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A Genealogy of a Non-Event: An Interview with Seth Anziska

By Daniel Chardell |  March 14, 2019 | Category: Interviews |

Tags: Israeli History, Middle Eastern History, Palestinian History, Political History, US in the World



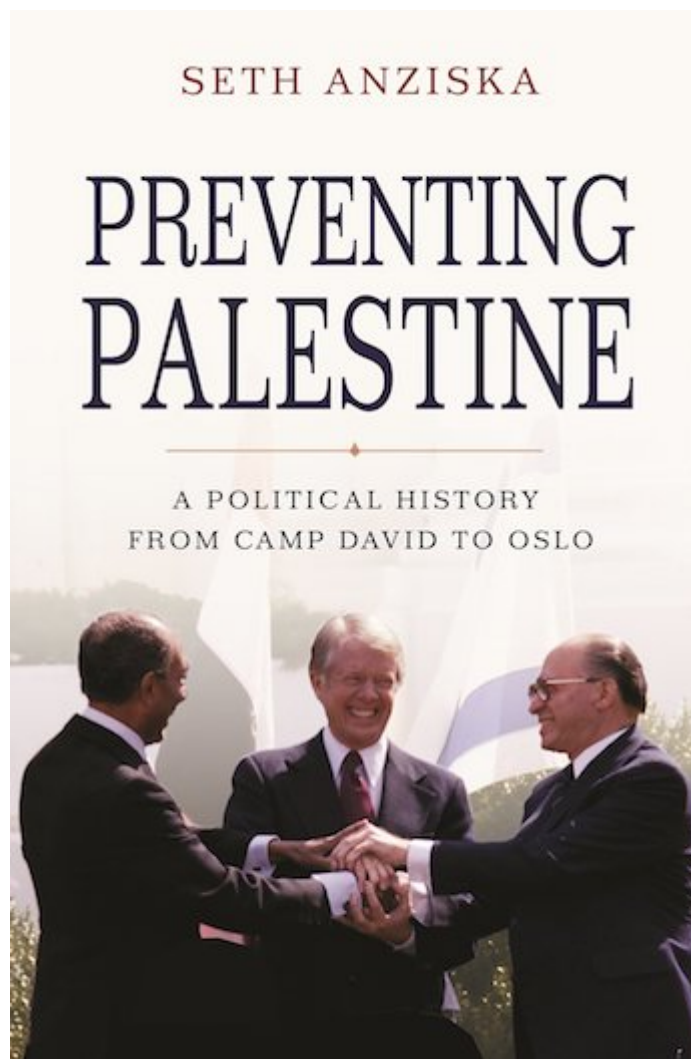
Seth Anziska, Mohamed S. Farsi-Polonsky Lecturer in Jewish-Muslim Relations, University College London. Credit: Helen Murray.

In *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo* (Princeton University Press, 2018), Seth Anziska throws new light on the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the unfulfilled Palestinian quest for statehood. The Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement brokered by President Jimmy Carter in 1978 has long been hailed as a diplomatic triumph that set the Middle East on a path toward peace. However, drawing on newly available sources in the United States and Israel, as well as international collections, Anziska argues that the Camp David Accords actually came at the expense of Palestinians.

Refusing to recognize the Palestinians as a nation deserving of the right to collective self-determination, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin introduced the concept of limited “autonomy” for the “Arab inhabitants” of the West Bank and Gaza. Begin’s formulation flew in the face of the stated position of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. And yet both he and Carter accepted it for the sake of securing Israeli-Egyptian peace. As Anziska demonstrates, the autonomy model proffered by Begin at Camp David would cast a long shadow over future Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, serving as the basis of the Oslo Accords negotiated in 1993 and continuing to inform the role of the Palestinian Authority today. Anziska documents this history of roads not taken, offering a “genealogy of a non-event”—the prevention of Palestinian sovereignty.

In the following interview, Anziska and I discuss a range of issues, from the current Israeli political climate and the future of the Palestinian national movement, to the methodological challenges confronting historians of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the stakes of writing history that is informed by personal experience.

