Zionism, Imperialism, and Indigeneity in Israel/Palestine: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

This article explores the similarities and differences between Zionism and archetypical European modes of settler colonialism to demonstrate the incongruence between the two phenomena. This analysis is contextualized around the recent discourse surrounding the competing claims of indigeneity to historic Israel/Palestine. The claims of both the Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities are explored to demonstrate that both communities can rightfully claim degrees of Indigenous connection to the territory, but that Palestinian Arab claims of being the sole Indigenous inheritors of the land are dubious. The analysis utilizes Burton's unmet human needs theory, and Kriesberg's theories on identity and conflict intractability to demonstrate how perpetuating such claims serves to exacerbate inter-group conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Furthermore, the relationship between Ottoman and British imperialism in the development of both nationalisms is expounded to illustrate the contributory factors of imperial policies to the development of the national aspirations of both social groups.

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This discussion explores the similarities and differences between Zionism and archetypical European modes of settler colonialism to demonstrate the incongruence between the two phenomena. The analysis is contextualized around the recent discourse surrounding the competing claims of indigeneity to historic Israel/Palestine. The claims of both the Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities is explored to demonstrate that both communities can rightfully claim degrees of Indigenous connection to the territory, but that Palestinian Arab claims of being the *sole* Indigenous inheritors of the land are dubious. Furthermore, the relationship between Ottoman and British imperialism in the development of both nationalisms is expounded to illustrate the contributory factors of imperial policies and the development of the national aspirations of both social groups. The analysis will draw upon the theoretical works of peace and conflict studies (PACS) scholars Louis Kriesberg, John Burton, and others to illustrate the applicability of identity-based conflict analysis and unmet human needs theory to provide a novel demonstration that attempts to de-indigenize the Jewish People from their connection to the land will only serve to exacerbate the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The issue dealt with in this paper is subject to a wide range of perspectives and debate. The literature on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is myriad, and it spans over 100 years of research and discursive engagement. While the thesis of my argument is clear from the outset, the ultimate purpose of engaging in this endeavour is to contribute a reconsideration of Zionism as an Indigenous emancipation movement within the sphere of Peace and Conflict Studies in general, and within its postcolonial subdiscipline, in particular. I aim to highlight the need for PACS practitioners to integrate this approach to Zionism into the prevailing analysis of conflict and praxis, so that the phenomenon can be properly understood in an Indigenous theoretical context that is largely missing from the current debate on Zionism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and by extension, any formative solutions or conflict management strategies that may emerge thereby. As such, this paper aims to be a prelude to further studies on the subject.

On July 25, 2016, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki delivered a statement on behalf of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, threatening to sue the British government over the issuing of the 1917 Balfour Declaration (Hazan, 2017, para. 1). The charge was: that the

British were complicit in the "historic crime" of the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine—at the expense of the "Indigenous" Arabs who "…had lived for thousands of years on the soil of their homeland" (Dearden, 2016, para. 1)—for the benefit of ostensibly foreign Jews.

As a form of redress for the Declaration, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has requested, among other things, that the United Kingdom take particular steps to make amends for this alleged injustice, "…including apologizing to the Palestinian people; recognizing the Palestinian state without delay; revoking the Balfour Declaration and issuing a new declaration in its stead that does justice with the Palestinians, and compensating the Palestinians for the suffering caused by the declaration" (Hazan, 2017, para. 2). Thus, it is by appealing to indigeneity that the Palestinians take issue with the notion of the legitimacy of a separate Indigenous claim to the territory, as Abbas' statement reiterated:

> On the basis of this terrible declaration – [in which] those who did not own [the land] promised it to those who were not entitled [to it] – hundreds of thousands of Jews from Europe and elsewhere were brought [to Palestine] at the expense of our Palestinian people who had been living… in their homeland for millennia…Yes, a century has passed since the terrible Balfour Declaration, in which Britain unjustly gave the land of Palestine to another people, thereby paving the way for the Nakba [of Palestinian people] and their dispossession and displacement from their land. (Hazan, 2017, para. 2)

It becomes evident that this rationale for rejecting the Balfour Declaration in its centennial year is based on a two-pronged set of assumptions—first, that the Palestinian Arabs are the sole legitimate heirs to the territory of historic Palestine, built on the claim of possessing unparalleled *indigeneity* to the territory as a social group; and second, that Jewish settlement in Palestine always was, and always will be, a British-imperialist-facilitated settler colonial enterprise. This logic requires the "de-indigenization" of the Jewish People from the territory of Palestine, and a supplanting of that indigeneity with that of the Palestinian Arabs alone.

In light of these claims, it becomes necessary to determine their veracity, and the obstacles such attitudes pose towards seeking mutual peace and justice for Israelis and Palestinians. As such, while a comprehensive review of the Zionist-Palestinian Arab conflict is beyond our scope, our discussion explores the imperialist and colonialist context of Palestine, including Zionist settlement and Arab migration to Palestine beginning in the Ottoman Period of the 1880s, until the period prior to the 1947 partition of Palestine under the British Mandate.

Additionally, the notions of both Jewish and Palestinian Arab indigeneity are explored to ascertain whether the Zionist enterprise can be viewed as an archetypical settler colonial project of a foreign group exploitatively settling on the land of an Indigenous community. This is critical, since the basis of Palestinian rejectionism toward the Balfour Declaration stems directly from the claim of sole indigeneity to the land. Furthermore, the analysis will utilize Kriesberg's (2003b) approach to examining the nature of conflicts and their relative intractability, as well as Burton's (1998) and Marker's (2003) discussion of unmet human needs to demonstrate that the denial of Jewish indigeneity in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contributes to its persistence over time. Accordingly, the discussion explores these matters and their consequences.

