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Settler Colonialism and Statehood: A Comparative Analysis of the USA and Israel

Abstract

This paper explores the structural and ideological parallels between the settler-colonial foundations of the United States and Israel, situating their political alliance within a postcolonial theoretical framework. The U.S. was built upon the displacement of Indigenous peoples, while Israel's founding in 1948 resulted in the Nakba and the dispossession of Palestinians – processes rooted in settler colonial logic. Drawing on postcolonial and settler colonial theory, particularly the works of Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi Bhabha, this study examines how colonial ideologies of land acquisition, militarization, and narrative control continue to shape the nation-building practices and geopolitical strategies of both states. Through qualitative desk research and critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, the paper argues that the United States' unwavering support for Israel is not solely strategic but ideologically grounded in shared histories of indigenous erasure and territorial domination. This alliance reflects an enduring structure of settler-colonial solidarity that sustains spatial fragmentation, economic dependency, and the undermining of indigenous sovereignty in both contexts. Ultimately, the paper interrogates how these intersecting colonial legacies influence contemporary understandings of justice, sovereignty, and human rights, offering a framework to deconstruct the normalization of settler colonialism in modern international relations.

Keywords: Colonialism, Settler-colonialism, USA, Israel, Indigenous people, Palestine

Introduction

Colonialism is a longstanding practice in human history, with numerous examples of societies expanding by annexing neighbouring lands and establishing settlements in conquered regions. At its core, colonialism is a system of domination that entails one group asserting control over and subordinating another¹. The term „settler colonialism” describes a system of oppression where a colonizing power removes and displaces an indigenous or pre-existing population, often through practices of ethnic cleansing². The political, physical, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual domination of spaces, often involving the forced displacement of Indigenous populations, leads to the emergence of colonialism, settler colonialism, neo-colonial relationships, and coloniality³. The United States and Israel serve as significant examples for understanding the dynamics of settler colonialism. The United States was established through a process of settler colonialism characterized by the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. This process became integral to its national identity and geopolitical strategies, driven by ideologies such as Manifest Destiny – the belief that it was a duty to „settle the continent, conquer and prosper”⁴. Similarly, Israel’s founding in 1948, guided by Zionist ideology, resulted in the displacement of Palestinians during and after the Nakba, as well as the continued expansion of settlements in disputed areas. Both nations exhibit parallels in asserting sovereignty through land appropriation, militarization, and control of historical narratives, making their experiences pivotal to understanding the broader consequences of colonial systems. These similarities reveal shared ideological and structural foundations that reinforce their political alliance.

Post-colonial theory emerged in the aftermath of decolonization during the mid-20th century, particularly after World War II, as scholars began critically examining the enduring impacts of colonialism on formerly colonized societies. Pioneered by figures such as Patrick Wolfe who established the field of settler colonial studies, and Edward Said, whose *Orientalism* (1978) exposed the cultural hegemony of the West over the „Orient”, the field expanded through the contributions of Homi K. Bhabha, Buchi Emecheta, and Frantz Fanon. These theorists interrogated the persistence of colonial power structures, racial hierarchies,

¹ M. Kohn, K. Reddy, *Colonialism* [9 V 2006], <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/colonialism/> (8 XII 2024).

² American Jewish Committee (AJC), *Entry: settler colonialist*, <https://www.ajc.org/translate-hate/settler-colonialist> (8 XII 2024).

³ *Colonialism, Coloniality and Settler Colonialism*, <https://www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading/systems-of-oppression/coloniality-and-settler-colonialism> (8 XII 2024).

⁴ Smithsonian American Art Museum, *America’s Manifest Destiny*, <https://americanexperience.si.edu/historical-eras/expansion/pair-westward-apotheosis/> (8 XII 2024).

and knowledge production that continued to shape global politics and identity after formal colonial rule had ended. In subsequent decades, post-colonial theory evolved to engage with various disciplines – literature, history, anthropology, and political science – interrogating how colonial logics persist in contemporary governance, spatial organization, and identity politics. The theory has also increasingly intersected with settler colonial studies, particularly in the analysis of states such as the United States and Israel, where the colonial project is not merely a historical moment but an ongoing structure.

This paper situates itself within this theoretical trajectory, drawing from both post-colonial and settler-colonial frameworks to critically examine the statehood narratives and policies of the USA and Israel. This research is based on qualitative desk research. It primarily engages secondary sources – including scholarly literature, historical analyses, and theoretical texts – to conduct a comparative study of settler colonialism and state formation in the USA and Israel. The study adopts a critical comparative lens, identifying structural parallels and divergences in the two cases. Applying postcolonial theory to these cases highlights how the United States' colonial history influences its steadfast endorsement of Israel as a settler-colonial state. This paper hypothesizes that the settler colonial foundations of the United States continue to actively shape Israel's policies and identity, making Israel follow a similar historical path. Specifically, it argues that the United States' endorsement of Israel is deeply informed by its own colonial legacy, creating a political and ideological alignment rooted in shared structures of dispossession, narrative control, and the normalization of indigenous erasure. Through this lens, the U.S.–Israel alliance can be understood not merely as geopolitical, but as a settler-colonial solidarity that perpetuates global patterns of structural violence and undermines indigenous sovereignty.

To verify the proposed hypothesis the following questions will be answered; how has America's own colonial past influenced its endorsement of Israel as a settler-colonial state? What part does the United States play in sustaining Israel's actions in the occupied territories, and how is this tied to its historical patterns of colonization? Additionally, how do the lasting impacts of settler colonialism in both the USA and Israel shape contemporary ideas of justice, sovereignty, and human rights?

Colonial Foundations in the United States

When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas in 1492, an estimated 1,5 mln Indigenous peoples already inhabited the continent, having migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait between 20000 and 35000 years earlier⁵. Between 1492 and 1600, European and Indigenous encounters varied widely depending on time and place. The French, Spanish, Portuguese, and English arrived sporadically and in small numbers during the early 16th century, relying on Indigenous peoples for food, guidance, and survival – often through coercion. Their most lasting impacts, however, were devastating: European diseases, to which Indigenous populations had no immunity, decimated communities, while violence and food seizures generated hostility. In addition to diseases, Europeans also brought transformative changes. Guns, iron tools, livestock, crops such as wheat and sugarcane, as well as Christianity and Roman law altered Indigenous lifeways and governance.

In Florida, Spanish arrival immediately provoked violent clashes⁶. The Spanish were the first to explore the peninsula, likely as an extension of their slave-raiding activities in the Caribbean⁷. On 3 III 1513, Ponce de León, a Spanish explorer, and his crew originally searching for Bimini, landed in 1513 near modern-day St. Augustine, Florida. de León, struck by the region's lush vegetation, named it La Florida, meaning „The Flowered One” in Spanish⁸. Later, in 1565, Spain established St. Augustine – the first permanent European settlement in today's United States. Conflict quickly followed: French settlers founded Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River, but Spanish forces soon eliminated them, underscoring Europe's violent competition for the New World⁹. Meanwhile, Basque, English, and French fishing fleets frequented the North Atlantic coasts, creating seasonal camps and trading furs with Indigenous peoples. But the 1600s brought a turning point: permanent colonies. The English established Jamestown (1607), the French founded Quebec (1608), and the Dutch built a foothold in New Netherland. Colonial expansion accelerated through ventures like the Plymouth Company

⁵ A. Gopnik, *History of the United States* [19 XI 2025], <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/History> (15 XII 2025).

