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THE HISTORICAL-IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS
OF THE ZIONIST-ISRAELI SETTLER COLONIALISM
AND ETHNIC CLEANSING OF PALESTINE

The paper investigates the ideological and historical roots of the Zionist-Israeli policy and practice of ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians to build an exclusivist ethnocratic Jewish state in Palestine. The ongoing Israeli military invasion of Gaza, since October 7th, 2023, shows that the Jewish state of Israel and its political leaders do not conceal their genocidal intent towards the Palestinian population of both Gaza and the West Bank. The intention of Israel in its war against Gaza is to empty or purify this area of its Palestinian residents and replace them with Jewish settlers, building and expanding Israeli settlements in Gaza like Israel has been doing in the West Bank since 1967. Therefore, our study seeks to answer the following question: Why from its inception has ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians been a consistent and coherent goal and policy of Zionism? To answer this question, we need to put the so-called Israeli-Palestinian conflict in historical context by critically examining the historical roots and ideological foundations of the Zionist settler colonial enterprise aimed at displacing Palestinians to make room for the Jewish state of Israel. Employing the critical discourse analysis of Michel Foucault and the concept of cultural reproduction of Pierre Bourdieu we will critically analyze discourses about population transfer promoted by early Zionist leaders in the pre-state period. In addition, we deploy the concepts of settler colonialism to understand colonial and expansionist character of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel. Having critically analyzed relevant literature and closely examined historical and political discourses underpinning Zionism, we have revealed the continuities of the Zionist strategy of the elimination and erasure of the indigenous Palestinian people and building an exclusivist ethnocratic Jewish state in Palestine. From its inception the Zionist movement and ideology has been colonial and eliminationist in its essence aimed at the removal of the indigenous population and replacement of Palestinians with the exogenous colonial settler population from Europe.

Key words: Palestine, Israel, Zionism, settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, Palestinians, Arabs, Jews.

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Сионистік-израиль қоныстанушы отаршылдығы мен
Палестинадағы этникалық тазалаудың тарихи-идеологиялық тамырлары

Мақалада Палестинада этнократиялық еврей мемлекетін құру бағытында сионистік-израиль режимінің Палестинаның байырғы халқына қарсы этникалық тазалау саясатының тарихи және идеологиялық тамырлары мен негіздері зерттеліп талданады. 2023 жылдың 7 қазанынан бергі Израильдің Газадағы әскери басқыншылығы Израиль саяси элитасы мен қоғамының Газа секторы мен Иордан өзенінің батыс жағалауындағы палестиндіктерге қарсы геноцид жүргізу пиғылын айқын көрсетіп берді. Израиль Газа секторында басқыншылық соғыс жүргізе отырып палестиндіктерді мәжбүрлі түрде басқа аумаққа көшіру арқылы бұл жерге еврейлерді қоныстандыруды, Газадағы еврей отарлық қоныстарын жүйелі түрде салуды мақсат етіп отыр. Израиль дәл осындай саясатты Батыс жағалауда 1967 жылдан бері жүргізіп келеді. Сондықтан бұл зерттеу аясында біз мына сұраққа жауап беруге тырысамыз: Неге Палестинаның байырғы халқына қарсы этникалық тазалау жүргізу сионистік қозғалыстың бастапқы кезден тұрақты әрі мақсатты саясаты болды? Бұл сұраққа жауап беру үшін израиль-палестин жанжалының тарихи тамырларын, соның ішінде еврей Израиль мемлекетін құруға қол жеткізу үшін Палестинаның байырғы халқын күштеп көшіруді мақсат еткен сионистік отаршылдықтың тарихи және идеологиялық негіздерін терең талдау жасау қажет. Осы бағытта Мишель Фуконың сыни дискурс анализі мен Пьер Бурдьнің мәдени репродукция тұжырымдамасына сүйене отырып 1948 жылға дейінгі сионизм лидерлерінің халықтарды трансфер жасау жөніндегі дискурстарына сыни талдау жасаймыз. Сонымен бірге, сионистік қозғалыс пен Израиль мемлекетінің отарлық

және экспансионистік сипатын тереңнен түсіну үшін қоныстанушы отаршылдық концепциясын пайдаландық. Тақырыпқа қатысты әдебиеттер мен сионистік дискурстарды сыни талдаудан өткізе отырып бұл зерттеу аясында біз этнократиялық Израиль мемлекетін құру жолындағы сионистердің Палестинаның байырғы халқына қарсы бағытталған этникалық тазалау саясатының сабақтастығы мен үздіксіз жүргізіліп келе жатқанын анықтадық. Бастапқы кезден осы күнге дейін палестиндіктерді Палестинадан мәжбүрлі түрде қуып жіберу арқылы тек еврейлердің мемлекетін құру сионистік отаршылдықтың саясатының негізін құрады.

Түйін сөздер: Палестина, Израиль, сионизм, қоныстанушы отаршылдық, этникалық тазарту, палестиндіктер, арабтар, еврейлер.

