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WATER IN TURTLE ISLAND AND PALESTINE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UNITED STATES AND ISRAELI SETTLER COLONIALISM

by
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ABSTRACT
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Title: Water in Turtle Island and Palestine: A Comparative Analysis of United States and Israeli Settler Colonialism

The Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and Palestine face an ongoing water crisis in which their communities do not have access to safe and consistent water. Building upon a body of work that has critically assessed the usefulness of the settler colonial analytical framework and a close analysis of the historical and temporary use of water as a weapon by both settler states, I seek to demonstrate several interrelated claims on how we talk about comparative settler colonialism and settler colonialism in the world today. First, the water crises both communities face today are a consequence of ongoing settler colonialism in both Turtle Island and Palestine. Second, United States and Israeli settler colonialism can and should be compared, particularly regarding both settler state's logic, tactics, and consequences. Third, comparing United States and Israeli settler colonialism can illuminate the ways in which solidarity and unified resistance is ultimately necessary for liberation. Once the similarities of histories and current conditions are laid out, we can begin to answer the question: how does knowledge of the similarity of United States and Israeli logic, tactics, and the conditions they create help generate solidarity?

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CHAPTER I

REFRAMING SETTLER COLONIALISM: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS FOR INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY AND SOLIDARITY

When it comes to discussions of settler colonialism, water is a central and undeniably critical issue. Water is essential to life, and for this reason it is coveted by settler states as a resource for their own settler infrastructure and as a weapon against Indigenous peoples, whom they seek to eradicate. This has led to Indigenous nations in Turtle Island and Palestinians disproportionately living in conditions of water scarcity, without access to adequate amounts of clean water that are necessary for life. In this paper, I focus on one aspect of Indigenous life that has been deeply harmed by settler colonialism: water. I discuss how historically, the United States and Israel have used attacks on water as a settler colonial tactic and how both states have created unlivable conditions for both Indigenous communities today. Through discussion of the challenges and opportunities of comparison, I seek to demonstrate several interrelated claims on how we talk about comparative settler colonialism and settler colonialism in the world today. First, the water crises both communities face today are a consequence of ongoing settler colonialism in both Turtle Island and Palestine. Second, United States and Israeli settler colonialism can and should be compared, particularly regarding both settler state's logic, tactics, and consequences. Third, comparing United States and Israeli settler colonialism can illuminate the ways in which solidarity and unified resistance is ultimately necessary for liberation. Once the similarities of histories and current conditions are laid out, we can

begin to answer the question: how does knowledge of the similarity of United States and Israeli logic, tactics, and the conditions they create help generate solidarity?

Before beginning, I want to discuss the choices that I have made in regards to the naming of people and places throughout this analysis. When it comes to settler colonialism, naming has serious political consequences. I follow the logic of Steven Salaita, one of the primary scholars who has theorized "inter/national solidarity" between American Indian and Palestinian communities. In discussing the word "America," he says, "although 'America'—and any other identifier not belonging to a Native language—is a colonial locution…whose decolonization (and colonization) is ongoing."[1] When settler names for people and places are used, the settler colonial project is furthered by erasing Indigenous histories and the historical and continued presence of Indigenous peoples on the land. At the same time, using Indigenous names aids in resisting settler colonialism as it recognizes the ongoing and inherent right that Indigenous peoples have to their historical lands. For this reason, I will use the title used by many Indigenous peoples for North America, Turtle Island, to acknowledge that decolonizing North America requires political and material return of land to its Indigenous stewards. The term Turtle Island is not only a reference to origin stories shared by many different Indigenous cultures, but use of this term also asserts a political stance in support of Indigenous sovereignty and stewardship of all of North America. In my research, the United States is useful as a unit of analysis as I am discussing United States settler colonialism, which most directly impacts populations within the colonial borders established by the settler government. Therefore, I use Salaita's definition of the United States as "the colonial enterprise and

[1] Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), xi.

subsequent nation-state, as opposed to the Indigenous spaces of America."[2] This raises a third important distinction. In discussing United States settler colonialism systematically, it is necessary to decide upon which descriptive term to use in reference the hundreds of distinct Indigenous nations whose land the United States occupies. While different Indigenous people use different terms to describe themselves, including Indigenous, Native, Aboriginal, Indian, or their nation's name, I will primarily use the term Indigenous nations or peoples in order to acknowledge Indigenous diversity and sovereignties.

In regards to Palestine, I continue to follow Salaita's logic, defining Palestine as "the nation of Arabic-speaking Palestinian people…[with] an origin in the historic land of Palestine, which includes today's Israel (minus the Golan Heights), the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip."[3] Similarly to the usage of the United States, I use the term "Israel" to describe the "colonial entity superimposed on the historic land of Palestine, an entity that continues a decades-long project of ethnic cleansing."[4] While the concepts of both the United States and Israel as bordered entities must be challenged, they offer a needed clarification when analyzing the material consequences of these settler states. With these terms defined, I can begin discussing the history and function of settler colonialism as an analytical framework.

In 2006, Patrick Wolfe defined settler colonialism as structure rooted in a logic of "elimination of the native" for territory and resource acquisition. Since then, Wolfe and Lorenzo Veracini—who is also a non-Indigenous theorist— have been cited as the

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[2] Ibid., xi.

[3] Ibid., xii.

[4] Ibid., xii.

founders of Settler Colonial Studies. However, as numerous scholars have demonstrated in response to this trend, the history of settler colonialism as a field and concept originates with Indigenous scholars from different parts of the globe, including Turtle Island and Palestine.[5] While the contributions of Wolfe and Veracini have been absolutely essential, the field's over emphasis on these scholars at times erases earlier and ongoing Indigenous knowledge production.[6]

The politics of citation is emblematic of one of the central issues of Settler Colonial Studies. J. Kēhaulani Kauanui discusses this politics of settler colonialism as a field and its relationship to enduring indigeneity. She describes Robert Warrior's observations in documenting the ratio of panels within the American Studies Association conferences focused on Settler Colonial Studies or Native and Indigenous Studies, that the former had become "'an answer to the chronic need for more attention to and awareness'" of the latter.[7] In this sense, Settler Colonial Studies had in fact begun to take the space that Native or Indigenous studies was intended to fill. In their analysis of Settler Colonial Studies, Brenna Bhandar and Rafael Ziadah articulate that the problem with this politics of citation is that it "marginaliz[es] scholars who have been writing about the effects of settler colonialism for decades…[and results in] the loss of the rich scholarship by Indigenous scholars which does not fit neatly into scholarly boundaries."[8]

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[5] J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, "'A Structure, Not an Event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity," *Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2016), https://csalateral.org/issue/5-1/forum-alt-humanities-settler-colonialism-enduring-indigeneity-kauanui/.; Rana Barakat, "Writing/righting Palestine Studies: Settler colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History," *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (2018): 349.

[6] Ibid,. 355.

[7] Kauanui, "A Structure, Not an Event."

[8] Brenna Bhandar and Rafael Ziadah, "Acts and Omissions: Framing Settler Colonialism in Palestine Studies," *Jadaliyya*, January 14, 2016, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32857/Acts-and-Omissions-Framing-Settler-Colonialism-in-Palestine-Studies.

While acknowledging the usefulness of Settler Colonial Studies as a category of analysis, these scholars have argued that the distinction between the two fields must be clear and that work on settler colonialism must be framed by indigeneity. Rana Barakat, in her critical engagement with the usefulness and harm of Settler Colonial Studies, asks: "how can a settler colonial studies analysis contribute to an indigenous analysis while not becoming the central focus of the narrative?"[9] Barakat highlights the primary concerns and consequences of citation in Settler Colonial Studies; an over emphasis on structures of settler colonialism distracts from the focus of how Indigenous peoples can benefit from its study.

Barakat asserts, in conversation with Warrior, that in order to frame Settler Colonial Studies through indigeneity, one must contextualize their analysis within local Indigenous history and narratives of resistance and discuss settler colonial projects as ongoing.[10] Wolfe takes an important step towards this with his characterization of settler colonialism as a structure, not an event, which necessitates an understanding of settler colonialism as an ongoing process. Barakat strengthens this analytical framework by categorizing settler colonialism by its "permanent incompleteness."[11] She explains that viewing settler colonialism in this framework creates more potential for concrete comparative analysis as it does not claim settler colonial projects to be in the past in any location.[12] This understanding is rooted in the fact that settler colonialism has not been a completed project anywhere, as Indigenous people have always resisted and survived.

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[9] Barakat, "Writing/righting Palestine Studies," 356.

[10] Ibid., 357; Ibid., 360.

[11] Ibid., 356.

[12] Ibid.

I seek to use this framing as the method to guide my analysis and specifically to understand how the current water crises are a result of United States and Israeli settler colonialism. First, I will ground my analysis of the current conditions in the historical origins of the settler colonial projects in both lands. Placing the historical and the contemporary colonization of Turtle Island and Palestine in conversation establishes settler colonialism as the cause of the water crises and reaffirms an understanding of the ongoing nature of these settler colonial projects in the face of 'enduring indigeneity.'[13] Second, my analysis and comparison of the water crises and its roots are drawn for the purpose of raising connections between each peoples' struggles and bolstering analytical and material foundations for solidarity. In doing so, I intend to add to a growing body of work that sees comparative analysis of settler colonialism as a method to "burst open the political imagination" and build unified resistance.[14] Given the comparative nature this work, I focus on the theoretical background of *comparative* Settler Colonial Studies and examine how it can be useful to a political praxis invested in indigeneity. This does not include a history of Settler Colonial Studies at large, but rather the texts that have been most relevant to using settler colonial analysis as a tool for building solidarity.

I will begin this account by acknowledging and discussing the long and ongoing history of Indigenous-Palestinian solidarity. Such practices of solidarity go back to at least the global period of postcolonialism (and ongoing decolonization) beginning in the 1950s. Palestinian scholar Rabab Abdulhadi discusses how in the 1960s and 1970s, the American Indian Movement, a militant anti-colonial Indigenous organization, partici-

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[13] Kauanui, "A Structure, Not an Event."

[14] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives: Settler Colonialism and Museum Politics." *Critical Inquiry* 47, no. 1 (Autumn, 2020): 3.

pated in anti-imperialist anti-racist solidarity that centered and expressed unwavering support for the Palestinian struggle.[15] At the same time in so-called Canada, the Canada Palestine Solidarity network and the Native Study Group both took part in the Third World Peoples Coalition.[16] These interactions demonstrate the way that both struggles have been rooted in shared anti-imperial struggle. Salaita discusses how Palestinian anti-colonial theorists writing in a similar moment, such as Fayez Sayegh and Walid Khalidi, understood Palestine in connection to other sites of settler colonialism, including North America. In addition to these more theoretical expressions of solidarity, there are numerous examples of more material instances.

The number of events and exchanges between Palestinians and Indigenous Nations in Turtle Island are too vast for me to cover in this paper, so I have selected a recent example that highlights the interconnectedness of the struggles. In their discussion of Canadian-Palestinian solidarity, Mike Krebs and Dana M. Olwan recount a recent example of solidarity between which Palestinians in the diaspora in so-called Canada and the Six Nations in so-called Ontario. Palestinian organizations offered material and physical assistance to the Six Nations in their struggle to reclaim their traditional lands by occupying their land with them and bringing foods and supplies.[17] These tangible actions of solidarity represented an understanding of the Palestinian and Indigenous struggle as shared. Palestinian activist Jamila Ghaddar described the significance of this moment of shared resistance, claiming that "'[a] victory for the American Indians of

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[15] Chandni Desai and Linda Tabar, "Decolonization is a global project: From Palestine to the Americas." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 6, no. 1 (2017): xiiii.

