

Purchase by Other Means: The Palestine *Nakba* and Zionism's Conquest of Economics

PATRICK WOLFE

La Trobe University

This article questions the singularity of the Palestine Nakba. It highlights some of the historical preconditions that enabled the Nakba to occur, revealing it to have been a consolidation rather than a point of origin. The preconditions that had equipped the Zionists for settlement before they first set foot in Palestine combined economic, technological, military, cultural and moral attributes that were the cumulative outcome of centuries of Eurocolonial history. The article introduces the concept of preaccumulation to characterise this complex historical endowment that settlers imported with them. The article also argues that the donors who funded the world Zionist project differed from the speculators who financed territorial expansion in other settler colonies in that they did not require a return on their investment. Unencumbered by the obligation to return a profit, Zionist settlers enjoyed the easiest of imported advantages in relation to the local population, a confounding of capitalist rationality that overwhelmed the limited set of resources available to Native Palestinians. Combining their unconditional funding with the ethnically exclusive strategy known as the Conquest of Labour, Zionists built up a contiguous zone of Jewish-only land on which to fashion their ethnocratic state-in-waiting in Mandate Palestine. Against this background, the article argues that the Nakba accelerated, albeit very radically, the 'slow-motion' means to Native dispossession that had been the only means available to Zionists while they were still building their colonial state.

The bare statistics of the *Nakba* are well enough established. Between late 1947 and early 1949, Jewish militias, subsequently regularised as the Israeli Defence Forces, forcibly expelled many thousands of Palestinians from their homes and prevented others who had fled the fighting from returning home. In the event, some three quarters of a million Palestinians were driven into exile, their homes being either destroyed or expropriated by Jewish immigrants. By the 1949 Armistice, the Jewish population – which two years earlier had constituted 26% of the population of Mandate Palestine

and had owned around 7% of the total land – had seized 77% of the land and come to constitute 80% of the population.¹ As settler takeovers go, this lightning dispossession dwarfs even the late-1830s seizure of Australia's Port Phillip grasslands or the postbellum invasion of the US Plains.² Whether in Palestinian memory, as the 'Great Catastrophe', or in Zionist memory, as the 'War of Independence', these events truly constitute a watershed. On this at least, there is no disagreement.

From a historian's point of view, the problem with watersheds is that they tend to obscure preconditions, continuities, the deep groundwork of historical possibility. This is not to discount the watersheds: the booms and busts, the revolutionary transformations or, for that matter, the seemingly miraculous flukes. But it is to say that they did not rest on thin air. Rome is not alone in taking more than a day. To be dazzled by a watershed is to miss the structure subtending the event. Thus the Nakba figures as a point of origin, as if it had no preconditions – apart, perhaps, from the Nazi Holocaust, itself a watershed.³ But just as the Holocaust presupposed and drew sustenance from a preceding history of European antisemitism, so did the Nakba rest on a well-established legacy of Zionist settler colonisation in Palestine. This article seeks to identify some of the structural preconditions that enabled the Nakba event to occur, revealing it as a consolidation rather than a point of origin.

SETTLER COLONIALISM

Settler colonialism's essential feature – or so I have tried to argue – is 'a sustained institutional tendency to supplant the indigenous population', a cultural logic of elimination that 'reconciles a range of historical practices that might otherwise seem distinct'.⁴ In the Australian context to which I was referring, the range of historical practices that commonly evince this cultural logic include homicide, spatial expulsion and/or confinement, various forms of assimilation, and a representational discourse that I term repressive authenticity. In the US context, the list overlaps substantially with the Australian one, augmented by certain features that flow from the acknowledgement of Indian sovereignty, in particular allotment and tribal termination.⁵ This commonality does not, of course, mean that Australian and United States histories are somehow the same, alike

reducible to a single underlying determinant. The idea that particular histories should share nothing in common would, however, be absurd – how else could we talk of such widely distributed commonplaces as capitalism, patriarchy or homophobia? As Paul Kramer has neatly observed, national histories are unique but unexceptional.⁶ Analytically, our task is to map the particular histories that sustain settler colonialism in any given locale, distinguishing the contingent from the systematic as well as the autochthonous from the transnational.

The primacy of the logic of elimination is a political and perspectival matter as well as an analytical one. It prioritises the outcome for conquered Native peoples. This has at least two consequences. First, it enables us to distinguish between different relationships of domination. There is a basic difference between being eliminated and being exploited for one's labour, a difference that monolithic categories such as colonialism or imperialism tend to elide, their usefulness for understanding the coordinating activities of metropolitan hegemonies notwithstanding.⁷ Second, the logic of elimination is prior to features that distinguish settler societies among themselves, such as whether they are monarchical or republican, Christian or Jewish, Black or White, communist or democratic, Asian or European.⁸ As experienced by Native peoples, categorical distinctions within a typology of invaders can hardly compare in significance to the totality of dispossession. Seen in this light, scholarly resistance to the priority of the logic of elimination represents a settler perspective.⁹

It is important to stress this analytical rigour when turning to the Zionist conquest of Palestine because the techniques of dispossession whereby settlers supplanted the Natives of Palestine differ significantly from the relatively uniform set of practices whereby settlers dispossessed the Natives of Australia and of North America. Nonetheless, the eliminatory outcome has been consistent, so the situation provides an opportunity to explore settler colonialism's strategic versatility.

This article will consider two salient differences between the Zionist colonisation of Palestine and the companion colonisations of Australia and the USA. In the first instance, Zionism originated as an international movement that consciously avoided confinement to a

single metropole in favour of a supportive transnational umbrella that Maxime Rodinson termed the 'collective mother country'.¹⁰ Second, prior to the end of 1947, Zionism was conspicuous for its policy of purchasing Native land in at least notional conformity with the domestic laws of the current local power. In these two important respects, Zionist policy in Palestine differed strikingly from – even, in the case of the purchases, reversed – settler policies in Australia or the United States. Thus it is highly significant that Zionist policy in Palestine constituted an intensification of, rather than a departure from, settler colonialism. In stark contrast to the Australian or United States models, for instance, Zionism rigorously refused, as it continues to refuse, any suggestion of Native assimilation. In this and other ways that will be discussed below, Zionism constitutes a more exclusive exercise of the settler logic of elimination than we encounter in the Australian and US examples. This conclusion only seems surprising if one concentrates on features that are extraneous to the logic of elimination, as Zionist apologists understandably do. Eschewing such diversions, this article will examine two features that have been held out as distinguishing Zionism from other forms of settler colonialism – the lack of a unitary metropole and the policy of purchase – in their particular historical context. As will emerge, these two features constitute linked elements in a uniquely developed programme of Indigenous dispossession.

PREACCUMULATION

The basic link between Zionism's diffuse metropole and Jewish land purchases in Palestine consists in the fact that the former financed the latter. As the old joke went, Zionism meant one Jew using another Jew's money to send a third Jew to Palestine. In common with many ethnoracial slurs, however, this joke represented a form of displacement, since there was nothing particular to Zionism about settler colonialism's metropolitan funding. Rather, in much the same way as antisemitism furnished a lexicon for capitalism to talk about itself, so might this joke equally well have referred to the colonisation of Australia or the United States. The frontier was led from behind, typically by speculators – speculators, moreover, who tended not to be limited by nationality.¹¹ In considering the transnational network that placed and maintained Jewish settlers in Palestine, therefore, we

should not think of Zionism as exceptional. Rather, the Zionist case enables us to see some general features of settler colonialism with enhanced clarity. This is particularly so because, in the annals of settler colonialism, Zionism presents an unparalleled example of deliberate, explicit planning. No campaign of territorial dispossession was ever waged more thoughtfully. Methodologically, this characteristic makes Zionism a particularly revealing archive for research into the logic of settler colonialism. The programme that Zionist planners consciously systematised combined elements that had converged more haphazardly in other dispossessions. To appreciate this, we should start before the establishment of the 'frontier' (in the Zionist case, before the Bilu settlers landed in 1882), and consider the historical preconditions that had equipped the invaders for settlement before they first set foot in Native country. These preconditions, a kind of historical capital, brought together a range of economic, technological, military, cultural and moral attributes that were the combined outcome of centuries of Eurocolonial history. I shall refer to this aggregate historical endowment that settlers brought with them as *preaccumulation*.

Settler preaccumulation had a global reach, a characteristic that endowed the settler project with an effectively unlimited capacity to reproduce itself. This near inexhaustibility opposed itself to the relative fixity of the Native stock. The disparity is crucial. In demographic terms, for instance, it meant that, where invasion rendered the Native population subject to extreme reproductive constraints, there were always more settlers where the first ones had come from – which, in the final analysis, meant anywhere else, the settler population being augmentable not only by further cognate settlers but, in addition, by any number of coerced subordinates imported from outside. Economically, Native societies were reduced to generating subsistence from an ever-shrinking repository that, even within territory that remained unconquered, became subject to the depredations of an advance guard of settlement made up of frontier irregulars, imported livestock, exotic predators and the like. The technological and military capacities that settlers inherited from Europe's expansive history are also well-known, as is Europeans' acquired immunity to the diseases they imported with them. On occasion, of course, the advantages could change hands, as when

Plains Indians acquired horses and guns, or Maori thrived on the introduced potato.¹²

On the whole, though, settlers brought with them an invasive inheritance that had been forged through centuries of colonial expansion and associated class struggle within Europe. The two were inseparable, the cotton that the industrial proletariat made up in Manchester's dark mills being sourced from unfree labour put to work in Egypt, India and the Deep South, the two parties further providing an expanding market for the products of their unwitting (not to say unwilling) collaboration. Thus it is important to appreciate preaccumulation culturally as well as materially, as a historical endowment of consciousness. European settlers brought with them historically specific ideologies of class, race and nation that had participated decisively in collective subjugations at home and abroad. As Barbara Fields once put it, in a different context:

[W]hen English servants entered the ring in [colonial] Virginia, they did not enter alone. Instead, they entered in company with the generations who had preceded them in the struggle; and the outcome of those earlier struggles established the terms and conditions for the latest one. But Africans and Afro-West Indians did enter the ring alone.¹³

In contrast to enslaved Africans in the Americas, Natives did not enter the ring alone. Their reinforcements were not oceans away. Nonetheless, their histories had equipped them with competencies that were not tailored to the unequal confrontation that settlers' endless renewability set in train. Natives' limited local stock was no match for capital's global elasticity. This, in the end, constituted the metropolitan advantage, a general condition that, as we shall see, was played out in particular ways in the Zionist takeover of Palestine.

