial practice and the attempted legitimization thereof. In addition, this article aims to further the scholarly debate on knowledge production and the politics of representation. As Jodi Byrd asserts, identities are often unintendedly read in a vertical hierarchy of colonizer versus colonized.<sup>36</sup> Acknowledging the fabrication of the rigid binary Jews-Arabs, may work towards a more horizontal reading of colonized voices in which the rich cacophony of Palestinian experience is foregrounded. Although history is linear only in its hindsight interpretation and clear breaks and subsequent events are always intertwined with preceding paradigms, for the purpose of clarity, the genealogy in this account is presented in two parts. First, a critical exposition of contemporary accounts will demonstrate that from the outset the Zionist movement faced various forms of opposition. In focusing on religion-based opposition among European Jews on the one hand, and anti-colonial direct resistance from indigenous Palestinians on the other, it will be shown that the Zionist movement faced obstacles from very different categories of 'others'. It will be argued that early religion-based opposition in Europe objected to the Zionist movement's use of Jewish religious texts to justify what was perceived as a secular political goal of establishing a nation-state in Mandate Palestine. Direct resistance from inhabitants of historic Palestine<sup>37</sup> focused less on religious arguments and was instead centred on countering the experience of colonial dispossession and opposing the Zionist enforcement of ethnic division of the indigenous population.

Second it will be argued, as suggested earlier in this paper, that early Zionist leaders consciously created the perception of 'binary conflict' with the desired solution of 'peace' in order to simultaneously counter accusations of settler colonialism and garner the support of non-Zionist Jews on the basis of self-defence or self-preservation. That is, early Zionist 'traditional intellectuals' such as David Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir consciously altered the framework from one of settler colonialism to that of conflict between the 'Arab aggressive Goliath' and the 'Jewish peaceful David'. Scrutiny of two Zionist myths associated with the binary-conflict conceptualization will subsequently illustrate that this manufactured framework became central to Zionist hegemonic discourse and dominant praxis.

In conclusion, it will be argued that the way the genealogy of the notion of conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories operates, deeply influences and limits our analysis today. Recognizing the power-knowledge nexus behind this peace and conflict paradigm holds the potential for conceptualizations that include subjugated knowledge and the lived experience of Palestinians. Such recognition may also deepen our understanding of the discursive and oppressive mechanisms of contemporary settler colonialism.

## Religious opposition and anti-colonial resistance

Opposition to the Zionist movement's objectives and practice was present from the time of movement's establishment in 1887. The main objectives, as outlined by one of Zionism's founding fathers, Theodor Herzl, were: (1) the creation of a collective secular nationalist Jewish identity; (2) the creation of a national Jewish language based on Rabbinical Hebrew to replace Yiddish; (3) the large-scale immigration of Jews from their countries of origin to Palestine and (4) dominance over the 'new old land' politically and economically, if necessary through violence.<sup>38</sup>

Initial opposition to the political Zionist movement came from religious Jews in Europe and was expressed through religious leaders.<sup>39</sup> Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), an Orthodox Jewish leader in Germany, for example, immediately objected to the new nationalist Jewish identity by stating: 'The Torah and only the Torah binds the Jewish people together.'<sup>40</sup> In Hirsch's understanding, the Zionist movement was neglecting and even replacing the heavenly duty of every Jew to live by the rules of the Torah. From this perspective Zionism was seen to have redefined the meaning of being Jewish from what you *do* (religious practice) to what you *are* (Jewishness as an ethno-nationalist identity). Early opposition from European Jews was thus focused less on objections the colonial aspirations of the Zionist movement and more on the secular nationalist underpinning of the movement's goals. These religious objections to the movement's ambitions and practices can be divided broadly into three arguments.

The first, as indicated, focused on the secular nationalist identity and its separation from the Torah. The Talmud<sup>41</sup> reads that 'The Jewish nation is distinguished by three characteristics; [Jewish people] are merciful, they are modest, and they perform acts of loving-kindness.'<sup>42</sup> According to the Haredim (ultra-Orthodox Jews), the new characteristics of the Zionist Jewish identity – national pride, the Hebrew national language and militant activism – represented a complete break with Jewish tradition.<sup>43</sup>

Second, early opposition to the political Zionist movement pointed to the divine exile as a collective binding factor for Jewish people and claimed that the Zionist ambition to break this exile was against the Torah and thus against God. They based this critique on the three oaths that forbid 'a collective return to Israel, an uprising against the nations or the subjugation of Israel too much [*sic*].'<sup>44</sup> In the third argument, opposition to Zionism was based on the Messianic prophecy, which reads that the Messiah will come to collect all Jews from around the world and lead them back to the Holy Land only when all Jews surrender to and live by the rules of the Torah. As Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson put it:

The false redemption does not allow the true redemption to be revealed, for those who think that they are already living in the redemption do not perform the [religious] actions required for the going forth from exile and the revealing of the true redemption; they cause the prolongation of the exile [...].<sup>45</sup>

These religious arguments against Zionist ambitions were echoed by Jews living in historic Palestine.<sup>46</sup> However, most early opposition from within the territory took the form of direct resistance from Palestinian peasants to being dispossessed of their land by Zionist immigrants.<sup>47</sup> In other words, resistance from indigenous inhabitants of historic Palestine – regardless of whether they were Muslim, Christian or Jewish – sprang primarily



from opposition to the direct experience of land dispossession rather than from theological or abstract objections to Zionist thought and ideology.