[16] Mike Krebs and Dana M. Olwan, "'From Jerusalem to the Grand River, Our Struggles are One': Challenging Canadian and Israeli Settler Colonialism." *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (2012): 152.

[17] Ibid., 156.

Palestine is a victory for the Palestinians of North America, and a victory for the Palestinians of North America is a victory for the American Indians of Palestine.'"[18] This sentiment acknowledges that both peoples not only hold the potential of solidarity with each other, but that the struggles are more inherently connected due to the alliance between and shared methods of the United States and Israel.

Furthermore, recent delegations and statements have cemented an understanding of Indigenous Peoples' in Turtle Island and Palestinians' struggles for sovereignty as shared. In 2011, a delegation of Indigenous women and women of color traveled to Palestine to bear witness to the situation and deepen their understanding of Palestine's connection to their own struggles. Upon returning, Dakota scholar Waziyatawin stated that "it was like witnessing a high-speed and high-tech version of the colonisation of our Indigenous homelands."[19] Krebs and Olwan comment that her experience and the shifts in her analysis "reveal how a comparative approach to settler colonialism can enable indigenous people to better understand their own struggles."[20] The inseparable nature of the struggles is also apparent in recent statements from organizations such as The Red Nation, who asserted that "[t]he liberation of Palestine represents and alternative path for Native Nations," and the Palestinian Youth Movement, who described themselves as "bound…in joint struggle against settler-colonialism, ethnic cleansing, forced

[18] Ibid., 160.

[19] Waziyatawin, "Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours: Reflections on US Indigenous and Palestinian Experiences under Occupation," *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 172.

[20] Krebs and Olwan, "'From Jerusalem to the Grand River,'" 159-160.

displacement, and environmental devastation to [their] homelands."[21] These delegations and statements are just a few instances of the increasing practices of solidarity between Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and Palestine.

A number of scholars have produced works that position United States and Israeli settler colonialism as linked, giving cause for Indigenous solidarities. Salaita has provided the most expansive history and analysis of solidarity within the academe between Indigenous scholars in Turtle Island and Palestinians. He defines the purpose of his work as the furthering of solidarity, founded in "commitment to mutual liberation based on the proposition that colonial power must be rendered diffuse across multiple hemispheres through reciprocal struggle."[22] He asserts firmly the idea that the United States and Israel operate within a discrete power structure, deeply connecting the liberation of all Indigenous peoples.[23] Cutcha Risling Baldy and Melanie Yazzie concur with Salaita's understanding of Israeli nationalism as a continuation of American colonization and reaffirm the need for decolonization and national liberation to be a cooperative and inter/national process.[24] Yazzie shares that she understands "the contemporary development of Israeli settler colonialism and the mind-boggling disciplinary infrastructures it has proliferated through experimentation on Palestinians as a direct extension of

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[21] The Red Nation. "The Liberation of Palestine Represents an Alternative Path for Native Nations." The Red Nation, September 6, 2019. https://therednation.org/the-liberation-of- palestine-represents-an-alternative-path-for-native-nations/.; The Palestinian Youth Movement United States Branch, "From Turtle Island to Palestine: Indigenous Delegation to Palestine," The Palestinian Youth Movement, November 12, 2018, https://palestinianyouthmovement.com/indigenousdelegation.

[22] Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism*, ix.

[23] Ibid., xv.

[24] Cutcha Risling Baldy and Melanie K. Yazzie, "Introduction: Indigenous peoples and the politics of water," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, no. 1 (2018): 11-12.

the United States' fundamental investment in colonial violence."[25] As an example, Salaita describes his own experience of being targeted by Zionist groups for highlighting the inclusion of Palestine within American Indian Studies. This illustrates the role of Zionism as invested in United States settler colonialism and as a "guarantor of U.S. colonial interests."[26] It also demonstrates that building connections between Indigenous struggles in Turtle Island and Palestine is viewed as a threat to the stability of both settler colonial projects. For this reason, Indigenous solidarity is valuable to the struggles to decolonize. Indigenous peoples are already drawing these connections and building these relations. Gyasi Ross, Blackfeet author, attorney, and rapper, described that "'this fraternal feeling for my brothers and sisters in Gaza and on the West Bank is due to a much more basic and primal feeling of fear: the realization that what befalls one oppressed group inevitably befalls others.'"[27] In many ways, recognition of the shared nature of these struggles is the largest threat posed to settler states.

This is the value of comparative settler colonialism, which all of these scholars conclude is needed. Within her critiques, Barakat acknowledges that "comparative analysis [that] can become shared political projects" is a useful method of analysis for settler colonialism.[28] Lila Abu-Lughod identifies comparisons as a method to give shape to the "alternative political futures" and solidarities that Salaita, Yazzie, and Baldy dis-

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[25] Melanie K. Yazzie, "Solidarity with Palestine from Diné Bikéyah." *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 2015): 1012.

[26] Steven Salaita, "American Indian studies and Palestine solidarity: The Importance of Impetuous Definitions." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 6, no. 1 (2017): 7-8.; Ibid., 20.

[27] Ibid., 19.

[28] Barakat, "Writing/righting Palestine Studies," 353.

cuss.[29] Bhandar and Ziadah also come to the conclusion that more research on "the circulation and transference of colonial, imperial strategies and techniques across territories" is needed.[30] One of the primary purposes of my research is to further establish an understanding of both the material connections in settler colonial strategies and the conditions they produce.

To address the question of building unity across discrete struggles, Yazzie and Baldy ask, "[h]ow can we conceive of, and build, connections between the ontology of decolonization (i.e. radical relationality) that emerges from [a] specific place, and ontologies of decolonization elsewhere?"[31] They understand the answer to this question as grounded in radical relationality, a way of living that is rooted in "interdependency and respect among all things with spirit."[32] When this logic is applied to a global scale, it shows that "working and collaborating across difference is a key part of what it means to organize under the banner of liberation and decolonization."[33] In 'An Open Letter to the People of Six Nations', Jamal Juma articulated that the only way for the future to be better than the past is if "the people of the world stand together united by their solidarity."[34] This is the project that I intend to contribute to, both by drawing connections between the material relations of United States and Israeli settler colonialism pertaining to water and furthering the conversation of how to hold discrete Indigenous struggles in

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[29] Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives," 13.

[30] Desai and Tabar, "Decolonization is a global project," vii.

[31] Baldy and Yazzie, "Introduction," 11.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Krebs and Olwan, "'From Jerusalem to the Grand River,'" 160.

comparative analysis. In alignment with the scholars and activists that I have discussed so far, I believe that these movements will be most fruitful when these comparisons are drawn and inform how we struggle.

Finally, I want to explain my decision to focus on water as the case study for this comparative analysis. Settler colonialism impacts all areas of Indigenous life. I have chosen to focus on how settler colonial states exploit, pollute, and use water as a weapon against Indigenous peoples because of the significance of water for Indigenous peoples and the significance of water to settler colonialism. The quick and wide spread adaptation of the phrase "Mni Wiconi" during the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline demonstrates the extent to which the idea that "water is life" is universally understood. Yazzie and Baldy profoundly articulate the significance of water and the relationship to water held by Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. Beyond being the sustenance that is necessary for all people, they explain that "water is seen as an ancestor and as a relative with agency within this network of life, one who deserves respect, care, and protection."[35] Water is central to indigeneity and connects all humans and "more-than-humans."[36] Where as settler states view water as "a resource to be weaponized for the interests of capital by corporations that harness, obstruct, pollute, and discipline water through infrastructure projects like dams and pipelines to boost the capitalist economies of settler nation-states," an Indigenous feminist framework views water as a relative.[37] Water is part of the social and political relations of Indigenous peoples and must be

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[35] Baldy and Yazzie, "Introduction," 1.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 2-3.

treated as part of a network of interdependency and respect.[38] Palestinians, too, have a deeply rooted relationship to water and land. Chandni Desai and Linda Tabar describe Palestinians' relationship of solidarity to the land, through "protecting, knowing and taking care" of it, and imbuing future generations with the same responsibilities.[39] It is essential to understand the deeply rooted emotional, social, and cultural connection to water and land held by Indigenous peoples to fully understand the significance of the harm erected by settler colonialism.

Water, however, is also inseparable from settler colonial projects, both because of the need to extract water resources for settlers and the ways in which it is used as a tool to aid in dispossessing Indigenous peoples. Nick Estes clearly articulates this notion when he says that "water is settler colonialism's lifeblood—blood that has to be continually excised from Indigenous peoples."[40] Waziyatawin's analysis of settler colonialism contributes to this understanding. She highlights how after the initial wave of violence in which settlers either massacred or displaced Indigenous peoples from their homelands, war continues to be waged against the land itself.[41] Yazzie and Baldy connect these attacks on the land and water to the project of settler colonialism and explain that "[c]opper mining, tar sands mining, hydraulic fracking, industrial logging, diamond mining, military and science tests, dams, water pipelines, bombs, oil drilling and uranium mining have destroyed many of our relatives and made it increasingly impossible

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Desai and Tabar, "Decolonization is a global project," xi.

[40] Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future,* (London: Verso, 2019), Apple Books, 212.

[41] Waziyatawin, "Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours," 185.

for others to live."[42] With an understanding of water as a relative, it can be understood that attacks on the land or water constitute attacks on Indigenous well-being and survival. Yazzie characterizes this situation as "living death," a term which most accurately describes the conditions created by settler colonialism that Indigenous people in Turtle and Palestine live in. She specifies that it is designed by and essential to settler societies.[43]

Returning to the potential of solidarity, water also offers a foundation on which to locate shared struggle. Yazzie and Baldy highlight how water has played a uniquely central role in resistance that has been increasing in recent years.[44] They explain how grounding the politics of water in struggle can act as a source of healing and consciousness, when rooted in radical relational and relationship to water.[45] For them, this represents "water view," which includes reclaiming knowledge for the people and the water and also accountability to relationships encompassed in water view.[46] Water is an essential issue in decolonization struggles and in rebuilding relationships to the earth. Grounding struggles in "a relationality from which all life and history derives meaning and shape" offers a path forward that requires global solidarity. Waziyatwawin also expresses the essentialness of radical relationality—to each other and the earth— because "our lives may very well depend on our capacity to reclaim and protect the integrity of

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[42] Baldy and Yazzie, "Introduction," 7-8.

[43] Yazzie, "Solidarity with Palestine from Diné Bikéyah," 1012.

[44] Baldy and Yazzie, "Introduction," 8.

[45] Ibid., 7.

[46] Ibid., 2.

our homeland."[47] This demonstrates how deeply integral water is to Indigenous peoples, decolonization, and reciprocally, to settler colonial projects. In this paper, I intend to begin providing a material answer to the indispensable question that Yazzie and Baldy ask: "[h]ow can we look to radical relationality and water view as a guide for our relationship-making with other nations?"[48]

[47] Wayizatawin, "Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours," 185.

[48] Baldy and Yazzie, "Introduction," 11.

CHAPTER II

THE INDIGENOUS WATER CRISIS IN TURTLE ISLAND AND UNITED STATES SETTLER COLONIALISM

The historical and ongoing process of the United States settler state using water as a tool against Indigenous peoples is manifested today most clearly in the lack of access to water for drinking, sanitation systems, agriculture, culture, or industrial purposes. Compared to other United States populations, Indigenous people face disproportionate challenges in accessing clean water. Throughout this chapter, I will discuss the conditions that settler colonialism has produced for Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island. In order to understand how the current challenges are consequences of settler colonialism, I raise the underlying logic of United States settler colonialism that views destruction of Indigenous resources as a tool of elimination and erasure. The historical and current attacks on Indigenous water are one example of the logic that targets resources necessary to Indigenous life, both materially, culturally, and socially. This strategy, beginning with burning of Indigenous crops and villages, has continued with homesteading for settler expansion, damming for hydroelectricity, building pipelines, and many more instances of settler infrastructure built with the dual purpose of enabling settler life and eliminating Indigenous peoples. I will discuss the primary tactics that the United States government has employed in order to make accessing water extremely difficult for Indigenous nations. The attacks serve to make life for Indigenous nations extremely difficult and often essentially unlivable.