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Историко-идеологические корни сионистско-израильского переселенческого колониализма и этнической чистки Палестины

В статье исследуются идеологические и исторические корни сионистско-израильской политики и практики этнической чистки коренных палестинцев с целью построения этнократического еврейского государства в Палестине. Продолжающееся израильское военное вторжение в Газу с 7 октября 2023 года показывает публичное намерение еврейского государства Израиля и его политических лидеров устроить геноцид в отношении палестинского населения как Газы, так и Западного берега реки Иордана. Израиль преследует цель в войне против Газы очистить данную территорию от палестинского населения и заселить их еврейскими поселенцами систематически расширяя израильские поселения в Газе. Израиль придерживаясь аналогичную политику осуществляет ее с 1967 года на Западном берегу Иордана. Следовательно, в рамках данного исследования попытаемся ответить на следующий вопрос: почему с самого начала этническая чистка коренных палестинцев была последовательной и неизменной целью и политикой сионизма? Чтобы ответить на этот вопрос, нам необходимо рассмотреть израильско-палестинский конфликт в историческом контексте, критически изучив исторические корни и идеологические основы сионистского колониализма, направленный на вытеснение палестинцев, чтобы построить еврейского государства Израиль. Используя критический анализ дискурса Мишеля Фуко и концепцию культурного воспроизводства Пьера Бурдье, мы критически проанализируем дискурсы о трансфере населения, продвигаемые ранними сионистскими лидерами. Кроме того, мы используем концепцию переселенческого колониализма для понимания колониального и экспансионистского характера сионистского движения и государства Израиль. Критически проанализировав литературу по теме и изучив исторические и политические дискурсы, лежащие в основе сионизма, мы выявили преемственность сионистской стратегии уничтожения и этнической чистки коренного палестинского народа и построения этнократического еврейского государства в Палестине. С самого начала и до сегодняшнего дня создание еврейского государства путем насильного изгнания коренного населения из Палестины легло в основу сионистской колониальной политики.

Ключевые слова: Палестина, Израиль, сионизм, переселенческий колониализм, этнические чистки, палестинцы, арабы, евреи

Introduction

With the Israeli ground invasion of Gaza at the end of October 2023, more and more voices are being raised by Israeli leaders and civil society to 'voluntarily' transfer or relocate 2.3 million residents to other countries (Landler, 2023). 'Voluntary relocation' or 'population transfer' is a euphemism for forced displacement or ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land to other places (Masalha, 1992). Despite 80 percent of the residents of Gaza are refugees who were expelled from their homes by the Zionist military forces in 1947 (Finkelstein, 2010, p. 15), the current prime minister of Israel

Benjamin Netanyahu and members of his cabinet have openly displayed their genocidal rhetoric and intent regarding the residents of Gaza. Israeli Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter stated that "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba," which is a reference to the tragic events of 1948, when the Zionist armed forces violently massacred and displaced the native populations of Palestine forcing them further into the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and neighboring countries (Arnaout & Kasim, 2023; Shpigel & Sokol, 2023).

Hostility and hatred towards Palestinians have deeply been permeated and embedded in the psyche of the Israelis and Israeli society, which have par-

ticularly been manifested in the light of the Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023. Kamel (2023) claims that since the Israeli forces in Gaza is unable to implement mass expulsion of Palestinians, they are intentionally decimating the Gaza Strip to make it uninhabitable. The declared goal of eradication of Hamas from Gaza seems to be used as a pretext to expel 2.3 million Palestinian residents from the area. Israeli leaders and civil society do not conceal their genocidal intent to force Palestinians to move to the Sinai Peninsula and to other countries (Danon & Ben-Barak, 2023; Kamel, 2023). In the aftermath of the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, the Ministry of Intelligence of Israel drafted a proposal that suggested that Israel ought to occupy Gaza and deport 2.3 million Gazans to the Sinai Peninsula (Avraham, 2023). Israeli occupation of Gaza implies that after Palestinians are transferred to Sinai and elsewhere, they would never be allowed to return to their homes. The Minister of Intelligence of Israel Gila Gamliel backed this proposal by saying that mass migration of people from war zones is inevitable and necessary (Avraham, 2023). Although the government of Israel has stated that the proposal is non-binding, prime minister Netanyahu has lobbied the EU and US to apply pressure Egypt to take in refugees from Gaza (Teibel, 2023).

Genocidal language and rhetoric against Palestinians have been normalized and rationalized in Israel as it has become a normal and common discourse to kill and expel Palestinians. Two Israeli lawmakers Danny Danon and Ram Ben-Barak published an op-ed piece for the Wall Street Journal on November 13, 2023, advocating the voluntary transfer of the residents of Gaza to other countries, and urging other countries to take in Palestinians (Danon & Ben-Barak, 2023). Danny Danon and Ram Ben-Barak are joined by other radical Israeli politicians who are likewise calling for the transfer of Palestinians to other countries. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and many other right-wing radical Israeli politicians have consistently advocated the annexation of the West Bank and expulsion of Palestinians to Jordan and Egypt (Magid, 2024).

