

The Israeli War on Palestine, 1917-2021, U.S. Role; Future Possibilities
by Peter Bohmer, July 15, 2021

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Also Rashid Khalidi, whose book, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine*, is a big influence on my presentation and all those, mainly but not only Palestinians working toward Justice for Palestine and Palestinians.

A little on my background.

Parents and grandparents, central European Jewish

Were living in Vienna when German Nazis invaded with a lot of support from Austria population in 1938. My dad imprisoned by Nazis but got out, parents came to U.S. in 1939. My mom's dad hid out and died at end of War, maybe in a concentration camp or possibly of cancer in barn of farmer who hid him out from 1939 to 1945 at great risk. I want to believe that he was hidden out as to me that is an important example of solidarity. My father's parents went to Palestine in 1939 and returned to Vienna in 1947 before the formation of Israel.

I was born in Queens, NY, heavily Jewish and pro Israeli neighborhood. My parents were critical of Israel and Israelis; they believed in Israeli injustice to Palestinians but also believed in the need for a mainly Jewish state.

After the six day war in 1967 and as part of the New Left, I increasingly supported the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the idea of a democratic and secular Palestine or Palestine-Israel that included Palestinians including those who had been expelled in 1948 or after (the right of return) and Jews who lived there. This was expressed by some of the Marxist groups, both Palestinian like DFLP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), and mixed, although majority Jewish left parties, like Matzpen. I am not sure of the path to get there but have considered myself an anti-Zionist for 50 years and have been active in the struggle for Palestinian justice.

Being of Jewish background and knowing well and directly the oppression of Jewish people has made me particularly saddened by the ongoing oppression and dispossession by the Israeli state of Palestinians with the support of most Jewish people inside and outside of Israel. I understand this support intellectually as an outgrowth of taking someone's land and resources and having to justify it but emotionally it is very hard and motivates me and I hope all of us to stand up against continued U.S. support for Israel, especially but not limited to military aid.

Outline:

I. Intro

Format: specific questions after each point, will stop a few times for questions and comments. If I don't get through all of it, you have my notes.

A. Thesis

From 1948 to present when state of Israel was founded, Israel has continued to expand its control of land and of Palestinians.--water, sky, borders-never willing to accept Palestinian equality inside or outside the 1948 borders, nor the right to return of Palestinians; preventing their mobility, sovereignty. Neither the Labor party (liberal) nor the more overtly right-wing: Likud, Netanyahu, Bennett (current prime minister) have ever accepted rights of Palestinians as a people. First the British and the U.S. at least since the 1960's have been total supporters of the Zionist Project of a Jewish State which is wrong.

Israel and U.S. have been unsuccessful in destroying Palestinian sovereignty; unsuccessful in what Baruch Kimmerling, an Israeli sociologist, calls *politicide*. Kimmerling, in his book, *Politicide*, uses this

concept to explain the project of Israel to destroy the possibility of Palestinians as a nation or as a collective self-determining entity.

B. Demographics

1. Show slide on population from desktop, slide 5. Slides are not included here.
2. Slide on, changing territory, slide 4, see Green Line, Israel controlled 78% after 1948
3. Israel, Palestine today, slide 3, close to 90% total control today of what was Palestine, before 1948

Israel population, about 9 million--growing--although more rapid growth of Palestinian population 6.8 million Jewish, divided almost equally between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi or Sephardic Jews, Includes 500,000 Jewish settlers in West Bank plus more in E. Jerusalem and suburbs
1.9 million Israeli Palestinian, name contested (within the Green Line or what is also called, Israel '48)
Palestinian in E Jerusalem counted in Israeli Population as it has been annexed by Israel.
West Bank--including East Jerusalem, ,about 2.5 million, includes Palestinians in East Jerusalem, 327,000. (Palestinians in East Jerusalem are counted as both part of West Bank population and Israel)
Gaza population, 2.1 million
Almost equal.6.8 million Jews, about 6.2-6.4 million Palestinians, 400,000 other
In addition, many Palestinians, still in refugee camps in other countries.

