

Zionism's Biggest MISTAKE In 300 Years. End Of Project. | Profs. J. Sachs & Y. Rabkin

For decades Israel pretended to be an innocent country established after the horrors of the holocaust for the protection of the Jews. Turns out, it was all a lie. The Zionist project is much older and has little to do with the wishes of the Jews when it was established. Inherently a Christian doctrine, Zionism was always a plan to resettle the Jews of Europe even against their will and to dominate West Asia in the process. Today, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs and Prof. Yakov Rabkin are discussing the past and the future of a racist settler-colonial political project that has become so violent in the past decade that the entire world now sees it for what it is. An irredeemable political sin. Support us on Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Our shop: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com>

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz, and I'm joined today by my two wonderful colleagues, Jakob Rapkin and Jeffrey Sachs. Jeffrey, of course, is in the United States, and Jakob is in Canada—at the University of Montreal for Jakob, and Columbia University for Jeffrey. Both of you, welcome. Thank you.

#Sachs

Great to be together with both of you.

#Pascal

And we're meeting today to discuss a topic of common concern, which is Zionism. Actually, Jakob's book has already been published in English recently, titled **Zionism Decoded in 101 Quotes.** Jakob, you did a marvelous job showing how Zionism has been a long-term project and how the Zionists and their different groups have been anything but secretive about it. Let's maybe start with you—these quotes, what do you think they tell us about Zionism? And then we'll ask Jeff to react to that.

#Rabkin

Well, I tried to show, in the words of the founders and the precursors of Zionism, what that movement has been. And many people, I think particularly in North America, sound disappointed with Israel—like, "Well, it was such a wonderful socialist enterprise, about equality, and all of a

sudden it became right-wing and fascist. How could that happen? It must be Bibi Netanyahu, it must be him." Well, my book shows that, in fact, the roots of this right-wing turn in Israeli political life have been clear practically throughout the whole history of Zionism.

Because Zionism is a settler-colonialist project. And again, it was very open about that. The first financial institution of the Zionist movement was called the Jewish Colonial Trust. You couldn't be more open about it. But a lot of people didn't want to see it. See, the problem with Israel is that the facts are all on the ground—you can see them—but people didn't want to see them because of all kinds of, I would say, very positive, pious tendencies. "Well, Jews have suffered so much, they deserve a state." You know, all these things that, I think, prevented a more objective look at what Zionism is.

#Pascal

Jeff, what do you think is important for understanding the Zionist project as a long-term, ongoing thing that keeps creating a lot of problems for many people?

#Sachs

Well, first, let me say that Yaakov Rabkin is the leading and absolutely brilliant expositor and historian of this subject. So, everyone listening—you must read Yaakov's work. The new book, but also a number of other books, explain absolutely clearly, and I would say uniquely clearly, the background of Zionism: how it emerged, what its ideological tendencies are, and why it has created such disasters in the present day. And as we speak, one of those disasters is Israel's invasion of Lebanon again, and its destruction of Beirut in these very hours we're talking.

I think one of the most interesting points about Zionism is that it seems to have two kinds of strands. One is that it's, in a way, a typical late 19th-century nationalist movement. Europe became aflame with nationalism at the end of the 19th century. Every linguistic group, every ethnic group, had to have its own nation. This ended up tearing apart Europe, destroying multiethnic, multinational, multilingual empires across the continent—especially in World War I and World War II. So that's one of the roots.

And the other roots are biblical, and there the biblical roots are Christian Zionism, which was the precursor of Jewish Zionism, as, again, Yaakov has explained. But it's extremely important because a major theme of Western history—one that extends across centuries of settler colonialism—is the idea of the new Israel, the new Jerusalem. And America was founded on that principle. The United States, before it was the United States, was made up of British Puritan settlers who saw themselves as the new Israel. The idea of conquering a new land in the name of God is a Western idea. Of course, it has parallels in other regions of the world, but it's a Christian Western idea. And Zionism is essentially a Christian Western idea as well—it's both nationalist and biblical.

The Jews who started Zionism, as Yaakov explains, at the end of the 19th century were not reading the Bible in the same way. They weren't even necessarily reading the Bible at all. They were nationalists, looking to overcome the absence of a physical state and to overcome anti-Semitism in Central Europe or in the Russian Empire. But it was the Christian Zionists who said there needs to be a nation because God promised that nation.

