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# DYNAMICS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM: INFLUENCING FACTORS ON THE ISRAELI TREATMENT TOWARDS THE PALESTINIANS

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## **Abstract**

*This essay explores the factors influencing the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip between 2009 and 2019. The essay argues that the Israeli approach towards the Palestinians can be examined in the broader context of settler colonialism and is not exclusively shaped on a security basis. Semi-structured interviews, documents, and other secondary data sources were employed to determine factors defining Israel's approach in confronting Palestinians. Multiple internal and external factors have shaped the Israeli treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Internal elements include power structure, ideology, public opinion, and the colonized people's response. The external factors include the regional (dis-)order and the US-Israel alliance. This analysis finds that most of these factors have fuelled a violent Israeli treatment towards Palestinians. The Palestinian resistance was found to compel Israel to lessen its violent treatment on various occasions. These results indicate that the Israeli treatment of Palestinians is not exclusively shaped on a security basis.*

**Keywords:** settler colonialism; indigenous people; power; resistance; Israel; Palestinians

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## Introduction

In recent years, there has been increased interest in adopting the settler colonialism framework in the context of Israel-Palestinians.<sup>4</sup> Patrick Wolfe has made a remarkable academic turn in theorizing settler colonialism which he defines as a continuous structure that premises on the principle of terra nullius (empty land) and displacement of natives.<sup>5</sup> For Elkins and Pedersen, the elucidation of settler colonialism begins with making a distinction between it and imperial expansion where the latter used to take place for military advantage or trade, and imperial overlords were less concerned about a land seizure or internal governance. Imperial powers have undertaken their mission through reliable indigenous partners or chartered companies.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the settlers create and employ a different dynamic as they intend to make a colonized territory their permanent home while securing metropolitan living standards and political privileges.<sup>7</sup>

Settler colonialism has emerged as a critical theoretical framework concerning contemporary colonial legacies, and it has enabled comparative projects to question the dynamics of settler domination and indigenous subjugation in various places, most often

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Omar Jabary Salamanca et al., "Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012/01/01 2012): 1-8. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648823>; David Lloyd, "Settler Colonialism and the State of Exception: The Example of Palestine/Israel," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 59-80; Lorenzo Veracini, "The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Israel, and the Occupation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, no. 2 (2013): 26-42; Jamil Hilal, "Rethinking Palestine: Settler-Colonialism, Neo-Liberalism and Individualism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2015): 351-62; Sara Salazar Hughes, "Unbounded Territoriality: Territorial Control, Settler Colonialism, and Israel/Palestine," *Settler Colonial Studies* 10, no. 2 (2020): 216-33, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2020.1741763>.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: New York: Cassell, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



in the contexts of Australia, Canada, the United States and New Zealand.<sup>8</sup>

Wolfe has premised his argument on settler-indigenous interactions on the logic of elimination as settlers seek to remove indigenous peoples from their lands by any means necessary.<sup>9</sup> The logic of elimination has guided the settlers' approach towards indigenous peoples as settlers seek to seize lands and expel the indigenous people beyond an ever-expanding frontier of settlement rather than governing the natives enlisting them in settlers' economic ventures.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to this tendency, the relationship between the colonizer and colonized peoples in modern experiences of colonization can be examined through the logic of exploitation as colonized peoples may remain in their places, but they have to provide labour and submit to colonial rules.<sup>11</sup> These tendencies demonstrate different types of relationships between foreign invaders and indigenous peoples in various contexts, and each relationship should have been carried out through multiple dynamics.

In the context of Israel-Palestinians, the Israeli approach towards Palestinians used to be ostensibly carried out in the name of Israel's security or the security of its settlers.<sup>12</sup> Israel has securitized the presence of Palestinian natives, designating them as a threat to Israel regardless of their actual danger to any life.<sup>13</sup> Several scholarly works, especially those conducted by Israeli authors, used the security argument to study the interactions between Israel and Palestinians. These works appear to have distanced from broader

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<sup>8</sup> Rachel Busbridge, "Israel-Palestine and the Settler Colonial 'Turn': From Interpretation to Decolonization," *Theory, Culture & Society* 35, no. 1 (2017): 92, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0263276416688544>.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.

<sup>10</sup> Elkins and Pedersen, *Settler Colonialism*.

<sup>11</sup> See, David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Ania Loomba, *Colonialism, Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Lloyd, "State of Exception".

<sup>13</sup> Noura Erakat, "The Sovereign Right to Kill: A Critical Appraisal of Israel's Shoot-to-Kill Policy in Gaza," *International Criminal Law Review* 19, no. 5 (2019): 783-818, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718123-01905002>.

debates of foreign domination using frameworks such as colonialism and settler colonialism.<sup>14</sup> This avoidance seems to be associated with intent. For instance, Busbridge concludes that the use of colonialism in studies related to Israel is often portrayed as an attack on its legitimacy or evidence of anti-Semitism.<sup>15</sup> However, Pappé argues that settler colonialism has been the most useful paradigmatic framework for Palestine-Israel.<sup>16</sup>

This paper critiques the dominance of security discourse in many studies in this context. It seeks to explore the dynamics of the Israeli treatment of Palestinians within the broader context of settler colonialism. The relatively stable security condition in Israel in recent years, which has not apparently resulted in a substantial shift of the Israeli approach towards Palestinians, suggests the need to look beyond the security argument. The relevance of this study may further arise from Busbridge's conclusion that the current literature seems to lack studies on place-based dynamics of settler-indigenous relations and territorial acquisition, especially in the case of Israel-Palestinians.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Carol Gordon and Asher Arian, "Threat and Decision Making," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 2 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002701045002003>; Sergio Catignani, "The Security Imperative in Counterterror Operations: The Israeli Fight against Suicidal Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 1-2 (2005): 245-264, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550490520718>; David Makovsky, "Gaza: Moving Forward by Pulling Back," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 3 (2005): 52-62, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20034349>; Ifat Maoz and Clark McCauley, "Threat, Dehumanization, and Support for Retaliatory Aggressive Policies in Asymmetric Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 1 (2008): 93-116, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002707308597>; Amir Lupovici, "Ontological Dissonance, Clashing Identities, and Israel's Unilateral Steps towards the Palestinians," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 4 (2011): 809-833, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210511000222>; Matthew Nanes and Trevor Bachus, "Walls and Strategic Innovation in Violent Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65, no. 6 (2021): 1131-1158, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027211994667>.