Palestinians divided into five locations

1. Inside Green Line (Israeli Palestinians)
- 2) East Jerusalem
3. West Bank
4. Gaza
5. Refugees in other countries, --Jordan, Lebanon, Syria--other including U.S,

One positive of latest 2021 war, of massive Israeli bombing was increased unity and solidarity between 1-4 including Israeli Palestinians.

II. Key Points, somewhat historical, (almost a timeline)

A. Zionist project of a Jewish State where Palestinians are denied self-determination and equality can be traced back to the 1917 Balfour Declaration, (see Khalidi, page 24) that supported a Jewish State in Palestine that this project would never been possible without first British designation and support for this project; and beginning in 1948 and especially since 1967, the U.S., political and military support for Israeli goals. Why British support--British outpost in the Middle East. Balfour declaration didn't mention Palestinians. Validated Zionism in Palestine--which became Israel in 1948. Palestinians had lived there for hundreds of years with small Jewish population.

By Zionism, I mean desire for a society or actual society, Israel, where Jews dominate economically, and politically. Right of return for Jews but not Palestinians no matter what their connection to land.

B. That the dominant strain of the Israeli state has been Israeli control of the land, air, water and resources over all of what was/is Palestine, from the river (the east) (Jordan) to the Sea (Mediterranean the west) with differences over whether to expel the Palestinians or where they would not be expelled but not have rights as a people and limited rights over the land, resources. The Jewish National Fund has been part of this as has been the continual expansion of Jewish/Israeli definition of their land from the Peel Commission, 1937, 17% of the land for Jews; U.N. proposal; Resolution 181 in 1947 that gave Israel 55% of the land after Britain had given up on control. Israel declared itself a State on May 15th, 1948 (the Nakba) ethnic cleansing on a significant scale by Israel occurred in April and early May, 1948 (Khalidi, p.72-74). Nakba means catastrophe in Arabic. Israel expelled a total of 750,000 Arabs from what became Israel, 78% of historic Palestine by the time of the 1949 armistice. None were allowed to return. See slide 8 (not here)

C. Until 1967, U.S. supported Israel, including its formation but did not unconditionally support Israel. For example, it opposed Israeli invasion of Gaza (part of Egypt) in 1956 when Great Britain and France also went to war against Egypt in response to Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal. The U.S. and USSR

took side of Egypt and demanded end of war and withdrawal from Egypt by France, Great Britain and Israel.

D. In the six day war, 1967, Israel attacked, destroyed air forces of Syria, Egypt, Jordan. Rapid victory by Israel. Growth of PLO resistance (ironic). Growth of PLO, Arafat and Fatah take lead. Became independent of Arab League, representative of Palestinian people, many factions. PLO, nationalist, Fatah the largest group, Although increasingly flawed have help keep Palestinian struggle a global issue. U.S. clearly on the side of Israel by 1967 War; , U.S. Defense Secretary McNamara gave ok for Israel going to war. (Khalidi, pp.104). Israel annexed East Jerusalem (had been Palestinian occupied under Jordan control as was Old City), Israel also seized but didn't annex, West Bank from Jordan; Gaza from Egypt. Also although not Palestinian, Sinai from Egypt and Golan Heights from Syria. All except Sinai still controlled by Israel today. Again see slide 5

E. UNSC (UN security council 242)--mentioned inadmissibility of seizing territory by force, but conditioned Israeli withdrawal on peace treaties with Arab states, and secure frontiers for Israel. Mentions solution of refugee problem but not Palestinians (Khalidi, pp 105-106). Legitimated 1949 armistice lines (Green Line) after 1948-1949 war which Israel defeated Arab nations.

F. Growth of Palestinian attacks on Israel by PLO groups outside Israel before and especially after 1967, and massive, massive Israeli attacks on PLO in Jordan, Syria, Black September, (attack on PLO and Palestinians by Israel and Jordan (allied with U.S.) in 9/70. PLO expelled from Jordan in 1971. Growth of Marxist groups, PFLP and DFLP. Affinity with DFLP, no attacks on Israeli civilians,

G. Headquarters of PLO moved to Lebanon after expulsion from Jordan; also large refugee Palestinian population in Lebanon. Attacks from Lebanon by Palestinians on Israel. PLO allied with some Lebanese groups in Lebanon but also alienated population, Major attacks on Palestinian camp in Beirut, Tal al Zatar, 1976. LF (Lebanese Forces) with Israeli support, up to 2000 killed) Also attack by Syrians. Israeli invasion in 1978--control of South Lebanon by Israeli military. Very brutal.