–Daniel Chardell



Credit: Princeton University Press.

Daniel Chardell: I'd like to start on a personal note. In the preface of your book, you write very beautifully and powerfully about your personal background; your Orthodox Jewish upbringing, your time spent living in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc in the West Bank, your subsequent revelations, and, in a word, your disenchantment vis-à-vis the realities of the Israeli occupation have all influenced your intellectual trajectory. To what extent was *Preventing Palestine* an outgrowth of your personal experience?

Seth Anziska: Everyone comes to the writing of history with personal questions. I think it's important to always ask yourself when you read a book or an article: What's the perspective? Where's this coming from? How is this being shaped by a particular background? Some people would say, no, you have to completely remove yourself from

the equation. For me, I always enjoyed the kinds of works that offered some critical self-reflection about where the author was coming from, what their investment might be historiographically, how they arrived at the questions they are investigating, especially when reading political and diplomatic history.

The reasons I came to think about histories of Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East arose in a particular context. Formal study of the region was actually a coping mechanism to process some of the traumatic experiences of living in the West Bank during the Second Intifada. During a gap year I spent between high school and university at Yeshivat Har Etzion, the vision that I had about Israel and the conflict came up against complex realities that I witnessed on an everyday basis, which I write about in the preface to my book. It was a violent and difficult time for anybody living there—Palestinian, Israeli, Arab, Jewish. My position as an American Jew on an Israeli settlement gradually forced me to question daily life as detached from the lived experience of Palestinians in the occupied territories, and how I might start investigating the disconnect between the ideology of my upbringing and the everyday reality on the ground. Part of it, then, is looking at history, languages, and regional politics as a way of understanding how certain narratives are conveyed or formed.

When I came to Columbia University as an undergraduate, I approached the history of the Middle East and the Global South as a site to work through some of these questions. If one can start studying and understanding more about what leads to political conflicts and where they come from, perhaps one can better understand contemporary dilemmas. That's what brought me to study Arabic. That's what brought me to study international history. That was a function of trying to come to grips with what I had witnessed.

There's a way of retreating to the past as a means of figuring out the present.

A lot of this examination came in the form of reading for lecture courses and seminars where I had to contend with the historiographical debates that have animated the field. In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the history of Israel and the Palestinians, I found the debates of the "New Historians" in the 1980s and 1990s really helpful. These historians introduced new ways of thinking about the conflict that in turn shaped political discourse in Israel and Palestine. They went into Israeli archives as a result of questions they started asking because of the 1982 Lebanon War, which had shaped the way they understood Israeli power and the role of the Israeli military. Because of the thirty-year declassification rule in Israel, they started looking at documents from 1948. They found that contrary to Zionist narratives about the defensive use of force, Israelis *were* involved in massacres and instances of violence that fomented the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe" of the Palestinian dispossession. Benny Morris famously wrote about the origins of the Palestinian refugee population. Avi Shlaim wrote about "collusion" between the Zionists and the Hashemites. Ilan Pappé wrote about the role of the British in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Then there were critical sociologists like Baruch Kimmerling and Gershon Shafir who examined disputes over land and labor practices, as well as the formation of Israeli identity.

All of this scholarship brought about a big debate in public culture around the role of history and how history does or does not shape the present. The introduction of the New Historians into Israeli school curricula was an outgrowth of this shift. That was cut off during the lead-up to the Second Intifada when then-Israeli education minister Limor Livnat took a lot of this material out of the high school

curriculum. Here we see how history actually shapes and informs people's understanding of their own political context. There was also a backlash among Palestinian scholars to some of the discoveries of the New Historians because a lot of what they discovered wasn't "new." It was understood, appreciated, or had been written about by pathbreaking Palestinian scholars like Nur Masalha, Salman Abu Sitta, and Walid Khalidi, who had done oral and archival research, but who had not been taken seriously in Israel. So there's also the question of when the discovery of something new gets heard. Is it because of who says it or who receives it? How do we accept something as legitimate?