There is, however, a basic difference between preaccumulation and the European experience of primitive accumulation that has figured so prominently in Marxist historiography. This is even apart from a certain Eurocentrism in established Marxist history-writing, which tends to emphasise the final stages of the production process

– industrial technologies and the domestic process of class formation that accompanied their development – at the expense of earlier stages of primary production that were to a large extent conducted overseas, by enslaved and/or colonised labour as yet unmotivated by the lash of wages.¹⁴ Even apart from the Eurocentric nature of this narrative, whereby many of the raw materials of industrial production figure as somehow miraculously (or, at least, internally) conceived, the point is that, when Europe was piecing together its imperial-industrial-capitalist global hegemony, there was no prior Europe already riding on its back. True, there were rival civilisational conglomerates, in particular the Islamic world, but these proved to be no match once the Atlantic had become a West-European sea.¹⁵ Marx himself observed that capitalism in the Americas was of the purest historical type, unalloyed by feudal survivals.¹⁶ Though this view underestimated the new-world articulations between European and Indigenous economies, it expressed the momentous fact that, in contrast to the tortuous, centuries-long domestic development of industrial capitalism and its associated social relations, Eurocolonial society arrived in Native country *ex nihilo* (or perhaps *ex machina*) and ready-made, condensing the power and violence of the long run. This pre-formedness, a plenitude that is independent of local determinations, is preaccumulation's central characteristic.

Initially, therefore – which is to say, prior to the moment of colonisation – preaccumulation is a metropolitan inheritance (the metropole itself being constructed in dynamic opposition to those whom it subjugates). Once on Native soil, however, settlers confront Natives endowed with different plenitudes, particular outcomes of their own local histories. Thus the outcome can never be predicted in advance. As Richard White and others have shown, the roots of Native American dependency could extend back for centuries.¹⁷ In the Palestinian case, the Natives were already incorporated in – and to that extent, protected by – extensive (albeit moribund) empires, first Ottoman then British. In relation to preaccumulation, this meant that they were already marginally articulated into global capitalism (at a remove, as it were). To explain a settler-colonial invasion, therefore, it can never be enough simply to invoke the global potency of capital, mighty though that is. Rather, in each instance, settler ascendancy rests on a particular contextual mobilisation of Europe's preaccumulated colonial resources.

In the case of Palestine, as I hope to demonstrate below, the particular resource that Zionism was able to marshal distinguished the capital transmitted to Palestine from the general run of speculative investment whereby capital was exported to other European colonies. With the possible (and early) exception of Baron Rothschild, the capital that Zionists garnered for investment in Palestine, as Barbara Smith has pointed out, was not conditional on the return of a financial profit.¹⁸ In this important regard, donors who funded the world Zionist project differed from the speculators who had financed territorial expansion in Australia and North America. Unencumbered by the requirement to return a profit, subsidised Zionist settlers enjoyed the easiest of imported advantages in relation to the local population, a confounding of capitalist rationality that overwhelmed the limited Native stock. In broad outline, this situation came about as follows.

OTTOMAN ORIGINS

For a sustained colonising programme that was to achieve such enormous successes, the Zionist plan for Palestine displays a consistent set of features whose effectiveness has not been hampered by its remarkable simplicity. Ostensibly operating within established imperial frameworks, but always with an eye to eventually supplanting them, Zionists have secured international support, both from regnant imperial powers and from private sources, to convert an ever-expanding contiguous wedge of Palestine from Native ownership into an irreversibly Jewish endowment, and to procure the import from overseas of funding and Jewish personnel at a level sufficient to maintain the continued expansion of this ethnocratically consolidated zone by whatever means should prove available and viable.¹⁹ This strikingly simple plan has been pursued with a sleepless organisational tenacity that remains apparent in Israel's ongoing disinclination to specify its borders.

When the Zionist (or, more strictly, proto-Zionist) Bilu group landed in Palestine in the early 1880s, they can hardly have had the foundation of an exclusively Jewish nation-state in mind. At least, if any of them had such ambitions, they would have been hubristic in the extreme. Moreover, unlike their Second-Aliya successors, who

began to arrive in the early years of the twentieth century, this group did not object to employing local Palestinian labour on the agricultural co-operatives that, after a false start, it established with funding from Rothschild.²⁰ By contrast, the Second Aliya firmly repudiated the Bilu group's reliance on Native collaboration, devoting its unremitting energies – again, with diasporan financial support – to establishing Jewish-only enclaves, initially the *moshav* agricultural collectives and, ultimately, the rigorously ethnocratic *kibbutzim*.

Despite this substantial difference, the Second Aliya chose to name itself as such – thereby retrospectively dubbing the Bilu group the 'First Aliya' – in the interest of establishing both a historical continuity and a historical rupture. The continuity consisted in a colonial entity termed the 'new yishuv', a mode of Jewish settlement in Palestine that was held to differ fundamentally from earlier Ashkenazi in-migrations, whose inspiration had been emphatically religious. Accordingly, these earlier arrivals became in their turn the 'old yishuv', disparaged and orientalised by the Zionists as lethargic rabbinical misfits. Thus, the rupture that Second-Aliya theorists ordained in co-opting the Bilu group's legacy as a settler point of origin provided, as Yehouda Shenhav has put it, 'an epistemological break, a point of discontinuity, which ma[de] possible the separation between the ethno-religious past and the ethno-national present'.²¹ Ideologically, Zionism was organic to the nineteenth century, a European secular-colonial-nationalist movement.

As a tiny group of new arrivals, the new yishuv was both constrained and protected by the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman administration). Natives recognised the incoming colonists' territorial agenda very early in the piece. The earliest Palestinian protest against modern Jewish settlement in Palestine came in 1891 in the form of a telegram asking the Grand Vizir to stop further immigration to and land purchases in Palestine on the part of Russian Jews, a protest which, as Neville Mandel noted, 'was lodged less than a decade after modern Jewish immigration into Palestine began and several years before the Zionist Movement was founded'.²² Mandel and others have documented the ways in which opposition to Jewish immigration and land purchases in Palestine gathered among Palestinian and other Arabs in the period leading up to World War I.²³ The Porte was sensitive to this opposition, not least because of its

established enmity with Russia, the pogrom-plagued source of most of the Jewish immigration. Moreover, the sick man of Europe had no desire to encourage large numbers of immigrants who, as Europeans, would be entitled to special privileges, including tax exemptions, under the system of capitulations.²⁴ Nor did it wish to incubate yet another nationalist problem in its midst. This last consideration prompted the Porte to place a selective ban on Jewish immigration into Palestine, which constituted a potential focus for the development of an unruly Jewish nationalism.²⁵

Faced with these constraints, Zionist colonisers devised a range of strategic responses. The Ottoman administration was badly co-ordinated and inefficient, with the result that many of the regulations designed to restrict Jewish immigration and land purchasing were inconsistently applied, temporary visas for the purpose of religious pilgrimage were routinely used to enable Jews to enter Palestine, whereupon they might simply vanish or bribe corrupt officials to allow them to stay, and the capitulation system enabled Jews who encountered problems to enlist consular support from their European nations of citizenship. In regard to land purchases, Jews who were already resident Ottoman citizens, and even on occasion non-Jewish Arabs, could be used to buy land on behalf of the newcomers.²⁶ In 1901, taking advantage of a concession granted under an Ottoman land code dating from 1867, the Jewish Colonization Association was able to acquire a very large tract of land in Tiberias from the Greek-Orthodox Sursuq landowning family, who were based in Beirut.²⁷ This purchase formed a territorial core around which further purchasing would subsequently enable a contiguous block of Jewish-owned land to be established. Though Jewish numbers remained a minute proportion of the population of Palestine as a whole, with landholdings to match, their rate of expansion (a tenfold increase over two decades) was dramatic.²⁸

A number of key features of Zionist settler colonialism that will figure importantly in the analysis to come are already apparent at this early stage. In particular, as noted, the acquisition of Native territory was initially carried out in conformity with the existing legal system. True, an appreciable level of friction between settlers and Natives developed once the settlers had moved onto the land they had purchased, friction arising mainly from the settlers' disregard for

local protocols concerning access to and use of land.²⁹ Nonetheless, the procedures whereby Zionists had obtained title to that land in the first place were more or less in accordance with Ottoman law, a situation that contrasts sharply with the lawless violence that characterised the acquisition of Native territory in Australia and the United States. Lawless violence was simply not an option for a small group of European settlers who were trying to establish a colonial beachhead within a powerful, albeit decadent, established empire. The conventional settler technique of violent expropriation only became available to Zionism in 1948, when the ethnic purging of Native territory heralding national independence occurred in response to metropolitan withdrawal. Up to that point, however, the yishuv had largely confined itself to operating within the framework of successive imperial umbrellas, first the Ottomans and then, under the League of Nations' Palestine Mandate, the British. In addition to constraining the Zionist enterprise, these empires (in particular the British) also provided protection for it, together with a legal system that enabled the purchase of land and immigration regulations that were susceptible to strategic manipulation. Still lacking a colonial state, Zionism did not seek to end imperialism but to harness it. In this regard, a major success came about in 1917, when the Balfour Declaration anticipated the shift from Ottoman to British rule.

UNDER THE MANDATE

One of the biggest of the many very big breaks that Zionism was to enjoy in the twentieth century came about in 1914, when the Ottomans not only chose to participate in the First World War but picked the wrong side. In the wake of the Great War, Turkey, in common with Germany, was obliged to submit to its empire being dismembered and parcelled out among its victorious European rivals under the aegis of the newly-established League of Nations' Wilsonian mandate system.³⁰ In the outcome, in addition to Britain securing Iraq and France securing Syria (with Australia, under a different category of mandate, securing Papua), Britain not only gained the Palestine Mandate but, fatefully, succeeded in having an extended version of the Balfour Declaration inserted into what thereby became a unique form of mandate, providing as it did for the

preferential intrusion of a third party into the relationship between a European authority and the local population it was to administer.³¹

The Balfour Declaration had been issued in 1917, while General Allenby was advancing on Jerusalem, at that point still an Ottoman possession. It expressed a favourable view of the 'establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people', an object whose achievement the British government would 'use their best endeavours to facilitate'. Strengthening these words four years after the defeat of Turkey, Article 6 of the 1922 Mandate charged the British to 'facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and [to] encourage, in co-operation with the Jewish Agency [...] close settlement by Jews on the land, including State lands and waste lands not required for public purposes'. Lest the implications of 'close' Jewish settlement on state and 'waste' lands – which, under the continuing Ottoman system of tenure, were scheduled as public property rather than as abandoned or ownerless – were not clear enough, Article 11 of the Mandate went on to provide that, 'in connection with the development' of Palestine, the British administration would have:

full power to provide for public ownership or control of any of the natural resources of the country or of the public works, services and utilities established or to be established therein. It shall introduce a land system appropriate to the needs of the country, having regard [...] to the desirability of promoting the close settlement and intensive cultivation of the land.