One such instance of early peasant resistance is described in a detailed case study conducted by Rashid Khalidi (1979) of the Tiberias region. Through a careful analysis of documents from the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) and the Jewish National Fund, Khalidi shows that Jewish Zionist immigrants purchased 70,000 dunums (7000 hectare) of land in the Tiberias region in 1902. They purchased this land, not from the Palestinian inhabitants of al-Shajara, Mishaa and Melhamiyya (the villages that were established on this land), but from the Sursuq family of Beirut. This merchant family had earlier obtained this land by simply registering it to their names under the new Ottoman Land Code Law of 1858<sup>48</sup> without ever having lived on or cultivated it themselves.<sup>49</sup> The Sursuq family had not notified the Palestinian inhabitants of the villages of the ownership transaction and, according to an eyewitness account by JCA official, Kalvariski, the villagers had forcefully resisted the take-over of the land by the Jewish newcomers. As confirmed by documents of the Ottoman army of that period, the Zionist immigrants were only able to establish themselves on this land after Ottoman troops intervened and arrested any Palestinian inhabitant who resisted. Over the next three years, from 1903 to 1905, the Jewish agricultural settlements of Sejera, Kafr Tavor, Yavniel, Menehamia and Bet Gan were set up on these lands.<sup>50</sup>

Following Wolfe's construction of binaries in settler colonial relations,<sup>51</sup> one should note that the replacement of Palestinian villages with Zionist settlements was not only a case of the displacement of Palestinians, instead, as put forward by Shafir<sup>52</sup> among others, it should be interpreted as a process of elimination in which the expulsion and exclusion of Palestinians functioned to create the 'new Jew':

[productivization] was designed, autarkically as it were, to inculcate productive self-sufficiency in a Jewish population that had been relegated to urban (principally financial) occupations that were stigmatized as parasitic by the surrounding gentile population – a prejudice that those who sought to build the 'new Jew' endorsed insofar as they resisted its internalization.<sup>53</sup>

The expulsion of Palestinians from their land and their exclusion from the successive labour force was thus not only a means to force out the colonized Palestinians, it also served to build the new Zionist subject.<sup>54</sup> The above very brief example illustrates both the settler colonial nature of early Zionist immigration to Palestine and the direct resistance against it from Muslim, Christian and Jewish Palestinian indigenous inhabitants. This anti-colonial resistance intensified with the second Aliya (Zionist immigrant stream) and the establishment of the British Mandate over Palestine after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps the best-known albeit under-researched instance of such early anti-colonial resistance is the 1936 *Al-Thawra al-Kubra* or the Great Revolt. It is tempting to portray this revolt against British control as a carefully constructed anti-colonial insurgency led by Arab notables and sustained by Palestinian peasants.<sup>55</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Mandate rejected any form of self-governance and that the urban notables thus did not function as representatives of Palestinian peasants or factory workers.<sup>56</sup> Instead, this revolt was primarily instigated and sustained by industrial workers and Palestinian peasants as a reaction to the impoverishment of Palestinian life. In other words, it was the socio-economic calamity that drove Palestinians to politics.<sup>57</sup>

The peasant unrest and accompanying massive industrial strike were organized in a non-violent way similar to later examples in other countries, such as South Africa. The British were initially rather impressed by these acts of civil disobedience and ordered a commission to study the claims and complaints of the Palestinians. However, due to a lack of direct results, and without clear leadership, a faction of the young rebels resorted to guerrilla warfare, and the British responded with military force.<sup>58</sup> During the 1936 revolt, the Zionist movement extended their paramilitary activity in Mandate Palestine. The Haganah – the collective name for various paramilitary units that would later become the Israeli Defence Force – unofficially cooperated with British forces<sup>59</sup> and simultaneously increased attacks on both Jewish and Arab inhabitants who refused to submit to the Zionist objective of creating a Jewish nation-state.<sup>60</sup> Jacob de Haan, a Jewish man, who in 1902 wrote a letter to King Hussein in support of the local Arab population, is just one example among many of an indigenous inhabitant of Mandate Palestine, who was assassinated by the Haganah for his anti-Zionist anti-separatist beliefs.<sup>61</sup>

The period between 1901 and 1948 thus saw direct peasant resistance against Zionist dispossession, widespread anti-colonial revolt against Zionist immigration and dispossession, and active resistance against Zionist ambitions and practice through local Arab–Jewish cooperation.<sup>62</sup> While much has been written about this period and much still deserves further research, this limited exposition draws out three central aspects of early anti-colonial anti-Zionist resistance.

First, anti-colonial anti-Zionist resistance was firmly rooted in everyday experiences. That is, rather than being an abstract, formulated opposition to an equally abstract ideology, it sprang directly from the experience of exclusion, dispossession and oppression. Second, anti-colonial anti-Zionist resistance was inherently multifaceted, stretching from non-violent mass mobilization to armed revolt, to elite theorized counter-discourse.<sup>63</sup> These different forms of resistance should not be seen as mutually exclusive (for example, violence versus non-violence), or as contradictory, but as an exemplification of how different strategies are created and transformed in response to changing socio-political and economic circumstances. Third, Palestinian–Jewish cooperation in historic Palestine did not stem from a need for dialogue in order to understand ‘the other’; it rejected such ethnically dichotomous categorization to begin with. Rather than ‘bringing two sides together’, as joint Palestinian–Israeli initiatives are often portrayed today, it fiercely rejected and resisted the artificial Jewish–Arab divide that the political Zionist movement proclaimed and aimed to enforce on the indigenous inhabitants of historical Palestine.