Chardell: On that note, what has been the reception of your book so far in the United States and the United Kingdom, where you live now, and among Israelis and Palestinians? Do you see yourself as part of a new movement among historians and academics—and especially among American Jews—to question this history to a greater extent than in the past?

Anziska: I came of age both as an undergraduate and in graduate school when a lot more scholars of the Middle East were studying Arabic and Hebrew. We were thinking not only about Israeli but also Palestinian history. We were thinking about the Ottoman context, but also the European context. That had to do with innovations in international history, training, and the fact that a lot more students were taking courses with both Jewish historians and Middle East historians. You can think about this as a Middle Eastern turn in Jewish history, or a Jewish turn in Middle Eastern history. The fruits of these turns are astonishing. I teach courses on Jewish-Muslim relations, on Arabs and Jews in the modern Middle East, and am amazed by the extent of new research in this area—from scholars like Orit Bashkin, who works on Iraqi Jews; Michelle Campos, Jonathan Marc Gribetz,

and Abigail Jacobson on late-Ottoman Palestine; Hillel Cohen, Liora Halperin, Suzanne Schneider, and Fredrik Meiton on the Mandate era; and astounding new work on North Africa. There's a huge amount of scholarly production and I have just barely touched the surface, and of course the mentors who guided these projects. There are people who are using Arabic and Hebrew. They're also making a historiographical shift. Rather than what Lital Levy, the comparative literature scholar at Princeton University, calls the "partitioning of the past" into distinct Jewish and Arab historical contexts, there is a need to start thinking about what happens within liminal spaces. What happens when, as Levy does, we look at a figure like Esther Azhari Moyal, a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Arab Jewish writer who is writing in Arabic and editing Arab journals, and who is part of the *Nahda* [the Arab "renaissance"]? Her existence is often misunderstood or written out of these histories because it doesn't seem possible to imagine that she could inhabit these complex, contingent spaces. You have a whole generation of new scholars who have come up in the last fifteen or twenty years, since around the time of the Second Intifada, who are thinking about more than one national context, who are trying to think transnationally and internationally. That has shaped the different kind of history that's being written. That means you don't only look at one part of this story in a silo. You cross these divides.

One thing that I think a lot about is what Will Hanley calls the phenomenon of "grieving cosmopolitanism" in Middle East studies. Many new scholars who look at broader Jewish and Arab contexts often go back to the nineteenth or early twentieth century, when there's a flourishing world of Ottoman and British Mandatory Palestinian history. I think part of the reason for that move is an aversion to dealing with the catastrophe of the present. There is a

discomfort and frustration with what has happened in the post-1948 and, in particular, post-1967 moment, so there's an instinct to retreat. Let's go back to Ottoman Jerusalem, or let's go back to Istanbul. I'm interested in what happens if you take that lens and you bring it to the post-1948 or post-1967 moment, when the creation of Israel and the success of political Zionism mean the disenfranchisement of Palestinians, but also new questions about Jewish power, statelessness, and the nationalization of Jewish religion. Those are very difficult topics. That explains where I came from. I was also highly influenced by the move towards international history in the 2000s. Particularly at a place like Columbia University, where I did my PhD, there was a big focus on international history.



U.S. President Bill Clinton looks on as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat shake hands at the signing of the Oslo Accords outside the White House in 1993. Credit: Vince Musi/The White House.

Chardell: With regard to international history, *Preventing Palestine* occupies an interesting place in the literature. The book makes contributions to Israeli and Palestinian history, of course, but also to U.S. diplomatic history. In my view, these historiographies are too

often siloed from each other. You bridge that gap, as you're clearly immersed in the American aspects of the story, but also equipped with Middle Eastern regional expertise and languages. Looking ahead, do you see the historiographies of American foreign relations and the Middle East merging to a greater extent?