A. The Indigenous Water Crisis: Lack of Access to Quality Water

The direness of Indigenous peoples' lack of access to quality water is staggering. According to the The Indian Health Services (IHS), "nearly half (48%) of all homes on tribal land lack access to adequate drinking water, sewage, or solid waste disposal facilities."[49] One study found that 24,000 Indigenous families live in water poverty, without running water or basic sanitation.[50] The National Indian Health Board reports that compared to only 1 percent of the United States general population, 9 percent of Indigenous homes do not have access to safe water.[51] Another report shows that Indigenous households are "19 times more likely than white households to lack indoor plumbing."[52] These households may not only lack access to clean running water but also flush toilets, showers, baths, or kitchen sinks.[53] There is a devastating lack of funding, not only for the actual infrastructure, but also for the data on these national issues.[54] One of the challenges of discussing this crisis is the lack of data collected on this issue in the United States. The IHS and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are the two, and seem-

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[49] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied: How Congress has Blocked Access to Water for Native Families,* (Committee on Natural Resources, 2016), http://blackfeetnation.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/House-NRC-Water-Report-Minority-10-10-16.pdf, 1.

[50] Adam Crepelle, "The Reservation Water Crisis," *Tulane Environmental Law Journal* 32, no. 2, (Summer 2019): 169.

[51] National Congress of American Indians, *Tribal Infrastructure: Investing in Indian Country for a Stronger America,* (National Congress of American Indians, 2017), https://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper_RslnCGsUDiatRYTpPXKwThNYoACnjDoBOrdDlBSRcheKxwJZDCx_NCAI-InfrastructureReport-FINAL.pdf, 6.

[52] Zoë Roller and Stephen Gasteyer, *Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States: A National Action Plan,* (Dig Deep Right to Water Project US Water Alliance, 2019), http://uswateralliance.org/sites/uswateralliance.org/files/publications/Closing%20the%20Water%20Access%20Gap%20in%20the%20United%20States_DIGITAL.pdf, 13.

[53] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 1.

[54] National Congress of American Indians, *Tribal Infrastructure*, 6-8.

ingly only, bodies that have collected nation-wide data on Indigenous peoples' access to water. The statistics developed by the IHS and EPA data show a staggering crisis in Indigenous access to water. While the numbers vary based upon the study, the overall trend is obvious: Indigenous people, at a disproportionate rate, do not have access to clean drinking water or the sanitation infrastructure necessary to provide it.

The other major component of the water crisis for Indigenous nations is the quality of water to which they have access. The EPA found that, compared to 91 percent of the United States population, only 88 percent of Indigenous people received quality drinking water that met the health-based standards.[55] Similar to the Pick-Sloan project, United States infrastructure, ranging from dams to mines to pipelines, is a primary cause of the poor water quality. For instance, of the 137 dams under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Safety of Dams Program, 136 are considered high or significant hazards.[56] Nearly a third of them pose potentially catastrophic threats to tribal schools, courts, housing and economies—not to mention the people and cultures— if they were to fail.[57] Even more actively threatening to Indigenous water is the uranium mines in the Navajo Nation. More than 500 abandoned uranium mines, built between 1944 and 1986, remain in Navajo territory from the United States nuclear arms race.[58] Chronic exposure to uranium, through drinking water, showering, or cooking, is shown to have severe consequences such as kidney issues, cancer and liver disease.[59] Some

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[55] Ibid., 6.

[56] Ibid., 8.

[57] Ibid.

[58] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 4.

[59] Ibid.

water sources, including backyard wells and stock points in the Navajo Nation tested as high as 700 micrograms per liter for uranium, with a federal standard of 30 micrograms.[60] There are also numerous examples of crude oil pipelines spilling their contents onto tribal land and into tribal waters.[61] Furthermore, the overall lack of adequate infrastructure leads to poor water quality. For instance, on the Santee Sioux Nation and the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska reservations, a quarter of the wells contain high levels of nitrate-nitrogen and coliform bacteria, which can cause blood disorders and intestinal issues.[62] Meanwhile, the water on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota does not meet water quality standards, with detected nitrate-nitrogen, coliform bacteria, fecal contamination, arsenic, lead, and or sources of radiation.[63] These statistics and examples clearly demonstrate that Indigenous peoples do not have access to safe and quality water, adding to the lack of access.

The poor quality of water results in serious and sometimes deadly health issues for the communities. Lack of access to adequate drinking water and sanitation are thought to contribute to high rates of morbidity and mortality in the Indigenous population.[64] A study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in 2008 found that "Alaska Natives who lived in regions where few people had access to pressurized in-home water service had significantly higher rates of hospitalization for pneumonia, in-

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[60] Ibid., 5.

[61] Native Land Information System, "NLIS Launches New Interactive Data Visualization of US Hazardous Liquids Spills, Pipelines, and Reservation Lands," https://nativeland.info/nlis-launches-new-interactive-data-visualization-of-us-hazardous-liquids-spills-pipelines-and-reservation-lands/.

[62] Crepelle, "The Reservation Water Crisis," 171.; National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 3.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

fluenza, skin or soft tissue infection, and respiratory syncytial virus."[65] As I previously discussed, nitrate-nitrogen, coliform bacteria, and other bacterias in the water sources of a number of reservations have been found to lead to blood disorders, intestinal issues, pneumonia, stomach problems, diarrhea, ulcers, and Legionnare's disease.[66] Additionally arsenic and uranium can lead to deadly conditions, such as cancer and liver disease.[67] A secondary health consequence is the rise of diabetes, as sugary beverages are more accessible than clean water.[68] Lack of access to clean water also can result in less healthy diets overall, in addition to poverty, if cooking is not an option. When Indigenous peoples are severed from their historical sources of water, when their people are sick, and when their elders who carry generational history and knowledge die young, the furtive practices of ongoing United States settler colonialism become more apparent. For the rest of this chapter, I will outline the water-related mechanisms that the United States has used historically and continues to use as a weapon against Indigenous nations.

B. United States Settler Colonial Logic: From "Scorched Earth" to Pick-Sloan

Explaining the long-standing Indigenous relationship to water and the continuous assaults against these practices demonstrate the pervasiveness with which a logic of destroying Indigenous resources undergirds United States settler colonial history.

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 4.

[68] Zoë and Gasteyer, *Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States*, 39.

Indigenous peoples of the Americas developed complex and advanced water infrastructure thousands of years prior to European colonization in the region. In the present-day Sonora Desert, Indigenous communities dug irrigation canals and practiced agriculture as early as 1250 BC.[69] From 900 to 1450 AD, the Hohokams (the anglicized name of the Huhugam) built extensive irrigation systems using canals, the largest of which were twenty miles long, seventy-five to eighty-five feet across, and twenty feet deep and could irrigate an estimated ten thousand acres.[70] Upon the arrival of European colonizers to south east Turtle Island (the territory of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muskogee Creek and Seminole), they found agricultural communities and economies based on corn.[71] Further up the eastern coast of Turtle Island, now called New England, the Haudenosaunee confederacy coordinated agriculture throughout thousands of villages.[72] Across the continent, different techniques for managing resources were used, including burning to optimize forests for the hunting and grazing of deer and buffalo, and roads for trade and transport constructed alongside rivers or the coast.[73] Indigenous nations of Turtle Island have developed water infrastructure to survive and thrive off of the land, dating back thousands of years.

The purpose of framing the water crisis in this historical context is to show that settler destruction of ancient agricultural and technological practices for water was necessary in order to create the water insecurity that many Indigenous communities are fac-

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[69] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States,* (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 2014), 21-22.

[70] Ibid., 22.

[71] Ibid., 24.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 28-29.

ing today. As clearly articulated by Robert T. Anderson, legal scholar on Indigenous water rights, "[m]any of the intractable problems faced in the arid West today are the result of more than a century of federal neglect of tribal water needs and a corresponding encouragement of non-Indian development."[74] In other words, lack of access to water—for its many and varied essential features in Indigenous life—is a direct consequence of United States settler colonialism. Beginning with the first British settlement in North America, the settlers of Jamestown were unable to conquer the Powhatan confederacy through use force. Instead, the settlers used the tactic of "feedfight" to try to eliminate the Indigenous people and settle their land. This entailed a "systematic destruction of all the Indigenous agricultural resources" with "settlers continuously raiding Indigenous villages and fields with the goal of starving the people out of the area."[75] This practice was replicated across the content, and settlers consistently carried out "scorched earth" campaigns in which, unable to defeat Indigenous nations by force, they burned their fields and villages to starve them out, weaken them, and force them to flee.[76] From the initial phase of settler colonization, settlers, often encouraged or supplanted by the state, deliberately targeted the means of Indigenous sustenance as a strategy of removal and genocide. The same logic—denying a people's access to their own resources that are essential for life—is seen in the devastation of water resources and infrastructure today.

As settlers continued to expand across North America and the United States government sought to develop infrastructure for the settlers, Indigenous nations continued to be displaced and their communities devastated. The control of water resources

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[74] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 7.

[75] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States,* 62.

[76] Ibid., 79; Ibid., 89; Ibid., 138-139; Ibid., 144.

were essential to settler infrastructure and life. In order to develop agriculture and sustain the new settler communities, irrigation and sources of safe drinking water had to be obtained. The Homestead Act of 1872, which provided federal funding for settler land development, demonstrates how such policies combined Indigenous elimination with development of settler water infrastructure. Under the policy, "one and a half million white families gained title to 246 million acres of Indigenous lands," and in order to do so and survive on the land, they received federal funding for irrigation.[77] The Dawes Act—another policy with the aim of obtaining more Indigenous land to settle and this time involving forced assimilation—was implemented shortly after in 1887. It allotted reservation land to Indigenous individuals and encouraged settlers to buy land which the government began to privatize and siphon off.[78] The result of this practice, which carried on into the 1920s, was transfer of ninety-one million acres of Indigenous lands to white settlers and most predominantly, farmers and ranchers, leaving a "a checkerboard pattern of land ownership within reservations."[79] Each of these policies were aimed at developing the western half of Turtle Island, which required the displacement of Indigenous people from their lands and building water infrastructure to sustain settler life.

Even with the formal end of the Dawes Act in 1934 and the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) that recognized greater tribal sovereignty, Indigenous peoples were not safe from infrastructural projects that would force their removal. Activist and scholar

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[77] Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 210-211.

[78] Ibid., 189-190.; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States,* 189-190.; Robert T. Anderson, "Indigenous Rights to Water & Environmental Protection," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 53, (2018): 344.

[79] Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 195.; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples History of the United States,* 189.; Anderson, "Indigenous Rights to Water & Environmental Protection," 344.

Nick Estes explains that the IRA offered Indigenous peoples a false choice, it was "adopt the colonizers' model fully [and] accept 'self-determination' with permanent tutelage; or perish."[80] The treaties that the United States government forced Indigenous nations to accept never protected Indigenous nations from further destruction or land grabs. Once then, when the United States government or corporations have discovered a resource on Indigenous land, it has routinely disregarded the terms of the treaty and found ways to enable extraction. The Pick-Sloan Plan is one of the instances in which the United States government took little hesitation before destroying sacred land and water to build its own infrastructure, for exclusive use by settlers. As one of the most devastating projects in the mid-twentieth century, the Pick-Sloan Plan exemplifies the continuous practice of the United States settler project of developing settler infrastructure with the joint purpose of enabling settler life and forcing the removal of Indigenous nations.