Ideas and proposals for the transfer of Palestinians from Palestine are not a new controversial topic in Israeli society, the discourse about ethnic cleansing of Palestinians is deeply rooted in history of Israel and in the Zionist ideology. Therefore, the paper seeks to understand the root causes of Zionist settler colonialism, early Zionist narratives about Palestine and the rationale behind the desire or plan to expel Palestinians and building an ethnically monolithic

Jewish state in lieu of Palestine. This is because the conventional Zionist ideology and vision form the basis of the apartheid regime of Israel and inform current mainstream political discourses in Israeli society. The purpose of the paper is to identify and examine the historical and ideological roots of mass removal of Palestinians from their homeland. The ongoing Israeli military carnage in Gaza is in fact a manifestation of the conventional and mainstream genocidal and eliminationist ideology of Israel in practice, whose roots go back to history. To get a proper understanding of the current Israeli aggressive behavior in Gaza, genocidal rhetoric uttered by Israeli leaders and civil society, a constant call for genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians not only from Gaza, but also from the West Bank, we need to put this complex issue into a historical context.

Materials and Methods

In this study to understand the meaning and interpretation of written and oral materials produced by the Zionist and pro-Zionist individuals and entities we deploy discourse analysis of Michel Foucault. In addition, to explain the continuity of the conventional exclusivist ethnocratic Zionist ideology and vision we deploy the concept of cultural and social reproduction coined by the French cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu. These two scientific approaches are powerful tools in understanding why certain given political, social, and cultural discourses are produced, reproduced, and reinforced. The French intellectual Michel Foucault coined discourse analysis to explain how and why language in both written and spoken forms is used to make the meaning, how and why particular discourses and narratives are produced, become mainstream and dominant, as well as how they inform and guide the course of action, attitudes, and behavior of actors (Lamont, 2015). Rather than relying upon a single text or speech, discourse analysis is designed to break down and examine larger data, which ought to be authoritative and official data generated by prominent figures or organizations (Lamont, 2015). Particular discourses are produced and reproduced to legitimize and cement a certain course of action and behavior (Lamont, 2015). The Bourdieusian concept of cultural reproduction explains how certain cultural patterns, discourses, narratives, and practices are transmitted from one generation to another (Bourdieu, 1973). This in turn shows the continuity, and persistence of certain policies and practices by actors across time. Pappe (2006) indicates how

the Zionist leaders from Herzl down to Ben-Gurion were consistent in their desire to ethnically cleanse as many Palestinians as possible from Palestine to make room for the Jewish state.

Data for our study come from mostly historical accounts related to the inception of the Zionist movement and implementation of the Zionist ethnonationalist colonial project in Palestine that led to the mass killing and displacement of Palestinians. We critically analyze the 1948 pre-state Zionist vision and ideology reflected in the thought and work of Theodor Herzl, Israel Zangwill, Chaim Weizmann, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and David Ben-Gurion. We examine the Balfour Declaration issued by the British government in 1917 in support of the Zionist cause in Palestine, the UN Resolution 181 of partition of Palestine in 1947 and the Zionist plan to expel in Palestinians from rural and urban areas of Palestine in 1947-1948 that led to the Nakba, mass expulsion of around 800.000 of Palestinians, and to the establishment of Israel.

Literature review

We analyze relevant literature on our topic based on the themes and problems other scholars have examined in their studies. From this standpoint, we have identified two key themes emerged in relevant literature in relation to the exclusivist, settler colonial and hegemonic nature of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel. First, ethnonationalist, racist and religious underpinnings of Zionism, and second, settler colonial, expansionist and eliminationist nature of the Zionist movement.

With respect to the first pattern literature highlights that the Jewish intelligentsia in Europe in the 19th century was under the influence of European nationalism, racism, and social Darwinism (Kornberg, 1993; Roshwald, 2003; Rozenblit, 2010; Shapira, 1999). Being subjected to constant persecution European Jewry arrived in the conclusion that to salvage themselves of rampant anti-Jewish sentiments in Europe, Jews ought to seek their own national home elsewhere (Rozenblit, 2010). Therefore, leading Jewish intellectuals such as Theodor Herzl, shifted to Jewish nationalism, which manifested itself in the Zionist ideology. Although Zionism has mostly been a secular form of nationalism, it is closely intertwined with Judaism. Early Zionists appealed to ancient Jewish history in biblical times (Kornberg, 1993). In the Hebrew Bible, ethnicity is understood as collective identity premised on the concept of common ancestry from Abraham and Sarah (Roshwald, 2003). While European nationalism is inter-

twined with the concepts of popular sovereignty and self-determination, the theocratic principle of Judaism helped legitimize the Jewish claim to Palestine as a land promised to Jews by God. Furthermore, religious Jews refer to themselves as God's chosen people, which indicates religious and national exceptionalism and superiority of Jews over other non-Jewish peoples (Roshwald, 2003,). Thus, the Zionist Jewish nationalism is not only informed by European nationalist models, but also Judaism affects and guides exclusivist ethnocentric Jewish nationalism (Roshwald, 2003). The ideas of promised land and chosenness have been used to justify the slaughter and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The promised land must be purified from non-Jews so that God's chosen people could establish a national home.

In the second pattern literature places Zionism in a settler colonial framework to explain colonial exclusivist and eliminationist character of the Zionist ideology. Underpinned by Western and Jewish political and religious traditions Zionism aimed to create a Jewish state in Palestine by dispossessing Palestinians. Said (2011) claims that Israel was erected on the ruins of the indigenous Palestinian society. Armed with superior Western exclusivist nationalist and racial models, Zionists embarked on settler colonial enterprise in Palestine (Erakat, 2019; Pappe, 2006; 2014; Said, 1980; Zureik, 2016). Thus, Zionism and the state of Israel are a colonial venture intended to eliminate native people because like any other settler colonialism the Zionist project needed land (Wolfe, 2006, p. 395). The Zionist movement driven by the zeal to colonize Palestine differs from conventional traditional colonialism in its constant aspiration to displace the indigenous people from the land and establish an exclusivist state for Jewish race (Hixson, 2023). So the logic of elimination of the native colonized people rooted in settler colonialism (Hixson, 2013, p. 4), through uninterrupted influx of settler population who would displace the colonized from their land (Wolfe, 2006, p. 395). Colonialism tends to have three basic dimensions such as violence, land, and population (Zureik, 2016), in which the colonizer resorts to violence to conquer land and replace its original inhabitants with its own population.

Thus, guided by the exclusivist ethnocratic nationalism and racial prejudices the Zionists viewed the native population of Palestine who constituted an absolute majority prior to 1948 as backward and primitive. Although across Europe Jews were subjected to racism and institutionalized violence, leaders of political Zionism instead of renouncing European racial prejudices and tropes, they internalized

and reproduced them in Palestine in dealing with its native inhabitants (Erakat, 2019, p. 27). Early Zionist leaders such as Theodor Herzl, Israel Zangwill, Chaim Weizmann, and others displayed arrogant condescending racist attitudes towards the native population of Palestine (Masalha, 1992; Pappe, 2006; Said, 1980). In settler-colonial discourse the natives are constructed as rootless, unsettled (Wolfe, 2006), indolent, savage foes (Hixson, 2013), mindless, decadent, backward, inferior, undeveloped, and uncivilized (Said, 1980). In this regard, Said points out that by drawing upon deeply entrenched Western racial prejudices about the Arabs and Muslims Zionism has dehumanized the Palestinians, denying their very existence (1980, p. xiv). Reducing Palestinians to the state of an animal and negating their humanity, the Zionists have permanently removed them from Palestine, denying their right to self-determination, human rights, and freedom (Said, 1980, p. 8). A sustained denial and racial constructions are always deployed by the settler colonial entity to reinforce and perpetuate its legitimacy and domination, and to justify its racial oppressive policies vis-à-vis colonized. Such binary, reductive, deficient, and artificial constructs justify removal and ethnic cleansing of the native (Hixson, 2013). It is evident that settler colonialism is a zero-sum game because the colonizer not only occupies the land permanently, but the settler entity also establishes its authority over colonial space through large-scale violence, removal, and replacement of the native inhabitants of the land, turning them into perpetual outcasts and refugees (Hixson, 2013, p. 5-7; Said, 1980, p. 7).

Results and Discussion

Genocidal and removalist discourses of turning Arab Palestine into Jewish Palestine had emerged even before the political Zionism movement was founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897. Discourses and narratives about ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians from Palestine were constantly produced, reproduced, and reinforced by the early Zionists. A socialist Zionist writer Moshe Smilansky wrote in 1890 that Jewish settlers in Palestine ought to keep distance from local Arabs and not to seek any integration with the natives (Masalha, 1992, p. 7). From the start, Smilansky and other Zionists were concerned that Jewish youth may adopt the Arab Palestinian way of life and integrate themselves into Palestinian society (Masalha, 1992). To prevent close contact and peaceful coexistence between the natives and incoming Jewish settlers from Europe, the Zionists intentionally engineered biased cultural

attitudes and negative images of Palestinians that mirrored Western colonial prejudices about the Arabs and Islam (Said, 1980, p. xiv). That is why, Zionists widely regarded the native Palestinian population as primitive and barbaric (Pappe, 2006, p. 20).

According to early Zionists, Palestine was the cradle of Jewish nationalist and religious movement, but at the time of Jewish colonization the ancient land of Israel, was occupied by 'strangers' and they had to be removed to make room for Jewish settlers (Pappe, 2006, p. 11). In fact, for many early Jewish settlers arrived in Palestine in the 1880s the land was not regarded as inhabited by anyone, making the native population invisible or part of the wilderness that needed to be removed (Pappe, 2006, p. 11). Masalha argues that when early Zionists referred to alleged emptiness of Palestine, they were aware that there were a people with its distinct language, culture, and history, yet Zionists believed that the indigenous population was not worth considering (1992, p. 6). Even if Zionists tried to make the natives in Palestine invisible or disregard them, the demographic reality on the ground was obviously not in favor of Jewish settlers. For instance, according to Ottoman statistics, the total population of Palestine in 1882 was 462.465, the number of Muslims was 403.795 (86-87 percent), Christians 43.659 (9 percent), Jews 15.011 (3 percent) and a small number of European Jewish settlers (1-2 percent) respectively (McCarthy, 1990, p. 10). Thus, almost 96 percent of the population of Palestine was made up of indigenous Palestinian Muslims and Christians, in contrast, the Jewish population was predominantly represented by local non-Zionist Jews, and the share of European Zionist Jews was meager. Moreover, in the following years, the demographic growth of non-Jewish population of Palestine was dramatic, rising to 725.507 in 1922, 880.746 in 1931 and 1.339.763 in 1946 (McCarthy, 1990, p. 37-38). That is why, the demographic problem was always at the core of the Zionist agenda from its inception and till 1948 when the Zionist military groups violently resolved this problem in favor of the newly created Israel. From this perspective, the Zionists consistently sought to change the existing demographic balance in their favor through unceasing Jewish immigration from Europe to Palestine.