Anziska: When I came into graduate school, this idea of international and global history was never fully defined. You interrogated it in graduate seminars, but what did it really mean? How did you do this? There are so many examples, such a range of practitioners. Do you approach the field like Odd Arne Westad, Susan Pedersen, John Lewis Gaddis, or Barbara Keys? The list goes on and on. Some new works placed international and national histories into conversation with one another. Some of them were trying to be more transnational and look beyond or below the state level. Some of them were looking at global solidarity movements. There are a lot of different approaches circulating in the air. As I found my own entry point that combined regional history with foreign relations, Anders Stephanson was supremely helpful in forcing me to consider the conceptual questions as well as the methodological ones.

At the time, the place of the Middle East had not fully been dealt with in the history of U.S. foreign relations. More recently, it has had a flourishing moment, thanks to new work by historians like Paul Chamberlin, Salim Yaqub, Osamah Khalil, James Stocker, and Craig Daigle. Even earlier, Irene Gendzier and Melani McAlister were doing archival work that brought the Middle East into conversation with the U.S. in very interesting ways. Nevertheless, I felt that these subjects had been understudied, undertheorized, and treated in isolation. You cannot think about the United States in the world without understanding the regional context. But you also can't understand the

regional context in the Middle East, or what's happening on the ground in Israel and Palestine, without understanding dynamics in the United States.

For example, consider the ways in which the Israeli settlement project expands massively between the 1970s and 1990s, which is something I examine in my book. You have between 2,500 and 5,000 settlers in 1977, on the eve of the Camp David Accords. In 1992, on the eve of the Oslo Accords, you have over 105,000 settlers (excluding East Jerusalem). Part of that history is clearly the rise of the Likud, Menachem Begin coming to power in 1977, Ariel Sharon as agriculture minister, the work that is done to expand the settlement project beyond isolated areas, and the legal questions that accommodate that expansion in the Israeli context. But as I discovered, part of this story is also the neoconservative turn in U.S. foreign relations. Because of the rise of new ways of thinking about Israel and Israel's place in the Cold War, you have people like the well-known Yale law professor Eugene Rostow making the argument that the settlements are not illegal, and that this is not occupied territory. That argument had purchase in an Israeli context. How do we explain or understand the circulation of these ideas between these two places? What I wanted to do in the book—and I'm sure there's more that can be done—is to think about these relationships. There are scholars like Shaul Mitelpunkt, my colleague at the University of York, who looks at the cultural shift in how Americans and Israelis understand each other, or Amy Kaplan at the University of Pennsylvania, who looks at how the United States perceived Israel as an ally. But there are also these circulations of ideas happening at the political and diplomatic level.

Chardell: This points to the role of domestic politics. Especially in the case of the United States, what strikes me is the extent to which Jimmy

Carter's grand vision for regional peace was foiled not only by Israeli intransigence, but also by the rise of American neoconservatives. In my mind, this speaks to the under-recognized importance of domestic politics in the making and implementation of foreign policy.

Anziska: Absolutely. This is something I learned in particular studying with Ira Katznelson at Columbia: that is, the importance of considering domestic political developments. There's not nearly enough about Congress in this story, for example. One could write a whole narrative about these dynamics through a congressional lens. But I do think that the integration of the domestic into the international is something that had already started to take off with the work of Barbara Keys, Daniel Sargent, and Andrew Preston. Part of the challenge is how you execute what you theorize methodologically as important. The proof, as the saying goes, is in the pudding. You can identify all the things you need to do to write certain kinds of histories, but you are also constrained by the amount of time it takes, the archives that are accessible, and where the richest material is located. I had thought, for example, that the richest material would end up coming from the United States, and I was totally wrong. Most of the revealing material that I got actually came from Israel. That was something that changed my approach. But what I did see, even in the Israeli archives, is a huge amount of attention being paid to American domestic politics. There are certain Israeli government offices that are dedicated to dealing with American Jewish communal organizations. The Carter White House and then the Reagan White House were very heavily invested in the office of the public liaison, which deals with questions of communal politics. Look at the recent work of Salim Yaqub, who has done a remarkable job exploring the role of Arab-Americans. There's a similar history to be written about Jewish

Americans. How does Jewish American politics shape these international contexts?

