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Germany's anti-antisemitic complex and the question of settler colonialism

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ABSTRACT

This discussion article argues that contestations about antisemitism in current German public discourse and an uncompromising and institutionally mandated support for Israel, even in the face of plausibly genocidal actions, are related to and enabled by an unreconstructed embrace of a settler colonialist ethos. In this context, an unwillingness to come to terms with a history of colonial violence is only one component among multiple determining factors. And yet the question of settler colonialism, while not immediately recognisable, should be recovered and foregrounded to explain the operation of what is here defined as an anti-antisemitic complex, where institutions, the media, and the law combine to enforce a ban on discussions of Israeli history and policies towards Palestinians.

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Settler colonialism is a specific mode of domination that requires that Indigenous life-worlds be destroyed so that new worlds can be established or extended. It is rarely mentioned in German public discourse beyond denunciations of those who refer to it, especially if they are contesting Israeli policies towards the Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories. This neglect is significant, because German settlers have colonised in many locations throughout history: abroad and nearby, under someone else's sovereignty and under the authority of the German state, in the Middle Ages and in the long nineteenth century, in the Americas and in Australia, in Africa and in eastern Europe. These days, even if the German state is not directly promoting the settling, it is supporting others who are doing it. This support includes silencing dissent and critique, and the state, the government, most institutions, and many of the guardians of public discourse, maintain that it is antisemitic to protest Israeli settler colonialism. This article is a response to this silencing and these accusations.¹

In a recently published intervention, historian Dirk Moses documents a deeply worrying situation, citing numerous episodes of state-mandated proscription for discourse that is deemed antisemitic.² Silencing decrees in contemporary Germany are enforceable and have been enforced. The cornerstones of this repression apparatus are the bipartisan

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support for Israel as Germany's 'reason of state' (*Staatsräson* – 'reason of state', but also 'national interest' – a doctrine Chancellor Angela Merkel articulated in 2008), the state's official adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism (an embrace that occurred in 2017), and a ban on support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, or even propinquity to it (a parliamentary motion to this effect was approved in 2019).³ (The notion that someone could be 'BDS-adjacent' and punished for presumably stationing around such a location is particularly weird: it is an expression that utilises a spatial metaphor to convey the probability of an unexpressed thought crime – but it has real consequences.)

These proscriptions carry significant weight in Germany, where most academics are state employees and where public funding crucially supports culture and the arts. This predicament is worrying, even if it should be noted that several legislatures and institutions beyond Germany have in recent years similarly adopted the IHRA's definition.⁴ While a determination to patrol the boundaries of admissible discourse is not a characteristic that is limited to Germany, this paper focuses on Germany to explore the usefulness of adopting a settler colonial studies lens when appraising political imaginaries.

Censorship, draconian repression, and even thought policing, as when in August 2024 a Berlin judge deliberated that saying 'from the River to the Sea' should be inadmissible, require explanation.⁵ Hannah Tzuberi and Nahed Samour insightfully describe the 'moral-emotional economy of post-unification Germany'.⁶ Their outline is persuasive, offering a springboard for further analysis: the German state desires to 'reconstitute itself as a liberal, democratic, and above all, anti-anti-Semitic polity', they note, but this reconstitution 'has illiberal and violent consequences', and 'creates the need for a "new anti-Semite" against which Germany can re-invent itself as a protector of Jews'.⁷ They observe that 'the Jew' in this context is 'an empty foil that enables a German moral conversion from anti-Semitism to anti-anti-Semitism', a fantasy involving the 'birth of a morally "improved" German collective, made of citizens who have "learned their lesson"'.⁸ Thus, they conclude, 'in recognizing Jewishness, Germany recognizes *itself*'.⁹

It sounds innocuous, but there is an underside to this process. As such a recognition is necessarily predicated on permanent repression,

a polity that defines itself via a conversion from anti-Semitism to anti-anti-Semitism needs someone else to stand in for everything that Germany today is not: someone has to be the illiberal, undemocratic, and anti-Semitic threat against which the good citizen can define herself as that which she is *no longer*.¹⁰

The repressive consequences of this identification are significant, especially when it comes to discussing the question of Palestine, as those who 'seek to enter the public arena can discuss Palestine on "German terms" only and are marked as subjects that require *preemptive* monitoring and sanctioning'.¹¹ Refusing to hear anything that is not uttered in one's terms is deeply worrying, a narcissistic trait, usually a symptom of an underlying psychological condition. The outcomes? Externalisation and disavowal: 'the performance of Jewish collective difference and political agency will be exclusively relegated to the State of Israel', while Palestinian 'political subjecthood and demands for equality' are seen as 'an annoyance to be ignored or a threat to be criminalized'.¹² By simply being themselves – Palestinians are in the way. They are used to it.

This repression is counterproductive, especially because, as this article's first section outlines, clearly recognisable antisemitic tropes are mobilised to sustain it. As all investigations of the country's 'moral-emotional economy' and what lies behind it are demoralised, foreclosure replaces denial, which does not seem like a breakthrough (more on this in the conclusion of this article). This economy, however, must be interpreted, and its underlying dynamics of identification should be explored. With this task in mind, this paper suggests that, far from being antisemitic, settler colonial studies as analytic offers a heuristic device that may be productively added to the conceptual toolbox. To push back against the presumptive antisemitism of analyses of settler colonialism in Palestine, this paper's first section discusses the IHRA definition's implicit yet substantive reliance on antisemitic logics. This paper's second section outlines a failure or unwillingness to critique colonialism and its consequences; while a third section focuses on the imaginary that enables a German collective identification with Zionist settler colonisers. Genuinely opposing antisemitism requires an opening more than foreclosure.

Antisemitic anti-antisemitism

In Germany (and in the US, where it is also officially enshrined in legislation, and elsewhere), the IHRA's definition of antisemitism sets policy – it is designed to do so. There are many reasons to query the wisdom of officially embracing a particular definition of antisemitism – perhaps it is unwise that there should be a legally enforceable definition of a specific ethnoracial hate, especially when other hateful phobias spread unchecked, and as distinct phobias invariably communicate with antisemitic structures of feeling, sharing significant borderlands, efforts to isolate and repress a specific hate remain unworkable. Besides, limiting debate by way of legally enforced definitions of acceptable discourse and associated repression is ... limiting.¹³ But the main reason why the IHRA definition should be questioned is that it is itself problematically antisemitic.

