

Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

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Israel: A Colonising Democracy

Israel is a colonising democracy.

Gaza and The West Bank are its two main colonies. On October 7th the Gaza colony dared to revolt by invading the lands of the colonising power. A shocked Israel decided to obliterate this colony which dared to revolt. The US, UK and Europe have opted to support the right of the colonising democracy of Israel to do what colonisers must do.

When the Labour Leader expressed support for Israel's decision to deprive Gaza of water, food, fuel and medicine, and a number of Labour Councillors resigned in protest, the party member who appeared on BBC's *Newsnight* (Oct 25) to support the Leader was John McTernan.

McTernan was political adviser to Tony Blair. His main point in support of the present Leader's support for a Blockade, that is widely considered to be genocidal, is that it doesn't matter what the Labour Party says or does on this matter because it is not in power and its proper business is to get into power.

But he went further, and said it doesn't matter what the Government says or does either, because Britain is a small, weak country which counts for nothing in world affairs.

And anyway, he said, we should support Israel "because we've always supported Israel".

One of the Councillors who resigned, Shaista

Continued On Page 2

Is the Labour Party really much different from the Tories?

The claim made by Labour, the Tories and nearly all newspapers is that there are substantial policy differences between the two major parties. *Labour Affairs* has argued that there aren't and that an elaborate charade is mounted for the British public to make them believe what is not the case. Now the Labour Party has published a "Full final policy platform set to shape next Labour manifesto".¹

This document does nothing to dispel the impression that the Labour Party is in substantial agreement with the Tories except in points of detail, just enough to maintain the illusion that there might be substantial differences. There is an extremely long list of proposals couched in aspirational verbs such as 'develop', 'create', 'co-operate', 'champion', 'restore' and 'examine'. None of this can be taken too seriously until it is formed into specific proposals that Labour can be held to account for. The following are the proposals that *Labour Affairs* found that are specific enough to qualify as potential policy rather than aspirational waffle.

- Create GB Energy: a new home-grown, publicly-owned national champion in

¹ <https://labourlist.org/2023/10/labour-national-policy-forum-final-document-summary-policy-manifesto-party-conference/>

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Aziz (Oxford), appeared in the same programme. She said the crisis was a legacy from British colonialism, and that Government and Opposition should issue a joint call for a Ceasefire.

McTernan said nothing whatever about Britain's colonial responsibility. He said the crisis was started by Hamas, and that for Israel to call off its siege would be surrender if Hamas did not lay down its arms.

*

The entire crisis exists only because of British action, and the actions of a British Labour Government in particular.

Britain, in conquering the Middle East in 1917, opened up Palestine to Jewish colonisation, with a view to imposing a Jewish State. Without large-scale Jewish colonisation in subsequent years, protected by British Power, there could have been no Jewish State in Palestine.

Britain guaranteed the Arab people that it would protect it against hostile Jewish action. But, when the Jewish colony that Britain had built up declared itself independent, and waged a terrorist war against Britain, the British Labour Government surrendered to it. It washed its hands of its responsibilities. That was when the Jewish nationalist war against the Arab population began. It has continued from 1948 down to the present.

John McTernan says it is "*intolerable for a democracy like Israel*" to be subjected to terrorist threats.

Israel, in its internal Jewish affairs is a democracy. It is a colony that became a State. But its colonising activity did not end when it became a recognised state. The state fosters colonising activity beyond its borders in order to lay foundations for the extension of the state.

It is a colonising democracy.

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clean power generation.

- On taxation: End tax breaks for private equity bosses, Remove the non-domiciled tax loophole, Close the loopholes in the windfall tax on oil and gas companies and remove the tax loopholes that private schools enjoy.
- End 'one sided' flexibility and ensure all jobs provide a baseline level of security and predictability, banning exploitative zero-hours contracts and ensuring everyone has the right to a contract that reflects the number of hours they regularly work, based on a 12-week reference period.
- Repeal the Trade Union Act 2016, the minimum service levels (strikes) bill and the conduct of employment agencies and employment businesses (amendment) regulations 2022.

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Labour Affairs

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- Keep the promises made to the North and Midlands and deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail and High Speed 2 in full.
- Reform our broken bus system. Hand power and control to local leaders through the Take Back Control Act. Give communities the ability to take on powers to franchise local bus services. Lift the ban on and promote municipal bus ownership.
- Make the NHS the preferred provider of commissioned healthcare services and will end the reliance on outsourcing and cronyism.

Note that all of this is to take place within Labour's 'iron clad' fiscal rules, which seem to preclude the state mobilising resources for investment unless the money required comes from taxation. A glance at the list above illustrates the complete lack of ambition about mobilising resources via taxation. Labour does not propose any other sources apart from the paltry fiscal measures mentioned above. The rest will have to be 'leveraged' from the private sector, which is to say that some kind of Private Public Partnership will be set up to provide risk-free and highly profitable opportunities for businesses. Foreign Policy and Defence are full-on globalism and imperialism with not a hair's breadth of

difference with the Tories. We suspect that there will always be resources for whatever imperial adventures the United States requires Britain to undertake, 'iron clad' fiscal rules or no. We can be equally sure that the iron clad rules will be invoked to renege on the promise to extend HS2 or to support local authorities who wish to run their own bus services. There is no attempt to substantially alter trade union legislation to allow trade unions to act more effectively in their members' interests and no suggestion of extending working class or trade union power into the Board of Directors. Even Teresa May was more ambitious than this.

There have been times in the past when Labour was able to act as an effective reforming party for the working class interest within capitalism. These were times when it had working class politicians in its leadership who were capable of exploiting the opportunities, often limited, that arose. Even that is no longer the case. The party is run by a middle class elite interested in managing capitalism and in developing their own careers. The Labour Party's particular job at the present time is to mobilise a different sector of the population for capitalism and imperialism from the Tories. The appeal is pitched at the traditional working class on the one hand and liberal minded graduate workers, on the other together with some minority groups. The rhetorical pitch is therefore somewhat different from that used by the Tories.

However, it lacks coherence. Working class voters worried about jobs, health, transport and housing are not going to be concerned about whether some women have penises, an issue that seems to mightily exercise the Labour leadership.

Thus the 'uniparty' charge levelled by ourselves and other commentators is substantially correct and not 'lazy' or 'puerile' as claimed by mainstream political commentators whose jobs depend on the pretence of difference, so that they have something to comment on. In order to maintain the illusion of difference, ferocious rhetoric about the 'incompetence' of the opposing party is deployed by Labour spokesmen. Politics thus becomes a competition about who is the most efficient manager of a fundamentally flawed and unjust system.

The most damaging aspect of this is that the trade union movement continues to talk and act as if the Labour Party is still an instrument for promoting working class interests. All the evidence suggests that not only is this not the case, but it is not likely to become the case. The Labour Party is a sink for activism and the trade union movement should adopt a transactional attitude towards it. In practice the Labour Party is in hock to corporate business interests, lobbyists and wealthy individuals, not to trade union members.

Labour's Economic Model – Rely on the Private Sector

By Martin Seale

The speech by the Shadow Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, to the 2023 Labour conference shows that a Starmer government could rapidly become dysfunctional.

In her speech to the 2023 Labour Party conference, Rachel Reeves stated “Today, I make this commitment to you, and to the country: Out of the wreckage of Tory misrule, Labour will restore our economic stability; We will lift living standards. Make work pay. Rebuild our public services. Invest in homegrown industries in every corner of our country. And together, we will get Britain its future back.”

In his speech, Keir Starmer said “It’s time to build one and half million new homes across the country.”

One would expect these commitments to require huge increases in government expenditure. Reeves believes that if a government wants to spend money, it must get that money via taxation or by borrowing it from the private sector. One would therefore expect Labour’s commitments to lead to increased taxes and/or increased borrowing.

However, in the same speech, Reeves states “I didn’t come into politics to raise taxes on working people. Indeed, I want them to be lower.”

Reeves mentions some tax increases, presumably not on working people, that she intends to implement: ending non-domicile tax status, removing vat exemption for private schools, increasing stamp duty for foreign purchasers of UK properties.

These tax increases would give the government some scope for action. However, It is clear that these tax increases would not free up the resources that a Labour government would need to reverse the effect of 40 years of small-state economics and to ‘rebuild Britain’.

One might therefore conclude that Reeves proposes to get the required

money by borrowing from the private sector. But here we again hit a problem. Any such borrowing would lead to an increase in the national debt. Since Reeves says that the ratio of national debt to GDP should fall over a parliament, she has effectively removed the option of substantially increased borrowing from the private sector.

By refusing to raise taxes or increase national debt, Reeves is sending a clear statement that the proposed rebuilding of Britain will be outsourced to the private sector. A Labour government under Starmer will not be reclaiming the role of the state in important areas like NHS, education, housing water, energy, transport and general infrastructure. Rather, it proposes to create the conditions that will make it attractive to the private sector to invest in this work, despite its poor record in many areas.

Reeves make this clear when she states:

“You cannot tax and spend your way to growth. The lifeblood of a growing economy is business investment.... But we know too that asking business to do all the heavy lifting, while government steps back, is not an option. As our competitors understand, there is a role for government in encouraging and de-risking investment in new and growing industries.”

So that’s the role for government in Reeves’s model for rebuilding Britain – encouraging and de-risking investment in new and growing industries. All this is reminiscent of Gordon Brown’s PFI schemes for building hospitals. Basically, the hospitals were built by the private sector in return for guaranteed very profitable future income streams. That allowed Brown to keep the national debt low while the taxpayer paid much higher amounts to those who financed this work than would have been the case had the government chosen to finance it by increasing the national debt or increasing taxes.

Reeves appears to be following a similar strategy but in every area of social infrastructure, not just hospital building. This strategy will lead to work being done that maximises the profits of private sector companies, not the social infrastructure. For example, in housing, building corporations always attempt to minimise the amount of social housing in their building commitments. Furthermore, the private sector will attempt to maximise, through subsidies and government guaranteed loans, the de-risking of whatever projects they undertake.

When Thatcher came to power in 1979, her long-term plan was to reduce the role of the state in economic affairs and to limit the power of Labour in the Capital/Labour conflict. This policy on the limited role of the state was largely continued by the Blair government. Also, no attempt was made to reverse the anti union laws enacted by previous Conservative administrations.

Labour should reclaim the role of the state in the provision of social infrastructure rather than rely on and subsidise the investment decisions of private enterprise.

Reeves’s strategy will quickly lead to tensions and frustrations in Starmer’s first administration.

The Tories are delighted that Reeves has, with her iron fiscal rules, painted herself, so diligently, into a corner. They will be waiting quietly while Labour’s failure to deliver on its promises becomes clear.

How will Labour respond to this crisis as it emerges? That is when Labour Party politics will again become interesting. If Reeves does not find some way to ditch her pre-occupation with low taxes and low national debt and to reclaim the state as the main guarantor of social infrastructure, Starmer’s administration will be short lived.