### **Zionist hegemony and dominance: creating the peace and conflict paradigm**

So far, it has been shown that there was direct and continuous opposition to the establishment of the Zionist movement. In Europe, as mentioned earlier, the opposition was based on traditional Jewish religious beliefs, whereas in historic Palestine there was direct objection to the physical settlement of newcomers and the dispossession of those already present on the land. The variety in reasons for the opposition to the Zionist movement and in the manner in which resistance was expressed can be understood as a manifestation of the triangular relations that settler colonialism establishes. That is, while the

Zionist movement maintained classic colonizer–colonized relations with indigenous Palestinians – dispossession, dissolution and elimination – its stance towards possible powerful allies such as Great Britain and criticism from European non-Zionist Jews was very different.

The second part of this genealogy will show how the conscious creation of the rigid binary ethno-nationalist conflict framework by early Zionist leaders functioned simultaneously to (1) rally support from powerful possible allies such as Britain and the United States; (2) persuade or stifle Jewish diasporic opposition and (3) sublimate indigenous Palestinian narrative and experience into a faceless, dismissible enemy Other.

This ‘broadening of framework’, as David Ben-Gurion depicted it, can best be captured through a critical examination of two prominent myths in early Zionist writings, namely the myth of ‘a land without people – for a people without land’ and the Israeli self-defence/peaceful intention narrative.

I consciously use the term ‘myth’ rather than ‘lie’ (even though many such myths have indeed been proven factually incorrect) because, as John Rose points out: ‘a lie is an intentionally false statement, a deliberate deception, whereas a myth is a widely held but false notion, without necessarily deceptive intent’.<sup>64</sup> Whether historically founded or not, for many Israelis these myths form an integral part of their (imagined) national history.

The ‘... land without people ...’ myth is best captured in a statement by the Zionist pioneer and Haganah frontrunner, Golda Meir, who would later become Israel’s fourth prime minister:

When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the First World War, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.<sup>65</sup>

Meir’s statement simply re-phrased and re-confirmed what is probably the oldest and best-known myth about the creation of the State of Israel, namely that it was ‘a land without a people’. While some Zionist and anti-Zionist writers have interpreted this idea literally – meaning that the land which was to become Israel had no human inhabitants<sup>66</sup> – early Zionist pioneers and British Mandate officials took it more in the spirit of its original instigator, Israel Zangwill.<sup>67</sup> A British Jew and firm supporter of what was known as Jewish ‘territorialism’,<sup>68</sup> Zangwill used the term ‘a people’ in its late nineteenth-century Western meaning.<sup>69</sup> A people, in this sense, refers to a united single, recognized national collective. Because historic Palestine up till then had been part of the Ottoman empire and later fell under British Mandate control, the indigenous inhabitants of historic Palestine were not acknowledged as a separate people (or as a nation) and on that basis any claims to sovereignty or to the land were denied. In other words Zangwill and other Zionist contemporary leaders acknowledged the existence of 600,000 indigenous people in historic Palestine but they did not recognize them as an independent collective nation. Rather they perceived the indigenous population as Arabs and as part of the Arab nation(s). In adopting this perspective, they rejected not only Palestinian claims to nationhood, but also any rights to the specific land of historic Palestine.<sup>70</sup>

As a strong advocate of ‘territorialism’, Zangwill was opposed to the Zionist ambition of creating an autonomous Jewish state in Palestine, and as such he did not specify ‘a

country' for the settlement of Jewish people. This left the matter open to interpretations such as that of Golda Meir, for whom it refers to a geographic area comprising greater Syria and/or Jordan. In the decades since Israel's creation Meir's interpretation has had a great impact on the perception of the situation in Mandate Palestine.

First, by accepting the Zionist proposal of a united secular Jewish nation 'returning' to their 'historical homeland', and, if one simultaneously states this national claim to be in opposition to 'the Arab people' as a similarly united nation (rather than accepting Palestinians as a nation), it automatically transforms the situation from one of an indigenous people opposing colonial settlers to one of a binary conflict between opposing national claims.

Second, refusing the Palestinians an independent national identity and instead calling them 'Arab nationals' created the binary distinction of *the Arabs* versus *the Jews*, and hence a distorted portrayal of the conflict in which one side is depicted as a small, persecuted and 'homeless' people (the Jews), and the other is a 'giant' Arab nation with absolutely no threat to its continued existence.<sup>71</sup>

Third, '[when] looking at the issue of the Palestinian Arabs from an overall Arab viewpoint', as David Ben-Gurion pleaded in 1937,

this [is] merely a question of a land less than 2 percent of the total area occupied by the Arabs in the East, and containing 3 percent of the total number of Arabs in the world, whereas for the Jews it [is] a question of their national past and future.<sup>72</sup>

As such, Ben-Gurion not only carelessly disconnects Palestinian Arabs from any specific attachment to their actual land by assigning equal national value for them to other 'Arab' geographical locations, but he also places the importance of the Jewish national claim above Palestinian and/or Arab claims.<sup>73</sup>

These 'expansions of framework'<sup>74</sup> – from 'Palestinians versus Zionist colonial settlers' to 'the Jewish people versus the Arabs' – became entrenched in a process of active persuasion and deliberate framing by Zionist leaders, as can be understood from Ben-Gurion's own account of [his] ... *Talks With Arab Leaders*.<sup>75</sup> In this lengthy document, Ben-Gurion describes how he constantly had to convince local authorities (such as Musa Alami, Shakib Arslan and George Antonius)<sup>76</sup> as well as British officials (among them James MacDonald and John B. Philby)<sup>77</sup> of this regional approach. Despite various opposing voices pointing out to him that

the Arab world was divided into any number of separate states, and there was no knowing when that Arab Confederation would come about that would break down the barriers separating the Arabs of Syria and the Arabs of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Palestine,<sup>78</sup>

Ben-Gurion refused to acknowledge the 'narrow framework'<sup>79</sup> in which only the Palestinians were taken into account.