The 1917 Balfour Declaration

Following the defeat of Ottoman forces, Britain came into possession of Palestine, which was of strategic importance for several reasons. First, it acted as a topographical buffer to the east (Matthew, 2013) to protect the Suez Canal in Egypt from imperial rivals in the region (Cohen, 2010), who also coveted the territory for similar reasons (Golan, 2001). Particularly for Britain, Palestine facilitated a land-based transit route from Iraqi oil fields to the Mediterranean (Cohen, 2010), and it provided a critical sea-route (and prospective railway) to both the Persian Gulf and Britain's most prized colonial possession: India (Matthew, 2013).

In 1917, to solidify its domestic support, Britain sought to ingratiate itself to the local population of Jews and Palestinian Arabs out of the mistaken belief that the empire could manipulate their respective nationalist aspirations toward imperial military and economic ends (Renton, 2013). The British did not seriously entertain the desires of either community, and filtered much of their approach through a Eurocentric lens—dismissing Palestinian Arab nationalism, in particular, to a perceived "backwardness," while also being suspicious of their loyalties to rival powers, especially France, which controlled the countries of Syria and Lebanon, as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (to be discussed below) (Golan, 2001).

This undoubtedly contributed to the subsequent dismissal of Palestinian Arab protests over British support for Zionism—the threat of which was viewed as immaterial (Cohen, 2010)—and due to the presumption that the Zionists, a majority of whom were of European extraction, would be more loyal and "civilized" by comparison, to the British cause (Matthew, 2013). This attitude was one that many Zionists strategically exploited (Matthew, 2013), which

has led to a misdiagnosis of Zionism by some analysts as a form of colonialism born out of British collusion (Golan, 2001), to be discussed in greater detail below.

While the attitudes held by British imperial authorities toward both Zionism and Palestinian Arab nationalism waxed and waned during the Mandate period, the resultant consequence of British imperialism, then, was an over-promising of independence to Arab and Jewish nationalists who sought that independence in the same piece of territory (Renton, 2013). For instance, through the 1915-1916 McMahon-Husein Correspondence between Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner of Egypt and Sherif of Mecca and Emir of the Hijaz, Sherif Husein, Britain promised Husein dominion over all Arab territories of the soon-to-be former Ottoman Empire, with the exceptions of the lands that would become Iraq and Lebanon. As a result of this agreement, Husein rallied support in Yemen and Syria against Ottoman forces on behalf of the British led by Colonel T.E. Lawrence (Andersen, Seibert, & Wagner, 2001).

Husein, however, was not the only proverbial "game in town," and in 1916, the British concurrently negotiated with the French to divide the Ottoman Empire. Syria and Lebanon were allocated to French tutelage, and Britain was assigned Iraq and Palestine, and the Arabian peninsula, via the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement (Goff, Moss, Terry, & Upshur, 1998). This solidified French and British domains of control (Andersen, et al., 2001), and thereby clearly overlapped the territories promised in the Husein-McMahon Correspondence—demonstrating, yet again, that Britain did not intend to relinquish its imperial influence in the Middle East in the near future.

Then, there was the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, in which Lord Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, wrote to the prominent British Zionist, Lord Walter Rothschild, declaring the British government's "…sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations" (Balfour, 1917), and most significantly that:

> His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country. (Balfour, 1917, para. 5)

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The Declaration's commitments were edified in the text of the British Palestine Mandate on July 24, 1922, whereby recognition was given "…to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country" (The Palestine Mandate, 1922, para. 3). The Balfour Declaration was based on an implicit acceptance and widespread acknowledgement of the longstanding Jewish connection to the land, and it supported the goal of "reconstituting" the Jewish People in the land, and to one extent or another recognized a *pre-existing* Indigenous connection validated by history. Importantly, the Declaration appeared to recognize the Jews as a distinct nation, akin to other nations throughout the world (Troen, 2007).

However, a close reading of the Declaration demonstrates that Britain was deliberately vague in its support of Jewish self-determination in Palestine, characterizing support for a "national home," while avoiding terms of *statehood* or any clear geographical boundaries. Moreover, it recognized that any consequent undertaking was not to prejudice non-Jewish— including, and especially, Arab—communities.

Nevertheless, the contradictions within these documents were readily apparent, but were of no consequence to imperial powers who had no interest in tempering their ambitions. At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, European interests in the Middle East, with American approval, were to continue on the condition that the imperial powers recognize the League of Nations. The terms of the agreement emerged out of the 1920 San Remo Conference where the League of Nations "mandate system" was born, allocating Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan to Britain, and Syria and Lebanon to the French (Goff et al., 1998)—similar to the terms within the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Given an understanding of the competing nationalisms in Palestine, and the imperial "lines in the sand" drawn up at the Paris Peace Conference, Renton (2013) argued that the primary reason the British government supported Zionism, through the Balfour Declaration, was to secure alleged "Jewish power" in the United States and Europe. It was believed that Jewish capital and influence would aid Britain in its rivalry with the Central Powers and elsewhere (Renton, 2013), the substance of which was more myth than reality (Bauer, 1979). Overall, Britain could not afford to continue its imperial largesse following the events of World War I, which made the prospect of Zionist-provided capital investment in Palestine particularly attractive (Cohen, 2011). As Cohen elaborated:

Palestine was basically a poor country, lacking growth potential. Apart from a limited reserve of minerals in the Dead Sea, it had no known natural resources, no significant agricultural potential or local consumers' market, and no obvious outlet for British investment…Britain's primary interest in Palestine was strategic. But thanks to Zionists, it came into a unique windfall – significant imports of Jewish capital, donations to the Jewish National Home. *During the entire period of the Mandate, the Palestine administration's entire budget never reached the level of Jewish capital imports.* (Cohen, 2011, p. 116; italic emphasis added)

Politically, such Zionist capital was quite opportune for British domestic consumption, given that Britain was committed to ensuring taxpayers did not have to prop up Palestine economically. The infusion of significant Jewish capital into Palestine allowed for British interests to maintain their presence while bearing minimal costs. Regarding this consensus at the time, Cohen cogently illustrated that,