First and most importantly, the IHRA definition is antisemitic because it collapses all 'Jews' with 'Israel', and then Israel with the policies pursued by its government. This collapse produces disquieting silencing effects; it silences numerous Jewish voices as well as, obviously, Palestinian ones. Indeed, it silences a large supermajority of Jewish voices by way of a reiterated synecdochical process. The Jewish Diaspora is way larger than Jewish Israel, a substantial population currently subjected to Israeli sovereignty cannot elect its government, while the current Israeli administration is beholden to the demands of a radical minority of the settlers who are residing in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – a minority of a minority of a minority. In particular, and in relation to the IHRA definition's current enforcement by German authorities, it is disturbing to see functionaries and administrators telling everyone, including Jewish individuals (distinguished philosopher Nancy Fraser, for example) what is and what is not acceptable discourse.¹⁴ Collapsing a vibrant diversity and presuming a single and unified Jewish agency was always a mainstay of historic antisemitism (i.e. the antisemitic discourse prevalent in the nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth). The IHRA definition and the German state are incorporating this mainstay.¹⁵

A second reason IHRA should be seen as antisemitic is that it assumes an unchanging political will, another mainstay of historic antisemitism. Israeli politics and policies are dynamic, constantly changing, always contested – this is what happens in a democratic

polity, even in an ethnoreligiously exclusivist one – and foreclosing critiques of Israeli colonialism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories cannot logically coexist with, say, an embrace of the previous Israeli policy of ostensibly forgoing further settler colonial expansion by appearing to be pursuing a peace process. And it is disturbing to see German state officials deliberating which Israeli policies are acceptable and which are to be proscribed. Presumably, the Antisemitism Commissioners may one day retroactively revise their previous determinations, should a change of policy ever occur. What was ‘antisemitic’ one day would become official state policy, and what was legitimate would be retroactively classified as ‘antisemitic’. The German state is taking sides in an intra-Jewish struggle pitting a cosmopolitan tradition against an ethnonationalist and exclusivist political project. State support for one section of the Jewish community and diaspora against other ones was once frightening routine. I remain suspicious.

The reasoning underpinning the IHRA definition is that a critique of Israeli policies should be seen as equivalent to proclaiming that Israel does not have a right to exist. This passage is especially problematic. Whereas the definition is offered as a defence of Israel, and it is intended as such, as it links the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories with Israel’s very right to exist, it is also an implicit confirmation that Israel can only be a colonialist polity, that a colonialist ethos is foundational to its existence, and that the polity is unreformable (like someone saying that a particular man is being abusive, and someone else responding that such a critique denies them the right to be a man, which, now that I think of it, is precisely what the defenders of patriarchy have always said). Ascribing to ‘Jews’ an irredeemable drive to dominate is yet another mainstay proposition of historic antisemitism that is being reproduced by the IHRA definition.

On the contrary, those who critique Israeli contemporary and past colonialism, the supporters of a democratic ‘one state’ solution for example, who maintain that Israel could be something else, perhaps even a noncolonialist polity representing all those who are subjected to its sovereignty, are not being antisemitic. Maintaining that it is inherent to the ‘Jewish’ polity that it should be ethnoreligiously exclusivist, the IHRA definition fails to imagine and deliberately disallows a possible different political dispensation for Israelis and Palestinians. Besides, the IHRA definition embraces an aggressive form of exclusivist nationalism and categorically rejects multiculturalism as a political possibility – again, a classic trait of historic antisemitism.¹⁶ Asserting that critiquing Israeli colonialism amounts to denying its right to exist is like saying, and it was said at the time, and it was propaganda, that resisting the fascist regime was equivalent to denying Germany’s right to exist. The country of course existed before and after the fascist regime, while the resisters were opposing Germany’s right to exist *as a fascist state*. The enemies of fascism were being more imaginative than the fascists. This should not surprise.

A third reason why the IHRA definition is antisemitic would have been clearly recognisable to observers of public discourse during the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth, that is, before antisemitism and Islamophobia diverged and became distinct sociopolitical phobias. The IHRA definition is antisemitic because it denies the political self-determination of a ‘Semitic’ national collective: the Palestinians. (Whatever ‘Semitic’ may be: it was a category invented for ethnoracist purposes by nineteenth century comparative linguistics – I am using scare quotes, and definitely do not condone essentialising and racist categories – but the point is that since the nineteenth century *all* ‘Semitic’ peoples have been targeted in different ways by antisemitism). Surely the IHRA definition

should be applicable to all those being targeted by antisemitic hate. Today's Palestinians are the descendants of the original 'Semitic' peoples of the country; the land was not originally promised to them because they were already in the land, and a promise about something one already has would have made no sense. In accordance with the IHRA definition, the very occupation of the Palestinian Territories may be considered an antisemitic undertaking, as it denies Palestinians the right to a self-determining state. Similarly, and in accordance with the IHRA definition, extending the right to self-determination exclusively to the 'Jewish people', as the 'Nation-State Law' that was enacted by Israel in 2018 undoubtedly does, should be seen as antisemitic. How can 'anti-antisemitism' be unevenly applied across distinct ethnonational collectives targeted by antisemitism?

Beyond the IHRA definition, it is often considered that many immigrants to Germany should be presumptively deemed antisemitic – those hailing from Palestine and other Arab countries in particular – as if it was a sociopolitical phobia one was born with. Contemporary German discourse about 'imported antisemitism', an argument premised on Islamophobic assumptions and leading to Islamophobic utterances, targets individuals who have entered the country but are perceived to not belong to it, as they are presumed to diverge from its 'civilisational' norms and expectations.¹⁷ Antisemitism is thus externalised.¹⁸ Recent calls to demand that an expression of unconditional support for Israel be a condition for citizenship, a requirement that would apply specifically to immigrants hailing from targeted countries, epitomise this logic. In these instances, a concern with antisemitism leads straight to Islamophobia and distracts from actual endogenous antisemitism. That immigrants should be presumed irredeemably untrustworthy, like the targets of historic antisemitism once were, is a worrying outcome of contemporary instantiations of antisemitic anti-antisemitism. It is disquieting indeed that there should be an officially sanctioned hierarchy of different 'Semitic' peoples premised on perceived conformity to specific civilisational standards.

How can the paradox of antisemitic anti-antisemitism be explained? Elad Lapidot offers a forceful critique of anti-antisemitism that focuses on epistemology. In his reconstruction, anti-antisemitism rejects antisemitism's claims to know 'Jews', but by doing so, it also rules out any knowledge about Jews, a category that thus becomes inscrutable (an alleged inscrutability was also a trope traditionally evoked in antisemitic utterances).¹⁹ For Lapidot, the 'Jews have come to signify the limit or end of philosophy'.²⁰ This 'limit' pertains to intellectual traditions that disregard contributions emanating from the Global South or indigenous epistemological approaches, but as far as Western philosophy is concerned, the limit is substantive.

The German politics of Holocaust-centered memory, a relatively recent development, may be considered in the context of such philosophical impasse. These politics are a defining feature of post-reunification Germany, consolidated during the Red-Green coalition administration of 1998–2005, after decades of intense debates (and denialism), and further developed during the following administration presided by Angela Merkel.²¹ Susan Neiman has perceptively observed for decades the politics of German memory and their evolution, and if she thinks there is a problem, then the situation is probably dire.²² In a November 2023 *New York Review of Books* article, she commented on an obvious deterioration:

it isn't the absence of historical reckoning with the Holocaust but a twist on it that has led today's Germany into a philosemitic McCarthyism that threatens to throttle the country's

rich cultural life. In the past three years, German historical reckoning has gone haywire, as the determination to root out antisemitism has shifted from vigilance to hysteria. Every application for grants or jobs is scrutinized for signs. Allegations of antisemitism, regardless of the source, serve as grounds for revoking prizes and job contracts or canceling exhibitions and performances. Although police statistics show that over 90 percent of antisemitic hate crimes are committed by white, right-wing Germans, Muslims and people of color have been the most heavily targeted by media campaigns that have cost several their jobs.²³

Neiman explains: '[r]ecent developments in German politics explain how the culture changed so quickly' (that said, it is likely that critical voices may want to contest Neiman's representation of a 'rich cultural life'). In 2017, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party entered parliament. Its ascendancy was driven by anti-immigrant 'fervor'. The crisis ushered in hysteria.