Zionists were convinced that only Jews had the right to historic Palestine, and its non-Jewish native population had to vacate Palestine for incoming Jewish settlers (Masalha, 1992, p. 8). Early prophets of Zionism launched a political movement with the aim to create a nation state exclusive to Jews

(Abulhawa, 2017). In this sense, Zionism was not only a classic settler colonial enterprise that mirrored other European settler colonies, but it was also a racial project aimed to create a racialized state predicated upon European Jewish identities. In terms of settler colonialism and racialization, the Zionists advanced hegemonic colonial narratives of superiority of White European Jewish race, as opposed to inferiority and savagery of an indigenous Oriental race in Palestine (Abulhawa, 2017). Therefore, the identity of this island of settler colonialism in the Middle East could only be White European, and Oriental identities of eastern Jews were to be obliterated, as one of the prominent forefathers of Zionism Vladimir Jabotinsky noted that "We are going to Palestine … to sweep out thoroughly all traces of the Oriental soul" (Abulhawa, 2017; Pappe, 2021, p. 127).

To build a racially pure Jewish state, the native population of Palestine had to be removed from the land. Since Arab-speaking Muslim and Christian population constituted an absolute majority in Palestine, Zionists were in search of finding a solution to the so-called "Arab question" or "Arab problem". Even before the establishment of the Zionist Organization in 1897 the founder of the Zionist movement Theodor Herzl contemplated how to turn Arab Palestine into Jewish Palestine. In his diaries he wrote: "When we occupy the land [Palestine], we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country ... Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly … We shall then sell only to Jews, and all real estate will be traded only among Jews" (Herzl, 1960). Thus, Herzl produced and advanced fundamental principles of Zionist venture of colonization, of an exclusivist racial Jewish community in Palestine, building self-sustaining Jewish colonies with only Jewish employment, labor, and trade, as well as removal of penniless poor local populations to neighboring countries (Sayegh, 1965).

In pre-state Zionist discourse, the native Palestinian population had been ignored and although Theodor Herzl was aware of the presence of an Arab population in Palestine, he viewed them as backward, and uncivilized (Shlaim, 2014). Moreover, Herzl was convinced that European Jewish settlers would be welcome by the natives as the latter would greatly benefit from advanced Jewish colonization (Shlaim, 2014). The 1897 First Zionist Congress, held at Basel under the leadership of Theodor Herzl adopted the main objective of the Zionist movement: "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine" (Sayegh, 1965, p. 208). In addition, the Basel Congress highlighted that to attain the stated goal it was necessary to facilitate Jewish colonization of Palestine, land purchase, and obtain government consent and support for the Zionist cause (Bickerton & Klausner, 1995, p. 34). Obtaining government consent meant not to seek acceptance of the natives, but rather a foreign power. In his pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) published in 1896, Herzl wrote that Zionists should aim at creating in Palestine an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism (Herzl, 1989, p. 13). That meant that Herzl and his followers sent a clear message to European powers that Jewish colonization of Palestine was to be carried out on behalf of the West (Herzl, 1989). When in 1898 Herzl met German Emperor Wilhelm II in Istanbul and Palestine, Herzl suggested that the future Jewish entity in Palestine would be a German outpost in the East (Shlaim, 2014). Likewise, Herzl told British officials that the Jewish Palestine would be a British colony in the East (Shlaim, 2014).

Shlaim (2014) points to two key enduring patterns in the Zionist movement such as the denial of the existence of Palestinian national body and the perennial quest for an alliance with a Western foreign power, which implied that the Zionist movement would attain its goal of a Jewish home in Palestine not through consent of the natives but rather by the assistance of a foreign power. In this regard, the native population was seen as an obstacle to the Zionist venture and thereby Herzl envisioned ethnic cleansing of non-Jews from Palestine (Herzl, 1960). Hence, the native population of Palestine was widely regarded by the Zionists as an extension of the local landscape like swampland and stony fields that would be removed in the process of Jewish colonization and nation building (Penslar, 2005, p. 66).