⁶ Library of Congress, *Europe Claims America: The Atlantic Joined – 1492: An Ongoing Voyage*, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/1492/eurocla.html> (15 XII 2025).

⁷ *Slavery Timeline 1501-1600 – a Chronology of Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation*, <https://brycchancarey.com/slavery/chrono3.htm> (15 XII 2024).

⁸ S. Otfinoski, *Juan Ponce de Leon: Discoverer of Florida*, New York 2005, pp. 37-38.

⁹ A.R. Nicholas, *Fort Caroline: The French Settlement on the St. Johns* [25 XI 2022], <https://www.thejaxsonmag.com/article/fort-caroline-the-french-settlement-on-the-st-johns/> (15 XII 2024).

(1620), Massachusetts Bay Company (1629), and Dutch West India Company (1621), which sent thousands of settlers to the Americas¹⁰.

The success of European colonization was far from guaranteed and reflected a slow and often contested process among competing powers to exploit the resources of the New World. This colonization was, in essence, an invasion of lands long occupied and managed by Indigenous peoples. While Native American societies may have appeared unfamiliar to European eyes, they had cultivated and governed these territories for centuries. Indigenous groups understandably viewed European encroachment as a direct threat and adopted a variety of strategies to resist or accommodate this invasion. However, the eventual inability of Native Americans to resist European expansion or negotiate more favourable terms was due not only to Europeans' military advantages but also to the devastating impact of European diseases, which decimated Indigenous populations.

From the outset, Europeans faced a chronic labour shortage in building their colonies. The Spanish responded by enslaving Indigenous peoples in regions under their control, while the English initially relied on indentured servitude to address labour needs in Virginia. Over time, nearly all European colonial powers turned to African slavery to sustain their economies, particularly on their West Indian plantations. This system of enslavement eventually expanded to colonies in both South and North America, cementing slavery as a cornerstone of colonial labour systems

The tensions of colonization erupted into violence. One of the most destructive conflicts was King Philip's War (1675-1676), when the Wampanoag, under Metacom (King Philip), rose against English settlers in New England. Having once helped the colonists survive, the Wampanoag now faced land seizures and loss of influence. Initially effective, Philip's tactics forced colonists to adapt Indigenous methods of warfare. But after 14 months of brutal conflict, with thousands killed or enslaved, the Wampanoag were crushed. Philip himself was executed in 1676, his severed head displayed for decades as a warning. The war decimated Indigenous power in New England, solidifying English dominance¹¹.

The 18th century opened with Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), part of the War of the Spanish Succession, fought between Britain, France, and Spain in North America. Indigenous allies participated on both sides, as seen in the 1704 Raid on Deerfield, where French and Native forces razed an English settlement.

¹⁰ Library of Congress, *U.S. History Primary Source Timeline. Overview*, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/colonial-settlement-1600-1763/overview/> (15 XII 2024).

¹¹ J.D. Drake, *King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676*, Amherst 1999; *King Philip's War and its impact on America*, <https://www.mayflower400uk.org/education/native-america/2020/july/the-story-of-king-philips-war/> (15 I 2025).

The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 gave Britain Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, while France retained Cape Breton Island. These shifting imperial boundaries intensified Indigenous diplomacy, as separate treaties were struck with tribes to stabilize relations¹². The French and Indian War (1754-1763), part of the global Seven Years' War, further reshaped North America. Sparked by competing claims in the Ohio River Valley, it pitted Britain and its colonies against France and numerous Native allies. A young George Washington played an early role at Fort Necessity. Britain's decisive victories at Quebec (1759) and Montreal (1760) led to France ceding Canada and lands east of the Mississippi to Britain, while Louisiana went to Spain. Britain, however, emerged from the war deeply in debt, laying the groundwork for colonial discontent¹³.

At the same time, the Industrial Revolution, beginning in Britain around 1760, gradually transformed economic life in the colonies. Innovations like the spinning jenny and water-powered machinery fueled industrial growth and foreshadowed America's later industrial expansion¹⁴. Though it started in Britain, its influence gradually reached the Americas, shaping 19th-century industrialization¹⁵. Meanwhile, post-French and Indian War Britain sought to reduce debt by taxing the colonies. The Stamp Act of 1765, the first direct tax, triggered protests, and the formation of the Sons of Liberty. Further taxes under the Townshend Acts (1767-1768) led to boycotts¹⁶. Tensions escalated with the Boston Massacre (1770)¹⁷, and climaxed in the Boston Tea Party (1773), where over 340 chests of British tea were dumped into the harbour¹⁸. These acts of resistance culminated in the First Continental Congress in 1774, uniting twelve colonies against British rule¹⁹.

¹² G. Chet, *Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast*, Amherst 2003.

¹³ J. Black, review of *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*, by Fred Anderson, New York 2000 [28 VI 2017], <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/albion/article/abs/fred-anderson-crucible-of-war-the-seven-years-war-and-the-fate-of-empire-in-british-north-america-17541766-new-york-alfred-a-knopf-2000-pp-xxv-862-4000-isbn-0375406425/26F1E46504F134811FFDA15D3E555CFF> (15 I 2025).

¹⁴ P.N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History*, Boulder 2018.

¹⁵ J. Horn, *The Industrial Revolution: History, Documents, and Key Questions*, Santa Barbara 2016.

¹⁶ R. Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, Oxford-New York 2005.

¹⁷ National Park Service, *Boston Massacre*, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/boston-massacre.htm> (16 I 2025)

¹⁸ B.L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party & the Making of America*, New Haven 2010.

¹⁹ Office of the Historian, *Continental Congress, 1774-1781*, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/continental-congress#:~:text=Spurred by local pressure groups,the 13 colonies except Georgia> (19 I 2025).

Conflicts regarding British taxes and governance sparked the American Revolutionary War in IV 1775. It was a pivotal conflict in which the thirteen American colonies fought to gain independence from British rule, ultimately leading to the independence of the United States in 1783. The war began with the Battles of Lexington and Concord, as tensions over British taxation and governance boiled over into armed resistance. In 1776, the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, an American founding father, claimed the colonies' right to self-governance; the declaration formally declared the colonies' intent to establish a sovereign nation. Key moments included the American triumph at Saratoga in 1777, which secured military and financial backing from France, and the Siege of Yorktown 1781, where General Cornwallis surrendered to a combined American and French force²⁰. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 formally concluded the war, acknowledging the United States' independence and granting it considerable territory²¹. The Treaty of Paris granted vast territories to the United States without consulting or acknowledging the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples living on those lands. This marked the beginning of an accelerated westward expansion by settlers, leading to widespread displacement, violence, and broken treaties. For Indigenous peoples, the Revolutionary War was not a step toward liberation but the start of greater struggles for survival, autonomy, and recognition in the new American republic²². After gaining independence, the United States continued to expand. In 1803, it acquired the Louisiana Territory from France, adding 530 mln acres of land to its territory for 15 mln USD²³.

²⁰ J.E. Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence*, Oxford-New York 2007.

²¹ R. Middlekauff, *op.cit.*

²² C.G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*, Cambridge 2005.

²³ Office of the Historians, *Louisiana Purchase, 1803*, [https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/louisiana-purchase#:~:text=The Louisiana Purchase encompassed 530%2C000%2C000,in 1803 for %2415 million \(19 III 2025\)](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/louisiana-purchase#:~:text=The Louisiana Purchase encompassed 530%2C000%2C000,in 1803 for %2415 million (19 III 2025).).