Then again, the ascendancy of an explicitly fascist political party with a mass following is more a symptom of an underlying malaise than the cause. An era is ending, and a new one has already been proclaimed (Chancellor Olaf Scholz famously identified an 'historic turning point' in 2022).²⁴ The country is deindustrialising – perhaps the need for someone to blame is being acutely felt. Like in Wilhelmine Germany Jews were supposed to pose an existential threat, in the contemporary liberal and democratic federal republic it is a fantastic combination of indigenous and exogenous, or 'imported', antisemitisms that is seen to pose an urgent threat. Industrialisation led to tumultuous transformation and sustained immigration, and the rise of antisemitic sentiments is often explained with reference to these processes. Tumultuous transformation and immigration undoubtedly apply to the post-Merkel German context – could the growth of state-mandated anti-antisemitism be related to these processes?

Anti-antisemitism could then be seen as a form of surrogate antisemitism, which explains how the far right in Germany and elsewhere can move seamlessly from one to the other.²⁵ Once, social contradictions associated with rapid industrialisation found an outlet in an aggressive-defensive and repulsive antisemitic sensibility; today, contradictions associated with deindustrialisation are displaced onto an institutional form of anti-antisemitism that is presented as a defensive response. Antisemitism was once described as the 'socialism of fools' – widespread and distorted structures of feeling premised on paranoid theories about Jewish 'influence' amidst growing social tension. Contemporary anti-antisemitism may be seen as a displaced response to growing contradictions.²⁶ Is contemporary Islamophobic antiantisemitism today's socialism of fools?

I see a recursion: current fantastic ideas about the putative origins of an Euroatlantic Judeo-Christian transnational collective (and associated anti-antisemitism) are functionally homologous to past fantastic racist pseudoscience commenting on the 'Aryan' origins of a national community and associated antisemitism.²⁷ I am not arguing that Germany is now what it used to be: pointing out homologous relations is not saying that something is like something else, it is about similarity in relationships. Think about this: there are currently 'Semitic' individuals in Germany who are presumed to be irredeemably alien, untrustworthy, and un-German by authorities because of their ethnoreligious background and identification.²⁸ Their careers in jeopardy, many are self-censoring, some are actively silenced.²⁹ They are the victims of a form of antisemitism that paradoxically speaks the language of anti-antisemitism. Again, how is this even possible?

The questions of colonialism and settler colonialism

The task is to focus on possible ways out. Far from offering an ‘antisemitic’ viewpoint, settler colonial studies can help unpacking the ways in which actual antisemitism is cleared for public consumption in the name of anti-antisemitism. Of course, in Germany, antisemitism and the country’s support for Israel are bound to be intertwined in complex ways.³⁰ Not just intractably complex, but one result of the simultaneous multiplicity of concomitant questions too. In this context, as argued below, a missing collective reckoning with the crimes of colonialism, including German colonial crimes, should be considered a contributing factor. We should productively focus on Germany and Europe’s other alterities, not just the Jewish question, the colonial question too, because the two questions are imbricated. In Wilhelmine Germany, Jewish individuals often went to the ultramarine colonies and fully assimilated. Colonial efforts and the assimilation of Jewish difference, however, are still related, and in the contemporary predicament, as I argue below, it is many Germans who identify as Jewish colonists. The result is a type of reverse assimilation – still assimilation (a worrying trope and demand of classic antisemitism).

And yet, in contemporary German public discourse, colonialism is not often considered problematic. Debate about addressing the legacies of colonialism is comparatively lagging there, especially when considering the more robust Anglophone critical historiographies of colonialism (indeed it is ‘postcolonialism’, which in German parlance is a stand in for all critiques of colonialism, that is typically considered suspect – as it emerged during the ‘Mbembe affair’ in 2020).³¹ Colonial studies exists and is vibrant, but its ability to impact public discourse remains limited – a predicament that has been insightfully described as ‘amnesia’.³² No need for apologies, no need for a reckoning, reparations represented as gifts or concessions; and as affect shapes the perception of colonialism in questionable ways, colonialism remains an unresolved *vulnus*.

Sebastian Conrad offered an authoritative call for the ‘deprovincialisation’ of the German experiences of colonialism. He acknowledged that German colonialism ‘has not occupied centre-stage in most accounts, neither of European imperialism nor of German history itself’, and that the ‘colonial experience was deemed marginal and insignificant’.³³ Conrad’s reconstruction of debates about German colonialism focuses on the ways in which colonialism has been externalised, as if Germans performing atrocities beyond the seas were somewhat irrelevant to German history, as if the country and its colonies could be seen as ‘separate entities’.³⁴ A ‘global history corrective’ was ‘timely and necessary’, Conrad concluded in 2013. Little changed since then. But now, the corrective seems even more urgent.³⁵

Lara Fricke outlines the reasons why German public discourse routinely assumes that colonialism is not that bad after all and links a belief in the Holocaust’s incomparability with a denial of colonialism.³⁶

If guilt entails confession and if the insistence on the Holocaust’s uniqueness obstructs a proper acknowledgement of German colonialism, it can be inferred that the affect of guilt within German memory culture does not include guilt about colonialism. Therefore, I conceptualise German guilt as expressed in the memory culture as twofold: guilt about the Holocaust, and the absence of guilt about colonialism. The belief in the Holocaust’s uniqueness, thus, serves not only as a confession, but also as a refusal to confess to the crimes of colonialism.³⁷

This 'uniqueness' is a crucial element of what Moses refers to as the current German 'catechism' (for those who do not comply, accusations of 'relativisation' are always at hand – the crime of relating, both in the sense of narrating and in the sense of considering in relation).³⁸ On the other hand, as shame becomes a resource that is to be turned into pride, a witness is required – Israel. In the context of such a frame of mind, the 'role of Israel as a legitimate witness of German amendments' cannot be challenged, Fricke observes.³⁹ Colonialism in general is denied; the genealogy linking colonialism and genocide is denied, even when evidence is produced.⁴⁰ If wrongdoing is admitted, an apology must be qualified with significant disclaimers. Postcolonial Namibia was awarded peanuts. Redress, if you could call it redress, a donation without real guilt.⁴¹ If a critique of colonialism is foreshadowed, it is shut down (a spatial logic becomes operative: a critique of colonialism is admissible, in papers, for example, but not utterable in public places, locales marked by specific taboos about what can and cannot be said about colonialism).⁴²

But German *settler colonialism* in particular is foreclosed – not just denied.⁴³ In the absence of a critique of colonialism, in the imagination, the settler remains alone, toiling in a sociopolitical void, settling land that is perceived as ontologically empty – mere space – an immaculate colonist without colonialism. Thus, colonialism must be defended against 'postcolonialism', and it is defended, especially in the press, but surely the settler, the emigrant-settler, the settler on the frontier, the German pioneer, the quiet tiller of the soil, may be left alone ... This settler is a fantasy, accompanied by a collection of images completely disconnected from historical reality, an imaginary of the 'frontier' that has now been completely disqualified. But it is a powerful fantasy, nourished by cherished images involving children's books and successful boardgames where various groups of settlers compete but do not go to war with each other. And yet, the 'frontier' is not a romance; it is a deathzone – no noble Winnetou there, ennobling the usurpers. The settlers covet the land and the lifeworlds of others and violently dispossess Indigenous collectives. If they are not being violent it is because they have already violently dispossessed, or someone else did it. The settlers may embody or epitomise qualities one approves of, but they are thieves. If they are not directly dispossessing, they are acquiring land from someone else who is.

Without an understanding of the consequences of this foreclosure, as it hinges on it, the German state's support for what has been described as Israel's 'human right to colonize' would remain inexplicable.⁴⁴ It is an unquestioned imaginary, populated with peaceful settlers that enables a defence of colonialism in general, the discursive staging area from where a defence of colonialist atrocities and exploitation can be mounted. It is perhaps not a coincidence that contributions from Australian scholars have been relevant to this debate – Australia is, after all, where settler colonial studies as a scholarly field first emerged and consolidated. Eminent scholar of Australian settler nationalism Ghassan Hage was defenestrated (he lost his job at the Max Planck Institute in early February 2024 for espousing 'antisemitism as defined by German law', a development that originally prompted the writing of this article).⁴⁵ Moses, another Australian, likewise is excommunicated. Both have written extensively about settler colonialism (I am using military and ecclesiastical metaphors because the question of colonialism in German historical debates looks indeed like a thirty years' conflict).

We witness an entirely unreconstructed settler colonial imaginary, in academia and beyond.⁴⁶ A crucial even if implicit argument in this context is that denying Israel the ability to colonise others would replicate the antisemitic excision of Jews from 'the West'. Western Europeans practiced colonialism and were defined by it; depriving Zionists in Israel-Palestine of their 'right' to colonise would amount to antisemitically singling them out. Germany was also allegedly excised from the West through a denial of its 'right' to colonise distant lands after WWI, and this analogy also contributes to reflexive identification.⁴⁷ But this identification and affect is at once completely oblivious of Palestinians as human beings, and very narcissistically German-centric. It is not a minor detail: remaining focused on oneself and oblivious to the humanity of others is one good definition of a sociopathic disposition.

The question of identification and settler colonial studies

Appraising a collective inclination to identify with the Zionist settlers in Israel-Palestine and their polity is thus crucial to explaining Germany's anti-antisemitism complex. In an insightful intervention, Martin Braach-Maksvyts emphasises postwar West German identification with Jewish 'pioneers' in newly established Israel in the context of Germany's '*frustrated*' colonialism.⁴⁸ This 'solidarity and admiration for Israel', Braach-Maksvyts argues, 'were less an expression of atonement for National Socialist crimes than a form of redemptive proxy colonialism'.⁴⁹ Braach-Maksvyts also links these structures of feeling with Germany's postwar 'cultural and physical rebuilding process'.⁵⁰ There were many returnees too, and they were resettling – settlers endowed with inherent rights and political support. Frustration and identification produce powerful effects and affects, but it is an identification with 'peaceful' pioneer settlers mediated by fantastic representations of colonisation processes that underpins a fantastic reading of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The dynamics of identification should be explored; settler colonial studies can help.

Beyond the 'sturdy' settler pioneer, other idealtypical figures of the settler colonial situation populate a particular imaginary and propel the process of identification. For example, the Israeli Jew who is 'indigenous' to Palestine, has indigenised there, or will indigenise at some point in the future. It is also a fantasy, and a settler colonial studies interpretative lens, premised on a relational understanding of the ways in which 'settlers' and 'indigenes' are reciprocally constituted in the context of an unequal relation, explains that Zionist settlers cannot be 'indigenous' to Palestine, unless an unequal relationship marked by displacement and violence is discontinued (if indigeneity is constituted by permanence *and* subjection, wondering how long it will take before settlers turn into natives is like measuring how long must a captain of industry exploit his workers and visit his factory before he turns into a proletarian – it makes no sense). The historic connection that the Jews entertain with the land in Israel-Palestine is meaningful and significant, this is undeniable, but it is not the ontologic connection of an Indigenous collective (incidentally, even the biblical story that is mobilised to support Zionist claims recounts that the Jews were a collective before they entered the land, that they conquered it, and that there were other peoples in the land – this is not a claim to indigeneity). Not being 'indigenous' does not mean that Israeli claims are illegitimate – settler collectives establish meaningful historic relationships to land; it does mean, however, that notions of a

symmetrical conflict opposing similar national projects pitted against each other while dwelling on the same land lose coherence.

Besides, ascribing 'Jews' to Israel and deeming them 'indigenous' to it, as many contributors to German public discourse recurrently reiterate, in accordance with understandings of indigeneity that are oblivious to the operation of settler colonialism as a mode of domination, is a way to crucially imply that Jewishness is not co-constitutive of German-ness, and that is not indigenous to Germany – classic antisemitic reasoning. 'Reforestation' the country with Jewish life is a current policy objective and is celebrated, but only as long as it remains an exogenous plantation. Celebrations of the current revival of Jewish life appear less miraculous if one considers an obsessive restatement that Jews are indigenous to somewhere else (and therefore forever alien).

On this point, Moses poignantly remarks on the ways in which 'philosemitism' continues 'to view Jews in Germany as guests, not fully German, and the Jewish community as representing a foreign state, Israel', before concluding that 'reforestation' views Jews as 'Jews in Germany (*Juden in Deutschland*), not as German Jews or Jewish Germans'.⁵¹ While afforestation as a metaphor directly evokes the plantation, a quintessentially colonial formation, this assertion of an indigeneity belonging to somewhere else is a poisoned gift: Jewish life in Germany is to be protected, the country's self-representation as a liberal and democratic polity depends on it, but will never be organic or fully belonging. Philosemitism replaces antisemitism, but an unbridgeable alienation that takes the form of a spatial externalisation is simultaneously restated. Old style antisemitism is just behind the corner.⁵²

Other figures populate this imaginary and further propel identification: the survivor from the destruction of the European Jewry and the expellee from Arab countries arriving to newly established Israel – refugees. These historical figures are real, and it is unsurprising that identification should be enabled by them, especially in the case of Germany. They are real, but not current, and a focus on settler colonialism as a distinct mode of domination highlights that it is in Israel-Palestine that survivors were turned into settler colonists in the context of a relationship of domination subordinating Palestinians. The intention of the Zionists was to save Jews from antisemitism, but the refugees, as far as Zionism as a political movement was concerned, in its search for statehood and sovereignty, were always settlers to be.⁵³ This specificity does not make Zionism an outlier in the global history of settler colonial expansion, settler colonial projects are recurrently driven by the prospect of 'saving' the future settlers from some mortal danger, real or imagined, from religious persecution, from abject poverty and famine, from the possibility of revolution, from the loss of national or even manly attributes, and much more. All settler political projects convert immigrants into settlers – this is what they do and the source of their demographic power. At some point, the refugees become settlers. Zionism triumphed and built a powerful polity. Now settler colonial domination extends over the whole of the land.

Identification is also possible because colonial relations and history are routinely and deliberately obscured. Zionism is a settler colonial movement, and its spokespersons historically said so, proudly, even if the Zionists do not hail from a single imperial metropole – indeed all settler projects are constituted by an ingathering of settlers hailing from many distinct locations and backgrounds. As sovereignty travels with the settlers to the frontier, the settlers resent the metropole's power and routinely agitate to assert their sovereign

prerogatives. Again, Zionism shares this experience with other settler colonial movements; it is not an outlier. Besides, Zionist settler colonialism operated and operates in a geopolitical context where the struggles of settlers against the Indigenous collective interact with imperialist ambitions – those of the British during the Mandate, and later, and now, those of the United States.

But also, and this should be emphasised, those of postwar and contemporary Germany. Today, linking Germany's 'reason of state' and Israel's safety extends the country's sovereignty and produces clearly observable colonial reverberations. It is a circumstance where a segment of a polity's sovereignty is projected outside of itself, a distortion of the Westphalian model that has important precedents; after all, all the imperial metropolises engaged in protecting their colonies across the seas and understood that their reason of state lied in the safety of the colonial enterprises they sponsored. Should it not be considered that this configuration of the country's 'reason of state' necessarily implies an extension of its sovereign reach over the Palestinian national collective, a collective that resides in an area targeted by such a projection?

Moses also observes that Germany's 'philosemitic identification with Israel' makes it 'effectively part of German political space'.⁵⁴ It is thus a colonial predicament, and if public discourse does not see the colonial subjects the state acquires by way of its sovereign 'reason', and proceeds without question, this is also not unprecedented – the colonial metropolises routinely supported the settlers in colonies far away without really caring about the colonised. Ideas about trusteeship came later. That such a predicament is not explicitly recognised as colonial is remarkable. And yet, it should be emphasised, because German hypocrisy about international norms and human rights aside, an arrogation of colonial prerogatives over a colonised collective comes with fiduciary obligations the coloniser must observe in its relationship with its wards. It is often said that the British established an Empire in a fit of absent mindedness; in this case, Germany is extending one in a fit of unseeing.

A final idealtypical figure enabling identification with Israel is a spectre: the putative Israeli refugee of an imagined future, a future that will follow the traumatic end of settler colonialism.⁵⁵ The assumption of this fantastic projection is that the only alternative to settler colonialism is, inevitably, a form of reverse ethnic cleansing, that the settlers must depart if their rule comes to an end. It is this hypothetical refugee of a dystopian future that renders antisemitic all challenges to Israel's determination to operate as an ethnonationalist and exclusivist colonialist state. Challenges to this determination, it is often argued, undermine Israel's right to exist. This logic is premised on a series of implausible synecdochical passages – first, the distinction between the state and the policies it pursues is collapsed, whereby an attack against a policy becomes an attack against the state, then a perceived attack against the state is conflated with a denial of its right to exist, and then an imaginary attack against its right to exist is further conflated with an attack against all Jews, wherever they may be.

But it is speculative fiction – a spectre deliberately evoked for political reasons. On the contrary, a focus on settler colonialism as a specific mode of domination confirms that the Israel-Palestine conflict is not exceptional (the very opposite of an antisemitic singling out or double standard). A focus on settler colonialism would enable comparisons with a growing body of international practice, where the settler colonial state is reconfigured in novel constitutional arrangements that enable Indigenous self-determination and

sovereignty. And coexistence: the settlers – their descendants – do not leave. There is no reverse dispossession. Reconciliation processes in the settler societies – processes that have been pursued with varying degrees of determination since the 1990s in many settler societies – are primarily about desisting from further colonising, not undoing dispossession. They are about the future. The settler polities initiate and pursue these processes, they are fiercely contested, and many Indigenous collectives remain sceptical about their outcomes, but foreclosure is finally overcome. The settler polities sometime even apologise. No double standard, there are many settler societies in most continents; no demonisation, the focus is on decolonial processes and reconciliation; and no delegitimation, the task is to craft more suitable political arrangements. The sky does not fall.

Conclusion: there are alternatives

Far from being antisemitic, settler colonial studies as analytic can help. It contributes to explaining identification with Zionist settler colonialists, and it may productively shed light on Germany's post-unification dispensation. One can observe a typical settler colonial predicament, where rejection of the prior turns the polity into a 'new' community that defines itself politically and imaginatively like the settler polities do. Unified post-Cold War Germany resembles a settler colonial polity – the 'moral triangle' is not unique to it (settler colonialism is recurrently about a dynamic triangulation involving settlers, and Indigenous and exogenous alterities).⁵⁶ It was in a post-reunification German context that the question of multicultural immigration was reconfigured within a triangulation involving a subject position that is homologous to that of a settler colonialist: simultaneously facing indigenous and exogenous alterities – the former GDR was indeed 'colonised' and its indigeneity repressed (fantasies of 'remigration' were the alternative for those who could be represented as exogenous).

Like contemporary Germany, the settler polities also reject history – they leave it literally behind as they build a new polity in a 'new' place.⁵⁷ The settlers are unburdened in their new place, and their polities thrive in a new world, defining themselves against a prior that is to be replaced, and against exogenous alterities that must assimilate. Likewise, in contemporary Germany, the prior that is to be left behind is the Nazi past, obviously, but also the GDR's experience – as the polity settles on itself. Its plural democratic experiment, like those of the other settler societies, is premised on a negation of history, and it is significant that public discourse is especially concerned with the presumed endangered status of Holocaust memory in the former GDR, a region that is often pre-emptively perceived as antisemitic in ways that replicate the parallel presumption of antisemitism that is typically projected onto Muslim immigrants. Assimilation is the only prospect on offer, and the 'hysteria' Neiman refers to recalls the 'paranoid' settler nationalism Hage seminally traced in the case of Australia.⁵⁸

This homology can help explain the early 2024 rallies against the far right *and* in support of Israel; this convergence makes no sense without an appraisal of a specific triangulation, and without a consideration of a subjecthood suspended between the projection of indigenous and exogenous alterities. Of course, supporters of Palestinian human rights have nothing to do with far right extremists, other than being perceived as, respectively, the exogenous 'others' and the indigenous prior of a polity that operates as if it was settling on itself.