By 1923, no official disputed the fact that without the continued import of Jewish capital and enterprise into Palestine, not only would the pace of development in the country slow down drastically, or even come to a halt, but also any expenses incurred in its routine administration would fall on the British taxpayer. Such a prospect was pure anathema to all postwar British governments. (Cohen, 2010, p. 89)

In other words, Zionist investment could offset the costs of Britain's imperial dominion, in exchange for at least a "promise" of Jewish self-determination in Palestine (Cohen, 2010), and it would provide the necessary capital to develop Palestine as a whole (not just for the benefit of the Zionists) (Cohen, 2010), which had been left underdeveloped (and subsequently under-populated) (Cohen, 2011) following centuries of Ottoman imperial dominion. Moreover, the British recognized that Zionists would be willing to invest *even at a loss*, as the motive for such investment was not profit-oriented—an attractive prospect that was not lost on Zionist efforts to sway British authorities towards supporting Zionism (Cohen, 2011). However, at least by the 1920s there appears to have been some genuine desire (and moralistic considerations) to appear honorable to commitments made to the Jews in terms of supporting a Jewish national home, in exchange for financing British imperial projects in Palestine (Matthew, 2013), especially as no other sources of investment were likely.

Much more can be said, and much ink has been spilled discussing the Balfour Declaration over the past 100 years since its existence. While the history surrounding the Balfour Declaration is clear, including its most positive—and most tragic—consequences, I shall turn my attention to the second part of this article, exploring the relational "indigeneities" of Jews and Palestinian Arabs to the land, and providing a critical appraisal of Palestinian Arab claims negating, or diminishing Jewish indigeneity to the land.

The Erasure of Memory: Denying Jewish Indigeneity

At its most basic, an "Indigenous people," is one that has inhabited a given territory prior to any contact with foreign settlers or colonizers with a different way of life (Yahel, Kark, & Frantzman, 2012). According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), a loose set of criteria are provided that apply to a diverse set of Indigenous peoples, in an equally diverse set of contexts, of which some—but not necessarily all—of the following criteria must be met:

> Self-identification as [I]ndigenous [P]eoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member; Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies; Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources; Distinct social, economic or political systems; Distinct language, culture and beliefs; Form non-dominant groups of society; Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. (United Nations, n.d., para. 3)

Naturally, this definition makes no judgment on the existence of a multiplicity of Indigenous peoples within a given space; it merely demonstrates the generally agreed-upon criteria that pertains to Indigenous Peoples across the world. It is apparent then that many Palestinian Arabs consider this definition to apply to themselves, but deny its reciprocal application to the Jews, ergo invalidating any claims to Jewish self-determination.

However, official Palestinian Authority media frequently denies Jewish indigeneity in the territory of historic *Eretz Yisrael* (Land of Israel)/Palestine. Such pronouncements are mainstream within Palestinian political discourse. For instance, on May 14, 2011, Abdallah Al-Ifranji, an advisor to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, relayed words on behalf of the President, where he remarked:

> National reconciliation [between Hamas and Fatah] is required in order to face Israel and Netanyahu. We say to him [Netanyahu], when he claims – that they [Jews] have a

historical right dating back to 3,000 years BCE – we say that the nation of Palestine upon the land of Canaan had a 7,000-year history BCE. This is the truth, which must be understood and we have to note it, in order to say: "Netanyahu, you are incidental in history. We are the people of history. We are the owners of history." (Palestinian Media Watch, 2011, para. 2)

To buttress such arguments, Palestinian Arabs must expound genealogical claims to Peoples who predate the Jewish presence in the land. The premise of such assertions—albeit with little evidence (Bukay, 2012)—involves, for instance, a claim of descent to the Jebusites of ancient Canaan, the original inhabitants of Jerusalem according to the Old Testament, in an effort to invalidate later Jewish claims to the city (Wenkel, 2007). In other cases, Palestinians have orchestrated ritual observances to the ancient god, Baal, as a purported demonstration of their Canaanite heritage (Breger, 1997).

By denying Jewish indigeneity and inventing a supersessionist Palestinian Arab indigeneity, the Palestinian political narrative has engaged in a form of cultural appropriation as a tool by which to delegitimize the Zionist enterprise *in its totality*, and sever Jewish connection to the land (Bukay, 2012). As Bukay asserted, "[t]his fictitious history, which ignores all historical documentation and established historical methods, is based on systematic distortions of both ancient and modern history with the aim of denying Israel's right to exist" (p. 23).

Without prejudicing any claims of some Palestinian Arabs on the subject of indigeneity, Jewish attachment to the land predates any documented Arab presence by millennia. In fact, and again, without prejudicing any justifiable Palestinian claims to national sovereignty or indigeneity of their own, as Yahel et al. (2012) reminded, "Jews are the only nation that can claim an uninterrupted presence on the land from biblical times to date—for a significant amount of the time as its rulers" (p. 8). By extension of this fact, the Jews have ties to the land prior to the emergence of any imperial powers in the modern era:

The Land of Israel has a dual history, marked both by constant waves of immigration and invasion by various peoples and uninterrupted Jewish presence in the land from time immemorial. The Jews have always considered the Land of Israel their national homeland, have lived in it as a sovereign nation in historical times, maintained at least a toehold there despite persecution, and returned to it time and again after being exiled. This

spiritual relationship is also expressed in both Jewish daily prayers and Israel's

Declaration of Independence. (Yahel et al., 2012, p. 14)

Of note, some Arab groups may have migrated to, and settled in, the land following the return of Jews from exile in 538 B.C.E. It is well known that beginning in the seventh century, with the expansion of various Islamic empires into the Levant, including Palestine, came a variety of ethnic groups, including Arabs, but all under the aegis of Islamic imperial rule from that point forward until the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (Yahel et al., 2012). This history could reasonably provide descendants of those Arabs with sufficient claims to national rights— including Indigenous rights—*but not at the expense* of the Jewish rights to the same. At issue is not the supplanting of the rights of one party over the other—there can be more than one Indigenous population within a given territory—but rather the denial of Jewish indigeneity altogether. Nor does such an acknowledgment privilege one group to have dominion over another—an important, but altogether separate discussion.

