



**ISRAEL NEWS**  
*A collection of the week's news from Israel*  
*From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of*  
*Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

So, to fend off an assault from an anti-Israel reporter, Blinken explained that President Joe Biden wouldn't visit Israel until Israel capitulated to Blinken's demand that it feed and water the people of Gaza who supported Hamas's decision to

## Commentary...

### **Blinken's Stunning Confession** By Caroline B. Glick

Liri Albag, one of five female IDF soldiers still being held hostage in Gaza, was the subject of Hamas's most recently released video. The video of Liri alive was filmed on Jan. 1. Available online on pro-Hamas websites, it shows the 19-year-old in emotional distress, shaking at times, as she begged for her life.

The hostages have been held in Gaza for 457 days. And the question of why they are still there, why has Israel been unable to bring them home, gets asked with increased frustration and alarm every day from all quarters.

On Saturday, we received an answer to that question. Shortly after news broke of the release of the video of Liri Albag, The New York Times published an interview with outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Tony Blinken. Blinken said that Hamas has refused to agree to release the hostages in exchange for a ceasefire for two reasons.

In his words, "There have been two major impediments, and they both go to what drives Hamas. One has been whenever there has been public daylight between the United States and Israel and the perception that pressure was growing on Israel, we've seen it: Hamas has pulled back from agreeing to a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

"The other thing that got Hamas to pull back was their belief, their hope that there would be a wider conflict, that Hezbollah would attack Israel, that Iran would attack Israel, that other actors would attack Israel, and that Israel would have its hands full and Hamas could continue what it was doing."

Under harsh questioning from the Times' anti-Israel reporter Lulu Garcia-Navarro, Blinken revealed that U.S. pressure on Israel began immediately after Oct. 7, 2023, and became a central feature of U.S. policy in relation to the war from its very earliest days. From the outset, the provision of unlimited supplies to Gaza—euphemistically referred to as humanitarian aid—has been the constant focus of U.S. pressure on Israel.

Almost immediately after the Oct. 7 invasion, then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced a siege of Gaza. The move was self-explanatory. The Gazans had taken 256 Israelis hostage into Gaza. So long as they weren't released, Gaza would remain under siege. Siege warfare has long been considered one of the most humane, least destructive forms of warfare, and it is legal under the laws of war.

The Biden administration would have none of it. Blinken described how he compelled Israel to resupply Hamas from day one of the war. "We've said from Day 1 that how Israel does that matters. And throughout, starting on Day 1, we tried to ensure that people had what they needed to get by. The very first trip that I made to Israel five days after Oct. 7, I spent with my team nine hours in the IDF's headquarters in Tel Aviv, six stories underground with the Israeli government, including the prime minister, including arguing for hours on end about the basic proposition that the humanitarian assistance needed to get to Palestinians in Gaza.

"And that was an argument that took place, because you had in Israel in the days after Oct. 7 a totally traumatized society. This wasn't just the prime minister or a given leader in Israel. This was an entire society that didn't want any assistance getting to a single Palestinian in Gaza. I argued that for nine hours.

"President Biden was planning to come to Israel a few days later. And in the course of that argument, when I was getting resistance to the proposition of humanitarian assistance getting in, I told the prime minister, I'm going to call the president and tell him not to come if you don't allow this assistance to start flowing. And I called the president to make sure that he agreed with that, and he fully did. We got the agreement to begin assistance through Rafah, which we expanded to Kerem Shalom and many other places."

take 256 Israeli children, babies, women and men hostage. Blinken also admitted that the reason that the 100 hostages are still in Gaza is that Hamas perceives the administration as pressuring Israel to capitulate to Hamas.

Blinken could have added that by demanding that Israel feed the people of Gaza, he and Biden removed any fear Hamas leaders might have had that the people would overthrow them. Unconcerned with that prospect, Hamas felt no pressure to release the hostages.

It bears noting that when Blinken arrived on Oct. 12, 2023, Israel still didn't know how many of its citizens had been taken hostage. It still didn't have a clear assessment of how many people were dead. Hundreds of victims had yet to be identified due to Hamas's mutilation and destruction of their bodies. Just last week, Israelis learned that half of the 1,200 Israelis butchered that day were beheaded.