The Creation of Israel and Settler Colonialism

Following the Holocaust²⁴, and while the Nuremberg trials where the Nazi leaders and operatives faced justice for the 6 mln Holocaust victims²⁵ were underway in Europe, the United States endorsed the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which was a public pledge by Britain to create „a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. This declaration was issued during World War I as part of the British Mandate for Palestine following the fall of the Ottoman Empire²⁶. In the context of Palestine, the distinct aim was to establish an environment conducive to a Jewish ‘national home,’ even though Jews made up less than 10% of the population. Following the beginning of the mandate, the British initiated support for Jewish immigration to Palestine, leading to a notable increase in the Jewish demographic from 10% to almost 27% between 1922 and 1935²⁷, despite initially opposing the creation of a Jewish or Arab state and unlimited Jewish immigration²⁸. By 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reassured Arab countries that the United States would consult both Jewish and Arab communities before intervening in the region, indicating a change in American policy to take the interests of all parties into account²⁹. Then shortly after, in V 1946, President Harry Truman endorsed a suggestion from a cabinet committee tasked with examining the situation in Palestine, to allow 100000 displaced Jew to enter Palestine, while openly backing the establishment of a Jewish state by October of that same year³⁰. The United Nations Special Commission on Palestine recommended the parti-

²⁴ The systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six mln Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies in Europe and North Africa between 1933 and 1945 is known as the Holocaust. The Holocaust, a cataclysmic event of unparalleled horror, shattered the world’s conscience and irrevocably altered the course of history. During World War II, the persecution and murder were at their worst. Nearly two out of every three European Jews had been murdered by the Nazis and their allies by the time the war ended in 1945. Germans were seen as having a superior race by the Nazis. They thought that Jews posed a danger to the so-called German racial group. See in: M. Berenbaum, *Holocaust. European History* [19 XI 2025], <https://www.britannica.com/event/Holocaust> (21 XI 2025).

²⁵ *How Many People Did the Nazis Murder?*, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust-and-nazi-persecution> (25 I 2025).

²⁶ Britannica, *Balfour Declaration* [28 X 2025], <https://www.britannica.com/event/Balfour-Declaration> (19 XI 2025).

²⁷ Z. Al Tahhan, *More than a Century on: The Balfour Declaration Explained* [2 XI 2018], <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/11/2/more-than-a-century-on-the-balfour-declaration-explained> (19 XI 2025).

²⁸ Office of the Historian, *Creation of Israel, 1948*, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel> (25 I 2025).

²⁹ U.S. Department Of State, *Creation of Israel, 1948*, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/97177.htm> (13 XII 2007).

³⁰ Office of the Historian, *Creation of Israel...*

tion of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states in 1947, leading to the adoption of Resolution 181 by the UN on 29 XI 1947. This resolution aimed to divide the former mandate into Jewish and Arab states by V 1948, with Jerusalem designated as an international zone under UN control³¹.

Although the USA endorsed Resolution 181, the Department of State proposed a UN trusteeship that would impose restrictions on Jewish immigration and create provinces in Palestine instead of independent states. Concerned about Soviet influence in the Arab world and potential disruptions to oil supplies, the State Department advised against American intervention in support of the Jewish population. As the British mandate was about to expire, anxieties increased over the likelihood of a regional conflict, as Arab nations threatened military action following the partition resolution. Despite these challenges, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the founding of the State of Israel on 14 V 1948. On the same day, President Truman recognised the state of Israel³².

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the region of Palestine was home to a diverse population of Muslims, Christians, and Jews who coexisted under various ruling empires, including the Ottoman Empire. Approximately 25000 Jews lived in Palestine, with many having deep-rooted ties to the region spanning generations³³. Around 1882, the Zionist political movement began to take shape, advocating a unique form of nationalism based on the belief that Jews could achieve complete cultural and political fulfilment only within their own homeland³⁴. Two major waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, known as the First and Second Aliyah, significantly shaped the region's demographics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The First Aliyah occurred between 1882 and 1903, bringing an estimated 20000 to 30000 Jews, primarily fleeing persecution in the Russian Empire. This was followed by the Second Aliyah, from 1903 to 1914, which brought an additional 35000 to 40000 Russian Jews to Palestine. At the time, however, Jewish immigration to Palestine remained modest compared to broader global migration trends – only 3% of total transoceanic Jewish migration was directed toward Palestine before World War I. Following the war and the 1917 Balfour Declaration, immigration surged. The Third Aliyah (1919-1923) brought approximately 35000 Jews from the USSR, Poland, and the Baltic states, followed by the Fourth Aliyah (1924-1931), which brought 82000 Jewish immigrants from

³¹ United Nations, *The Question of Palestine and the General Assembly*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/data-collection/general-assembly/> (25 I 2025).

³² Office of the Historian, *Creation of Israel...*

³³ Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), *Jewish Immigration to Historical Palestine*, https://www.cjpme.org/fs_181 (25 I 2025); U. Makdasi, *Coexistences in the Holy Land* [28 V 2021], <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/coexistences-in-the-holy-land> (28 I 2025).

³⁴ L. Halperin, *Origins and Evolution of Zionism* [9 I 2025], <https://www.fpri.org/article/2015/01/origins-and-evolution-of-zionism/> (17 IV 2025).

the Balkans and the Near East. By the end of 1931, the Jewish population in Palestine had reached 175000, comprising 17,7% of the total population³⁵.

As immigration continued to rise, Arab Palestinians increasingly pressured Great Britain to limit Jewish entry, placing British authorities in a politically precarious position. In response, the British government began restricting immigration certificates during the 1930s, and in 1939 issued a major policy shift in the form of a White Paper. This document, intended to appease Arab opposition, capped Jewish immigration to Palestine at 75000 over five years, restricted Jewish land purchases, and proposed the establishment of an independent Arab state within a decade³⁶. This document imposed strict restrictions, capping Jewish immigration to Palestine at 75000 over five years, limiting Jewish land purchases, and proposing the creation of an independent Arab state within a decade. Despite these measures, Jewish immigration persisted – especially as persecution in Europe escalated with the outbreak of World War II. Although British authorities attempted to intercept unauthorized ships, many migrants still reached Palestine through clandestine means. Some enrolled at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to avoid certificate requirements, others entered through fictitious marriages or arrived as tourists who never left. As a result, between 1939 and 1948, an estimated 118228 Jews successfully immigrated to Palestine, defying British restrictions and reshaping the demographic and political landscape of the region³⁷. The Zionist ideology and the huge number of Jewish immigrations to Palestine, led to the Nakba (Arabic for „catastrophe”), an intentional and organized effort to create a Jewish-majority state in Palestine. Several proposals for distinct Jewish and Arab states were put forward during the British Mandate; however, they encountered resistance from both communities, creating a significant challenge for British authorities attempting to resolve the escalating conflict³⁸.

Following the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent Arab Israeli wars, the territorial landscape of historical Palestine changed dramatically. Over the decades, Israel had colonised more than 85% of historical Palestine, leaving less than 15% under Palestinian control³⁹.

³⁵ A. Gresh, D. Vidal, *Les 100 clés du Proche-Orient*, Paris 2011.

³⁶ E. De Vaumas, *Les trois périodes de l'immigration juive en Palestine*, „Annales de Géographie” 1954, no. 335, pp. 71-72.