The persistence of Israeli, Zionist and pro-Zionist writers in referring to the indigenous people of Mandate Palestine as 'Arabs' should therefore be understood as a political strategy designed to delegitimize Palestinian claims to land and nationhood. In addition this framing sets the scene as one of binary ethno-national claim-making, rather than as a situation of traditional colonial conquest.

The second Zionist myth, namely the Israeli self-defence narrative,<sup>80</sup> is closely intertwined with and builds on the Arab/Israeli binary conflict notion. This narrative relies on

the mainstream Zionist claim that the Zionist movement had no intention of going to war with Arab countries or conquering Palestine and held no desire to harm or expel the Muslim, Christian or Jewish indigenous inhabitants in the process of realizing its ambition of creating a Jewish nation-state. As Finkelstein portrays mainstream Zionist opinion in *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, the Zionist movement 'did not anticipate or intend resorting to force against the indigenous population to achieve its aims, but only did so as the result of an accumulation of intractable circumstances'.<sup>81</sup> In early Zionist writing, this self-defence narrative was presented as self-evident by pointing to United Nations resolution 181. This resolution called for the partition of Mandate Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab nation state, but was rejected by the Palestinians. A text by Ben-Gurion, published under the heading, 'The Arab War Against Israel', serves as an example of how resolution 181 was taken as proof of Israel's self-defence narrative and is worth quoting at length:

After a temporary halt during World War 2, the conflict in Palestine broke out afresh and the problem was submitted to the United Nations. On November 27, 1947, acting on the report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine, the general Assembly adopted its historic resolution calling for the establishment of Jewish and Arab states, with an economic union between them. Although the area proposed for the Jewish State was only a small part of the Land of Israel in which, according to the League of Nations Mandate, the Jewish National Home was to be established, the Jews accepted the resolution and pledged their cooperation in implementing it. They were ready to forgo a large part of their cherished aims and their just demands in the hope of achieving a peaceful agreement with the Arabs.

The Arab leaders, however, showed no such conciliatory spirit. On the morrow of the Assembly resolution Arab attacks on Jews started in Jerusalem and elsewhere, and on May 15, 1948, on the departure of the British, when the Jews proclaimed Israel's independence in conformity with the UN decision, the armies of the neighbouring Arab countries invaded the new state with the declared purpose of strangling it at birth.<sup>82</sup>

From the outset, the State of Israel officially emphasized its sincere desire for peace and cooperation with the Arabs. In two important paragraphs, the Proclamation of Independence declared:

Even amidst the violent attacks launched against us for months past, we call upon the sons of the Arab people dwelling in Israel to keep the peace and to play their part in building the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its institutions, provisional and permanent.

[...] We extend the hand of peace and good-neighbourliness to all the States around us and to their peoples, and we call upon them to cooperate in mutual helpfulness with the independent Jewish nation in its Land. The State of Israel is prepared to make its contributions in a concerted effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East. The outstretched hand was not accepted, and the newborn state was compelled to embark on a desperate struggle for survival against superior numbers and equipment. The cost was heavy – over five thousand of our finest young men and women paid for victory with their lives – but the Arab rulers did not succeed in destroying the Jewish State. They did, however, prevent the establishment of the Arab State envisaged in the UN resolution. The Egyptians occupied the Gaza Strip, while King Abdullah of Transjordan occupied the Arab-inhabited areas of Samaria and Judea, as well as the Old City of Jerusalem, and later annexed them to his kingdom, which he renamed 'Jordan'. The Arabs who had fled during the tension and fighting at their leaders' call were kept in refugee camps by their Arab brethren.<sup>83</sup>

Three Zionist arguments are underlined in this statement: (1) The 'sincere' peaceful intentions of Israel; (2) the rejection by 'the Arabs' of any such 'conciliatory spirit' and (3) the David and Goliath concept of the little army of Jews against the 'superior' destructive force of the 'the Arabs' which paved the way for the absolutist 'to live or perish' stance discussed below. A critical reader should note, however, that Ben-Gurion's perceived 'logical' conclusion holds only if one perceives the situation to be a conflict between two opposing national claims, *and* if one *also* portrays the claims as coming from the imagined opposing entities of 'the Jews' versus 'the Arabs' (rather than as a matter to be worked out between an indigenous people, the Palestinians and Zionist settlers). Only then does the interference of the United Nations via resolution 181 seem appropriate and thus legitimate, and only then can one perceive the allocation of 53% of all Mandate Palestinian land to a 5.6% Jewish minority,<sup>84</sup> as a 'compromise' and show of good will by the Zionist movement.

The belief that Israel (as the weak, subordinate David) was forced to defend itself against the powerful Goliath of 'the Arabs' depends on the previously explored myths of 'a land without a people – for a people without a land' and Zionists' initial peaceful intentions. Only when the Palestinians as an indigenous people (or nation) are dissolved into a fusion with 'the Arabs' can one resort to the generalized and inadequate perception of an Arab Goliath versus the Jewish David and take this distortion as proof of Israel's peaceful intentions. Only if one uncritically reiterates this binary power imbalance can one ignore the contradictory reality of the contemporary inhabitants, i.e. the experience of the 'non-existent' Palestinians.