Acknowledging this history, one would have to take great pains to divest the Jewish People from their rightful Indigenous heritage in the land. To do so would demand a loosening of the threshold required to make a reasonable claim to indigeneity, which would actually serve to *strengthen* the Jewish claim versus its competitors (albeit, without prejudicing those claims that *could* meet the threshold) (Yahel et al., 2012). Thus, the view of the Jewish People as a distinct nation bound to the land of *Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine, both physically and spiritually, is a well-established, millennia-old trait.

Important, however, is the fact that such rhetorical distortions serve to exacerbate the current intractability of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. According to Kriesberg (2003b), the intractability, or persistence of a social conflict is influenced by various factors, including the belief or perception that the goals of one group (i.e., Zionism) contradicts the goals of another (i.e., Palestinian Arab nationalism). Such conflicts are typified by persistently destructive relationships despite efforts to positively transform them by members of both sides of the conflict, as well as third party mediators. Moreover, while not *always* the case, it is common for intractable conflicts to be inherited and perpetuated intergenerationally, which tends to further ossify the conflict and make it more difficult to de-escalate so as to pursue some form of mutually acceptable peaceful outcome.

Accordingly, the reason such conflicts tend to be intractable is precisely because they centre around issues of identity—involving both the perceptions social groups in conflict have of themselves and their real, or perceived, enemies. This perception informs how they relate to each other, how they believe the conflict should be resolved, and how best to achieve that end. In essence, such conflicts are more typically zero-sum than conflicts over mere material concerns in that the idea of compromise is often seen as a price that is too high to pay and comes at the expense of a core element of group identity—often to the point of feeling that the existence of one's group identity hinges on the collective ability to *resist* compromise. As Kriesberg wrote:

> Members of one or more sides in every conflict have grievances, some of which contribute to intractability. This is the case when members of one side feel grossly wronged by the oppression and injustices imposed by the other side, or feel that their very existence is threatened. Such feelings tend to be found in conflicts that are intractable. (Kriesberg, 2003b, para. 15)

In fact, Burton (1998) went so far as to suggest that such critical identity-related issues are not subject to bargaining or compromise along the lines that more material matters are, as there is an implicit "need" to have one's identity recognized and legitimated. While many scholars are critical of this approach as being too deterministic and opaque (Rubenstein, 2001; Marker, 2003), there is certainly some merit in recognizing that unmet needs can—albeit contextually—count as an independent variable worthy of consideration when analyzing conflicts (Rubenstein, 2001). Thus, feelings of existential threat can lead to intractability or emerge as the result of intractability. Either way, such intractability produces dichotomous "us-versus-them" thinking that is characteristic of identity-based conflicts (Kriesberg, 2003a).

For our purposes, social identity is understood to be socially constructed insofar as there has historically been mobility between various elements of identity, including religious, ethnic, racial, and other considerations depending on the context—although some elements of ethnicity are more malleable than others (Kriesberg, 2003a). Identity-based conflicts, especially ethnic-oriented conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict result in competitive thinking, in which social groups broadly share similar values, beliefs, and aspirations that seemingly—or realistically—contradict those shared by a competing social group. While intractability is not necessarily a permanent condition, it is unlikely to be alleviated unless some form of mutually beneficial congruence is established between the competing social groups in question.

It should be noted that possessing a set of identities is natural and necessary, and is not a problem in and of itself; rather the denial of a particularly salient element of a collective group's identity is likely to result in social conflict that will almost certainly be intractable until recognition of that element of identity is respected. That is, there needs to be a legitimation of one's identity vis-à-vis an adversarial social group that can lead to a positive-sum set of social relations that hitherto is impossible to achieve (Marker, 2003). As Marker poignantly illustrated regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself:

> For example, the Palestinian conflict involves the unmet needs of identity and security. Countless Palestinians feel that their legitimate identity is being denied them, both personally and nationally. Numerous Israelis feel that they have no security individually because of suicide bombings, nationally because their state is not recognized by many of their close neighbors, and culturally because anti-Semitism is growing worldwide. Israeli and Palestinian unmet needs directly and deeply affect all the other issues associated with this conflict. Consequently, if a resolution is to be found, the needs of Palestinian identity and Israeli security must be addressed and satisfied on all levels. (Marker, 2003, para. 4)

As such, for there to be a realistic chance for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to end, there must be a *mutual* recognition that both Jews and Palestinian Arabs have national rights, in order to transform how each community perceives the other, and to build the requisite trust necessary to create peace on the ground. In fact, such mutual recognition is critical in ensuring that positive relationships based on trust can arise between both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, in order to begin the process of reconciliation in some form (Kriesberg, 2003a). While this certainly includes an acceptance of Palestinian identity and rights, it also includes *a priori* a recognition of Jewish indigeneity—as a core and inalienable element of Jewish peoplehood and identity—to the same territory that Palestinians claim as a homeland.

It should be noted that the recognition of Jewish indigeneity in *Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine does not preclude any agreement which would result in national self-determination for both Jews and Palestinian Arabs in the land, but rather to demonstrate that merely claiming that Jews are *not* Indigenous to the territory further exacerbates the conflict. The same can be said for those claiming Palestinian Arabs have no rights to self-determination. The discussion here does not surround what a policy outcome would look like but deals only with official Palestinian

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governmental denial of Jewish indigeneity as a contributing factor to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Given an understanding of what drives identity-based conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is necessary to turn attention to an exploration of Zionism and Palestinian Arab nationalism in historical context. In doing so, I preface the subsequent discussion of postcolonialist critiques of Zionism, which mirror those levied by official Palestinian Authority political communications, and develop an understanding of how Zionism differs significantly from archetypical settler colonial societies around the world.