³⁷ A. Gresh, D. Vidal, *op.cit.*

³⁸ W.F. Albright, *World War I and after*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine/World-War-I-and-after> (21 V 2025).

³⁹ Middle East Monitor (MEM), *Israel now occupies 85% of historic Palestine* [1 IV 2020], <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200401-israel-now-occupies-85-of-historic-palestine/> (3 IV 2025).

Parallels: Israel vs U.S.A.

The creation of both the United States and the State of Israel involved foundational settler-colonial ideologies that justified territorial expansion, indigenous displacement, and the construction of exclusionary national identities. Manifest Destiny in the U.S. and Zionism in Israel, though rooted in different historical and theological contexts, share a logic of divine entitlement and civilizational superiority used to legitimize the dispossession of native populations Native Americans and Palestinians, respectively. By tracing key legal, military, and ideological parallels – from the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears to the Balfour Declaration and the Nakba – this comparison highlights how settler-colonial systems perpetuate cycles of displacement, resistance, and cultural erasure. These historical echoes are not coincidental but structurally linked, revealing the persistence of imperial strategies that frame indigenous existence as incompatible with national sovereignty.

The Creation of the United States of America vs. The Creation of the state of Israel

The creation of the United States of America was based on the Manifest Destiny ideology, like how the creation of the state of Israel was based on the Zionist idea of the land of Palestine being the land of the chosen people by God, the Jews. The idea of Manifest Destiny – the belief that U.S. expansion was divinely sanctioned, justified, and inevitable – was used to legitimize the displacement of Native American tribes. Many white Americans viewed Indigenous land as underutilized since it was largely left for hunting rather than farming. They saw it as their duty to claim, settle, and cultivate the land. Land speculators, who profited from rising land values as westward expansion continued, were among the strongest advocates for this ideology and the removal of Native Americans.

The founding myths of both the United States and Israel reveal how settler colonial states mobilize sacred or civilizational narratives to legitimize territorial conquest. In the United States, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny cast westward expansion as a divinely sanctioned mission, rendering Native American lands as underutilized and available for „improvement” through settler agriculture and speculation. Similarly, the Zionist claim to Palestine as the divinely promised homeland of the Jewish people framed territorial acquisition not as conquest but as a redemptive return. In both cases, Indigenous claims to land were not denied outright but delegitimized as culturally inferior: Native reliance on hunting and communal farming was depicted as „wasteful”, while Palestinian cultivation

was erased under the Zionist maxim of making „a land without a people for a people without a land”. Patrick Wolfe’s notion of the „logic of elimination” is evident in both trajectories: settler societies justified displacement not only through force but also through ideological constructs that erased Indigenous presence by casting it as non-modern, unproductive, or illegitimate.

The Balfour Declaration vs. The Indian Removal Act

Although Indian removal became official policy under the 7th president of the USA, Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), its roots trace back to the 18th century. Thomas Jefferson was among the first to propose it, believing that while Native Americans were equal to whites in intellect and ability, their way of life was culturally inferior. He saw their semi-nomadic traditions and communal farming as inefficient land use and thought they could only become „civilized” by adopting European-style agriculture and settlements. Jefferson’s views were influenced by Enlightenment environmentalism, which suggested that culture shaped human progress. However, his motivations were largely economic – if Native Americans abandoned their lands, it would free up space for white settlers. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase provided a convenient solution, allowing the government to relocate tribes further west, postponing assimilation while making room for expansion. In 1825, President James Monroe, 5th American President built upon Jefferson’s ideas, arguing that Native Americans could not integrate into white society and should be relocated for their own benefit. Though Jefferson and Monroe shaped the policy, it was Andrew Jackson who ultimately enforced it, making Indian removal a reality⁴⁰. This trajectory parallels the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which Britain endorsed the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine without consulting its Arab majority. Both texts exemplify the imperial prerogative to decide the fate of Indigenous populations, treating them as obstacles to larger strategic projects – agrarian empire-building in the U.S., and geopolitical partition in the Middle East.

To underscore the colonial context of Zionism’s rise, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, revealed in 1916, was a secret arrangement between Britain and France – endorsed by Russia – to divide the Arab provinces of the collapsing Ottoman Empire into colonial spheres of influence. The agreement carved up the Middle East with little regard for ethnic, tribal, or religious realities. France was to control what is now Syria and Lebanon, while Britain would dominate areas including Iraq and Jordan, with Palestine placed under international administration. This

⁴⁰ Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), *Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal*, <https://americanexperience.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Manifest-Destiny-and-Indian-Removal.pdf> (20 V 2025).

imperial blueprint ignored Arab aspirations for independence, despite concurrent British promises to Arab leaders leading to the Balfour Declaration of 1917⁴¹.

Similarly to the Balfour Declaration, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 was an act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing⁴². Not only were the indigenous people forced out of their lands, but they were confined to Indian reservations⁴³. Native people needed government-issued permits to leave⁴⁴. Similarly to that, the Israeli occupation has systematically imposed measures that fragment Palestinian communities, restrict movement, and undermine economic self-sufficiency. In other terms, the Middle East was carved into spheres of European influence with little regard for local populations. Just as U.S. policy confined Native peoples to reservations and imposed movement restrictions, Israel's occupation has fragmented Palestinian territory into enclaves divided by checkpoints, walls, and permits. Both systems manufactured dependency and immobility: Native Americans were forced to rely on federal rations, while Palestinians today face unemployment, confiscated revenues, and blocked access to their own resources. In both cases, settler colonial policy not only dispossessed but also engineered conditions of structural dependency, undermining sovereignty and enforcing fragmentation.

According to a report by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), as of II 2025, there are 793 Israeli checkpoints and obstacles in the West Bank, severely disrupting daily life and economic activities for Palestinians. These restrictions have contributed to an unprecedented unemployment rate of 51% across Palestinian territories. Additionally, Israel has deducted approximately 797 mln USD from Palestinian tax revenues, further exacerbating the economic crisis⁴⁵. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) highlights that, since 2007, Gaza's GDP would have been 77,6% higher without these constraints, amounting to a cumulative loss of 35,8 bln by the end of 2023⁴⁶. Similarly, the Indian reservation system in the United States was designed

⁴¹ Al Jazeera, *A Century on: Why Arabs Resent Sykes-Picot*, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2016/sykes-picot-100-years-middle-east-map/index.html> (20 V 2025).

⁴² Library of Congress, *Indian Removal Act: Primary Documents in American History*, <https://guides.loc.gov/indian-removal-act/introduction> (20 V 2025).

⁴³ Khan Academy, *The Reservation System*, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/the-gilded-age/american-west/a/the-reservation-system> (25 III 2025).

⁴⁴ Indigenous Corporate Training, *Indian Act and the Pass System* [23 VI 2015], <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indian-act-and-the-pass-system> (23 VI 2025).

⁴⁵ Information Department, *Israel Targets the Palestinian Economy: 793 Checkpoints, 51% Unemployment and \$797 Million Deducted from the Budget by Israel-Palestine Observatory*, <https://palestine.oic-oci.org/2025/02/28/israel-targets-the-palestinian-economy-793-checkpoints-51-unemployment-and-797-million-deducted-from-the-budget-by-israel/> (25 VI 2025).