And in a very—well, I won't use the term I was going to use—in a very particular strand of ideas from the 19th century, called dispensationalism, or premillennial dispensationalism, a construct arises—again, I won't use language that could be misconstrued as harmful or pejorative—but it's a very particular set of ideas that entail the Jews returning to rebuild the land so that the end times can come, and so that the Second Coming of Christ can appear at Armageddon, based on a reading of the Book of Revelation and a new theology that emerged in Britain and the United States in the 19th century. Well, the only reason I mention that—and then I'll turn it back over to you—is that we have these two Zionisms today. We have a Jewish Zionism, and we have a Christian Zionism, and they're partners. You don't even know who's in the lead.

The United States' partnership with Israel is led right now by a group infused with extreme Christian Zionism. The American ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who is a Southern Baptist and, by all evidence, a premillennial dispensationalist, said a few weeks ago—just before the current war of aggression by Israel and the U.S.—that Israel owns all the land, has the right to all the land from the Nile to the Euphrates, based on, I think, a theologically dubious reading of Genesis chapter 15. And based on that, there's a sense that in our world today, Israel has the right to all of this land. Israel's acting on that, because part of the Israeli government is Jewish biblical Zionism now, which was not the Zionism of a hundred years ago. All in all, read Yaakov—he knows all of this better than I do. So I'll turn it back over to you.

#Rabkin

Yeah, I'd like to add to what Jeff just said—that American troops engaged in the war against Iran are being exposed to the same idea, the idea that they're bringing about the end times, that Trump was anointed by Christ to gather all the exiles, all that rhetoric. And this isn't just rhetoric; people genuinely believe it. I saw the interview with the official American ambassador in Jerusalem—though I have my doubts about which country he really represents, Israel or the United States. He said very clearly that, for him, there's a right—a biblical, God-given right—to occupy all the land. I think it's very dangerous that, despite the separation between church and state in the United States, federal troops are being indoctrinated in this way. But again, that's part of the general trend, as far as I can tell, in American society these days.

#Pascal

And, you know, very important American commentators have been talking about this. Just today, there was an email sent out by the Prime Group Foundation in the U.S., which monitors these

religious strains inside the army. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson is a board member of that foundation, and he wrote an email warning everyone how dangerous this is. Because it's not only the Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth, who represents the Christian Zionist strain—it goes all the way into the ranks of the army, and that's highly dangerous. Pascal Lottaz, since you've looked at Zionism for so long—these two strains, Jewish Zionism and Christian Zionism—which one of the two is actually bigger? And why is it that the Christian version is now so deeply entrenched in different branches of the U.S. government?

#Rabkin

Well, I'll quote Pastor Hagee, who is one of the leaders of the Christian Zionists in the United States. A few years ago, he said there are 50 million Christian Zionists in the U.S. There are 15 million Jews worldwide, including babies and old people like myself. So you can see which group is bigger. And the United States is not the only place where you find them—Christian Zionism is also very well represented in Brazil, Guatemala, parts of Africa, and South Korea. So it's a very important religious movement, whereas Jewish Zionism is dividing Jews.

And as you know, the most recent example is the election of the new mayor of New York, who is openly anti-Zionist and very critical of Israel. About one-third of the votes came from Jews. So you could see that some people said, well, in spite of that—no, I wouldn't say it's in spite of that. It's because of that that he got those Jewish votes. So Jewish communities are very much divided. And the more violence continues in West Asia, with Israel as the perpetrator and initiator of it—today, you can't really deny it, even if you want to—Israel is losing Jewish support and, to a certain degree, Christian Zionist support. And that may explain why Netanyahu was in such a rush to start a war.

#Sachs

Please, please. Yeah, I was going to add—again, based on Jakob's teaching to us on the origins of Jewish Zionism, which go back to the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century—the main religious movements of Judaism in the United States and in Europe were generally against the Zionist idea. The Zionist leaders, most famously Herzl, were nationalist and secular, and at that stage they were promoting not a biblical cause but a nationalist one: that each nation, to protect itself, had to have its own nation-state. That was the idea of nationalism—not that you were a nation living in, say, the Habsburg Empire or the Romanov Empire with all its multi-ethnicity, but that you needed your own state.

And that was true whether you were Serbs or Croats or Czechs or Bulgarians or Slovaks, and so forth. And that was the secular Jewish Zionist strain. The rabbis said no. And I think it's absolutely fascinating for me—you know, I grew up as a secular American Jew, but definitely in the rabbinic style of Judaism. Yeah, because basically, you know, with my bar mitzvah and so forth, this was in the standard rabbinic tradition, though not in my own case, in my community, in a very religious sense. But in the rabbinic teachings, the idea of Judaism for roughly, uh, almost two thousand

years—or nineteen hundred years—is: live where you are, obey God’s commandments, behave, uh, don’t make too much mess.