Zionism, Migration, and Palestinian Arab Nationalism

Prior to the emergence of nationalism within the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Islam was the most dominant organizing societal principle in the Arab-Islamic world. Palestinian Arab identity was centered around a "…complex web of political and social allegiances: Ottoman, Arab, Greater Syrian, regional, religious, and familial" (Renton, 2013, p. 577). Thus, Palestinian Arab notions of national uniqueness is considerably more recent than Jewish notions in the land (Joffe, 2012), and was somewhat ironically influenced by the nascent and growing Zionist movement emerging in Palestine (Bukay, 2012).

Moreover, many of the Arab inhabitants in Palestine in the period immediately following the First World War were recent migrants to the territory, and were—again, not without irony—spurred to migrate by the fruits of Jewish immigration (Karsh, 2008). In fact, it is noteworthy to mention that the Zionist enterprise—through its economic investment in Palestine—not only increased Arab immigration, but decreased the prior trend of Arab emigration from Palestine, as Karsh illustrated:

> […] the inflow of Jewish immigrants and capital after World War I revived the country's hitherto static population. If prior to the war some 2,500-3,000 Arabs, or one out of every 200-250 inhabitants, emigrated from Palestine every year, this rate was slashed to about 800 per annum between 1920 and 1936, while the Arab population rose from about 600,000 to some 950,000 owing to the substantial improvement in the socio-economic conditions attending the development of the Jewish National Home. (Karsh, 2008, p. 364)

The *1937 Report of the Palestine Royal Commission* acknowledged this economic-related growth in the Arab population, where it stated:

> The Arab population shows a remarkable increase since 1920, and it has had some share in the increased prosperity of Palestine. Many Arab landowners have benefited from the sale of land and the profitable investment of the purchase money. The *fellaheen* are better off, on the whole, than they were in 1920. This Arab progress has been partly due to the import of Jewish capital into Palestine and other factors associated with the growth of the National Home. In particular, the Arabs have benefited from social services, which could not have been provided on the existing scale without the revenue obtained from the Jews. (Great Britain, Peel, W.R.W.P, 1937, para. 18)

It is of interest to learn there was a concomitantly negative relationship between Palestinian Arab material gain, and the resultant affinity for their Jewish co-habitants, as the Peel Commission illustrated:

> We have found that, though the Arabs have benefited by the development of the country owing to Jewish immigration, this has had no conciliatory effect. On the contrary, improvement in the economic situation in Palestine has meant the deterioration of the political situation. (Peel Commission, 1937, p. 363)

Again, while making exception for those Arabized Peoples that could justifiably claim lineage directly to antiquity, it can be demonstrated that of the significant cohort of Arab economic migrants to Palestine from modern-day Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere (Bukay, 2012) prior to partition in 1947, no reasonably Indigenous connection to the territory can be claimed.

Critics counter this reality with the charge that most Jewish settlers in Palestine also arrived in the three decades or so prior to the establishment of the State of Israel (Greenstein, 2017), which could therefore provide an argument that the case between recent Jewish and Arab arrivals to Palestine are equivalent in this regard. However, this critique ignores the motivations of this migration, with the former being motivated largely by an existing Indigenous connection to the land, and the latter being motivated by more material concerns. Thus, the definition of Indigenous connection, supplemented by the criteria set out by UNPFII, demonstrates the Indigenous connections of the Jews to the land, which does not apply to the more recent Arab migrants to Palestine. That is not to say that those Arab economic migrants had no right to reside

in the land; only that they cannot reasonably claim Indigenous heritage, and if the argument is made that they *can indeed* make such claims regardless of definitional restrictions, then by the same token, so too can the Jewish People.

Postcolonialism and Its Discontents

Thus far, it can be established that a rejection of Jewish indigeneity to the land requires the employment of fallacious history with the rhetoric of decolonization. This involves the use of politicized communications to link the phenomenon of Zionism with historical European settler colonialism through a post-colonialist and postmodernist lens (Bukay, 2012). This is achieved through the reductive ascription of complex social ills to the legacies of imperialism and colonialism (Salzman, 2007), working retroactively to illustrate a predetermined causal linkage. Therefore, without focusing on the positive or negative consequences of history, the question becomes whether Zionism is a form of Indigenous self-determination for the Jewish People, or an illegitimate settler colonial project involving the disenfranchising of an Indigenous population for the benefit of an alien population.

Given the ideological diversity within "Zionism" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.*a*) at its most basic, a distilled definition of Zionism involves the commitment to the (re)establishment of a Jewish national home in the Jewish People's historic homeland (*Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine) in one fashion or another (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.*b*). The different ideas surrounding how this type of national polity should emerge is beyond the scope of our discussion, but essentially it was an emancipation movement emerging out of the European nationalistic milieu of the late 19th century (Bareli, 2001), aiming to assert Jewish sovereignty and the creation of a Jewish body politic in at least part of the ancient lands of Israel.

However, critics of Zionism consider it to be nothing more than a form of British-facilitated colonial exploitation and dispossession by foreigners to the land, in order to establish a polity that asserts its dominance over an Indigenous population (Bareli, 2001). Viewed as such, Zionism, then, is inherently illegitimate. However, as such critics are largely informed by settler colonial theories, a historically contextualized response is required to separate fact from fiction with "…neither moral judgmentalism nor apologetics on behalf of Israeli interests" (Bareli, 2001, p. 103), or presumably for that matter, Palestinian Arab interests.

What then, is "settler colonialism?" Greenstein provided a comprehensive definition, which is instructive:

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[Settler colonialism] identifies a cluster of societies in which colonial rule – the overseas extension of Europe-based states – was combined with large-scale immigration of metropolitan settlers. Politically, it focuses on particularly resilient forms of domination that serve the interests of settlers who made a new home for themselves in overseas territories. Facing resistance from indigenous people to their subjugation, settler societies were shaped historically by ongoing conflict. This has provided them with common features and a sense of shared destiny, based on the similar challenges they faced. Solidarity between those at the losing end – indigenous groups, slaves and other people marginalized through this form of colonial rule – is the other part of the process. (Greenstein, 2017, p. 1)

Thus, one can see that settler colonialism as a phenomenon is quite malleable, and applicable to many scenarios and can take on many forms (Greenstein, 2017). However, the one thing that all cases of settler colonialism have in common is, according to Greenstein, "the distinction between indigenous people and settlers (including their descendants)" (p. 3).