⁴⁶ United Nations, *Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: The Economic Impact of the Israeli Military Operation in Gaza from October 2023 to May 2024*, https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/a79d343_en.pdf (25 III 2025).

to restrict the movement of Native Americans, confining them to specific areas and creating economic dependence. Native people were required to obtain government-issued permits to leave reservations or engage in trade, much like Palestinians need permits to travel between areas under Israeli control. Both systems have resulted in high unemployment, lack of access to resources, and a reliance on external authorities for basic economic survival. In both cases, settler-colonial policies have worked to weaken indigenous sovereignty and enforce territorial fragmentation. The 1917 Balfour Declaration, which endorsed the establishment of a „national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine without consulting its Arab majority, laid the diplomatic foundation for Zionist settlement, ultimately catalysing mass displacement, intercommunal violence, and the erosion of Palestinian sovereignty under British colonial rule.

Nakba vs. The Trail of Tears

The Trail of Tears was a forced migration of Indigenous peoples, mainly the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole, from their ancestral lands in the southeastern U.S. to territories west of the Mississippi in the 1830s. This was driven by the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and intensified by the discovery of gold on Cherokee land. Though framed as a land exchange, it was largely involuntary, with Indigenous communities subjected to brutal conditions, lack of supplies, and deadly weather. Around 15000 people died, making it one of the most tragic injustices in American history, symbolizing the U.S. government’s betrayal and disregard for Indigenous rights⁴⁷. The primary motivation behind the forced displacement was the unyielding desire for land and resources by British Americans, mirroring the expulsion of over 800000 Palestinians out of a population of 1,4 mln living in 1300 Palestinian towns and villages from their homeland in 1948 during the Nakba.

The Nakba refers to the mass displacement of Palestinians during the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and is widely recognized as an intentional and organized effort to create a Jewish-majority state in Palestine. Well before Israel’s official founding, Zionist leaders frequently employed the term „transfer” as a euphemism for what would now be considered ethnic cleansing. Following the United Nations Partition Plan’s passage in late 1947, between 250,000 and 350,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced by Zionist militias, with dozens of massacres—such as the infamous Deir Yassin massacre on 9 IV 1948, where over 100 Palestinian civilians, including women, children, and the elderly, were

⁴⁷ E.P. Pauls, *Trail of Tears. United States History* [2 X 2025], <https://www.britannica.com/event/Trail-of-Tears> (22 X 2025).

killed – triggering widespread panic and accelerating the exodus. Between 1947 and 1949, an estimated 750000 to one mln Palestinians, approximately 75% of the indigenous Palestinian population, were expelled by Zionist forces and the newly formed Israeli army, forced to flee to the West Bank, Gaza Strip, neighbouring Arab nations (Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq), and other parts of the world⁴⁸, mostly to Canada, USA, Sweden, Denmark and Germany⁴⁹.

In the aftermath, more than 400 Palestinian villages and towns were systematically destroyed to prevent the return of refugees, while approximately 4,2 mln acres of Palestinian land were seized. Although around 150000 Palestinians remained within the borders of the new Israeli state, they were stripped of most of their land and subjected to military rule until 1966. Beyond the loss of land and homes, the Nakba inflicted immense cultural and economic devastation: roughly 70000 Palestinian books were looted, and the financial toll of dispossession is estimated at 200 bln USD in today's value⁵⁰. The United Nations defines Palestine refugees as individuals whose normal place of residence was Palestine between 1 VI 1946 and 15 V 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict⁵¹. The legacy of this mass displacement remains unresolved, with more than 5,2 mln registered Palestinian refugees and their descendants still denied their internationally recognized right of return⁵².

In the years following the Nakba, Israel continued to assert its regional military power. In X 1956, Israel launched a military offensive into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, swiftly occupying Gaza, Rafah, and Al Arish, capturing thousands of prisoners and gaining control east of the Suez Canal. This operation was intended to secure maritime access through the Gulf of Aqaba. After British and French intervention in December, the United Nations Emergency Force was deployed, leading to Israel's withdrawal by III 1957⁵³. Meanwhile, Israel promoted mass Jewish immigration to consolidate its demographic majority. Since its establishment, the state has absorbed approximately 3,1 mln Jewish immigrants, including 1 mln between 1990 and 1999 alone. These immigration policies were particularly motivated by

⁴⁸ L. Shabaneh, *PCBS President: Despite Tragic Circumstances, Palestinians Have Multiplied Seven Times since the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948*, https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/nakba%2060.pdf (1 V 2025).

⁴⁹ P. Rekaewicz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, <https://mondediplo.com/maps/refugeesdiaspora-pldpl2000> (1 V 2025).

⁵⁰ Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU), *Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe)* [5 IV 2023], <https://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba> (20 V 2025).

⁵¹ UNRWA, *Palestine Refugees*, <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees> (5 V 2025).

⁵² Amnesty International, *Israel's refusal to grant Palestinian refugees right to return has fuelled seven decades of suffering* [15 V 2019], <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/05/israels-refusal-to-grant-palestinian-refugees-right-to-return-has-fuelled-seven-decades-of-suffering/> (5 V 2025).

⁵³ A. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, New York 2014.

concerns over the high birthrate among Arab Israelis and aimed to reinforce the Jewish character of the state. While the 1948 declaration of Israeli independence marked a moment of national realization for the Jewish population, it simultaneously led to the marginalization of Palestinian Arab national identity, fuelling enduring conflict. The displacement and dispossession experienced during the Nakba have had deep and lasting impacts, driving the ongoing cycle of violence, contested narratives, and political tensions that continue to define the Israeli Palestinian conflict to this day⁵⁴.

The Trail of Tears (1830s) and the Nakba (1948) represent foundational moments of mass displacement in which settler colonial projects achieved demographic transformation through ethnic cleansing. The Trail of Tears forcibly removed Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole peoples from their homelands, resulting in approximately 15000 deaths. Its underlying logic was clear: land hunger, resource extraction, and settler expansion required the erasure of Indigenous presence. Likewise, the Nakba saw over 750000 Palestinians expelled from 1300 towns and villages through coordinated Zionist campaigns that combined military force, massacres, and psychological warfare. Both events were rationalized as „necessary” for national projects – American expansion and Jewish statehood – while the catastrophic human toll on Indigenous populations was dismissed as collateral.

The aftermath reveals further parallels. Native peoples were confined to reservations and stripped of sovereignty; Palestinians were confined to refugee camps, denied return, and rendered stateless. In both contexts, land seizure was coupled with cultural destruction: Native languages and practices suppressed in boarding schools, Palestinian books and archives looted, villages destroyed, and place names erased. As Said reminds us in *Orientalism*, colonial conquest often requires not only material domination but also the erasure of memory to naturalize settler sovereignty.

Native Americans vs Palestinian Wars of Resistance

Throughout history, both Native Americans and Palestinians have engaged in resistance movements against settler-colonial expansion and oppression. Native American resistance took the form of armed conflicts like Red Cloud’s War (1866-1868) where Lakota warriors achieved a rare victory over U.S. forces with the goal of halting further U.S. expansions⁵⁵ and the Battle of Little Bighorn (1876),

⁵⁴ United Nations, *The Question of Palestine, About the Nakba*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/about-the-nakba/> (20 V 2025).

⁵⁵ World History Encyclopedia, *Red Cloud’s War*, https://www.worldhistory.org/Red_Cloud’s_War/ (25 III 2025).

where Lakota and Cheyenne warriors achieved yet another victory on 25 VI 1876, near the Little Bighorn River in Montana, against federal troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer. Tensions had been escalating after gold was discovered on Native American lands, and when several tribes missed a federal deadline to relocate to reservations, the U.S. army, was sent to confront them⁵⁶. Unaware of the large number of Native warriors led by Sitting Bull, the main chief of the Sioux peoples, Custer's forces were greatly outnumbered and swiftly overwhelmed, resulting in the defeat known as Custer's Last Stand⁵⁷.