What was most notable about Blinken's admission was that he didn't appear to believe that there was anything wrong with the policies he imposed on Israel. Many military leaders have argued persuasively that had Blinken and Biden left Israel to pursue its siege strategy, combined with airstrikes, Israel could have fomented Hamas's capitulation, or at least its surrender of the hostages, by the end of 2024. While Blinken's statements indicated that he is at least in partial agreement with that assessment, he gave no indication that he felt remorse for the devastating impact his policies have had on the hostages or for the fact that those policies are a primary reason that the war is still ongoing.

The question is whether his assessment will impact his actions in his last two weeks in office.

Last week, Michael Doran, senior fellow and director at the Hudson Institute and a former member of the U.S. National Security Council, told Dr. Gadi Taub on their Israeli Update podcast that the Biden administration intends to use its allegation that Israel is not providing sufficient supplies to Gaza to permanently undermine Israel's international position. Doran explained that the administration intends to use Section 620(i) of the Foreign Assistance Act, which asserts "that any country that is blocking U.S. humanitarian aid will have its military assistance cut off," against Israel.

Seemingly backing up Doran, in his interview with The New York Times, Blinken alluded to a letter that he and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin sent their Israeli interlocutors in early October alleging that Israel had violated Section 620(i).

Doran said, "The January surprise is that there will be an official finding by the State Department that Israel is in violation of 620(i). It's blocking humanitarian aid to Gaza, and then what will happen is that the president will waive the penalties for blocking of the humanitarian aid, but there will have been an official American finding."

That finding, Doran explained, will be used as the basis of a U.N. Security Council resolution put forward by Algeria or Slovenia. It will also be used by the International Criminal Court, the European Union and other bodies to strike out at Israel.

Later last week, Channel 14 reported that the administration is enabling a resolution to be put forward at the U.N. Security Council that would require Israel to withdraw from Gaza, and perhaps from Lebanon and Syria. The idea is that other Security Council members would put forward the resolution and the U.S. will permit it to pass by abstaining, as the Obama administration abstained from Resolution 2334, which passed in the Security Council in December 2016, after President-elect Donald Trump was elected to his first term in office. That resolution declared all Israeli communities in eastern Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria illegal.

Doran shared that there are two camps in the administration

regarding the planned move. Many senior officials support moving forward. However, several senior officials oppose the move. He said that the ultimate decision will be made by Blinken.

Towards the end of his interview with the Times, Blinken lashed out at the international forces that have not held Hamas responsible for the suffering it has caused and continues to cause.

In his words, "One of the things that I found a little astounding throughout is that for all of the understandable criticism of the way Israel has conducted itself in Gaza, you hear virtually nothing from anyone since Oct. 7 about Hamas. Why there hasn't been a unanimous chorus around the world for Hamas to put down its weapons, to give up the hostages, to surrender—I don't know what the answer is to that. Israel, on various occasions, has offered safe passage to Hamas's leadership and fighters out of Gaza. Where is the world? Where is the world, saying, 'Yeah, do that! End this! Stop the suffering of people that you brought on!'"

The obvious answer is because Blinken himself has devoted most of his energies to pressuring and castigating Israel.

Perhaps Blinken's interview was a signal that he will not go forward with the plan that his subordinates have developed to subject Israel to a Security Council resolution and to further criminalization it at The Hague. Perhaps it was nothing more than an effort to rebuild his ties to the anti-Israel camp as he leaves office. Time will tell.

In the meantime, and not knowing how Blinken will act, the only way to avoid what Doran referred to as a "January surprise," and facilitate the speedy release of Liri Albag and the other 99 hostages, is for the incoming Trump administration to apply massive pressure on Britain and France to veto any such resolution in the Security Council and to threaten Slovenia and Algeria with sanction if they advance the resolution in question.

Liri Albag's video, like others that Hamas has released in recent weeks, is a reminder (if one was necessary) of why Hamas must be eradicated. Blinken's interview was proof that the Biden administration has been the single greatest obstacle to the release of the hostages and the eradication of Hamas. (JNS Jan 5)

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### **Yoav Gallant's Exit, Stage Left** By Ruthie Blum

Former Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant's resignation from the Knesset, which he tendered on Jan. 1, became official at 10 a.m. on Sunday morning. Despite pressure from retired defense officials-turned-talking heads that he reverse his decision, Gallant—whom Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu finally fired from his Cabinet post in early November—remained steadfast.

In a press conference Wednesday evening to announce the move, however, he indicated that he'd be returning to the political arena in the future. Given his simultaneous declaration of loyalty to Likud principles and harsh critique of its chairman, he seemed to be hinting at a plan to beat Bibi in the party's next primary race.

If that's what he's thinking, he needs to have his head examined. Given his behavior since the government was sworn in at the end of 2022, he'd be lucky at this point to garner enough support among Likud voters to obtain a realistic spot on the party's list for the 26th Knesset, let alone rise to the top of the heap.

So a comeback on his part is probably going to involve forming or joining a different faction that describes itself as part of the "center" or "center-right," yet resides on the left side of the electoral-poll pie chart with the rest of the "anybody but Bibi" crowd.

Another possibility is that the warm embrace he received by oppositionists and the protest movement will grow chilly once he's no longer of use to them as a tool to weaken or oust Netanyahu through the crumbling of the coalition.

In such an event, Gallant may find himself in the same boat as many of his colleagues with illustrious careers in the Israel Defense Forces: settling for a highly paid gig at a politically correct think tank.

It's just as well. For the past two years, Gallant has exhibited a greater allegiance to the elitist "old boys' network" of the IDF top brass than to the government he was appointed to represent.

The first sign of this was in March 2023, when the country was in the throes of a serious schism over government plans to reform the judicial system. Prominent among the ill-wishing fear-mongers insisting that having a more equitable balance of power between the

legislature and judiciary would be the end of Israeli democracy were mainly Air Force and Cyber Division reservists.

These paragons had the nerve to threaten not to serve under a "dictatorship." Instead of promptly demoting them in rank or kicking them out of the army altogether, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi lent a sympathetic ear to their concerns.

And rather than forcing Halevi to get his troops in order, Gallant called for a halt to all judicial-reform legislation. Worse, he took the opportunity of a short visit by Netanyahu to London—for a meeting with then-British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak about Iran's nuclear program—to give a speech to that effect.

He pulled this stunt a mere 48 hours after Netanyahu delivered an address that articulated the purpose of the reform—to enhance, not harm, Israeli democracy—and assure that all civil and minority rights would continue to be guaranteed by law.

Upon his return from the United Kingdom, Netanyahu rightly sacked Gallant. Mass demonstrations ensued, and Histadrut Labor Federation Secretary General Arnon Bar-David called for a general strike.

After local authorities, banks, shopping malls and even Ben-Gurion International Airport shut down, with the health-care system on the verge of following suit, Netanyahu declared a pause in judicial-reform legislation. Two weeks later, he said he and Gallant had patched things up.

Gallant's victory was a pyrrhic one for the Jewish state. His willingness to side with the protesters against his own government not only deepened national divisions; it set a dangerous precedent for military insubordination. By elevating the grievances of "refuseniks," Gallant handed Israel's enemies a propaganda weapon and sabotaged IDF deterrence.

Fast forward to Oct. 7, 2023, the Black Sabbath when Hamas invaded southern Israel and committed the worst atrocities against Jews since the Holocaust. Though the entire nation was reeling from the horrifying intelligence and operational failures that enabled the surprise attack, Gallant—the official charged with Israel's defense—escaped the wrath of all those who lambasted Netanyahu for the deadly fiasco. All he had to do in exchange for this metaphorical flak jacket was go against Bibi.

Nor did his clashes with the prime minister end there. On the contrary, emboldened by the support of previous detractors in the media and academia, he continued to undermine Netanyahu's execution of the war in Gaza, and subsequently the IDF's entry into Lebanon. This made him a perfect patsy for the Biden administration, which viewed him as an ally in its efforts to bring about Netanyahu's downfall. Apparently, he was happy to oblige.