In the case of Carter, the way the domestic interacts with the international is that Carter's desire to tackle the Palestinian question from the start of his presidency brings him into direct conflict with two domestic constituencies. The first is Cold War conservatives, who are worried that his approach signals a move away from the fight against communism towards an agenda of human rights and self-determination. This is something I give a great deal of credit to Brad Simpson for really thinking through, the question of self-determination and its limits in Carter's context. Carter opens that can of worms by talking about ideas like a Palestinian "homeland" and self-determination, and what exactly that means is never fully understood. Cold War conservatives are worried because of what it signals in relationship to the Soviet Union and their entry into the Middle East. Second, the American Jewish community is enraged by Carter's discussion of a Palestinian homeland, because that for them signals recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which is seen as beyond the pale. American Jews hadn't necessarily evolved in the direction of accepting the idea of collective Palestinian political rights in the late 1970s, and that constrains what Carter can actually achieve. You have to bring that domestic dynamic into conversation with whatever is happening on the ground in Israel, Egypt, and the West Bank. Daniel Strieff at the London School of Economics has written about Carter's Arab-Israeli diplomacy, and he's really homed in on this domestic context—how Carter is constrained by the shifts that are happening globally, such as the revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This limits Carter's room for maneuver. He's always thinking about the domestic vis-à-vis the international.

Chardell: I'd like to turn to your research methodology. You mentioned that the U.S. archives were less useful than the Israeli archives. Why is that? More broadly, the range of materials that you consulted is really extraordinary. Practically speaking, how did you manage doing research at so many archives in Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom, not to mention the dozens of interviews that you conducted?

Anziska: I had started my research in the presidential libraries and National Archives in the United States. But by chance, on an exploratory visit in Jerusalem at the Israel State Archives, I discovered that there was much more material available there because of their thirty-year declassification rule. There wasn't really a process of redaction. If it was open in the Israeli context, it was open. As for the U.S. context, what I constantly kept finding at the Carter and Reagan libraries were these big black chunks of redacted text, especially around the juiciest material. Ironically, a lot of the material that would have been redacted in the U.S. copies had been deposited in the Israel State Archives. So, let's say there was a meeting between Israeli diplomats and American diplomats. The American copy of that meeting would be redacted, but the Israeli copy would not be redacted. At the time, you could go into the Israel State Archives and find material that you couldn't necessarily get in the United States. It's a process of triangulation. I've heard similar things for people who work in other national contexts.

The problem in the Israeli case is that the archives have been digitized in recent years, and researchers can no longer work in the reading room at the Israel State Archives. Instead, you have to request these files via an online interface. That is catastrophic, in my view, because all the meaningful adjacencies that you might find—the files you

might discover by chance—are not possible through digital retrieval. I believe very much in the value of being able to go and sift through documents, see what there is, and request things that you might not necessarily anticipate finding. But at the time that I did the research, the Israel State Archives were a huge resource.

If you broaden this out to non-state archives, the private papers of Menachem Begin, which are held by the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem, are a tremendous repository for understanding his own views and the role of the Likud. There are also the Revisionist Zionist movement archives at the Jabotinsky Institute in Tel Aviv. In parallel, you can then think about non-state archives in the United States. You don't just go into the Carter or Reagan libraries. The papers of a lot of the prominent individuals who were active at the time will be available at places like the Hoover Institution, the Library of Congress, and Yale University's manuscript collection. Again, you start triangulating. You can look in Jewish communal archives at the New York Public Library and the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which yield a host of other material including crucial oral history repositories. American Jewish communal organizations are highly significant in deciding to support Menachem Begin in the 1977 election, and that, I argue, has an enormous impact. American Jewish organizations had always supported Labor governments, but now they begin supporting Likud. We actually can find minutes of the meetings of major Jewish organizations in the Center for Jewish History in New York City that show in full some of the internal debates between constituent organizations like the Anti-Defamation League, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, highlighting the extent to which they circled the wagons to support

the state of Israel at any cost. We now know what the consequences of their actions were.

