

Q&A with Dr Steinbock on *The Fall of Israel*

DG Team

Dr Steinbock's new book *The Fall of Israel* is a stunning look at the longstanding forces undermining the state of Israel and the lives of Palestinians, while fostering genocidal atrocities and regional escalation. His interview offers revealing insights about the ongoing catastrophe.

The path to the obliteration of Gaza was paved by a confluence of a set of longstanding forces; the subject of Dr Dan Steinbock's new book, [The Fall of Israel](https://www.claritypress.com/product/the-fall-of-israel/) (<https://www.claritypress.com/product/the-fall-of-israel/>)

The book comes with high-level endorsements. "*The Fall of Israel* does an outstanding job explaining the causes and the evolution of the disastrous path that Israel is on," says Prof. John Mearsheimer, the leading proponent of realism in international relations.



In addition to Mearsheimer, the book is endorsed by Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, who is concerned of US complicity urging "those of us who believe in the rule of law and democracy to read this book. Our current national path leads us straight to hell."

Their views are seconded by Ilan Pappé, Director of the European Centre for Palestine Studies; Prof. Seyed Hossein Mousavian, Princeton's Middle East Security and Nuclear Policy Specialist; Jonathan Kuttub, the-founder of Al-Haq for Palestinian human rights; Alfred-Maurice de Zays, UN expert on Democratic and Equitable International Order; and Erkki Tuomioja and Mogens Lykketoft who were among a group of former European foreign ministers charging Israel for being an "apartheid state."

What makes *The Fall of Israel* unique is its broad scope. What makes it unsettling is its stubborn quest for verifiable truth, even if it is complex and nuanced. The book connects the dots among the lethal headwinds in the

Middle East. We sat down with Dr Steinbock to learn more.

The great conjuncture

Question (Q): In *The Fall of Israel*, you argue that the forces of the great conjuncture are the key to understand the Israel/Palestine catastrophe. What do you mean by the term?

Dr Steinbock (DS): The great conjuncture refers to four structural forces that account for a series of cumulative disasters in the Middle East, starting with the waves of Palestinian expulsions since the late 1940s.

Second, it refers to the aggressive expansion of the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Furthermore, the recent rise of the Messianic far-right has fostered the militarization of the settlers accelerating the anti-Arab pogroms in the West Bank, which is effectively being annexed into Israel.

Third, a half century of failed American diplomacy in the Middle East. *The Fall of Israel* shows how the US-Israeli ties have moved from hedging and choosing sides to partnership and eventually a symbiosis. These are not ties that bind, but ties that blind. They account for 50 years of military destabilization in the region and US complicity to genocidal atrocities.

Finally, instead of fostering peace in the region, America's massive military aid to Israel - \$18 billion in the past year alone – has amplified Israel's parallel militarization degrading its economy, politics and military.

These forces feed on each other forming a vicious cycle, thereby intensifying and broadening regional escalation.

Israel's ominous long-term trends

Q: The second part of the book focuses on Israel. True to its subtitle, *The Fall of Israel* shows how the underlying forces of the great conjuncture have degraded Israel, its politics, economy and defense forces. You believe that the very nature of the country is now at risk.

DS: It *is*. Secular Jewish democracy is threatened by ultra-religious, autocratic forces, as evidenced by the record-large mass protests against the “judicial reforms” since early 2023. Social divides are worse than ever before. Labor Zionism, with its more moderate, egalitarian legacies, has been crushed by revisionist Zionism, with its harsh-right neoconservatism and “iron wall” security policies.

Q: What about the economic prospects?

DS: Past growth has benefited a small economic elite, plus the highly-subsidized settlers. Income polarization is the highest among all OECD countries. Poverty is climbing. The welfare state is eroding. The economy relies on the expertise of the relatively narrow high-tech sector and the tax revenues of a shrinking middle class that's over-burdened. And as the high-tech “brain drain” has soared, Israel's future is at risk.

It is these *long-term* trends that are the real challenge. The recent rating downgrades are a prelude. Without a major change, Israel is heading toward

an economic edge.

