R. Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 269pp, £76.50

Reviewed by Monish Bhatia

On 12 June 2019, the newly (re)elected Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has pursued the politics of Hindu nationalism, voted in favour of Israel barring a Palestinian human rights group from UN bodies due to its alleged ties with Hamas. The Palestinian-Lebanese organisation, Shahed, was eventually denied the status of an “observer” by the UN Economic and Social Council. India itself has a long history of supporting Palestine and has viewed the British Mandate rule and the consolidation of Zionism from an anti-imperialist position. However, this position has been erased. Modi has built close ties with the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and a sinister economic relationship has emerged between the two countries – turning India into Israel’s largest defence customer. According to the Stockholm International Peace Institute database, between 2016 and 2018 India bought 48% of Israeli arms. Of course, such investment legitimises (if not finances) the brutal occupation of Palestinian territories. While still reeling from the news of Modi’s landslide election victory and feeling deeply ashamed of my birth country’s involvement with the Israeli state’s arms industry, I started reading and reviewing this text.

The book starts with the disturbing and infamous case of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) medic Elor Azaria, who was charged with the murder of Abdel al-Fattah al-Sharif, an unarmed 21-year-old Palestinian man. Al-Sharif was one of the 181 Palestinians suspected of “terror” attacks and lynched by the IDF between October 2015 and February 2016. The murder trial of Azaria exposed the grim racism in Israel. There were mass demonstrations by thousands of angry Israeli-Jews who shouted “death to the Arabs” (2), pledged to prevent their own children from joining the IDF, and declared the accused their “collective son” (41). A staggering 65% of Jews polled in 2016 supported the killing, and 67% (including the prime minister and other high-profile public officials) supported pardoning of the accused. The medic was eventually convicted of manslaughter and given a light sentence of eighteen months in a military prison, which was later cut by four months. In any case, the sentence was a rare exception and Azaria was only convicted as the video capturing the killing surfaced on the internet. The introduction highlights the racial devaluation and dehumanisation of Palestinians and the crimes committed by the state. The author, who is a Jewish-Israeli scholar and activist, makes it clear from the outset that the book places race front and centre of the analysis, and focuses on the perpetrator, i.e. the Jewish supremacist/Israeli state. While other texts on Israel and Palestine operate on one theoretical strand,

this book engages with three strands simultaneously: Agamben's state of exception; Theo-Goldberg's racial state; and Wolfe's theory of settler colonialism.

Chapter 2 begins with the case of the Palestinian National Theatre, based in the occupied East Jerusalem, which was raided by the security forces for allegedly being in "sympathy with terrorists" (21). The raid was based on the anti-terrorist law passed by the Israeli parliament in 2016. According to a civil rights organisation in Israel, the legislation normalises the Defense (Emergency) Regulations imposed under the British Mandate and later adopted by Israel on the day of establishment, and it damages human rights and severely restricts the freedom of speech for Israel's Palestinian citizens and occupied subjects. The law also restricts freedom of movement, brands certain groups as "terrorist organisations", authorises property confiscations, and violates due process in the criminal justice system.

The author refers to Agamben's state of exception to understand such practices but, drawing on the work of Alexander Weheliye, also critiques Agamben for his Eurocentrism and lack of engagement with the theories and histories of race and racism. The chapter is theoretically rich and persuasively argues that law is not merely suspended (as stated by Agamben), but rather works in the service of the racial state – a state that treats Palestinians as inferior subjects. For instance, a two-tier judicial system is applied in the occupied territories: the civilian legal system for Israeli citizens, and the military court system for Palestinian subjects. Unlike Israeli citizens, Palestinians are tried for minor infractions, so-called "suspected" terrorist offences and even punished for building property on land that belongs to them. They are managed through institutionally racist structures, and unmediated brutality and torture is administered on their bodies (and this includes children). The indigenous Palestinians are turned into foreigners through extensive racialised legislation and practices (39–40). The Israeli government insists that Israel is democratic and Jewish, which according to the author is an "oxymoron" and relies on white Jewish supremacy (45). Israel is a democracy that behaves like a dictatorship, a democracy that creates hierarchies of belonging and exclusion based on biological reasoning.