But when seen from a Palestinian point of view, this dispensation is even more perplexing, and the only substantive difference in the opposition pitting the political parties who are seen as capable of contributing to governance and those who are deemed inadmissible (i.e. the AfD) is that the former believe that it is acceptable to ethnically cleanse and settler colonise in Palestine, whereas the latter is of the opinion that ethnic cleansing should be performed at home too. A defense of the right to colonise across the seas is seen by mainstream opinion as crucial to maintaining political coherence, whereas the AfD is unwilling to abide by the classic colonial distinction separating colony and metropole. It is an uncanny predicament: both sides are thinking about colonialism, one implicitly proclaiming its admissibility somewhere, the other its desirability everywhere. And yet neither is referring to it. When seen from the outside, the reason of state appears unreasonable and unstable. How about agreeing that colonialism and ethnic cleansing are admissible nowhere? 'Never again' should also mean nowhere again.

After the paradox of an anti-antisemitism that operates like antisemitism and produces antisemitic effects, the tragedy: despite intentions and efforts, foreclosure replaces denial. Critical engagement is still pre-empted, as Holocaust education and the 'coming to terms with the past' (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) generates clearly recognisable foreclosing effects.⁵⁹ We need to focus on these effects; they follow closure. Denial is no longer, acknowledgement is mandated, but the 'coming to terms' becomes ritualised remembrance. Anything else that may be brought forward is seen as a relativisation that undoes the original coming to terms, a backsliding. Denial and foreclosure are left in their false opposition. Denial was reproachable, but foreclosure is always worrying; ask any psychoanalyst.

Recurring self-congratulatory references to a successful and collective 'coming to terms with the past' appear insincere in the face of an ongoing determination to ignore colonial violence in order to uphold settler colonial fantasies.⁶⁰ And if the German state mobilises antisemitic tropes, even if only implicitly, including that Israel can only be an ethnocratic colonial state, that it cannot be anything else, and that Jews can only be oppressors of Palestinians, we should be worried. It does so implicitly, and for political expediency, but this is not much of a relief – antisemitism is unacceptable whether it is unthinking or pondered, and whether it is explicit or implicit. Racist dehumanising is poisonous and poisoning. We should recognise this poisoning when it crops up, especially when this poison is offered as redemptive cleansing.⁶¹

Identification and a failure to consider settler colonialism as a distinct mode of domination produce an impasse, and just like it is often easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, it is easier to imagine the end of Jewish life in Palestine than the end of Israel's colonialism. This is when actively imagining and seeking alternatives becomes crucial: there are alternatives – there are decolonial alternatives – and the German experience can even help this imagining. The 'one state' versus 'two states' solution debate, for example, when seen in the light of recent German history, resonates in very special ways. The country, after all, also faced the 'one state/two states solution' dilemma, before eventually opting for a one state solution. Perhaps a two-state solution in Israel-Palestine would also end up being a temporary arrangement leading towards a single democratic polity to come. It was outright annexation in one case, it may be democratic federation in another. There are alternatives, and they must be sought, like there were alternatives in South Africa, even if the white supremacists there consistently argued that opposing apartheid amounted to denying the Afrikaner community's very

right to exist. They were racists and colonialists, and they were wrong. A majority of Afrikaners have embraced postapartheid South Africa.

Those who cannot or would not distinguish between Israel as a polity and its current ethnoracist and colonialist policies in the West Bank and Gaza, are being antisemitic as they falsely accuse their opponents of antisemitism. There is no reason to think that things cannot change, that Israel can only be a settler colonial state, and that Jews in Palestine can only be settler colonialists. Besides, saying or implying that Israelis or 'Jews' cannot change is probably the most antisemitic thing I can think of. Likewise, there is no reason to believe that the current German policy of closure should remain unchanged. The German legislators should officially disendorse the IHRA definition of antisemitism – especially because it is in significant ways an antisemitic text. They may adopt a better one. The 'Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism', for example, is likely to be a more suitable point of departure.⁶²

Notes

1. A pondered response to these accusations, for example, has been issued by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies statement. See BRISMES, 'Statement on Settler Colonialism, Decolonisation and Antisemitism', February 19, 2024, <https://www.brismes.ac.uk/news/brismes-statement-on-settler-colonialism-decolonisation-and-antisemitism>.
2. A. Dirk Moses, 'The German Campaign Against Cultural Freedom: Documenta 15 in Context', *Grey Room* 92 (2023): 74–93.
3. See Ruth Wittlinger, 'The Merkel Government's Politics of the Past', *German Politics and Society* 26, no. 4 (2008): 9–27. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism is available at: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>.
4. For example, in early May 2024, when the pro-Palestinian movement was most visible on US university campuses, the US House of Representatives approved the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which required that the Department of Education explicitly mandates the principles of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Censorship is real and is not limited to Germany.
5. See Deborah Cole, 'German Court Convicts Activist for Leading "From the River to the Sea" Chant', *The Guardian*, August 7, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/06/german-court-due-to-rule-on-from-the-river-to-the-sea-case-in-test-of-free-speech>. For an historical overview of this repression and its evolution, see Anna-Esther Younes, 'Fighting Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Germany', *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 5, no. 2 (2020): 249–66. Younes examines the developing German discourse of anti-antisemitism since the early 2000s and focuses on what she defines as the 'War on Antisemitism'. For a focus on contemporary developments, see, for example, Vanessa E. Thompson and Pinar Tuzcu, 'Policing Palestine Solidarity: Moral Urban Panics and Authoritarian Specters in Germany', *Antipode*, May 15, 2024, <https://antipodeonline.org/2024/05/15/policing-palestine-solidarity/>; Yassin al-Haj Saleh, 'Gaza in Berlin: Projection, Censorship, and the Othering Machine', *Al Jumhuriya*, May 31, 2024, <https://aljumhuriya.net/en/2024/05/31/gaza-in-berlin/>; Gert Krell, 'Germany, Israel's Security, and the Fight Against Anti-Semitism: Shadows from the Past and Current Tensions', *Analyse & Kritik* 46, no. 1 (2024): 141–64.
6. Hannah Tzuberi and Nahed Samour, 'The German State and the Creation of Un/Desired Communities', *Contending Modernities*, February 22, 2022, <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/theorizing-modernities/the-german-state-and-the-creation-of-un-desired-communities>.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., (emphasis in original).