Uh, and, um, you don't go back to the Holy Land or the Promised Land—that’s for the Messiah to determine. That’s something you can remember in your prayers or your festivals during the year, but not something that was an actionable political agenda. And in the United States, we had several religious movements: the so-called Reform movement, the least religious, to Orthodox Judaism, and something in between—the way I was raised, in Conservative Judaism. But all of these strains, at one point or another in the early 20th century, said, “No, no, this is not us. Israel, or the Holy Land, or whatever—we’re Americans.”

And even when the Balfour Declaration was issued to create a Jewish homeland under the auspices of the British Empire—which didn’t yet have control over the land it was promising, a typical British maneuver—even then, there was one Jew in the cabinet who said, who wrote, “I’m against this. I’m British. This isn’t my homeland. My homeland is Britain. And this is going to create a mess, because I don’t want to be called a nationalist of some other country. My nation is British.” And so, this Zionist movement was not what it’s portrayed as today—the great cause of the Jewish people.

#Rabkin

Quite true. If I may interrupt and add—no, you definitely should. Montagu, who wrote this—this Jewish member of the British cabinet—titled his letter protesting against the Balfour Declaration “Accusation of the British Cabinet in Antisemitism.” He accused them of antisemitism for being Zionist. For being Zionist, because this is something that today appears as an oxymoron. It isn’t, because even Herzl wrote in his diary that antisemites will be our best friends and allies. And again, if you look at it dispassionately, if I may say so, the antisemites want to get rid of the Jews wherever they happen to live, and the Zionists want to bring them to Palestine.

Their interests combine. And it's not a coincidence that, say, during the 1930s in Germany, Zionists established a kind of cooperation with the Nazi authorities, who wanted to get rid of the Jews, while the Zionists were trying to show that Palestine was a good place for Jews to go. We have a lot of evidence. My book doesn’t have illustrations, but there was an episode I think is very important—there’s an Israeli film called *The Flat*. It tells the story of an SS officer in '34 or '35 visiting Palestine in the company of the chairman of the Zionist Federation of Germany and then writing glowing articles about it in the SS newspaper.

And on the occasion of that visit, a medal was minted with a swastika on one side and the Zionist symbol, the six-pointed star, on the other. So it's part of history. And today, it's very interesting—a colleague of mine observed that if, a hundred years ago, someone said to a Jew, “You don’t belong here, you belong in Israel,” he would be considered an antisemite. Today, for some strange reason,

when someone says, “Well, I have nothing to do with Israel, I’m American,” the response is, “Oh no, you’re antisemitic, you’re denying the right of the Jewish people to self-determination.” So you have this very interesting inversion of what antisemitism is. And I think, incidentally, it’s very dangerous.

#Sachs

You know, the camouflage... And just, if I could add, with Montague in that very remarkable letter he wrote—I had the same absolutely gut feeling when Israel revised its Basic Law in 2018 and declared that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people. My reaction was, how dare you? How dare you say this? I’m not a citizen of Israel, and you are not my country. I’m a U.S. citizen. So the presumptuousness of it was felt by Jews, and that was actually the original reaction. And I think it’s becoming the main, or at least a very prominent, reaction again today.

#Rabkin

Well, the danger of it, as you can see, is that there are more and more episodes of attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions because of what Israel is doing. Of course, some Jewish Zionists contribute to that—they put up Israeli flags in front of their synagogues or Jewish institutions and say, “We stand by Israel.” Well, in that case, you can expect this kind of reaction—not that anyone should condone it—but a lot of people who are appalled by what Israel has been doing don’t find a more acceptable way of protesting than this violent one, as we just saw recently in Michigan, particularly in the very violent culture, if I may say so, of American society.

#Pascal

May I just ask, because the intention is also, maybe in the last 15 minutes, to talk a little bit about the trajectory of Zionism and where you see this movement—or these movements—going. It’s more than one; it’s at least two strains, right? And I know, Yaakov, you also differentiate within Israel other strains that are non-Zionist. But if we look at these two strains, where do you think they’re going? Maybe Jeff first. You know, there’s a lot of talk—and John Mearsheimer, of course, wrote this very important book about the Israel lobby, right? So the thing is, if we differentiate between these two strains of Zionism and between the people lobbying for Israel—who is actually lobbying for Israel? Who is the lobby? Is it the Christian Zionists foremost, the Jewish Zionists? Is it the Israeli nationalists? What do you see, and where do you see it going—first Jeff, and then Yaakov?