Thus did John Locke become an unlikely champion of Judaeocracy; the terms 'development' and 'intensive cultivation' invoking the classic liberal formula linking agricultural efficiency to population increase, while the repetition of Article 6's 'close settlement' left no doubt as to which population was scheduled to increase as a result of its progressive (read 'European') development of the land. This form of words represented a triumph for Zionist lobbying in both Britain and the United States, Felix Frankfurter and Louis Brandeis having secured President Woodrow Wilson's endorsement of the Balfour Declaration, which had itself resulted, in large part, from the

influence of Chaim Weizmann on British politicians, notably Arthur Balfour, David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill – Christian statesmen whose distaste for Jews was matched by their fondness for Zionism.³²

In this and other decisive ways, the yishuv's influence on Whitehall did not suffer from the lack of a delegated governmental structure. Indeed, the absence of a formal metropolitan relationship enhanced Zionism's capacity to mobilise a transatlantic network of support that was relatively independent of colonial rivalries between Western nations. In the years between the two world wars, the British Mandate provided an incubator in which international Zionism was able to make crucial progress towards assembling the demographic and territorial prerequisites for a European settler state in Palestine. To this end, with formidable organisational zeal, Zionist institutions secured the importation of Jewish people and capital into Palestine and maximised the efficiency of their distribution once they got there. This agenda was personified in the career and writings of colonial master-strategist Arthur Ruppin, whose incisive pragmatism informed the designs of central Zionist planners, including David Ben Gurion and key removal planner Yosef Weitz. The context in which this was made possible was the British Mandate. The harmony between Zionism and the British reflected a substantial convergence of interests.³³ In the absence of the Ottomans, the yishuv needed an imperial protector to shield it from the resentment that its intrusive activities were bound to provoke among the Native majority. Support from the United States was effectively informal. Having only recently taken over from Turkey, Britain had the requisite administrative capacity without being compromised by long-standing affiliations (possession of which gave the yishuv a local advantage), and Zionists had high-level connections within the British government.³⁴ Correspondingly, Palestine's situation at the eastern end of the Mediterranean had major implications for British imperial strategy. The region as a whole, especially the Suez Canal, was vital to traffic between Britain and its imperial holdings in India and beyond. A Jewish state there could provide a reliable regional ally without incurring the need to overcome French resistance.³⁵

This convergence of interests extended back to the Great War years, when British support for Zionist aspirations in Palestine had

been intended to encourage Jews in both the United States and post-Czarist Russia to influence their governments to back Britain's war effort, not only against the Ottomans, whose defeat would make Palestine available, but against imperial Germany – who, in waging war on the Czar, had taken on the instigator of the pogroms.³⁶ Moreover, there was no saying that, after the war, the tripartite alliance of Britain, France and Russia would hold. A Jewish Palestine might provide a buffer-zone capable of insulating British interests in Egypt from threats to the north and the east (an option that Britain's most influential Zionist, Chaim Weizmann, promoted as an 'Asiatic Belgium').³⁷ It could even enable the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf to be linked by rail, through an ideally British Mesopotamia/Iraq. In the event, as Kenneth Stein observed, once the Mandate had been established, Britain would come to devote an 'overwhelming predominance' of administrative expenditure to strategic purposes, 'while only small amounts of governmental revenue were made available to ameliorate the economic and social conditions of either the Arab or Jewish communities' – an allocation that worked to the advantage of the one community that was already receiving international contributions.³⁸ In this regard, the yishuv stood to gain from the metropole's neglect as much as from its support.³⁹

The preference for Zionism that Britain had built into the League of Nations Mandate reflected these strategic interests. The Mandate's preamble included a safeguard clause protecting the rights of 'existing non-Jewish communities'. This clause is significant on a number of counts, not least the transience implied in the term 'existing', whose suggestion of temporariness was reinforced by the designation of 91 per cent of the population as 'non-Jewish'. The implications of this terminology resonated through the concept of 'national home', which the Mandate adopted from the Balfour Declaration. The term *heimstatte* had originated as a Zionist codeword for the exclusively Jewish state that the movement actually desired, Zionist leader Theodor Herzl's associate Max Nordau having suggested a formula that could 'deceive by its mildness' so long as there was a need to 'dissimulate our real aim'.⁴⁰ Understood as a euphemism for the Jewish state, the 'national home' commitment conflicted with the safeguards afforded the so-called 'non-Jewish'

population – the national home, as Stein again observed, being a statement of right; the safeguards 'a statement of sufferance'.⁴¹

This asymmetrical duality received official justification in Britain's pledge to encourage Jewish immigration into Palestine to the extent that 'the economy', significantly expressed in the singular, was capable of absorbing it. This formula overlooked, and thereby strengthened, Zionists' untiring efforts to effect a separation between two conflicting economies in Palestine (the policy that Ruppin termed 'economic segregation').⁴² The Mandate administration abetted these efforts by treating the Jewish economy's capacity to absorb immigrants as if it were the absorptive capacity of the whole of Palestine, ignoring the fact that the growth of the Jewish sector was taking place not in a vacuum but in a zero-sum relationship whereby its growth took place at the expense of the Indigenous sector.⁴³ Even during a period of global recession, settler-colonial expansion, especially in the construction industry in the new Jewish city of Tel Aviv, enabled the sheltered Jewish economy to grow at the same time as the predominantly agrarian Native economy was placed under increasing strain.⁴⁴ The inflow of financial capital that sustained the yishuv was beyond official control. So far as the companion inflow of human capital was concerned, Britain's administration of the Mandate provided the conditions that enabled world Zionism to continue building its state-to-be, a state that would ultimately exist instead of, rather than in, Palestine.⁴⁵

In practice, of course, the preferential treatment that the yishuv was to enjoy under the British Mandate did not pass unopposed. Within Britain, there was significant resistance to the idea that Palestine's Arab population should be betrayed, while prominent Jewish public figures under the leadership of Edwin Montagu opposed Zionism's allying itself with antisemitism for the purpose of encouraging Jewish emigration out of Europe. Even Herbert Samuel – Britain's first Jewish cabinet minister who, as first High Commissioner to Palestine, was foremost among a number of Zionists appointed to senior positions in the administration – frustrated leading Zionists by his adoption of ostensibly even-handed policies.⁴⁶ In 1921, in a huge blow to Zionist ambitions that has been oddly downplayed in much scholarly literature, the British created the Amirate of Transjordan in the two thirds of what was to become

Mandate Palestine that lay east of the Jordan river. This concession to Arab expectations (or, at least, to those of Ali Ibn Husayn) had major unresolved implications that continue into the present day.⁴⁷ In particular, it prompted Ze'ev Jabotinsky's formation of Revisionist Zionism, which committed itself to revising the Mandate to reincorporate the 'partitioned' section into the Jewish national home.⁴⁸

With regard to Britain's international obligations under the Mandate itself, official concern at the emergence of a sub-proletarianised class of dispossessed Natives rendered landless by Zionist purchases led, in the 1930s, to the introduction of measures designed to restrain the transfer of land into Jewish hands. As World War II loomed, British anxiety that Arabs should not be attracted to side with the Germans led, as in World War I, to significant concessions, including restrictions on Jewish immigration that the 1937 Peel Commission recommended despite the ascendancy of Nazism. Sharpening such imperial considerations, Native resistance was maintained throughout the Mandate period, recurrently peaking in violent opposition, often directed against Jewish immigrants, that prompted a number of British policy shifts away from the generally pro-Zionist norm.⁴⁹ Typically, however, Zionist influence in Whitehall succeeded in having the new policies changed or, at least, in frustrating their restrictive provisions. Events surrounding the Shaw Commission and Hope Simpson reports, both published in 1930, provide a major case in point.

In the wake of homicidal street-fighting between Muslims and Jews that had started around the Western Wall in Jerusalem over access to holy places, the British established a commission of enquiry under Walter Shaw, which reported that the religious issue symptomatised wider Arab political and economic grievances stemming from British authorities' implementation of the Mandate's commitment to the Jewish national home. On this basis, the report recommended that Jewish immigration into Palestine be restricted and that 'a scientific enquiry should be held into land cultivation and settlement possibilities'.⁵⁰ Pending this second enquiry, the eviction of peasant cultivators, by which Shaw meant further Jewish land purchases, was to be checked. The head of the second enquiry, John Hope Simpson, asserted that the Mandate's objectives required that

the encouragement of close settlement and intensive cultivation should apply to Arabs as well as to Jews. To Zionist consternation, he recommended that, for Arab Natives of Palestine to be able to maintain their existing standard of living, Jewish immigration should be summarily curtailed.

These recommendations found their way into a government white paper that was presented by Colonial Secretary Baron Passfield (British Labour Party luminary Sidney Webb). The objections that Zionists raised in response to the Passfield White Paper were revealing in regard to the dual economy that the Shaw and Hope Simpson reports had both problematised. In response to Hope Simpson's assertion that Arab health was suffering as a result of the Jewish influx, Zionists argued that the immigration of more Jewish doctors could only alleviate the problem, an argument that denied the bifurcation of the two communities. At the same time, however, in response to Hope Simpson's related assertion that, in view of the level of unemployment among Arab workers, the Palestinian economy was incapable of absorbing any more immigrants, Zionists argued that Jewish immigrants were joining the industrial sector and would not impact on employment in the Arab agricultural sector, an argument that relied on mutual separation.⁵¹

In the event, it was not argumentation, consistent or otherwise, that won the day. Labour Zionism, under the leadership of David Ben Gurion, secured its dominance of yishuv politics at around the same time as British Labour first succeeded, by a vulnerably slender majority, in gaining government in Westminster. While the Zionist labour organisation Histadrut, in the person of their London representative Dov Hos, lobbied Trades Union Congress leader Ernest Bevin, Chaim Weizmann was involved in a mysterious meeting with Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and his son Malcolm, from which emerged a memorandum that would, predictably enough, be dubbed 'the Black Letter' by Palestinian Arabs. Penned by Malcolm MacDonald, signed by his father, and addressed, Balfour Declaration-style, to Weizmann, the Black Letter 'clarified' the Passfield White Paper out of meaningful existence, negating the material that the Zionists had found objectionable.⁵² As Tom Segev has crisply noted, 'The Passfield White Paper never went into effect;

indeed, it is notable only because the Zionist movement was able to get it revoked'.⁵³

Thus, the absence of a formal hierarchy actually meant more metropole rather than less. The composite transnational network whereby Zionist organisations secured sponsorship without reciprocal commitment not only enabled them to draw on multiple sources of support. Even within the formal Mandate relationship, Zionists' capacity to influence British policy was hardly less than that enjoyed by colonial administrations elsewhere. In the outcome, Britain provided the military protection necessary for world Zionism to co-ordinate its importation into Palestine of international finance and east-European immigrants, an arrangement that enabled the would-be Jewish nation to marshall its preaccumulated combination of capital, culture and labour with unparalleled effectiveness.