H. Camp David--Carter; 1979-- Peace Treaty, Egypt, Sadat and Israel, recognition of Israel, no discussion of Palestine sovereignty, or of Jerusalem, refugees. Israel and U.S. played divide and conquer to separate Egypt from other Arab countries and especially Palestinian causes although much support by Egyptian people for Palestine struggle and against Israeli occupation. Egypt recognized Israel. Egypt got part of Sinai, Israel had seized in 1967.

I. Sabra and Shatila massacre, Sept, 16-18, 1982, Massacre in Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. Sharon involved in planning murder. Israeli inquiry showed Sharon complicity with Phalange (Lebanese fascists) who did the actual killing. Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June, 1982 to destroy PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization); Israel gave ok to massacre by Phalange, 19,000 Palestinians and Lebanese killed in total from Israel land invasion and massive bombing in Lebanon in 1982. PLO withdrew from Beirut before massacre, Israel involved in this horrendous slaughter in September 16-18 1982. Mainly Palestinian, some Lebanese Shiites killed in two refugee camps, 450 to 3500 killed. mainly Palestinian. PLO naively believed U.S. promise to protect refugees which they didn't. PLO had been forced to withdraw from Beirut just before massacre.

PLO lost further support by Gulf States and Kuwait by supporting Saddam Hussein, in Gulf war, 1991

J. Palestine first Intifada (meaning uprising) , began 1987 in Gaza, nonviolent, spontaneous uprising, began in Gaza, new young and local and young Palestinian leadership. Growing global solidarity with Palestine from Intifada and also from the resulting Israeli repression. Labor Party in control in Israel. Head of Israeli military, Rabin -break bones of protesters, Lasted 12/87 to 1993-- but Jewish settlements, in West Bank continued to grow, 1987-1993

K. . Oslo accords-Rabin and Peres, Arafat, 1993 (Oslo 1--signing with Clinton); possibly even more significant Oslo II, 1995.

West Bank was designated as three areas, A, B and C.

A and B, C--60% of West Bank stayed under total Israel Control, (C) --includes many of the Jewish settlements

A--18% of West Bank--Palestinian administrative and security control

B--22% of land --only administrative control by Palestine Authority (PA), security by Israel military

87% of Palestine population in A and B, (Khalidi, pp. 202)

Israel maintained power over entering and leaving Palestine, residency. Settlement construction, house demolitions by Israel continued.

Checkpoints, private Jewish roads. Daily humiliation of Palestinians even travelling within West Bank.

Set up of Palestine Authority (PA)--no sovereignty, no jurisdiction--mainly -security against Palestinians.

Failure in 2000 to deal with unanswered questions, so-called final status that had been promised as part of Oslo; Israel continues to expand settlements,

Lack of legal rights for movement of Palestinians into East Jerusalem from West Bank, Gaza--strangulation of Gaza. Also further devastated economy of E. Jerusalem. Egyptian collaboration with Israel, particularly current Egyptian government; controls entry into Gaza and exit from Gaza to Egypt.

M. Israel separation wall began in 2002, mainly along Green Line but annexes some of West Bank--also called apartheid wall, 470, miles long--security given as reason, further annexation--ruled against by international law but continues. Continual protests against it. Also wall with Gaza, began in 1994.

N. Hamas-- Gaza--Oslo agreement and Israel control most constricting in Gaza (Khalidi 208), Hamas founded in 1987 --grew because of discontent with PLO and Fatah--militant Islamist alternative, outgrowth of Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt, 1928). Growth of Islamist Groups in Mideast, critique of secular nationalist groups and govts. Hamas won Palestinian elections in Jan 2006, not allowed to take power in West Bank by Fatah and PA. Hamas controls Gaza since 2006. This blocking of Hamas taking power in West Bank in 2006 after surprisingly winning election was supported by U.S. and Israel.