Early Day Motion on Gaza

— House of Commons 17th October 2023

Early day motions are short proposals that give MPs a chance to express an opinion, publicise a cause or support a position. They are rarely actually debated, and are only publicised in writing.

Motion text

This House utterly condemns the massacre of Israeli civilians and taking of hostages by Hamas;

-agrees with the United Nations Secretary-General that these horrific acts do not justify responding with the collective punishment of the Palestinian people;

-expresses its deep alarm at the Israeli military bombardment and total siege of Gaza and the resulting deaths and suffering;

- believes that the urgent priority must be to stop the deaths and suffering of any more civilians in Gaza and Israel;

-welcomes the joint statement from 12 leading aid agencies, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, CAFOD, Medical Aid for Palestinians and

Islamic Relief, calling for the Government to use its influence to help protect civilians,

-to ensure adherence to international humanitarian law and to guarantee civilians have access to critical life-saving humanitarian support;

and to this end supports their call for the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to urgently press all parties to agree to an immediate de-escalation and cessation of hostilities, to ensure the immediate, unconditional release of the Israeli hostages, to end to the total siege of Gaza and allow for unfettered access of medical supplies, food, fuel electricity and water, to guarantee that international humanitarian law is upheld and that civilians are protected in accordance with those laws.

Put forward by Richard Burgon, supported by 95 MPs.

Another Early Day Motion was put forward in July 2023 by Andy McDonald, supported by 58 MPs:

That this House recognises that

the Palestinian people are under unprecedented attack; notes that the Israeli Government, one of the most right-wing in its history, has launched its biggest military incursion in the West Bank in two decades, is announcing thousands of new illegal settlements on a regular basis, continuing with its expulsions of Palestinians from East Jerusalem and Masafer Yatta and its school and home demolitions, and failing to prevent armed settlers from rampaging through Palestinian villages killing, maiming, and attacking Palestinians and destroying homes, mosques, and agricultural lands; is horrified to note that this year in the West Bank alone the Israeli military has killed more than 170 Palestinians, nearly one per day; further notes that the US Administration has publicly criticised the plans for illegal settlement expansion; is dismayed that instead of taking concrete steps to uphold human rights and international law, the British Government seems determined to shield Israel from accountability, as well as companies complicit in its occupation, by legislating to silence those trying to achieve change through peaceful and democratic means; believes that any suggestion that, alone among peoples facing oppression around the world, Palestinians should be singled out and denied the right to appeal to people of conscience for support is not only wrong but runs counter to the UK's legal obligations and must be rejected; and insists that the ability of public authorities to divest from companies proven to be complicit or responsible for violations of human rights should be defended.

Editorials and articles at our website, by subject, at

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

Also <https://labouraffairs.com/>

Check what we were saying in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which still reads well. Web pages and PDFs at

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/>

Or by subject at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/m-articles-by-topic/>

Magazines from 1997 to the year 2000.

NATO's war on Serbia over Kosovo - one of many unjust wars that made a nonsense of talk of International Law.

The foolish decisions of the Blair Government. New Labour mindlessly treated Thatcherite economics as a fact of life. The error that Labour under Starmer are determined to repeat, accepting the Small State as an ideal.

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/2023/09/26/newly-available-magazines-from1997/>

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/2023/09/28/newly-added-magazines-for-1998/>

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/2023/10/11/1999-the-nato-war-on-serbia-over-kosovo/>

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/2023/10/19/magazines-for-the-year-2000-kosovo-aftermath/>

A listing of the contents, and the magazines themselves can be read and saved as very readable PDF documents.

Sahra Wagenknecht Newsletter

Sahra Wagenknecht is currently taking steps towards forming a new left party with a strong working class orientation and splitting from Die Linke. In this extract she covers a range of topics that will be vital to the new party. Space does not permit us to add more but it is worth pointing out that, contrary to the left mainstream in Germany she advocates a more restrictive immigration policy, arguing that Germany needs more skilled workers rather than unskilled ones. She also favours a German rapprochement with Russia, not least because Germany needs inexpensive Russian energy to maintain its industrial base which is rapidly being eroded. The German economy, according to Wagenknecht needs to function along the value chain, from the processing of raw materials right through to high quality manufactured goods. Only such a strong manufacturing economy can support the service sector of the economy.

In her weekly Newsletter 26/10/23 Sahra Wagenknecht said:

“Many people in our country have lost confidence in politics and no longer feel represented by any of the existing parties. We have now decided to found a new party to put pressure on the government and to enforce responsible policies for economic sanity, social justice, peace and freedom. To prepare the party foundation, which is planned for January 2024, we use the association Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht - For Reason and Justice.

“A new party can only be successful if it is supported by many. Since we have decided for a slow and controlled growth, it will not be possible for the time being to join the party - which does not even exist yet - or even the association. But donations are welcome. The new party can't and won't attract thousands of people initially.”

The Newsletter includes a link to a Question and Answer about policy, extracts are translated below:

What counts for us as a ‘strong social state’?

A strong welfare state not only ensures that no one in Germany lives in poverty, but also that the standard of living is secured in the event of strokes of fate such as illness or unemployment through no fault of one's own, as well as in old age. Daycare places and good schools must be available for everyone. Housing, water and energy supply, health care close to home and mobility services should primarily be provided by non-profit providers.

How do we create and maintain secure well-paid jobs?

It should once again be normal to be able to make a good living from good work and for employees to have secure prospects. This is another reason why the industrial base of the German economy must be preserved, because industrial jobs pay above average wages in the majority of cases. In contrast, temporary work, fixed-term contracts, low wages and poor working conditions are particularly widespread in the service sectors. We will not accept this. Fixed-term contracts should no longer be permitted. Temporary workers must be paid at least the same wages as those in the industries in which they are employed. Collective bargaining agreements must be strengthened again, and the best way to do this would be to make them generally binding. However, to achieve this, all companies, even smaller ones, must be put in a position to pay collectively agreed wages. If company management obstructs the formation of works councils, this must not be tolerated. There must be an end to companies like Amazon raking in billions in profits while at the same time exploiting their employees in an intolerable manner. Likewise, all healthcare workers finally need tangible support and better wages and working conditions, instead of hollow promises and inconsequential applause.

What do we mean by reliable security in cases of illness, unemployment and old age?

All people in Germany must have access to good medical care, regardless of their financial means. We reject the current 2-tier medical system. Good care also includes having a hospital within easy reach. Pensions must secure the standard of living and in any case protect against poverty in old age. In the case of unemployment, the duration of payments and previous income must be decisive for the level of benefits. Entitlement to a corresponding unemployment benefit exists until the person concerned has been offered a new job that corresponds to his or her qualifications and, if possible, is paid according to collective agreements. If qualifications are lacking or no longer in demand, meaningful qualifications must be offered.

How will we improve our education system?

The austerity measures of recent decades have turned the German education system into one of the worst in Europe. Children, teachers and parents are suffering as a result. We demand standardized curricula and qualifications in all 16 German states, as well as longer periods of shared learning for all children. The federal government must support the states in renovating ailing schools and combating the shortage of teachers. Above all, this means more money for teaching positions. In addition, the attractiveness of the teaching profession must be increased and the number of students in classes reduced. This applies especially to elementary schools in poorer residential districts. We call for at least a mandatory preschool year to address language deficits before children start school. Education must be available free of charge and of high quality. All children must be given the opportunity to develop their talents and obtain good vocational or academic qualifications. This requires special support for highly gifted children as well as intensive support for children with learning difficulties. We want to strengthen the dual training system again [apprenticeships with day release at college] and encourage high school

graduates to opt for scientific and technical courses of study.

What is our position on Cancel Culture and the pressure towards Conformity?

It undermines our democracy when the public flow of opinion narrows more and more and an open exchange - even of controversial opinions - is less and less possible. Unfortunately, we are seeing the so-called cancel culture taking over more and more space and the pressure on individuals to subordinate themselves to a certain opinion in order not to be singled out and defamed. This was particularly extreme during the Corona pandemic, but we are also experiencing it in the debate about the right way to end the Ukraine war and on other issues. We do not accept this. We are committed to ensuring that no one has to be afraid to express their opinion, even if it does not correspond to the opinion published via the leading media.

What do we mean by a new era of tolerance on the international level?

We rely on understanding and reconciliation of interests between states on the basis of international law. It is not our business to lecture other peoples, nor to treat them as inferiors. This means that we recognize that countries can have legitimate interests even if their government or form of rule do not conform to our ideas and values. History has shown that trade and economic exchange can help maintain peace. Binding, fair treaties and respectful dealings in international politics can create the conditions for disarmament and common security.

For a Strong and Innovative Economy.

Our country still has a solid industrial base and a successful, innovative Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) sector. But general conditions have deteriorated dramatically in recent years. Our public infrastructure is in a disgraceful condition for a leading industrial country. Hardly any trains run on time, patients on public health insurance wait months for an appointment with a specialist, thousands of teachers,

day-care places and flats are missing. Dilapidated roads and bridges, dead spots and slow internet, overburdened administrations and useless regulations make life difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises in particular. The German school system, with 16 different curricula, classes that are far too large and too early selection, denies children from less well-off families educational and life opportunities and at the same time fails in the task of training the skilled workers urgently needed by the economy. Since the Russian sanctions and alleged climate policy have made energy suddenly more expensive, our country is threatened with the loss of important industries and hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs. Many companies are considering relocating their production abroad. Others may go out of business altogether.

Politics influenced and bought by corporations and the failure of antitrust authorities have created a market economy in which many markets no longer function. Dominant large corporations, overbearing financial groups like Blackrock and encroaching digital monopolies like Amazon, Alphabet, Facebook, Microsoft and Apple have emerged, imposing their toll on all other market participants, undermining competition and destroying democracy. To a considerable extent, the current inflation is also the result of market failure caused by too much economic power.

We strive for an innovative economy with fair competition, well-paid secure jobs, a high share of industrial value added, a fair tax system and a strong middle class. To achieve this, we want to limit market power and unbundle dominant corporations. Where monopolies are unavoidable, tasks must be transferred to non-profit providers.

For a self-confident foreign policy.

Our foreign policy sits in the tradition of the German Chancellor Willy Brandt and the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who opposed thinking and acting in the logic of the Cold War with a policy of détente, reconciliation of interests and international cooperation. We

fundamentally reject the resolution of conflicts by military means. We oppose the fact that more and more resources flow into weapons and war equipment instead of into the education of our children, research into environmentally friendly technologies or our health and care facilities. Nuclear armament and escalating conflicts between nuclear powers put the survival of humanity at risk and must be stopped. We seek a new era of détente and new treaties on disarmament and common security. The Bundeswehr has the mission to defend our country. It must be adequately equipped for this task. We reject the deployment of German soldiers in international wars as well as their stationing on the Russian border or in the South China Sea.

A military alliance (NATO) whose leading power has invaded five countries in the past years in violation of international law and killed more than 1 million people in these wars threatens others and leads to defensive reactions and thus contributes to global instability. Instead of an instrument of power for geopolitical goals, we need a defensive defence alliance that respects the principles of the UN Charter, strives for disarmament instead of committing to rearmament, and in which members meet as equals. Europe needs a stable security architecture, which in the longer term should also include Russia.

Our country deserves a self-confident policy that puts the well-being of its citizens at the centre and is driven by the realisation that US interests are sometimes very different from our interests. Our goal is an independent Europe of sovereign democracies in a multipolar world and not a new bloc confrontation in which Europe is ground down between the USA and the increasingly self-confident new power bloc around China and Russia.

(The original German text is at <https://buendnis-sahra-wagenknecht.de/faq/>)

A law against Boycotting Israel

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories are to be made illegal by a new bill going through Parliament.

According to the proposed law, public bodies are forbidden to disapprove of any country, unless the Secretary of State has disapproved first and he will never disapprove in the case of Israel, the Occupied Territories and the Golan Heights.

Section 1 : “Disapproval of foreign state conduct prohibited”.

But:

“The Secretary of State or the Minister for the Cabinet Office may, by regulations, specify a country or territory to which Section 1 does not apply” [e.g. Russia] and, the Secretary of state can never specify Israel and the Occupied Territories or Golan Heights as ‘a country or territory to which Section 1 does not apply’:

“Regulations under subsection (5) may not specify, and regulations under subsection (2) may not result in a description of decision or consideration relating specifically or mainly to—

1. (a) Israel,
2. (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or
3. (c) the Occupied Golan Heights.”

The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-public-bodies-banned-from-imposing-their-own-boycotts-against-foreign-countries>

This Bill is at the Report stage, it will have a third reading and then go to the House of Lords. On 3 July 2023, 268 MPs voted to continue with the bill, 70 voted against. We reproduce below some of the arguments.

The bill intends to ban public bodies such as Councils or Universities boycotting Israeli goods, but its stated aim is to prevent public bodies from making their own decisions regarding procurement and investments according to their moral principles at all: It is a bill to “Make provision to prevent public bodies from being influenced by political or moral disapproval of foreign states when taking certain economic

decisions, subject to certain exceptions; and for connected purposes.” Section 1 is entitled: Disapproval of foreign state conduct prohibited.

There is opposition to the bill, but it is not on the ground that an apartheid state should be boycotted. It is on the grounds that the bill goes beyond banning the boycott of goods from Israel by also banning the boycott of goods from the illegal Occupied Territories, and so the bill is illegal. Further, the bill penalises not just instituting a boycott, but also expressing the opinion that such a boycott should take place, were it legal to do so. The bill also prevents any boycotts at all, unless they coincide with the government’s foreign policy: “The Secretary of State or the Minister for the Cabinet Office may, by regulations, specify a country or territory to which Section 1 does not apply”. The boycotting of South African goods would have been illegal under this proposed law.

Several MPs express the fear that singling out Israel as an exception could increase feelings of hostility towards Jews.

19 June 2023

“From:

[Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#) and [The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP](#)

Published

19 June 2023

“Today’s Bill will stop businesses and organisations – including those affiliated with Israel - being targeted through ongoing boycotts by public bodies – leading to community tensions and, in the case of Israel, a rise in antisemitism.”

[But it’s OK to boycott organisations connected with Russia, because that is in line with UK foreign policy]:

“The UK has a well-established sanctions policy which remains in place. Organisations with links to Russia and Belarus will still be prevented from benefiting from taxpayers’ money with councils able to terminate existing contracts with those linked to Putin’s barbaric war machine.”

The government added:

“The Government remains strongly committed to the UK’s long and proud tradition of free speech. The ban will not apply to individuals or private organisations, where they are not

carrying out public functions. It will also not change the UK's approach to the Middle East Peace Process, or our position on settlements, which are illegal under international law."

The debate before the second reading.

The Conservative Crispin Blunt opposed the bill, making important points:

"As the effect of Israeli policy since 1967 has been to build out of existence the possibility of a two-state solution by settling 700,000 Jews who have arrived in the state of Israel, with their right to go there under Israeli law, it is now no longer possible for there to be a two-state solution, so what is British policy to be?"

Joanna Cherry

... I also found the Secretary of State's suggestion that those of us who oppose the Bill are condoning antisemitism, or are in fact antisemitic, to be disgraceful. Has she, like me, seen a public letter to the Secretary of State from a number of British-based Jewish academic experts in the fields of Jewish studies, the study of antisemitism and Israel studies, including my dear friend Professor Francesca Klug OBE, visiting professor of human rights at the London School of Economics? They have expressed the view that this legislation is damaging and wrong-headed and should be withdrawn. Will the hon. Lady confirm that that is a letter from leading British Jewish academics?

Dr Whitford

The hon. Lady talks about when she has visited Israel or Palestine, as I have done

regularly with the breast cancer projects I am involved with in Gaza and the west bank. The thing is that the settlements are illegal under international law, and they have been condemned by the Government in the past. Obviously, companies, pension funds, councils and devolved Governments who try to act ethically and do not wish to purchase settlement goods, which are illegal, would be flooded by that clause. How does that match with current UK policy?

Alicia Kearns Con

[her main point is: we would support a boycott of products from the occupied territories, because we consider them to be illegal or annexed, [but the bill puts together (a) Israel, (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or (c) the Occupied Golan Heights. As places that cannot be the object of an economic boycott.]

This evening's debate should focus on the specifics of the Bill in front of us. The right of Israel to exist and defend itself is not up for debate. The right of Palestine to exist and defend itself is also not up for debate. The UK supports a two-state solution, and I believe that everyone in the Chamber would also be of that mind. I wish to draw the attention of hon. Members to the implications of the current drafting of the Bill. It has implications on our historic commitments and responsibilities and ability to play the role of honest arbiter within the region, and risks undermining our commitments as a United Nations Security Council member.

My concerns about the Bill

fall within four areas: first, foreign policy implications; secondly, exceptionalism in legislation; thirdly, protection of freedom of speech; and finally, the legality of what we are being asked to support. Let me begin with the implications of the Bill on foreign policy and international obligations. My first concern, as was raised in earlier interventions, is the conflation of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Conflating East Jerusalem, the west bank and the Golan Heights breaks with our position, because the UK recognises the Golan Heights as annexed and the west bank and East Jerusalem as Occupied Palestinian Territories. That is a departure from our foreign policy.

Not only does the Bill break with our foreign policy, but clause 3(7) puts the UK in breach of our commitments under UN Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). That is not just an international commitment; it is one that we drafted back in 2016. It states that in their "relevant dealings", states must distinguish.

"between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967."

The Bill does not distinguish between our treatment of Israel and the OPTs.

Why does breaching UNSCR 2334 matter? Because we rely on the rules based system to protect ourselves and to protect our allies. How many of us have talked about the rule of law in this Chamber, when it comes to Ukraine and Russia, Serbia, the Balkans, and so many other parts of this world? The impact

of the Bill would be significant. It will undermine our position as a respectable and reliable multilateral partner, committed to upholding UN Security Council resolutions as we should as a permanent member. It risks our losing the support of Arab states on shared issues, and their vote at the UN. We all know that western states are spending a significant amount of time trying to shore up the support of so-called non-aligned countries. I have spent most of the last few days on the phone to Arab ambassadors—the same Arab ambassadors who recognise Israel and want to normalise relations with Israel. Finally, we risk giving China, Iran, Russia, Serbia and others an easy propaganda win, because they will use this against us when we talk about the annexation of territories around the world.

I am concerned that the UN Special Coordinator would have no choice but to explicitly name the UK in their next report on how member states are adhering to compliance with UNSCR 2334. I also worry that it sends the wrong message about the achievement of sovereignty through violence. It means that if Israel breaches international law in the occupied territories, public bodies cannot express their ethical objection to those crimes. I worry that the Bill will leave the international community questioning whether Israeli settlements in the OPTs and the Golan Heights are still regarded as illegal by the UK Government.

[...]

I have received significant

representations from human rights organisations within Israel, and also from within our Jewish communities in the UK, who feel that this is not only the worst possible timing for the Bill, but that they themselves do not support it.

If we are now to have questioned our position on the OPTs legally, how is the Bill compatible with that, and with the fact that the Conservative Government recognise that settlements built on occupied Palestinian land since 1967 are illegal? We must ensure that all legislation makes a clear distinction between Israel where we support no boycott, and the illegal settlements on occupied land where a boycott would be consistent with our position on UNSCR 2334. Why are we undermining our international position by breaching our position on a two-state solution, and changing the UK's recognition of certain territories as occupied, when the Bill can achieve the same end simply by removing clause 3(7)? The House will hear that point reiterated throughout the evening by many of my colleagues.

I was also concerned that the Secretary of State appeared not to be aware of the concerns emanating from the Foreign Office and from diplomatic posts. I ask him to clarify that when winding up this evening. I think the wording was that “no such advice had been received”. Has the Foreign Office truly not given any advice that it had concerns that the Bill breached our UN Security Council resolutions?

Dr Whitford adds:

Is it not an issue to use the term “boycotting” with regard to the settlements? They are illegal under international law, so no public body should be investing in, or making profit from, them.

Alice Kearns also made the point about freedom of expression:

“a local council leader, university vice-chancellor or even the chief executive of a private company delivering public services” [saying or writing that they would like to boycott products (say from the OPTs) break the law and can be fined, even if no action was actually taken.] “to now stop elected individuals from expressing moral disapproval or even to consider or vocalise ethical investment decisions is wrong.”

“Our obligations under the UN guiding principles on business and human rights essentially mean that this legislation would see the private sector having greater adherence to our human rights than the public sector. I encourage the Secretary of State to consider potential conflict between the UK Government and the UN stating that settlements are illegal while then penalising local councils in the UK for taking ethical procurement decisions to address that illegality.”

Monday 3 July 2023

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-03/debates/CF82F174-BC12-452A-B9B0-F67B7940CCCC/>

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

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Israel Against Zionism?

Israel and its supporters have lost sight of what Zionism was originally about. It began as a marginal dream, but became serious in the late 19th century. Growing nationalism and militarism included an intensification in European anti-Semitism.

The USA, previously mild, disliked taking in huge numbers of East European Jews with unfamiliar values. Migration got cheaper, so large numbers of poor people took advantage. Especially Jews, and many went to Britain:

"The [UK] Aliens Act 1905 introduced immigration controls and registration for the first time...

"The British Brothers' League ... its speakers said that Britain should not become 'the dumping ground for the scum of Europe.'"¹

The current crisis can only be understood by looking at past roots.

Writing near the end of October, I won't talk about specific fast-moving events. I will say that after the first few hours, nothing Israel did could be truthfully called 'Israel defending itself'.