The discourse of ethnic cleansing came to the fore and became central in the Zionist movement (Masalha, 1992; Penslar, 2005). Colonial constructs and discourses manufactured by Herzl were constantly reproduced and reinforced by other prominent Zionists such as Israel Zangwill, a British Zionist, who was an ardent proponent of ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians. Having converted to Herzl's political Zionism in 1901, Israel Zangwill wrote that "Motherlands

have always created colonies. Here colonies are to create a motherland … The task is difficult … Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country" (Udelson, 1990, p. 165). Zangwill implied that Jewish diasporas or colonies scattered across the world ought to return to their historic homeland to restore their ancient state, yet his reference to the emptiness of Palestine was made purposefully to justify Zionist colonization and forced removal of the indigenous people. In addition, Zangwill further reinforced Western Oriental attitudes towards Palestinian Arabs, referring to them as backward (Masalha, 1992). In his view, the transfer of the native people of Palestine to neighboring countries was a precondition for the realization of Zionist dream. Being aware of the demographic domination of the Arabs in Palestine, he warned that "We must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the Arab tribes … or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population" (Masalha, 1992, p. 10).

The emptiness of Palestine became a dominant narrative of the Zionist movement. Like Zangwill, Chaim Weizmann, who served as the president of Zionist Organization and the first president of Israel, propagated a manufactured discourse of "Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country" (Masalha, 1992). To facilitate the Zionist cause and translate the idea of population transfer into concrete action Chaim Weizmann secured British support for the Zionist colonization of Palestine. On November 2nd, 1917, the British government issued an official statement known as the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government stated its readiness to support and facilitate the Zionist aspirations to establish a national home for the Jewish people (Bickerton & Klausner, 1995, p. 58; Khalidi, 2020). The Balfour Declaration was the reflection of the Zionist discourse of nation building, and like the Zionists, the British referred to the indigenous population of Palestine merely as existing non-Jewish communities (Bickerton & Klausner, 1995, p. 58). Indeed, with the establishment of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1920, Britain started to implement the Balfour Declaration, encouraging large scale Jewish immigration, transferring state lands in Palestine to Zionists for expanding Jewish settlements, building Zionist institutions, creating, training, and arming a Jewish military organization (Sayegh, 1965). The British patronage of the Zionist movement accelerated and eventually led to the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, while the British Mandatory authorities

suppressed and degraded Palestinian national aspirations (Erakat, 2019).

As Britain opened the gates of Palestine to large scale Jewish immigration, a steady growth of Jewish population resulted in the erosion of the numerical superiority of the native Palestinian people who were forced to resist and fight against double British and Zionist colonization. In fact, the British officials were aware of the intention of Zionists to drive the native population out of Palestine to make room for a Jewish state (Masalha, 1992). The president of the Zionist Organization Chaim Weizmann, who was close to the British political elites, noted that Jews could completely colonize Palestine either by purchasing land from the Arabs or compelling them to move somewhere (Masalha, 1992). Weizmann expected that with the British help the Zionists would purge Palestine of its indigenous inhabitants. Like Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Yishuv – the Jewish community in Palestine and the first prime minister of Israel, showed contempt for the Arabs, their culture and society (Masalha, 1992). As the leader of labor socialist wing of Zionism, David Ben-Gurion ardently advocated and eventually implemented ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians in 1947-1948. Ben-Gurion noted that two ethno-religious communities were fighting for Palestine and the indigenous people were attempting to maintain the Arab Oriental character of Palestine both culturally and demographically, otherwise they understood that they would be forced to lose their homeland to Zionists whose goal was to turn the country into Jewish homeland (Masalha, 1992, p. 18). Denying the existence of a separate Palestinian nation, Ben-Gurion were convinced that there was only a Jewish national aspiration in Palestine and local Arabs did not belong to Palestine and thereby they could be transferred to other Arab countries (Masalha, 1992).

Although during the British Mandate in Palestine left-wing labor Zionists led by Ben-Gurion dominated the Jewish community, in 1921-1922 a split occurred within the Zionist movement caused by the British decision to separate Palestine from Transjordan. Although the Zionists leaders claimed both banks of the Jordan River, the British government destroyed the Zionist dream of establishing a Jewish state on both Palestine and Transjordan. While more pragmatic left-wing Zionists acquiesced in the British partition policy, more radical Zionists led by Vladimir Jabotinsky felt betrayed by the British, demanding the revision of the British policy so that a Jewish state would encompass both Palestine and Transjordan

(Masalha, 2000). As opposed to the pragmatic and gradualist left-wing of Zionism, Revisionist Zionists insisted that Jewish right to Palestine and Transjordan ought to be acknowledged (Shlaim, 2014). In contrast to left-wing socialist Zionism, Revisionist Zionism predicated on ultranationalism, militarism, and authoritarianism, placed greater emphasis on coercion and violence in achieving the main objective of Zionism. The leader of Revisionist Zionism Vladimir Jabotinsky argued that a Jewish state could be established in Palestine only by using military force, which he defined as an 'iron wall' (Jabotinsky, 1924). In his article *On the Iron Wall* published in 1924 Jabotinsky stressed that since any deal with the Arabs and Arab acquiescence in Zionist colonization were out of question, Jewish colonization of Palestine must go on against the will of the Arabs under the protection of Jewish military force that the Arabs would be unable to break down (Jabotinsky, 1924).

