

Undermining Gaza

Chomsky interviewed by Sameer Dossani

By [Noam Chomsky](#)

Global Research, January 19, 2009

Foreign Policy In Focus 19 January 2009

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Sponsored by MIT Center for International Studies.

Date Recorded: 2009-01-13

Part 1

[Download MP3](#)

Editor: Emily Schwartz Greco

DOSSANI: The Israeli government and many Israeli and U.S. officials claim that the current assault on Gaza is to put an end to the flow of Qassam rockets from Gaza into Israel. But many observers claim that if that were really the case, Israel would have made much more of an effort to renew the ceasefire agreement that expired in December, which had all but stopped the rocket fire. In your opinion, what are the real motivations behind the current Israeli action?

CHOMSKY: There's a theme that goes way back to the origins of Zionism. And it's a very rational theme: "Let's delay negotiations and diplomacy as long as possible, and meanwhile we'll 'build facts on the ground.'" So Israel will create the basis for what some eventual agreement will ratify, but the more they create, the more they construct, the better the agreement will be for their purposes. Those purposes are essentially to take over everything of value in the former Palestine and to undermine what's left of the indigenous population.

I think one of the reasons for popular support for this in the United States is that it resonates very well with American history. How did the United States get established? The themes are similar.

There are many examples of this theme being played out throughout Israel's history, and the current situation is another case. They have a very clear program. Rational hawks like Ariel Sharon realized that it's crazy to keep 8,000 settlers using one-third of the land and much of the scarce supplies in Gaza, protected by a large part of the Israeli army while the rest of the society around them is just rotting. So it's best to take them out and send them to the West Bank. That's the place that they really care about and want.

What was called a "disengagement" in September 2005 was actually a transfer. They were perfectly frank and open about it. In fact, they extended settlement building programs in the West Bank at the very same time that they were withdrawing a few thousand people from Gaza. So Gaza should be turned into a cage, a prison basically, with Israel attacking it at

will, and meanwhile in the West Bank we'll take what we want. There was nothing secret about it.

Ehud Olmert was in the United States in May 2006 a couple of months after the withdrawal. He simply announced to a joint session of Congress and to rousing applause, that the historic right of Jews to the entire land of Israel is beyond question. He announced what he called his convergence program, which is just a version of the traditional program; it goes back to the Allon plan of 1967. Israel would essentially annex valuable land and resources near the green line (the 1967 border). That land is now behind the wall that Israel built in the West Bank, which is an annexation wall. That means the arable land, the main water resources, the pleasant suburbs around Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and the hills and so on. They'll take over the Jordan valley, which is about a third of the West Bank, where they've been settling since the late 60s. Then they'll drive a couple of super highways through the whole territory — there's one to the east of Jerusalem to the town of Ma'aleh Adumim which was built mostly in the 1990s, during the Oslo years. It was built essentially to bisect the West Bank and are two others up north that includes Ariel and Kedumim and other towns which pretty much bisect what's left. They'll set up check points and all sorts of means of harassment in the other areas and the population that's left will be essentially cantonized and unable to live a decent life and if they want to leave, great. Or else they will be picturesque figures for tourists — you know somebody leading a goat up a hill in the distance — and meanwhile Israelis, including settlers, will drive around on "Israeli only" super highways. Palestinians can make do with some little road somewhere where you're falling into a ditch if it's raining. That's the goal. And it's explicit. You can't accuse them of deception because it's explicit. And it's cheered here.

DOSSANI: In terms of U.S. support, last week the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for a cease fire. Is this a change, particularly in light of the fact that the U.S. did not veto the resolution, but rather abstained, allowing it to be passed?

CHOMSKY: Right after the 1967 war, the Security Council had strong resolutions condemning Israel's move to expand and take over Jerusalem. Israel just ignored them. Because the U.S. pats them on the head and says "go ahead and violate them." There's a whole series of resolutions from then up until today, condemning the settlements, which as Israel knew and as everyone agreed were in violation of the Geneva conventions. The United States either vetoes the resolutions or sometimes votes for them, but with a wink saying, "go ahead anyway, and we'll pay for it and give you the military support for it." It's a consistent pattern. During the Oslo years, for example, settlement construction increased steadily, in violation of what the Oslo agreement was theoretically supposed to lead to. In fact the peak year of settlement was Clinton's last year, 2000. And it continued again afterward. It's open and explicit.