In 1944, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation designed the Pick-Sloan Plan, a water infrastructure project that would construct multiple earth filled dams along the Mississippi River for flood control, reclamation, and to irrigate the grasslands of the areas.[81] The locations for each of the dams appear to have been deliberately selected on Indigenous lands in the lower basin states. When there was risk of damage for the majority-white towns of Williston, North Dakota, and Bismarck, North Dakota, the Army Corps altered the locations for the dams to appease the settler com-

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[80] Ibid., 199.

[81] Ibid., 191-192.; Robert Kelley Schneiders, "Flooding The Missouri Valley: The Politics Of Dam Site Selection And Design," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, (Summer/Fall 1997): 239.

munities.[82] The same considerations were not taken for the seven Missouri River Lakota and Dakota reservations—Santee, Yankton, Rosebud, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, Cheyenne River, and Standing Rock, many of whom had been displaced from their original lands and were only surviving off of the resources provided by the river.[83]

As a result, four of the five Pick-Sloan dams flooded these reservations and the damages were immense.[84] Nearly 4,000 Indigenous peoples were forced to relocate to off-reservation towns and another 7,000 Indigenous people's lives were severely altered.[85] Furthermore, the natural food sources, timber, and game that the Indigenous nations had been surviving off of were flooded.[86] In addition to the destruction of life, a number of the reservations' agencies, encompassing hospitals, health clinics, schools, and administrative offices, were covered.[87] This federally funded project resulted in displacement, but also complete devastation of the peoples' food sources and societal infrastructure. The effects were devastating for the health and well-being of the communities. While prior to the dams, the nations were living off of the wildlife and plant life by the river, after their relocation they were forced to shift to a diet high in carbs, sugars, and fat, leading to dramatic increases in diabetes and generational health issues.[88]

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[82] Ibid., 245-248.; Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 217.

[83] Ibid., 192.

[84] Ibid., 191-192.

[85] Schneiders, "Flooding The Missouri Valley," 238.

[86] Janet McDonnell, "Reviewed Work(s)," review of *Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944—1980,* by Michael L. Lawson, *Great Plains Quarterly* 4, no. 2, (SPRING 1984): 137.

[87] Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 222.

[88] Ibid., 226-227.

In a report on the damages, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), a colonial institution created to manage the Indigenous population, described this tragedy as an "'opportunity' in Indigenous 'removal,' 'relocation,' and 'rehabilitation,' …[which could] sever Native people from the one thing keeping them from 'merging with the total population' and evolving beyond their 'primitive status.'"[89] They even described the destruction of the agencies as beneficial and with the potential to bring the "gift of democracy" to the tribes.[90] The agencies and engineers behind constructing the dams saw the tribes as dispensable and more easily movable than the nearby settlers, and that they were "underutilizing" the land.[91] This report places the Pick-Sloan Plan clearly within the framework and goals of settler colonialism. The project's aim was not only to build settler infrastructure, but to further project of elimination of the native. The Pick-Sloan project appears even more to be a project of Indigenous removal and assimilation when understood in conjunction with the termination policy that followed shortly after the dams were constructed. These policies terminated tribes and liquidated the reservations, displacing people to urban-centers and enabling the privatization of Indigenous lands.[92] It is estimated that 750,000 Indigenous people moved off of the reservation between the 1950s and 1960s as a result of termination.[93] Viewing this history holistically, attacks on resources have used as a tool since the initiation of the United States settler project. From the original structures of settlement, to home-steading, to the Pick-Sloan project,

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[89] Ibid., 220.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Schneiders, "Flooding The Missouri Valley," 244.

[92] Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 194.

[93] Ibid., 195.

this history shows the ways in which infrastructural projects have continued to double as displacement projects throughout the 20th century.

C. United States Settler Colonial Tactics: Denied Access and Denied Responsibility

Adding to the historical analysis, a discussion of the contemporary tactics and mechanisms of United States settler colonialism illuminates how the United States government perpetuates the water crisis today. Although these methods are frequently less visible than outright destruction during the past six centuries, they are equally ubiquitous and devastating. One of the primary mechanisms that perpetuates the water crisis and settler colonialism is the impoverishment of Indigenous nations. Through displacing Indigenous peoples from the resources that keep them alive and the practices of relationship to those resources, settler colonialism has created the foundation for Indigenous poverty. The lack of access to water that many Indigenous communities face further impoverishes them, placing them in a deliberate and vicious cycle. Indigenous people are impoverished at much higher rates than any other population in the United States. According to the United States Census Bureau, more than 28 percent of "American Indians and Alaska Natives" lived in poverty in 2014, while the United States national average was 15 percent.[94] In at least ten states, more than 50 percent of Indigenous people were unemployed.[95] Some tribes report far higher numbers of unemployment and poverty on their reservations.[96] This impoverishment is a consequence of United States settler

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[94] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 6.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

colonialism. Throughout centuries of settler colonial violence, Indigenous peoples faced forced displacement, genocide, assimilation policy in which communities were divided, criminalized for practicing their culture, and kidnaped and placed in boarding schools rampant with physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. These communities are still trying to heal and recover from the devastation and trauma of settler colonialism in their lands.

Such history cannot be disentangled from the current economic situation of Indigenous nations. Returning to the tribes who were displaced by the Pick-Sloan Dams, Estes demonstrates the economic consequence of this series of traumatic events: "When the river trade increased violence in the nineteenth century, the Oceti Sakowin escaped invasion by following the buffalo onto the plains. When the United States Army annihilated the buffalo, the survivors were forced onto reservations, where they found refuge once again in the lush river bottomlands where food and game abounded, subsistence agriculture flourished, and fresh water was plenty."[97] He describes the resiliency of these nations and how despite being displaced from their land, they adapted and developed "a mixed economy [that] consisted of subsistence hunting and gathering, along with small-scale agriculture and small-scale reservation cattle enterprises."[98] They were once again able to depend on the natural resources provided by the land and the water despite scarce employment. One man described how "mouse beans" were an essential source of protein for many families, and "the previous winter [he] had dug up some of these mouse beans and had 'enough to tide him over two weeks and [save] his family from starving.'"[99] However, when the Pick-Sloan Dams were constructed, these Indige-

[97] Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 192-193.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., 226.

nous nations were again forced to relocate when their institutions, homes, and resources from the land were flooded. Estes concludes the recitation of this history by explaining that after this event, many of the people ended up "penniless and homeless."[100] This anecdote demonstrates both the resiliency of Indigenous peoples in the face of an unending settler barrage against them and also the economic consequences of settler colonial violence and displacement. Furthermore, the United States government continues to keep Indigenous nations economically suppressed through "paternalistic federal policies that create a dense business-killing bureaucracy in Indian country."[101] Although the United States government does not maintain a deliberate policy of impoverishment with the aim of denying Indigenous peoples access to water, the impact of such actions aids in accomplishing the goal of settler colonialism by debilitating their communities and making resistance all the more difficult.

Lack of access to water affects nearly every part of life, including economic production, and, in many ways, makes life unlivable. The Native American Rights Fund and the Western States Water Council explain how lack of clean water in these communities "'has contributed to [poverty], unemployment and mortality rates on reservations that are much higher than those of adjacent non-Indian communities.'"[102] At a very basic level, the many hours a week spent hauling water is time that could be spent on work or education.[103] For instance, in the Navajo Nation, "some residents must drive 40 miles every few days to haul water home for drinking, cooking, and bathing," and can spend

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[100] Ibid., 229.

[101] Crepelle, "The Reservation Water Crisis," 172-173.

[102] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 6.

[103] Ibid., 5.

up to 200 dollars a month on gas for these trips.[104] The crisis also places challenges on schools where lack of heat or running water add extra challenges to creating a positive learning environment, with 34 percent of schools on reservations reported to be in poor condition.[105] Both agriculture and industries are also unable to function properly without water infrastructure, including irrigation, drinking water, or sanitation services.[106] Particularly when these services may be intermittent and unreliable, a business may face extra costs in repairing issues or finding other sources for water.[107] Given that one of the primary reasons that these communities lack water in the first place is poverty, further impoverishment as a result of the crisis demonstrates the cyclical nature of this process.

Despite the United States government's control over water resources, it denies its responsibly to provide Indigenous Nations with water resources or infrastructure. In the over 350 treaties, agreements, or Executive Orders made with different tribes, water rights are legally implied.[108] This means that although they are not explicitly stated, it is a right that is necessary in order to fulfill the objective of the treaty.[109] This right was upheld in the 1908 *Winters v. United States* ruling. The United States Supreme Court ruled against Winters, a private irrigator who claimed to have superior water rights, on the grounds that the United States reserved Indian water rights at the time of establishing the reservations.[110] The terms of the ruling were rooted in paternalistic and settler

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[104] Roller and Gasteyer, *Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States*, 38.

[105] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 5.

[106] Ibid., 6.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Anderson, "Indigenous Rights to Water & Environmental Protection," 347.

[109] Ibid., 346.

[110] Ibid., 347.

colonial logic; water was considered an implied right because the purpose of reservations was to assimilate Indigenous peoples into "a pastoral and civilized people."[111] However, the persistent lack of access to water demonstrates that establishing Indigenous people's right to water does not ensure access.

In order to understand why the United States holds this responsibility, beyond its legal right, it is necessary to understand the trust doctrine that defines the United States-tribe relationship. The trust relationship is rooted in a colonial and paternalistic relationship, in which the tribes are dependent and subservient nations within the United States.[112] It holds an inherent contradiction, which Robert Anderson articulates as, "on the one hand, tribes rely on the federal trust relationship as a shield that provides protection for tribal rights from state and local incursions. But, on the other, the United States has used the trust relationship to dispossess tribal land, decimate tribal societies, and drive some tribes to political extinction."[113] Despite this relationship, in which tribes are forced to be dependent on the United States government, the federal government claims that the trust duty does not include an obligation to provide tribes with water.[114] This, by default, places the onus on the tribal governments to supply their people with water. The Indian Sanitation Facilities Act of 1959 obligates the Indian Health Service to provide safe drinking water and sewage to Indian homes, yet it does not receive adequate fund-

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[111] Ibid.; Crepelle, "The Reservation Water Crisis," 161.; Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 207.

[112] Anderson, "Indigenous Rights to Water & Environmental Protection," 341.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Crepelle, "The Reservation Water Crisis," 173-174.

ing.[115] In 2016, Congress appropriated less than 4 percent of the funds necessary to address to the Indigenous water crisis.[116]

At the same time, given the trust relationship and the federal government's control over resources, tribes must go through the federal government in order to actualize their right to water. While a number of tribes have successfully gained access to their water rights and infrastructural funding through litigation and settlements, most tribes cannot afford these legal processes which can take decades and are expensive.[117] At the same time, the federal government has only approved 33 Indian water rights settlements in the past 30 years.[118] The economic conditions of the tribes compounds with their legal-political situation, creating deep institutional barriers for Indigenous people to access the water that they have both a legal and ancestral right to. The trust relationship entraps Indigenous people in a vicious cycle of bureaucracy, forcing tribal governments to be dependent on the federal government, while at the same time denying its responsibility to provide access to an essential resource like water and preventing tribal governments the resources and power to do so.

The water crisis facing Indigenous nations in Turtle Island today is a direct result of historical and ongoing settler colonialism. Destruction of land and water has been a tool used alongside genocide and displacement to fulfill the goals of settler colonialism: to eliminate the native. Throughout the history of the United States settler colonial project, the destruction of these resources has been paired with development of

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[115] National Resources Committee Democrats, *Water Delayed is Water Denied*, 12.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., 11-12.