Three days after a chummy phone conversation in May with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, for instance, Gallant took to the airwaves to put his disloyalty to Israeli policy on full display.

"I call on ... Netanyahu to ... declare that Israel will not establish civilian control over the Gaza Strip; that Israel will not establish military governance in the Gaza Strip; and that a governing alternative to Hamas in the Gaza Strip will be raised immediately," he said, adding, "The 'day after Hamas' will only be achieved with Palestinian entities taking control of Gaza, accompanied by international actors, establishing a governing alternative to Hamas's rule."

Bibi should have gotten rid of Gallant right then, but anxiety got in the way. The one thing the coalition didn't need was a repeat of the chaos that followed the previous time the premier handed the defense minister a proverbial pink slip.

The last straw for Gallant came months later, after his infidelity—in the form of leaks and other security breaches—became too blatant to ignore. Netanyahu put it this way: "In the midst of war, more than ever, complete trust is required between the prime minister and the defense minister. Unfortunately, even though such trust was present during the first months of the military campaign ... during the past several months this trust between myself and the defense minister has begun to crack. ... I have made multiple attempts to resolve these disagreements, but they became increasingly wider. They were also brought to the knowledge of the public in an inappropriate manner, and what is even worse, they have reached the knowledge of the enemy; our enemies have taken great delight in

these disagreements and have derived much benefit from them.”

Lo and behold, the anticipated brouhaha didn't materialize. Now-former Foreign Minister Israel Katz—a Likud and Netanyahu loyalist who had served in the IDF as a “mere” squad commander in the Paratroopers Brigade—replaced Gallant at the Defense Ministry.

As irony would have it and likely to Gallant's dismay, Katz has proven to be anything but a disappointment. Gallant's way of handling the humiliation was to wait a few weeks before making a grand exit from the parliamentary stage, while indicating that his departure was only a temporary farewell, not a final retreat.

Too bad he didn't take a hike long ago, when he first revealed his real fealty and true khaki-green colors. (JNS Jan 6)

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### **Can You Cancel a Country?** By Russ Roberts

One of the stranger and more disturbing aspects of the world since October 7, 2023 is the ongoing and increased support for the Palestinians in the aftermath of the atrocities of that day. This is hard for some of us to understand—rape and murder and kidnapping are not the usual way to make friends and influence people. Why did so many in the West celebrate and exult in the so-called resistance? Somehow, the atrocities of October 7th invigorated the Palestinian cause rather than shamed it.

I thought I understood what was going on. It's the standard logic that Arnold Kling identified long ago and that now seems commonplace. The left views the news of the day through the lens of the oppressor and the oppressed. Israel is the oppressor, the Palestinians the oppressed. The war in Gaza simply intensified the emotions behind the marches, chants, and encampments. There isn't a lot of nuance in the modern world. A lot of people just pick a side. Some choose Israel. Some choose the Palestinians.

But they didn't just choose the Palestinians. After October 7th, anti-Israel sentiment increased well before Israeli launched its counter-attacks in Gaza. But it's a very special kind of anti-Israel protest movement.

The protests aren't about criticizing or reforming Israel. They're not about the settlements on the West Bank. They're not about getting Israel to improve the daily life of Palestinians in Gaza. They're not about pressuring Israel to accept a two-state solution. They're not even about delegitimizing Israel. They're about erasing Israel. They're about denying any righteousness that might exist in the pro-Israel cause or more accurately, in Zionism. They're about a utopian ideal of returning Palestine to the state it was in as if the last 76 years hadn't happened. Never mind that the Palestinians didn't have sovereignty then. At least the alleged settlers didn't either.

The resistance is about turning back the hands of time. Put aside for the moment the reality that history only runs forward. This isn't about history. It's about myth and what inspires people.