Attempt for unity of Palestinian groups in manifesto by political prisoners but rejected by Abbas, Fatah, PA. Gaza is poorer, more crowded, even than West Bank. Israel controls land and sea, entry of people, goods. Israel withdrew in name only from Gaza in 2005, ended settlement but still control of borders. Israel attacks on Gaza--Rachel Corrie killed in Rafah in Gaza in, March 16, 2003; murderous attacks by Israel on Gaza, major, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2021--2014--most intense, bombing and usually invasion. Also continual military attacks by Israel, totally disproportionate to attacks from Gaza into Israel.

O. Second intifada--less popular, 2002, smaller and often armed attacks. Arafat died in 2004, possibly poisoned by Israel, 2002--Suicide bombings in Israel grew.

P. Change in U.S. public opinion, some Democrats increasingly critical of Israel. Israeli hegemony and version being increasingly challenged by progressives in Democratic Party and population. More sympathy for Palestinian cause. For example, Bernie Sanders and the squad.

Q. Rule by Netanyahu, most right-wing Israeli Prime Minister, 1996-1999, 2009-2021--multi-party coalition, usually including religious parties, Jewish Fundamentalists. This Netanyahu led coalition closely allied with Republican Party in U.S.

In 2021, coalition of right-center parties and also those supporting expelling all Palestinians like Naftali Bennett formed a government. It is led by Yair Lapid, current foreign minister, he had been finance minister under Netanyahu before breaking from him. The current coalition government with Bennett as prime minister for two years; little change with regards to Palestine, less tied to just Republican Party than Netanyahu.

R. In 2018-- Basic law on the Jewish National State became law-- self-determination only for Jews, downgrading Arabic, Jewish settlement a national value with highest priority, (Khalidi, 243-244)--further institutionalizing inequality. How can one call Israel a democracy? They claim only democracy in Middle East. Needs to be challenged, not a democracy. Suppression of all Palestinians. Contradictions of a state defined by ethnicity or religion. Like calling U.S. a white Christian state and society.

III. Additional Points

1. Opportunist role of Arab States with regards to Palestine, words but not deeds, --especially Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt since Camp David. Also Syria and Iraq, especially the latter involved in assassination of PLO leaders. Still major support for Palestinian cause throughout Mideast by population.

2. Weaknesses of PLO, reliance on U.S. govt. Little understanding of U.S. people or our importance in changing U.S. policy, or how to change public opinion here. Growing corruption of PLO, collaboration with Israel. Pro capitalist.

3. 3 aspects of understanding Palestinian struggle against the Israeli Occupation and War!

All have validity,

A. Israel as settler colony, --like South Africa, U.S., Ireland--Israel as an apartheid state (Khalidi, pp241). There is Jewish ancient and biblical connection, and holocaust is part of history but doesn't justify Israeli occupation.

Apartheid--South Africa system of racial domination institutionalized by whites. Some differences with Israel '48 (inside Green Line, not post 1967 Israel)-apartheid.

B. Gross imbalance of power by Israeli state, internally and externally; unequal power --Israel ideology as victim, no peace partner must be challenged. Reality, Israeli military superiority, U.S. Support for Israeli project.

and

C. Inequality of rights-even within Green Line, no rights of Palestinians in occupied territory, 5 million--very limited in East Jerusalem. Only U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as capital of Israel. Khalidi argues this structural inequality, when explained, has the highest possibility of reducing support for Zionism and Israel.

4. In the early, 1990's a Palestinian activist, Khadar Hamide, whom the U.S. was trying to export was asked at a talk at the Evergreen State College: "Isn't what is going on in Israel and Palestine a struggle between two opposing sides with equally just claims to the land and resources and power". He answered, Israelis are losing their humanity, Palestinians are losing their land and lives. A very profound summary.

5. Effective use by Israel of security threat, playing on Holocaust--fears are key to gaining support of Jewish people in Israel. Needs to be effectively challenged. Need for justice and peace.