Greenstein argued that while Jews can certainly, to an extent, be viewed as Indigenous to the territory, as "…if not as individuals then as a collective – The Jewish People – that maintained unique identity and link to the country over millennia, regardless of specific time and space configurations" (Greenstein, 2017, p. 3). However, he seemingly qualified Jewish indigeneity to those residing within Palestine prior to Zionist (re)colonization. Speaking with regard to the consequences of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War following partition, Greenstein wrote:

It involved the displacement of indigenous people by recently-arrived settler immigrants: a vast majority of local Jews by 1948 had moved to Palestine in the previous three decades, and new immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East doubled their numbers within the next four years. In the other cases [wars between equally indigenous parties to a conflict] those involved were equally indigenous to the scene as they had co-existed in the same territory for centuries. (Greenstein, 2017, p. 10)

That is, Greenstein appeared to dismiss the notion that those Jews who immigrated in the recent decades prior to the 1947 partition of Palestine could claim indigeneity to the land, and seems to privilege Arab indigeneity by virtue of longstanding residence, while failing to apply the same standard to those Arabs who recently migrated to Palestine as well. Thus, for this critique to sustain itself, it is essential for Jewish notions of indigeneity to be dismissed or

minimized, insofar as an indeterminate number of Jews in Palestine prior to partition had not lived among the Arab population "for centuries."

This perspective privileges longstanding association with a land—as is undoubtedly the case with many Palestinian Arabs—over the Jewish Indigenous connection, without identifying a reason, nor a threshold for these criteria. This therefore problematizes Greenstein's approach, as no time threshold is established to constitute a "legitimate" length of time by which to claim indigeneity, or have indigeneity extinguish. Moreover, this application of indigeneity is arbitrarily applied to only one set of Jews within a specific set of criteria, while not applying to the collective Jewish People, as per the commonly accepted application of the concept elucidated via UNPFII.

Other critiques focus on different elements of the Zionist enterprise. According to Wolfe (2006), both settler colonialism and genocide are linked in a "logic of elimination," whereby genocide can be—but is not necessarily—a component of settler colonial processes. In other words, settler colonialism seeks an "elimination" of sorts, but is not invariably genocidal in its outcome (Wolfe, 2006). The primary motive of settler populations is to gain access to territory by eliminating native societies, either physically, or culturally through assimilation, and supplant it with a foreign society, a process which can take many forms (Wolfe, 2006).

Wolfe applied this concept to Zionist colonization in Palestine, claiming that the process of colonization involved efforts to disenfranchise not only Palestinian Arab labour, but also to fashion an *exclusively* Jewish state, from "…the negative process of excluding Palestine's Indigenous owners" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 390). Implicit, of course, is the suggestion that Jews—Zionist or not—are *not* Indigenous to the territory. Wolfe stated his contention bluntly, and applied to Israel (even defined by pre-1967 borders) the same condition he applied to all settler colonial societies that:

> […] settler colonialism is an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view of eliminating Indigenous societies. Its operations are not dependent on the presence or absence of formal state institutions or functionaries. (Wolfe, 2006, p. 393)

Yet in his conflation of Israel's founding with settler colonialism, Wolfe engaged in emotive polemics describing Israel's "…chronic addiction to territorial expansion" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 401) and implicitly denied Jewish indigeneity to the territory by suggesting that the Zionist enterprise had driven "…so many of its original inhabitants into the sand" (p. 401). Of importance here is that aside from a critique of particular Israeli policies—which may or may not be legitimate—the denial of Jewish indigeneity is taken for granted, which then paves the way for a simplistic and erroneous equation between Zionism and settler colonialism.

Lloyd goes further by considering Zionism to be an "…exemplary settler colonial project" (Lloyd, 2012, p. 59), arguing that Zionism necessitated—and continues to necessitate—the "functional absence" of "native people" in Palestine (p. 61), effectively downplaying Jewish indigeneity to the land, and privileging Palestinian Arab indigeneity. Furthermore, Lloyd cited the existence of Zionist Eurocentricism and desires among them to emulate European nation-states, which will be addressed in more detail below, as evidence of Zionist imperialism, and as a typical manifestation of settler colonies around the world. Lloyd stated:

> Accordingly, the foundations of Zionism are imbued with the contradictory pulls of European nationalisms in general, between an inwardly directed demand for self-determination and an outwardly directed desire for expansion through the colonisation of others considered inferior to Europeans...insisting on the *equivalence* of the European Jews to other European nationalities and therefore on the right to self-determination while at the same time negotiating with the German Kaiser, British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, and the Ottoman Sultan in turn for a land to colonise, embodies the terms that would come to shape Zionism through and through. Zionism's conception of a nationality lay in the ethnic but largely secular nationalisms of Europe. Like its nineteenth-century European forebears, Zionist nationalism was founded in the belief in the historical destiny of a given people to self-determination and sovereignty. (Lloyd, 2012, pp. 63-64)

Thus, Lloyd equated Zionism with European settler colonialism by virtue of the existence of similar worldviews between some Zionists and Western European nations. Importantly, Lloyd suggested that Zionist settler colonialism is characterized, as all settler colonialism is, on the appropriation of Indigenous land, "...rather than the political and economic subordination of the

Indigenous population, the monopolisation of its resources, or the control of its markets" (Lloyd, 2012, p. 66).