In addition, the myth of Israel's peaceful intentions surrounding the years of its creation completely ignores and, at crucial junctures, contradicts the elaborate discussions among early Zionist thinkers and implementers on 'how to deal with the Arab problem'.<sup>85</sup> In this discussion, described in-depth by Yosef Gorny,<sup>86</sup> among others, Zionist leaders understood that the need for a *Jewish* homeland unquestionably meant a partition from the Arabs 'by any means necessary'.<sup>87</sup> This exemplifies how the consciously advocated 'broadened framework', not only contradicts early Zionists' 'peaceful' intentions, but actually shows that the force applied by the 'little David', was premeditated and carefully executed.<sup>88</sup>

The 'a land without people – for a people without land' myth in combination with the Israeli self-defence/peaceful intention narrative thus enabled an Israeli Zionist dominant discourse, with, at its core, the supposed Jewish choice 'to live or perish': in other words, the supposedly zero sum gain choice that Israel made to 'fight the Arabs' or 'cease to exist'.

Returning to the first part of this genealogy, which highlighted two of the multiple forms of opposition against the Zionist movement, the multiple instrumentality of the binary conflict paradigm becomes clear. First, as illustrated by the Zionist myths described above, this paradigm reduces the Palestinian experience and narrative to one of a rigid enemy 'other', which can be dismissed on that basis alone. This, in turn, can be used to explain why Zionist discourse, particularly about historic events, is still dominant despite hundreds of books, articles and documents that empirically and meticulously disprove the factual correctness of its main parameters.

Second, the effect of depicting the situation as one of rigid alterity based on religious differences between Jews and Arabs should be noted. Just as the concept of a binary

ethno-nationalist conflict conflated Palestinians with all Arabs, so it attempted to conflate Zionists with all Jews. While this is obviously highly problematic and contested,<sup>89</sup> it did stifle most<sup>90</sup> religion-based anti-Zionism in the period surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel. Or as Rabkin observes: 'It is a personal decision to become part of a Zionist movement. To be part of a State is necessary and in many ways inevitable. That membership then loses much of its normative value.'<sup>91</sup>

Third, it can be argued that the binary framework further functioned to animate and solidify the new Jewish nation and the Jewish subject therein. As has been argued by Lavie,<sup>92</sup> among others, the idea of the Arab enemy has been and still is used to bind Jewish Israelis together and silence possible dissent. If one, alternatively, recognizes the perceived 'truth' of binary conflict as a politically driven discourse consisting of narratives and myths put forward by a carefully constructed extended framework, one can start to acknowledge the far-reaching consequences of this peace and conflict paradigm.

### Conclusion: continuous conflict

This article traced the use of the term 'binary conflict' to describe the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories from the inception of the political Zionist movement in 1897 to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Through a critical genealogy of the dialectic relation between Zionism and its discontent, it put forward the idea that early Zionist leaders deliberately 'broadened the framework' to one of binary conflict in order to counter direct anti-colonial resistance, and simultaneously stifle opposition and rally support from third-party others, such as non-Zionist Jews and potentially powerful allies.

By focusing on two prominent Zionist myths it illustrated how the notion of binary conflict together with the desired solution of peace, has grown central to Israeli hegemonic leadership to the extent that it reached a near to complete 'objective consensus: the essential that *goes without saying because it comes without saying*' (emphasis in original).<sup>93</sup> I thus argue that depicting the past and current situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a contest between two sides in the interests of peace should not be perceived as a neutral or value-free description, but as a deliberately constructed framework with an inherently Zionist bias. Acknowledging this power-knowledge nexus opens the possibility for expositions of the far-reaching consequences that this peace and conflict paradigm holds today.

A possible area of exploration could be how the notion of binary conflict functions as an ideological distraction<sup>94</sup> from the settler colonial dispossession that is currently taking place in the West Bank. In this respect, it could be argued that the 'binary conflict' conception is instrumental in constructing a narrative in which those subjected to dispossession are seen to be the transgressors.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, a critique of the binary conflict depiction could be useful in arriving at further expositions of the ambiguous processes of inclusion and exclusion of Mizrahi Jewish Israelis and may stimulate critical reflection on how the notion of rigid binary conflict shaped academic knowledge production. As mentioned in the introduction, scholarship loosely bound together as *Thinking Palestine*, has paid increasing attention to the politics of representation. As Jodi Byrd asserts, however, postcolonial or critical theory can unintentionally reproduce distorted knowledge when remaining within a binary framework established by a settler colonial regime.<sup>96</sup> Awareness of the functioning of the rigid binary conflict paradigm may thus serve to



open up research to the ‘cacophony’ of Palestinian experience. It may also enhance our understanding of the current fierce stance against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) and particularly the ‘from within’ branch of the BDS movement.<sup>97</sup> As the name suggests, this movements consists of Israelis who endorse the broader BDS movement goals of

Ending the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall; Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.<sup>98</sup>

By their mere presence, the ‘BDS from within’ activists challenge and undermine the very basis of the binary ethno-nationalist conflict paradigm.

Returning to the brief examples mentioned in the introduction, both Sucharov and Allen point to the misleading effects of depicting the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in simplistic binary terms. Sucharov<sup>99</sup> criticizes the classification of Israel’s separate buses policy as a particularly worrisome step ‘from one side’ and instead identifies this policy as merely another instrument in Israel’s continuous illegitimate rule over Palestinians. Allen<sup>100</sup> similarly demonstrates how spatial geopolitics set Gaza apart and set the scene for interpretations of Israel’s military attack on Gaza’s population as ‘exceptional violence’. Concurrently she argues that this depiction of exceptionality obfuscates the everyday violence inherent to Israel’s continuous oppression and dispossession of Palestinians. Both her arguments thus reject Golda Meir’s and David Ben-Gurion’s framework of binary nationalisms in the form of conflict between an ‘Arab aggressive Goliath’ and a ‘peaceful Jewish David’. Therewith Sucharov and Allen reiterate the everyday experience and subjugated knowledge of many Palestinians and of an increasing group of critical scholars working on Palestine from a subaltern perspective.