What should happen to the Jews who live in what is today called Israel is also beside the point—a detail to be pushed aside as relatively unimportant. You can hear the disinterest when someone is asked to expand on the implications of the phrase “from the river to the sea.” What will happen to the Jews who live there now, a protestor, is asked. They usually don't have an answer. It's not because they're hiding a genocidal wish. The most important thing is an unraveling of the last 76 years. How that can possibly be achieved is irrelevant.

At the root of this idea, especially in the minds of progressive intellectuals in the West, the Ivy League faculty members supporting the encampments and their students, is the concept of settler colonialism. If you google “settler colonialism syllabus” you will pull up course after course on this perspective. Schools teaching it include Harvard, UC-Berkeley, Cornell, Williams, McGill, University of Toronto and others. It's a ubiquitous paradigm in college classrooms in a wide array of departments.

Settler colonialism is an extraordinary lens for looking at the world—or at least the parts of the world where settler colonialism is said to be practised—the US, Canada, Australia, and, as they like to call it, Palestine. These are the countries where white Europeans allegedly displaced and killed indigenous people taking over their land and their resources.

I'd heard of settler colonialism. But I didn't appreciate its breadth and application to Israel until I read Adam Kirsch's short and superb

treatment of the subject in his recent book, *On Settler Colonialism: Ideology, Violence, and Justice*. Buy the book. You'll learn a lot.

Almost every nation has violence, conquest, brutality, and oppression in its past and often in its founding. Some do a better job than others of coming to grips with their history. Some run from it and hide. Others confess and add chapters to their history books. But settler colonialism is a special kind of national historical failing.

The essential and also the most radical claim of settler colonialism is that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. What does that mean? It means that the settling of the United States by Europeans isn't just something that happened in the past, a sin that demands atonement. The sin is ongoing. The sin is now—there's a structure of oppression of indigenous people that oppresses them today and a group of settlers who benefit from that oppression.

The Pilgrims or others who came to the United States aren't the only settlers. Those who came from Ireland or Poland or Italy in the 19th century to the United States—they're settlers, too, because they benefited from the displacement and murder of the Native Americans. In fact, anyone who isn't indigenous is a settler. In settler colonialism, you're either a settler or you're a colonized indigenous native. Latecomers are still settlers. The descendants of the indigenous people remain colonized. They can never escape their status.

This perspective explains some of the stranger aspects of the current state of debate around Israel, the war in Gaza, and October 7:

- In the settler colonialism view, the atrocities of October 7 are a form of resistance—not to the quality of life of those who live in Gaza or Israel's responsibility for that quality of life—but to the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine that still colonizes the Gazans and the non-Jews who are the descendants of those who lived in Israel in 1948. So the state of Gaza before October 7 is irrelevant to what happened on October 7. Those of us who are pro-Israel point out that Gaza wasn't an open-air prison. Much of it was actually nice and it could have been nicer if Hamas had devoted resources to economic development instead of creating tunnels and smuggling in weapons. Similarly, the Israeli blockade of Gaza which allegedly immiserated the Gazans, wasn't very effective. The tons of cement that built those tunnels found their way into Gaza anyway. None of that matters. October 7 wasn't about Gaza. It was about Palestine.

- Anti-Israel voices accuse Israel of apartheid, echoing the settler colonialism of South Africa. Pro-Israel voices explain that no, Arab-Israelis have full rights as Israeli citizens. They can vote, get government subsidized health care and education, and so on. These facts are irrelevant in the eyes of the adherent of settler colonialism. It doesn't matter that the Arab citizens of Israel have high standards of living and live better than Arabs in neighboring Syria, Jordan, or Egypt. Irrelevant. Israelis as settler colonialists are still colonizing those Arabs. And those doing the colonizing or the settling aren't just in the West Bank. They're in Haifa and Tel Aviv and everywhere that we call Israel. I arrived here in Israel three years ago. By the settler colonialist logic, I, too, am a settler.

- Why does no one protest when Syria kills Kurds or tens of thousands of civilians in the Syrian civil war? Why no encampments for various atrocities occurring around the world? Assad's not a European. He was just a run-of-the-mill tyrant. No settler colonialism? Irrelevant. Just part of the ongoing tragedy of human existence. Move along.