<sup>15</sup> Busbridge, "From Interpretation to Decolonization," 98-99.

<sup>16</sup> Ilan Pappé, "Shtetl Colonialism: First and Last Impressions of Indigeneity by Colonised Colonisers," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 39-58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473x.2012.10648825>.

<sup>17</sup> Rachel Busbridge, "Messianic Time, Settler Colonial Technology and the Elision of Palestinian Presence in Jerusalem's Historic Basin," *Political Geography* 79



Hence, this study addresses the gap on settler-indigenous relations by arguing that the Israeli government's determinants regarding the Palestinians are not limited to security, offering a specific account that incorporates various internal and external aspects.

## **Research Methodology**

The present study seeks to provide a novel perspective on factors influencing the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians. The research employs a qualitative approach, with interviews serving as the primary data collection method. A total of seven interviews were conducted to collect the primary data.<sup>18</sup> There were criteria for selecting the informants, which included: involvement in Israeli deliberations regarding Palestinians, lived experience in occupied Palestinian territories, and expert knowledge on Israeli and Palestinian affairs. There were consultations with academics, political figures, and journalists to help identify interviewees for this study. Multiple databases were searched to find individuals who could meet the criteria.

The stakeholders for this study were classified into four main categories. The first category is involved international organizations, particularly the United Nations (UN). Two former senior UN staff who worked with Israeli officials in recent years were interviewed. The second category is liaison authority between Israel and Palestinians. One interview was conducted with a senior official who handled negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The third category is political movements. Two interviews were conducted with two leaders from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah). The fourth category is experts in Israeli and Palestinian affairs. Two experts were interviewed. No interview was conducted with Israeli officials because of the sensitivity of the subject matter. The Israeli Basic Law

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(2020): 102-158, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2020.102158>.

<sup>18</sup> All interviews were conducted by the first author between July 2019 and October 2020.

of Government generally prohibits Israelis from disclosing information about the decision-making of foreign and security policies.<sup>19</sup>

However, interviewees under the above categories can provide relevant data in this context. Ranta (2015) shows that the Israeli deliberation regarding the Palestinians used to involve dignitaries from the United Nations (UN). Additionally, documents providing insights about the Israeli perspective were used for the data collection. On the other hand, the present study used thematic analysis as an analytic approach to categorize the data and identify patterns from the text. Fereday and Muir-Cohrane (2006) define thematic analysis as pattern identification within data, with emerging themes becoming analysis categories. Two main themes were found: internal factors and external factors. Subsequently, subthemes were identified, as shown in the data analysis section.

Table 1 provides information on the interviewees and their positions in affiliated institutions, using the four major categories. Each informant is coded for use in the analysis section.

Table 1. Application of the categories on the organizations and selected informants for the interviews

Categories	Organization	Selected informant	Coding
Involved international organizations	United Nations (UN)	Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, based in Jerusalem. Former Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General.	IE1
		Former Deputy Head of Office at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palestinian Territories.	IE2

<sup>19</sup> *Basic Law of Government 2001*. [https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic14\\_eng.htm](https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic14_eng.htm) (accessed 2 October 2020).

DYNAMICS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM: INFLUENCING FACTORS ON THE ISRAELI  
TREATMENT TOWARDS THE PALESTINIANS

Liaison authority	Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)	Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis. Legal advisor to the peace process negotiations since 1994.	NT1
Political movements	Hamas	Senior leader of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. The leader spent 18 years in Israeli jails.	PL1
	Fatah	Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Parliament). Member of the Palestinian National Council. Former minister.	PL2
Experts	-	Expert in Israeli affairs. Head of Israel's Unit in a research centre. The interviewee translated numerous books from Hebrew to Arabic.	ET1
		Head of a prestigious research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs. Professor. Author of 13 books.	ET2

## Findings

The Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians was influenced by a variety of internal and external factors. The internal factors include power structure, ideology, public opinion, and the colonized people's response. The external elements include regional (dis-)order and the US-Israel alliance. These factors mostly drive violent treatment towards Palestinians. It was found that no single factor has determined the treatment of Palestinians independently.

### *Internal factors*

#### *Power Structure*

Israel practices parliamentary democracy where the executive branch gains power from the Knesset (Israeli parliament) based on a majority vote.<sup>20</sup> The power structure in Israel has been guided by Basic Laws as there has been no codified constitution to date. The Knesset has passed Basic Laws over the years, which define the political power structure, the authority of the government's branches, and their interaction.<sup>21</sup> The government has the supreme executive authority in Israel, where the prime minister and ministers are authorized to act in the name of the state. Israel's Basic Law of Government articulates that the government is authorized to perform in the name of the state and subject to any law, all actions which are not legally incumbent on another authority.<sup>22</sup>

The interviews show that right-wing parties have dominated the Israeli governments between 2009 and 2019. The dominance of right-wing parties appears to have determined the prospect of existence for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in recent years:

*I was briefing the security council every month that was back in 2011. I started to warn the security council and to talk about an emerging one-state reality instead of*

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<sup>20</sup> Joel Peters and Rob Geist Pinfeld, in *Understanding Israel: Political, Societal and Security Challenges* (London; New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> *Basic Law of Government 2001*. [https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic14\\_eng.htm](https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic14_eng.htm) (accessed 2 October 2020).