However, as Penslar (2001) lucidly illustrated, this characterization requires the obfuscation of the underlying motivations behind Zionism as an Indigenous revival of the Jewish People in their historic homeland:

> Zionism was a product of the age of imperialism; its adherents shared a number of common sensibilities with European advocates of colonial expansion in the Middle East. Yet the movement was not, in and of itself, a form of colonial practice. Due to myriad historical and ideological factors, Zionism sought to realize itself in the Middle East, in an area chosen not for its strategic value, natural resources or productive capabilities, but solely because of the Jews' historic, religious and cultural ties to the area known to them as the Land of Israel. (Penslar, 2001, p. 96)

As can be deduced, many settler colonial models apply malleable criteria to accommodate a critique of Zionism. Shimoni argued that postcolonialist theory is often used as a tool through which to weaponize critique, by associating anything with "colonialism"—rightly or wrongly, and often without sufficient critical inquiry—to be beyond the pale (Shimoni, 2007). Steinberg suggested that such lenses utilize selective bias to determine *a priori* "oppressors" and "oppressed" groups, and allow for ideological positions to disproportionately value subjective interpretations of events in order to produce notionally valid results (Steinberg, 2007).

Given our discussion of Jewish indigeneity and its subsequent rejection by many Palestinian Arabs, as well as a discussion of postcolonialist attempts to correlate Zionism with settler colonialism, we turn to an elaboration of Zionism itself to demonstrate the incongruence between the two concepts.

<div align="center">**Zionism Versus Settler Colonialism**</div>

First and foremost, Zionism was indeed (re)colonialist to the extent that it was a movement of primarily—but not exclusively—Jews of European extraction to Palestine. The intent was to settle the land and encourage Jewish newcomers to compete for land and labor with both the Palestinian Arab residents and Arab economic migrants beginning in the 1880s and continuing onward until the 1947 partition of Palestine (and beyond) (Bareli, 2001). During this period, both Jews and Palestinian Arabs competed for recognition with the British imperial

authorities, in what amounted to a "civil war" between two separate nationalistic communities (Bareli, 2001).

Unlike "settler societies" elsewhere, Jews did not view themselves as foreign to the land, but as Indigenous returnees seeking national independence (Troen, 2007). For this fundamental reason, Palestine was chosen over alternative locations (Goff et al., 1998; Gans, 2007). While certainly influenced by European thought, the Zionists invoked the cultural distinctness of the Jewish People, a difference recognized by Europeans historically through the "othering" and persecution of European Jews for centuries (Bareli, 2001).

Jews, according to Shimoni, were perceived as the "...quintessential Oriental Other" (Shimoni, 2007, p. 860) in the myriad of societies they inhabited throughout history. Over time, they had, to varying extents, internalized the ideals of their host societies, engaged in self-hatred and the internalization of stereotypes, and desired to mimic dominant cultural norms (Shimoni, 2007). Zionism was perceived by many of its adherents as the way to assert a more confident identity and (re)construct the "New Jew" through a re-association with the symbolism and connection of the land of *Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine. This particularly involved the pursuit of Jewish resilience, and self-sufficiency for the Jews that were undoubtedly influenced by European thought, but nevertheless distinct from European nationalism (Shimoni, 2007).

For postcolonialist critiques of Zionism—irrespective of its positive and negative consequences—the matter of Jewish indigeneity to the land is denied, ignored, or dismissed as irrelevant. Such critiques consign Zionism to a political, historic, and socioeconomic vacuum, by conflating Zionist (re)colonization with true cases of settler colonialism elsewhere, thereby making Zionism appear as not only possessing a parasitic quality, but also an arbitrary and predatory approach towards the Palestinian Arabs. Such arguments disenfranchise Jews, while privileging Palestinian Arabs, of their Indigenous patrimony, while ignoring the "othering" that has also transpired on the side of Arab nationalists in general, and Palestinian Arab nationalists, in particular. Speaking to this trend in postcolonialist analysis of Zionism, Shimoni asserted that,

> […] nothing is said of the degradations deriving from the traditional *dhimmi* status of
> Jews as a tolerated but subordinate and oft-humiliated religious minority within the realm
> of Islam; not to speak of consequent self-righteous indignation at any expressions of
> Jewish assertiveness, and the pathological shame-and-honour syndrome which precludes
> any thought of Jewish sovereignty within any part whatsoever of the claimed geo-

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political realm of Islam. Moreover, as unquestionably sound scholarship has shown, Arab representations of Jews have increasingly projected unmistakably anti-Semitic motifs, avidly adopted from Christian Europe. (Shimoni, 2007, p. 863)

However, as alluded to elsewhere, this is not to suggest that Eurocentricism did not exist among many Zionists. Many did in fact believe that their way of life was superior to that of Palestine's Arab inhabitants, which was all but an inescapable legacy of the European environment in which the early Zionists found themselves (Bareli, 2001). However, there were those Zionists who valorized—often romanticizing and idealizing—"the Orient," causing intra-Zionist discord over what manifestation Zionism should take on (Shimoni, 2007).

Among such Zionists were those who claimed that the Jews and Arabs were essentially distant family, with some maintaining—albeit with scant evidence—that some Palestinian Arabs were indeed descendants of ancient Hebrews, as a way to demonstrate their fealty to the land and the region (Penslar, 2001). David Ben-Gurion himself made this assertion, which had the *de facto* effect of linking Jewish indigenity to any claims made by the Palestinian Arab population, and vice versa (Pearl, 2008). Others viewed the Palestinian Arabs as a corporate group (Muir, 2008) and called for social integration with Palestinian Arabs, and for Jews to learn Arabic in their schools (Karsh, 2008), all the while recognizing that the land had enough room for both national groups (Gans, 2007). It would seem then that among prominent Zionist thinkers—at least rhetorically—there was no conflict in admitting that Jews were not Palestine's sole Indigenous inheritors.