Israel retaliating was normal enough. But things have gone way beyond that. Life in Gaza is being made impossible unless Hamas releases its hostages without getting anything in return. No Israeli government could think that Hamas would do that: so how does it end?

The Global West cheers on acts of aggression that hurts non-combatants. 'Defensive' only if they

believe it makes Israel safer in the long run.

Or some of them may just see it as the best thing to say, to advance their careers at this moment in time. Cynics may have noted that few had their careers blighted by supporting the pack of lies over Iraq. Or an Afghan intervention that has left the Taliban far stronger than before.

My view is that Israel will only be secure when the majority of Arabs and Muslims accept it. Agree to a Jewish state on land that was overwhelmingly Arab and Muslim until the 1940s. Israelis convincing themselves it is just the fault of Palestinians would be irrelevant, even if it were true.

And while some global politicians genuinely wanted to help Jews, most just cared about power.

During World War Two, the USA and the British Empire ignored requests to bomb railway lines leading to the Death Camps. Most Germans and German allies believed that Jews were being deported, not murdered. It had to be done out of sight. Many on the allied side had thought it exaggerated, which supposed World War One German atrocities in Belgium really had been.

Stripping Jews of their rights as citizens was no secret, of course. And the USA and the British Empire had wanted no more Jews – even Einstein had a problem getting refuge in the USA.

Bombing the actual Death Camps might have killed more than it saved, but huge numbers of Jews would have survived had they not been sent there. But was this something that most politicians would make sacrifices for? Delay final victory, and slow the race into Germany as the Soviet army advanced?

The Nazis had killed more than half the Jews in territories they controlled. Many of the survivors had been hidden, at great risk to whoever hid them. Only in the Baltic states, Croatia and parts of Ukraine was there local enthusiasm for killing neighbouring Jews. Done along with Gypsies and Serbs in Croatia and Poles in Ukraine. But the survivors were mostly not wanted as part of the population of any part of Continental Europe. Nor were they welcome in the USA or the settler colonies of the British Empire.

The British Empire had already tried defining a British Palestine that was smaller than historic Israel, but did include most of the places that had historic meaning for Jews. Churchill saw it as a convenient place to send Jews who might otherwise join Global Communism. But people who'd lived there for centuries, mostly Muslim but some Christian,

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aliens_Act_1905

didn't want to suddenly become strangers in their own land.

Europeans since Columbus had been displacing, de-culturing, and sometimes exterminating other populations. The original inhabitants of North America, Australia and New Zealand had been swamped, and at that time they were dwindling in numbers. De-cultured to be inferior minorities who mostly imitated settler values. Likewise in Latin America, where those of mostly-European descent held most of the wealth and power.

Post-1945 leaders dumped unwanted Jews onto the unimportant inhabitants of British Palestine, and assumed it would work. In 1947, the British Empire had reluctantly let go of the Indian subcontinent, but most British politicians intended to keep the rest of the Empire. France and the Netherlands re-asserted control of their own Empires, with fierce resistance in Vietnam and Indonesia.

Without the Soviet Union championing anti-Imperialist causes, a total clearance of the non-Jewish inhabitants of British Palestine might have happened right then. As things were, two separate and sovereign states were proposed:

"The proposed plan is considered to have been pro-Zionist by its detractors, with 56% of the land (mainly the sparsely populated Negev desert) allocated to the Jewish state despite the Palestinian Arab population numbering twice the Jewish population."²

The Arab and Muslim world would not accept this, just as Britain and the USA had earlier shut out unfamiliar Jews from foreign cultures. But they did not respond coherently. Tiny

new Israel was better prepared, and took more than the UN had offered. Drove out much of the non-Jewish population.

Israel became Europe's final settler-colony,³ though later joined by Jews from the Muslim world.

The Oslo Accords of 1993 to 1995 stopped short of the Two-State Solution that the United Nations had authorized in 1947.⁴ Yasser Arafat as the world's most respected Palestinian accepted it in principle: something he should have done years earlier. But with the USA briefly dominant, Israel chose to offer far too little. Jewish settlement on the West Bank expanded, which is unacceptable to all Arab and Muslim opinion.

Even more serious for Muslims are threats to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which sits on top of where the Jewish Temple stood before the Romans demolished it. Loose talk of a Third Jewish Temple alarms and outrages devout Muslims. And the Anglosphere has willfully demolished or discredited most Arab Secularism.

A War of Populations?

Hamas attacking into Israel surprised me as much as it surprised most people.

I initially took it to be a coldly calculated attempt to start a War of Populations. Hamas's Gambit – leaders aware that they may lose control of Gaza. Not wanting to run a stressed and weak Bantustan, while Israel takes more of the West Bank.

I've now heard other interpretations. I may be wrong about *intent*. But the *outcome* remains likely. The world has polarised, with the USA letting Israel do almost anything.

US Presidents have spoken against Israel expanding on the

³ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/post-liberalism/israel-as-a-western-colony/>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two-state_solution

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Partition_Plan_for_Palestine

West Bank. But never said that aid would be cut unless it stops. So it does not stop.

Globally, there are 14.3 million Palestinians. 2.03 million in Israel. 2.17 million in Gaza. 3.19 million in the West Bank. 2.17 officially recognised as such in Jordan, but probably more. 0.57 million in Syria. 0.46 million in Lebanon.⁵ Which makes more than 11 million ruled by Israel, or close enough to join a fight if the governments ruling them would allow it.

Many more Arab Muslims and Global Muslims would also join. Including some Global Uighurs, but less than if Beijing had not cracked down on Extreme-Islamist separatism.⁶

Against that, there are only 6.7 million Jews in Israel. 15 to 20 million Jews globally, but how many of those would risk their lives for Israel?

Another aspect: 'guest workers' from Thailand were among those killed or captured.⁷ An article in the *Financial Times* explains that they had been encouraged as a way of employing fewer Palestinians.⁸ But if they can't be tempted back by relatively high wages, Israel may become increasingly isolated and short of people.

Supposed friends of Israel are more dangerous to its future than overt enemies.

Snippets

Benedict Arnold Not a Traitor?

I was making a general study of cases where politics get called treason, because someone dares seek a different outcome. I hadn't
⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinians>
⁶ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/West-Reports-Only-Propaganda-on-Xinjiang>
⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/10/i-just-want-my-son-families-of-thai-workers-in-israel-face-painful-wait-for-news>
⁸ <https://www.ft.com/content/9ddbdec8-c566-47b1-b514-b3ad6c45f641> - pay site.

thought Arnold was one such, but probably he was.

Yet another hole in the US vision of themselves as the world's main Abode of Virtue.

In 1778, the British government sent out the Carlisle Peace Commission.⁹ British America was offered everything they had been originally asking for. Arnold when he changed sides argued that this met the reasons why he originally took up arms. The Declaration of Independence was a mistake: the alliance with anti-democratic France was worse.¹⁰

My planned study is about Democratic Secession. The United Nations, operating by selfish power politics, always condemns it until the relevant government gives up.

Norms of International Law are ignored by almost everyone, when they are inconvenient. But the USA since the Soviet collapse has been much the worst offender.

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Property Only With Privilege

"England worst place in developed world to find housing, says report.

"Quarter of UK private renters spending over 40% of income on housing amid warning people are 'trapped in poverty'."¹¹

The Thatcherite vision was a property-owning democracy: the automatic outcome of a minimum of regulations.

Not what actually happened.

On wealth-creation, the 'brilliant' New Right never did better than the 'disastrous' Keynesian era. And now does much worse.

They massage conservative feelings, but have never yet delivered a conservative result. Things that were still solid in the 1980s have now fallen apart.

I see them as historic failures, likely to be viewed with contempt by

future generations.

*

Climate Change Costs

"Climate crisis costing \$16m an hour in extreme weather damage, study estimates

"Analysis shows at least \$2.8tn in damage from 2000 to 2019 through worsened storms, floods and heatwaves".¹²

The cost falls mainly on ordinary people, especially the poor. Britain's boiler and car control schemes don't include decent subsidies. Most politicians don't dare ask the very rich to pay even the same percentage taxes that ordinary citizens must pay.

Action is needed. What's happening now could sensibly be called Climate Genocide. Not extinction, but hotter countries could have seasons that were too hot for humans. A mix of heat and humidity, unlike the hot-but-dry conditions of East Africa where we evolved, cooling ourselves by sweating. Sweating does not work in high humidity.

We now pay vast amounts, in lives and in misery, and even in crude economic terms, for not having acted strongly in the 1990s. That was when a large majority of the experts decided climate change was real.

In 20 or 40 years' time, if we do not act strongly now, those still alive will face a lot more cost and suffering.

The whole thing gets confused by what I call the Miss Greenpest Effect.¹³ Climate change warnings come most loudly from Deep Greens with unrealistic notions of ending modern society. It gets overlooked that most scientists take a different and much more realistic view.

Or do you want to say '**2% of Climate Experts Can't Be Wrong**'?

*

An end to Feed-the Rich?

«A minimum 2% tax rate on billionaires' global wealth would raise \$250bn (£205bn) a year.

«There are around 2,500 billionaires with a combined

wealth of \$13 trillion.»¹⁴

This is from the EU Tax Observatory in Paris. But will voters see it as a good idea? The people who'd have to pay dominate the media. They persuade ordinary people that tax is a burden on everyone, and the enemy of wealth.

The real story is that the West's Mixed Economy won the Cold War.¹⁵ But critics of capitalism mostly fail to mention that.

Also forgotten is that Khrushchev 'reformed' the Soviet economy by replacing harsh and coherent Stalinist planning with a bizarre system of pseudo-markets.¹⁶ ¹⁷ A system as easy to fraudulently play as Enron's manipulation within US Capitalism. And just as destructive of real wealth.

*

Poor People's Burden

"If You Want Our Countries to Address Climate Change, First Pause Our Debts

"When poor countries are forced to default on their foreign debt, as Ghana and Zambia have done, they pay a heavy price. Cut off from credit of any kind, spending on health, education and dealing with the damaging effects of climate change comes to a juddering halt.

"Countries in the West often plead with us to invest in the kind of ambitious resilience projects we need to survive in a warming world. But in Africa, we can't fix the climate issue unless we fix the debt issue. Of the 52 low- and middle-income countries that have defaulted on their debts or have come close to it in the last three years, 23 are in Africa. The continent's debt burden is skyrocketing as a result of factors

¹⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-67191791>

¹⁵ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>

¹⁶ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/>

¹⁷ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/marxism-and-market-socialism/>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlisle_Peace_Commission

¹⁰ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Benedict_Arnold%27s_letter_To_the_Inhabitants_of_America

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/oct/05/england-worst-place-in-developed-world-to-find-housing-says-report>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/oct/09/climate-crisis-cost-extreme-weather-damage-study>

¹³ <https://labouraffairs.com/2022/12/02/notes-on-the-news-17/>

beyond its control: the aftershocks of the pandemic, rising fuel and food prices, higher interest rates and climate catastrophes that weaken our economies and sap our ability to repay creditors.