This perspective represents the common or subjugated knowledge and everyday experience of the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as one of military occupation, institutionalized segregation, the structural denial of basic human rights, ongoing dispossession of inhabitants by colonizing settlers and the elimination of people based on ethno-nationalist racism. To be clear, I do not argue against the use of the word ‘conflict’ in mere heuristic terms, especially not when it is expressed in parentheses as is increasingly regular in talks and conferences, nor do I aim to replace one constructed and biased paradigm with another. Replacing the ‘peace and conflict’ paradigm with a mere ‘Human Rights approach’, for example, comes with its own analytical neo-liberal baggage which does not adequately include the Palestinian lived experience and the systematic oppression by Israel. Instead, the above genealogy serves to highlight the power-knowledge nexus that underlies descriptions of Israel–Palestine in terms of binary conflict. Acknowledging and further understanding the effects of the notion of binary conflict holds the potential to contribute to conceptualizations that include subjugated knowledge and the experience of Palestinians, and that deepen our understanding of the discursive and oppressive mechanisms of contemporary settler colonialism.

## Notes

1. Chaim Levinson, ‘Ya’alon Bans Palestinians from Israeli-Run Bus Lines in West Bank, Following Settler Pressure’, *Haaretz*, October 26, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/premium-1.622414> (accessed January 12, 2015).



2. Nabila Ramdani, 'Bus Segregation Is One Aspect of Israeli Apartheid', *The Nation*, November 4, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/bus-segregation-is-one-aspect-of-israeli-apartheid> (accessed February 14, 2015). Caitlin Dewey, 'Israel's Palestinian-Only Buses Draw Accusations of Segregation, Apartheid', *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/03/04/israels-palestinian-only-buses-draw-accusations-of-segregation-apartheid/> (accessed February 14, 2015).
3. Revital Hovel and Chaim Levinson, 'AG Orders Ya'alon: Explain Why Palestinians Banned from Israeli-Run Buses in West Bank', *Haaretz*, October 27, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.623036> (accessed January 12, 2015).
4. Mira Sucharov, 'Separate Buses? That's How Occupation Rolls', *The Jewish Daily Forward*, October 28, 2014, <http://blogs.forward.com/forward-thinking/208092/separate-buses-thats-how-occupation-rolls/> (accessed February 14, 2015).
5. Sucharov, 'Separate Buses?' 4.
6. Lori Allen, 'The Scales of Occupation: "Operation Cast Lead" and the Targeting of the Gaza Strip', *Critique of Anthropology* 32 (September 2012): 262. doi:10.1177/0308275x12449103.
7. See among others: Lori Allen, 'Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal During the Second Palestinian Intifada' (*Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 3 (2008): 453–87); also Mira Sucharov, 'Regional Identity and the Sovereignty Principle: Explaining Israeli Palestinian Peacemaking', *Geopolitics* 3, no. 1 (2007): 177–96.
8. Lisa Taraki, 'Even-Handedness and the Palestinian-Israeli/Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', *Contemporary Sociology* 35, no. 5 (2006): 449–53. Lisa Taraki, 'Mass-Organization in the West Bank', in *Occupation: Israel over Palestine*, ed. N.H. Aruri (Belmont, MA: Association Arab-American University Graduates 1989 [2nd edn], 431–63. David Theo Goldberg, 'Racial Palestinianization', in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008), 25–45.
9. Ronit Lentin (editor), *Thinking Palestine*, 8.
10. Goldberg, 'Racial Palestinianization', 25–45.
11. Honaida Ghanim, 'Thanatopolitics: The Case of the Colonial Occupation in Palestine', in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008), 65–82.
12. Raef Zreik, 'The Persistence of the Exception: Remarks on the Story of Israel Constitutionalism', in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008), 131–47. Laleh Khalili, 'Incarceration and the State of Exception: Al-Ansar Mass Detention Camp in Lebanon', in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008), 101–15.
13. Ilan Pappé, 'The Mukhabarat State of Israel', in *Thinking Palestine*, ed. Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008), 148–70.
14. Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadah, 'Acts and Omissions: Framing Settler Colonialism in Palestine Studies', in *Jadaliyya*, Published online January 14, 2015, [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23569/acts-and-omissions\\_framing-settlercolonialism-in-](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23569/acts-and-omissions_framing-settlercolonialism-in-)
15. Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: 1936–1939 Rebellion in the Palestinian Past* (Chicago: University of Arkansas Press, 2003 [1995]).
16. Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979).
17. Naseer Aruri, *Occupation: Israel over Palestine* (London: Zed Books, 1985).
18. Raja Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law: Israel and the West Bank* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1988).
19. Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie, and Sobhi Samour, 'Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine', *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 1–8, 4.
20. Sucharov, 'Separate Buses?'.
21. Allen, 'Scales of Occupation: "Operation Cast Lead"'.  
22. See, among others, Salamanca et al., 'Past Is Present'. And also David Lloyd, 'Settler Colonialism and the State of Exception: The Example of Palestine/Israel', *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 59–80.
23. Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.
24. Patrick Wolfe, 'Recuperating Binarism: A Heretical Introduction', *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013): 257–79.

