



all of them talk extremely candidly about the fact that there are indigenous people and that they will have to be defeated, expelled, etc., in order to develop a state.

From the 1920s onwards, there was very open debate amongst the Zionists about what at the time they called “transfer”, which is a sort of euphemism, the polite way to say expulsion of the Palestinians out of Palestine if the Israeli state is to be built. There’s a wonderful book by a Palestinian historian called Nur Masalha, who traces the uses and theories of transfer amongst the early Zionists, and shows that the Nakba, the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians out of Palestine at the moment of the creation of the Israeli state doesn’t come from nowhere. It comes from decades of political argument, preparation, strategy, etc., that makes the moment of expulsion possible in 1948, and it continues after that.

People have spoken a lot about a formative moment in Zionist historiography, which is in 1956. There was a clash between Palestinian fedayeen from Gaza and the militia in the kibbutz of Nahal Oz – which was attacked again on October 7, so it’s a very long ongoing history – and the head of the militia of Nahal Oz was killed. Moshe Dayan, who’s an important figure in the Israeli army and then in Israeli politics, gave the eulogy for the head of this militia who was killed, and in his eulogy he says that of course the Palestinians hate us, because they have been stuck in refugee camps for the last eight years, looking at us living on the lands of their ancestors. There are many more examples of this. But over and over and over again, in Zionist and Israeli historiog-

raphy, they are extremely clear about what they’re doing. And I think that’s important because you can’t colonize a place, you can’t ethnically cleanse a place, without doing it on purpose. It just doesn’t come out of thin air. And I think we’re seeing that for the moment. So, while pro-Israeli speaking points say that the Israelis are just defending themselves, that they’re fighting Hamas and so on, if you listen to what Israeli politicians and policymakers are saying, they’re extremely transparent. They’re saying there are no innocents in Gaza, that there is no difference between fighters and civilians. They say that they are cutting water, energy, etc. Some of them are calling for atomic bombs to be dropped on Gaza, they are talking about recolonizing Gaza, people are drawing up plans, and so on and so on. All of this is being discussed very much in the open. And so I think the smoking gun in a sense is that Israeli policymakers at all different times in the evolution, both of Zionism and of the Israeli state, are extremely clear about what they’re doing, and are very, very transparent in how they discuss it.

Do you see this latest round of Israeli hostilities towards Palestinians as a way to lay the groundwork for dispossessing the Gaza natives?

I think that’s a difficult question to answer. It is very clear that there are sections of the Israeli government who very much want to do that. I think it’s very clear. We’ve seen plans to expel the Palestinians in Gaza into Egypt or just into the sea. Some Israeli politicians are saying that they can take boats and, you know, can go to Europe or the United States, but they won’t



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stay here. Or there are plans circulating about building artificial islands on which the people of Gaza can be sent.

And of course, what we’re seeing is that there’s a genocide being carried out against people. Tens of thousands have been maimed and killed, millions have been displaced, infrastructure has been destroyed. I think there’s definitely an attempt at making life in Gaza either impossible or at least as difficult as possible. All of that is happening. And I think it is very clear that in a world in which they could do whatever they wanted, that is what Israelis would try to do. And again, it’s a very old line of thought there. People like Yitzhak Rabin, who was the prime minister in the 1990s, famously said he wished he could wake up one day and that Gaza would have disappeared into the sea. Or in 1967, after conquering the whole of Historic Palestine, Levi Eshkol, who was the Prime Minister of Israel at the time, said that perhaps if Israel cut the water supply to Gaza, the Palestinians wouldn’t have a choice and they would just leave.

So you have all these sort of dreams of if the Palestinians could just be gotten rid of. However, the Israelis do not live in a world that is shaped by their deepest desires, but they live in a world in which they have to engage with material limits that are imposed on them, and they’re imposed on them by Palestinian resistance. They’re imposed on them by social movements across the region. You know, the fact that we’re seeing millions of people taking to the streets in Yemen, in Jordan, in Iraq, across the entire region. In Egypt, for the first time since 2013, people took to the streets again to demand that the Egyptian Government doesn’t collaborate with Israel in allowing the expulsion of

Gazans, to demand that the ties with Israel are cut. You know, the fact that the Houthis in Yemen are stopping boats and disrupting world trade in an attempt to put pressure on Western governments to stop allowing Israel from acting the way it does, I think all of that points to the limits imposed on Israel.

Also there are massive social movements in the Global North as well, so that the governments that are the most supportive of Israel potentially have to pay the price. For example, I have doubts on the fact that Biden could win the election anyway in the United States, but it could very well be that his support for the genocide in Gaza will cost him his reelection.

The fact that the Israeli military seems to be doing quite badly inside of Gaza, and that the numbers that are starting to come up in terms of wounded and deaths, etc., on their side, seem to be very high, which probably means that their ability to carry this on for a long period of time is limited. All of that, I think, points to the fact that Israel can’t just wish things into existence. And so, actually, I think it’s fairly unlikely that they will be successful. In fact, if you look at the plans that, for example, the Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has drawn up for what would come after, they look very similar to what came before. The only difference is that they don’t name Hamas as being in control of the Gaza Strip. They talk about an unidentified Palestinian body. But apart from that, we’re basically talking about the same thing.

And so I think that in reality, what’s the most likely outcome is the same status quo, but with the Gaza Strip that has just gone through a genocidal assault. And I think what is going to be

the real lasting horror of this is the destruction, the loss of life, the loss of infrastructure, the loss of land, the loss of water, etc. It is unimaginable. And so the conditions inside of the Gaza Strip will be much worse than they were. But I think the settlement will be fairly similar to what came before.

In 2005, Israel, led by Ariel Sharon, pulled out the settlers in Gaza unilaterally, and this was often presented by pro-Israeli voices as a sort of a peace offering to the Palestinians. Now, of course, that wasn’t the case. There was no negotiation around this in any kind of way. But it was a strategic decision that Gaza was too difficult to hold. Because there were 8000 settlers controlling 30 percent of the land in Gaza, surrounded I think at the time – my numbers might be wrong – by about 1.5 million Palestinians, and that balance of forces was considered impossible to hold and too difficult to secure. It demanded too many soldiers for too little strategic or economic interest, whereas in the West Bank, there was more land available. There were many more settlers, more growth was possible, etc. And so they made the choice to pull out. And so I think while there is a fanatical settler right in the Israeli government that thinks they can relaunch the settlements in Gaza, that would be extremely difficult to imagine. I might be wrong, but I find it very difficult to imagine because it’s exactly because of that balance of forces, which has gotten much worse by the way. Today, there are 2.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. I think it would be a total strategic mistake for the Israelis to do that. They would find themselves in the very situation that they tried to pull themselves out of in 2005.