To get back to the question of motivation, they have sufficient military control over the West Bank to terrorize the population into passivity. Now that control is enhanced by the collaborationist forces that the U.S., Jordan, and Egypt have trained in order to subdue the population. In fact if you take a look at the press the last couple of weeks, if there's a demonstration in the West Bank in support of Gaza, the Fatah security forces crush it. That's what they're there for. Fatah by now is more or less functioning as Israel's police force in the West Bank. But the West Bank is only part of the occupied Palestinian territories. The other part is Gaza, and no one doubts that they form a unit. And there still is resistance in Gaza, those rockets. So yes, they want to stamp that out too, then there will be no resistance at all

and they can continue to do what they want to do without interference, meanwhile delaying diplomacy as much as possible and “building the facts” the way they want to. Again this goes back to the origins of Zionism. It varies of course depending on circumstances, but the fundamental policy is the same and perfectly understandable. If you want to take over a country where the population doesn’t want you, I mean, how else can you do it? How was this country conquered?

DOSSANI: What you describe is a tragedy.

CHOMSKY: It’s a tragedy which is made right here. The press won’t talk about it and even scholarship, for the most part, won’t talk about it but the fact of the matter is that there has been a political settlement on the table, on the agenda for 30 years. Namely a two-state settlement on the international borders with maybe some mutual modification of the border. That’s been there officially since 1976 when there was a Security Council resolution proposed by the major Arab states and supported by the (Palestinian Liberation Organization) PLO, pretty much in those terms. The United States vetoed it so it’s therefore out of history and it’s continued almost without change since then.

There was in fact one significant modification. In the last month of Clinton’s term, January 2001 there were negotiations, which the U.S. authorized, but didn’t participate in, between Israel and the Palestinians and they came very close to agreement.

DOSSANI: The Taba negotiations?

Yes, the Taba negotiations. The two sides came very close to agreement. They were called off by Israel. But that was the one week in over 30 years when the United States and Israel abandoned their rejectionist position. It’s a real tribute to the media and other commentators that they can keep this quiet. The U.S. and Israel are alone in this. The international consensus includes virtually everyone. It includes the Arab League which has gone beyond that position and called for the normalization of relations, it includes Hamas. Every time you see Hamas in the newspapers, it says “Iranian-backed Hamas which wants to destroy Israel.” Try to find a phrase that says “democratically elected Hamas which is calling for a two-state settlement” and has been for years. Well, yeah, that’s a good propaganda system. Even in the U.S. press they’ve occasionally allowed op-eds by Hamas leaders, Ismail Haniya and others saying, yes we want a two-state settlement on the international border like everyone else.

DOSSANI: When did Hamas adopt that position?

CHOMSKY That’s their official position taken by Haniya, the elected leader, and Khalid Mesh’al, their political leader who’s in exile in Syria, he’s written the same thing. And it’s over and over again. There’s no question about it but the West doesn’t want to hear it. So therefore it’s Hamas which is committed to the destruction of Israel.

In a sense they are, but if you went to a Native American reservation in the United States, I’m sure many would like to see the destruction of the United States. If you went to Mexico and took a poll, I’m sure they don’t recognize the right of the United States to exist sitting on half of Mexico, land conquered in war. And that’s true all over the world. But they’re willing to accept a political settlement. Israel isn’t willing to accept it and the United States isn’t willing to accept it. And they’re the lone hold-outs. Since it’s the United States that pretty much runs the world, it’s blocked.

Here it's always presented as though the United States must become more engaged; it's an honest broker; Bush's problem was that he neglected the issue. That's not the problem. The problem is that the United States has been very much engaged, and engaged in blocking a political settlement and giving the material and ideological and diplomatic support for the expansion programs, which are just criminal programs. The world court unanimously, including the American justice, agreed that any transfer of population into the Occupied Territories is a violation of a fundamental international law, the Geneva Conventions. And Israel agrees. In fact even their courts agree, they just sort of sneak around it in various devious ways. So there's no question about this. It's just sort of accepted in the United States that we're an outlaw state. Law doesn't apply to us. That's why it's never discussed.

Sameer Dossani, a Foreign Policy In Focus contributor, is the director of 50 Years is Enough and blogs at www.shirinandsameer.blogspot.com

The original source of this article is Foreign Policy In Focus
Copyright © [Noam Chomsky](#), Foreign Policy In Focus, 2009

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Noam Chomsky](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca