

# The Legacy of Colonial History. Reflection on the Aims of Past Wars and Wars to Come

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Theme: [History](#)

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*Down at my grocer's for half a dozen eggs and some melon, I answered the usual question about my well being openly as accustomed. My neighbour is a friend and his query is sincere. After recounting local concerns he expresses his frustration, one more people certainly share, that they can witness audio-visual depictions of the rampage in the Gaza concentration camp of occupied Palestine on television and hear the words of the ostensible leaders of the great states in the United Nations assembled say little and do less to stop the carnage. Of course neither of us is in a position to raise more than private outrage. I add however that this performance of mass murder has been escalating since the end of the Great War when the great states of British Empire, the French Republic and the United States agreed to the European colonization of a strategic prize from the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918.*

Neither of us was alive at the time. Nor were we contemporary with the declaration of statehood by those colonizers on 14 May 1948. The stories we were told to explain and justify European colonization at the same time when those states had proclaimed in San Francisco the universal rights to self-government even for brown people, were that the Europeans concerned had been so punished by the Great Powers through the centuries, especially most recently by the two-time loser among the Great Powers—Germany, that as an act of contrition the population of Palestine had been chosen for collective retribution. That is to say, the brown inhabitants of Palestine in the British Mandate were chosen as a people to be punished, deprived of life, liberty and property, as a penalty for the evils inflicted upon a mass of Europeans whose most important characteristic was that they had been identified as Jews. In the case of Germany under the NSDAP many of the Europeans in question had been deprived of their citizenship as Germans and defined as Jewish by nationality. Thus under the NSDAP tyranny they were deprived of all their rights as citizens of the state in which they had been born and to whom they had owed allegiance, by operation of law and administrative procedure. One of the principle formalized in the conventions adopted with the United Nations Charter stipulated that no one could be deprived of their nationality against their will. Thus it would seem the acts of the German regime were declared retroactively violations of human rights. Unfortunately this principle, like so many others adopted by the Great Powers, was not taken very seriously when skin complexions or geographical locations differed from those of the charter members of the League of Nations successor club. Very little in the stories we were told addressed the obvious inconsistencies between the expressed prohibitions, e.g. collective punishment and deprivation of nationality, when applied to skin colours.

Moreover the stories we were told conflated the victims of the NSDAP regime, a tyranny that enjoyed massive financial and covert political support from the commanding heights of Western industry and finance, with an established settler-colonial movement about which so

little was said as possible. While we were entertained by Hollywood productions—beginning with the show trials in Nuremberg and their later film adaptation cast with famous stars of American stage and screen— and continuing with the Leon Uris’s pulp fiction, also adapted for propaganda cinema—the settler-colonial movement was busy practicing what they had no doubt learned from seminars with experts like Adolf Eichmann behind a screen of genuine NSDAP victims and displaced persons manipulated to lend legitimacy to the crimes it continues to perpetrate, live on TV as this is being written. All of this was known to representatives, high and low, of the Great Powers that gave license to this invasion. Where reports of the crimes were not suppressed, the amazing control over mass media and brutal assassinations silenced them quickly.

It has often been said that those methodical Germans were so disciplined that they kept careful records, which could be used to incriminate them later. Thomas Suárez (*State of Terror*, 2016) found he could reconstruct enough of the criminal history of Zionist occupation of Palestine from the perpetrators records to suggest that not only the NSDAP regime was proud of its attention to detail. As we have seen over the past four years, one of the principal functions of mass media is to inoculate the population at large so as to make them resistant to facts. The details Suárez relates based on research in the National Archives (Kew, UK) cover the period until the declaration of statehood by the settler-colonial regime in Tel Aviv; in other words the behaviour of the founders before we were told that Tel Aviv was the only “democracy” in the Middle East with “the most moral army” on the planet. The book is worth reading if only as a corrective to the amnesiac shock suffered by millions who only discovered that there was “savage and relentless killing in Gaza” a year ago.

Suárez’s story is full of aid workers and UN officials being abused, attacked and murdered. **The archives showed that meticulous account was taken of how many Palestinians the invaders were able to rape, torture, kill or otherwise violate and eliminate from the country in which they had been born.** Deep intelligence operations throughout the West combined with well-funded and effective mass media campaigns in the US and Britain were as prevalent then as they are today. Innovations in lethality and terror accompanied every effort leading to statehood—and as can be seen beyond. Nobel Peace laureate Menachem Begin, a proud veteran of that era, could justifiably claim—as he indeed once did (in a January 1974 television interview Russell Warren Howe asked Begin “How does it feel, in the light of all that’s going on, to be the father of terrorism in the Middle East? “In the Middle East”, Begin bellowed, “in all the world”)—that they (Irgun et al.) had invented terrorism. Striking is the account of youth cadres, some as young as 13, who had been trained as terrorists within the trinity of Zionist paramilitary organisations (Hagana, Irgun and Lehi). Innumerable operations were performed by these highly indoctrinated cadres disguised in the attire typical of the natives (dressed as Arabs). Chronologically it becomes obvious that the methods of terrorism attributed in the West to Muslims were in fact all standard operating procedures for Zionist paramilitary death squads—long before there was any armed resistance to the Zionist invasion and occupation of Palestine.

