

A week before Hamas's attack in October 2023, I presented at a conference in London the possibility that the Zionist enterprise was about to collapse. My assumption was that a state that was established in the mid-twentieth century as settler colonialism under British auspices, while expelling most of the country's indigenous inhabitants and subjecting the remaining to an apartheid regime and violent occupation, must meet very special conditions over time in order to maintain relative stability. One of these important conditions was the existence of a government that was considered left-wing with liberal tendencies, at least by the standards of Western countries. Labor governments, despite establishing Israeli colonialism, have always managed to create a facade of a desire for peace. Netanyahu governments, especially the current one, took a different path which have undermined this stability.

But the shaking is not in changing policy, because Netanyahu is in fact continuing it. It is important to remember that it was the Labor governments that led the three main colonial moves: the expulsion of the Palestinians in the Nakba in 1948 and the prevention of their return; The completion of the occupation of Palestine in 1967 and the fourfold expansion of Israel; the establishment of settlements in the West Bank, which now are officially illegal under international law. The only Israeli step that could be seen as de-colonial is the withdrawal from Sinai as part of the peace agreement with Egypt, and it was led by Menachem Begin of the political right.

Since its establishment, Israel has faced a clear and constant Palestinian resistance that has posed a persistent challenge to its stability. For decades, saturated with state violence at various levels, Israel has attempted to "manage the conflict" and keep the Palestinians, both citizens and subjects under occupation, in a state of subjugation that would allow a "normal" life for its Jewish citizens.

The current far-right government in Israel aims rather to eliminate the “Palestinian problem.” It seeks to do this by implementing the “Decisive Plan” suggested by Bezalel Smotrich in 2017, which essentially calls for the full annexation of the West Bank without granting rights to the Palestinians and the exercise of extreme repression against anyone who opposes it. The logic behind this plan is that the sovereignty of a Jewish nation-state, in a situation where half of the population does not belong to the Jewish supreme group, is only possible by exercising an extreme force against the Palestinians. To succeed in this, the government have announcement of “legal reform” in March 2023 to ensure unrestrained right-wing rule, without restraints by the supreme court and other democratic institutions.

This happened to be was one step too far, the result of excessive self-confidence, a kind of hubris. The secular white camp in Israel took the streets. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish Israelis who feared for the fate of their Jewish democracy. Palestinian citizens didn’t take part in those demonstrations. The widespread demonstrations caused instability to the point of threats to refuse to serve in the army. To illustrate that eliminating the “Palestinian problem” was the goal, the government moved toward normalization with Saudi Arabia, and the Minister of National Security Ben Gvir did everything in his power to crumble the status quo at Al-Aqsa through frequent provocative visits.

The Palestinians in Gaza, who have been under a suffocating blockade since 2006, had no choice but to try to break through the Israeli sealed wall, and this was the goal of the October 2023 attack. From the perspective of a few years from now, I estimate that we will see October 7, 2023, as the culmination of the decolonization process of Palestine.

In terms of Israeli policy, what the current Netanyahu government did and still do is to remove the mask from Israel's face as the "only democracy in the Middle East" with the "most moral army in the world" and other clichés. Previous Labor governments have maintained the mask of "aspiration for peace," which preserved the stability of the state. The Israeli protesters against the government fought to put on the mask again, but it have been lost forever. That mask is buried under the rubble of Gaza and over a year of genocide supported by that "opposition" camp in Israel.

That white camp in Israel, mostly Ashkenazi, has fully mobilized to support the campaign of killing and destruction in Gaza. A camp that threatened to refuse to serve if the government harmed its democracy, joined the military service in Gaza with a turnout rate of over 100 percent. They dismiss the war crimes in Gaza, as "There's Rotten Fruit Everywhere », as a friend told me. The Palestinian external enemy has reunited all the Jews in Israel with the exception of a few real heroes. The white camp have found every possible excuse to justify its participation in the greatest crime ever committed by Jews.

I foresee the approaching end of the Zionist enterprise and its collapse from within. The main reason is the impossibility of controlling over time the Palestinians who refuse to disappear or stop resisting. The internal, social, economic and political collapse are the result of the contradiction at the heart of the colonial reality. Once this contradiction has shaken the internal order among the ruling Jewish population, as a result of the extreme moves of the Netanyahu government, the end is only a matter of time. Anyone who thinks that it is possible to turn the wheel back, and restore at least a semblance of liberal democracy, is deluded. There are no political forces in Israel that are willing or able to stand up to the growing trend of extremism.

We could think of this “end” in at least three different scenarios. There could be an “Algerian model” decolonization in which many Israelis would leave, because they won’t be able to imagine living together with the Palestinians. This would be the complete collapse of the state and its replacement with a different regime. The dream of a free Palestine where justice would prevail for everyone lays in this option. The second scenario is a dictatorial military state. Under Trump’s auspices, Israel could, at least theoretically, have unlimited military power and with unbounded internal rule, which would suppress any uprising by force of arms. And we can think of a poor and backward state from which those who can will flee in time.

Towards the end, I would like to show a certain similarity, perhaps surprising, between the beginning of the Zionist colonial enterprise and its current state, towards its end, I argue. In the year of the Nakba and immediately after it, several important texts were written by Israeli Jews that addressed the deportations and massacres against the Palestinian population with great honesty, even naivety. I’ll give just one example of this. In 1948, Natan Alterman was a prominent poet in Israel. In November 1948, he published a poem that described in details and emotion the massacre committed by IDF soldiers in the town of El-Llid in July of that year. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion was greatly influenced by the poem and its warning against committing war crimes, and instructed to distribute 100,000 copies to soldiers.

A few years later, and for decades, denying the Nakba became the mission of the state at all levels. Israelis grew up without the slightest idea of what had happened in that formative year. Since the beginning of the 2000s, after the writings of the New Historians and the work of Zochrot, Israelis have begun to be exposed to what really happened in 1948. The 2011 Nakba Law has given this discussion an additional boost despite and because of that pathetic government attempt to suppress it again.

In the past year, we have witnessed open calls to carry out another Nakba, which is actually happening, and soldiers are filming themselves blowing up houses, burning and looting. Calls for revenge and incitement in the media echo the calls of the country's leaders so the crimes are being committed openly. The denial of committing genocide and other crimes against humanity is only because Israel has always been used to impunity and is not willing to pay the price. The similarity between the revealing writing about the massacre in 1948 and the self-documentation of the crimes today seems like a closing of a circle. The end meets the beginning, but from here it is no longer possible to start over.

I would like to end with a personal note. These things that I see from afar today, from Brussels, hurt me personally. This is where I grew up. I see how it becomes a genocidal society. I have children and grandchildren there who I fear will grow up to be soldiers in the most immoral army in the world or, at least, will grow up to hate Arabs. My close family members have been saying things over the past year that I dare not quote out loud here. I wonder if this pain is relevant, deserves to be heard. After all, I am not the victim here. The pain of Jews, Israeli citizens like me, is also silenced under the Israeli killing machine. So thank you for listening.