Struggle for Palestine, Israeli ultra-apartheid

Q: The third chapter of your book takes a deep look at the longstanding Palestinian struggle for sovereignty, Israel's apartheid rule in the occupied territories, South Africa's genocide case against Israel, and the potential for regional escalation.

DS: Israeli independence and Palestinian Nakba or catastrophe are different sides of the same coin. I describe in detail the early Palestinian dual economy, the emergence of al-Banna's Islamic modernization and Qutb's Islamism already in the 1950s, the rise of Fatah and the PLO in the 1960s, and Hamas in the 1980s.

Q: Then, the peace process crumbled as the right-wing Likud cabinets in Israel opted for more suppression, which has now turned savage.

DS: The First Intifada (1987-93) paused with the peace process. The Second Intifada (2000-05) began with the demise of that process. It paused with Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, but was re-ignited following a democratic election in which the majority of the Palestinians voted for Hamas. Thereafter Israel's blockade of Gaza, in cooperation with the US and the EU, effectively paved the way to an economic and geopolitical catastrophe. October 7, 2023, is a logical outcome of these brutal, misguided policies.

Q: You also examine Israel's apartheid rule in the occupied territories, as the former head of Mossad calls it, and its genocidal atrocities in Gaza and beyond. Instead of apartheid, you talk about ultra-apartheid, however. Why?

DS: Apartheid South Africa exploited its segregated and underprivileged black majority. What makes Israeli apartheid different is its ultimate purpose: ethnic expulsions. It sees Palestinian labor as a redundant surplus that will eventually have to be expunged or worse. It is *ultra*-apartheid.

Allegations of genocide and US complicity

Q: The International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accuse Israel of committing acts of genocide in Gaza. What is your take?

DS: The Genocide Convention lists five conditions for genocide. On the basis of extensive evidence, I conclude that the Gaza atrocities fulfill four, possibly all five conditions.

Q: You also looked at historical examples of starvation from British rule in India, to Auschwitz and Gaza.

DS: It is one of the saddest and most painful sections of the book. There is huge gap between the West's media portrayal and what has taken place in Gaza. It is moral catastrophe that will cast a dark shadow over decades to come.

Q: What about allegations of US complicity?

DS: These atrocities could not have happened without the incessant flow of US arms and financing and the close collaboration of Israel and the Biden administration. Abundant evidence highlights US complicity, as the leading genocide scholar William Schabas has argued. This is a direct outcome of a status quo in which international law has been rendered effectively impotent.

Regional repercussions

Q: *The Fall of Israel* presents regional escalation as a net effect of the Netanyahu era. Is the region being destabilized?

DS: Effectively, yes. In the book, I show how the destabilization has spread over time from Israel and Palestine to the neighboring countries (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon) and beyond them (Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, Iraq and Iran, and Yemen). Worse, the potential of regional escalation does not pose just risks of conventional conflicts. In moments of crisis, Israel has resorted to nuclear mobilization since 1967.

Q: And the impending Iran retaliation?

DS: In the continued absence of international containment, a broader Israel-Iran escalation could take the turmoil to an entirely new level, with global repercussions.

Q: How could that happen?

DS: There are three basic scenarios. Now, a proportionate Israeli retaliation would signal might without causing widespread economic and human costs. Second, a disproportionate escalation would also target infrastructure. Third, if the aim is to seek regime change, the retaliation would additionally target Iranian nuclear sites and critical military infrastructure, hoping to destabilize Iran for a US-style regime change.

In the first case, Iran is likely to contain its further response. In the second, Iran will escalate. In the third, all bets are off in the Middle East and global reverberations will ensue.

Why The Fall of Israel?

Q: Why the title? Some speculate it reflects a fall from grace. Others believe it heralds the economic fall of Israel. Still others stress the destructive impact of the perfect storm in the Middle East.

DS: While I was working on the book, I often thought of Gunnar Myrdal, the Nobel-awarded development economist, and his master treatise, *An American Dilemma* (1944). It was inspired by the gap between the American creed of opportunity and the ugly realities of segregation. There is a deepening chasm between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, but also huge divides within Israel and between Israel and the neighboring Arab states. The parallels abound. Just as American democracy is not viable with racial seclusion, Israeli democracy is not possible with Palestinian segregation.