Archival collections in the UK also provide a non-American and non-Israeli perspective. The Foreign Office and the Callaghan and Thatcher governments are watching what's unfolding in the 1970s and 1980s, and they are making their own observations. Of course, that comes with the caveat for anybody who's worked in the UK National Archives to resist the story that they are trying to tell you in their nicely organized files, and really to question how they narrate the past.

Chardell: How did you strategize locating materials that would shed light on Palestinian perspectives?

Anziska: How to locate the voice of Palestinians, how to find Palestinian agency in a process where Palestinians are disenfranchised or excluded—these are core questions. Rashid Khalidi, who was my PhD advisor and is one of the foremost historians of the Palestinians, has written very eloquently in his book *Palestinian Identity* about the challenges of this imbalance. The inequalities of the political conflict are reflected in the victors' privileges of having archives and the losers of history not always having archives. This has always been part of what the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut and Palestinian historians have struggled to do—bringing in oral histories, looking at other sources. They are also very much influenced by the subaltern school of Indian historiography, learning to “read against the grain” in the archive of the colonial official. In this case, you can read the archives of the Israelis to find the voices of Palestinians even when they were excluded. There are ways to find those voices. There are meetings, petitions, and other sources that can reveal what is concealed by dominant accounts.

At the same time, one should not fall into the trap of assuming that the only useful way to understand history is through the lens of the state. Statelessness also produces remarkable archives, and those come from grassroots activists, newspapers, and factional materials. Yezid Sayigh did the pioneering and exhaustive historical and sociological mapping of the PLO. Paul Chamberlin looked at the transnational influence of other anticolonial movements on the PLO. I am indebted to these and other scholars. I would also mention visual culture, photographs, and other material available in places like Lebanon, which can shed more light on Palestinian agency in this process. But if you are trying to understand at an international and diplomatic level how statelessness is perpetuated or how sovereignty is undermined, part of the reality you're going to contend with is the intentional exclusion of the PLO from this process.

Chardell: Shifting gears, one of the book's main contributions is the reconceptualization of the time period. You argue that the peace process, which we tend to associate with the 1990s, has its roots in the 1970s with the Camp David Accords and the rise of the Likud. This raises the question of continuities over time. You hint at the influence of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the founder of the Revisionist Zionist movement in the interwar years, on figures like Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, for example, and we can see that influence continuing in the Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu today. Is it correct, then, to think of Revisionist Zionism as a constant spanning Israeli history?

Anziska: My argument is that the contemporary prevention of Palestinian sovereignty and statehood cannot be viewed in isolation from earlier roots. It's deeply connected to events that are happening well before the 1990s. We can think about the late Ottoman context. We can think about the British context. I'm indebted to the work of

Shira Robinson, who has focused on the period between 1948 and 1967, and Avi Raz, who looks at 1967. There are elements of what is happening in the 1970s and 1980s that are very much shaped by what had come before. There are also ways in which the Nakba and the dispossession of Palestinians in 1948 is present in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1982, for example, Lebanese Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel tells Ariel Sharon and the Israelis that he wants to foment another Deir Yassin, which was the infamous massacre of Palestinians in 1948. So, the thinking is of a much broader nature.

But the role of the historian is also to periodize and consider how we understand these wider developments within certain parameters, and what always bothered me about the histories of the conflict and the question of Palestine was the obsession with Oslo in the 1990s and after. According to this view, everything is a result of the mistakes that were made in the final decade of the twentieth century. This is wrong, because much of the architecture of that “peace process” was already rooted in the developments of the late 1970s. You have to go back fifteen years to understand where it came from—not only the ways of negotiating, but also the intellectual influence of ideas like autonomy, of thinking about Palestinians not in collective national terms, but as individuals in need of some enhanced quality of life in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem rather than actual sovereignty or statehood. If you go back to the 1970s, you can understand where some of these ideas emerge.