#Rabkin

Well, I think it’s the same—oh, sorry. Okay, sorry. Go ahead, go ahead.

#Sachs

Yeah, I was going to say that American politics should be understood as interest-group politics. And American politics has created methods of state capture. The American political system is basically: spend a lot of money, and you get to set the policies in your sector. It's an incredibly corrupt system. If somebody—let's hope they will—writes political science textbooks in the 22nd century, just like we read as school kids about the rotten boroughs of Britain and shake our heads, wondering how you could have a parliament that was essentially owned by one landlord or one aristocrat, and so forth.

We have a very corrupt political system—legalized corruption, in a way. Big money, big influence. And so you ask, well, what is this Israel lobby or the Zionist lobby? It's actually a mix of a number of things. Partly, it's the direct penetration of Israel into U.S. politics, because there's a lot of Israeli money and effort, period. I'm pretty much convinced that Epstein was a Mossad agent, for example—definitely an Israeli asset operating in the United States. Okay, there are still doubts about that, but I don't have many of them. I think this was pretty clearly somebody being used by Israel.

And the evidence for that, by the way, is not only the circumstantial evidence that Ehud Barak, who had been the head of military intelligence, was his big buddy, but also the fact that Epstein was representing himself all over the world as making deals on behalf of Israel. And if he was freelancing, the Israelis would have stopped him—believe me. They didn't stop him, so the fact is he was operating at someone's behest. Okay, that's an example of direct Israeli influence. Then there's big Jewish money, and there definitely are Jews who are Zionists, and there definitely are billionaire Jews who are Zionists, and they put a lot of money into this—just like there are a lot of us who are not billionaire Jews, who are not Zionists, and who are especially repulsed by what Israel is doing right now.

So if it's today's Zionism—my God, no way. So this is a second strand that's definitely important. And it's important because these people are very influential. Miriam Adelson, the widow of Sheldon Adelson, a big casino magnate—she definitely has influence. It's hundreds of millions of dollars given to Trump. And if there's one thing that Trump loves above anything else, it's money. It's probably his number one priority—his deep love, even more than hatred or other things. So she's definitely influential. He calls her out on occasion: "Miriam, how am I doing?"

He's completely focused on the money. And there's other big money involved too. You know, they had to take over TikTok because TikTok was showing images from Gaza. So Larry Ellison of Oracle—well, his son—buys TikTok. This is part of the lobby, for sure. Then there's the Christian lobby side. That's not only a lot of votes, by the way—maybe 30% to 40% of Trump's voter base, so it's not small. That evangelical Protestant Christian Zionism—it's also money. These megachurches are big money. Hagee, who Yaakov mentioned, raises money for Ted Cruz.

Ted Cruz perhaps could care nothing about Israel, but he cares about Haiti—and Haiti finances him. And Ted Cruz puts influential people into the National Security Council and elsewhere who are

basically, some of them even dual citizens—literally Israeli and U.S. citizens—handling the Mideast portfolio in the U.S. government. So the U.S. is a very porous country. It's completely interest-group driven, sold to the highest bidder. You know, I'm sure if the Arab world got together and made an Arab lobby and put in ten billion rather than two billion, they could probably buy a lot of U.S. politics.

I'm not recommending this. I hate the American political system the way it is right now. But it is interesting—it's not so hard to buy. And just one note: our politicians are incredibly cheap. They really are cheap. We're a \$30 trillion economy, with many trillions of dollars in GDP. We're a one-and-a-half-trillion-dollar war machine. And yet, a few hundred million is often enough to buy control over your preferred sector. So it's quite a bizarre operation. The American people are against all of this. They're against this war. They're siding with Palestine over Israel. But so far, money speaks louder.

#Pascal

Yeah, and if you put it like that, you get a good bang for your buck in the United States. That's it—unfortunately. But Yakov, if you want to react to that, and maybe also give us your sense of where Zionism as a political movement is going.

#Rabkin

Well, I think Zionism has been moving from the ostentatious left—because it used to be very socialist, kibbutz and all that—to the fascist right. And this has nothing to do with the personalities involved. I think this is a very natural evolution of a political movement that's based on discrimination, on ethnic nationalism. And here it's important to distinguish between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism, because in a system of ethnic nationalism, just like in anti-Semitism, you cannot change your identity. In other words, either you belong or you don't belong. You can't change it.