None of this historical context was part of our history lessons. Nor is it part of the ranting that counts for reporting now. I have heard enough said about my compatriots and their supposed affinity for fascism or natural racism—all based on the interminable repetition of increasingly bizarre films about the NSDAP era in Germany. That all ended in 1945. The insinuations have not stopped, although their application in the past four years defies coherent explanation. However the same regime has been in power in Palestine, *de facto* since the establishment of the Jewish Agency and *de jure* since statehood was declared.

It is worth noting that settler-colonialism was still high fashion in 1948 since the Union of South Africa and Rhodesia (also under British rule with a close relationship to Cecil Rhodes' principal financial advisor) also proclaimed their nationalist version of white supremacy, *apartheid*. Despite many predictions to the contrary, they have not survived as long as the regime in Tel Aviv. The Afrikaner nationalist attempt to establish a racial-ethnic state with its own language (*Afrikaans*) and culture also failed. (see also *Church Clothes: Land, Mission and the End of Apartheid*, 2024) Decades of National Party rule were predicated on the potential onslaught awaiting whites on the continent if a strong white government did not defend them. There was no onslaught. In 1991 the feared horror of Bantu/ Black/ African communism had disappeared. Even the Afrikaner nationalist attempt to support its racial-ethnic state with a "white African" language and culture failed. Although Afrikaans remains one of South Africa's nine official languages, there is no longer a single Afrikaans-medium university in the country since the *apartheid* constitution was abolished. The "Cape Dutch" had been established in South Africa since the 1600s and within a mere decade the whole edifice was gone.

That leaves us with the question; especially if one dares to take the absurd woke ideology currently propagated in the West at its word, **why settler-colonialism can prevail in Palestine** in forms that even heads of state are now likening to those of the NSDAP tyranny? While all manner of institutions, monuments, and artefacts are being renamed, removed or vandalized because of their imputed relationship to racism, colonialism, slavery or some other grave injustice (mainly in Britain and the US), the uninterrupted century of settler-colonial terror in Palestine barely caused a ripple. Is it ignorance, hypocrisy, or plain stupidity? What seems long ago now, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (*The Manufacturing of Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*, 1988) nearly popularized the distinction between "worthy and unworthy victims". In their propaganda model the mass media—and those who own it—decide which victims are worthy and hence treated as victims whose suffering is acknowledged and which victims are unworthy and whose suffering can be and is dismissed. This distinction is certainly helpful in calling attention to the silence and invisibility of a century of mass murder and terrorism, after 1948 state terrorism. In order to understand the source of silence, obfuscation, and mendacity, it is necessary to ask the questions how the "worthy victims" are chosen and also by whom?

What we say we know about the past is a construct. Even in the course of a conversation develops as a construct by which the exchange continues on the assumptions of two speakers as to the appropriate way to respond to what was just uttered. Each of us is unwittingly a small scale amateur historian when confronted with utterances, like "what did you mean?" or "what I meant to say was." There is no way to know what definitively what someone was thinking in the past. One can only judge the utterance, either as memory (covertly) or as recording (written or audio), to have some chronological significance and respond to it as one deems appropriate. We have all heard people respond with statements like, "when I said that I did not mean what you think" or "the situation was different then" or "I can change my mind, can't I? (When someone refuses or denies the interpretation of an utterance assigned to the past). We all know people whom we say are unreliable because in our judgement statements "in the past" do not permit predictions of future behaviour. "Oh he never comes on time" or "he always says one thing and does another". In all these cases the purpose of our assessment is to control our own behaviour, our reaction to others. We can call it prediction if it means that it controls what we will do (it cannot control what we already have done.) At the same time we have certainly all heard "Oh you are being unfair. He is not always like that" or "He is never like that with me". In other words the judgement

that “he never does what he says he is going to do” is judged by someone else to be an inappropriate explanation and prediction for that person’s behaviour. At the same time it is certainly reasonable to reply, “maybe he does not behave that way with you but he does with me. I cannot rely on him.” At this point one is acknowledging that although it may be inappropriate to claim that “he is universally unreliable”, it is reasonable to say that “he is unreliable for me”—and it is my interest in reliability that is important here. My interest is another way of saying, reliability is a category of personal conduct which I value and which controls my interaction with others.