[118] Ibid., 15.

settler infrastructure, such as irrigation and hydroelectricity. The denial of something so essential to existence has severe physical, material, social, and psychological effects on Indigenous communities. Given the many ways in which the United States government neglects the crisis and denies its responsibility to provide Indigenous people with just access to water, this issue can only be viewed within the larger project of settler colonialism.

CHAPTER III

THE PALESTINIAN WATER CRISIS AND ISRAELI SETTLER COLONIALISM

Palestinians face a severe crisis when it comes to water and many are unable to access the necessary quantity and quality of water to live on a day-to-day basis. In addition to long-term systematic issues, the Israeli state actively seeks out opportunities to demolish Palestinian water infrastructure, ranging from centuries' old cisterns, to new wells, to irrigation systems for olive groves, for the purpose of making life extremely difficult and painful for Palestinians. In this chapter, I will explain the current conditions, place the water crisis in the context of Israeli attacks on Palestinian water, and discuss the tactics used by the state to deny Palestinians the water they need to survive. Mirroring the logic of the United States, the Zionist settler project has targeted Palestinian use of water to displace Palestinians and make way for Zionist settlers. The Israeli state claims to have "made the desert bloom," and this has only been done by forcing Palestinians off of their land, denying them access to their own water, and over using the available resources in Palestine. The Israeli government uses an expansive range of tactics to prevent Palestinians from having stable and safe access to water.

A. The Palestinian Water Crisis: Lack of Access to Quality Water

The current water crisis that Palestinians face is the consequence of over a hundred years of settler colonial policies and actions which have displaced Palestinians and

taken their resources to make way for an Israeli state. The main water sources in Palestine are the Mountain Aquifer (beneath the West Bank), the Coastal Aquifer (beneath the Gaza Strip), the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River which flows from it.[119] There are also many springs that provide fresh water. However, the State of Israel controls how much water Palestinians can use from these sources and over extracts from them itself.[120] For instance, Israel extracts 83 percent of water in the West Bank, leaving only 17 percent for Palestinian use.[121] This is not proportionate to needs of Palestinians versus Israelis.[122] Israeli citizens consume four to six times more water than the average Palestinian located in the West Bank.[123] This contrast is particularly stark in "the Dead Sea settlements of Mitzpe Shalen and Qalya, both of which enjoy approximately 700 litres of water per person per day, while…the [nearby] Palestinian villages of al-Nuwei'ma and al-Hadidiya are struggling at humanitarian crisis levels of 24 and 22 litres of water per person per day respectively."[124] Palestinian access to water in the Gaza Strip is even more devastating. Israel can extract as much water as it wants from the Coastal Aquifer before it ever reaches the Gaza Strip, due to the aquifer's east to

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[119] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters: Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*, (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2009), https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE15/027/2009/en/, 10-11.

[120] The World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza - Assessment of restrictions on Palestinian water sector development,* (World Bank Group, 2010), http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/775491468139782240/West-Bank-and-Gaza-Assessment-of-restrictions-on-Palestinian-water-sector-development, v.

[121] World Health Assembly 58, *Health conditions of, and assistance to, the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories including Palestine*, (World Health Organization, 2005), https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/20388.

[122] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine: A Background," New York: Center for Economic and Social Rights, https://www.cesr.org/right-water-palestine-background, 1.

[123] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT,* (United Nations, 2011), https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-195880/.

[124] Ibid.

west flow and despite its being the only source of clean water for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.[125] The water from Wadi Gaza, which would naturally supply the Gaza Strip with another source of clean water, is diverted away from the Palestinian territory by an Israeli dam.[126] The disproportionate Israeli-controlled distribution of water in Palestine is only the first of many mechanisms that result in inadequate water access for Palestinians.

The statistics of Palestinians' access to water in all of historic Palestine demonstrate this disparity. In the West Bank, one of the largest concerns is consistent availability of water. According to one report, when access to water was defined as "'not available for at least one full day during the previous two weeks,'" the percentage of Palestinians with access to water went from 93 percent to 80 percent.[127] Another report showed that around 13,000 Palestinians living in Area C of the West Bank, which is under military occupation but not under the jurisdiction of the PA, are considered at high risk of water scarcity because they do not have access to the water network and are forced to depend on unreliable trucks.[128] A third of Palestinians are estimated to have no access to the water network.[129] Palestinians receive far less water than Israeli settlers in the West Bank. It is estimated that 50,000 Palestinians receive less than thirty liters per

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[125] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters*, 14.

[126] Ibid.

[127] David Brooks, Julie Trottier, and Giulia Giordano. *Transboundary Water Issues in Israel, Palestine, and the Jordan River Basin: An Overview*, (Singapore: Springer Briefs on Case Studies of Sustainable Development, 2020), 17.

[128] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[129] The World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza - Assessment of restrictions on Palestinian water sector development*, (World Bank Group, 2010), http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/775491468139782240/West-Bank-and-Gaza-Assessment-of-restrictions-on-Palestinian-water-sector-development, v.

person per day, while the World Health Organization recommends that one hundred liters per person per day are necessary for human dignity.[130] While Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have access to more water per capita, only 5 to 10 percent of the water is safe for drinking.[131] In East Jerusalem, Palestinians are denied access to the water network as they are forced to build homes without housing permits, and despite Israeli collection of taxes in the area, more than one third of households are not connected to the sewage network.[132] In the Naqab, the southern end of Palestine, Palestinian Bedouins who make up the majority of the population in the region have no access to water networks, and must use plastic hose hook-ups or unhygienic metal containers to transport water from a distance.[133] In northern Palestine, Arab villages face cut offs from the Israeli water company, Merkorot, limiting their ability to maintain everyday functions, as well as causing problems in schools and health care clinics.[134]

Poor quality of water compounds on the issue of water access for Palestinians. Even when connected, "only 1 percent of the population has access to improved drinking water that meets the standard of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator, according to 2016 data from the Local Government Performance Assessment."[135] Pollu-

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[130] Zayneb Alshalalfeh and Susan Koppelman, *Our Right to Water in Palestine*, (Life Source, 2012), https://www.blueplanetproject.net/documents/RTW/RTW-Palestine-1.pdf, 4.

[131] The World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza*, 28.

[132] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[133] Adalah, *Adalah's NGO Report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Regarding Israel's Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Adalah Arab Citizens of Palestine.* (Adalah, 2010), https://www.adalah.org/uploads/oldfiles/newsletter/ara/oct10/Adalah%20CESCR%20Report%20October%202010.pdf.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Brooks, Trottier, and Giordano, *Transboundary Water Issues in Israel, Palestine, and the Jordan River Basin*, 17.

tion of the aquifers due to waste water is a major issue. The Mountain Aquifer is becoming increasing threatened by seepage from untreated sewage.[136] While Palestinians are sometimes blamed for pollution, Israelis have disproportionate access to sanitation services compared to Palestinians. Only 1 percent of Palestinians in the West Bank have access to sewage systems that are connected to wastewater treatment plants.[137] While the Israeli government maintains treatment plants for West Jerusalem, the nearby Palestinian villages do not have access and as a result their waste water goes untreated into the West Bank.[138] In the Gaza Strip, the clean water and sanitation crisis is even more dire. Water in the Gaza Strip fails to meet quality standards requiring it to be free from micro-organisms, chemical substances and radiological hazards.[139] Entire cities have no access to water treatment and as a result rely on on-site septic pits or sewage lagoons, which often spill into the streets, leak, or collapse causing major health crises.[140] This sanitation crisis is also polluting the Coastal Aquifer that lays beneath the Gaza Strip and the Mediterranean Sea. According to World Health Organization standards, 95 percent of the water in the Coastal Aquifer—the Gaza Strip's only source of fresh water—is unfit for human consumption due to contaminants.[141] Pollution of the Coastal Aquifer results in diseases caused by lack of safe water, and consequently, the leading cause of

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[136] Ibid., 20.

[137] Ibid., 19.

[138] Ibid., 19-20.

[139] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[140] The World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza*, 30.

[141] Alshalalfeh and Koppelman, *Our Right to Water in Palestine*, 4.

morbidity amongst Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.[142] Palestinians face a deadly water crisis without consistent or adequate access to safe and clean water—a crisis which the Israeli state has created and perpetuates.

Water-related disease also severely impacts Palestinian health and well-being. In the West Bank, some communities have rates of water-related diseases as high as 64 percent and in more than a quarter of rural households one member suffers from diarrhea.[143] Furthermore, over half of these households were not able to bathe adequately for a period of more than two weeks due to inadequate water.[144] As a result of ongoing destruction of water and sanitation facilities in the Gaza Strip—and the inability to repair them—hepatitis A, typhoid, and acute diarrhea are widespread.[145] Diseases such as watery diarrhea and bloody diarrhea are the main cause of morbidity in the Gaza Strip.[146] High levels of pollution and sewage in water sources in the Gaza Strip also result in exposure to extremely high level of nitrate that causes serious illness or death in children.[147] In the Naqab, dehydration, intestinal infections and dysentery are a major factor in high mortality rates.[148] Attacks on water infrastructure directly result in death and illness in a high portion of the Palestinian population. For the rest of the chapter, I

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[142] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[143] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 2.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Hannah Boast, *Hydrofictions: Water, Power and Politics in Israeli and Palestinian Literature,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020, 154.

[146] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 19.

[147] Ibid., 29- 30.

[148] Adalah, *Adalah's NGO Report.*

outline the ways in which the Israeli government perpetuates Palestinian water scarcity through a logic of Palestinian removal for Israeli infrastructure and a variety of tactics.

B. Israeli Settler Colonial Logic: Targeting Palestinian Sustenance

The Israeli state has routinely destroyed Palestinian water infrastructure and resources for the purpose of Palestinian removal and for the state's own use of water. Its denial of Palestinian access to water has made life extremely difficult for Palestinians, particularly because of the importance of agriculture and the land within Palestinian society. The foundations of the Palestinian economy and society—agriculture and pastoralism—were dependent on established practices of water use and consumption. Farmers used strategies crafted over centuries, such as growing crops that did not require irrigation, like wheat, barley, and sorghum, and planting crops that would replenish the soil.[149] With a deeply engrained understanding of their ecosystem, they used terracing and avoided plowing to prevent erosion, planted trees far apart to reduce their water needs, and made agreements with Bedouins for herds to cross their land and provide fertilization.[150] In other parts of Palestine, Palestinians cultivated animals among the marshes, fished in lakes, and created small irrigation systems.[151] Within cities, water infrastructure was built to maintain industry and more urban agriculture. For instance, in Nablus, "[w]ater management lay at the heart of the city's success: twenty-two springs were channeled to the city's fountains, mosque courtyards, gardens, tanneries, dye and

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[149] John Brioch, "British Water Policy in Mandate Palestine: Environmental Orientalism and Social," Environment and History 19, no. 3, (2013): 262.

[150] Ibid., 263.

[151] Ibid., 263-264.

pottery establishments, and to the homes of the city's elite. Aqueducts carried water through the western valley, feeding irrigation canals and powering grain mills."[152] Terracing was used on the outer edges of the city, including olive groves, fruit orchards, and vineyards.[153] Water was central to Palestinian cultural and economic life, and legal systems were crafted around it.[154]

However, with the initiation of the British Mandate over Palestine, the British enacted a number of the laws and policies that greatly altered its water landscape and supported the Zionist settler project. While Palestinians land strategies had been oriented towards minimal alteration of the water landscapes and movement of animals between water sources, the British and Zionist colonial entities enforced practices that were reliant on machinery, chemicals, and water control.[155] For instance, the British instituted a law banning passage of animals through certain areas where they instilled water infrastructure.[156] Whereas under earlier laws, water was seen as a shared and public good, British laws determined what price water was to be sold at and fees could be charged for violating water laws, even if the new laws were contrary to the centuries-old practices of the region.[157] The effects of the approved British projects were devastating for Palestinian water use and practices. In the 1920's and 1930's, over 150,000 acres of

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[152] Annalisa Jabaily, "Water Rites: A Comparative Study of the Dispossession of American Indians and Palestinians from Natural Resources," *The Georgetown International Law Review* 16, no. 225 (2004): 227.