25. Lorenzo Veracini, 'On Settlerliness', *Borderless e-Journal* 10, no. 1 (2011): 1.
26. For alternative readings on Israel's history, I recommend the work of the so-called Israeli new historians, such as Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, Tom Segev and Simha Flapan.
27. Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire', in *Michel Foucault & Gilles Deleuze: Nietzsche als genealog en als nomade*, ed. E. Bolle (Nijmegen: SUN, 1971). For a thorough exploration of Foucault's genealogy in relation to Nietzsche, I recommend a paper by Evangelia Sembou, 'Foucault's Genealogy', presented at the *10th Annual Meeting of the International Social Theory Consortium*, University College Cork, Ireland, on 16–17 June 2011, and also Evangelia Sembou, *Hegel's Phenomenology and Foucault's Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 2015).
28. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 16.
29. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa – Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 23.
30. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International, 1971), 5.
31. Donald V. Kurtz, 'Hegemony and Anthropology: Gramsci, Exegeses, Reinterpretations', *Critique of Anthropology* 16 (1996): 103–35, 108.
32. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 207.
33. Kurtz, 'Hegemony and Anthropology: Gramsci ...', 106.
34. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2006). Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).
35. Lorenzo Veracini, 'The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Israel, and the Occupation', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XLII, no. 2 (2013): 29.
36. Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
37. I use the term 'historic Palestine' because I refer to a period where the land fell under Ottoman rule as well as later under British Mandate rule.
38. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 127.
39. Yakov Rabkin, *A Threat from Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* (London: Black Point & Zed Books, 2006), 137.
40. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*, translated from German by Isidore Grunfeld (London: Soncino Press, 1962), 461.
41. [The] Talmud (the Hebrew word for 'learning') contains the history of the Jewish religion, laws and ethics. The learnings of historic Rabbis serve to interpret the religious texts and read the ethics behind the 613 commandments (Mitzvoth). For further reading on the role of the Talmud in the shaping of Jewish culture and traditions, I suggest: Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
42. *Babylonian Talmud: Talmud Bavli* (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 2000), 79a.
43. Rabkin, *Threat from Within*, 137.
44. *Babylon Talmud*, ketubot, 111a.
45. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 147.
46. Rabkin, *Threat from Within*, 137.
47. Rashid Khalidi, *Peasant Resistance to Zionism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1979). Rosemary Sayigh, *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979).
48. The Ottoman Land Code Law of 1858 demanded registration of land ownership by individual owners and changed the traditional land division based on *masha'a*, or ownership by community with a communal usufruct. Many peasants did not register their agricultural fields out of fear of centralized taxation and other state interventions. Instead, members of the upper classes and merchant families mainly from Beirut, Jaffa and Haifa manipulated the Land Code Law to register big chunks of agricultural land as their own (Avraham Granott, *The Land System in Palestine: History and Structure*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode).

49. Walid Khalili, 'Why Did the Palestinians Leave?', *Middle East Forum* 24, no. 21–24 (July 1959). Reprinted as 'Why Did the Palestinians Leave Revisited', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXIV, no. 2 (2005): 42–54. Here referenced in book form by an unknown publisher and with an unknown date, available in the School of Oriental and Africa Studies' Library, local code: QJ 956.04/366100. Neville J. Mandell, *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
50. Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism Before World War 1*, 67–70.
51. Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', 4.
52. Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
53. Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', 389–90.
54. For further reading on the dialectic process of indigenous elimination and settler construction, see Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1949* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2005). Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*.
55. Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: 1936–1939*.
56. Pappé, *History of Modern Palestine*, 104.
57. Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: 1936–1939*, 38–43.
58. Pappé, *History of Modern Palestine*, 108.
59. Officially, British military forces did not cooperate with either Palestinian or Zionist leaders or groups. Accounts by British security officials such as Charles Wingate, however, demonstrate the direct contact between and the training of the Zionist paramilitary units known as the 'Special Night Squads', or *Plugot Ha'LAYLA Ha'Meyukhadot* in Hebrew (John Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979)); Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. For further reading on relationship of the British security forces with the Zionist movement in mandate Palestine and how this consisted of a contested the 'dual colonialism', I recommend Ronan Shamir, *The Colonies of Law: Colonialism, Zionism and Law in Early Mandate Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
60. Shamir, *The Colonies of Law*; Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*; and Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*.
61. Rabkin, *Threat from Within*, 137.
62. For example, the municipality of Haifa was run by both Jewish and Arab clerks, and, on a local level, cohabitation and co-operation between Jewish and Arab inhabitants preceded the nationalist goals of the Zionist movement (Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 109–11).
63. For further reading on elite theorized counter-discourse on Mandate Palestine, I recommend Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* and Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: 1936–1939*. Furthermore, the archive of the *La Nation Arabe 1930–1938* (Arslan) provides valuable insights into contemporary intellectual exchanges on Pan-Arab nationalism and political opinions on self-determination and liberation in the region. *La Nation Arabe 1930–1938* has been published as part of the Cambridge Archive Editions: <http://www.archiveeditions.co.uk/titledetails.asp?tid=69> (accessed January 9, 2015).
64. John Rose, *The Myths of Zionism* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 1.
65. Golda Meir (June 15, 1969) as quoted by F. Giles (June 16, 1969), Interview with *Sunday Times*, *The Sunday Times* (accessed May 16, 2014).
66. Anti-Zionist arguments use Zangwill's quote as evidence of the colonial and racist nature of the Zionist movement, while pro-Zionists (most notably Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 1984) take it literally to devalue any Palestinian claims to the land. Such accounts, however, do not take into account that the original writers used the term 'a people' in its late nineteenth-century Western meaning (Adam M. Garfinkle, 'On the Origin, Meaning, Use and Abuse of a Phrase', *Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 1991): 539–50, 546).
67. There are actually three people who can be traced back as instigators of this phrase: Israel Zangwill (1901), Lord Shaftesbury (1853) and John Lawson Stoddard (1881). However, because of the widespread attributions of the phrase to Zangwill, and because all three original authors 'clearly spoke in a political and not a literal sense' (Garfinkle, 'On the Origin,