Explanations are unavoidable. Whether they are good explanations or bad explanations depends on the judgement of someone and on the interests controlling that judgement. Those interests may also include rendering no judgement that deviates from those others consider appropriate. So in more explicitly historical research, reflection and debate, the interests of the investigator may be controlled by the desire to be treated as a “serious historian” or “serious scholar”, another way of saying that investigation will be governed not only by one’s personal judgement but by what one perceives as the judgement of others as to the appropriateness of one’s work. Academic institutions and other venues where history (often conflated with the past) are the focus of human activity are not only repositories of data but organizations for structuring the use of that data. Structuring the use is another way of saying controlling the way those who are engaged in historical research or study respond to the artefacts and the utterances of other investigators or members of the research institution. There is data, e.g. documents, and utterances and redundancies in response to the data. In that sense historical research is no different from the activity in a chemistry laboratory. It is impossible to separate the utterances and redundancies of response that form an institution from the research product. There is no pure objective fact in the test tube or the archive that is self-evident. Explanations arise from attempts to respond to data in meaningful ways, for instance to control or predict our responses to other data. Even the most abstract forms of research constitute controls on the researcher, what he sees; what he may discover; what he discards or ignores.

A historical explanation, regardless of the volume and nature of the data available (whether known or unknown in scope), will always be a selection of data and its organization. It will always be governed by interests of the researcher or of other researchers or those on whose behalf the research is selected and performed or even of those to whom the researcher addresses his work, e.g. readership, students, public policy, etc.

The armistice of 1918 ended the open hostilities between the regular forces of the alliance (the British Empire, the French Republic and the United States) against those of Austria-Hungary, the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the so-called Central Powers. However it by no means ended the organized military operations on the Continent or the non-military warfare, as might have been expected by anyone who took the Wilsonian rhetoric at face value. War continued in Eastern Europe. The United States fought with Czech legions, Japanese troops and White Russians against the new Bolshevik government in the Soviet Union until 1922. Economic warfare continued throughout the interwar period despite negotiations and the conclusion of a plethora of treaties known under the rubric of Versailles. The Allies fought overtly or covertly to capture and allocate the extinguished empires among themselves while reinforcing their hold on the empires with which they began the war.

If war aims are not defined by what is announced in declarations but are ascertained by examining forensically the results, then such imputed war aims can be said to constitute a

pattern. In other words, a sequence of distinguishable outcomes can form the basis for interpretation of belligerent conduct, specifying general aims or attitudes to explain present and future wars. Such patterns may be classified as instructions by which belligerents chose to wage war or analysis can identify the latent or implicit culture that drives the behaviour. The forensic examination serves to identify redundancies that must be practiced in order to sustain the institutional behaviour underlying the belligerence.

None of the foregoing would have been practically relevant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the adoption and ratification of the *General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy* aka *Kellogg - Briand Pact* (1928) which declared war illegal as a means of resolving international disputes; a violation of international law also known as the law of nations. This pact has yet to be renounced by any of its principal signatories. Thus the prohibition stands. Therefore the determination of war aims and the causes attributed to such wars by those who wage them becomes highly relevant.

If the aims of a given war are not clearly understood, neither the appropriate defence nor a realistic negotiating position to end hostilities can be found, let alone pursued.

In battle, the assailing force seeks to magnify its impact by concealing the actual targets or objectives from the defender. In waging war itself the aggressor is obliged to justify the use of force within the rhetorical framework of the law of nations as commonly understood. Rhetorical legitimacy is no trivial weapon in the aggressor's arsenal, especially under the League of Nations/ United Nations framework. The more intensely the claims are asserted, the more difficult it becomes to ascertain the effective aims. This is a peculiar aspect of modern ideological warfare. Silencing the defender in public opinion and international fora relies on domination of the totality of communications channels.

The history of modern warfare actually begins with the Crusades. These centuries of assaults against the declared enemies of Christendom always comprised both psychological and physical orders of battle. The papal-rabbinical infrastructure under the command of the Roman pontiff "preached" the Crusades. The military force unleashed through the vassals of the Latin Church wielded the swords and other instruments of death. The pulpit and ecclesiastical apparatus mustered the support needed to drain manpower and other resources for the campaigns of slaughter, demolition and plunder. Prospects of plunder and intangible wealth (salvation) have been essential to convince all those who sacrifice that they will be rewarded on Earth as it is in Heaven, or at least compensated for the material and bodily losses they have to bear.

This is no less true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than it was in the 11<sup>th</sup>.

It is really quite remarkable that while the NSDAP era has been an almost obsessive target of historical research for as long as I can remember, the era in which the settler-colony in Palestine was established receives so little attention although its ostensible legitimization is derived from (retroactively) and enhanced by the very existence of the German fascist regime from 1936 until 1945. Although the ideological roots of Afrikaner nationalism and its close relationship to the doctrinal authors of German National Socialism have been investigated and publicly debated. The relationship between Zionism and Nazism has been given more muted attention. When Zionism and Nazism are discussed generally then there is a tendentious context, which fosters the conflation of Herzl's ambitions with the campaign to funnel all displaced Jews from Europe into Mandatory Palestine under administration of

the Jewish Agency. The implication is that Zionism anticipated the Nuremberg laws, the deprivation of Germans once classified as Jewish of their German nationality and their relocation – disposal, including enslavement and murder. However any attempt to examine the practices of the Tel Aviv regime over the past century in historical context, including comparison of those practices with practices under other regimes, has been vigorously discouraged.

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