*two states. I felt it became more and more difficult in terms of all the changes on the ground and the fact that the settlement movement was actually in power or empowered by successive Israeli governments.*<sup>23</sup>

Right-wing parties have commonly shown hawkishness towards the Palestinians.<sup>24</sup> The dominance of the right-wing was viewed as one reason for an Israeli rejectionist approach towards Palestinians:

*These extreme movements have become determinant and active in Israeli decision making, and that has been linked to an overall Israeli tendency to reject the two-state solution. While (Israel was) dealing with the Palestinians with further inferiority to the extent of not allowing them to have more than autonomy in place.*<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, several interviews show that the Israeli government has empowered the military to be significantly involved in matters related to the Palestinians: “Well, you know, the army and generals do have an important influence in Israel again because of the security, security is being considered so important by every Israeli”.<sup>26</sup> “What is true and I think that when it comes to dealing with the Palestinians on the ground, whether in Gaza or in the West Bank, it is, of course, the army, it is COGAT, the general, the Coordinator”.<sup>27</sup>

The increasing role of the COGAT was notably felt by Palestinians:

*The role of the Israeli Coordinator has been enlarged in the last four years to the extent of overriding the function of the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli Coordinator has opened direct communications with the*

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

*people, offering them permission (for work and movement).*<sup>28</sup>

The Israeli military appears to have had the power to pursue steps affecting Palestinians that even some Israeli ministers were not aware of:

*It was this general of COGAT who came to me after the war (in 2014) asking me if I could actually rekindle my contacts with Qatar and make the very, very secret first shipment of money for Gaza, and he did that, he could not have done that without the knowledge of Netanyahu, but apart from Netanyahu and his own minister of defence, nobody else knew about it in the cabinet.*<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, some interviews indicate that the Israeli prime minister has a pivotal role in setting the direction and making significant decisions about the Palestinians: “Mr Prime Minister who very much makes the policy (on the Palestinians), (and) certainly since Netanyahu more so than the defence, even than his defence minister sometimes, so that is how it works”.<sup>30</sup>

The Israeli prime minister between 2009 and 2019, Benjamin Netanyahu, seemed to have played the Palestinians’ card to appease right-wing parties:

*He (Netanyahu) figures out that to do so (stay in power), he will have to earn the support of the Israeli extreme right, the middle right, the centre-right, and to destroy the left, and to play into the settlers’ demands, and (to adopt) the conservative Jewish notion of control, taking Zionism to its full extent.*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, April 2, 2022.



### *Ideology*

Some interviews indicate that ideology has a vital role in shaping the Israeli government's interactions with Palestinians:

*It was not a religious conflict in the beginning. (...) Of course, you can say that religion can always play a role, but it certainly; it was not how they looked at it on the Israeli side. But of course, that has also changed on the Israeli side. So now you have a government that is propelled by Zionists, by settlers, religious settlers also in particular.*<sup>32</sup>

It appears that ideology constitutes a vital determinant in Israel's interactions with the Palestinians: "The ideological factor is strongly present (in Israel), and it has been considered in the internal Israeli discussion when they address the Palestinian question".<sup>33</sup> For instance, the ideological factor was found evident in the matters related to the Palestinians in the West Bank:

*The right-wing governments have given special treatment to cities of religious and historical values for them. Hence, they tighten their actions in areas such as Hebron, Salfit, Ariel, or Gush Etzion. For instance, the number of settlers in the city of Salfit is more than the number of Palestinians.*<sup>34</sup>

The use of ideology seemed to entrench in recent years. For instance, the Jewish Nation-State Law, adopted by the Israeli parliament (the Knesset) in 2018: For Israel, there has been an increase and dominance of extreme religious and national agenda, which resulted in the passing of the Jewish Nation-State Law.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with the head of Israel's Unit in a research centre, May 6, 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

### *Public opinion*

The Israeli public opinion appears to have influenced the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians: The Israeli politicians had their own considerations, mainly their own electoral to be mindful of.<sup>36</sup> Particularly, the Israeli prime minister was found to take reprisal measures towards Palestinians in pursuit of public opinion:

*He (the Israeli prime minister) is also thinking about that in terms of his future electability and all that, which sometimes leads him to take decisions you would prefer him not to take in terms of taking reprisals measures after Palestinian violence and all that.*<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, military officers appeared to consider the public views when they made decisions concerning Palestinians: "Then you know your career in the army very often also is a big help in the rest of your career, in society or in politics".<sup>38</sup>

The public opinion concerning Palestinians seemed to be taken into account by Israeli leaders as they were concerned about their political future and electability: "It also means that an Israeli leader, when he is showing weakness to Palestinian violence, showing weakness to Hamas, he will be next elections out of power".<sup>39</sup>

Many Israelis have pushed for poor treatment of Palestinians and opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state:

*I lived for seven years there. I also made some Israeli friends and not only political friends. I was struck by how many Israelis simply did not believe it was possible for them to grant Palestinians (the right to) self-determination.*<sup>40</sup>

*Most of them (Israelis) believe that all is theirs, (and)*

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

*this idea that everybody is always out to get them.*<sup>41</sup>

The vulnerability feelings among many Israelis seem to shape their views in this context: “I know Israel is by far one of the strongest states in the Middle East by now, but this is not the way many Israelis look at that. They still feel that vulnerability in an Arab world”.<sup>42</sup>

*The colonized people's response*

It appears that Palestinian internal divisions between the Fatah and Hamas movements have offered Israel a convenient condition for a violent treatment towards Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip:

*Israel has also benefited from the Palestinian internal condition. First: since 2007, the Palestinian internal condition has been tragic as there has been a political division and a geographic one. And this situation is convenient (for the Israelis) to impose whatever policy. The Israelis exploit this Palestinian situation in order to escape forward from any obligation that could be demanded through the peace process.*<sup>43</sup>

It is suggested that the Israeli government has promoted Palestinian internal divisions:

*I felt that acutely also when I was there in Jerusalem that whenever there was any serious talk of (the Palestinian) reconciliation, the Israelis got very nervous, particularly, of course, the present Israeli government, which is so easy to divide and rule over the Palestinians.*<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Former Deputy Head of Office at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palestinian Territories.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with the head of Israel's Unit in a research centre, May 6, 2022.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

In this respect, the Israeli government granted Palestinian Authority officials' personal privileges, which Israel used to blackmail the officials against ending internal divisions:

*The Israeli authorities granted leaders of the Palestinian Authority special cards called VIP Cards to facilitate their movements and gave them permission to enter the areas Israel had occupied in 1948 and to travel overseas.*<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, the Palestinian resistance, especially in the Gaza Strip, seemed to have served as deterrence to Israel:

*But it was (mitigation to the Palestinians in Gaza) coming directly from the generals directly responsible for the situation, understanding that Gaza would explode again, meaning that another war would come much sooner if this would not be done.*<sup>46</sup>

*The Palestinian resistance is an active and influential factor in Israeli policymaking, particularly the strength and steadfastness in Gaza, which has caused a headache to the Israeli side. (...) The resistance also has a role in other parts of Palestine and causes anxiety to the Israeli occupation.*<sup>47</sup>

### ***External factors***

#### ***Regional (dis-)order***

A former top UN official explained that the unstable regional situation in the Middle East had detrimental effects on the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians:

*Well, I am afraid largely (the influence of regional*

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

*developments on Palestinians); I see it negative. (...) If you look at the Arab states themselves, of course, since the Arab Spring, particularly after that, it further marginalized the conflict.*<sup>48</sup>

A regional leaning towards Israel has taken place in recent years:

*It is noted that there was a sort of building up a relationship (between Israel and Arab regimes), and that certainly influenced the Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. (...) After the Arab Spring, Netanyahu was no longer talking about the two-state solution, which happened due to the absence of pressure to accept this proposal.*<sup>49</sup>

The developments in the region paved the way for rapprochement between Israel and Arab regimes:

*The current environment in the Arab world can be characterized by the submission of authoritarian and corrupt regimes to the American hegemony. (...) The US conditioned their response to these regimes by meeting the Israeli demands or normalization of ties between these regimes and the Israeli side.*<sup>50</sup>

Israel's and Arab regimes' common hostility towards Iran was used to justify the leaning towards Israel in the region: "Iran increasingly became an issue; the Sunni-Shia divide in the region, it all led to a situation, where we know that it is now a corporation between Israel and a number of Arab Gulf states".<sup>51</sup>

However, the regional situation had once constrained the violent Israeli treatment of Palestinians when the Arab Spring gained some momentum in Egypt in 2012:

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with the head of Israel's Unit in a research centre, May 6, 2022.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

*I wanted to tell you about Egypt, Egypt under Morsi of course, the (Muslim) Brotherhood was in power, I had many contacts with the Brotherhood, I also had many contacts on the Israeli side, Israel was very concerned about the developments.<sup>52</sup>*

The involvement of Egypt's Morsi appears to have facilitated the end of the Israeli war on Gaza in 2012:

*And then Morsi showed his leadership, in my view, during the second Gaza war when he actually effectively influenced Hamas to accept another ceasefire which was basically brokered by him together with Hillary Clinton and for the UN; we also played a role.<sup>53</sup>*

#### *US-Israel alliance*

Evidence suggests that the United States has sided with Israel in the Israel-Palestinians issue:

*What I have seen is that the Americans, first of all also for the peace process, close to themselves, you know, there was also a Middle East Quartet, but do not believe that the Quartet was really directing the peace process. It was always the Americans. It was also what the Israeli only wanted.<sup>54</sup>*

*The US has played the broker's role in the peace process, and unfortunately, successively, they have not been able to get an agreement going because they also have their interest and is much closer to Israel. And with Trump, it becomes very, very clear that they are one-sided.<sup>55</sup>*

In recent years, Israel has totally ignored a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians, while the US's Trump administration has supported

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, April 2, 2022.



and help authorized Israel's policy towards the Palestinians.<sup>56</sup> "During the years of Trump's presidency, the Zionist right-wing and Netanyahu have aspired for the annexation of around 30% of the West Bank".<sup>57</sup>

An interviewee demonstrated some recent examples about the US engagement in this context: "They shut the (Palestinian) diplomatic mission to Washington. They have suspended US Aid operation to Palestine, and they have suspended all relations with Palestinians".<sup>58</sup>

## Discussion

The Israeli government seems to deliberately impose violent treatment on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Several internal and external factors have influenced Israeli treatment. The internal factors include power structure, ideology, public opinion, and the colonized people's response. External factors include regional (dis-)order and the US-Israel alliance. Most of these factors appear to have enabled a violent approach towards Palestinians in recent years.

Theoretically, Pappé suggests that settler colonialism is currently the most useful paradigmatic framework on the issue of Israel and Palestinians.<sup>59</sup> Veracini explains that violence is fundamental in the context of settler colonialism, and the settler political order is premised on violent inception.<sup>60</sup> However, Busbridge suggests that the emphasis on overarching logics in settler-colonial studies frequently overlooks place-based dynamics of settler-indigenous relations.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the security argument seems insufficient to explain the interactions between Israel and Palestinians (see Erakat 2019). Hence, this study shows that multiple

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with the head of Israel's Unit in a research centre, May 6, 2022.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, April 2, 2022.

<sup>59</sup> Pappé, "Shtetl Colonialism," 39-58.

<sup>60</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 33-35.

<sup>61</sup> Busbridge, "Messianic Time".

internal and external factors influence the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians.

### *Internal factors*

#### *Power structure*

The dynamics of the power structure in Israel seems to have facilitated a violent treatment of Palestinians. According to the Basic Law of Government, the government has the supreme executive authority in Israel.<sup>62</sup> The executive branch gains power from the Knesset (Israeli parliament) based on a majority vote.<sup>63</sup> Israel adopts the Proportional Representation (PR) system in the parliamentary elections.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, Peters and Pinfold show that the wide range of cleavages among Israelis in terms of culture, ideology, and political view has affected Israel's power arrangements.<sup>65</sup> Given the multiple divisions in the Israeli society and the PR system, the Israeli polity has been a multi-party system with no single political party has ever won a majority.

Right-wing parties dominated the Israeli government coalitions between 2009 and 2019, and those parties have commonly shown hawkishness towards the Palestinians.<sup>66</sup> These governments have chiefly authorized the military to take charge in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israeli generals have significantly influenced the treatment of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>67</sup> A retired Major-General, Shlomo Gazit, indicated that the minister of defence, General Staff of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and the

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<sup>62</sup> *Basic Law of Government 2001*. [https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic14\\_eng.htm](https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/basic14_eng.htm) (accessed 2 October 2020).

