

Palestine, Israeli Foreign Policy and the Pan-African Movement

Rooted in imperialism and racist ideology, Zionism is a bulwark of Western domination

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Since the late 18th century various European powers and proponents of colonialism have advocated the establishment of a Jewish state in alliance with imperialism. Since 1948, when the State of Israel was formed and officially recognized by the United Nations, its legitimacy has been questioned by not only the people of Palestine but historians and political analysts from various nationalities, including many Jewish intellectuals, activists and religious figures themselves.

The advocacy of a Zionist state coincides with the development of slavery, colonialism and the mass removal and extermination of indigenous peoples throughout Latin America, North America, Africa, Asia and the South Pacific. With specific reference to the Atlantic Slave Trade which began in the 15th century, millions of Africans were removed from their homeland and subjected to super-exploitation for over 400 years as human chattel.

Even after the outlawing of the Atlantic Slave Trade by Britain in 1806, the system would continue well into the 19th century. Slavery was officially abolished in the British colonies in 1833 only to be replaced by a system of apprenticeship that closely resembled the involuntary servitude.

In regard to France, the colony of Haiti, its most prosperous, became an outpost for the exploitation of African labor. Prior to the refinement of the slave system in Haiti, the indigenous people, described as the "Carib Indians", were largely exterminated to make way for European dominance.

Portuguese slavery and colonialism extended from the Far East regions of the Macau Peninsula, East Timor and Goa to the North Atlantic Azores and Cueta, Morocco, down through West and Southern Africa over to the South American nation of Brazil. Portugal was the first European empire after the so-called Middle Ages and was the last imperialist state to be forced out of slavery in 1888 in Brazil and colonial rule in Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola and East Timor by 1974-75.

With specific reference to the imperialist advocacy of a Jewish state as an outpost of Western hegemony, Abdel-Wahab M. El-Messiri says of the European military invader Napoleon Bonaparte that "On April 20, 1799, the French commander issued an appeal to all the Jews of Asia and Africa asking them to follow the French command so that their 'lost glory' and 'usurped rights' may be restored. Behind the appeal were Napoleon's imperial dreams and desire to block Britain's route to India." (Israel: Base of Western Imperialism,

May 1969)

El-Messiri also says that “The dream was later re-discovered by Colonel George Gawler, one-time Governor of South Australia. Throughout the 1840s he pressed the claims for Jewish resettlement in Palestine in order that the British might ensure her unbroken lines of communication.”

Later, he says, “In 1879, Sir Laurence Oliphant, a notorious anti-semitic, was one of the most active British advocates of Jewish resettlement in Palestine. He visited Palestine, and discovered that the scheme of a Jewish state in this region would ensure ‘the political and economic penetration of Palestine by Britain.’”

Later Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary of Britain, said in 1902 that he welcomed the proposals for a Jewish homeland put forward by Theodore Herzl, the founder of the World Zionist Congress. Chamberlain was seeking to gain control of areas near Palestine as a base for the securing and expansion of British interests in the region.

In early 1915 during the First World War, Herbert Samuel, a British cabinet member, submitted a memorandum entitled “The Future of Palestine” where he made a case for the establishment of a Jewish state that would be annexed to London. This document was clearly related to the declaration of war by Britain against the Ottoman Empire in 1914 which had controlled Palestine up until the War.

Although Samuel claims in his memorandum that the time was not right then for the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine due to the demographic factors in existence, that the immigration of Jewish people must be encouraged before such a reality could come into being. He notes that if this was done prematurely that the state would fail because of the contention it would attract from the overwhelming majority Arab population in Palestine.

Nonetheless, Samuel proposes that “under British rule facilities would be given to Jewish organizations to purchase land, to found colonies, to establish educational and religious institutions, and to spend usefully the funds that would be freely contributed for promoting the economic development of the country. It is hoped also that Jewish immigration, carefully regulated, would be given preference so that in course of time the Jewish people, grown into a majority and settled in the land, may be conceded such degree of self-government as the conditions of that day may justify.”

The following year in 1916, the so-called Sykes-Picot Agreement between France and Britain secretly divided up the Middle East between these two colonial powers. This agreement when made public generated outrage among the Arab population groups throughout the region.