I would say that the violence we've observed in the Middle East, in West Asia, over the last 80 years is largely connected with Zionism—not entirely, but largely. Because you have to control a population that is naturally unhappy. You displace it, you exile it, you discriminate, and now you subject it to genocide. Of course, they're not going to be happy. Of course, there will be resistance. But this resistance is not considered by Israel as legitimate or even logical in a way. They try to frame it as anti-Semitism. I would say that if China had invaded Palestine, you'd see exactly the same reaction—or if the Swiss decided to invade Palestine.

You would have anti-Swiss sentiment. So I think all of this has to be spelled out. And, well, if I may, my other little book that Jeff referred to is about Jewish rejection of Zionism. You see, it's really important to understand that what's happening among Jews is also logical. I would say—well, I don't have sociological data—but the higher the income of a Jew, the more Zionist he's likely to be. And

that's why you have Adelsons and others. It may have nothing to do with Jewishness, but there's another very important group that's part of the lobby: the arms manufacturers. Israel is very important both as a consumer and as a producer of arms.

And there are very close connections between the American and Canadian arms producers and Israel. These are very important parts of society because it's one of the wealthiest sectors of the economy. So the evolution of Zionism in the direction of fascism is perfectly predictable. And I would say it's certainly not just Bibi Netanyahu or Smotrich or Ben-Gvir—who are often mentioned among those people saying, "How horrible, they're taking Israel in the wrong direction." I wouldn't say so. I'd say they represent, they embody that trend toward fascism, which has been there from the beginning.

#Pascal

And then maybe we have to be mindful of time. Jeff, if you want to take two minutes to give your concluding thoughts, and then the final two minutes will go to Yakov.

#Sachs

Excellent. Very briefly, the point Yakov made about the reaction of the Palestinians and the reaction of co-religionists in the Arab world was that resistance formed. And basically, since 1996, when Netanyahu first became prime minister, he brought along with his American advisers the "Clean Break" doctrine. The Clean Break doctrine says that Greater Israel will control all of Palestine—there will never be a Palestinian state. But more importantly, in response to resistance movements like Hamas, Hezbollah, or others, Israel's response will be to overthrow the governments in the Middle East that support those resistance movements.

That's Netanyahu's insight: don't fight the resistance, fight the governments that back them. So Israel has been on a war spree since 1996. And Wesley Clark famously told us about the seven wars the U.S. would fight. These are basically U.S.-Israel wars, and that list included Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. And here we are—we've had several small wars with Iran. This is supposed to be the big one. So this is the logical effect: you abuse your colonial settlers, you push aside the local population, there's resistance, that resistance has its allies regionally, and you end up in a regional war. And this is the disaster that we're in.

#Pascal

Very sad. Yakov, please.

#Rabkin

Well, I think it's important to distinguish between Zionism as a political movement and Jews and Judaism, which may be a religion or an ethnic group—whichever way you want to put it—because this confusion really serves Israel and Zionism. Israeli leaders, whether they were socialists like Shimon Peres or Bibi Netanyahu or anyone else who came later, will convince you that Israel represents the entire Jewish people. For Israel, that's a source of legitimacy; for Jews, it's a source of shame and insecurity. So it's very important to see that Israel not only hasn't brought security to the Jews—that's what the Zionist movement was promising.

In fact, the most insecure place for a Jew to live today, I think, is Israel. But it also brings insecurity to Jews in Michigan, in California, in Montreal—wherever they live. Strangely enough, not in Tehran, because Jews there don't identify with Israel. And the anti-Zionist government of Iran knows very well how to distinguish between Jews and Zionism. You know, I've been to Iran. I even wrote about Jews in Iran—it's available on the Internet. And I hope they're not harmed by what Israel is doing to that country.

#Pascal

And I think this is a fundamental insight from all of your work, Jakob. Judaism is a wonderful, peace-loving, and wise religion, and Zionism is a highly problematic political movement of various kinds, including Christians and Jews, but going over and beyond that. So please, everybody, we ought to love the Jews and work on the Zionist issue. Yeah. And never hate anyone, in any case. Please—it only hurts. I would like to thank you both for these wonderful explanations. Jeffrey Sachs, Jakob Rapkin, thank you for your time today.

#Sachs

Great, thank you. It's great to be with you. Thanks.

#Rabkin

Bye-bye.