- Why hasn't anyone offered the Gazans refuge from a horrific war zone? There are currently hundreds of thousands or maybe even 2 million Gazans who have lost their homes. When the Syrians fled from their civil war, millions found refuge in Europe. Why aren't the Gazans being taken in by their Arab neighbors or by Europeans? There's more than one answer but part of the answer is that to give the Gazans refuge is to take them from their indigenous land and to endorse the Israeli occupation by Jewish settlers—not just of Gaza or the West Bank, but of Palestine.

- Alumni of the University of Pennsylvania recently showed a film of the Nova Music Festival where peace-loving music-loving dance-loving people were gunned down and hunted like animals by Palestinians from Gaza. People protested the showing of the film. What did they chant? “Liar liar colonizer!” I don't know if they meant by “liar liar” that the film was fake but I think they meant that

the film was irrelevant. Only colonized indigenous people suffer injustice. What happened at Nova is irrelevant—it happened to colonizers. It is some comfort that there were only a few handfuls of chanters. But who protests showing a film like this? People who believe that all Israeli Jews are colonizers.

- Why aren't the marchers and encampers demanding a two-state solution—a home for the Palestinians alongside the Jews? You hear those demands but they come from the current residents of the White House not the students and faculty of the Ivy League or the people marching in the streets of London. Why not? A two-state solution would validate the existence of Israel. It would set in stone the events of 1948. “By any means necessary” and “in our lifetime” aren't demands for a Palestinian state. They are demands for the end of the Jewish one.
- Why are the Palestinians the only refugees with a dedicated branch of the UN, UNWRA, making sure they never move on? Because that would validate the existence of Israel. It would set in stone the events of 1948.
- The settler colonialism paradigm explains the absurd attempts to paint Jesus as a Palestinian rather than a Jew. It explains the attempts to ignore the Jewish heritage of the Temple Mount and the Temple in Jerusalem pretending that the Dome of the Rock was the first religious building there. It explains the attempt to paint wine-making as an ancient Palestinian activity. All of this is to strengthen the indigeneity of the Palestinians and to erase the indigeneity of the Jews.
- And of course the settler colonialism paradigm explains the rise in anti-Israel sentiment after October 7. The end of resisting settler colonialism justifies the means: raping and murdering and kidnapping. The blow struck against Israel created an optimism among the adherents of settler colonialism that it could be the first of many such successes.

The fans of settler colonialism love hating Israel because Israel is so young. You can't return America to 1619, say. In America, there are over 325 million settlers and only 7 million Native Americans. Decolonizing the United States is unimaginable. So is decolonizing Israel, really. But it's more imaginable than the United States.

The defenders of Israel see Israel as the tip of the sword fighting against terrorism and Jihadism. For the those who use the settler colonialism lens, Hamas is the tip of the sword against settler colonialism. If somehow the Palestinians could get control of what was once called Palestine, then anything is possible, isn't it? Free Palestine? What do you think that means? It means let's go back to 1947. From the river to the sea? Back to a Palestine of 1947. Never mind that Palestine in 1947 was under the control of actual colonizers, the British. By any means possible? Rape and kidnapping are resistance to settler colonialism. In our lifetime? Believe or at least pretend to believe that soon the land of Palestine can be liberated from the so-called settlers and its indigenous people restored to their homeland.

Some of much of the animus toward Israel is simply Jew-hatred. But settler colonialism gives more than sheep's clothing to that wolf. It motivates many casual observers against Israel. If I am right, we have been fighting the wrong battles when we explain that many Gazans lived fairly well on October 6 or that Hamas inflates the death toll in Gaza by including the deaths of Hamas fighters. The real intellectual battle is over the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

A stranger recently emailed me about Israel's right to exist. His son lives in a major European city and while the son is a supporter of Israel, he avoids conversations about Israel because in his circle of highly educated friends, there is a virulent dislike of the Jewish state. My correspondent asks me: what do you say when confronted with the argument that Israel is a settler/colonial nation which stole Palestinian land and never should have been allowed to become a state?

