

It is evident that achieving such influence and control requires significant effort and strategic maneuvering. How do you explain the success of the Israeli lobby in maintaining its influence for such an extended period, considering the challenges involved in unilaterally shaping and influencing the narrative on a topic as divisive and controversial as the Israel-Palestine conflict?

That's an extremely important question, and in order to answer it, we need to focus on the historic alliance — which continues today into the early 2020s — between the Zionist project and what has been Western imperialism, especially US imperialism (or the US Empire). The United States and Western Europe supported the formation of the Jewish state, specifically as an outpost for the expansion of world capitalism into the Middle East at a time when the Middle East was going through decolonization; when Arab nationalism and even socialist and communist and other revolutionary movements and popular mass struggles were taking off in the Middle East. Israel became the outpost to keep control over the Middle East.

That alliance was forged very early on between the larger project of US foreign policy, which has since become a policy of promoting global capitalism around the world and defending global capitalism, and the Zionist project as a representative of that US foreign policy in the Middle East at this time.

So, we cannot understand the power of the Israel lobby outside the relationship of Israel to what we can call historical imperialism and to global capitalism now in the Middle East. That's a giant part of the story.

The other part of the story, again, is that their control over financial levers is very powerful. I can try and put forth a discourse of support for Palestine, a discourse that critiques Zionism as a right-wing, racist, and imperialist project, but I don't have financial support behind me. So, I can't translate my own discourse into financial leverage and therefore into political leverage. That's not so in the case of the Zionist discourse and of the discourse of the Israel lobby.

I want to add one other point here, i.e., historically, something else has been going on. The Holocaust involved the murder of six million Jews. But before I explain to you why I'm mentioning the Holocaust, I want to say that, of course, that was not the only holo-

caust in the last few hundred years. There's the holocaust of the indigenous people in the Americas with 100 million victims, and the holocaust of the victims of colonialism all around the world, et cetera, et cetera.

But when we just speak about 1939 to 1945, that Nazi Holocaust took the lives of six million Jews. And that Holocaust and the Jewish suffering around the Holocaust have been manipulated and incorporated into the Zionist project, and, on that basis, Zionism was able to move from a minor ideology in the world Jewish community to the hegemonic ideology. That takes place in 1945, and especially 1948, and on through the state of Israel.

I'm saying all of this and going into the background to answer your question of why is this discourse so powerful. The biggest reason is that the discourse is aligned with US imperialism, intervention, and foreign policy and now, the larger global capitalist interests in the Middle East. But secondly, because an unbelievably powerful lobby group has been created among the Jewish American community, by manipulating Jewish suffering around the Holocaust. That is changing now because a significant portion of young Jews, as I just mentioned, are saying "not in our name," and turning their back on all of this. So, it's a very interesting and important time here in the US because these battle lines are being drawn now, very, very clearly.

Based on your explanation, it seems clearer now why the term "decolonization" as it pertains to Palestine provokes such strong opposition from Zionists, leading them to coerce social media platforms like X into banning the use of terms like "decolonization" or "from the river to the sea".

Absolutely. Actually, what we are seeing inside Israel now is fascism, and I don't use the term lightly — just like we don't use the term genocide lightly. Genocide, however, has a specific definition: it's the attempt to eliminate, in whole or in part, a people. So, it's correct to use the term genocide regarding what Israel is doing in Gaza. But the other term I want to use, which is fascism, has an intellectual, analytical, and scholarly history as well. And everything indicates that fascism is now a project that is gaining domination, or hegemony, inside Israel, and it means political suppression. Our colleagues in Israel tell us you can be arrested if you talk

inside Israel about the genocide going on in Gaza. But if you make Nazi-like statements about the need to totally wipe out Palestinians, call them animals, and so forth, you're within the hegemonic discourse. So, there's actually fascism emerging in Israel, and we have had the inklings of a fascist project here in the United States as well. I'm mentioning all of that because it's true that speaking about decolonization, about apartheid, about genocide, will run you into big trouble with the powers that be, both in the US and especially in Israel.

I want to note something else as well: I want to go back to the point I was previously making that one of the key strategies in the Zionist lobby, and the US government, is to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. I just want to hammer home that point again: the reason they can try and make that equation is because they're manipulating the Holocaust and the feelings around the Holocaust, of course, and no one wants to be anti-Semitic. People who believe in justice, freedom, and equality don't want to be anti-Semitic. So, Israel's whole legitimating discourse, the discourse that legitimizes the existence of a Jewish state, is based on manipulating the Holocaust and the feelings around it. So, if you keep hammering home that criticizing Zionism is anti-Semitic and is embracing the Holocaust, then you have a very powerful propaganda instrument.

Now that you've mentioned the rise of fascism in Israel, it seems like a good starting point for our audience to understand why Israel is often referred to as an apartheid state. Could you please elaborate on the pillars of apartheid and the similarities between today's Israeli apartheid and the historic apartheid in South Africa?

Yes, apartheid is considered a crime against humanity, and there's an international convention against it. In fact, early on after South Africa became liberated from apartheid in 1994, they sent delegations to Israel. They studied Israeli apartheid and discovered that it has four pillars. One is the systematic segregation of different populations; then there's the subordination of one of those populations through its segregation, a different set of rights for two different groups. So, Israeli Jews have a whole set of rights that Palestinians — either in Israel or in the occupied territories — don't have, i.e., one set of legal, civil, political, and social rights that are



Activists from Jewish Voice for Peace occupy the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in New York City, the US, on November 6, 2023.

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