Within the negotiations between France and Britain that also involved Russia as a minor player, the Arab monarch Faisal of the House of Saud was also promised independence and authority over other countries in exchange for their involvement with Britain, France and Russia against the Ottoman Empire. However, in the aftermath of the war, France moved swiftly to take control of Syria and Britain in essence colonized Palestine under a so-called Mandate.

Rebellions erupted among the Arab peoples of the Peninsula and later in Egypt and Sudan in 1919 in which they declared independence. Later the revolt was crushed by France and

Britain as a result there was continuing animosity between the European imperialists and the Arab and African peoples of the region.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was negotiated and documented in secret. However, when the Bolsheviks took power in Russia in October 1917 they discovered the treaty in the state archives and revealed it to the international community. This exposure greatly embarrassed Britain and France but did not curtail their imperial ambitions.

Later the famous Balfour Declaration took the form of a letter written to Lord Rothschild, who was a de facto leader of the Jewish community in Britain. The Declaration read that "His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Zionist Collaboration With Settler Colonialism in Southern Africa

Since the Zionist movement sought the establishment of a Jewish state in alliance with imperialism as a means of spreading western values and civilization in the so-called backward regions of the world, it is not surprising that an alliance arose between the early leaders of the Zionist movement and the British and Afrikaner settlers in Southern Africa.

After the demise of Herzl, Chiam Weizmann became the leader in the Zionist movement. Jan Smuts, an advocate for Dutch-descendant dominance in South Africa, became close friends and a political collaborator with Smuts, who eventually became leader of the racist South African state after World War II under Afrikaner dominance. Weizmann during this same time period would become the first Prime Minister of Israel.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa was formed. This grew out of the Anglo-Boer war at the turn of the century, when the British and Dutch-descendants, known as Boers, fought over control of the land of the African people of the country.

In neighboring Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe, the British under Cecil Rhodes had established a settler-colonial state where they engaged in genocidal practices against the Shona and Ndebele peoples during the late 19th century. Also, in South-West Africa, currently known as Namibia, the German imperialists during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, moved into this territory to seize control from the Herero, Nama, Ovambo and other peoples in the mineral rich but arid country.

All of these colonial projects were extremely violent and genocidal. In Zimbabwe, the Shona people rose up in 1896-97 under Nehanda's leadership and sought to defeat the British. They did not prevail but the leadership of the Chimurenga were imprisoned and later executed.

In South Africa there was also mass extermination of the indigenous people during a series of wars between the 1820s and 1906. The land and cattle of the Africans were stolen by the Boers and the British, and in 1910, these two settler communities united in an unholy alliance forming the Union of South Africa.

In Namibia during 1904, the German colonialists under Von Trotha and Goering issued the infamous extermination order resulting in the genocide against the Namibian people when

they revolted against German rule. By 1907, thousands of Hereros and Namas were herded into camps where they were forced to work for the Germans as slaves.

According to Richard P. Stevens in his book entitled "Weizmann & Smuts: A Study in Zionist-South African Cooperation," "The importance of the Smuts-Weizmann friendship can be fully appreciated only when it is remembered that without Weizmann there would have been no Balfour Declaration and without Smuts the union brought forth in 1910 might well have foundered. Both men stood in much the same position towards their respective 'constituencies' and both represented in their 'constituencies' the imperial factor in its economic, political and strategic dimensions. On the personal level it must be noted that during the entire thirty-three years of this relationship, extending from 1917 to Smuts death in 1950, each man took for granted the moral legitimacy of the other's position." (p. x)

This same author goes on to point out that "Thus, not a word is to be found in Weizmann's correspondence or writings questioning either the racial basis of the South African state on which Zionism was so dependent or Smuts' role in upholding its racist system: the subordinate position of the African majority in South Africa posed no moral difficulty nor detracted from the respect felt by the 'New Moses', as Smuts called Weizmann, toward the South Africa leader. Similarly, Smuts assumed without question "the right" of Jewish settlers to occupy Palestine without regard to the rights of the indigenous Palestinian Arabs. In both cases, Smuts and Weizmann epitomized the capacity of western civilization to rationalize domination and exploitation, conquest and control, as a Christian civilizing mission or Judeo-Christian fulfillment.