[153] Ibid., 228.

[154] Muna Dajani, Saed Khayat, and Amer Marie, "Water quality legislation in Palestine over the past century," *Environmental Sciences Europe* 24, no. 15, (2012): 3, https://doi.org/10.1186/2190-4715-24-15.

[155] Brioch, "British Water Policy in Mandate Palestine," 256.

[156] Dajani, Khayat, and Marie, "Water quality legislation in Palestine over the past century," 4.

[157] Ibid.

water sources such as lakes, wetlands, or springs were drained or altered, disrupting Palestinian use of the land both for subsistence and markets.[158] The British justified this interference at the expense of the Palestinians with the orientalist idea that Arabs demonstrated a "striking evidence of backwardness" and "uneconomical use of water."[159]

These practices and ideas favored and supported Zionist colonization of Palestine. The purpose of installing irrigation and drainage was to begin growing cash crops, controlling disease, and to improve Palestine's "absorptive capacity" for Jewish settlers.[160] The consequences of these projects necessitated Palestinian displacement and disrupted their way of life. For example, the Kabbara region was severely altered by the joint project of the British and the Zionists. After draining the area that had been full of springs, wetlands, and a small river, the British were convinced that the Palestinians would be unable to "improve" the land and granted 10,000 acres of this area to the Zionists.[161] This uprooted life for at least 840 people who were displaced and whose longstanding industries and animals were dependent upon the water sources.[162] In another case, the Palestine Land Development Company, a Zionist enterprise, created a plan to canalize part of the Jordan River and drain around 7,700 acres of swamps to support irrigation for 100,000 settlers.[163] The British and Zionist entities enacted these

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158 Brioch, "British Water Policy in Mandate Palestine," 255-256.

159 Neil Boneparth, "British and Mandatory Palestine," Whose Water is it Anyway?: A Timeline Analysis of the Role of Water in the Israel-Palestine Conflict, https://whosewaterisitanyway.wordpress.com/27-2/.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid.

162 Brioch, "British Water Policy in Mandate Palestine," 270.

163 Ibid., 274.

projects with the intention of forcing Palestinians into a sedentary and "modern" way of life and away from their traditional industries and practices.[164]

Throughout the Zionist colonization of Palestine, which originated during the British Mandate and prior to the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, land theft has been tied to demolition and destruction of Palestinian water sources. By the end of the Nakba, in which Zionist militias removed 750,000 Palestinians from their land via tactics of terrorization and violence, the new State of Israel occupied 78 percent of historic Palestine.[165] In 1947, only 5.8 percent of cultivated land had been owned by the Jewish population.[166] Within the early years of declaring a state, the Israeli government began developing the necessary infrastructure for settler life in Palestine. Beginning in 1953, the State of Israel began constructing the National Water Carrier, which including pipelines, pumping stations, reservoirs, and canals that diverted water from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River to the newly declared state.[167] In 1959, the Israeli government created the Israeli Water Law, which claimed that all people are entitled to use of water.[168] The construction of the National Water Carrier at the same time demonstrated that the legal right to water never has and was never intended to apply to Palestinians. This was only the beginning of Israeli infrastructure depriving Palestinians of water in order to ensure access for Israelis.

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[164] Ibid., 275.

[165] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 136.

[166] Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010), 30.

[167] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 1.

[168] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 22-23.

Legalized discrimination and inequality was further codified by laws passed in 1967 after a second Israeli military assault in which the Israeli military began the occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula (the latter of which was later returned to Egypt). Within a year of the new military occupation, three significant military orders were issued that shifted control of all water resources in these territories to the Israeli military. Together, they gave the Israeli military complete control over all water-related issues, required Palestinians to obtain a permit before constructing water installations, and annulled all previous agreements pertaining to water in the West Bank.[169] The consequences of these three orders gave the Israelis explicit control over all water in Palestine and made it illegal to construct water infrastructure without the permission of the military, which is almost never granted. In the first twenty-nine years of the law, only thirteen permits were granted.[170] In 1967, with the beginning of the occupation, the Israeli military took over the Jordanian West Bank Water Department and in 1982 privatized the West Bank water infrastructure, giving it to the Israeli national water company, Merkorot. An Israeli official's remarks on water in the West Bank show how central obtaining water resources is to the Israeli settler colonial project. He asserted that the West Bank is the "most important long-term source in the [national] water system."[171] This statement, paired with the history of Israeli water projects and military orders, demonstrates how the Israeli settler colonial project is integrally tied to control of water.

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[169] Ibid., 15.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 1.

The Oslo Agreements, negotiations held between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1993, codified the Israeli occupation and control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including water resources. Although the Oslo Accords gave the semblance of Palestinian sovereignty by establishing the Palestinian Authority (PA), the Israeli government and military has maintained its power through a number of economic, political, legal, and social mechanisms. In the case of water, the Oslo Accords established that the PA is responsible for managing water and the necessary infrastructure for the Palestinian population.[172] However, the second agreement of the Oslo Accords in 1995 determined that Israel had access to six times the amount of water of Palestinians, despite the West Bank being the extraction site of the water resources.[173] Additionally, Palestinian water rights in the West Bank were set to be determined in the "final status negotiations" along with many other issues—an agreement that 25 years later has yet to come to fruition.[174] The agreements made in the Oslo Accords serve primarily as deeper entrenchment of Israeli domination over Palestinian land and society. This history overall shows that since before the creation of the State of Israel, Zionist entities have established control over water resources at the expense of Palestinians.

C. Israeli Settler Colonial Tactics: Demolition and Displacing Responsibility

The Israeli state and military use an all-encompassing variety of strategies to prevent Palestinians from establishing their own water infrastructure. This includes bla-

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[172] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 21.

[173] Dajani, Khayat, and Marie, "Water quality legislation in Palestine over the past century," 1.

[174] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 1; Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 24.

tant destruction and demolition, pollution, and a bureaucratic system preventing Palestinians from constructing their own infrastructure. Through regular practice of demolition of infrastructure, military assaults, and settler violence via pollution, Israel has destroyed mass amounts of water infrastructure and created the water crisis for Palestinians. In addition to homes, the Israeli military has demolished cisterns, wells, water heating solar panels, and water tankers.[175] Between 2000 and 2006 Israeli forces demolished at least 244 wells in the Gaza Strip and, along with settlers, routinely shoot holes in Palestinian water tanks to render them unusable.[176]

These more regular occurrences coincide with periods of aggravated violence against Palestinians that also result in severe destruction of water infrastructure. During Operation Defensive Shield, the World Bank, UNDP, and USAID estimated that between March and May of 2002, damage to water infrastructure in the West Bank at the hands of the Israeli military amounted to seven million U.S. dollars.[177] Jan Shelby describes the chaotic scene caused by destruction of water infrastructure during the siege:

> As with every other area of Palestinian life, water supply services were gravely affected. Pipes were ruptured by tanks and trenches, water spilling down the streets; pumping stations and wells ran out of diesel fuel or lost their electricity supplies; roof-top water tanks were deliberately shot at by Israeli troops; and under curfew, local engineers were often unable or too frightened to undertake necessary repairs. In Nablus, around 30,000 people went without piped water for 11 days in a row. In Ramallah, at least 25,000 people lost their supplies for several days. In Jenin, amidst the piles of corpses and bull-dozed sewerage pipes, children screamed for water and drank sewage. Oxfam estimated that, as of 4

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[175] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 2.; Ibid., 45.; Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[176] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[177] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 2.

> April, 400,000 people in Ramallah, Nablus, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Tulkarm were without access to running water.[178]

This scene of absolute chaos and destruction shows how the Israeli military specifically targeted Palestinian water infrastructure, likely with the understanding that attacking such infrastructure is an attack on the ability of Palestinians to live. The 2009 siege on the Gaza Strip, named Operation Cast Lead by the Israeli military, created similar devastation. Damages to water wells, water networks, waste water facilities, and water tanks added up to six million U.S. dollars, and resulted in widespread suffering.[179] New wells were destroyed that had supplied water to over 50,000 Palestinians, along with emergency sewage treatment plants.[180]

Even after the invasions, Israeli bombing and use of tanks continues to target water infrastructure. Israeli forces have destroyed agricultural roads, water supply lines, sanitation networks, water storage tanks on rooftops, and cisterns in cities such as Beit Hanoun, Gaza City, and Rafah.[181] Attacks on electricity in the Gaza Strip worsen the already dire water situation. In 2006, Israel destroyed the Gaza electrical power plant and continues to reduce the amount of electricity it provides to the Gaza Strip as collective punishment.[182] As a result of infrequent electricity, water and sewage systems are disturbed and water supply is cut off. Lack of fuel has halted the functioning of desali-

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[178] Boast, *Hydrofictions,* 153.

[179] Alshalalfeh and Koppelman, *Our Right to Water in Palestine*, 7.

[180] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[181] Ibid.

[182] Ibid.

nation plants.[183] Furthermore, the blockade on the Gaza Strip, which was imposed beginning in 2007, prevents necessary equipment for maintaining or rebuilding damaged infrastructure.[184] Such attacks serve no purpose to Israel other than making life unlivable for Palestinians and furthering the project of Palestinian death and removal.

Returning to the issue of water quality, the Israeli state and settlers deliberately target Palestinian water sources and pollute them, making them dangerous and useless to Palestinians who rely on them for daily needs and livelihoods. One recorded instance of such attacks occurred in 2001 when the Israeli state poured 3.5 million cubic meters of wastewater mixed with rainwater in the Gaza Strip.[185] This is a regular practice of settlers in the West Bank. In 2016, Al Jazeera reported that 12 percent of settlement sewage is untreated and flows into Palestinian streams.[186] Similarly, Israeli companies are moving their high polluting industries to hilltops in the West Bank to avoid Israeli environmental regulations and, as a result, polluting Palestinian streams and land with untreated industrial waste.[187] In addition to these systematic practices, Israeli settlers also commit smaller scale attacks by deliberately polluting Palestinian's drinking water. For instance, in the West Bank city of Tuwani, settlers have taken over water cisterns and in other cases dumped dead chickens, soiled diapers, and toxic chemicals in water

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[183] The World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza,* 29.

[184] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 31-32.

[185] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 2.

[186] Brooks, Trottier, and Giordano, *Transboundary Water Issues in Israel, Palestine, and the Jordan River Basin*, 19.

[187] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 2.

reserves.[188] In the village of Madama, settlers relentlessly attacked its sole water source, a nearby spring, and the water pipe that brings its water to the village's tank.[189] When Oxfam, an international aid agency, attempted to repair the damage, they were fired upon by settlers, and eventually settlers poured concrete into and dumped rocks in the pipe to prevent use of the spring.[190] These are all examples of the ways in which the Israeli military and settlers actively enable the Israeli settler colonial project against Palestinians.

