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## Israel's Exports of Violence

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Séamus Malekafzali

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<https://www.seamus-malekafzali.com/p/on-israels-exports-of-violence>

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*These remarks have been adapted from a talk with the Palestine Working Group at Columbia University on April 15.*

I don't mean to speak as if I am ancient, but when I was in college, there was a perception that left-wingers, socialists, and communists, were mixing together all these different causes, foreign and domestic, economic and social, that ultimately meant nothing to each other. At worst, they were spouting off incoherent nonsense about an "omnicause", if that phrase was in common parlance then.

How can it be that this issue of tuition is in any way related to Native Americans in the student body, how can you seriously argue that such-and-such donation box shows the administration's blindness to Western interventions abroad, and so on and so on and so on? Newspaper opinion pages love this sort of thing, college presidents enjoy using it as a cudgel against student protestors, and when strategy is being dis-

cussed on campus, it may be difficult and thorny to navigate these debates and to decide where priorities should lie.

When it comes to the issue of something as present and severe as what is happening to the Gaza Strip, the lines that are being drawn by those in the streets between Palestine and other nations suffering under the heel of oppression and conflict are not far apart at all, not in the slightest. Students are not just demanding these issues be brought to the forefront, they are being forced to by governments and their own university administrations who seek to make an example of them.

The Israelis who are pushing for these crackdowns and celebrating as students here are arrested, imprisoned, and deported despite their legal status and their rights, are not solely seeking control over the narrative in the United States, or the temperature of the rhetoric in the United Kingdom. Israel is seeking to place its thumbs on the scale of governments, societies, and most critically conflicts, all around the world, to make its influence undeniable, and to make avoiding interaction with it, as many Arab states tried to do in decades past, impossible. The bombs that rain down in Shuja'iyya, and the ethnic cleansing that is occurring right now in Rafah, have consequences that stretch beyond its borders, both to the benefit and the chagrin of the Israeli politicians and arms dealers who are responsible.

Inevitably, whenever we discuss Gaza and the war being waged against it, we are confronted with the argument: "What does this have to do with me? It's on the other side of the world, two countries duking it out. It's none of my business."

To begin with, on a basic level, how could this not be your business? We, as Americans, pay our taxes to a state that then uses that money to send arms to the country that is enacting this catastrophe. It is by definition something you are related to.

Your dollars went to funding this venture, one way or another. You have the ability to pressure your representatives to speak up about it because they retain the power to halt that

could Egypt have anything to do with Gaza, it's their own affairs." Even as missiles were striking no more than a couple miles away, I would hear these same arguments in the heart of Beirut, as if nothing affected the other, as if we were all in our own cocoons, insulated from the rest of the world.

We are constantly bombarded by arguments that oppressed people have nothing to do with each other, yet that is clearly not the same for those doing the oppressing. They understand that they are gathered together, they understand that they are allied in this fight, and they understand that is crucial that the opponents of their oppression remain ignorant and separated. Why do they understand that these causes are connected, and must be opposed while connected, and we do not?

Many quotes from Malcolm X ring true decades later, and on this topic, I believe these words in particular to be as critical then as they are now: "Never let your enemy tell you how many of you there are."

The RSF is not doing this solely because it is ideologically aligned with Zionism and has some sort of genuine support for Jewish settler nationalism. It is a much larger alignment with a malignant fascism, a desire for even a smudge of the impunity that Israel enjoys due to its alignment with the United States on everything in relation to the Arabs. It desires that ability to massacre and to destroy completely without consequence, and it is the conduct of Israel in Gaza that has no doubt given them hope, as strange a thought as that may be.

That is the common thread here: governments, present or potential, see Israel's crimes, and its policies toward its occupied peoples, not as travesties but as models to follow. It is not exclusionary, but aspirational. Once we realize this fact, accusations regarding the spuriousness of the connections we are drawing become insubstantial.

How could Chile have anything to do with Israel, when Israel's state-owned arms dealer was sending heavy weapons to Pinochet? How could Rwanda have anything to do with Israel, when Israel has been trying to hide the fact it sold weapons to the Rwandan state that committed genocide in the 1990s? How could South Africa not have anything to do with Israel, when its relationship with apartheid was so vast and so deep that they even proposed selling them nukes? How could Bosnia have anything to do with Israel, when Israel sent artillery shells to the Serbs as they besieged Sarajevo, and the war criminal General Mladić himself, the man who led the forces that eventually committed the massacre at Srebrenica, wrote that Israel "proposed [a] joint struggle against Islamist extremists", and that they offered his men training abroad and a free supply of weapons?