- Meaning, Use and Abuse', 546), I will use the name Zangwill in order to explore its intended meaning.
68. Territorialism was a political movement that called for a large Jewish territory that did not have to be in Israel and did not necessarily seek autonomy. After the Zionist movement dismissed the option of realizing the Zionist project outside of Palestine at the 7th Zionist congress in 1905, Zangwill became one of the founders of the Jewish Territorialism Organization and thereby officially broke with his Zionist roots.
  69. Garfinkle, 'On the Origin, Meaning, Use and Abuse of a Phrase', 539–50.
  70. *Ibid.*, 541–2.
  71. David Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders* (New York: The Third Press, 1973 [1967]), 124.
  72. *Ibid.*, 124.
  73. At the end of the nineteenth century, Arabism, the prelude to Arab nationalist thinking, brought with it a strong sense of location-specific self-awareness. In Palestine alone, there were already 8 regional newspapers and 21 periodical publications. There were 98 public schools and 379 private Islamic educational facilities (Khalidi, *Peasant Resistance to Zionism*, 213). These figures indicate that in the period of the first Aliya, Palestine was not the backward, stagnated country that the Zionist movement regularly describes it as being.
  74. Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders*, 260.
  75. *Ibid.*
  76. Musa Alami was a Palestinian civil servant in the Jerusalem district under the British Mandate and later became the private secretary of the High Commissioner General Arthur Grenfell Waushope. Alami participated in talks with David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett from 1934 to 1936 and was a member of the Palestinian delegation to the London conference in 1939. Shakib Arslan was a Syrian/Lebanese pro-Pan-Arab leader. George Antonius was a Lebanese writer living in Jerusalem (Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders*, 331) and author of *The Arab Awakening* (1945) (London: Hamish Hamilton).
  77. James MacDonald was the British Prime Minister in 1924 and in the period 1929–1935. John B. Philby was the British representative in Transjordan from 1921 to 1924.
  78. Ben-Gurion, *Talks with Arab Leaders*, 124.
  79. *Ibid.*, 126.
  80. Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
  81. Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London: Verso, 1995), 98.
  82. Ben-Gurion, *My Talks with Arab Leaders*, 266–7.
  83. *Ibid.*, 267.
  84. UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (Partition Plan), November 29, 1947. Source: Israeli Government official website: [http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/un181\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/un181_eng.htm) (accessed July 3 2014).
  85. Yaacov Shavit, *Jabotinsky and the Revisionist Movement, 1925–1948* (London: F. Cass), 27.
  86. Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs 1882–1948: A Study of Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).
  87. Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *The Iron Wall – We and the Arabs*, 1923. First published in Russian under the title *O Zheleznoi Stene in Rasswyet*, 5684 (November 4, 1923). Here referenced from The Zionist Alliance: <http://www.zfa.org.il/opinions/ironwall.html> (accessed July 13, 2014).
  88. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 54–86. In this article, the myth of Israel's peaceful intentions is evoked to exemplify the conscious creation and far-reaching consequences of the peace and conflict paradigm. For further reading particularly on this myth, I recommend Flapan (*The Birth of Israel*) and for scholarship on the well-documented debate among a large faction of the early Zionist movement about the need, willingness and actual use of violence by the Zionist movement in Mandate Palestine, I recommend Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (Los Angeles: Nash, 1982); Judith Tydor Baumel, *The 'Bergson Boys' and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Yitshaq Ben-Ami, *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory: Memoirs from the Irgun* (New York: Speller, 1982); Yehojachin Simon Brenner, 'The "Stern Gang" 1940–48', *Middle Eastern Studies* 2, no.

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  92. Smadar Lavie, *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel: Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture* (Berghahn Books, 2014).
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  94. Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
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  99. Sucharov, 'Separate Buses?'
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  101. Anne de Jong, *Geen Vijanden: 1000 dagen in Israël en de Palestijnse Gebieden* (Amsterdam: Muntinga Uitgeverij, 2011).

## Acknowledgements

As part of my fieldwork research for my PhD (SOAS 2011)<sup>101</sup>, I attended an activist meeting in al-Ram in 2008. Preparing for the demonstration against a visit by US president George W. Bush the following day, activists painted banners, one of which read 'It's the Occupation stupid!' In response, a Palestinian–Israeli activist mentioned that 'segregation' should be added so to include the situation within Israel 'proper'. In a joking manner, others started to add 'medieval siege', 'apartheid' and 'settler colonialism', making the banner into a very long and messy collection of paint marks. Eventually, a new banner was made which stuck to the initial slogan, because, as Abeer explained, 'We have to consider our audience and they don't know shit about what is really going on here' (personal communication, January 2008). While this article does not include its ethnographic origins, the activists above did instigate the initial exploration into the above materials. The subjugated knowledge and everyday struggle of activists such as Abeer, Ala', Itamar, Huwaida, Mai, Ashraf, Yael, Susu, Ali and many others should thus be thoroughly acknowledged.

## Disclosure statement

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