In Chapter 3, "Unexceptional Exceptionalism: Israeli Settler Colonialism", the author outlines the recent case of school teacher Yaqoub Moussa Abu Al-Qia'an, who was framed as a terrorist and ISIS sympathiser following his death. He was shot in the knee by the police while driving a van and as a result lost control of the vehicle, leading to death of an officer. This happened during an Israeli state raid on a Bedouin village not recognised by the state and considered to be squatted "illegally". The destruction of villages is central to settler society. The settlers have an insatiable appetite for native Palestinian land, thereby making it a land-centred project. The chapter demonstrates that settler colonialism is an ongoing, unfinished project that involves revocation of citizenships, illegalisation, withdrawal of rights

and protections, demolitions, elimination of natives, and the creation (in Fanon's terms) of zones of non-beings. The Zionist principle of self-segregation does not encompass simply coexisting with the inhabitants of Palestine and is based on racial purity and racial exclusiveness to the land, persisting on the elimination of "unwanted dirt".

Chapter 4, "Racialising the Israeli Settler Society", uses race to theorise Zionism, Israel, and Jewish supremacy. It taps into the gruesome past and discusses the unauthorised medical experiments and medical treatments performed in 1940s–1950s on the children of Yemeni and other non-European Jewish immigrants. Hundreds of children disappeared – some supposedly died and others were adopted by European Jews in Israel or abroad without their parents' consent. The experiments were conducted to discover whether these children had sickle-cell anaemia, which was considered a "black disease". Blood tests were conducted on live children and autopsies on those who died, to discover if they had "African blood". More recently, a 2013 journalistic investigation of the low birth rates amongst Jews from Ethiopia also uncovered that women were administered the long-acting contraceptive Depo Provera and threatened that their immigration status would be blocked if they refused the drug. The author argues that such eugenic technologies aim to differentiate genetically stronger groups of European Ashkenazi Jews and inferior Arab-Jewish and non-European Jewish immigrants. She argues the Ashkenazi establishment is built on racial categorisations and traces how Arabness or Africanness is considered as culturally incompatible by the (European) Zionist project, which also rejects the Arabness and Africanness of Arab Jewish/African Jewish immigrants. The chapter also explores the racialisation and criminalisation of refugees and people seeking asylum from Africa, the rise in deportations, and the emergence of other technologies of control.

The penultimate chapter, "Beyond Femina Sacra", theorises the intersections of race and gender in Israeli settler colonial practices and refers to dense debates on gender, body, and sexuality. The author unpacks the 1949 case of a 12-year-old girl, who was captured, raped, and murdered by the IDF – an army that produced and circulated the continuing myth of it being the "world's most moral army". The case was hidden for over five decades and only exposed in 2005–2006. Despite the overwhelming evidence of Zionist soldiers raping Palestinian women during Nakba, many Jewish Israelis, largely due to racism, refuse to accept it happened. More recently, the rape of Palestinian women was also sanctioned by religious edicts, which proclaimed that soldiers are permitted to rape "enemy women" during war (124). The author argues that Palestine and Palestinians are feminised in contrast with the hyper-masculinisation of Israeli Jews, which epitomises Jewish supremacy. Nevertheless, in Jewish imaginaries, Palestinian men are misogynist, homophobic, hyper-sexed, and ruthless masterminds of terrorist acts (135).

The final chapter discusses strategies of resistance and decolonisation, including boycotting Israel. This concludes a scholarly text that provides new ways of thinking about Israel and Palestine and the dynamics of Israeli state crime. It is written in accessible, clear, and concise language, which makes the most complex information straightforward and easy to understand. Therefore, it is suitable for academics and non-academics, students and activists alike.

Monish Bhatia, School of Law, Birkbeck, University of London.