<sup>63</sup> Peters and Pinfold, *Understanding Israel*.

<sup>64</sup> Abraham Diskin, "The New Political System of Israel," *Government and Opposition* 34, no. 4 (1999): 498-515, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.1999.tb00167.x>.

<sup>65</sup> Peters and Pinfold, *Understanding Israel*, 63-70.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

security establishment were responsible for the Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>68</sup>

Further, the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) became significantly involved in liaising the movements of Palestinian people and goods through crossings and checkpoints and has controlled the issuance of work permits to Palestinians in recent years.<sup>69</sup> The Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) is a unit under the Israeli military responsible for the security coordination of the Israeli government in the West Bank and towards the Gaza Strip and liaises Palestinians' civilian affairs. It pursues its tasks in coordination and collaboration with other Israeli military officials and relevant Israeli ministries.<sup>70</sup>

Some interviews show that Benjamin Netanyahu, who was the Israeli prime minister between 2009 and 2019, has used his upper authority in the Israeli polity to influence the treatment of Palestinians. The involvement of Netanyahu can be linked to his ambition to stay in power. Netanyahu appears to have believed that the more brutal treatment of Palestinians will secure significant support from the Israeli right.<sup>71</sup>

Certain Israeli decisions on Palestinians were highly confidential and involved only the prime minister, defence minister, and army generals. At the same time, nobody else knew about them in the Israeli cabinet. Notably, the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has become pivotal in this context, preceding even the minister of defence on some occasions.<sup>72</sup>

The Israeli interactions with Palestinians were structurally authorized and executed. The subjugation of Palestinians seems to

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<sup>68</sup> Shlomo Gazit, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories* (Psychology Press, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> "About COGAT," Government of Israel, <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/about/aboutcogat> (accessed 15 March 2020).

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, April 2, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

have served as a fixing point of the Israeli power structure as the agreement on a violent approach towards Palestinians has offered a rare common ground to Israeli political forces.

### *Ideology*

The topic of ideology has increasingly received attention in studies that address the Israeli social and political spheres.<sup>73</sup> Seliger defines ideology as a set of ideas used by men to posit, explain and justify ends and means of organized social action, particularly political action, irrespective of whether such activities aim to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order.<sup>74</sup> A body of literature indicates that ideology plays a vital role in structuring government preferences.<sup>75</sup>

The traditional Israeli deliberation about the situation in Palestine has viewed some shifts to more inclination towards the use of ideology in politics. The conflict with the Palestinians was not religious from the Israeli perspective initially, but it has changed as Israeli governments have been propelled by Zionists and religious settlers.<sup>76</sup>

In recent years, religious parties have gained momentum in Israel's politics as they won a considerable number of seats in the Knesset and entered the cabinet. The admission of Jewish religious parties, particularly Shas and United Torah Judaism, to Netanyahu's cabinets<sup>77</sup> has arguably resulted in a predominance of ideological agenda. For instance, the Israeli government has tightened its

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, David Ohana, *Nietzsche and Jewish Political Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Gerald M. Steinberg and Ziv Rubinovitz, *Menachem Begin and the Israel-Egypt Peace Process: Between Ideology and Political Realism* (Indiana University Press, 2019).

<sup>74</sup> Martin Seliger, *Politics and Ideology* (London: Ruskin House, 1976).

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "How Are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model," *The American Political Science Review* (1987): 1099-120; Peter Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs* (Stanford University Press, 2014).

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>77</sup> Sharon Weinblum, *Security and Defensive Democracy in Israel: A Critical Approach to Political Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

treatment of Palestinians living in cities that are perceived with religious and historical values to the Jews, such as Salfit, Jerusalem, and Hebron.<sup>78</sup> For instance, Israeli used the centre of life scrutiny to revoke the residency status of thousands of Palestinians in Jerusalem.<sup>79</sup> The centre of life scrutiny means that Israel would begin to revoke the residency status of Palestinian Jerusalemites when they stay in other parts of Palestine outside Jerusalem or study or work abroad for extended periods.<sup>80</sup>

The religion has been further institutionalized in this context as the Knesset passed a Basic Law that makes Israel officially a Jewish state. The Nation-State Law articulates that the right to self-determination is exclusively given to the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.<sup>81</sup> The use of religion in this context seems to stipulate that the elimination of native Palestinians is inevitable as the national viability for Palestinians or self-determination has become undermined even by the law. In essence, the religious factor in Israel was associated with hawkishness towards the Palestinians.<sup>82</sup>

Further, the religious factor seems to have profoundly influenced the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in recent years. Estimates of religious Zionists officers in the combat officer corps show a significant ratio of their enlistment disproportionate to their segment among the Jewish population.<sup>83</sup> The number of religious Zionist officers has increased at both junior and senior levels, and several officers among them have obtained general ranks, including one that was promoted to the position of Deputy Chief of Staff of the military.

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Former Deputy Head of Office at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palestinian Territories.

<sup>80</sup> "Israel: Jerusalem Palestinians Stripped of Status," Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/08/israel-jerusalem-palestinians-stripped-status> (accessed 11 December 2020).

<sup>81</sup> Nadia Ben-Youssef and Sandra Samaan Tamari, "Enshrining Discrimination: Israel's Nation-State Law," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 1 (2018): 73-87.

<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Rynhold, "Religion, Postmodernization, and Israeli Approaches to the Conflict with the Palestinians," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 3 (2005).

<sup>83</sup> Yo'av Peled and Horit Peled, *The Religionization of Israeli Society* (London; New York: Routledge, 2020).