6. Need to accept national rights of both people, Israeli Jews and Palestinians; whether one state or two states. Rights of both people today!

7. Bankruptcy of Hamas and especially Palestine Authority (PA) --see growing repression, authoritarianism, death of activists in West Bank, e.g., Nizar Banat beaten, tortured and killed by PA, June 24, 2021--he had exposed corruption, Neither armed attack (e.g., Hamas, Islamic Jihad) or negotiations, Fatah and PLO, have advanced Palestinian cause. PA is dependent on U.S. aid. Abbas, head of PA and PLO, cancelled 2021 elections knowing Fatah and he would lose, cancelled both for President and legislature, also previously in 2006.

Need for mass movement of Palestinian, not primarily armed struggle, importance of direct action.

8. Significance of first Intifada, 1987-1993--new and more progressive leadership; also 2021 struggle in East Jerusalem, growing solidarity among four Palestinian constituencies--including Israeli Palestinians (name matters)

9. Trump and Biden

\$3.8 billion in military aid by U.S. to Israel a year for 10 years. from Obama forward

a. Trump total support for settlements, e.g. his ambassador to Israel; increase of weapon sales, Jerusalem as capital, U.S. moved embassy there; allied with most right-wing forces in Israel, cut off money to Palestine Authority (PA). Supported binational agreements between Israel and Gulf States. e.g., weapon sales to UAE for recognition of Israel; also, Morocco.

b. Biden, historically very pro Israel, allied with AIPAC (significant pro Israeli lobbying group). Biden supported current Israeli massive bombing of Gaza in late May, 2021; delayed call for a cease fire-- supports continued weapon sales, not tied to Netanyahu. Restored aid to PA. U.S. Cannot be arbiter for peace and justice. U.S. totally and historically on side of Israelis.

10. Why U.S. support for Israel

a. Jewish control of U.S. policy. Often this explanation is anti-Semitic, Control by Jews of, media, Jewish bankers dominate. Jewish control is false and little difference on Israel between Jewish and non Jewish owned media.

b. Israel serves U.S. strategic interests, e. g., aid to Guatemala military in 1980's when Congress cut off aid.

c. Common interests between Israel and U.S. state

My conclusion--Combination of b and c. Groups such as AIPAC may have influence on specific policies but on the whole, U.S. strategic interests (not U.S. people) main determinant of U.S. support for Israel.

IV. Moving forward

A. Importance of BDS--can contribute to loss of legitimacy of Israeli occupation and project. Very significant globally. Not primarily direct economic costs of BDS to Israel.

B. Organize to reduce and cut off U.S. aid to Israel, military aid key--also to end U.S. support for Israel in UN Security Council, other organizations.

C. Palestine movement needs to connect more and gain more support from Arab people, less reliance on Arab States; also reaching out to U.S. people and Israeli people although Israeli population has moved to the right, less support for Palestinians than past; shrinking of Israeli left. Why has Israeli population moved to the right, not sure why. Challenge anti-Palestine and anti-Muslim stereotypes.

D. Reach out to other countries besides U.S. govt, which is still totally pro Israeli state.

E. Anti-Semitism (anti Jewishness) is real and should be challenged but don't let this accusation stop solidarity with Palestinians and actions against the Israeli occupation.

When Jewish people say never again referring to the holocaust-- and never again for Jewish people as rationale for a militarized Israel, my response is "Never Again for All People"

Goal: Path forward based on equality and justice for all, especially but not only Palestinians-- **probably for one binational state**, maybe called Palestine-Israel.

Need for long term strategy towards this;

or possibly as transition with first, two states, 1) West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem only 22% of historic Palestine as a nation, and 2) Israel (78% of land) with right of return of Palestinians to inside Israel as first step, popular education of Jewish people and increasing cooperation. Two state solution less and less possible as settlements grow.

V. Future reading and good groups to volunteer with.

1. Middle East Children's Alliance

2. Rachel Corrie foundation

3. Jewish Voices for Peace, also their educational materials. <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org>

4. Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years War on Palestine* (Metropolitan Books, 2020)