

Callum Holley

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On Settler Colonialism: Through the Lens of Recent Knesset Decision

Isreal's parliment advances Bill to annex occupied West Bank, an article in Al Jazeera by Tim Hume announces the Israeli parliament's decision on October 22nd, 2025, to give preliminary approval for a bill imposing sovereignty over the West Bank (Hume, 2025). The move, according to Hume, is essentially a formal intent to annex the Palestinian territory, breaking international law and putting a thorn in the side of the Trump Administration's attempts at a ceasefire (Hume, 2025). The decision was a close 24-25 vote, with Prime Minister Netanyahu against the move, proclaiming it an attempt to sabotage relations with the United States. (Hume, 2025) Described as "ancestral homeland", the Israeli parliament has also officially renamed the annexable territory "Judea" and "Samaria" (Hume, 2025), coming from their ancient names.

Many of the region's other power players like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the Palestinian Foreign Ministry, have unanimously condemned the parliament and have formally accused their bill of being a violation of international law. (Hume, 2025) Hume also addresses the UAE dilemma, in which the UAE had already formally warned Israel that any annexation of Palestinian territory would cause a severing of ties tween the two states. (Hume, 2025) Indeed, he explains that if this were to occur, it would break up the Abraham Accords, a treaty Trump himself worked on in his first presidency. (Hume, 2025)

Hamas deemed the move an act of colonial occupation, and indeed, Hume reminds us that 700,000 Israeli's live in settlements on the West Bank and Gaza, which are considered illegal under international law. (Hume, 2025)

From what is presented, the effects of the act could potentially be global. The biggest losers are obviously the Palestinians, who will likely be continually pushed out of their homes by Israeli settlers or soldiers. Whether other MENA regional states will become more involved is unclear, as current responses are only denunciations. Ironically, the U.S. government also loses in some capacity. Trump's recent 20-point plan could be in jeopardy if Israeli annexation occurs. This move makes it clear that the Israeli government has no intention of allowing for a two-state solution, which would tarnish Trump's agenda as portraying himself as a "peacemaker". Combined with the UAE's past threats of abandoning the Abraham Accords, Trump risks losing connections in the Middle East.

Indeed, what is most apparent in this article is Patrick Wolfe's logic of elimination, which is explored through the positive and negative dimensions of settler colonialism. As Patrick Wolfe describes in *Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native*, settlers eliminate non-settler populations with the intent to take their territory. (Wolfe, 2006, p.388) It's obvious that the Israeli state uses the logic of elimination to remove indigenous Palestinians from the land to take its territory. Through the positive lens of settler colonialism, this is justified through building a new society on top of the older one (Wolfe, 2006, p.388), which is apparent in Israel's 700,000 settlements.

In theme with these settlements, Wolfe introduces the term "frontier rabble" to describe the poor, landless class that settler colonialism utilizes to expand. (Wolfe, 2006, p.392) Indeed, this rabble used violence and terrorism to drive native peoples away, and while not state agents, Wolfe claims that this "frontier rabble" was its primary means of expansion. (Wolfe, 2006, p.392.) Indeed, according to Wolfe, "These have occurred "behind the screen of the frontier, in the wake of which, once the dust has settled, the irregular acts that took place have been

regularized and the boundaries of White settlement extended.”. (Wolfe, 2006, p.392) What is occurring in Palestine is the same, with Israeli settlers expelling the natives and establishing their own 700,000 settler settlements. Once the “dust settles”, with the official annexation of the territory, these settlements will become legitimized by the settler colonial system. Indeed, leading to the negative aspect of settler colonialism, their ultimate goal, “...strives for the dissolution of native societies.” (Wolfe, 2006, p.388) Outside of just physical violence, the renaming of the Palestinian territories to “Samaria” and “Judea” alludes to this negative settler colonialism.

According to Said, Palestine is a place with a deep and complex ideological history. (Said, 1979, p.8) Spanning multiple empires and religions, both “oriental” and “western,” the name Palestine has political interpretations. (Said, 1979, p.8) For example, Palestine as a place has been referred to as simply a Roman and British administrative designation, but by using this rhetoric, you relegate the place to an interpretation, something without a concrete history that can be simply wiped away. (Said, 1979, p.8) Israel is using this lexical tool of settler colonialism in its renaming of territories. A new name signifies an erasure of Palestinian history to make room for the new settler state.

Upon reflection, it seems like the word “occupation” is becoming increasingly harder to justify in connection to the war in Gaza. Indeed, the author frames what is going on in the West Bank as being an “occupation”, which, considering Al Jazeera is a Palestinian-leaning source, likely serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the Palestinian nation. I understand how this could be a tool to help Palestinians, but I disagree with this aspect of the author’s perspective. To be an occupation, according to Edelstein, “An occupying power must intend at the onset of the occupation to vacate the occupied territory and return control to an indigenous government.”.

(Edelstein, 2004, p.52) The recent announcement of annexation from Israel calls into question whether the state truly intends to “vacate the occupied territory.”. Indeed, it seems much more apt to designate the Gaza War as a settler colonial extension of Israel to grab more territory.

Israel’s overturning of Netanyahu’s diplomacy with the U.S. is also extremely interesting; It shows how deeply ingrained settler colonial tendencies are in settler state unconsciousness, and Wolfe’s notion that settler colonialism is “impervious” to “regime”. (Wolfe, 2006, p.402) Considering just how integral settler colonialism is to the state, it is more than likely that Israel will go through with the bill and indeed attempt to annex the territory. From an American perspective, I have a mixed sense of optimism. Though Netanyahu denounced his government’s decision, perhaps President Trump will begin putting more pressure on Israel to reduce aggression. This could be by publicly embarrassing Netanyahu, something reminiscent of the shouting match between Zelensky, Trump, and Vance that we saw in February. Indeed, Trump’s ego and legacy are at risk, which could inadvertently do good, but it's more than likely that America will continue to stand by and endorse what is happening.

Globally, America has denounced Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and China’s threats to invade Taiwan. If Trump allows Israel to annex Palestine, I see no ideological reason for the previous two countries not to proceed with their ambitions. We are at a hypocritical crossroads, and our decision whether or not to intervene may potentially impact the future of other at-risk nations.

Citations

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