"During the pandemic, rich countries pumped trillions of dollars into their economies to support families and businesses. African governments had no such option. Instead, their leaders kept their nations afloat by taking on more debt, which turned out to be a very expensive life raft. As a result of rising interest rates, Africa's debt repayments will surge to \$62 billion this year, up 35 percent from 2022.

"To put this figure into context, Africa is now paying more in debt service than the estimated \$50 billion a year the Global Center on Adaptation says it needs to invest in climate resilience. These investments are not nice-to-haves — they are vital for building roads, bridges and dams that can withstand torrential rains and floods. Failure to do so is to invite catastrophe, as the recent floods in Libya so tragically attest."¹⁸

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Democratic Secession – Either Admirable or Forbidden

The geniuses of the New Right saw no need to protect that complex system of autonomy that Lenin and Stalin had created. The fifteen Union Republics were **sovereign**. Surely **democracy** would solve everything?

But populations that had fought each other before the Soviet Union stabilised went back to fighting each other after the Soviet collapse. And even before that in Former Yugoslavia. Yet Western observers could not understand it, despite their own failure to get peace in Northern Ireland until the IRA / Sinn Fein settled for compulsory power-sharing.

Parliaments with MPs elected for particular regions easily start wars between previously peaceful nationalities. MPs and parties can flourish by saying that whatever their

¹⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/08/opinion/climate-change-africa-debt.html> - pay site.

own nationality have, it is far less than they deserve.

An ethnic Armenian majority in Nagorno-Karabakh grabbed too much, and have now lost everything.

Georgia was led on by Western words, and let down when Russia went to war. They have no meaningful control over South Ossetia. Nor Abkhazia, where Russia may beef up its naval base to keep control of the Black Sea.¹⁹

But Kosovo, autonomous and not sovereign within Serbia, was given independence by an arbitrary act of the USA. And though the Serbs were a majority in a distinct region in the north, the USA insists that they must be ruled by ethnic-Albanians who hate them.

The New Right idea is that they ought to learn to 'get along'. But the sad reality is that they have split the USA into factions that hate each other. It may have been only the danger of being accused of not helping Israel that broke the deadlock on the US Republican's choice of Speaker.

*

Kiev Facing Defeat?

"Russian forces intensify pressure on Ukraine's Avdiivka, Kherson..."

"Avdiivka has become a watchword for resistance, viewed as the gateway to recapturing the Russian-held city of Donetsk and the rest of Donbas."²⁰

Western media say as little as possible: just repeating Kiev's claims of huge Russian losses. And never mentioning that when the First Orange Revolution began to polarise Ukraine in 2004, the regions now annexed by Russia had clear majorities for anti-Orange parties.²¹

While there were still open elections – Kiev has now banned all of the anti-Orange parties, even though they spoke against the Russian invasion – everywhere was split. But the elected regional government of Crimea seceded, and then invited Russia to

¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-67017375>

²⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-forces-intensify-pressure-ukraines-avdiivka-kherson-2023-10-22/>

²¹ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Ukraine-Mariupol-and-the-War-for-the-Oblasts>

annex them. The Donbass regional governments sought the same.

Far-Rightists infested with neo-Nazism began the main violence.²² Got away with mass murder by arson against anti-Orange demonstrators in Odessa in 2014.²³

Why do I say Kiev, not Kyiv? Because that's how it was always written in Global English, before the current crisis. I will not express implicit support for them trying to purge Ukraine of the Russian influences: the bulk of their real history.

I will not glorify anti-Russian politics noted mostly for failure, and for massacres of Poles and Jews.²⁴

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China Purges

When President Xi began purging corrupt officials, Western experts said he was using it just against rival factions.

No one doubted that there was massive corruption, which had to be dealt with. But strong government action offended Western liberals. It was supposed to happen by spontaneous action, which hardly ever triumphs in the real world.

China used to be rated above India on official indexes of corruption. And were unexpectedly re-rated as worse, when some of us started drawing attention to it.

Once it was clear Xi would not trash China in the way that Yeltsin trashed post-Soviet Russia, Western reporting found him wrong whatever he did. So when people seen as his supporters were included, this too was called wrong.

Chinese politics is largely hidden from outsiders. But the *Financial Times* is there to give hard facts to the rich and powerful. So I was only mildly surprised to find this:

"A high-profile Chinese television presenter who was in a relationship with the country's ousted foreign minister had a child last year with

²² <https://gwydionmadawc.com/my-blogs/ukraine-the-current-conflict/>

²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Odesa_clashes

²⁴ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/West-Ukraine-The-Bitter-Past>

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A STATE FOR ALL ITS CITIZENS

A contribution to a debate, by Peter Brooke

In a recent interview on BBC radio, Ehud Barak, the Israeli Prime Minister who is supposed to have offered the best deal Israel ever offered to the Palestinians, spelled out, in rather awkward grammar, what he regards as the ideal two state solution:

'I will never lose eye contact with the ultimate objective which is to separate ourselves from the Palestinians and having Israel which have probably 80% of the settlers holding strategic assets on several [sic] percent of the West Bank side by side with the Palestinian demilitarised viable state.'

In this 'ultimate objective' the Palestinians are given a 'viable state' of their own without the means of self defence, with the Israeli settlers occupying all the positions of strategic importance, including the border with Jordan.

That is not a state.

The first requirement of a state is the ability to defend its citizens. A state is not a state if it does not have its own army under full control of its sovereign government.

So what would a real 'two state solution' look like?

The Palestinians would have full control over Gaza and the West Bank, full access to the rest of the Arab world and the right to develop a military force capable of defending themselves against the neighbouring Israeli state.

Even after the current slaughter taking place in Gaza it is generally assumed that, if the Palestinians in the whole area from the river to the sea do not already outnumber the Jews, they soon will. This is of course not counting those living in refugee camps outside Israel. This population, with its free military capacity and its free relations with the rest of the Arab/Muslim world would be living in some 20% of the total area, beside a state which they knew was built on the spoliation of their land and expulsion of their people back in 1948. Does anyone seriously think such a state of affairs would be viable? That it would not simply serve as a springboard for a later, more equally matched, war?

The 'two state solution' was from the first based on the fiction that what happened in 1948 was 'legitimate'. It was only the land seizure of 1967 that needed to be rectified, only the West Bank that is 'occupied.' It might have been possible for some naïve souls to believe at the time that that was a viable solution to the problem but the Israeli government could never, in any of its manifestations, be accused of naïvety. They never had any intention of implementing it. From the start they set about colonising the parts of the West Bank that were under their control. Discreetly at first but the discretion didn't last very long. It was the steady advance of the colonisation project that provoked the second intifada and the rise of Hamas. It is now so

solidly, so arrogantly implanted that talk of the 'two state solution' is now nothing but an empty cliché, a good example of what is called 'virtue signalling', an insult to the intelligence.

So what are the alternatives? If we define a state as an area under the control of a single government with a monopoly of effective force there is of course only one state in the area from the river to the sea. It is because there is only one state that the word 'apartheid' can be used to describe it - pre-1967 Israel isn't an apartheid state. It is an even worse version of pre-1967 Northern Ireland, a political entity in which there are two peoples living together, the majority people keeping the minority people in a state of subjection.

So what will become of this single state?

There are three possible outcomes:

1) The continuation of the status up to the point where the Israeli government succeeds in its ultimate aim - a single Jewish state with a hugely reduced Palestinian population, maybe with some tiny bantustans still allowed to live in its midst under constant surveillance. That is the most likely outcome, but it is impossible to imagine that such a state would ever be able to live at peace with its neighbours.

2) The radical overthrow of the Israeli state accompanied by mass slaughter of the Jews. That is the implication of the demand for a 'Free Palestine', assuming that we agree that the Palestinians couldn't be satisfied with a 'Free Palestine' confined to the West Bank without control of its border with Jordan and with no means of defending itself. This outcome is improbable but not impossible. It would require a regional - if not a world - war.

3) A single binational state in which everyone living in the area would have equal rights - a 'state for all its citizens' - perhaps analogous to what happened in South Africa. There are a variety of constitutional forms it could take to try to protect the rights of the different peoples. The Jews would very soon be a minority but they would still (like the white South Africans) possess many of the levers of economic and military power. This option is of course highly improbable. It presents many difficulties. But it is the only option anyone with a conscience not fully committed to total victory for their own side can support.

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the help of a surrogate mother in the US, people familiar with the matter have said.

"Fu Xiaotian, 40, was in a relationship with Qin Gang, according to six people close to Fu and China's foreign policy establishment. She told a close associate about the surrogate pregnancy last year, the person told the *Financial Times*. Two other people familiar with the matter also said she had a child via a surrogate. Surrogacy is illegal in China.

"Chinese authorities are scrutinising the relationship between Qin and Fu, said two separate people familiar with the matter, although it remains unclear how central it was to his sudden disappearance in June and removal a month later as the country's foreign minister."²⁵

Speaking personally, I'd like to see surrogate mothers legalised. Do it within a framework of licenced non-profit agencies. These would be required to support babies born disabled, or otherwise unwanted. But that's just me. I won't criticise China for enforcing its own vision of Family Values.

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Old newsnotes at the magazine websites. I also write regular blogs - [https://](https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams)

www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams

Putin's speech at the Valdai discussion club—Extracts

Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, made a significant speech at the Valdai Discussion Club. We reprint extracts of particular interest to our readers, although the whole, including the question and answer session is of great interest.¹ In these extracts it is possible to see Putin's no-nonsense approach to foreign affairs, the legacy of colonialism and the need for the great civilisations of the world to co-operate. There is much food for thought here, but Western readers who stick to the conventional outlets will read none of it because it has been ignored. No doubt Western politicians will pay not attention either. However, we suspect that the rest of the world has already taken heed of these arguments.

Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai Discussion Club. Transcript of the Plenary Session of the 20th Annual Meeting, 5th October 2023.

Colonialism.

“The United States and its satellites have taken a steady course towards hegemony in military affairs, politics, the economy, culture and even morals and values. Since the very beginning, it has been

clear to us that attempts to establish a monopoly were doomed to fail. The world is too complicated and diverse to be subjected to one system, even if it is backed by the enormous power of the West accumulated over centuries of its colonial policy. Your colleagues as well – many of them are absent today, but they do not deny that to a significant degree, the prosperity of the West has been achieved by robbing colonies for several centuries. This is a fact. Essentially, this level of development has been achieved by robbing the entire planet. The history of the West is essentially the chronicle of endless expansion. Western influence in the world is an immense military and financial pyramid scheme that constantly needs more “fuel” to support itself, with natural, technological and human resources that belong to others. This is why the West simply cannot and is not going to stop.