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., emphasis in original. See also Anna-Esther Younes, 'Germany: A Concerning Case of Censorship and Digital Surveillance', European Legal Support Centre, April 12, 2424, <https://elsc.support/cases/germany-a-concerning-case-of-censorship-and-digital-surveillance>.
12. Tzuberi and Samour, 'The German State and the Creation of Un/Desired Communities'.
13. See Susan Blackwell, 'Language in the Service of Lawfare: The "Working Definition of Antisemitism" of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance', in *Discourse and Conflict*, ed. Innocent Chiluwa (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 51–84.
14. See Hanno Hauenstein, 'Nancy Fraser: Germany Canceled Me for Supporting Palestine', *Jacobin*, April 9, 2024, <https://jacobin.com/2024/04/nancy-fraser-germany-palestine-letter>. On the distinctly antisemitic effects of current German debates, see *Jewish Currents* staff, 'Bad Memories', *Jewish Currents*, July 5, 2023, <https://jewishcurrents.org/bad-memory-2>. The authors conclude that 'Jews are negated' by these debates, while 'Palestinians are villainized by it'.
15. It is significant that drafter of the IHRA definition Kenneth Stern has argued against its 'weaponisation'. See Kenneth Stern, 'I Drafted the Definition of Antisemitism: Rightwing Jews are Weaponizing It', *The Guardian*, December 13, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect>.
16. This is a trait that is not restricted to the IHRA definition. Historian Enzo Traverso has reflected on the exhaustion of an illustrious Jewish tradition of 'critical thinking'. See Enzo Traverso, *The End of Jewish Modernity* (London: Pluto Press, 2016).
17. For recent analyses, see Denijal Jegić, 'Why is Germany so Viciously Anti-Palestinian?' *Al Jazeera*, January 7, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/1/7/why-is-germany-so-viciously-anti-palestinian>; Ruairí Casey and Esra Özyürek, 'Germany Should Stop Outsourcing Its Shame Over Historic Antisemitism to Migrants', *Jacobin*, December 5, 2023, <https://jacobin.com/2023/12/germany-holocaust-memory-migrants-islamophobia-antisemitism-israel-gaza>.
18. Esra Özyürek, 'Export-Import Theory and the Racialization of Anti-Semitism: Turkish- and Arab only Prevention Programs in Germany', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58, no. 1 (2016): 40–65; Esra Özyürek, *Subcontractors of Guilt: Holocaust Memory and Muslim Belonging in Postwar Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023).
19. Elad Lapidot, *Jews Out of the Question: A Critique of Anti-Anti-Semitism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2020).
20. Ibid., 29.
21. Wittlinger, 'The Merkel Government's Politics of the Past'.
22. See Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).
23. Susan Neiman, 'Historical Reckoning Gone Haywire', *New York Review of Books*, October 19, 2023, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2023/10/19/historical-reckoning-gone-haywire-germany-susan-neiman>. See also Masha Gessen, 'In the Shadow of the Holocaust: How the Politics of Memory in Europe Obscures What We See in Israel and Gaza Today', *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-weekend-essay/in-the-shadow-of-the-holocaust>.
24. See, for example, Benjamin Tallis, 'The Zeitenwende Is Here, It's Just Unevenly Distributed', *Internationale Politik Quarterly*, April 3, 2023, <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/zeitenwende-here-its-just-unevenly-distributed>.
25. For an analysis of the imbrications of Zionism, antisemitism and Islamophobia, see Lorenzo Veracini, 'Islamophobia, Antisemitism, Zionism, Settler Colonialism', *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 7, no. 1 (2022): 96–107.
26. See Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Penguin, 2005), 496.
27. I am not alone. See, for example, Ingar Solty, 'In Germany, Liberals Lead the Authoritarian Turn', *Jacobin*, May 27, 2024, <https://jacobin.com/2024/05/germany-afd-liberalism-militarism-authoritarianism>. This article was originally published as Ingar Solty, "'Innere Zeitenwende": Die AfD braucht keine Nazis, der Liberale Deutsche hilft schon genug',

- Berliner Zeitung*, May 19, 2024, <https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik-gesellschaft/innere-zeitenwende-afd-braucht-keine-nazis-der-liberale-deutsche-hilft-schon-genug-li.2214494>.
28. See Hilla Dayan and Yolande Jansen, 'Antisemitism, Anti-Palestinian Racism and Europe: A Plea for a Critical and Democratic Debate', *Eurozine*, February 21, 2024, <https://www.eurozine.com/antisemitism-anti-palestinianracism-and-europe/>; Anna Younes and Hanna Al-Taher, 'Erasing Palestine in Germany's Educational System: The Racial Frontiers of Liberal Freedom', *Middle East Critique* (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2024.2383444>.
 29. See Hanna Al-Taher and Anna-Esther Younes, 'Lebensraum, Geopolitics and Race – Palestine as a Feminist Issue in German-Speaking Academia', *Ethnography* (2023), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/14661381231216845>; Sultan Doughan, 'Free Palestine from German Guilt? Responsibilization, Citizenship, and Social Death', *Errant Journal* 6 (2024): 11–20; Sami R. Khatib, 'Germany and Its Palestinian Discontents', *Journal of Visual Culture* 20, no. 2 (2022): 238–41; Omar Sabbour, 'German Guiltwashing in Times of Genocide', *Al Jazeera*, February 27, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/2/27/german-guiltwashing-in-times-of-genocide>.
 30. See Daniel Marwecki, *Germany and Israel: Whitewashing and Statebuilding* (London: Hurst, 2020).
 31. This reluctance is not a new phenomenon. See Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On the 'Mbembe affair', see Aleida Assmann, 'A Spectre is Haunting Germany: The Mbembe Debate and the New Antisemitism', *Journal of Genocide Research* 23 (2021): 400–11. This controversy unfolded over the suitability of historical comparisons, like another famous debate had, the 'Historikerstreit' of the mid-1980s. See Michael Rothberg, 'Comparing Comparisons: From the "Historikerstreit" to the Mbembe Affair', *Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/43395/comparing-comparisons-from-the-historikerstreit-to-the-mbembe-affair>; Michael Rothberg, 'On the Mbembe Affair the Specters of Comparison', Goethe Institut, May 2020, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/us/en/kul/art/stp/deb/22019616.html>.
 32. Henning Melber, *The Long Shadow of German Colonialism Amnesia, Denialism and Revisionism* (London: Hurst, 2024). Melber's book is a fundamental resource for a reconstructing the long-term evolution of historical debates surrounding the question of colonialism.
 33. Sebastian Conrad, 'Rethinking German Colonialism in a Global Age', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 4 (2013): 543–66, at 544.
 34. *Ibid.*, 544.
 35. *Ibid.*, 558.
 36. Lara Fricke, 'Insisting on Uniqueness: Shame and Guilt in German Memory Culture and the Denial of Palestinian Perspectives', *History, Culture, and Heritage* 2 (2023): 131–8. See also Anonymous, 'Palestine Between German Memory Politics and (De-)Colonial Thought', *Journal of Genocide Research* 23, no. 3 (2020): 374–82.
 37. Fricke, 'Insisting on Uniqueness', 135.
 38. See A. Dirk Moses, 'The German Catechism', *Geschichte der Gegenwart*, May 23, 2021, <https://geschichtedergew Gegenwart.ch/the-german-catechism>.
 39. Fricke, 'Insisting on Uniqueness', 136.
 40. See Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011). This book is now translated in English: Jürgen Zimmerer, *From Windhoek to Auschwitz? Reflections on the Relationship Between Colonialism and National Socialism* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2024).
 41. Howard Taylor, "'Grammars of Repair": Redress for German Colonialism in the Aftermath of the Shoah' (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2023). The Namibian government, unsurprisingly, is paying attention. See Tafi Mhaka, 'Namibia, Gaza and German Hypocrisy on Genocide: Namibia's Response to Germany's ICJ Intervention on Behalf of Israel Exposed the Former Colonial Power's Inability to Learn from Its Past Mistakes', *Al Jazeera*, February 20, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/2/20/namibia-gaza-and-german-hypocrisy-on-genocide>.