As imagined in Zionism, the Jewish nation was a relationship between people and land that realised both. The yishuv was not merely a demographic unit. Indissolubly, and to no lesser extent, it was also territorial. As such, the yishuv was not so much a state-in-waiting as an agenda, a vision to be realised in the fusion of people and land. Such were the requirements of state-building, however, that this was to be a very particular fusion. The random purchasing of as much land as possible, which would have scattered islands of Jewish ownership across a multicultural Palestine, may have made room for more Jews but it would not have consolidated the yishuv. Rather, the isolated Jewish groups that resulted would have had to participate in the local economy. For the Jews in Palestine to become a nation, they had first to be (in)gathered together, a requirement that dictated contiguous land holdings.⁵⁴ In Zionism's obsession with contiguous Jewish ownership, we see how the strategic combination of metropolitan funding and the policy of purchase made possible the institutional practice known as the Conquest of Labour (or Hebrew Labour, *avoda Ivrit*), the thoroughgoing system of ethnoracial exclusion on which the Jewish nation was to be built.

THE CONQUEST OF LABOUR

As Gershon Shafir has shown, Zionist settlements in Palestine were modelled on European colonial experiments elsewhere, initially the

French colonisation of Algeria and subsequently Bismarck's Germanisation of East Prussia.⁵⁵ When Rothschild came to the aid of the failing First Aliya, he instituted an Algerian *colon*-style system in which Jewish settlers relied on a predominantly Native labour force to produce their crops (mainly grapevines). When viable returns remained unforthcoming, Rothschild precipitately withdrew his support, leaving the First Aliya in a crisis that was not at first resolved by the Second Aliya, who arrived early in the twentieth century in response to the fresh round of pogroms that had been unleashed in Kishinev. Initially, the Second Aliya sought to compete with Natives on their own terms, attempting to survive at the subsistence level of surrounding fellaheen. Like their First Aliya predecessors, however, these European immigrants found themselves unequal to the task, defeated by what Shafir has termed 'the contradiction between market-based colonisation and Jewish national aspirations'.⁵⁶

In 1905, however, the Jewish workers' organisation Hapoel Hatzair resolved to abandon market rationality in favour of a Jewish-only isolate in Palestine that would reject any labour that was not Jewish.⁵⁷ Thus began the Conquest of Labour. From the outset, it was not a strategy that made any pretence of competing with Palestinian labour on the open market. Rather, it depended on the provision and maintenance of a closed, protected and autonomously reproduced circuit of production, consumption and exchange – which is to say, on an exclusive and preferentially subsidised economy. As such, in a kind of wishful *corpus nullius*, its proponents sought to conduct their affairs as if nobody else was around.⁵⁸ There might the scheme have rested, had not the internationally constituted World Zionist Organization taken it up, inspired in large part by Ruppin's admiration for Bismarck's colonisation scheme in East Prussia, under which the government had bought up failed Junker estates and broken them down into private allotments for subsidised sale to exclusively German smallholders, the idea being to rid the region of Poles.

The WZO wholeheartedly adopted the Conquest of Labour, funding Jewish-only initiatives through the Jewish National Fund, which it had established in 1901 for the purpose of extending Jewish ownership of land in Palestine. Ideologically, the Conquest of Labour

came to be sustained by the figure of the New Jew, whose distinctive iconography bore the marks of the extreme nationalisms that were emerging in Europe (Fig. 1). The ideal of the New Jew required incoming Zionists to remake themselves through the Conquest of Labour, not only clearing Natives from the land but boycotting Native labour and produce, a repudiation of dependency on others that progressively deprived these others of their means of subsistence.⁵⁹ Thus bolstered, the campaign for the Conquest of Labour eventually produced the core institution of the kibbutz, a totally insulated Jewish-only capsule that really did conduct its affairs (at least, its non-military ones) as if nobody else was around, a posture that exceeded the exclusiveness that settlers attained in Australia or the United States.⁶⁰



Figure 1.⁶¹

The capital imports that enabled the yishuv to evade market realities were central to the dispossession of Native Palestinians. Relieved of the requirement to generate a surplus (the JNF was able to run up large debts), the yishuv could prioritise ethnicity over efficiency.⁶² Foreign capital was Zionism's principal

preaccumulation. In this, it was no different from other settler projects. But freedom from the discipline of the bottom line set Zionism apart from other colonial projects. Without this freedom, there could have been no Conquest of Labour, no kibbutzim and, ultimately, no Jewish state. Accordingly, the profound outcomes of this creative subversion of market principles are poorly characterised in terms of labour alone. The premise that it was more important that labour be Hebrew than that it be productive was, rather, the centrepiece of an all-encompassing conquest of economics that was enabled by Zionism's diffusely integrated metropole.

The centrality of economics did not relieve Zionism of the need for military support, even though the acquisition of Native territory was being conducted in at least notional conformity with the imperial legal system, which meant that the initial means to settler expansion was financial rather than military. As observed, the yishuv's land-acquisition tactics were bound to provoke Native hostility. Thus military force was never far away, whether in the form of the colonial policing provided by British forces or, locally, by unofficial Zionist militias (the Haganah, forerunner to the Israeli Defence Forces, being formed by Jabotinsky in 1920).⁶³ Here, however, in contrast to Australia and North America, violence or the threat of violence was deployed to secure territorial gains that had already been made by other means rather than to gain territory in the first place. Eventually, of course – which is to say, in 1948 – violence would become a viable way to gain territory, whereupon it would be used as such.

The relative restraint that Zionists displayed in the Ottoman and Mandate periods did not mean that they had yet to formulate the goal of replacing Palestinians in Palestine. The initial restraint was pragmatic – the eventual Nakba, to adapt Carl von Clausewitz, being a continuation of purchase by other means.⁶⁴ Moreover, the purchases were prerequisite to Zionism's attainment of these other means: a disciplined population with a territorial base and an adequately-funded state apparatus possessed of military resources and a functioning hierarchy of command. Without Zionism's strategic co-ordination of human and capital imports, whereby a contiguous land base was secured and populated with Ashkenazi immigrants, none of these things would have been possible. When we observe this

remarkably disciplined and systematic programme of settler-state formation, the complementarity between the creation of the Jewish state and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine emerges with particular clarity, the two being inseparable features of a unified programme. Thus we turn to the land, the contested theatre on which all this took place.

LAND PURCHASES

In their ceaseless deliberations over the best ways to tailor Jewish immigration to the goal of transferring Palestinian land into exclusively and irreversibly Jewish ownership, Zionist planners were seeking to build a fully-formed ethnocratic parallel to the existing apparatus of government. To this end, they sought to modulate Jewish demographics so as to take maximum advantage of the Palestinian-owned land that became available for acquisition. Moreover, as noted, they did not simply seek to acquire land wherever it could be bought. Nor did they limit their purchasing to agriculturally valuable land. Rather, they sought to create unbroken expanses of Jewish ownership. Crucially, this ownership was not individual but collective. Once transferred into Jewish hands, parcels of land would cease being commodities in the general-alienability sense. Prior to leasing the land out to Jewish tenants, the Zionist organisations that had purchased it imposed conditions preventing it from ever returning to gentile ownership.⁶⁵ On the basis of this plan, every inch of acquired Palestinian land would become forever Jewish. Which Jews took it over – efficiently, inefficiently or indifferently – was not the point. What mattered was that they – and, whether or not they flourished, their successors in perpetuity – be Jewish.

Conceptually, the idea of collective ownership on behalf of the Jewish nation diametrically reversed the US ideology of private property, which demonised Native ownership on the grounds of its collective nature. In practical terms, however, the Zionist strategy shared characteristics with US Indian policy, where the collectivity – in that case, the US government – acquired Native land and transferred it to into ethnically non-Indian hands. In the Zionist case, however, the acquiring had to be effected within the terms of an imperial legal system that could not be swept aside or imposed on in the way that settlers had dealt with Indigenous legal systems in the

USA or Australia. This legal system was based on the Ottoman *tanzimat* land reforms of the mid-nineteenth century, which were largely inherited and maintained by the British during the Mandate era and even, to a significant extent, by the post-Nakba Israeli state.

Operating within the continuing framework of Ottoman land law, abetted by the British penchant for property settlements, Zionist purchasers sought to convert nexuses of overlapping entitlements (a Levantine analogue to E.P. Thompson's 'messy complexities of coincident use-right')⁶⁶ into an exclusive form of ownership that compressed discontinuous sets of rights into consolidated units of Jewish property.⁶⁷ So far as fellaheen 'tenants' were concerned, however, what mattered was not who had ultimate title to the land on which they made their livelihoods but the scope of that ownership. In general (there were exceptions),⁶⁸ large-scale effendi landowners under the Ottoman *tanzimat* system, who were often resident elsewhere,⁶⁹ owned, bought and sold their holdings subject to the continuing use-rights of fellaheen, whose rent or other forms of tribute provided the return on the effendi's investment. To this extent, Ottoman land transactions were comparable to capitalist business takeovers, which do not generally involve the replacement of employees.

Much has been made of these absentee landowners, whom Zionists liked to characterise as unscrupulous orientals bearing responsibility for their humbler countrymen's misfortunes.⁷⁰ No doubt in some cases the Zionists had a point. In others, though, landowners had only become absentees because their homes had been separated from their landholdings in the post-war Anglo-French carve-up of the Ottoman empire.⁷¹ Regardless of effendis' locations or motivations, however, the crucial factor for settler expansion was the attachment of usufruct to title. Settler colonialism takes place at the level of usufruct. Buying and selling between landlords, absent or present, does not change systems. Rulers can come and go. Laws change. Dispossession takes place – Natives become *replaced* – at the level of usufruct. The methods that Zionists used to attach usufruct to title, so that vendors might sell a consolidated right that would not otherwise have been theirs to sell, exploited the variety of social relationship that together constituted property under the Mandate regime.