The Israeli state also uses the construction of the wall in order to separate Palestinians from their water sources. While the Israeli state claims to be constructing the wall for Israeli security, the wall primarily functions as a means of taking control of and displacing Palestinians from land with resources, including water.[191] In reality, the majority of the wall is constructed on Palestinian land—not on the border claimed by the Israeli state after the Nakba.[192] Thousands of Palestinians are separated from their land or water as a result of the wall, particularly the in areas best suited for agricultural development and water infrastructure.[193] One hydrologist, Abdellatif Khaled, from the agricultural hub of the region, Jayyus, described the situation: "'We are here and our water is there. Many farmers don't have permits to go to cultivate their land where the

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188 Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 Alshalalfeh and Koppelman, *Our Right to Water in Palestine*, 7.

192 Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 52.

193 Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.;* Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 2.; Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 52.

water is, and on this side of the wall we suffer from lack of water.'"[194] Jayyus was cut off from two thirds of its land as well as six groundwater wells and the water network.[195] Another town, Qalqilya, lost 80 percent of its land and eleven wells.[196] As another mechanism for seizing Palestinian land, the Israeli forces set up spontaneous checkpoints and declare areas closed without cause, preventing Palestinian access to agricultural areas and water resources.[197] For example, in the village of Susiya, after a series of attacks on their water infrastructure, the Israeli forces declared the land a "closed military area," where the village's thirteen rainwater harvesting cisterns were located.[198] Such unjustified closures cover more than one third of all the land in the West Bank.[199] The Israeli military has applied a similar tactic in the Gaza Strip by establishing a "buffer zone" along the claimed border, destroying 350 wells in the process and preventing Palestinians access to land and water.[200]

Despite these many extreme and overt tactics employed by the Israeli state to deny Palestinians access to water, the Zionist narrative still blames Palestinian institutions for the water crisis. This strategy is used in other aspects of Israeli settler colonialism; the existence of Palestinian agencies or organizations that are tasked with different aspects of governance are used as justification for Palestinian suffering, when in reality

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194 Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 52-55.

195 Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

196 Ibid.

197 Ibid.

198 Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 3.

199 Ibid., 18.

200 Alshalalfeh and Koppelman, *Our Right to Water in Palestine*, 4.

Israel is responsible for imposing such conditions. The Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) was established by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1995 to manage and maintain water infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, given Israeli control of water resources and the previously explained military actions preventing construction of Palestinian infrastructure, the PWA is unable to enact its purpose.

Additionally, the use of a permit system created by the Israeli military theoretically allows Palestinians to legally construct water infrastructure, but in reality makes it nearly impossible. In order to obtain a permit to build, a Palestinian must first gain approval from the Joint Water Commission, in which the Israeli members have veto power over the Palestinians.[201] For projects in Area C, a Palestinian must then obtain further permits from the Israeli military. This includes a vast range of construction projects necessary for Palestinian water access including wells, reservoirs and sanitation systems, but also projects such as piping for Areas A and B that pass through Area C.[202] This encompasses 61 percent of the West Bank.[203] A majority of the permits are denied, and if a Palestinian chooses to construct without the permit for their survival, these structures are most often demolished by Israeli authorities and lead to forced displacement.[204] As a result of these bureaucracies, the Israeli state can claim that Palestinians have equal access to water and if they are not receiving the needed amount of water, it is the fault of the Palestinian government.

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[201] Ibid., 6.; Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters,* 33.

[202] Ibid., 35.

[203] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

[204] Ibid.

Even in cases where Palestinians are not overtly forced to leave due to attacks on water infrastructure, the resulting economic hardships can have similar consequences. When Palestinians are denied access to springs or wells, they are often forced to travel several kilometers to buy water and hold it in tankers.[205] This is the most expensive way to obtain water, but it is often their only choice. It is made even more expensive because of roadblocks and checkpoints set up by the Israeli military that force water tankers to take far longer routes for their deliveries.[206] Water from tankers can cost up to twelve times more than water from a piped water network and carries greater risk of disease.[207] According to an Oxfam study, Palestinians can spend "as much as 39 [percent] of their household expenditure on purchasing water."[208] This is completely unsustainable, especially given that 70 to 90 percent of the Palestinian workforce is unemployed.[209] Palestinians often desire to become self-sustainable by growing their own food and maintaining livestock, but cannot due to lack of water.[210] They are also forced to rely on water provided by Merkorot, the Israeli national water company, which extracts water from the Mountain Aquifer.[211] This overall devastation of the economy is tied to lack of access to water given that agriculture would normally be the largest sec-

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[205] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters*, 6.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Alshalalfeh and Koppelman, *Our Right to Water in Palestine*, 6.

[208] Center for Economic and Social Rights, "The Right to Water in Palestine," 2.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters*, 43.

[211] Ibid., 36.

tor in the Palestinian economy.[212] Without the opportunity to expand in agriculture, Palestinians are forced to seek employment by Israelis as unskilled labor increasing Palestinian economic dependence on the Israeli economy.[213]

Palestinians themselves understand the Israeli attacks on their water infrastructure as motivated by the essential aim of settler colonialism: to remove Palestinians. One of the ways that denying Palestinian's access to water achieves this goal is by making life incredibly difficult for Palestinians. A resident of Susiya, a town located between two settlements that is reliant on agriculture, Fatima al-Nawajah explained that,

> "Water is life; without water we can't live; not us, not the animals, or the plants. Before we had some water, but after the army destroyed everything we have to bring water from far away; it's very difficult and expensive. They make our life very difficult, to make us leave. The soldiers first destroyed our homes and the shelters with our flocks, uprooted all our trees, and then they wrecked our water cisterns. These were old water cisterns, from the time of our ancestors. Isn't this a crime? Water is precious. We struggle every day because we don't have water."[214]

All of the mechanisms used to attack Palestinian access to water take an economic and emotional toll on Palestinians and is tied to Israeli settlement expansion. In the case of Fatima al-Nawajah's village, demolition or confiscation of cisterns, homes, olive groves, sanitation facilities, and water tanks coincided with pressure from Israeli military and settlers for Palestinians to leave.[215] In another village, Humsa, Israeli forces

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[212] Brooks, Trottier, and Giordano, *Transboundary Water Issues in Israel, Palestine, and the Jordan River Basin*, 15.

[213] Amnesty International, *Troubled Waters*, 18.

[214] Ibid., 1.

[215] Al-Haq and Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene Group, *Israel's Violations of Human Rights Regarding Water and Sanitation in the OPT.*

confiscated water tanks and tractors—the sole water infrastructure of the community—and to reclaim their property. The people of Humsa were forced to pay an unreasonable fine and pledge to leave and never come back to their land.[216] These villages show clear examples of how devastating attacks on water can be for a community and how forced removal is inherently tied to these attacks. Since the beginning of the Israeli settler colonial project, it has relied on extraction and devastation of Palestinian resources in order to remove Palestinians from the land and establish a settler state. The ongoing attacks on water are once piece of this violent and devastating process.

[216] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

BUILDING SOLIDARITY FROM TURTLE ISLAND TO PALESTINE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In this final chapter, I momentarily return to the more theoretical aspects of Indigenous-Palestinian solidarity in order to address a number of misconceptions about the viability of comparison. While one of the purposes of this paper is to frame water crises in Turtle Island and Palestine as a result of settler colonialism, the second part of this project is to further develop the conversation on how to conduct comparative settler colonial studies in a useful manner. Therefore, I debunk these misconceptions as a point of departure to understand how, in the case of water, United States and Israeli settler colonialism can be compared. Although some of the comparison involves the conditions of Indigenous nations in Turtle Island and Palestinians, the point of analysis is not to compare these two populations, but rather to understand the connections between the two systems that mark both peoples' lives. Understanding the intersections and similarities in the logic, tactics, and conditions produced by both settler polities is what enables a further analysis to unfold and uncover new ground for Indigenous-Palestinian solidarity.

In her article, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives: Settler Colonialism and Museum Politics," Lila Abu-Lughod advocates for the usefulness of the settler colonial framework to the Palestinian struggle for liberation. She also articulates the reasons often used to justify Palestinian's hesitation to compare themselves to Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and so-called Australia. The objection is centered around the settler em-

phasis on inclusion of Indigenous people or reconciliation over the atrocities that settlers committed, which prevents and seeks to justify the lack of real redress or reparations for the violence that occurred.[217] This objection is particularly strong as the language of the Palestinian struggle has for so long been rooted in anti-colonial national liberation.[218] Palestinians also object to the overemphasis of defining Indigenous peoples by their culture, which reduces them to a static, romanticized, and historical people and fails to recognize that Israel has not used assimilation as a settler colonial tactics against Palestinians.[219]

While these reasons are valid, they reply upon a logic that makes an essentially faulty assumption about Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island and Australia and settler colonialism itself. Barakat locates this fundamental misconception in the paradigm of success or defeat.[220] Framing settler colonialism in this manner actually furthers the settler colonial project by assuming that it has been able to fully eliminate Indigenous peoples from their land—an assumption which is false in every location around the globe. This myth, created by settlers, has actually been upheld in a number of cases by scholars and activists. For instance, Barakat criticizes Lorenzo Veracini's article "The Other Shift" because of the ways in which he rhetorically divides Palestine as two distinct parts and claims that settler colonialism has been completed within Israeli-claimed borders.[221] Similarly, Mahmood Mamdani falls into a trap of discussing settler colonialism

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[217] Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives," 8-12.

[218] Ibid., 10.

[219] Ibid., 8-10.

[220] Barakat, "Writing/righting Palestine Studies," 351.

[221] Ibid., 350.

in Turtle Island as a past occurrence.[222] Yasser Arafat, in a speech in the early 2000s spoke with pride that "Israel has failed to wipe [Palestinians] out. We are here, in Palestine, facing them. We are not red Indians."[223] This narrative has primarily been used regarding Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, but in any location this assumption fails to recognize the ongoing presence of Indigenous people and their continued resistance.[224] Bhandar and Ziadah recognize this logic as a hindrance to solidarity, as it erases ongoing Indigenous presence and resistance.[225] Abu-Lughod raises the topic of how many Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island, much like Palestinian communities, are refusing recognition as a solution and that Palestinians should look at other Indigenous peoples' "[experimentation] with non-national sovereignties, new solidarities, and different forms of activism, legal and otherwise."[226] She argues that overcoming these falsities can create ground for solidarity that opens up new ways of conceiving of Indigenous futures.

For these reasons, it is important to explain the root assumption of this paradigm and why it is inaccurate. One of the main sources of this misconception comes from the difference in how blatantly Israeli policy aims to displace Palestinians and make their lives impossible in comparison to United States policy towards Indigenous peoples in the last 50 years. It is true that the largest wave of dispossession and genocide by settlers in Turtle Island occurred in the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries as opposed to the

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[222] Ibid., 352.

[223] Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives," 14.

[224] Bhandar and Rafael Ziadah, "Acts and Omissions."

[225] Ibid.

[226] Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives," 14.

more recent and ongoing Nakba in Palestine. Waziyatawin explains in her comparison, that "[i]t is only because the US militarily subjugated Indigenous Peoples by the end of the nineteenth century that we do not see the level of surveillance and checkpoints, or an Apartheid Wall on every reservation."[227] The temporal difference of Israeli and United States settler colonialism sometimes leaves the impression that the United States state is no longer perpetuating its project of settler colonialism and consequently, Indigenous nations in Turtle Island are defeated. This is, of course, untrue. Although settler colonialism in the United States is less visible at times, Waziyatawin describes how "even when we are not in prison we do not have to see physical walls or barriers because we know that if we violate the invisible borders we will join the ranks of the incarcerated or dead."[228] Despite the lack of visibility at times of ongoing settler violence against Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island, it is ever present.