A different image of General Smuts, which challenged his reputation as a founding father of a new international moral order and champion of civilized values, was scarcely noticed by the western press. This image, evoked by Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, father of the Pan-African movement, was presented in the Manifesto of the Fourth Pan-African Congress (1927, NYC): 'What more paradoxical figure today confronts the world than the official head of a great South African state striving blindly to build peace and goodwill in Europe by standing on the necks and hearts of millions of Black Africans.' (p. x)

During the course of white settler-colonial rule in South Africa, Namibia and Rhodesia, firm and fraternal relations were maintained with Zionism and the State of Israel. The Jewish population in South Africa which supported settler-colonialism and apartheid maintained a privileged position within the society. However, there were Jews such as Joe Slovo who allied themselves with the national liberation movement led by the African National Congress (ANC). These Jews were persecuted, imprisoned and even killed, such as Ruth First, who died from a letter bomb sent to her in Mozambique in 1982.

Consequently, an alliance between the ANC, the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Palestinian liberation movement existed through the armed struggle of the 1960s-1980s and still holds today.

World War II and the Politics of Jewish Immigration to Palestine

As noted above Jewish immigration to Palestine was well underway prior to the issuance of the Samuel memorandum, the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. The terms under which the dominate imperialist powers established the post-war political and

economic construct led to the impoverishment of Germany, the rise of fascism in Italy and later Germany, and the erupting of World War II.

However, the Zionist movement remained a small minority within the European Jewish community. During the rise of Hitler and World War II there arose an alliance between the Nazis and leading elements within the Zionist movement, particularly in Germany and Hungary.

Hannah Arendt in her book entitled "Eichmann In Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil," published in 1963, noted that "But quite apart from all slogans and ideological quarrels, it was in those years a fact of everyday life that only Zionists had any chance of negotiating with the German authorities, for the simple reason that their chief Jewish adversary, the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith, to which ninety-five percent of organized Jews in Germany then belonged, specified in its bylaws that its chief task was the 'fight against anti-Semitism'; it had suddenly become by definition an organization 'hostile to the State,' and would indeed have been persecuted—which it was not—if it had ever dared to do what it was supposed to do.

During its first few years, Hitler's rise to power appeared to the Zionists chiefly as 'the decisive defeat of assimilationism.' Hence, the Zionists could, for a time, at least, engage in a certain amount of non-criminal cooperation with the Nazi authorities; the Zionists too believed that 'dissimilation', combined with the emigration to Palestine of Jewish youngsters and, they hoped, Jewish capitalists, could be a 'mutually fair solution.' At the time, many German officials held this opinion, and this kind of talk seems to have been quite common up to the end. A letter from a survivor of Theresienstadt, a German Jew, relates that all leading positions in the Nazi-appointed Reichsvereinigung were held by Zionists (whereas the authentically Jewish Reichsvertretung had been composed of both Zionists and non-Zionists), because Zionists according to the Nazis, were 'the decent Jews since they too thought in 'national terms.'" (p. 60)

This same author goes on to point out that "There existed in those first years a mutually highly satisfactory agreement between the Nazi authorities and the Jewish Agency for Palestine—a Ha'avarah, or Transfer Agreement, which provided that an emigrant to Palestine could transfer his money there in German goods and exchange them for pounds upon arrival. It was soon the only legal way for a Jew to take his money with him (the alternative then being the establishment of a blocked account, which could be liquidated abroad only at a loss of between fifty and ninety-five percent). The result was that in the thirties, when American Jewry took great pains to organize a boycott of German merchandise, Palestine, of all places, was swamped with all kinds of goods 'made in Germany.'" (p. 60)

Arendt cites the book entitled "The Secret Roads: The 'Illegal' Migration of a People, 1938-1948, saying that "these Jews from Palestine spoke a language not totally different from that of Eichmann. They had been sent to Europe by the communal settlements in Palestine, and they were not interested in rescue operations: 'That was not their job.' They wanted to select 'suitable material,' and their chief enemy, prior to the extermination program, was not those who made life impossible for Jews in the old countries, Germany or Austria, but those who barred access to the new homeland; that enemy was definitely Britain, not Germany. Indeed, they were in a position to deal with the Nazi authorities on a footing amounting to equality, which native Jews were not, since they enjoyed the protection of the mandatory power; they were probably among the first Jews to talk openly about

mutual interests and were certainly the first to be given permission 'to pick young Jewish pioneers' from among the Jews in the concentration camps.

Of course, they were unaware of the sinister implications of this deal, which still lay in the future; but they too somehow believed that if it was a question of selecting Jews for survival, the Jews should do the selecting themselves. It was this fundamental error in judgment that eventually led to a situation in which the non-selected majority of Jews inevitably found themselves confronted with two enemies—the Nazi authorities and the Jewish authorities." (p. 61)

During the war some of the most militant Zionist organizations sought to form a military alliance with the fascists in both Italy and Germany. In 1940 when the Lehi was formed as a split from the Irgun, they offered to send legions to fight with the fascists against Britain in exchange for massive Jewish immigration to Palestine.

The Lehi was also known as the Stern Gang, named after its leader, Avraham Stern. This group engaged in a campaign of terror against British colonial authorities in Palestine. They assassinated officials during the war and proclaimed that Britain was a greater enemy to the Zionists than the Germans.

After the war, they were credited with the assassination of the United Nations envoy to Palestine, Folke Bernadotte, in September 1948. In addition to the assassination of this UN mediator, both the Irgun and Lehi were responsible for the Deir Yassin massacre that killed well over a hundred Palestinian villagers.

The Role of Ralph Bunche in the Creation of Israel

Perhaps one of the most controversial figures in African American history was the academic and State Department functionary, Ralph Bunche. Bunche was a Harvard graduate and during the 1930s appeared to have had sympathies with the Left.

During World War II he was recruited into the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS), the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the State Department, becoming a functionary of U.S. imperialism. Bunche was involved in deliberations around the formation of the United Nations in 1945 where he collaborated closely with Eleanor Roosevelt.

After the creation of the State of Israel, war erupted between several Arab states and Israel. The United Nations intervened in an attempt to mediate the conflict.

It was during this period that Bernadotte was assassinated by the Zionist Stern Gang. Bunche took over and mediated an armistice agreement between the Arab states and Israel in 1949. For this he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950, the first person of African descent to receive this honor.

The 1956 Suez Crisis

On July 26, 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal which had been completed in 1869 by France. This provided a rationale for the British, Israeli and French invasion of the country.

Israel invaded Egypt and Britain began to bomb Cairo. Later pressure from both the United States and the Soviet Union forced the British and French to withdraw.

Israel gained some strategic gains from the war due to its ability to conduct shipping through the Straits of Tiran. The war represented the new configuration of imperialism in the Middle East where the U.S. asserted its imperial dominance in the post-World War II period.

The Americans would not allow the former dominant powers, Britain and France, to reassert their hegemony in the Middle East. Consequently, the U.S. began to carry out more aggressive actions in the region.

In July 1958, in response to anti-western rebellions in Iraq and Lebanon, the U.S. sent troops to Beirut under Eisenhower. By 1967, the Palestinians sought to initiate a guerrilla campaign to reclaim their homeland from Zionist occupation.

During this period, the perception of the State of Israel began to shift tremendously within the African and African American communities. By the time of the June 1967 war many younger and more militant organizations within the African American community were publically supporting Egypt and the Palestinians against the State of Israel and the U.S.

Much of this can be attributed to at least three factors: the growing influence of anti-imperialist African states such as Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Egypt, Tanzania and the alliance between the-then national liberation movements of Southern Africa and throughout the continent; the political actions and propoganda of organizations and leaders such as Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam and later the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the later years of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the African solidarity committees and other revolutionary and progressive organizations; and the hostility shown toward African American political aspirations by Zionist organizations in the U.S. after the advent of Malcolm X, SNCC, the urban rebellions, the campus revolts for Black Studies and affirmative action and the Pan-African solidarity movement.

The Six Day War of 1967

During the period surrounding the Egypt-Israeli war of June 1967, SNCC appeared to have come out in support of Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Malcolm X had met with representatives of the PLO right after their founding in 1964 during his trip to the region.

When SNCC issued a newsletter and position paper in support of the Palestinians, they were vilified by the corporate media and even some moderate civil rights organizations. This position was also echoed by the Black Power Convention in Newark in July 1967 as well as by the Black Congress held around the New Conference for a New Politics in Chicago in September of that same year.

In 1968, the former chairperson of SNCC and prime minister of the Black Panther Party, Stokely Carmichael addressed the Organization of Arab Students conference held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Carmichael expressed his organizations' solidarity with the peoples of North Africa, the Middle East and of course the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

The previous year Carmichael gave an interview with the National Guardian newspaper, based in New York which was published on September 16, 1967, where he stated that "We reason that the Jews have been mistreated for centuries and centuries... There is no need

(however) for the Jews to turn around, because the white man persecuted them, and persecute the Africans and especially the Arabs. If the Jews want a state of their own it seems to me that what they should have done after the war when the white Western powers were dividing up Germany was to demand that they be given a part of Germany... But for the Jews to use the extermination of the Jews in Germany as an excuse to take land from the Arabs is clearly unjust.”

This position was in line with revolutionary anti-imperialist governments and regional organizations throughout the world. On June 7, 1967, the government in Cuba issued a statement in solidarity with Egypt and the Arab nations.

The Cuban statement read in part that “The Cuban Revolutionary Government, fully aware of the principles formulated in this declaration expresses solidarity with the Arab nations facing imperialist aggression today, and condemns this aggression.”

As early 1955 at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, a resolution was passed by the Afro-Asian states saying that it “supports the rights of the Arab people of Palestine, and called for the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on Palestine and the achievement of peaceful settlement of the Palestine questions.”

These views were also expressed through the First Conference of Independent African States held in Accra, Ghana on April 15, 1958. At the Casablanca Conference in Morocco on January 3, 1961, solidarity with Palestine and the regional states were reaffirmed.

Both the Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the States of the African Charter of Casablanca, held in Cairo in April 1961 and the First Conference of the Heads of State or Governments of Non-Aligned Countries held at Belgrade, Yugoslavia in September 1961, pledged support for Palestine and the Arab states.

In the U.S. even leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., although invited on numerous occasions to visit the State of Israel, declined to do so. Many Zionist leaders and organizations in the U.S. have attempted to claim that King supported Israel. However, the actual record cannot confirm this categorically.

The 1973 War and the Demise of Andrew Young in 1979

In October of 1973 Egypt attacked Israel in the Sinai in an effort to take back land seized during the 1967 war under Nasser. During this war international support was overwhelming among the oppressed nations for Egypt.

The so-called Arab oil embargo was instituted and most African states severed relations with Israel. This pattern continued even within the United Nations General Assembly which declared that Zionism is racism in 1974.

Andrew Young, who came to prominence as a leader of King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1950s and 1960s, was appointed as the first African American Ambassador to the United Nations in 1977 under the Carter administration. Young drew fire immediately by making statements that the Cuban internationalists were stabilizing the situation in Angola and that there were political prisoners inside the U.S.

Young was terminated by Carter in 1979 after it was revealed that he had contact with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization at the United Nations. These

developments led to more moderate leaders such as Rev. Jesse Jackson to take a trip to Palestine and call for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Jackson would raise this issue during his 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns. By the 1980s more African American, left and progressive organizations were in support of the Palestinian struggle for national independence.

The War on Gaza in 2008-2009

A three week campaign of terror was launched by the Israeli Defense Forces against the Palestinian people of Gaza at the end of 2008. This military assault took place between the administrations of George Bush and Barack Obama. Obama remained silent throughout the bombing of Gaza by the Israeli Air Force.

Since Obama came to office his administration has maintained the same pro-Zionist position on Palestine. The administration refused to participate in the World Conference Against Racism review in Geneva in 2009 claiming the gathering was anti-Israel because it upheld the right of Palestinians to self-determination and statehood.

Obama's recent visit to Israel and the occupied territories provided no hope for the Palestinian people. The U.S. has continued to provide billions in direct aid to Israel, sophisticated weapons as well as political and diplomatic support.

The present war against Syria is being carried out in part as a means to support and strengthen the State of Israel. With more aggressive military intervention being threatened against Syria, Israel has expressed its support for the fabricated stories about the use of chemical weapons by the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

The Need for Continued Solidarity With Palestine

National liberation movements, progressive governments, left parties, peace and anti-war organizations, solidarity coalitions and social justice groups must continue their support and alliances with the Palestinian people, the resistance forces and the progressive states throughout the Middle-East. This issue is becoming even more important in light of the escalating threats against Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

People must reject efforts for another war in the Middle East. The question of Syrian, Lebanese and Iranian sovereignty should be a cherished principle of all honest political forces inside the U.S. and Europe.

These wars of imperialist aggression and regime-change only worsen conditions for workers and the nationally oppressed inside North America and Europe. Consequently, support for the peoples of North Africa and the Middle East provide the conditions for greater cooperation between the workers and oppressed of this region and those within the industrialized states.

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