“To attain these goals, they try to replace international law with a “rules-based order,” whatever that means. It is not clear what rules these are and who invented them. It is just rubbish, but they are trying to plant this idea in the minds of millions of people. “You must live according to the rules.” What rules? And

actually, if I may, our Western “colleagues,” especially those from the United States, don't just arbitrarily set these rules, they teach others how to follow them, and how others should behave overall. All of this is done and expressed in a blatantly ill-mannered and pushy way. This is another manifestation of colonial mentality. All the time we hear, “you must,” “you are obligated,” “we are seriously warning you.””

A civilisation state.

“In Russia's Foreign Policy Concept, our country is characterised as an original civilisation-state. This wording clearly and concisely reflects how we understand not only our own development, but also the main principles of international order, which we hope will prevail.

“From our perspective, civilisation is a multifaceted concept subject to various interpretations. There was once an outwardly colonial interpretation whereby there was a “civilised world” serving as a model for the rest, and everyone was supposed to conform to those standards. Those who disagreed were to be coerced into this “civilisation” by the truncheon of the “enlightened” master. These times, as I said, are now in the

¹ <https://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-club-transcript-2023/>

past, and our understanding of “countries to small ones. The main thing is to free international relations from the bloc approach and the legacy of the colonial era and the Cold War. We have been saying for decades that security is indivisible, and that it is impossible to ensure the security of some at the expense of the security of others. Indeed, harmony in this area can be achieved. You just need to put aside haughtiness and arrogance and stop looking at others as second-class partners or outcasts or savages.”

The UN and International Law.

“Some will say that the UN and international law created on the basis of the UN Charter have become obsolete and should be discarded, giving way to something new. However, there is a risk that we will destroy the system of international rules, the real rules, and international law based on the UN Charter without creating anything to replace it, and this will lead to universal chaos. We can already see elements of this, but if we consign the UN Charter to the dustbin of history without replacing it with anything new, the inevitable ensuing chaos will lead to extremely serious consequences.

Therefore, I believe that we should choose the path of changing international law in accordance with modern

requirements and changes in the global situation. In this sense, the UN Security Council should have among its members countries with ever-increasing weight in international affairs and potential that allows them to influence decisions on the key international issues, which they are already doing. What countries are these? One is India, with a population of over 1.5 billion and an economy growing by over 7 percent, or more precisely, 7.4 or 7.6 percent. It is a global giant. It is true that many people there still need support and assistance, but India’s high-tech exports are growing with rapid strides. In short, it is a powerful country that is growing stronger every year under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi. Or take Brazil in Latin America, with a large population and rapidly growing influence. There is also South Africa. Their global influence should be taken into account, and their weight in decision-making on key international issues must increase.”

Nord Stream.

“If the criminals are ever found, they must be held accountable. This was an act of international terrorism. At the same time, one line of Nord

Stream 2 has survived. It is not damaged and can be used to supply 27.5 billion cubic metres of gas to Europe. It is solely up to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany to decide. Nothing else is needed. They make a decision today – tomorrow we open the valve, and that’s that; the gas is on its way. But they will not do this, to the detriment of their own interests, because, as we say, “their bosses in Washington” will not allow them to.

“We continue to supply gas to Europe through the TurkStream pipelines, and judging by everything, Ukrainian terrorist groups are plotting to do damage there as well. Our ships are guarding the pipelines that run along the bottom of the Black Sea, but they are constantly being attacked by unmanned vehicles, with English-speaking specialists and advisers clearly involved, among others, in planning those attacks. We have intercepted them on the radio: we always hear English speech wherever those unmanned semi-submersible boats are being prepared. This is an obvious fact for us – but draw your own conclusions.”

Religion is a great force: the only real motive force in the world; but what you fellows don't understand is that you must get at a man through his own religion and not through yours.

George Bernard Shaw

Israel's Right to Defend Itself

Will Israel's right to defend itself continue to the last Palestinian?

By Eamon Dyas

"Israel has a right to defend itself" has been the constant refrain of western leaders to justify every Israeli response to expressions of Palestinian resistance since the state was established. In recent years that refrain from western leaders has usually been linked with a request for Israel to exercise that right proportionately and with due consideration for Palestinian civilians. But besides these two constants there has been a third. And that is, despite such calls for a proportionate response, Israel has never responded to any expression of Palestinian resistance in a proportionate manner. In fact, it is a feature of those Israeli responses that they are invariably disproportionate. Based on the historical record it could be justifiably said that Israel's commitment to a disproportionate response to Palestinian resistance has been a policy of the Israeli state ever since it was founded. A simple check of the figures for casualties in every expression of "Israel's right to defend itself" since the start of the present century reveals that to have been the case. Yet, despite what these figures reveal, western leaders never hold Israel to account after the fact of a disproportionate response becomes self-evident. Instead they remain silent until the next Israeli response to an expression of Palestinian resistance when the same mantra is repeated and Israel commits the same excesses. And so it goes on interminably in a pattern which western leaders, because of their failure to hold Israel to account, have become complicit in those Israeli actions.

Let us look at the evidence. The following figures have been taken from a database maintained by the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem. According to that database from the start of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000 to the 27 September 2023 a total of 10,555 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces and an additional 96 by Israeli citizens (for

the most part armed settlers). In the same period 550 Israelis had been killed by Palestinians as well as 122 members of the Israeli armed forces. (See: <https://statistics.btselem.org/en/all-fatalities/by-date-of-incident?section=overall&tab=overview>). This means that since the year 2000 for every one Israeli killed as a result of Palestinian resistance there have been almost 16 Palestinians killed (many of whom had not offered resistance of any kind and many of whom were children!) Yet, despite such a disproportionate level of killings the United States and its western acolytes continue to rubber-stamp the continuation of this Israeli policy of ensuring multiple Palestinian deaths for every Israeli. This is the reality of the Israeli Government's relationship with the indigenous Palestinian population and it represents the way in which Israel operates its western bestowed right to militarily defend itself.

The figures for Israeli deaths compared to Palestinian deaths given above are from before the latest conflict. With the Israeli response to the events of 7 October still ongoing there has been no settled figure available at the time of writing but already the figures are weighing in favour of the Israelis and against the Palestinians in multiples. Unfortunately for the people of Gaza, if precedent is anything to go by, Israel will insist on many more Palestinian deaths before it feels that it has inflicted a sufficiently "proportionate" response in the exercise of its right to defend itself.

The Jewish Law of Return.

These casualty figures from 2000 to date suggest that something much more significant has been happening when it comes to Israel's claim to be simply defending itself against attack. So why does it feel compelled on the occasion of every expression of Palestinian resistance to respond to that resistance in so obvious a disproportionate manner? And why

does it do so, knowing that such a disproportionate response only feeds subsequent Palestinian resentment that will inevitably result in more expressions of resistance further down the line?

In seeking any reasoning behind this policy we have to go back to the foundation of the state itself and the relationship of the Jews of Israel with the land on which they now exert control. If we look at the population of Israel/Palestine in 1947 just prior to the 1948 clearances that total population was 1,970,000. Of these 630,000 were Jews and 1,324,000 were non-Jews, meaning that Jews made up 32% of the total. A year later we see that the total population was 872,700 with the number of Jews having risen to 716,700 and the number of non-Jews having shrunk to 156,000 and Jews now making up 82.1% of the population. (Note: since then Jews have consistently made up more than 80% of the population until 1996 when their percentage dropped into the 70% range where it has remained ever since. See: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-and-non-jewish-population-of-israel-palestine-1517-present>). It goes without saying that the reason for the decline in the number of non-Jews living in the area of Israel/Palestine between 1947 and 1948 is the wholesale removal of the Palestinian population from the area.

But with the land having been so effectively cleansed of its indigenous non-Jewish population there remained for the Jewish State the need to populate it with fellow Jews. So it was that the State formally emphasised its biblical mission with the Law of Return.

"The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the 'Ingathering of the Exiles.' This is what the Government in its Declaration of Independence on the 5th of the month of Iyar in the year 5708, May 14, 1948. The integration of immigrants into the social fabric of the community has been one of

the central objectives of the State of Israel from the day of its founding, and, as such, it stands at the forefront of the Government's scale of priorities." (<https://www.gov.il/en/departments/guides/the-aliya-story>)

That is the opening statement on the website of the Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Integration and when it refers to "immigrants" it of course means Jewish immigrants. It is a sentiment that dictated the way in which the Zionist architects foresaw the central purpose and role of the state and it was integrated into the fabric of the Israeli legal framework with the passing of the Law of Return by the Israeli Parliament on 5 July 1950. It is important to realise that this has been and remains the central purpose of the Israeli State and the reason why it exists. Knowing that and appreciating what that implies in terms of its assertion of its right to defend itself is critical to understanding Israeli actions in terms of the Palestinians.

The primary purpose of Israel's existence is the "Ingathering of the Exiles". The provision of a safe haven for Jews was associated with this but it was not originally the primary sentiment that went into the making of Israel. Although periodic outbreaks of antisemitism in Russia and Europe highlighted this aspect of the Zionist project it only assumed the importance it did in the aftermath of the Holocaust. It was the Holocaust that provided the practical outcomes that enabled Israel to become a functioning State capable of asserting its existence in the world. It was the Holocaust that generated the sense of political accommodation for such a State amongst the world's politicians and it was the Holocaust and its legacy that provided the State with its much-needed population in the years immediately after the State's foundation. (Thus, by 1949 almost one in three of Israel's citizens were Holocaust survivors). From then on the "Ingathering of the Exiles" became synonymous with the safe haven aspect of the State's purpose.

An essential part of the operation of the 1950 Law of Return placed an obligation on the Israeli State to not only facilitate "returning" Jews to Israel but to actively encourage them.

The measures put in place to meet that obligation meant that within five years of the foundation of the State the Jewish population more than doubled and during this time half of the national budget of the country was being spent on resettlement costs (with military spending coming a close second).

These returns of the Jewish diaspora to the biblical land of Israel are referred to as "making Aliyah" and in the context of large-scale immigrations organised by the State the term is usually added to the name of the country from which that group has returned. Thus there was the Iraqi Aliyah in 1950-51 (organised under the name "Operation Ezra and Nehemia") which involved the airlifting of over 100,000 Iraqi Jews to Israel and the Moroccan Aliyah of 1954 which brought 30,000 Moroccan Jews. The only Aliyahs that have taken place since then were the Aliyah of Ethiopian Jewry in 1984 (there was another in 1991) and the Aliyah from the former Soviet Union in 1990 (which brought a million immigrants to Israel). Since then, the idea of the Aliyah has reverted to its original meaning involving individuals or small groups of individuals making the decision to "return" to Israel. Among these individual and small groups, Jews from the United States are a relatively recent phenomenon and they only began arriving in any significant numbers between 1961 and 1971. Nonetheless they have constituted an important source of Jewish immigration ever since. These immigrants from the United States represent a significant shift in the relationship of Israel with the Jewish diaspora. This is because these Jews have not moved to Israel to escape persecution in their home country but primarily out of a sense of religious zeal or to make a better life for themselves. In that sense the concept of the Jewish safe haven assumes a different meaning for these immigrants. But it also has implications for the historic mission of the biblical Zionists.