These officers may, under certain circumstances, follow their rabbis and defy military orders.<sup>84</sup>

Yagil Levy has explained two relevant processes within the IDF: religionization and theocratization.<sup>85</sup> Religionization means an increase of religious culture in the military or the endeavour to make religious meaning to military undertakings. Theocratization leads to the direct involvement of religious authorities in the military's operations beyond its professional autonomy. More significantly, the prominence of religion has implicated viewing Israel's wars as holy wars. For instance, during an Israeli military operation on Gaza in 2014, the commanding officer of the Israeli Givati infantry brigade, Ofer Vinter, has mobilized his troops to fight "the terrorists who defame the God of Israel".<sup>86</sup> Shahak argues that Jewish rabbis have influenced military officers as rabbis can lecture them about adopting Torah principles when dealing with Palestinians or Arabs in general.<sup>87</sup>

While the Israeli government appears to have faced challenges in securing a definite settlers' majority in historic Palestine, the introduction of democratic and secular values in addressing the Palestinians may ultimately strengthen Palestinians' demographic and political positions. The Palestinian population may grow up further, and Palestinians can gain significant powers under democracy. Hence, Israel might have used religious propositions to undermine the presence of Palestinians.

### *Public opinion*

The responsiveness of governments to citizens' preferences is a central concern of various studies on democracy.<sup>88</sup> The government

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (Pluto Press, 2008).

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (University of Chicago Press, 1956); Jonas Linde and Yvette Peters, "Responsiveness, Support, and Responsibility: How Democratic Responsiveness Facilitates Responsible Government," *Party Politics* 26, no. 3 (2020): 291-304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818763986> (accessed 8 December 2020).



responsiveness has mainly gained momentum in democracies, as the public perceives a government that manages to act per the preferences of the majority of citizens as worthy of support, and it accordingly enjoys a high degree of legitimacy.<sup>89</sup>

However, Israel is not a typical case of democracy as it incorporates settler-colonial foundations. Settlers may have their preferences regarding their ordinary life in the colony. However, constant fears and concerns could shape their opinion, stemming from possible indigenous people's reactions to the zero-sum tendency towards them.<sup>90</sup> Public opinion seems to be of particular significance in this debate. Ignoring settlers' views may lead unsatisfied settlers to consider exodus and return to their countries of origin.

The public opinion in Israel seems to be significantly considered by the government as politicians and officials were found to be concerned about their future in politics, which is primarily determined by the public, who will eventually select the government by voting. Israeli politicians were mindful about their election and how the Israeli public perceived them.<sup>91</sup>

The Israelis' public opinion towards the Palestinians seems to be generally threat-driven and hostile. Israelis constantly feel that they are under threat.<sup>92</sup> Maoz and McCauley indicate that the Israeli Jews' perceived threats from and dehumanization of Palestinians led them to support the transfer of the Palestinian population and encourage the government to adopt concrete and coercive actions against Palestinians.<sup>93</sup>

While Israel is considered one of the strongest states in the Middle East, many Israelis feel vulnerable to the Arab world.<sup>94</sup> A

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<sup>89</sup> Linde and Peters, "Democratic Responsiveness," 292.

<sup>90</sup> Wolfe, "the Elimination".

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Former Deputy Head of Office at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – Palestinian Territories.

<sup>93</sup> Ifat Maoz and Clark McCauley, "Threat, Dehumanization, and Support for Retaliatory Aggressive Policies in Asymmetric Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 1 (2008).

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

recent Israeli poll indicates that most Israelis oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with 48.7% opposed versus 43.8% who agreed while the remainder of 7.4% said they do not know.<sup>95</sup>

Wolfe demonstrates that settlers seek to dissolve native societies.<sup>96</sup> This logic can be read in the Israeli public attitude to liquidate the Palestinians' presence. For instance, the majority in Israel tend to deny the political right of Palestinians to establish an independent State.<sup>97</sup> Many Israelis rejected any possibility to grant the right of self-determination to the Palestinians.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, a public opinion survey indicated that 62% of Israeli Jews believed Arabs only understand force.<sup>99</sup>

The Israeli public opinion regarding the Palestinians appears to have been recognized by the Israeli government and its military. In Israel, government elected officials seek to remain in power, and military officers consider possible participation in future elections.<sup>100</sup>

Ultimately, settlers may feel more secure with their government's ability to attack the indigenous people. In the meantime, settler officials may likely show more hawkishness in this context to gain public support.

### *The colonized people's response*

Several academic studies have examined the effects of settler colonialism on indigenous peoples.<sup>101</sup> However, there has been a lack of studies that examine how the indigenous people interact with settlers and possibly influence settler colonialism, particularly in the case of Israel and Palestinians. This study indicates that Palestinians

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<sup>95</sup> Arutz Sheva, "Poll: Majority against a Palestinian State," Arutz Sheva 2019, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/271360> (accessed 8 October 2020).

<sup>96</sup> Wolfe, "the Elimination".

<sup>97</sup> The Institute for National Security Studies, INSS, "National Security Index 2018-19," (2019), <https://www.inss.org.il> (accessed 8 October 2020).

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>99</sup> INSS, "National Security".

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Wolfe, *the Transformation*; Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*.

have, to a large extent, shaped the Israeli treatment towards them in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On the one hand, Palestinian internal divisions between the Fatah and Hamas movements have offered Israel a convenient condition for its violent treatment towards Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Internal divisions implicated that Palestinians have become preoccupied with in-house conflicts that distracted their struggle against Israel. Israel seemed to have become less concerned about the consequences of its actions on the Palestinians. The schism between the Fatah and Hamas was detrimental to the Palestinian struggle, and Israel has exploited it to continue its colonial policies.<sup>102</sup>

The internal division negatively impacted the Palestinians as Israel plays out a divide and rule in this context.<sup>103</sup> Israeli authorities blackmailed Palestinian officials against ending internal divisions.<sup>104</sup>

On the other hand, the Palestinian resistance seems to have influenced the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians by being a means of deterrence that helped restrain the use of force by Israel. Israel was concerned about armed reactions from the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.<sup>105</sup> Israeli generals have pushed for mitigation to the dire living situation in the Gaza Strip in recent years as they understood that failing to do so would trigger another war.<sup>106</sup>

However, the potential of resistance, particularly the armed resistance, was limited by the security coordination between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel. The Israeli government became less concerned about reactions from Palestinians in the West Bank, whereas the PA was involved in thwarting armed operations in recent years.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Interview with Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, April 2, 2022.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance

In sum, the Palestinian resistance appears to have deterred Israel and challenged Israeli attempts to change the status quo. In contrast, Palestinian internal divisions and security coordination with Israel appear to have offered Israel a convenient condition for its violent treatment of Palestinians.