42. Controversies abound. See, for example, the outrage that followed the publication of the German edition in 2021 of Michael Rothberg's, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
43. A welcome exception is Jürgen Mackert and Ilan Pappé, eds., *Siedlerkolonialismus* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2024). See also Anna-Esther Younes, 'Settler Coloniality is Coming Home to Roost in Europe: Antisemitism, Palestine and The Right to Protest in Germany', *Jadaliyya*, August 11, 2023, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/45243/Settler-Coloniality-is-Coming-Home-to-Roost-in-Europe-Antisemitism-Palestine-and-The-Right-to-Protest-in-Germany>. Younes details the settler coloniality of Berlin's policing and judicial structures and their determined repression of all expressions of solidarity with Palestinians under occupation. Following October 2023, repression was further escalated. The documents Younes unpacks 'framed the Palestinian activist into a potentially dangerous "intruder-figure"', a disturber of the peace. That a peaceful expression of solidarity with an embattled collective that has no peace should be seen as disturbing the peace is ... disturbing.
44. See Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon, 'The Human Right to Colonize', in Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon, *The Human Right to Dominate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 101–26.
45. See The Max Planck Society, 'Statement of the Max Planck Society about Prof. Ghassan Hage', February 7, 2024, <https://www.mpg.de/21510445/statement-ghassan-hage>; Hage Ba'a (Ghassan Hage), 'Statement Regarding My Sacking from the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology', February 9, 2024, <https://hageba2a.blogspot.com/2024/02/statement-regarding-my-sacking-from-max.html>. For an outline of Hage's position regarding the conflict in Gaza, see Ghassan Hage, 'Gaza and the Coming Age of the "Warrior"', *Allegra Lab: Anthropology for Radical Optimism*, November 16, 2023, <https://allegralaboratory.net/gaza-and-the-coming-age-of-the-warrior>.
46. Geography as a discipline, for example, remained pervasively settler colonial after WWII. See Gerhard Rainer, 'German Colonial Geography as a Racial-Völkish Reordering Project Beyond the East: National Socialism and the Colonial Writings of Geographer Oskar Schmieder', *Journal of Historical Geography* 84 (2024): 85–94. On the way colonisation was understood for a long time as a privileged site for the manufacture of German-ness, see Anna Danilina, *Ethiken der Essenz: Eine Emotions- und Körpergeschichte der Rasse in inneren Kolonien (1890–1933)* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2023).
47. Analogical identification, of course, is not restricted to Germany. Unquestioning US support for Israel, for example, can be explained with reference to a shared history of settler colonial conquest. Same in Canada. See Lorenzo Veracini, 'Interacting Imaginaries in Israel and the United States', in *Edward Said: Debating the Legacy of a Public Intellectual*, ed. Ned Curthoys and Debjani Ganguly (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 293–312; Jeremy Wildeman and M. Muhannad Ayyash, eds., *Canada as a Settler Colony on the Question of Palestine* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2023). Interestingly, in the US, Islamophobia has specifically anti-Palestinian and anti-Indigenous origins. See Moustafa Bayoumi, 'Decades of Spying and Repression: The Anti-Palestinian Origins of American Islamophobia', *The Guardian*, May 23, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/article/2024/may/23/islamophobia-us-palestine-history>.
48. Martin Braach-Maksvyts, 'Germany, Palestine, Israel, and the (Post)Colonial Imagination', in *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany*, ed. Volker Langbehn and Mohammad Salama (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 294–314, at 295; emphasis in original.
49. *Ibid.*, 295.
50. *Ibid.*, 295.
51. Moses, 'The German Catechism'; A. Dirk Moses, 'Dialectic of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*', *The New Fascism Syllabus*, June 15, 2021, <https://newfascismsyllabus.com/opinions/the-catechism-debate/dialectic-of-vergangenheitsbewaltigung>.
52. Rachael Shapiro, 'German Memory Culture, Anti-Semitic Zionists and Palestinian Liberation: Germany's Much Lauded "Memory Culture" is Pure, Empty, Self-Congratulatory Propaganda', *Al Jazeera*, March 1, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/3/1/german-memory->

- culture-anti-semitic-zionists-and-palestinian-liberation. Shapiro, who is a Jewish returnee, insightfully links Germany's current obsessive anti-antisemitism with repressed rage towards Jews.
53. Lorenzo Veracini, *The World Turned Inside Out: Settler Colonialism as a Political Idea* (London: Verso 2021).
 54. Moses, 'Dialectic of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*'.
 55. For a recent iteration of this argument, see, for example, Bret Stephens, 'Settler Colonialism: A Guide for the Sincere', *New York Times*, February 6, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/06/opinion/settler-colonialism.html>.
 56. Sa'ed Atshan and Katharina Galor, *The Moral Triangle: Germans, Israelis, Palestinians* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020). Atshan and Galor argue for Germany's acknowledgment of responsibility for the Nakba, and for the pluralisation and extension of the politics of memory and responsibility. For an outline of triangular relations involving settlers and Indigenous and exogenous alterities in the context of settler colonialism as a mode of domination, see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2024).
 57. This was Louis Hartz's seminal insight: 'the theory of fragmentation, beginning with the European archetype itself, permits us to define a situation unknown to either the "traditionalist" or "revolutionary" experiences of Europe'. Louis Hartz, 'A Theory of the Development of the New Societies', in *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia*, ed. Louis Hartz (San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1964), 28. Could the German predicament be productively framed as the predicament of a 'fragment'?
 58. Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998); Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2003).
 59. On the emergence of this predicament in the 1990s, see Adam Sutcliffe, 'Whose Feelings Matter? Holocaust Memory, Empathy, and Redemptive Anti-Antisemitism', *Journal of Genocide Research* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2022.2160533>. Sutcliffe reconstructs the genealogy of the argument that 'the Holocaust in toto was beyond comprehension', which was then 'mobilized as a bulwark against serious engagement with the intellectual and emotional inner lives of perpetrators' (10).
 60. See Enzo Traverso, 'No, Post-Nazi Germany Isn't a Model of Atoning for the Past', *Jacobin*, June 6, 2022, <https://jacobin.com/2022/06/post-nazi-germany-colonialism-holocaust-israel-atonement>. Traverso contends that clearly distinguishing between Nazi crimes and a protracted history of colonial violence is genealogically bogus and morally suspect.
 61. See Dirk Moses, 'The German Catechism'; A. Dirk Moses, 'Dialectic of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*', Curated by Jennifer Evans and Brian J Griffith, *The New Fascism Syllabus' Catechism Debate* is available at: <https://newfascismsyllabus.com/category/opinions/the-catechism-debate>.
 62. 'Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism', <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org>.

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Data availability statement

Data are available upon reasonable request by contacting the corresponding author.