The cost of defending the safe haven.

The idea of a safe haven is that it

provides a space within which those entering it feel a level of safety that is absent from the place they left. In the case of those who enter it from a state which was genuinely perceived by them to be dangerous to their well-being or prosperity they would bring with them the capacity to withstand the lesser threat from Palestinians because they felt the protection of the Israeli State. This is why so much effort has been invested in building up the public reputation of the likes of the IDF and Mossad. However, unlike the earlier Jewish immigrations which consisted of people who held a genuine fear for their futures in their countries of origin the Jewish immigrants since the 1970s have in many cases not done so to escape persecution but to find a better home for themselves and with the Israeli State providing that home and generous inducements it has tended to attract an increasing number of what are considered in some Zionist circles as the less committed type of Jew or even Gentiles. All of this has created a dilemma for the Israeli State. On the one hand it needs to continue to attract Jews from the wider diaspora in order to meet the challenge of its own diminishing fertility rate in comparison to that of the Palestinians but on the other hand many of those Jews making the Aliyah have in recent decades come from areas of the world in which there is no significant threat to them as Jews and therefore are more susceptible to the potential threat from Palestinian resistance. While that is not necessarily an issue for those Jews who came to Israel from a committed religious belief as such people would have a tendency to endure, it was and continues to be an issue for those Jews of the more secular variety.

It is in that context that Israel feels obliged to continue to inflict a disproportionate price in lives on the Palestinians at every point of resistance. Such a price is not so much meant to serve up a lesson to the Palestinians but more to act as a kind of perpetual assurance to the ingathered Jews of the present and of the future. In the mind of the Zionist, without such a response the idea of the safe haven for Jews begins to

dissolve. This importance of the idea of the safe haven for Jews was articulated by Rushi Sunak in the debate in the House of Commons on 16 October when, in referring to the events of 7 October as a pogrom, he said:

“This atrocity was an existential strike at the very idea of Israel as a safe homeland for the Jewish people.” (Hansard, 16 October 2023, col. 23).

The point at which the threat from Palestinians on Jewish immigrants assumes sufficient potency to discourage Jewish immigration is the point at which the idea of a demographic decline in Judaism in Israel takes on a greater reality. It is important not to underestimate this fear among the Jews of being outbred by Arabs.

The charting of Palestinian birth rates had long been a preoccupation of Israel and it was based on the fear that the reproduction rate of the Palestinians would outrun the reproduction rate of Jews and with the last great Aliyahs of “ingathered” Jews having taken place in the early 1990s that source has failed to make up the difference. This consideration was clearly articulated by Ariel Sharon’s deputy leader, Ehud Olmert, in an interview he gave to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz in November 2003 where he said:

“There is no doubt in my mind that very soon the government of Israel is going to have to address the demographic issue with the utmost seriousness and resolve. This issue above all others will dictate the solution that we must all adopt. In the absence of a negotiated settlement – and I do not believe in the realistic prospect of an agreement – we need to implement a unilateral alternative. . . More and more Palestinians are uninterested in a negotiated, two-state solution, because they want to change the essence of the conflict from an Algerian paradigm to a South African one. From a struggle against ‘occupation,’ in their parlance, to a struggle for one-man-one-vote. That is, of course, a much cleaner struggle a much more popular struggle – and ultimately a much more powerful one. For us, it would mean the end of the Jewish state.

Of course I would prefer a negotiated settlement (for two states). But I personally doubt that such an agreement can be reached within the time-frame available to us.”

Olmert’s formula for the parameters of a unilateral solution are: to maximise the number of Jews; to minimise the number of Palestinians, not to withdraw to the 1967 border and not to divide Jerusalem.” Large settlements such as Ariel would “obviously” be carved into Israel. . . “Twenty-three years ago,” he says, “Moshe Dayan proposed unilateral autonomy. On the same wavelength, we may have to espouse unilateral separation. We won’t need the Palestinians’ support for that. What we would need is to pull ourselves together, to determine where the line should be run.

“Maximum, minimum, Dayan, unilateral line – all these seem to add up to large-scale withdrawal from the West Bank and probably full-scale withdrawal from Gaza. . . Olmert says his unilateralism “would inevitably preclude a dialogue with the Palestinians for at least 25 years.” (‘Maximum Jews, Minimum Palestinians’, by David Landau. Haaretz, 13 November 2003).

Here we have the encapsulation of the plan that Israel put into effect two years later and they reveal the intentions that have dictated policy ever since. In the above quote Olmert makes it plain that Israel had no intention of moving back to the pre-1967 borders as had been required by United Nations Resolution 242. He also clearly understood that this refusal would not be accepted by the Palestinians as it precluded the emergence of a functioning Palestinian state. Therefore, having decided to destroy the prospect of an independent Palestinian state but yet needing to find some way of surgically removing them from having any real influence on the Israeli body politic in the future, the idea of corralling them inside a cordon sanitaire became the preferred option.

Olmert’s fear that the Palestinians were breeding at a faster rate than the Jews of Israel had one year earlier been brought to the attention of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon by the Israeli demographer, Arnon Sofer. This was

reported in Haaretz as follows:

“About three months ago Prof. Arnon Sofer sent an urgent letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The subject was the need for separation from Palestinians. ‘Most of the inhabitants of Israel realise that there is only one solution in the face of our insane and suicidal neighbour – separation,’ wrote Sofer. ‘You should have known this months before they did, as the grave demographic data were put on your desk many months ago. In the absence of separation, the meaning of such a majority (of Arabs) – is the end of the Jewish state of Israel. You should remember that on the same day as the Israel Defence Force is investing efforts and succeeding in eliminating one terrorist or another, on that very same day, as on every other day of the year, within the territories of western Israel, about 400 children are being born, some of whom will become new suicide terrorists! Do you realise that?’” (A Jewish Demographic State, by Lily Galili, Haaretz, 27 June 2002)

Sofer was the Head of the Geography Department at the University of Haifa and a long-established lecturer at the Israeli Army’s Staff and Command College. He had been warning about the prospect of Arabs outnumbering Jews in Israel and the occupied territories since the 1980s and had predicted that this would happen by around 2010. But Sofer was no ordinary academic. According to the American Jewish paper Forward, by the time of his letter to Ariel Sharon in 2002 he had become highly influential with the Prime Minister, with Ehud Barak, Benjamin Netanyahu and with hundreds of other Israeli politicians, and military and economic leaders of Israel. It was his idea to cede territory to the Palestinians as a means of diminishing their influence on the future of Israel.

“He wrote: ‘If such a course is carried out, there will remain within the bounds of Israel in 2020 an Arab population of 1,300,000, [while the] Jewish population will then number six million. These are statistics that a Jewish-Zionist Israel can digest,’ If the borders don’t change, he added, current population trends point in

2020 to 6,300,000 Jews in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza combined – alongside 8,740,000 Arabs. . .

“A Jewish state can live with Arabs inside its borders, he said, but not with a majority of them.” (Sounding the Alarm About Israel’s Demographic Crisis, by Larry Derfner, Forward, 9 January, 2004).

Although Sofer’s predictions were to prove incorrect (the current Jewish population of Israel is over 9.2 million whereas he said it would be 6,300,000 and the population of Gaza and the West Bank is 5,410,000 whereas he said it would be 8,740,000). There are obviously a number of reasons why his predictions were incorrect but there is one main reason and that is the action taken by the Israeli Government in response of his advocacy of an arbitrary withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank. So it was that in 2005 the Israeli government unilaterally implemented a limited disengagement plan from some of the territory it had seized during the Six-Day War. That disengagement plan involved the removal of all of the 8,000 residents of the 21 Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and four settlements in the West Bank.

The plan for this action was first proposed in 2003 by the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and approved by the Knesset in February 2005 as the Disengagement Plan Implement Law with the removal of the settlers being completed between August and September of that year. The removed Jewish settlers were paid more than \$200,000 per family by way of compensation. Those who refused were forcibly removed by the Israeli army – something that caused much turmoil within Israel at the time – and sold to the West as evidence that Israel was willing to exchange land for peace.

But from the Israeli perspective this arrangement meant that they could implement a tighter blockade of Gaza while maintaining a presence in the West Bank. By this means Israel took control over every aspect of the lives of the Palestinians of Gaza including access to fresh water, food, electricity, communications etc. This arrangement was explained

by Dov Weisglas, an aide to Ehud Olmert, at the time as “The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger”. The idea of starving the Palestinians was not an acceptable option but the next best thing was to ensure that the population could be kept under control by other means. How successful these other means were can be gauged by the fact that at the time of the imposition of the 2005 arrangement the fertility rate of Palestinian women in Gaza was 6.2 births per woman. Since then it has declined every year to where in 2020 it was 3.64 births per woman and it has continued to decline since. (See chart of the Total Fertility Rate of women in Gaza at <https://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?v=31&c=gz&l=en> and for Palestinian women in general at <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/state-of-palestine-demographics/#tfr>).

Other demographic outcomes reveal a similar constraint on the Palestinian population in comparison with the Israeli Jewish population are as follows. The life expectancy of Israelis is 83.39 years (for Palestinians it is 74.28 years). Infant mortality among Israelis is 2.8 per 1,000 live births (for Palestinians it is 13.8 per 1,000 live births). Deaths of the under 5 years among Israelis is 3.4 per 1,000 live births (for Palestinians it is 16.2 per 1,000 live births). The statistics relate to 2023 and are available at <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/> .

So it has to be said that, although it hasn’t stopped the expansion of the Palestinian population, in terms of curtailing it, the incarceration of the Palestinian population inside Gaza and “keeping them on a diet” has been successful from the Jewish perspective of Israel’s right to defend itself from the Palestinian demographic threat.

The immigrant dilemma

It should be added as one final point that the changing nature of Jewish immigration to Israel in recent years has created a further dilemma within the country. Bezal Smotrich, the lawyer and religious Zionist leader who has served as Finance Minister

in the Netanyahu cabinet since December 2022, and Avi Maoz, head of the ultranationalist Noam Party, have committed to changes in the Law of Return as they feel that it is no longer serving the purpose for which it was originally formulated. (See “Israel’s far right targets Law of Return to restrict Jewish Immigration”, by Shira Rubin, Washington Post, 22 December 2022). They view those recent Jewish immigrants arriving under the Law of Return as the type of Jew that cannot be relied upon to contribute to the Zionist mission for the recreation of Jewish control over biblical Israel. From that perspective, the growing number of such Jews constitute a threat to that mission as under the conditions of Israeli democracy their influence would be used to counter their agenda. Consequently, they are eager to ensure that the Law of Return should be tightened to enable only the more religious Jew to enter Israel in the future.