The key to keep in mind is not to have a path-dependent reading of state prevention, or a reading that doesn’t allow for contingency and the different influences that could have moved things in another direction. What we think about now as Palestinian statehood was not present in Carter’s mind in the late 1970s. He talked about self-

determination, he talked about a “homeland,” but that concept was vague and indeterminate. We risk being anachronistic in extending a view of statehood from today to the 1970s. We need to be careful about that. But I did feel that it was important to look back rather than think about this all as a byproduct of the 1990s. Of course, I’m influenced by all this wonderful scholarship looking at questions around human rights and self-determination in the 1970s. Historical interest in human rights and the 1970s, pioneered by Sam Moyn, was bubbling up at the time that I was conducting my research. This concept clearly had some purchase on the question of Palestine.

To the second part of your question, in terms of continuities over time, and how the ideas of Begin have been revived today but also link to the ideas of Ze’ev Jabotinsky, this is very much a live question. When one goes back to cabinet meetings after the conquest of the West Bank, Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli cabinet is trying to figure out what to do with the territories. As Avi Raz explains in full detail in his book, *The Bride and the Dowry*, there is an explicit “decision not to decide” on the fate of those territories. At the time, Begin is uncomfortable with any possible outcome that will grant Palestinians political rights. He’s also opposed to these ideas of autonomy. He shifts and evolves, influenced in part by Jabotinsky and the interwar European focus on the liberal notion of minority rights. Gil Rubin has written important new work about how Jabotinsky’s own views changed as a result of World War II. Begin is looking at this interwar European model as a way to consider the Arab minority of Judea and Samaria—he does not call them Palestinians of the West Bank or Gaza, he doesn’t recognize them as a collective—and he believes that they should have certain rights as a minority. This is where you get some of the ideas of granting them citizenship, though how far he is willing to take that is always up for some debate. So,

there is a benevolent attitude that he takes towards the innovations of this autonomy plan, and his treatment of the Palestinians is positioned as a new, innovative way for Zionism to reconcile itself with territorial expansion and with the people living under expanded Jewish state sovereignty.

If you look at what is happening in Israeli political culture today, you very clearly see a revival of this idea that Begin had proposed, or the notion that Begin's vision was a missed opportunity, and that if only he had succeeded this would have solved some of the questions around Palestinian political claims. Except in some ways, he *has* succeeded, because this notion of autonomy was instantiated in the Camp David Accords and then in the Oslo process. Arguably, the creation of the Palestinian Authority can be seen as a triumph of autonomy rather than actual sovereign statehood, and this is why I think statelessness is perpetuated. You also see lots more Israeli politicians, people like Naftali Bennett, talking about "autonomy on steroids" for the Palestinians and annexation. They are drawing very much on Begin's ideas, and on Ze'ev Jabotinsky's ideas, but in a very malicious key. They are not interested in what you would have to contend with, which is the question of rights, equality, access, and justice. You can talk about autonomy on steroids, but at the same time, Bennett will say self-determination can't fully be recognized for Palestinians. It's a partial offering. And it's an offering that mirrors the kinds of quality-of-life initiatives, or the so-called Jordanian option, or other ways of trying to move around the core Palestinian national demands that failed in the 1970s and 1980s.

If you look at Palestinian politics today, besides so much of the fragmentation and the dislocation that Palestinians are feeling, you also see—if you look at the Great March of Return in Gaza and some

of the smaller efforts in the West Bank—a re-articulation of what have always been the core demands animating the national movement. They go back not only to the 1960s and the founding of the PLO, but also to 1948 and earlier. And the Israelis have still not figured out how they might come to terms with these political questions. When we go back to the 1970s and the 1980s, we can understand the era as a proving ground, elevating troubling models within political discourse that have become politically significant today.