Walter Lehn has noted how shifts in the acquisition policies of the Jewish National Fund reflected changing circumstances on the ground.⁷² While large landholdings were the consistent preference, the JNF initially targeted absentee landowners because they were relatively immune from local pressure not to sell.⁷³ When British policy became more restrictive in response to Native insurgency in the later 1930s, however, 'it became JNF policy to buy any land from any owner, large or small, who was willing or could be persuaded or forced (e.g. through mortgage foreclosure) to sell'.⁷⁴ As Lehn's 'persuaded or forced' formulation suggests, Zionist purchasing agencies used all available methods to acquire land that was suitable to their needs. In the early years of British rule, effendis who had been able to enlarge their holdings by informal means under the Ottomans found themselves hamstrung by British regulations and in many cases proved willing to sell.⁷⁵ Absentee landholders had been unable to collect rent during the war, so they were often responsive to the offer of cash.⁷⁶ After World War I, smallholding cultivators found themselves plagued by debt, with the result that many pledged their land as security for loans that they could not service, eventually forfeiting their security to moneylenders, who amassed substantial holdings that they could sell on to Zionist purchasers.⁷⁷

Under a plan of Ruppin's that Mandate assistant treasurer Michel Abcarius termed 'a vile use to which money can be put', Zionists sought to buy up land before there were enough Jewish immigrants to cultivate it, expelling the fellaheen and keeping the land in reserve and unused (the 'dead hand' of mortmain) until such time as Jewish tenants should become available.⁷⁸ When the British introduced regulations to restrain such practices, ways were found around them.⁷⁹ As in the Ottoman period, proxy buyers could be arranged, or sales could be made into a future time when the regulations had been relaxed.⁸⁰ The widespread practice of under-registering landholdings so as to avoid taxation and military conscription enabled much larger parcels of land to change hands than the deeds indicated (by the same token, purchasers paid less tax).⁸¹

As indicated, however, the crucial factor was not so much the sale itself as the prior clearing of cultivators from the land. Given collusion between a Native landlord and a Jewish purchaser, this

could be achieved in a number of ways. The requirement that tenants had a right of first refusal when land was sold could be evaded by having it publicly auctioned in satisfaction of mortgage debts 'collusively arrived-at' between a landlord and a purchaser.⁸² Alternatively, tenants could be moved around, the targeted portion of land being let to incoming tenants who then let it on as agents of the landlord, tenants of tenants not being protected against eviction.⁸³ Landlords could apply duress to induce tenants to sign undertakings that they did not wish to purchase the land themselves as they had been adequately compensated with land elsewhere.⁸⁴ To these ends, Zionist organisations were careful to protect the anonymity of Native vendors, who could also be leaders of the emergent Palestine national movement. Stein, who painstakingly tracked these multifarious ruses, has described various ways whereby debts to Zionist purchasers could be contrived in order to obtain court orders for the land to be sold in satisfaction:

this entire process was pre-planned so that the Jewish National Fund would obtain the land, the prestige of the seller would be protected, the rights of cultivators would be summarily circumvented, and the seller would obtain a price for the land well above the price set by the court.⁸⁵

A further, key component of Palestinians' expropriation was an assimilation of public land to the category of state land that reflected the deeper penetration of the realm of property that the advanced-capitalist British state exercised in comparison to its Ottoman predecessor.⁸⁶ Under the reformed Ottoman system, types of land tenure had been divided up into a mix of private and public categories.⁸⁷ Public forms of ownership could be state, religious, or local-collective based. Private ownership generally fell under the heading of the *mulk* form of tenure, which covered dwellings and private plots accompanying them and which could be inherited. *Waqf* land was set aside for religious purposes, the revenue derived from it generally going to the upkeep of Muslim institutions. *Metruke* land was public in the widest sense, encompassing rivers, lakes, roads, public grazing areas and the like. Most of the land in Palestine was, however, classified as *miri*, a system under which ownership was

vested in the state but usufructuary rights were assigned to fellaheen. In the event of miri land not being tilled for a period of five years, usufructuary rights reverted to the state, which could redistribute them to other fellaheen. By introducing the notion of state land, which had not existed as an Ottoman classification, the British provided for land that had not been assigned to particular owners, including common pasturage and hunting or wood-collecting grounds as well as land that remained unregistered in the post-Ottoman confusion, to be treated as unclaimed.⁸⁸ In effect, land that was everybody's became land that was nobody's, which meant that it reverted to the state.

Under the preferential provision whereby Mandate authorities were to encourage close Jewish settlement of 'state land and waste land not needed for public purposes', land thus reclassified could then be sold (or, in some cases, indefinitely leased) to Zionist purchasers.⁸⁹ The wide distribution of state land made it particularly suitable for filling in strategic gaps in the Zionists' overall land-acquisition programme, premised as it was on contiguity. Where fellaheen held land that was contiguous with existing Zionist holdings, for instance, state land could be purchased elsewhere to be used as compensation for their displacement.⁹⁰ By such means, not only was the yishuv consolidated but Palestinian communities were further fragmented.

For Palestinians, the continuing effects of the Ottoman land-tenure system, itself an imperial imposition, did not end with the Mandate. Various key tanzimat reforms were to survive the Nakba to provide ongoing pretexts for Israel's expropriation of Palestinian land. The preponderance of non-private forms of ownership became susceptible to interpretation as state ownership, which would come to mean collective Jewish ownership in the post-1948 era.⁹¹ A further pretext was provided by the five-year reversion rule, which meant that Palestinians who had been driven from their land in 1948 could be made subject to forfeiture through having failed to cultivate it. Another resulted from the fact that, in 1858, fellaheen had become obliged to register their interest in particular tracts of land, an obligation that had become more thoroughly bureaucratised by the British in the Mandate period. A major disincentive to registration under the Ottomans had been that it rendered the person registering

liable both to taxation and to the much-feared military conscription, consequences that encouraged large numbers of fellaheen to avoid registration or to register the land in fictional or absentee names.⁹² Eventually, this led many fellaheen to resort to urban-based moneylenders, to compensate both for their increased tax burden and for the loss of labour that they sustained as a result of increased military conscription. Subsequently, when they had fallen behind with their payments, the moneylenders could claim the land as collateral and sell it to Zionist purchasers, as occurred in the case of the Sursuq family's large sale.⁹³ In terms of future implications, however, the chaotically disordered record of local land tenure that resulted from this situation led to numerous fellaheen being unable to establish their entitlement to their land under the more demanding administrative requirements imposed by the British and, subsequently, under the punitive conditions of the Israeli legal system. The recitation could be continued indefinitely.⁹⁴ It is a litany of dispossession.

BEYOND THE WATERSHED

It may seem perverse to offer a narrative of Palestinian dispossession that dwells so obliquely on the Nakba. My intention has not been to understate the repeated enormities that the nascent Jewish state perpetrated in the Nakba. Rather, it has been to situate it in the context of the ongoing (in Saree Makdisi's term, 'slow-motion') enormity that Zionists, with imperial and comprador connivance, had been conducting incrementally, day by day, for over half a century before the Nakba.⁹⁵ In the absence of that context, the Nakba would make no sense. We might even agree with Benny Morris that ethnic cleansing was a spontaneous aberration that took place in the heat of warfare.⁹⁶ In the preceding context of Zionism's conquest of economics, however, the Nakba makes only too plain sense. There was no change of ends. The Nakba simply accelerated, very radically, the slow-motion means to those ends that had been the only means available to Zionists while they were still building their colonial state.

If, in the 1930s, Palestinians had fled their homes instead of rising up against British rule, there would not have been enough Jews to fill them. The same can be said for the dream of 'transfer' (the Zionist euphemism for removing the Natives from Palestine). Though

there had been much talk of transfer before the Second World War, the practical exigencies of the mid-Mandate years meant that it could be no more than that – talk.⁹⁷ To understand the Nakba, therefore, we have to keep in mind the crucial fact that it was Zionism's *first opportunity*. The fact that the emergent Jewish state seized this opportunity with such devastating effectiveness was both a testament to and a legacy of its preparedness. As we have seen, the creation of the Jewish state and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine were two sides of the same coin. The conquest of economics was a Nakba-in-waiting.

As historians, then, we should approach events carefully, recording them at face value but also looking behind them to their enabling contexts, the historical conditions that made them possible. This, I think, is why Israel Shahak refrained from discussing the infamous April 1948 massacre that Zionist troops carried out at Deir Yasin (the Jerusalem suburb since renamed Kfar Sha'ul): 'Accurate and detailed knowledge of Zionist thought as expressed by its leaders led to many incidents like Dayr Yasin [*sic*] and, more importantly, can yet again lead to similar or worse events'.⁹⁸ Shahak's prescient warning brings us to the most urgent reason of all for attending to historical structures. It is in the nature of structures that, often as not, the deep-seated regularities subtending individual events can be traced forwards as well as backwards in time. For there to be any hope that the study of history might help us to escape being collectively condemned to repeat history, we should not submit to the tyranny of detail. This is not, of course, to jettison rigour. Rather, as Ted Carr retorted to the implacable G. R. Elton, 'Accuracy is a duty, not a virtue'.⁹⁹

The details do not speak for themselves. They speak in context. Four decades after the Nakba, for example, Israeli economist Ira Sharkansky was astounded to find that the Israeli government's expenditure exceeded the gross national product (not government revenue, GNP!). On investigation, Sharkansky discovered that the government received revenues that did not emanate from productive activity, so they were not counted for GNP purposes: 'grants from overseas governments and private contributors, plus loans from overseas and domestic sources'.¹⁰⁰ Sharkansky found all this surprising. Aware of the historical background to Israel's diasporan funding, we should not be surprised.

As I write, in February 2012, Israeli authorities are engaged in forcibly evicting Palestinian residents from Wadi Hilweh (Silwan) in occupied al-Quds (East Jerusalem). 50,000 Palestinians live there. There is no saying how many will be driven from their homes. The pretext for this ongoing post-Nakba removal has been provided by a highly dubious archaeology according to which King David built a Jewish city there in the third millennium BCE.¹⁰¹ The City of David Archaeological Park, which is replacing the Palestinian homes, is being financed by, among others, Ron Lauder of Estee Lauder perfume fame, who currently chairs the Jewish National Fund. Lauder is but one of numerous plutocrats who are supporting this contemporary exercise in ethnic cleansing. We should not be surprised. It is no random event.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An earlier version of this article was presented as an address to the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies Palestine Society's 2011 annual conference, 'Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine'. My thanks and congratulations to the organisers. Thanks to Gershon Shafir for his comments. Thanks to Omar Jabary Salamanca and Lorenzo Veracini for the prodding. Research for this article was enabled by an Australian Research Council fellowship held in the History Programme at La Trobe University.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Patrick Wolfe is a freelance historian associated with La Trobe University. He lives and works in Wurundjeri country. He has written, taught and lectured on race, colonialism, Aboriginal histories, genocide, theories of imperialism and the history of anthropology. He is currently working on a comparative account of regimes of race in Australia, the USA, Brazil and Palestine/Israel. Research for this article was enabled by an Australian Research Council fellowship held in the History Program at La Trobe University.