## External factors

### *Regional (dis-) order*

Some studies have examined the Middle East's regional order and its implications on states and entities.<sup>108</sup> The Middle East query gained traction in recent years as significant developments took place in the region. A range of regional rivalries and conflicts have ensued in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.<sup>109</sup>

Some interviews argue that the recent wave of revolutions and counter-revolutions in Arab countries, which began in 2010, has resulted in an overall marginalization of the Palestinian issue while regional forces posed little challenge to the violent Israeli treatment of Palestinians. The regional influence was primarily negative on the Palestinians in recent years as the instability in the region further marginalized the conflict.<sup>110</sup>

Patrick Wolfe demonstrates that settler colonialization is a continuous structure rather than an event whereby the logic of elimination towards the indigenous people would continue to occur.<sup>111</sup> It appears that Israel would continue to seek to eliminate the Palestinians unless fundamental changes or deterrence take place.

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Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019, Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

<sup>108</sup> See, Martin Beck, "'Watching and Waiting' and 'Much Ado About Nothing'? Making Sense of the Israeli Response to the Arab Uprisings," *Palgrave Communications* 2, no. 1 (2016): 1-10; Kristina Kausch, "Identity Politics and Regional Order in the Levant," *Uluslararası İlişkiler / International Relations* 15, no. 60 (2018): 21-29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26605032> (accessed 23 November 2020).

<sup>109</sup> Ufuk Ulutaş and Burhanettin Duran, "Traditional Rivalry or Regional Design in the Middle East?" *Insight Turkey* 20, no. 2 (2018).

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>111</sup> Wolfe, "the Elimination," 390.

The regional states were assumed to help in the fight against Israel, but there was no regional deterrent in the face of the Israeli settler-colonial regime in recent years.<sup>112</sup>

The Israeli concerns over interventions from Arab countries appear to have softened in recent years amid a condition of regional disorder where Arab countries became preoccupied with domestic issues. The former Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, stopped talking about the two-state solution due to the absence of pressure to accept this proposal.<sup>113</sup>

Salem suggests domestic tensions under unstable regional order prompt external alignment and fuel regional proxy conflicts.<sup>114</sup> The pressure on Arab regimes facing domestic revolutions seems to have led them to seek legitimacy from international powers, particularly the United States. The power struggle of Arab regimes appears to have opened the door for normalization of relations with Israel as the US, particularly during the Donald Trump's presidency, conditioned their response to demands from these regimes by rapprochements with Israel.<sup>115</sup>

Further, Israel seems to have attempted to shift the attention from the Palestinian issue to the question of Iran. There has been a corporation between Israel and several Arab states on the ground of the Sunni-Shia divide.<sup>116</sup> Israel has sought to legitimize and prolong its occupation of Palestinian territories by securitizing Iran in the regional context.<sup>117</sup> It appears that Israel had an interest in creating distractions and intensifying other conflicts in the region to divert possible engagement with and support to the Palestinians.

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with a member of the Palestinian National Council, September 12, 2019.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with the head of Israel's Unit in a research centre, May 6, 2022.

<sup>114</sup> Paul Salem, "Working toward a Stable Regional Order," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (2016).

<sup>115</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>117</sup> Beck, "Watching and Waiting," 7.

*US-Israel alliance*

The classical form of alliances used to be military in nature revolving around formal agreements, while the modern shape of alliances could be formal or informal, and the emphasis in this regard has become on crisis prevention and diplomatic influence.<sup>118</sup> However, the United States has exceeded the traditional implications of alliance relationships with its annual financial aid to Israel, used mainly for military assistance. For instance, the US signed a USD 38 billion military assistance agreement with Israel, giving the latter USD 3.8 billion per year.<sup>119</sup> Notably, the text of the military assistance agreement has no mention of restraints on using the fund to commit violence against a civilian population, particularly the Palestinians.<sup>120</sup>

The US has offered Israel a shield against interventions from other countries in response to its violent treatment of Palestinians. The strong relationship between Israel and the United States and other foreign actors have led Israel to commit brutal acts on Palestinians and violate international law without fearing sanctions or real repercussions.<sup>121</sup> Interested parties would likely put the US factor into account before initiating reactions against Israel.

The US has frequently sided with Israel regarding the Palestinians: “it was always the Americans; it was also what the Israelis only wanted”.<sup>122</sup> Israel has ignored a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians, and the US’s Trump administration has supported and helped authorize Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians.<sup>123</sup>

Further, the US backing seems to allow Israel to aspire for

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<sup>118</sup> John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992: Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia* (Lexington Books, 2002).

<sup>119</sup> Robert O Freedman, *Israel under Netanyahu: Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

<sup>120</sup> See, The White House, “Memorandum of Understanding Reached with Israel,” <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/14/fact-sheet-memorandum-understanding-reached-israel> (accessed 12 September 2020).

<sup>121</sup> Interview with the head of a research centre on Israeli and Palestinian affairs, October 6, 2020.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Former United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, April 27, 2020.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with the head of Israel's Unit in a research centre, May 6, 2022.

annexing large parts of the West Bank, which threatens the presence of Palestinians in the area.<sup>124</sup> The US has closer interests with Israel and has been one-sided with it, to the extent of shutting down the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington in 2018.<sup>125</sup>

It appears that the relationship between the United States and Israel has offered Israel protection and consent to carry on with its violent approach towards Palestinians without considering severe international consequences.

## Conclusion

This article has sought to identify influencing factors on the Israeli treatment towards the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It then examined how each element has shaped the Israeli interactions with Palestinians in recent years. Further, it pursued to contextualize these influencing factors within the broader context of settler colonialism. In the light of the lack of studies on the dynamics of settler-indigenous relations, this article offers inputs to the scholarly debate in this context by arguing that internal and external factors influence the Israeli interactions with Palestinians that are not limited to security determinants.