In the 20th century, resistance evolved into political activism, most notably through the American Indian Movement (AIM), which fought for indigenous rights and led the Wounded Knee Occupation (1973) to protest U.S. government policies⁵⁸. Similarly, Palestinians have resisted Israeli occupation through both armed and political movements, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and mass uprisings like the Six-day War of 1967, the First Intifada (1987-1993) and Second Intifada (2000-2005).

Nearly two decades after Israel's founding, the Six-Day War broke out in 1967 between Israel and a coalition of Arab states, including Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The conflict was sparked by escalating tensions and the perceived military mobilization of Israel's neighbours. During the war, Israel swiftly captured key territories, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Additionally, Israeli forces launched decisive air strikes that crippled the Egyptian and Syrian air forces while successfully countering Jordanian attacks. By the war's conclusion, Israel had seized control of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Old City of Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs⁵⁹. Israel came to control 78% of historic Palestine, while the remaining 22% – comprising the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza – fell under Jordanian and Egyptian rule. However, following the 1967 War, the Israeli military occupied these territories. Soon after, Israel initiated settlement expansion, establishing colonies in these areas despite international opposition⁶⁰. On 22 XI 1967, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 242, urging Israel to withdraw from territories occupied during

⁵⁶ History, *Battle of the Little Bighorn* [2 XII 2009], <https://www.history.com/articles/battle-of-the-little-bighorn> (25 V 2025).

⁵⁷ Oxford Reference, *Sitting Bull*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100509161> (1 V 2025).

⁵⁸ J.E. Luebering, *American Indian Movement* [17 X 2025], <https://www.britannica.com/topic/American-Indian-Movement> (10 XI 2025).

⁵⁹ M.B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford 2002.

⁶⁰ R.I. Khalidi, *Historical Landmarks in the Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, „Journal of Palestine Studies“ 2017, no. 1, pp. 6-17.

the recent war. The resolution also called for an end to hostilities and emphasized the importance of respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all states in the region. Additionally, it affirmed the right of all nations to live in peace within secure and recognized borders⁶¹.

The two Palestinian intifadas – uprisings against Israeli rule – occurred in the late 1980s and early 2000s, significantly impacting Israeli Palestinian relations. The first intifada involved spontaneous protests, boycotts, and limited attacks by Palestinians, met with heavy Israeli military force, resulting in a disproportionate number of Palestinian deaths. The second, more violent intifada followed the failure of the 2000 peace talks. The violence escalated from demonstrations to suicide bombings and rocket attacks, leading to about 1000 Israeli and 3200 Palestinian deaths before it subsided in 2005. This period deeply altered Israeli public opinion, weakening support for the peace process and complicating future negotiations⁶².

Dawes Act vs Nation-State Law: Cultural Genocide

Settler colonialism does not end with physical dispossession; it extends to cultural genocide. Both Native Americans and Palestinians have faced systematic efforts to erase their cultural identities and assimilate them into dominant colonial structures. In the United States, Native American boarding schools, such as the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, established in 1879, sought to forcibly assimilate indigenous children into Euro-American society by erasing their cultural identities. With the motto „kill the Indian” to „save the Man”, administrators imposed strict policies requiring students to speak only English, wear Anglo-American clothing, and adopt U.S. values and customs. Carlisle, which operated for approximately 30 years, housed children from over 100 different indigenous cultures at an off-reservation facility on a former military base. Its model influenced the creation of 24 additional off-reservation schools, further contributing to the widespread suppression of Native languages and traditions⁶³. Additionally, „An Act to Provide for the Allotment of Lands in Severalty to Indians on the Various Reservations”, known as the Dawes Act (1887) dismantled commu-

⁶¹ Security Council Resolution 242 – UNSCR, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/242> (20 V 2025).

⁶² Z. Beauchamp, *What Were the Intifadas?* [14 V 2018], <https://www.vox.com/2018/11/20/1808-0066/israel-palestine-intifadas-first-second> (20 V 2025).

⁶³ National Park Service, *The Carlisle Indian Industrial School: Assimilation with Education after the Indian Wars*, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-carlisle-indian-industrial-school-assimilation-with-education-after-the-indian-wars-teaching-with-historic-places.htm> (20 V 2025).

nal land ownership, fragmenting indigenous communities and weakening cultural continuity⁶⁴.

Similarly, Palestinians have endured Judaization policies, where Palestinian places have been renamed, Palestinian heritage sites have been destroyed, Palestinian culture has been claimed, the Arabic language has been undermined, and cultural contributions of the Palestinian people has been erased, Islamic and Christian holy sites and endowments are targeted, and all that has continued ever since the creation of the State of Israel in order to change Palestinian cities, hide the Palestinian identity and marginalise the Arabic and Palestinian existence⁶⁵. The Nation-State Law (2018) formally declared Israel as a Jewish state, demoting Arabic from an official language and further marginalizing Palestinian identity⁶⁶. Both cases reveal how colonial powers have sought to suppress indigenous cultures, reshape historical narratives, and impose their own national identities at the expense of native peoples.

Legal Discrimination and Political Disenfranchisement: Native Americans vs. Palestinians

Both Native Americans and Palestinians have faced systemic legal discrimination and political disenfranchisement under colonial rule. In the United States, Native Americans were not granted full U.S. citizenship until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, despite being the land's original inhabitants⁶⁷. Even today, tribal governments have limited sovereignty, operating under federal oversight that restricts their autonomy⁶⁸. Similarly, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank live under a dual legal system, where Israeli settlers are governed by Israeli civil law, while Palestinians are subjected to Israeli military law, severely restricting their rights and freedoms thereby structurally discriminating based on nationality⁶⁹. Unlike Israeli settlers, Palestinians cannot vote in Israeli elections, despite Israeli policies

⁶⁴ National Archives, *Dawes Act*, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dawes-act> (20 V 2025).

⁶⁵ R. Baroud, R. Rubeo, *Israel's Judaisation of Palestine is failing* [17 II 2019], <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/2/17/israels-judaisation-of-palestine-is-failing> (20 V 2025).

⁶⁶ A. Fuchs, S. Navot (*Israel Democracy Institute*), *Nation-State Law Explainer* [11 XII 2023], <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/24241> (20 V 2025).

⁶⁷ *Indian Citizenship Act of 1924* [2 VI 1924], <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/1924-indian-citizenship-act/> (20 V 2025).

⁶⁸ *Frequently Asked Questions*, <https://www.bia.gov/frequently-asked-questions> (20 V 2025).

⁶⁹ American Muslims for Palestine, *Ep03: Separate & Unequal: Israel's Discriminatory Dual Legal System*, <https://www.ampalestine.org/ep03-separate-unequal-israels-discriminatory-dual-legal-system> (20 V 2025).

controlling their daily lives⁷⁰. These legal structures have created systems of apartheid and political exclusion, denying indigenous populations full participation in governance and self-determination.