NOTES

¹ The standard references include Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage, 2001), pp. 161-258; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006); Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), pp. 122-40. For what was lost, Walid Khalidi (ed.), and his team's *All That Remains: The Palestine Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992) remains, as does Salman Abu-Sitta, *Atlas of Palestine 1948* (London: Palestine Land Society, 2004). According to official Israeli

estimates, over 85% of Palestinian villages were 'abandoned' in the Nakba, 218 villages being listed as destroyed. Figures summarised in Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley, CA: U.C. Berkeley Institute of International Studies, 1983), pp. 122-25. 'Of the 370 new Jewish settlements established between 1948 and the beginning of 1953, 350 were on absentee property. In 1954, more than one third of Israel's Jewish Population lived on absentee property and nearly a third of the new immigrants (250,000 people) settled in urban areas abandoned by Arabs. They left whole cities like Jaffa, Acre, Lydda, Ramleh, Basan, Majdal; 388 towns and villages and large parts of 94 other cities and towns, containing nearly a quarter of all the buildings in Israel'. Don Peretz, *Israel and the Palestine Arabs* (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1958), p. 143 (for Custodian of Absentee Property figures, see pp. 143-53). For an instructive demography of relative pre-Nakba population figures, see Janet Abu-Lughod, 'The Demographic Transformation of Palestine' in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Transformation of Palestine: Essays on the Origin and Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), pp. 139-163, especially pp. 147-151. For some of the key land-acquisition statistics ('the Israelification of state land'), see Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory*, p. 143; Walter Lehn, *The Jewish National Fund* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1988), pp. 69-74.

² For the invasion of the Victorian grasslands, which is less well-known than the 'winning' of the US West, see James Boyce, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne & the Conquest of Australia* (Melbourne: Black Ink, 2011), pp. 85-163. '[G]rassland lay for hundreds of kilometers to the west and north of Melbourne, into which squatters and their sheep made rapid forays, as fast as any expansion in the history of European colonisation'. Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. xxiii.

³ Thus it is debatable whether shifting the point of origin back from 1967 (the Six Day War and Israel's seizure of the Occupied Palestinian Territories) to the Nakba is an improvement. The antidote to being blinded by a watershed is surely not another watershed. The concept has proved itself a versatile ideological resource in Israeli discourse. Avi Shlaim has noted that liberal Israelis regarded the 1982 invasion of Lebanon as a watershed marking the end of '*ein breira*', or the idea that Israel only went to war because there was no alternative. 'Until then, Zionist leaders had been careful to cultivate the image of peace lovers who would stand up and fight only if war was forced upon them'. Avi Shlaim, 'The Debate About 1948', in Ilan Pappé (ed.), *The Israel/Palestine Question* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 172-194, quotation at p. 177. This watershed ended abruptly with the publication of an article by Prime Minister Menachem Begin entitled, with characteristic Revisionist candour, 'On Behalf of a War of Choice'. Ironically, Begin's title belies the notion of 'resort' that informs the book that publicised it: Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), which cites Begin's article as its inspiration (p. vii). The idea that the Nakba was a miracle (biblical overtones included) has furnished grounds for its justification, as in A. Granott's assertion that, 'Since the Arabs surprisingly fled from the territory of the State', restitution was out of the question because '[m]istakes may be corrected but not miracles'. A. Granott, *Agrarian Reform and the Record of Israel* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1956), p. 96. Granott was here echoing the description of the Nakba by Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, as 'a miraculous simplification of Israel's tasks' (quoted in Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* [Austin, TX: Texas University Press, 1980], p. 28). As Erik Cohen notes, Israel's 1967 seizure of the balance of Mandate Palestine could also be depicted in 'miraculous or providential terms'. Erik Cohen, 'The Changing Legitimizations of the State of Israel', in Peter Y. Medding

(ed.), *Israel, State and Society, 1948-1988* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 148-65, quotation at p. 157.

⁴ Patrick Wolfe, 'Nation and Miscegenation: Discursive Continuity in the Post-Mabo Era', *Social Analysis*, 36 (1994), pp. 93-152, quotation at p. 96. Back then, we still had to fight for the capital N in Native, let alone the capital I in Indigenous.

⁵ Patrick Wolfe, 'After the Frontier: Separation and Absorption in US Indian Policy', *settler colonial studies*, 1, 1 (2011), pp. 13-51.

⁶ Paul A. Kramer, 'Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World', *American Historical Review*, 116 (2011), pp. 1348-1391, quotation at p. 1361.

⁷ '[I]f I come and say: "you, work for me", it's not the same as saying "you, go away"'. Lorenzo Veracini, 'Introducing *settler colonial studies*', *settler colonial studies*, 1 (2011) pp. 1-12, quotation at p. 1. I am saving my disagreement with Lorenzo over his next line – 'This is why settler colonialism is not colonialism' – for another time. This article is long enough as it is.

⁸ Obvious examples respectively include Britain or Canada as opposed to the United States in North America, the British Mandate authorities as opposed to the Zionists in Palestine, Botswana as opposed to Britain in Khoi-San country, the Chinese in Tibet, the Indonesians in West Papua, etc.

⁹ I argue this in more detail in the US context in a forthcoming article: Patrick Wolfe, 'Against the Intentional Fallacy: Legocentrism and Continuity in the Rhetoric of Indian Dispossession', *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 36, 1, (2012), pp. 3-45.

¹⁰ Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York, Monad Press, 1973), p. 76.

¹¹ Wolfe, 'After the Frontier', p. 28.

¹² For the potato's remarkable colonial career in Aotearoa/New Zealand, see James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders: From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 1996), pp. 145-146, 159.

¹³ Barbara Jeanne Fields, 'Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America', *New Left Review*, 181 (1990), pp. 95-118, quotation at p. 104.

¹⁴ This is not true of Marx himself. See, e.g., Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954), pp. 716-724 ('The Modern Theory of Colonisation'). A residual Eurocentrism continues to characterise some of the most sophisticated Marxist discussion of this and related topics, however. See, for instance, the stimulating exchange between Robert P. Brenner and Ellen Meiksins Wood. Robert P. Brenner, 'The Low Countries in the Transition to Capitalism', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1 (2001), pp. 169-241; Ellen Meiksins Wood, 'The Question of Market Dependence', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 2 (2002), pp. 50-87.

¹⁵ This sea was, of course, actively populated by many different groups (Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* [London: Verso, 1993] remains the classic source). My point concerns the ultimate overlordship of this densely transacted zone.

¹⁶ In one of his panoramic asides, Marx characterised 'North America' as 'a country where bourgeois society did not develop on the foundation of the feudal system, but developed rather from itself; where this society appears not as the surviving result of a centuries-old movement, but rather as the starting-point of a new movement [...] where, finally, bourgeois society itself, linking up the productive forces of an old world with the enormous natural terrain of a new one, has developed to hitherto unheard-of dimensions and with unheard-of freedom of movement, has far outstripped all previous work in the conquest of the forces of nature [...]. In England [by contrast], bourgeois society does not exist in pure form, not corresponding to its concept, not adequate to itself'. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*:

Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft) (London: Penguin/New Left Review, 1993), pp. 884-85.

¹⁷ Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska University Press, 1983). See also Gary C. Goodwin, *Cherokees in Transition: A Study of Changing Culture and Environment Prior to 1775* (Chicago: University of Chicago Dept. of Geography Research Paper, 1977); Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1996).

¹⁸ The yishuv 'could tap the resources of sympathetic Jews throughout the world, and these donations, along with capital imported by the immigrants themselves, could be used without prime regard to the profit motive. The Zionists were willing for reasons other than material gain to invest their resources in Palestine, and this motivation differentiated them from traditional colonialists'. Barbara J. Smith, *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine: British Economic Policy, 1920-1929* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 11.

¹⁹ The term ethnocracy has been coined by Oren Yiftachel in *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2006).

²⁰ Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley, California University Press, 1996), pp. 52-63, 73-79; Neville J. Mandel, 'Ottoman Policy and Restrictions on Jewish Settlement in Palestine: 1881-1908 – Part I', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 10 (1974), pp. 312-332, especially pp., 321-328; Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1976), pp. 31-36.

²¹ Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews. A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2006), p. 90.

²² Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism*, p. 40.

²³ Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism*, p. 207.

²⁴ Mandel, 'Ottoman Policy and Restrictions', p. 315. For the capitulations system, which had a long history before it came to compromise Ottoman sovereignty in the nineteenth century, see Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beraths in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Feroz Ahmad, 'Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations 1800-1914', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11 (2000), pp. 1-20; Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 78-79.

²⁵ 'The Ottoman Government informs all [Jews] wishing to immigrate into Turkey that they are not permitted to settle in Palestine. They may immigrate into the other provinces of [the Empire] and settle as they wish, provided only that they become Ottoman subjects and accept the obligation to fulfil the laws of the Empire'. Quoted in Mandel, 'Ottoman Policy and Restrictions', p. 313.

²⁶ Mandel, 'Ottoman Policy and Restrictions', p. 324.

²⁷ See William R. Polk, 'The Arabs and Palestine', in William R. Polk, David M. Stamler, Edmund Asfour (eds), *Backdrop to Tragedy: The Struggle for Palestine* (Boston: Beacon, 1957), pp. 225-306, especially pp. 236-238.

²⁸ Thus I am surprised at Mandel's dismissive attitude to their impact: 'Their [Jewish settlers'] exact numbers cannot be precisely known. In the mid-1880s they perhaps comprised between five hundred and a thousand souls. In 1893 the combined population of the nine colonies founded in the 1880s was a fraction over two thousand. In 1898, there were over four thousand settlers in eighteen colonies; and a decade later, in 1908, there were about ten thousand settlers in twenty six colonies. In the light of these figures, only a limited number of Arab villagers and a few passing Bedouin could have directly felt the presence of the Jewish settlers during the years before 1908'. Mandel, *Arabs and Zionism*, p. 34.

²⁹ Shafir, *Land, Labor and Origins*, pp. 40-41, 199-202.

³⁰ Rhetorically, the Wilsonian trust doctrine continued the euphemistic mode of settler domination perfected by Chief Justice John Marshall in his *Cherokee v. Georgia* judgment of 1830. See Wolfe, 'Against the Intentional Fallacy', pp. 9-16.