One answer is that for some reason, the sin of settler colonialism is the only sin that negates the legitimate existence of a country. After the murder of 6 million Jews, no one suggests that Germany forfeited its right to exist or that the establishment of Germany in 1870 was a mistake that needs to be made right.

Depending on how you count, there are about 195 countries in the world. Over half of those countries are younger than Israel—109 of them were created after Israel's independence in May of 1948. Jordan and Syria were created in 1946. Nobody marches or protests the Syrian

state. The people who live within Syria's borders haven't exactly had the opportunity to flourish since 1946. Or the people of Jordan or dozens of other countries where people are oppressed. But Israel is different. Settler colonialism is the sin that makes Israel unique.

The other answer is to learn some history: Israel is a remarkably dishonest example of settler colonialism:

- Jews have lived here in Israel for millennia. We're the indigenous people so we can't be settlers.
- We're not white Europeans. Well some of us are. But most of those who are white are descendants of Holocaust survivors who were almost murdered for not being white enough. Not exactly the British running India and of course, we Jews were instrumental in throwing real colonizers—the British—out of Palestine. But we're also black and brown refugees from Ethiopia and Yemen and Iran and Iraq and Morocco. Over half of Israel's population is Mizrachi—Jews who came from Arab countries fleeing Jew-hatred.
- One of the weirder parts of trying to squeeze Israel into the settler colonial narrative is that the place that is now called Israel, when it was established in 1948, hadn't been a country for a few millennia. There was no sovereignty for the Palestinian people in 1948 that the Jews took away. The region that is Israel today, that was called Palestine in 1947 (though not ruled by the people who today are called Palestinians) had always been ruled by others—the British, the Ottoman Empire, and then the Mamluk Sultanate, the Ayyubid Dynasty, the Crusaders, the Fatimid Caliphate, the Abbasid Caliphate, the Ummayyad Caliphate, the Byzantine Empire, the Roman Empire. Before that, the only time it was a sovereign country under the rule of its inhabitants was when it was run by the Jews. Israel was never a colony of anyone's like Algeria was for the French or India was for the British. The Jews in 1948 had as good a claim as anyone could make to be the indigenous people of this land.
- We didn't steal land from the indigenous Palestinians. We lived here alongside them. We bought land from our Ottoman rulers as well as from our Palestinian neighbors. We did not invade Palestine like Cortez, say, invaded Peru. We lived here and accepted the UN compromise that our Arab neighbors rejected. When we declared a state, our Arab neighbors invaded us. We did not ethnically cleanse the land like the Americans did, say, with Native Americans. As part of the war in 1948, we did fight against Arabs who were already living here. Shamefully, we committed some atrocities. Both sides did. It was a war.

We did drive out Arab residents through fear and military threat. But many Arab residents simply fled at the encouragement of the invading Arab armies, expecting to return to an Arab country after a military victory. Those two groups of people—those who were pushed out and those who left coluntarily—became the refugees of the war, settling in the West Bank and Gaza, territories ruled by Jordan and Egypt between 1948 and 1967. No one demanded sovereignty for those refugees until Israel took Gaza and the West Bank in the Six Day War of 1967. Jordan and Egypt could not plausibly be described as White European colonialists. So the world said nothing.

- A few hundred thousand of our Palestinian neighbors—about 25% of the Arab population of Palestine neither fled, nor were driven out. They stayed in their homes. We let them. That population grew into the 2 million Arab-Israeli citizens who are my neighbors today in Israel. They did not lose their homeland when the British left Palestine. They did fail to get one because they did not embrace the UN compromise.

It is tempting to find solace in the reality that the existence of Israel does not rise and fall on an academic debate. We're here. We're not going anywhere. We have the best army in the Middle East and we finally have the opportunity to pursue justice for those who rape and murder and kidnap our people. More than ever, we understand that a Jewish state is a necessary sanctuary for our people. All of that is some consolation. But the academic debate matters. The elevation of the settler colonialism paradigm is not a small thing. It has mobilized many people, especially those from what were once the most prestigious universities in the West, to despise the Jewish state. This is not good for the Jews or the West. We ignore the doctrine of settler colonialism at our peril. (Substack Dec 30)