The same body of opinion is working towards a change in the legal code of Israel from its current secular basis to one that relies on Jewish religious law. This is a growing body of opinion within Israel and is particularly influential among the Israeli settlers. Hundreds of those same settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa mosque in early October (coming in the wake of an assault on the same mosque by Israeli police in April), and happening as it did only a matter of days before, should be viewed as part of the context leading up to the events of 7 October. It is the immigration of this more robust type of religious Jew that the likes of Smotrich and Maoz wish to encourage in their proposed changes to the Law of Return while ensuring that the less robust type of Jew is kept out. Should this trend in Israeli Zionism continue to grow there is no way of knowing where it will lead and what it will mean for the Palestinians. But, given the attitudes of western leaders up to now wherever it leads we can expect them to continue to support Israel’s right to defend itself while wringing their hands at the cost that the Palestinians will be paying.



Palestine Links—November 2023

[GAZA: 3,195 children killed in three weeks surpasses annual number of children killed in conflict zones since 2019 \(Save the Children, 29 October 2023\)](#)

[I run the UN agency for Palestine refugees. History will judge us all if there is no ceasefire in Gaza \(Philippe Lazzarini, Guardian, 26 October 2023\)](#)

[Joe Biden's Armageddon, from Gaza to Ukraine \(Aaron Maté, 24 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel enraged by UN head's reminder of "suffocating occupation" \(Maureen Clare Murphy, Electronic Intifada, 24 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel furious that elderly captive spoke of humane treatment by Hamas \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 24 October 2023\)](#)

[Let Gazans Eat Cement \(Chris Hedges, 22 October 2023\)](#)

['The most successful land-grab strategy since 1967' as settlers push Bedouins off West Bank territory \(Emma Graham-Harrison & Quique Kierszenbaum, Guardian, 21 October 2023\)](#)

[Damning evidence of war crimes as Israeli attacks wipe out entire families in Gaza \(Amnesty International, 20 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel-Palestine war: Strike on ancient Gaza church devastates Christian community \(Aseel Mousa, Middle East Eye, 20 October 2023\)](#)

[Gaza: UN experts decry bombing of hospitals and schools as crimes against humanity, call for prevention of genocide \(UN Human Rights Commission, 19 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel/Palestine: ICC has mandate to probe attacks as war crimes \(Human Rights Watch, 18 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel's culture of deceit \(Chris Hedges, 18 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel & the myth of 'Self-Defence' \(David Hearst, editor-in-chief, Middle East Eye, 17 October 2023\)](#)

[The US is complicit in Israel's campaign of genocide against children of Gaza \(Miranda Cleland, Middle East Eye, 17 October 2023\)](#)

[Israeli forces shot their own civilians, kibbutz survivor says \(Ali Abunimah & David Sheen, Electronic Intifada, 16 October 2023\)](#)

[A Textbook Case of Genocide \(Raz Segal, Jewish Currents, 13 October 2023\)](#)

[Israeli intelligence suddenly knows exactly where Hamas is \(Caitlin Johnstone, Scheerpost, 13 October 2023\)](#)

[Israel-Palestine war: Three lies Biden has told since the start of fighting \(Middle East Eye, 12 October 2023\)](#)

[How much aid does the US give to Israel? \(Christopher Wolf, US News, 10 October 2023\)](#)

[They're repeating the word "unprovoked" again, this time in defense of Israel \(Caitlin Johnstone, Peace & Planet News, October 2023\)](#)

[The West's hypocrisy towards Gaza's breakout is stomach-turning \(Jonathan Cook, Middle East Eye, 8 October 2023\)](#)

[Israeli settlers storm Al-Aqsa Mosque complex on fifth day of Sukkot \(Al Jazeera, 4 October 2023\)](#)

[Five Israeli landmarks built on the remains of Palestinian communities \(Middle East Eye, 16 May 2022\)](#)

[How Israel went from helping create Hamas to bombing it \(Mehdi Hasan & Dina Sayedahmed, The Intercept, 19 February 2018\)](#)

Britain's Ticket Offices Saved

Great news for the RMT and other campaigners:

Plans to close rail ticket offices in England scrapped.

The BBC article below quotes the Labour Shadow Transport Secretary saying Labour will nationalise the railways and have a unified system, but the programme does not specify how they will do that. The piece also keeps silent the RMT role in this great victory: it was the RMT who went on strike, RMT members who seriously lost income to fight for these ticket offices.

Plans to close hundreds of rail ticket offices in England have been scrapped

Transport Secretary Mark Harper said the government had asked train operators to withdraw their proposals because they failed to meet high passenger standards.

However, a source told the BBC rail bosses were "furious", saying the original plans had been approved by the Department for Transport.

The proposals had sparked concerns from unions and disability groups.

The plans were put forward by the rail operators as a move to save money, after coming under pressure from the government to cut costs after being supported heavily during the Covid pandemic.

Train companies said that only 12% of tickets were now bought at station kiosks.

But passenger watchdogs Transport Focus and London Travelwatch objected to the proposals, saying they had received 750,000 responses from individuals and organisations in a public consultation.

These included "powerful and passionate concerns" about the potential changes, they said.

The watchdogs said they had secured "significant" changes, including getting companies to revert to existing times for when staff would be available at many stations.

But serious concerns remained, including ticket machine capability, accessibility and how passenger assistance and information would be delivered in future.

In September, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said closing ticket offices was "the right thing for the British public and British taxpayers" as "only one in 10 tickets are sold currently in ticket offices".

But MPs had warned in a letter **last week** that the plans went "too far, too fast".

Announcing the decision to reverse the closures, Mr Harper said the government had made it "clear to the rail industry throughout the process that any resulting proposals must meet a high threshold of serving passengers".

"The proposals that have resulted from this process do not meet the high thresholds set by ministers, and so the government has asked train operators to withdraw their proposals."

Labour described the cancellation of the plans as "shambolic" and a "humiliating climbdown".

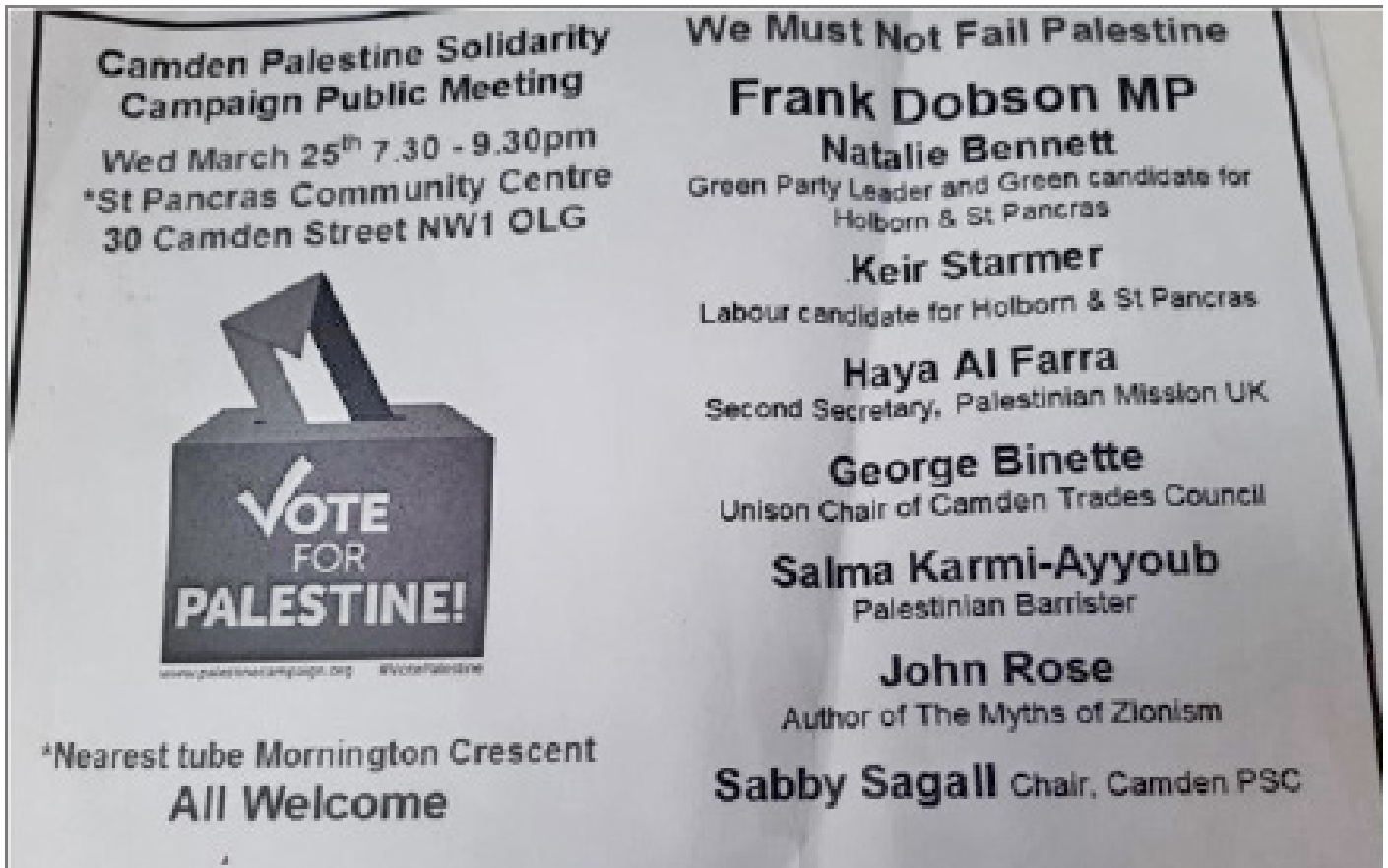
Shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh criticised the government for failing to "come clean on the impact for accessibility and job security".

A Labour government, she said, would bring about a "publicly owned and unified rail network".

Starmer once supported Palestine

This Camden Palestine Solidarity Campaign Public Meeting took place in 2015. Keir Starmer was one of the speakers, and he was at the time Labour candidate for Holborn and St Pancras.

Principles are based on strong belief and do not change with fashion or expediency. Keir Starmer is not a man of principles, but we knew that.



Labour suspends MP over calling for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

A note from Eamon Dyas

The phrase Andy McDonald used at a pro-peace rally was:

“We will not rest until we have justice. Until all people, Israelis and Palestinians, between the river and the sea, can live in peaceful liberty.”

The expression “between the river and the sea” seems to have become the latest “evidence” of antisemitism as the Zionist agenda advances into our vocabulary and the Labour Party. This despite the fact that such verbal advance is echoed in the actual territorial ambitions of the Zionists who are the only force in the area with the military capacity to so advance.

That territorial ambition continues to find military expression in the destruction of what is left of Palestine and continues to escape the censure of western powers while these powers persecute those who draw attention to it verbally.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67268154>