³¹ Unlike the Balfour Declaration, which, being very short, had referred only once to 'a National Home for the Jewish people', the longer Mandate, which consisted of a preamble and 28 articles, having adopted the Declaration's indefinite 'a national home' in its preamble, had occasion to refer back to the concept, initially as 'their [i.e., the 'Jewish people's'] national home' (preamble), and subsequently as 'the Jewish national home' (Article 2). This formula, in its use of the definite article and, significantly, in adjectivally rendering Jewishness a property intrinsic to the home (Palestine) itself, far exceeded the Declaration's avoidance of any suggestion of the exclusively Jewish state that the Zionists had patently wanted. Earlier drafts of the Declaration had come closer to accommodating Zionist ambitions but, in the immediate wake of the Sykes-Picot agreement, and with a war still to fight in the Arab heartland, Britain had been too sensitive to Arab perceptions to entertain Weizmann's more candid statements of intent. These were expressed in what David Fieldhouse termed 'the first real draft of the eventual Declaration', which called for 'Palestine to be recognized as the Jewish National Home, with liberty of immigration to Jews of all countries, who are to enjoy full national political and civic rights; a charter to be granted to the Jewish Company; local government to be accorded to the Jewish population; and the Hebrew language to be officially recognised'. Six months later, in July 1917, a revised Zionist draft called upon the British government to 'use its best endeavours to secure the achievement' of the object of 'reconstituting' Palestine as 'the national home of the Jewish people', a task that the British government should carry out in consultation with the Zionist Organization. The fact that the 'best endeavours to secure the achievement' wording was incorporated into the final Declaration testifies to Weizmann's influence on its formulation. In the following month, Balfour himself issued his own first draft, which closely followed the Zionist version, whereupon Milner and Amery circulated further drafts to Cabinet which avoided mention of the World Zionist Organization, played down the likelihood of an exclusively Jewish state, and built in safeguards for 'existing non-Jewish communities', before the final draft, including the safeguards clause, was published on 31st October 1917. Five years later, with Arab allegiance in wartime no longer being a concern, the British succeeded in persuading the League of Nations to incorporate into the Mandate the key elements of the Zionist drafts that had been excluded from the Declaration (in addition to those already mentioned, consultation with an 'appropriate Jewish agency', Article 4; political and civic rights, Article 7; Hebrew [along with English and Arabic] an official language, Article 22; and local government [qualified] to the Jewish population, Article 4). For the successive drafts and final text of the Declaration, together with the discussion just quoted, see D.K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 134, 149-150. For a penetrating critique of the wording of the Declaration that partly anticipates my comments here, see Erskine B. Childers, 'The Wordless Wish: From Citizens to Refugees', in Abu-Lughod, *Transformation*, pp. 170-71.

³² See Scott Atran, 'The Surrogate Colonization of Palestine, 1917-1939', *American Ethnologist*, 16, 1989, pp. 719-744, especially pp. 721-22. Leonard Stein reported Lloyd George as observing, in the House of Commons at the time of the British offer of Uganda to the Zionists, that: 'There were a good many Jews they could well spare'. Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: Vallentine-Mitchell, 1961), p. 143. For discussion and examples of the well-known antisemitic sentiments harboured by Lloyd George, Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain, Churchill and others, see Atran, 'Surrogate Colonization', pp. 721, 737-38, n. 2; W.T. Mallison, 'The Balfour Declaration: An Appraisal in International Law', in Abu Lughod, *Transformation*, pp. 61-111, especially pp. 67-69; Richard P. Stevens, 'Zionism as a

Phase of Western Imperialism', in Abhu Lughod, *Transformation*, pp. 27-59, especially pp. 36-37.

³³ 'All this [the 1915 de Bunsen Committee recommendations] would surely have been grist to the mills of Herzl and Chamberlain if they had still been in power. The former thought that British imperial needs could be made to serve Zionist purposes, the latter that Zionist needs could be made to serve British ones, a realistic basis for effective co-operation'. Frank Hardie, Irwin Herrman, *Britain and Zion: The Fateful Entanglement* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1980), p. 19.

³⁴ 'There were scarcely any Arabs living in Britain. Zionist leaders had the ear of many of the highest in the land and made almost daily use of that privilege; there was no corresponding channel for the Arab point of view'. Hardie and Herrman, *Britain and Zion*, p. 76.

³⁵ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, pp. 138-148.

³⁶ 'When Herbert Samuel was the Home Secretary in 1916, he was faced with a serious controversy with Britain's Russian Jewish immigrant community who refused to enlist in the British Army to fight alongside Russia, the country they fled, against Germany. Out of a total of 70,000 Russian Jews who were eligible for military service, only 700 volunteered'. Victor Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conflict: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891-1949* (London: Pluto, 2009), pp. 64-65.

³⁷ Michael Haag, *Alexandria: City of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 141; Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), p. 127.

³⁸ Kenneth W. Stein, 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights for Cultivators in Mandatory Palestine', in Joel S. Migdal (ed.), *Palestinian Society and Politics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 233-61, especially p. 234.

³⁹ Ilan Pappé has picked up on Barbara Smith's identification of this factor. Pappé, 'Zionism as Colonialism: A Comparative View of Diluted Colonialism in Asia and Africa', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 107, 2008, pp. 613-633, especially p. 630. See also Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, pp. 135-158. Moreover, as Perry Anderson has pointed out, 'Unlike any other [colonial relationship], the relationship of the Yishuv to Whitehall was without sentimental ties of kinship or culture'. Perry Anderson, 'Scurrying Towards Bethlehem', *New Left Review*, 10 (2001), pp. 6-30, quotation at p. 9.

⁴⁰ Quoted from Max Nordau's (unpublished) 'The Prosperity of His Servant' in Christopher Sykes (son of Mark Sykes, of Sykes-Picot fame), *Two Studies in Virtue* (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 160, n. 1. 'Zionists knew that *Heimstätte* was a circumlocution for *Judenstaat*; so did the War Cabinet of 1917'. John Ruedy, 'Dynamics of Land Alienation', in Abu-Lughod, *Transformation*, pp. 119-138, quotation at p. 127, citing Lloyd George's testimony before the Peel Commission ('if the Jews had [...] responded to the opportunity afforded them by the idea of a national home and had become a definite majority of the inhabitants, then Palestine would thus become a Jewish Commonwealth' [Lloyd George in *Palestine Royal Commission Report*, July 1937, Cmd. 5479, henceforth *Peel Commission Report*], p. 24). Presumably the same sentiment underlay Zionist Organization leader Nahum Sokolow's strident insistence, in the year following the Balfour Declaration, that the Zionists were not seeking a Jewish state. Nahum Sokolow, *The History of Zionism, 1600-1918* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1919), p. xxiv.

⁴¹ Kenneth W. Stein, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina University Press, 1984), p. 213.

⁴² Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 173.

⁴³ Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, pp. 84-85.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, pp. 77-81, citing Robert Szereszewski.

⁴⁵ I have adapted this poignant distinction, which encapsulates Zionism's settler-colonial essence, from Victor Kattan's observation that the Balfour Declaration

'provided that it [a Jewish national home] would be established in Palestine, not instead of Palestine'. Kattan, *Coexistence to Conflict*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ When Samuel was appointed in 1920, Palestine was still under British military occupation (resulting from Allenby's conquest in 1917). Samuel presided over the shift to a British civilian administration in 1920 and the imposition of the Mandate in 1923. Turkey formally ceded its rights under the Treaty of Lausanne.

⁴⁷ During the second half of 1915 and the beginning of 1916, when securing Arab allegiance had become critical to Britain's conduct of World War I, an exchange of letters between Husayn, Sharif of Mecca, and Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Cairo, had resulted in a strategic agreement whereby a wartime revolt against the Ottomans (which Husayn and his two sons, Abdullah and Faysal, duly launched in July 1916) would be rewarded with British support for Arab independence in the post-war era. The substantive elements of this deal were apparently ignored in the subsequent Sykes-Picot agreement, which divided Arab homelands between the British and the French, and in the Balfour Declaration. In token acknowledgement perhaps, in 1921 the British had Abdullah crowned in Transjordan and Faysal in Iraq.

⁴⁸ Neither Labour Zionism nor the Revisionists' party-political successors (who, since the late 1970s, have dominated Israeli politics) have formally renounced the claim to the southern part of present Syria and the majority of present-day Jordan.

⁴⁹ For the 'original intifada', or Arab Revolt of 1936-39, see Matthew Hughes, 'The Banality of Brutality: British armed forces and the repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936-39', *English Historical Review*, 124, 507 (2009), pp. 314-354; Baruch Kimmerling, Joseph S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 102-131; Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Fayetteville, AR: Arkansas University Press, 2003).

⁵⁰ Quoted in *Peel Commission Report*, p. 71.

⁵¹ The arguments and factors are summarised in Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, pp. 66-76.

⁵² For a well-documented account of the events leading up to the Black Letter, see Atran, 'Surrogate Colonization', pp. 730-731. See also *Peel Commission Report*, pp. 70-78; Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan/Henry Holt, 1999), pp. 335-38.

⁵³ Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, p. 336.

⁵⁴ As Anita Shapira has pointed out, this policy not only limited the extent of Jewish landholding. It also laid the ground for partition. Shapira, *Land and Power*, p. 176.

⁵⁵ Shafir, *Land, Labor and Origins*, pp. 50-51, 152-154.

⁵⁶ Gershon Shafir, talk presented to the 'Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine' conference, SOAS, March 5th, 2011.

⁵⁷ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken, 2003), pp. 284-288; Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), pp. 38-40.

⁵⁸ See Patrick Wolfe, 'Corpus Nullius: The exception of Indians and other aliens in US constitutional discourse', *Postcolonial Studies*, 10 (2007), pp. 127-151.

⁵⁹ Clause 23 of the lease that Jewish settlers signed before taking up land purchased by the JNF required lessees to 'execute all works connected with cultivation of the holding, only with Jewish labour'. Quoted in M.F. Abcarius, *Palestine: Through the Fog of Propaganda* (London: Hutchinson, 1946), p. 131.

⁶⁰ There is at least superficial tension between the emphasis that I place on the importedness of preaccumulation and Gershon Shafir's insistence that the doctrine of the Conquest of Labour was not derived from European Zionist theory (the concept of productivisation) but was born on the ground of settlement out of struggles between Zionists and Palestinians. See Shafir, *Land, Labor, and Origins*, pp. 81-82. My perspective is dialectical: in the encounter between metropole and

colony, as in that between theory and practice, the two elements mutually condition one another.

⁶¹ 'The New Jew': 1938 Jewish National Fund poster calling for Zionist colonisation of the Galilee. Source: Central Zionist Archives, reproduced in Segev, *One Palestine Complete*, facing p. 374.

⁶² Confronting probable restrictions on its land purchases in the wake of the Peel Commission Report, the JNF resolved to adopt any measures, including deficit financing, to buy as much land as it could, a policy whereby, as the JNF reported in 1939, its 'indebtedness has been much enlarged'. Quoted in Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, pp. 72-73.

⁶³ Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pp. 96-97.