The internal factors are power structure, ideology, public opinion, and colonized people's response. The power structure in Israel has paved the way for the Israeli military to take much charge regarding the Palestinians. Moreover, the numerous socio-political cleavages in Israel can disrupt the functionality of the power structure as it allows the admission of many groups in the Knesset. Subsequently, no party has obtained a simple majority to establish the government alone in recent years. However, the broad hostile tendency towards the Palestinians seems to serve as a common ground among Israeli political forces where violence can offer a rare agreement to form governments and keep the system functional. Further, the Jewish ideology was interpreted to promote an eliminatory treatment towards the Palestinians. Additionally, the

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with a senior leader from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, October 30, 2019.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Chairman of the Legal Committee to Final Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, April 2, 2022.

Israeli public opinion has mobilized the former tendency as well. While the role of colonized people can be pivotal in this context as their resistance may help deter the settler-colonial regime, the internal divisions among the colonized people and collaboration with settler authorities could promote the settlers' endeavours.

In addition, the regional (dis-) order has played a role in this context as Israel became less concerned about consequences from neighbouring countries to its actions on the Palestinians. Moreover, the alliance relationship with big powers in the world, particularly the United States, has enabled Israel to proceed with its settler-colonial project with fewer restraints from international interventions. The US has provided diplomatic, and material supports in various areas. It is a complex and active dynamics.



## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

### CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR
ء	‘	‘	‘	ز	z	z	z	گ	—	g	g
ب	b	b	b	ژ	—	—	ř	ل	l	l	l
پ	—	p	p	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m
ت	t	t	t	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n
ٹ	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ş	ه	h	h	h <sup>1</sup>
ث	th	th	th	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ş	و	w	v/u	v
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	ž	ی	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	-a <sup>2</sup>
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al <sup>3</sup>	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	<sup>1</sup> – when not final <sup>2</sup> – at in construct state <sup>3</sup> – (article) al - or l-			
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğ				
ڈ	—	—	ḍ	ف	f	f	f				
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	k				
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	k			

### VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا	ā	ā
	آ	Ā	—
	و	ū	ū
	ي	ī	ī
Doubled	ي	iy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)
	و	uww (final form ū)	uvv
	و	uvv (for Persian)	uvv
Diphthongs	و	au	ev
	ی	ay	ey
Short	ا	a	a or e
	u	u	u or ū
	ی	i	o or ö
	ی	i	ī

### URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چھ jh گھ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

# AL-SHAJARAH

Vol. 27, No. 1, 2022

## Contents

### ARTICLES

- OSMAN BAKAR AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL RENEWAL  
IN THE MUSLIM WORLD 1  
*Khairudin Aljunied*

- IBN ARABI AND HIS CHALLENGES ON THE ISSUE OF FREE WILL 29  
*A REVIEW OF THE ISSUE IN LIGHT OF TWO OF HIS THEORIES*  
*Saeideh Sayari, Mohd Zufri bin Mamat*  
*and Maisarah Hasbullah*

- RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY, IFTĀ' CULTURE, AND SECTARIANISM IN 53  
MODERN PAKISTAN  
*THE IMPACT OF ITS INTRA-ISLAMIC PLURALISM*  
*Muhammad Kalim Ullah Khan and Osman Bakar*

- AWARENESS TOWARDS WAQF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MALAYSIA 77  
AND INDONESIA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION  
*Nisful Laila, Ririn Tri Ratnasari, Shafinar Ismail, Mohd Halim Mahphoth*  
*and Putri Aliah Mohd Hidzir*

- QURANIC EXEGETICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO 101  
*A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW*  
*Nadzrah Ahmad*

- CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM DURING EARLY 123  
ISLAMIC CIVILISATION: A CRITICAL STUDY OF SELECT CONCEPTS  
*Thameem Ushama*

### MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

- AN INTRODUCTION TO PERSIAN SEALS: 153  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DEVOTIONAL SEALS FROM  
AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT  
*Amir H. Zekrgoo*

### REVIEW ESSAY

- ON PRAISE AND VIRTUES OF BOOKS IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS 171  
*Azenita Abdullah*

- BOOK REVIEWS 187

# AL-SHAJARA

Vol. 27, No. 2, 2022

## Contents

### ARTICLES

- IBN KHALDŪN'S BIOGRAPHY: UNVEILING GLOBAL HISTORY AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF MODERN CIVILIZATION 205

*Ahmad Murad Merican*

- DYNAMICS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM: INFLUENCING FACTORS ON THE ISRAELI TREATMENT TOWARDS THE PALESTINIANS 233

*Belal Alakhra, Raja Noriza Raja Ariffin & Makmor Tumin*

- THE EUROPEAN SOURCE OF GUNNERY PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE IN KITĀB AL-'IZZ WA AL-MANĀFI' LI AL-MUJĀHIDĪN FĪ SABĪL ALLĀH BI AL-MADĀFI' 263

*Mansour Mohamed Sabri, Khairil Husaini Jamil & Ahmed Jomaa Abd Al-Hamid*

- INTRODUCING EXISTENTIALIST PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES FOR CULTIVATING AUTHENTICITY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION 289

*Malick Elias*

- EIDOS IN SUFI PHENOMENOLOGY: A NEW LOOK AT CREATION 311

*Konul Bunyadzade*

- ISLAMIC ASTRONOMY AND CALENDARICAL SCIENCE IN CHINA FROM SONG TO QING DYNASTIES 327

*Min Ke-qin*

- SCIENTIFIC HISTORY IN PRE-MODERN CIVILIZATIONS 351

*A Critical Review*

*Radzi Sapiee and Osman Bakar*

### MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

- DEVOTIONAL POETRY, EXCEPTIONAL CALLIGRAPHY, CHARMING MANUSCRIPT: EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS EMOTION IN ḤASSAN KĀSHĪ'S HAFT-BAND 369

*Amir H. Zekrgoo*

- MA HUAN MA 马欢 (1380-1460) AND HIS YINGYA SHENGLAN 瀛涯胜览 395

*Omar Min Keqin*

### REVIEW ESSAYS

- SAMUEL JOHNSON'S THOUGHTS ABOUT ISLAM 401

*Hüseyin Çaksen*

### BOOK REVIEWS

411

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