In Jabotinsky's view, only a self-reliant and self-sustaining heavily militarized Jewish fortress in Palestine would break the backbone of Arab intransigence and resistance to Jewish colonization and a Jewish state in Palestine (Jabotinsky, 1924). Moreover, he emphasized that a voluntary agreement with the Arabs was unattainable, yet Jews could coerce the Arabs into a deal on Zionist terms only with the 'iron wall' (Jabotinsky, 1924). It meant that Jabotinsky acquiesced in the presence of the natives in a Jewish state where Jews ought to constitute the overwhelming majority, which implied expulsion of a significant part of the natives from Palestine. Jabotinsky said that when it came to the 'Arab question' there was no difference between various factions of Zionism as all of them wanted the Arabs gone from Palestine. In another essay *The Arab Problem – Without Dramatization* published in 1940 before his death, Jabotinsky strongly advocated the transfer of the natives to neighboring countries to make room for Jewish immigrants from Europe (Jabotinsky, 1940). Having concluded that the age of minority rights had been over, Jabotinsky envisioned a pure ethnocratic racialized Jewish state (Gils, 2019). Jabotinsky referred to other cases of population transfers such as the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923 when within several months 400.000 Greeks were transferred from Turkey to Greece and 350.000 Turks from Greece to Turkey (Jabotinsky, 1940). In this regard, Jabotinsky rationalized the population transfer practices in Europe and Asia, highlighting that the transfer of the Arabs from Palestine to neighboring

Arab states would be beneficial to both the Arabs and Jews (Jabotinsky, 1940).

Thus, all Zionists were in agreement and consistent in their desire to expel the indigenous population of Palestine to make room for millions of Jewish immigrants and refugees from Europe, especially after World War II. The Holocaust in Europe forced millions of Jews to flee other countries, including Palestine. In 1946, the number of Jewish settlers in Palestine was estimated at 650.000, making up one-third of the population, and there were 1.269.000 Palestinian Arabs (Bickerton & Klausner, 1995, p. 88). So, the natives still constituted a majority. Despite the British support for Zionist colonization of Palestine, land purchase and Jewish immigration, after World War II Palestine remained an overwhelmingly Arab country in which the natives firmly controlled over 94 percent of the cultivated land whereas Jewish settlers held less than 6 percent (Pappe, 2006, p. 30). Unrestricted Jewish immigration and land purchase were not enough to change the demographic balance in favor of Zionists and could not ensure a Jewish majority in Palestine. Hence, Zionists became convinced that immigration and land purchase had to be combined with other means, specifically resorting to violence to compel the natives to abandon Palestine (Pappe, 2006). All factions of Zionism were convinced that only force and violence would ensure a Jewish majority and would pave the way for a Jewish state in Palestine. In particular, the head of the Jewish Agency in Palestine David Ben-Gurion understood this reality well and in his 1937 statement he stressed that Jews had to use force to get rid of the natives and to materialize the Zionist dream of a purely Jewish Palestine (Pappe, 2006, p. 48).

To translate the discourse of forced transfer of the natives into action all Zionists factions came together in 1946 when the Haganah, the military organization of the Jewish community in Palestine, joined arms with the Irgun and Lehi (the Stern Group) who were the offshoots of the right-wing Revisionist Zionism led by Jabotinsky (Masalha, 2000; Shlaim, 2014). The followers of Jabotinsky such as Eliahu Ben-Horin and Joseph Schechtman during World War II called for the forced relocation of the natives of Palestine to Iraq and they were actively involved in the post-war ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in 1947-1948 (Masalha, 2000). Unable to resolve the Palestinian issue, Britain decided to refer this problem to the newly created United Nations in 1947, who adopted Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947. UN Resolution 181 partitioned Palestine into separate a Jewish state

and an Arab state, in which even if Jews constituted one-third of the population and owned 5.8 percent of land, they were given 56 percent of Palestine, while 44 percent of land was allocated to the Arab majority (Finkelstein, 2010; Pappe, 2006). Whereas the Arab side rejected the UN partition plan on the grounds that they were indigenous to Palestine, they constituted the majority, and as the native people they refused to share their homeland with European Jewish settlers (Finkelstein, 2023; Khalidi, 1997); despite their claim to all Palestine, the Zionists decided to go along with the UN Partition plan.

However, the Zionists, who coveted all Palestine, were in fact dissatisfied with the UN Partition because the UN plan did not guarantee a Jewish state with a Jewish majority. Hence, the Zionists led by David Ben-Gurion decided to implement Jabotinsky's iron wall to force the natives of Palestine to acquiesce in Jewish Palestine. Regrettably, the UN did not include no mechanism to prevent any intent to violently change Resolution 181 (Pappe, 2006). To ensure the Jewish dominated Palestine, the Zionist military forces translated the discourses about population transfer into action in 1947-1948 through large scale violence against the natives, uprooting 800.000 Palestinians (Pappe, 2006, p. xiii). As a result of mass attacks of Jewish forces on Palestinian urban and rural areas half of the indigenous population became refugees (Khalidi, 2020). During the violent assaults on Palestinians the Zionists forces annexed lands allocated by the UN to a Palestinian state, successfully establishing control nearly 8o percent of the former Mandatory Palestine (Finkelstein, 2010; Khalidi, 2020). Due to ethnic cleansing of the indigenous people the Zionists turned Arab Palestine into Jewish Palestine, successfully implementing the old Zionist plan of forced removal of Palestinians.