Targeting of Ecological Systems

A central feature of settler colonialism is the systematic effort to sever Indigenous peoples from the land in order to consolidate settler control. As Patrick Wolfe has argued, this process operates through a „logic of elimination”, where the destruction of Indigenous life is not limited to direct violence but extends to dismantling the material and cultural conditions of survival. Environmental transformation becomes a critical weapon in this project: by targeting ecological systems that sustain Indigenous communities, settler states reconfigure landscapes to both dispossess native populations and normalize settler dominance.

In nineteenth-century North America, the extermination of the buffalo illustrates this logic with particular clarity. The buffalo was the foundation of Plains Indigenous societies, providing food, clothing, tools, and trade goods while also embodying spiritual significance. U.S. authorities openly encouraged the mass killing of buffalo herds, recognizing that their destruction would cripple Indigenous resistance and force dependence on federal rations. The near-eradication of the species by the 1880s was not merely an ecological catastrophe but a deliberate strategy of conquest, designed to weaken Indigenous sovereignty and facilitate settler expansion across the plains.

A comparable pattern can be observed in Israel/Palestine, where the destruction of olive groves functions as a tool of dispossession. Olive trees are integral to Palestinian livelihood, identity, and cultural heritage, often representing multi-generational continuity with the land. The uprooting, burning, or confiscation of these trees – frequently carried out by settlers with tacit or direct state support – undermines both economic survival and symbolic rootedness. Like the buffalo slaughter, this practice disrupts Indigenous autonomy while reshaping the landscape for settler use, whether through agricultural transformation, infrastructure, or settlement expansion. In both cases, environmental destruction serves as a mechanism of elimination, advancing settler colonial projects by eroding the ecological foundations of Indigenous existence.

⁷⁰ B’Tselem, *Not a „vibrant democracy”*. *This is apartheid*, https://www.btselem.org/publications/202210_not_a_vibrant_democracy_this_is_apartheid (20 V 2025).

The Role of the United States in Supporting Israel

Washington's unwavering support for Israel is rooted in the aftermath of World War II. The United States not only supported the establishment of Israel and became the first nation to recognize it but has also remained its largest provider of foreign aid. Since Israel's founding, it has received approximately 310 bln USD (adjusted for inflation) in total economic and military assistance as of XI 2024⁷¹. Israel has been officially recognized as a Major Non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Ally of the United States, a designation that grants it privileged access to defence trade and security cooperation.

Since the Eisenhower Administration in the 1960s, the United States has displayed a heightened dedication to safeguarding Israel's interests in significant confrontations and ensuing negotiations. While not granting Jerusalem all its desires, Washington's support has remained steadfast and substantial⁷². The Kennedy administration (1961-1963) marked the first significant U.S. military commitment to Israel. In 1963, the U.S. approved its first major arms sale to Israel, supplying Hawk anti-aircraft missiles, which signified a strategic shift in American support, especially after realizing the significance of the Jewish vote in critical states such as Illinois and New York, making 80% of the Jews residing there vote for Kennedy⁷³. Despite its global stance against weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation, Israel was the sixth nation in the world to acquire nuclear weapons⁷⁴.

Since the 1960s, Israel has consistently received substantial U.S. support. In 1968, a memorandum of understanding ensured long-term U.S. arms shipments, including aircraft and tanks⁷⁵. During the 1973 October War, when Israel faced unexpected military challenges, President Richard Nixon and Secretary of state Henry Kissinger authorized a 2,2 bln USD military aid package and a large-scale airlift of essential military supplies⁷⁶.

⁷¹ J. Masters, W. Merrow, *U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts* [7 X 2025], <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts> (20 V 2025).

⁷² P.L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945-1961*, Chapel Hill 2004.

⁷³ A. Ben-Zvi, *Decade of Transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Origins of the American-Israeli Alliance*, New York 1998.

⁷⁴ S. Joshi, *Israel's Nuclear Policy: A Cost-Benefit Analysis*, https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/sa/sa_00jos01.html (20 V 2025).

⁷⁵ D. Rodman, *Phantom Fracas: The 1968 American Sale of F-4 Aircraft to Israel*, „Middle Eastern Studies” 2004, vol. 40, no. 6, pp. 130-144.

⁷⁶ E. Ghareeb, *The Us Arms Supply to Israel during the October War*, „Institute for Palestine Studies” 1974, no. 2.

Throughout the Cold War, the U.S. provided unwavering military backing, ensuring Israel maintained military superiority over Soviet-backed states like Egypt and Syria⁷⁷. In 1975, President Ford offered Israel 2 bln USD in financial aid as an incentive after Israel's opposition to the terms negotiated with Egypt. Later, in 1975, Ford's administration proposed a substantial U.S. aid package of 4,2 bln USD for Israel over 27 months, making up over 40% of all U.S. aid to Israel since its founding. Despite tensions, the U.S. continued its military supply programs, reinforcing Israel's defence needs and ensuring its safety and stability in the Middle East⁷⁸. The same amount of support and more was maintained during President Carter's administration, reaching 10,9 bln USD in 1979 after the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty⁷⁹ since 1976, Israel has generally received more U.S. foreign aid each year than any other country⁸⁰ even when its actions were seen as unwise or against U.S. interests. This aid continued despite Israel not signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty, pursuing weapons programs, building settlements in disputed territories, selling U.S. military technology to potential enemies like China, conducting espionage operations on U.S. soil, and using U.S. weapons in ways that violate U.S. laws. Even when Israeli leaders backtracked on promises to U.S. presidents, the aid kept flowing⁸¹.

During the 1980s, Israel received access to advanced U.S. intelligence, including KH-11 reconnaissance satellite imagery, surpassing even NATO allies like Britain. Despite tensions over Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the annexation of the Golan Heights, and rejection of the Reagan peace plan, strategic collaboration expanded⁸². During the Gulf War, which began after Iraq invaded Kuwait in VIII 1990, Bush authorized real-time satellite intelligence sharing with Israel to counter Iraqi Scud missile attacks⁸³. During the Clinton administration, the U.S. provided substantial support to Israel, including increased military aid, diplomatic backing, and alignment with Israeli positions in peace negotiations. The U.S. committed an additional 1,2 bln USD in aid to secure Israel's participation in peace processes with Palestine⁸⁴. In the 1990s and early Bush administration, the U.S. backed Israel's security priorities, influenced by pro-Israel lobbying.

⁷⁷ J.J. Mearsheimer, S.M. Walt. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, London 2007, p. 52.

⁷⁸ The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library & Museum, *President Ford '76 Fact Book*, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/president-ford-76-fact-book> (20 V 2025).

⁷⁹ J.J. Mearsheimer, S.M. Walt, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

⁸⁰ D. Waxman, J. Pressman, *The Rocky Future of the Us-Israeli Special Relationship*, „The Washington Quarterly” 2021, no. 2, pp. 75-93.

⁸¹ J.J. Mearsheimer, S.M. Walt, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 33-34.

⁸³ *Trust and Verify*, <https://www.vertic.org/media/assets/TV/TV18.pdf> (20 V 2025).

⁸⁴ T. Wilkinson, *U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts*, <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts> (20 V 2025).

Policymakers took a confrontational stance toward Iran, favouring Israel's aggressive approach and rejecting negotiation offers from Iran in favour of more confrontational actions⁸⁵.