Another essential reason for the increased visibility of settler colonialism in Palestine and Turtle Island is the demographic difference. This is sometimes used as justification for viewing settler colonialism in Turtle Island as a completed project, whereas it should be viewed as an explanation for the source of the intensity of Israeli violence against Palestinians. While there are only 4.9 million self-identified American Indians constituting less than 2 percent of the total United States population, 6 million Palestinians remain in Palestine, with another 6 million in the diaspora, compared to 9 million Israelis. Given these numbers alone, it is clear why the United States government views

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[227] Waziyatawin, "Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours," 173.

[228] Ibid., 174-175.

Indigenous peoples as less of an active threat to its stability than how the Israeli government views Palestinians.

However, the United States government has demonstrated that it will immediately use its vast militarized forces against Indigneous communities when they resist. Waziyatawin points out that "if [Indigenous people] step one toe out of line, or challenge US colonial power in any way outside of the prescribed legal routes open to [them]," the United States government and settlers are ready to attack Indigenous people with the same vigor of Israeli soldiers or settlers.[229] Nick Estes recounts how he and a number of other water protectors were brutalized by the police and random passersby in a mall in Bismarck for simply "smelling like campfire."[230] The United States has sent its military to respond to Indigenous resistance from the American Indian Movement's Occupation of Wounded Knee to the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock. Additionally, the United States government continues many practices that support its settler colonial project via further corporate and state encroachment onto Indigenous land, denial of access to sacred sites and resources, and devastation of the land —as exemplified by the water crisis.[231] Indigenous peoples, no matter the size of the population, are always viewed as a threat to the continuation of settler colonial entities, as their mere presence is a constant reminder of its failure.

Salaita articulates a useful alternative to this logic: Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island and Palestine are "contemporaneous agents who directly inform [each other's]

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[229] Ibid., 183.

[230] Estes, *Our History is the Future*, *24*-26.

[231] Waziyatawin, "Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours," 183.

conditions."[232] This framework can help us to understand how the water crises in Turtle Island and Palestine are connected through United States and Israeli settler colonialism. In the context of water, Annalisa Jabaily is the only scholar who has conducted a comparative analysis of the situations. She focuses on how, despite difference in the justification used by the United States and Israeli for seizing control of land and water, they are actually both rooted in settlement ideologies and displacing the native.[233] She argues that because both populations are disproportionately thirsty, they are forced to make claims for water to the very states that depend on the "fantasy of [their] non-existence."[234] One of the main parts of her project is to discuss the historical relationships to water held by Indigenous people in Turtle Island and Palestine in order to pressure the settler discourses that deny them.[235] This work offers a useful analysis as it places the water crisis within the context of settler colonialism while remaining grounded in indigeneity. I seek to deepen the comparative analysis that Jabaily begins, and more closely interrogate the methods used and conditions created by United States and Israeli settler colonialism.

The most significant similarities can be observed in three areas: the underlying logic guiding United States and Israeli destruction of Indigenous resources, the tactic of establishing an Indigenous institution of governance as the scapegoat for crises, and the drastic overlap in the conditions that Palestinians and Indigenous people currently live under. While these three arenas of comparison could be drawn in regards to many as-

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[232] Salaita, "American Indian Studies and Palestine Solidarity," 21-22.

[233] Jabaily, "Water Rites," 226.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid.

pects of settler colonialism by both states, using the information outlined in Chapter II and Chapter III, I focus on how they can been seen in the settler colonial use of water as a weapon. In Chapter I, I discussed the ways in which water is integral to projects of settler colonialism, both because of the settler's need for it and its ability to aid in removal of Indigenous people. The result of this role of water—as being essential for life—makes the way in which settler colonial states use it as a tool slightly less explicit than other tactics, such as outright genocide or home demolitions. The term used by Yazzie, "living death," describes the condition that Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island and Palestine face every day. While often issues of water—ranging from extraordinary challenges to obtain water to living with diseases from poisoned water to losing cultural practices as a result of destruction—do not result in immediate death or disappearance, they make life unbearable. This has both psychological and physical consequences and is equally as violent.

To help understand the violence of living death, I employ the definition by Rob Nixon of "slow violence." Nixon sees slow violence as the "delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all."[236] While at times, United States and Israeli attacks on water can be quite violence and visible, in many cases both the assault and the harm is more covert. Critically, Nixon explains that slow violence is exponential because it acts as a "major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded."[237] The ma-

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[236] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

[237] Ibid., 3.

terial, physical, and psychological harm compound to disintegrate all aspects of peoples' lives and in doing so result in literal death and death of a people as social and cultural entities. This is what Indigenous people in Turtle Island and Palestine are resisting in many ways in the current moment. As both the United States and Israel somewhat attempt to maintain an appearance on the international scene of being democratic, this tactic seeks to slowly erase the native.

The practice of both settler states and settlers themselves reveal the logic that is deep within settler colonialism itself: if you destroy the land and the water, you are essentially destroying the native. In Turtle Island, settler use of "scorched earth" campaigns can be compared to the settlers burning olive tree groves or tearing up of the irrigation systems in Palestine. While these are not explicitly murderous acts, they are aimed at denying the needed sustenance to Indigenous people. They also take a psychological toll, as people see their livelihoods and cultures burning before their eyes and knowing that any attempt to stop it will likely result in further violence. This is a recurring theme, the act of "eliminating the native" is a combination of physical damage and psychological harm, making life unlivable. This is the case for both the Pick-Sloan Project and British/Zionist water infrastructure projects. Although the dams constructed along the Mississippi River did not kill anyone, they destroyed the infrastructure of the reservation communities along with the connections of people to the land that had been sustaining them with Indigenous practices. They forced people to relocate into cities where they had no economic opportunities or social infrastructure. The impact, in terms of erasing Indigenous people, was essentially the same as outright genocide. The construction projects in Palestine, which occurred within decades of the Pick-Sloan dams,

also did not cause direct death, but demolished the foundation of economic and social life for Palestinians. Being unable to continue their agricultural and pastoral practices destabilized Palestinians—to make way for Zionist settlers. All of these projects were motivated by "modernizing" indigenous people and forcing them to become sedentary and agricultural. This claim was tragically ironic given that Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island and Palestine had practiced agriculture for thousands of years prior to European colonization.

A second central mechanism that both the United States and Israel use is the establishment of institutions for managing Indigenous peoples. These institutions enable both settler states to deny their responsibility in the ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples. This enables the settler governments to create a semblance of sovereignty while both states maintain complete authority over the material conditions of Indigenous peoples. In Turtle Island, the United States established the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an institution that historically played a far greater role in supporting the settler colonial project of the United States and managing the Indigenous population than advocating for them. The United States also uses the existence of tribal governments to justify its denial of basic services, such as water, to Indigenous people. This move appears to be in recognition of the sovereignty of Indigenous people on reservations, however, the United States government does not uphold the same respect for Indigenous sovereignty when it comes to building pipelines through Indigenous land or returning public land to its Indigenous stewards. These governments, in many cases, do not have the financial resources to create infrastructure for their people and do not have control over how water sources might be polluted beyond their territory. In Palestine, the estab-

lishment of the Palestinian Authority in the Oslo Accords has, at large, been used as a tool of justification for all of the conditions Palestinians face—which in reality are imposed by the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Despite the existence of the Palestinian Water Authority or the Joint Water Commission, the reality is they do not have material control over water resources in Palestine or the ability to construct infrastructure. In both places, the main function of these institutions is for settler colonial states to deny the material deprivation that they are imposing upon the Indigenous peoples of the land.

The last similarity of significance is the conditions facing Palestinians in Palestine and Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island. First, the challenges in access to water and the economic impact display overwhelming similarity. Both populations are already impoverished (as a result of settler colonial violence) and are often forced to pay much higher rates for water than their settler counterparts and go to great lengths to obtain it. Indigenous peoples are often not connected to the water networks and are forced to travel long distances to get clean water, in the case of Turtle Island, or must purchase water in tanks brought from a distance, in the case of Palestine. Without this access to water networks, both populations are forced to drink poor quality water. Due to consumption of high levels of nitrate, both Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island and Palestine face the threat of blood disorders, intestinal issues, or death. Water-related diseases severely impact the rates of morbidity in both populations. In addition to making life challenging and painful, losing elders to disease at an early age also can have devastating consequences in terms of loss of cultural or linguistic knowledge. Many of the diseases also severely impact children. For instance, both populations face disproportionately high rates of diarrhea and other gastro-intestinal issues. The inability to access

good quality water drastically impacts the ability of Indigenous peoples in Turtle Island and Palestine from living stable and healthy lives— creating the conditions of living death.

When the perceived challenges to comparing United States and Israeli settler colonialism are held in conversation with the historical and temporary similarities, a deeper understanding of the connectedness of both settler regimes is possible. Acknowledging that both settler colonial projects are ongoing negates the myth of "successful" settler colonialism, and provides the framework to understand that the temporal and demographic differences do not prevent comparison. Despite the fact that the largest thrust of forced removal and genocide occurred earlier in Turtle Island than in Palestine and although the percentage of Indigenous population to settler population is higher in Palestine than in Turtle Island, both Indigenous peoples are still there and resisting the settler colonial projects. Without these faulty assumptions, the temporal and demographic differences can create new ways of analyzing the similarities in the logic and tactics of settler colonial states.

Furthermore, this framework requires a shift in how comparative questions are asked. For instance, given the earlier genocidal settlement in Turtle Island, we can ask, in what ways has Israel sought to and continues seeking to employ the same tactics that the United States has used and continues to use? At the same time, given the ongoing nature of settler colonialism in Turtle Island, we should also ask how do tactics developing by Israel and used against Palestinians travel to Turtle Island and are used against Indigenous people? Additionally, how does the shared settler logic and narratives of benefit and embolden both states? This line of thought, which understands comparison

in terms of exchange, further facilitates an understanding of settler colonialism as ongoing and both states as benefitting from each other's tactics for removal. There is a need for more comparative research on United States and Israeli settler colonialism to answer such questions. In order for this research to be most useful for Indigenous solidarity in resistance to settler colonialism, analysis and material evidence of exchange should be fleshed out. It is important to note that further comparative analysis must be completed within a framework of indigeneity. Returning to the politics of citation that I discussed at the beginning of this paper, such a praxis includes centering Indigenous history, resistance, and narratives and ensuring that Indigenous scholars have a central role in comparative analysis that takes place going forward. Without being rooted in Indigenous knowledge production and movements, such analysis cannot be rooted in a political praxis of decolonization.

With further research and a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of United States and Israeli settler colonialism, it will become more clear how acts of solidarity by Indigenous people in Turtle Island or Palestine can disrupt the processes of settler colonialism in both places. This brings us back to the original question motivating and guiding this work: What do we do with this knowledge of similarity, both in conditions and in methods of settler states? The main purpose of the analysis presented in this paper has been to elicit and name the conditions, which can then be used as a basis for strategic resistance to settler colonialism in specific locations and as a global project. Ultimately, the Indigenous communities in Turtle Island and Palestine who are engaged in struggle determine whether or not this analysis can assist in informing their struggles. However, an understanding of the similarities in logic and tactics can be use-

ful for a number of reasons. First, as Indigenous narratives exposing the realities of United States and Israel settler colonialism become more normalized and widely accepted, effective strategies for poking holes in settler narratives can be shared. Second, resistance tactics employed by Indigenous peoples that are successful in Turtle Island can be shared with Palestinians facing similar challenges, and vice versa. With more analysis of the exchange between and interconnectedness of both settler states, the possibilities of such actions become more apparent. Third, solidarity can open up possibilities for shared resistance that acts against the United States and Israeli settler states simultaneously. Comparative analysis within a framework of exchange opens up possibility to disrupt both settler colonial projects by acting in strategic unity. With these possibilities, and the ongoing potential for solidarity between Indigenous peoples, comparative analysis of United States and Israeli settler colonialism is a critical component of collective Indigenous liberation.

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