⁶⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2004), p. 42, # 24. 'The whole of Palestine, or at least most of it, must belong to the Jewish people [...] this can be achieved by three means: by force, but we do not have it, governmental coercion or purchase'. Menachem Ussishkin, *The Ussishkin Book* (Jerusalem, Ussishkin Publications, 1934), p. 105, translated and quoted in Pappe, 'Zionism as Colonialism', p. 616. Israeli journalist Z. Schiff caricatured this perspective: 'We have always stolen lands. We always chased our Arabs. Don't bother us with the argument that in the past we purchased the Arabs' lands. Indeed, we bought lands from the effendis but we chased away the tenants who lived on them [...]. If this is what we did in the past, why not continue doing so in the present and future? God forbid that we should stop this tradition'. Schiff quoted in Baruch Kimmerling, 'Sovereignty, Ownership, and "Presence" in the Jewish-Arab Territorial Conflict: The Case of Bir'im and Ikrit', *Comparative Political Studies*, 10 (1977), pp. 155-76, 166.

⁶⁵ '[T]he result of the purchase of land in Palestine by the Jewish National Fund has been that land has been extra-territorialised [...]. The land is in mort-main and inalienable'. *Hope Simpson Report* (Cmd. 5479), 1, p. 54. Compare with: 'The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land *is* mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me'. *Leviticus*, chap. 25, verse 23.

⁶⁶ E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), p. 241.

⁶⁷ In Ottoman terminology, this typically involved converting *masha'a* (collectively held land allocated to individual cultivators in rotation) into *mafruz* (Dawes-style individual allotments).

⁶⁸ 'Arab landowners before World War I could and did evict tenants without offering them compensation'. Stein (citing 'Mr. Bennett of the [British] Palestine Lands Department'), 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights', p. 238. See also Stein, *Land Question in Palestine*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ According to Ruppin's testimony to the Shaw Commission, 90% of vendors were absentees. *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929*, Command paper Cmd. 3530 (Shaw Commission report), p. 114. Granott's figures showed a drop from 86% in 1923-1927 to 14.9 % in 1933-36, the bulk of the difference being provided by 'large resident landowners': 'if we add up all these figures we shall find that not less than 90.6 per cent. of all acquisitions were of land which formerly belonged to large landowners, while from *fellaheen* only 9.4 per cent. was purchased'. A. Granott, *The Land System in Palestine: History and Structure* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1952), p. 277.

⁷⁰ Atran has argued that some scholars, including Stein, have been influenced by orientalist stereotypes into disparaging the traditional style of land-distribution, and in particular, the *mash'a* system of circulating tenure, which Atran sees as having protected *fellaheen* landholdings from alienation. Atran, 'Surrogate Colonization', pp. 738-739.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Abcarius, *Fog of Propaganda*, p. 128.

⁷² Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, p. 79. Strictly, the land was purchased for the JNF by Zionist land-purchasing agencies, principally Ruppin's Palestine Land Development Company. See Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, p. 89; Kenneth W. Stein, 'The Jewish National Fund: Land Purchase Methods and Priorities, 1924-1939', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 20 (1984), pp. 190-205.

⁷³ Arthur Ruppin, *The Agricultural Colonisation of the Zionist Organisation in Palestine* (London: Martin Hopkinson, 1926), pp. 69-70.

⁷⁴ Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, p. 79. See also Stein, 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights', pp. 246-247.

⁷⁵ Stein, *Land Question in Palestine*, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Stein, *Land Question in Palestine*, p. 40.

⁷⁷ Polk, 'Arabs and Palestine', pp. 234-236; Stein, *Land Question in Palestine*, pp. 14-15, 19-21; Stein, 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights', p. 238.

⁷⁸ Abcarius, *Fog of Propaganda*, p. 156. See also Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, pp. 54, 72-73.

⁷⁹ Revealingly, however, 'the corporation tax imposed by the Turkish Government on such lands [held in mortmain] was practically the only fiscal measure which the Palestine [Mandate] Government failed to reinstate'. Abcarius, *Fog of Propaganda*, p. 137.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Roots of Separatism*, p. 94; Stein, 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights', pp. 238-239.

⁸¹ Stein, 'Jewish National Fund', p. 201.

⁸² 'In "forcing" a sale through the courts, the Arab seller blamed the British for forcing him to sell his land to the Zionists'. Stein, 'Jewish National Fund', p. 201. See also Atran 'Surrogate Colonization', p. 733.

⁸³ Stein, 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights', p. 247.

⁸⁴ Stein, 'Legal Protection and Circumvention of Rights', pp. 258-259 (including specimen undertaking).

⁸⁵ Stein, *Land Question*, p. 72. Albert Hyamson had earlier made much the same point: 'When the transfer took place the land was consequently empty, without tenants for whom to provide. And all parties were satisfied – the vendors, the purchasers and presumably the money-lenders, permanently, the tenants for only a short time'. Albert Hyamson, *Palestine Under the Mandate, 1920-1948* (London: Methuen, 1950), p. 87. For a general survey of these ruses, together with loopholes that Natives were able temporarily to exploit (for squatting, opportunistic grazing, etc.), see Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, *A Survey of Palestine*, vol. 1 (reprint of the 1946-47 original [Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991]), pp. 289-294. For an overview of JNF purchases up to the Nakba, see Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, pp. 69-74.

⁸⁶ Susan Reynolds has noted this deeper penetration in the increased resort to the power of compulsory purchase (or eminent domain) to provide for roads, canals, railways, airports and other core undertakings of the modern state. Susan Reynolds, *Before Eminent Domain: Toward a History of Expropriation of Land for the Common Good* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2010), pp. 45-46, 139.

⁸⁷ For overviews of the Ottoman tenure system and its land classifications, see, e.g., Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, *Survey of Palestine*, pp. 225-237; George E. Bisharat, 'Land, Law, and Legitimacy in Israel and the Occupied Territories', *The American University Law Review*, 43 (1994), pp. 467-561, especially 491-495; Granott, *Land System*, pp. 23-25, 27-28; Efraim Orni, *Agrarian Reform and Social Progress in Israel* (Jerusalem: Jewish National Fund, 1972), pp. 13-15; Efraim Orni, *Land in Israel: History, Policy, Administration, Development* (Jerusalem: Jewish National Fund, 1981), pp. 47-50; Elia T. Zuriek, *The Palestinians in Israel: A study in internal colonialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 39-46.

⁸⁸ 'The position of the [Ottoman] Sultan as the ultimate owner of the land (the holder of the *raqabeh*) was necessarily transferred to the [British] High

Commissioner who replaced him and who inherited the Sultan's ultimate theoretical ownership of all the lands of Palestine'. Rajah Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law: Israel and the West Bank* (Washington, DC: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1985), p. 25. The land thus affected 'included lands for government and army use, as well as railways, roads, rivers, wadis, antiquity sites, forests, marshes, sand dunes, and mountainous and rocky areas [...] also unoccupied and uncultivated (and often uncultivable) lands [...] lands to which title-claims had not been made or upheld'. Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, p. 77. Under the Land (Settlement of Title) Ordinance of 1928, land not established as privately owned was to be registered in the name of the state. David Kretzmer, *The Legal Status of Arabs in Israel* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), p. 52.

⁸⁹ Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, p. 77.

⁹⁰ Lehn, *Jewish National Fund*, p. 76.

⁹¹ As one of the architects of Israel's post-Nakba campaign of expropriation expressed this pretext: 'From whence could Jewish settlement derive its terrain following the establishment of the State of Israel? On the day that the sovereignty of the New State was proclaimed, it inherited automatically and legally all real property previously belonging to the Mandatory Government. Under international law the State is the heir to the rights of the former Government, including ownership of land, just as, following the first World War, the prerogatives of the Ottoman State passed to the Mandatory Power. The Palestine Government had certain rural and urban lands registered in its name, according to law, in the Land Registry. However, their precise size was never clearly defined; the Mandatory authorities published different figures on various occasions, with substantial discrepancies'. A. Granott, *Agrarian Reform and the Record of Israel* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1956), p. 90.

⁹² 'Rightly fearing that the tax collector and army recruiter would make effective use of the new registers and hardly understanding the enormous importance of the new records and deeds to their own future, when the implementing regulations of the [tanzimat] code began to be applied, they [fellaheen] evaded massively and stubbornly'. Ruedy, 'Dynamics of Land Alienation', p. 124.

⁹³ Polk, 'Existing Non-Jewish Communities', pp. 236-238.

⁹⁴ Hussein Abu Hussein & Fiona McKay, *Access Denied: Palestinian land rights in Israel* (London: Zed, 2003), pp. 69-171; Bisharat, 'Land, Law, and Legitimacy', pp. 512-517; David Kretzmer, *The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 50-61; Sabri Jiryis, 'The Legal Structure of the Expropriation and Absorption of Arab Lands in Israel', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2 (1973), pp. 82-103. For a select list of salient Israeli statutes, see Oren Yiftachel, *Planning a Mixed Region in Israel: The Political Geography of Arab-Jewish Relations in the Galilee* (Avebury: Ashgate, 1992), p. 313.

⁹⁵ 'Hebron is living evidence of what it means for Palestinians to be inexorably forced out of their homes and pushed off their land. It is a slow-motion "portrait" of Palestine being turned inside out'. Saree Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (New York: Norton, 2008), p. 212. In relation to the settler long run, it should be noted that this is a description of the situation today.

⁹⁶ That is, so long as we overlook the cold-blooded system with which Zionist forces prevented Palestinians who had fled their homes from returning. See Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, pp. 341-413. Compare with Nafez Nassal, *The Palestine Exodus from Galilee* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978). Ben Gurion noted: 'I don't accept the formulation that we should not encourage their return: Their return must be prevented [...] at all costs'. Quoted in Simha Flapan, 'The Palestinian Exodus of 1948', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1987), pp. 3-26, 17.

⁹⁷ For the genealogy of the Zionist dream of transfer, see, e.g., Benny Morris, 'Yosef Weitz and the Transfer Committees, 1948-1949', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 22

(1986), pp. 522-561. See also his 'The idea of "transfer" in Zionist thinking before 1948', in Benny Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, pp. 39-64. Compare with Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), especially 94-101 and *passim*; Orni, *Agrarian Reform and Social Progress*, pp. 14-15; Israel Shahak, 'A History of the Concept of "Transfer" in Zionism', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18, 3, (1989), pp. 22-37.

⁹⁸ Shahak, 'Concept of "Transfer"', p. 33.

⁹⁹ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 11. Though Carr properly credited A.E. Housman with the remark, it seems fair to say that the offspring has outgrown the source.

¹⁰⁰ Ira Sharkansky, *The Political Economy of Israel* (Oxford: Transaction Books, 1987), p. 24.

¹⁰¹ See, for example, www.cityofdavid.co.il/hp_eng.asp Accessed: 21/02/12.