Yet still, we hear the inevitable and endless disputes from those who seek to remain uninvolved, or to remain entirely apathetic: "How could Yemen have anything to do with Palestine, they're over 2,000 miles away." "How could Lebanon have anything to do with Gaza, they're a different country." "How

funding. You have the ability to vote in other leaders because they hold the executive authority to tell Israel to stop its ventures. The United States holds powers that very few, if any, countries in the world have, which is that Israel listens to the White House and almost always the White House alone. When even the late leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, says that it is a myth that Israel controls America, that in fact America controls Israel, you understand how accepted this notion is among those who are intimately involved.

If you are aware of what is happening, and you know that America is supporting it, and you still consider it to be none of your business, or even none of the business of those who oppose it, then you are abandoning the very idea of cause and effect. In discussing most Israeli actions during this war, that abandonment seems to be increasingly invoked by its defenders.

If we manage to break past that argument of having nothing to do with it, then the appeals to sanity start to come in. "Okay, I acknowledge we have something to do with Israel, but why are you putting Mexico and Palestine in the same category? What does ICE and the border wall have to do with Gaza, why are you calling for walls to be torn down everywhere?"

Are there not similarities between how the threat of illegal immigration is expressed by American conservatives and how the threat of Palestinians is expressed in Israel? How migrants in so many countries around the world are fear mongered about? That all they want to do is to rape, is to pillage, that they take over communities, that the sight of their laborers is to be feared, that the sight of their families means they're about to subsume you as a race? Technology from Israel's Elbit Systems, the defense contractor, is building surveillance towers on the border with Mexico, just as mortars from that same contractor are being used by Israeli soldiers to bombard Palestinian towns in Gaza. CECOT, the Salvadoran mega-prison where innocents are being deported to right

now, was constructed under the guise of holding “terrorists” indefinitely, borrowing language from the War on Terror, with President Bukele publicly making the comparison that Hamas was just like MS-13.

The Israelis see the commonalities in that mission. That understood commonality has reached such a fevered pitch that now Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is trying to create a new Iron Dome, one for the United States, something that may even now be called, in keeping with the third-rate fashion of the administration, the “Golden Dome”.

This dome is protect against whom? Drug cartels from Mexico, with the rockets and missiles that they are now assumed to have, by this metric? Is it supposed to protect against constant barrages of nukes from China? Fentanyl attacks from Canada? None of these are plausible explanations but we have reached this stage nevertheless.

These commonalities, this weaponized xenophobia, is why the Israeli government puts out videos pretending that October 7th could happen in the UK, or South Korea, that there is a Muslim threat building in the heart of Europe. It’s why its politicians support far-right parties that would otherwise have despised Jews in a previous generation, collaborating with the Nazis. The idea of migrants being a demographic threat unites them and it is why its arms manufacturers and politicians are so eager to be the top bidder on these projects, whether rhetorical or physical.

Then the argument inevitably gets even further from America’s shores. “How does Gaza relate to Sudan? Why do you include Sudan in your chants about Gaza? Sudan is in Africa, Gaza is in the Middle East, these are two separate conflicts with no relationship to each other.”

How can Sudan’s plight not be related to Palestine when Israel has consistently interfered in its affairs? When Israel was supporting separatists during Sudan’s first civil war in the 1960s, was the argument ever put forward within Israel that

it had nothing to do with Sudanese affairs? No, of course not. Sudan was a supporter of the pan-Arab cause and it was better off split apart and fighting amongst itself than it was a unified state that may one day pose even a minuscule threat to Israel’s control. That same dynamic is playing out now, where different sectors of the Israeli state are playing the two sides of the current war in Sudan against each other, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces.

Sudan’s current government, the military junta led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, is not even a strong supporter of Palestine. The Sudanese coup government recognized Israel, under the Abraham Accords, in return for international financing and being removed from the state sponsors of terrorism list. It was blackmail, straight from the tap, but they still accepted its terms and were willing to play ball with Trump and the State of Israel and compromise the state’s long-standing principles. In keeping with history, Israel was not satisfied with these concessions and only desired more and more.

Now, Hemedti, the leader of the Rapid Support Forces, responsible for countless unspeakable war crimes since the war’s onset, has met with Israeli officials in clandestine settings, receives support from the Mossad, and has refashioned his battle with the Sudanese state not as merely a civil war but as a battle of the kind Israel is waging against Hamas, with him in the IDF’s seat. RSF officials have described the Sudanese army as having committed October 7th-esque attacks, and Hemedti himself has supported normalization more openly than perhaps any Arab leader before, declaring among other statements that “there is no Muslim or Arab army fighting to stand in solidarity with, this means that the boycott is worthless as a weapon.” The RSF even went so far as to remove “Quds” from its logo, which is the acronym of the organization in Arabic, presumably because Israel may have found it an indication of a secret pro-Palestinian sympathy.