According to Penslar, Zionism's *mission civilisatrice* was directed primarily at other Jews, with the aim of having the Jewish People shed off the yoke of Europe and transform themselves economically and politically through the (re)invention of an Indigenous folk culture in their historic homeland. There was no colonial attempt to force affiliation with Judaism or Zionist ideals upon the Palestinian Arab population, unlike other European colonial projects in North America, Africa, and Asia (Penslar, 2001). The "New Jew" was to use Hebrew as a living national language—a language always Indigenous to the region, most palpably in *Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine (Bareli, 2001)—in direct opposition to those who sought other languages as the Jewish *lingua franca* (Troen, 2007).

Importantly, Zionists invested capital in, rather than extracting resources from, Palestine for the benefit of a colonial metropole, demonstrating that Jewish (re)colonization was not

carried out for economic or merely "Eurocentric" purposes. In fact, local economic conditions became attractive (for all) only following the considerable influx of Jewish capital to Palestine from abroad (Bareli, 2001).

Ultimately, however, the conflict was that of two competing nationalisms. Both the Zionists and the Palestinian Arabs sought to curry favour with the British imperial powers, and argue their respective positions. The majority of mainstream Zionists indeed sought to peacefully (to the extent possible) establish a Jewish majority in Palestine, all while recognizing that there would always be—and rightfully so—a permanent Arab minority within a Jewish State (Karsh, 2008). Jewish indigeneity as a basis for Zionist aspirations did not preclude the same rights for the Palestinian Arab population, despite the reverse being true by a significant proportion of the Palestinian Arab community (Shimoni, 2007). In this respect, we see at the very least that the opposition to Zionism in Palestine was not over its effect, but rather its intent. Moreover, today's postcolonial attempts at critiquing Zionism tend to critique both Zionism's intent *and* effect, and demonstrating the congruence between Zionism and settler colonialism, which is a far different exercise than what informed the original reasoning by Palestinian Arabs themselves surrounding their rejection of Zionism.

A further characteristic of postcolonial discourse on Zionism is the failure to contextualize Zionism within its historical environment. The enterprise itself began in the late 19th century within the Ottoman Empire, and continued under British imperial rule following the Ottoman surrender. In such a political environment, Jews had limited authority over their own affairs, as imperial law determined the limits of the Zionist enterprise in all spheres of life (Penslar, 2001). Moreover, unlike in other imperial contexts, Jews were not provided free lands and indentured labour in service of a foreign imperial enterprise, but instead had to purchase land and hire labor through their own means (Golan, 2001). However, as reiterated elsewhere, investment in Palestine was the norm, rather than the reverse, as Troen (2007) clearly illustrated:

> Jewish colonization during its first forty years took place in the Ottoman Empire and was not part of the process of imperial expansion in search of power and markets. It was not a consequence of industrialization and financial interests. Indeed, as numerous scholars have noted, *Jewish settlement was so unprofitable that it has been judged to be economically irrational.* (Troen, 2007, p. 881; italic emphasis added)

This meant that Zionist (re)colonization of Palestine required the buttressing of Jewish self-sufficiency in agriculture and commerce, to augment a unique societal foundation for further growth. At times, although certainly not always, this process resulted in exclusionary policies in relation to Arab labor, whereby Arabs lost employment prospects as Zionists encouraged *and* pressured Jewish employers to hire only Jewish employees (Cohen, 2011). Yet the behavior was carried out to ensure Jewish self-sufficiency *without* any imperial aegis (Shimoni, 2007). That is, Zionism was meant to produce Jewish national continuity, self-sufficiency, and *independence* within *Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine, alone, with no loyalty to any other country. As Shimoni put it, "those postcolonialist studies which ignore this intrinsic truth are guilty of the...privileging of consequences over intentions" (Shimoni, 2007, p. 866).

It is possible, however, to conceive of Zionism as being simultaneously an Indigenous project of Jewish national reconstitution in *Eretz Yisrael*/Palestine *and* a settler colonial enterprise, insofar as people point to the effect of Zionism rather than its intent (as mentioned above). Through this perspective, analysts could point out particular Israeli policies which are detrimental to Palestinian national interests, rights, needs, and desires. However, such critiques would merit appropriate consideration in the context of a critique of Israeli policies, along the lines of critique levied against any other country—no more and no less. Zionism itself could not be considered the fulcrum upon which *any and all* social ills evident within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict hinge. There are myriad reasons for the state of affairs that contemporarily plague Israelis and Palestinians. Thus, it is necessary to reiterate that Jewish indigeneity and subsequent self-determination is not in question, just as Palestinian national rights are not in question. However, individual Israeli and Palestinian policies can *certainly* be questioned, without drawing inaccurate parallels to settler colonialism, or extinguishing the rights of any one group.

Conclusion

Zionism is an unprecedented form of (re)colonization, as it is the only historical instance in which an Indigenous People have returned to their homeland through a deliberate effort to reacquaint themselves with their patrimony, revive their language, and re-establish their society (Bareli, 2001). No other colonial venture can claim an Indigenous connection to the land which it colonizes, setting Zionism apart from archetypical settler colonial undertakings. Efforts to de-

indigenize the Jewish People and equate Zionism as a wholly settler colonial project in the pejorative sense fail to make a convincing case, given this historical connection.

Moreover, the available PACS literature makes it clear that the denial of Jewish Indigenous identity is more likely to exacerbate an already intractable conflict rather than foster fruitful reconciliation efforts between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. That being said, the legacy of British (and Ottoman) imperialism in contemporary Israel/Palestine is both a blessing and a curse depending on one's position within the forces of history. Two nations with different—yet valid—claims to the same land continue to struggle over recognition, territory, and self-determination.

This discussion sought not to explore the many (in)justices of this conflict for both communities, or offer any (il)legitimate prescriptions for contemporary peace or redress. Rather, the narrative sought to demonstrate the futility in suggesting that Palestinian Arabs enjoy *sole* claims to indigeneity in the land, at the expense of the Jewish People, and the subsequent synonymization of Zionism with settler colonialism, based on this very premise. Despite the complexity and emotions involved in this iconic conflict, it is apparent that by any measure in which Palestinian Arabs can express legitimate indigeneity to the land, so too can the Jewish People.

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