Chardell: Do you see those Palestinian core demands for statehood changing? You mentioned the fragmentation of PLO leadership, which is, of course, related to the ageing Palestinian leadership and their sclerotic political structures.

Anziska: I would stress that this is a perfect illustration of the limits of the struggle for statehood. It's not the limits of the national movement. It's not the limits of the claim for self-determination. This is where I go back to Brad Simpson's arguments about trying to get at the heart of what self-determination means. Yes, the political establishment of the PLO and the national movement is sclerotic, it's corrupt. There's a great deal of aggravation and anger about what this fragmentation has meant, both in the West Bank and in Gaza, and about the failure of a broader political vision. All of these things are real and true and pressing. At the same time, there is remarkable grassroots activism on the ground, and not only in Palestine itself, but also in the diaspora and among Palestinians living abroad. There is a shift in discourse towards rights, and there's demand for equality that is not necessarily going to be obtained through independent statehood, or through a two-state model, but through something else. It's not about getting into this debate about one state or two states, which I often find to be a red herring. Rather, it's about thinking about

certain principles, certain ideas, and how to achieve both collective and individual rights in that context. Just as we might problematize the teleological ways of thinking about international history in terms of the state, you also need to do a similar thing when you consider political realities on the ground. You have the Palestinian political establishment that is very aware of the limits of that struggle for statehood in this current context and is trying to rearticulate and reimagine certain ideas. There are similar things happening in an Israeli context. You have a lot more of a move towards thinking on the left about non-partition, about going back to some model that doesn't necessarily mean territorial division. There's lots of rich and interesting debates to be had about this. But consider how it mirrors the limits of a national teleology in historical writing, as well.

Chardell: What's next for you? What ideas are percolating for future projects?

Anziska: One of the areas that fascinated me in doing the work for this book revolved around the 1982 War in Lebanon. I became really interested in why this is a black box in Israeli historiography as well as Lebanese historiography. What I mean by that is there's an obsession with events in 1948, 1967, and even 1973, but 1982 is not really dealt with by historians. I think 1982 is central to so many aspects of Middle Eastern history, international history, histories of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, and even domestic developments. This is the moment that brings together a shift in views about Israel and Zionism among diaspora Jews, and also among Palestinians in the diaspora because of the picture of the violence and the reframing of the Palestinian question. It also brings Israel into the Middle East in arresting ways. This is the first time that Israel enters an Arab capital. It's not just fighting conventional warfare with planes over the desert.

It's in Beirut itself. Israeli writers have tried to trace what it means to move from the experience in Beirut to what happens in Jenin in the Second Intifada, the parallels to be drawn between fighting in heavily civilian populations. And, of course, you have the rise of Hezbollah, the influence of Iran, shifts that involve Syria, a foolhardy American intervention. All of this is taking place in 1982, which is also part and parcel of the global Cold War context, and Lebanon is the primary arena of some of these different foci. For me, there's a lot more exciting work to be done on the 1982 War.

Interestingly, it's actually been artists, filmmakers, people involved in visual culture that have really forced me to think about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in historical terms. We don't traditionally think enough about these other sources, but particularly in Lebanon there's a whole generation of artists who have worked on 1982 who have built up their own archives of material on the war and the surrounding events. This is another way to get into the story of that moment. There are also oral histories, the possibility of interviewing veterans of the war in Israel and Lebanese and Palestinian survivors, many of whom are now more open to talking about it and to grapple with what it means. The possibility of moving between these spaces, between Israel and Lebanon and Palestinian communities, which in many ways is a privilege afforded by an American passport, is a way of also thinking methodologically about writing across these different boundaries. Here I'm very much inspired by scholars like Cyrus Schayegh and others who have attempted their own versions of thinking regionally and across geographic lines, because so much of the imposition of borders and divisions between these places is obviously an artificial creation of the mid-twentieth century. How can we break that down? How can we think across national contexts? It's

something that the events in Lebanon underscore and is an area that requires further investigation.

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