Since the establishment of the Zionist state of Israel both Jewish political elites and scholars have denied the Zionist crimes of genocide, and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1947-1948, forcefully arguing that the Jewish leadership did their best to persuade the natives to stay (Flapan, 1988). Yet the Zionist concealment and denial of its crimes against Palestinians has been exposed in the scholarship, as even Israeli scholars have acknowledged that ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1947-1948 was orchestrated by the Zionist political and military leaders who believed that the forced transfer of Palestinians was the most important precondition for Jewish settler colonialism and Jewish statehood (Flapan, 1988; Masalha, 2003; Pappe, 2006). The concealment and denial of the crimes Zionists

committed against the indigenous people of Palestine reflected in Chaim Weizmann's description of the 1947-1948 tragic events as the "miraculous clearing of the land, and miraculous simplification of Israel's task" (Bickerton & Klausner, 1995, p. 101). The first US ambassador to Israel James McDonald once said that the first president of Israel Chaim Weizmann, first prime minister David Ben-Gurion and other high-ranking official had not anticipated the mass flight of Palestinian refugees in 1948 (Masalha, 2003, p. 7). Yet Masalha (2003) indicates that historical evidence demonstrates that all Zionists leaders ardently advocated and carried out ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1947-1948.

Conclusion

Our study has shown that the discourse of population transfer or ethnic cleansing of the native people of Palestine is rooted in the Zionist ideology and today still informs and guides policy of the Zionist state of Israel in relation to the Palestinian populations of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Hence, in order to understand the current policy of Israel to expel 2.3 million Palestinians from Gaza to the Sinai Peninsula, we have put this issue in historical context by critically examining discourses and narratives generated and promoted by the pre-state Zionists leaders. Foucault's discourse analysis and Bourdieu's cultural reproduction have helped us understand and explain how certain political discourses are produced, reproduced, reinforced, and perpetuated by people with power and influence. Early Zionists such as Theodor Herzl, Israel Zangwill, Chaim Weizmann, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and David Ben-Gurion not only produced deficient colonial knowledge about the natives of Palestine, but they also manufactured genocidal discourses about violent removal of the Palestinians from their homeland. The Zionist discourses of population transfer was not mere statements, rather in the late 1940s they were translated into concrete action when the Zionist armed groups carried out forced removal of the Palestinians from their land to make room for Jewish settlers and a Jewish state. Since then, Israel has been consistent and coherent in its policy to dispossess the native Palestinians from Palestine whose ideological basis were laid out by the pre-state leaders of Zionism.

Studies call our attention to how the concept of transfer or ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Palestine was rooted in the Zionist ideology. At the heart of Zionism lies utter negation and denial of the very existence of Palestine and Palestinian

nation (Said, 1980). Influenced and informed by European racism, ethnocratic nationalism, and Jewish religious traditions, prominent leaders of the pre-state Zionist movement constructed and outlined dominant narratives about Palestine, specifically regarding how to get rid of the native Palestinian population to have a Jewish state. The bottom line of this eliminationist genocidal policy was that Palestine ought to be turned into a Jewish dominated state with the prevailing Jewish character. Such aspirations entailed changing the demographic and cultural landscape of historic Palestine from a Palestinian Arab dominated to a Jewish dominated entity. The Zionist leaders believed that an absolute Jewish majority and Palestinian Arabs reduced to a small minority was the precondition for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In this sense, the demographic preeminence of local Palestinians in the pre-state period had been a nightmare for the Zionists who tried to transform the demographic balance in Palestine in favor of Jewish settlers. The strategies adopted and used by the Zionists were land purchase from local population in Palestine, encouraging Jewish immigration from Europe, yet that was never enough for transforming the demographic balance and achieving a Jewish majority in Palestine. That is why the Zionists harbored a great idea or plan of either voluntary exodus of Palestinians from Palestine to neighboring Arab countries or forced dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants for gaining a Jewish demographic domination.

The creation of the Jewish state of Israel in Palestine required a Jewish majority and an Arab minority. To turn Arab Palestine into Jewish Palestine Zionists heavily relied on hard power defined by Jabotinsky as the 'iron wall'. To a certain extent Zionists agreed that a future Jewish state could accommodate or tolerate a small proportion of Palestinians, but Jewish domination was considered essential for the existence of such a state. Palestine once dominated demographically and culturally by Arab-speaking Muslims, Christians and eastern Jews was turned into a Jewish dominated society through sustained ethnic cleansing perpetuated by Israel since its creation. Removal of the indigenous Palestinians has been a consistent policy of Israel and thereby the current call for ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza by Israeli leaders is not accidental but rather it reflects the continuity of racialized eliminationist policy of the Zionist-Israeli regime. Thus, the discourse of ethnic cleansing is always inherent in Zionism and has always been practiced by Israel and is being practiced today to dispossess the Palestinian population from their land in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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