During the Obama administration, the U.S. kept provided extensive support to Israel. Military assistance increased to 3,8 bln USD annually under a 10-year agreement signed in 2016 (38 bln USD in total), including 500 mln USD per year for missile defence systems like Iron Dome⁸⁶. The administration consistently shielded Israel from international accountability, opposing Palestinian efforts for UN recognition and blocking attempts to hold Israel accountable for war crimes⁸⁷. The U.S. also replenished Israel's weapons stockpiles during conflicts, such as the 2014 Gaza war, despite civilian casualties⁸⁸. The first Trump administration provided unprecedented support for Israel by openly endorsing its territorial expansion⁸⁹ and reshaping U.S. policy in favour of Israeli interests. Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the U.S. embassy there in 2017, are of Israeli interests. Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the U.S. embassy there in 2017, a controversial move that disregarded Palestinian claims⁹⁰. His administration also cut funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), undermining aid for Palestinian refugees, and halted financial assistance to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza⁹¹. The U.S. further legitimized Israeli settlements by declaring they were not in violation of international law⁹².

Finally, according to UN Security Council, the USA has used its veto powers against UNSC resolutions, 82 times in total since 1970. 49 of these vetoes were

⁸⁵ J.J. Mearsheimer, S.M. Walt, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

⁸⁶ The White House, *Fact Sheet: Memorandum of Understanding Reached with Israel* [14 IX 2016], <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/14/fact-sheet-memorandum-understanding-reached-israel> (20 V 2025).

⁸⁷ C. Newton, *A history of the US blocking UN resolutions against Israel* [19 V 2021], <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/19/a-history-of-the-us-blocking-un-resolutions-against-israel> (20 V 2025).

⁸⁸ J. R. Chappell, S. Harrison, *The „War Reserve Stockpile Allies – Israel” Explained & Why Congress Should Not Expand It*, <https://www.justsecurity.org/91213/the-war-reserve-stockpile-allies-israel-explained-why-congress-should-not-expand-it> (20 V 2025).

⁸⁹ I. Kershner, *Emboldened by Trump, Israel Approves Large Settlement Expansion in West Bank* [24 I 2017], <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/24/world/middleeast/israel-settlement-expansion-west-bank.html> (20 V 2025).

⁹⁰ U.S. Embassy in Israel, *Statement by Former President Trump on Jerusalem*, <https://il.usembassy.gov/statement-by-president-trump-on-jerusalem/> (20 X 2025).

⁹¹ H. Amr, *In one move, Trump eliminated US funding for UNRWA and the US role as Mideast peacemaker* [7 IX 2018], <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/in-one-move-trump-eliminated-us-funding-for-unrwa-and-the-us-role-as-mideast-peacemaker/> (20 V 2025).

⁹² L. Jakes, D. M. Halbfinger, *In Shift, U.S. Says Israeli Settlements in West Bank Do Not Violate International Law* [18 XI 2019], <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/18/world/middleeast/trump-israel-west-bank-settlements.html> (20 V 2025).

used against Israel-related UN Security Council draft resolutions, most frequently to block decisions that are regarded as detrimental to Israel's interests, with 14 of these vetoes cast since 2020⁹³.

Conclusion: Legacies of Settler Colonialism on Justice and Human Rights

The historical trajectory of colonialism, particularly in the cases of the United States and Israel, reveals a persistent pattern of settler-colonial domination, dispossession, and resistance. From the forced displacement and cultural erasure of Native Americans to the continued struggles of Palestinians against Israeli expansion, these histories are not isolated incidents but part of an enduring structure of colonial power. The ideological and strategic parallels between the U.S. and Israel – rooted in territorial conquest, the subjugation of Indigenous populations, and the militarization of governance – demonstrate how settler colonialism transcends time and geography. A key aspect of this colonial structure is the creation of „second-class” citizens – populations whose political rights are systematically curtailed to maintain the dominance of the settler state. In both the U.S. and Israel, Indigenous and marginalized communities have been subjected to legal, social, and political mechanisms designed to exclude them from full citizenship. Whether through the denial of voting rights, restrictions on political representation, or policies that limit self-determination, these practices reveal the contradictions of so-called democratic nations that selectively extend democratic rights. The right to vote and run for office is fundamental to democracy – without it, there is no democracy worthy of its name. Yet, for many Indigenous Americans, and Palestinians under Israeli occupation, these rights have been historically denied or rendered meaningless through systemic barriers.

By examining the shared legacies of these two states, it becomes clear that their political alliance is not merely a matter of contemporary geopolitics but is deeply embedded in their colonial foundations. The narratives of Manifest Destiny and Zionism, both of which justify expansion under the guise of national destiny, reinforce systemic inequalities, and sustain cycles of structural violence. Furthermore, resistance movements – whether through armed struggle, legal advocacy, or cultural preservation – continue to challenge these colonial legacies, underscoring the resilience of Indigenous and occupied populations.

⁹³ Security Council Report, *The Veto* [13 II 2024], <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php> (20 V 2025); Middle East Eye, *The 49 Times the US Used Veto Power Against UN Resolutions on Israel* [20 XI 2024], <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/49-times-us-has-used-veto-power-against-un-resolutions-israel> (20 V 2025).

Ultimately, the study of settler colonialism is not just about understanding historical injustices but about recognizing their ongoing implications for justice, sovereignty, and human rights today. The United States' unwavering support for Israel must be viewed in light of its own history, as both nations continue to navigate the unresolved consequences of their colonial pasts. Addressing these legacies requires a critical re-examination of national identities, international policies, and the structures that sustain colonial dominance. Only through such reflection can meaningful steps be taken toward reconciliation and justice for those who continue to live under the weight of historical and contemporary colonialism.

Abstrakt

Jennifer Badr-Wągrowska

Osadniczy kolonializm i państwowość. Analiza porównawcza Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki i Izraela

Niniejszy artykuł bada strukturalne i ideologiczne podobieństwa między osadniczo-kolonialnymi podstawami Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki i Izraela, umiejscawiając ich sojusz polityczny w ramach postkolonialnej teorii krytycznej. Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki zostały zbudowane na wywłaszczeniu i przymusowym przesiedleniu ludów rdzennych, podczas gdy utworzenie Izraela w 1948 r. doprowadziło do Nakby i wywłaszczenia Palestyńczyków – procesów zakorzenionych w logice kolonializmu osadniczego. Odwołując się do teorii postkolonialnej i kolonializmu osadniczego, w szczególności do prac Edwarda Saïda, Frantza Fanona i Homiego Bhabhy, artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób kolonialne ideologie zawłaszczania ziemi, militaryzacji i kontroli narracyjnej nadal kształtują praktyki budowania państwa oraz strategie geopolityczne obu krajów. Na podstawie jakościowych badań źródłowych i analizy krytycznej materiałów pierwotnych i wtórnych, autorka twierdzi, że niezachwiane wsparcie Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki dla Izraela ma nie tylko charakter strategiczny, ale również ideologiczny – zakorzeniony we wspólnej historii wymazywania ludności rdzennej i dominacji terytorialnej. Sojusz ten odzwierciedla trwałą strukturę solidarności kolonializmu osadniczego, która podtrzymuje fragmentację przestrzenną, zależność ekonomiczną oraz osłabianie suwerenności ludów rdzennych w obu kontekstach. Ostatecznie artykuł bada, w jaki sposób te przecinające się dziedzictwa kolonialne wpływają na współczesne rozumienie sprawiedliwości, suwerenności i praw człowieka, oferując ramy do dekonstrukcji normalizacji kolonializmu osadniczego we współczesnych stosunkach międzynarodowych.

Słowa kluczowe: kolonializm, kolonializm osadniczy, USA, Izrael, ludy rdzenne, Palestyna

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