Q: Most observers know you as an expert or visionary of the multipolar world economy. What's the link with *The Fall of Israel*?

DS: For decades, I have looked into the structural conditions of growth in the West and development in the Global South. By contrast, this book shows what happens when those objectives are reversed for geopolitical reasons. It is about the deliberate *unraveling* of development and modernization.

Q: The book is very extensive. When did you start writing it?

DS: Just 2-3 days before October 7, 2023, I began to write a brief on the impending storm between Israel and the Palestinians?

Q: *Before* October 7?

DS: Yes, I'd been projecting that storm since the late 2010s. I knew it was coming, but not when. However, it was the 50-year anniversary of the Yom Kippur War.

Israel's 9/11 or a 50-year time bomb?

Q: You've said that the writing process was fast, but that it was a half century-long project.

DS: Yes. Prior to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, I toured all the occupied territories, interviewed both the colonizers and the colonized. The Israelis saw a bright future and thought they were paving the way to a lasting peace. The Palestinians saw no future and dreamed of a land of their own.

I saw the settlements as a ticking time bomb that could subvert Israeli democracy, endanger its Jewish and Arab citizens and Palestinians, morph into apartheid causing a cycle of "forever wars" with its Arab neighbors.

Q: But to many October 7 was a major surprise.

DS: It's a very convenient view and fully misguided. Right after October 7, 2023, CNBC interviewed Eurasia Group's Ian Bremmer and myself. Bremmer said the Hamas offensive was "no less than [Israel's 9/11](#)." By contrast, I said the attack "certainly did not come out of the blue." I saw it as "a logical result of 50 years of failed military policies."

Q: It was a time bomb.

DS: Yes, but it's no longer just ticking. The explosions have begun.

Q: So, was October 7 a "surprise"?

DS: Not exactly. Israeli border soldiers saw signs about an impending attack months before that date and warned about it repeatedly, particularly in the prior weeks, as I show in the book. The warnings of these largely female "spotters" were ignored by the top echelon. It wasn't a failure of intelligence. It was a massive *political* failure. And the question is why.

Q: I don't recall seeing the spotters' interviews.

DS: Most were killed by Hamas. But the few survivors have been interviewed widely in Israel since October 2023. Yet, their stories were picked up by the mainstream media far later, if even then in the West.

Messianic far-right

Q: What's the role of Israel's Messianic far-right in all of this?

DS: It has evolved hand in hand with the huge settler expansion since the 1970s, but its rise has drastically intensified in the past 25 years. With the inclusion of the far-right in the Netanyahu cabinet, the foxes entered the henhouse. Hence, the efforts to turn the secular democracy into a Jewish autocracy, to demolish Gaza, to annex the West Bank and devastate southern Lebanon and to go after Iran.

Q: You argue that the infiltration of these groups into Israeli institutions has been downplayed for decades by observers.

DS: The rise of the Messianic far-right does not conform with the image contemporary Israel would like to project internationally. Yet, extremist rabbis have legitimized supremacy doctrines since the 1967 Six Day War.

Parallels with Weimar Germany

Q: Are there parallels with the 1930s Germany?

DS: A part of the Messianic far-right identifies with fascist canons. These changes have taken place with the rise of a dual state, as in Weimar Germany after 1933 when democratic institutions were being penalized by far-right populism, violence and xenophobia.

Q: Is the threat recognized in Israel?

DS: Yes, but not by the mainstream. Historians like the late Ze'ev Sternhell and Moshe Zimmerman have warned about such trends for years. Yeshayahu Leibowitz saw that future already in 1968, as did novelist Amos Oz, the co-founder of the Israeli peace movement whose book on the settlers I translated in the early 1980s. And so did Primo Levi, the Holocaust author whose works I promoted at the time.

Q: So, there is a long continuity from revisionist Zionism to Netanyahu-led right-wing Likud and the far right?

DS: When the right-wing Likud first took over the cabinet in the late 1970s, it was led by Prime Minister Begin, the former head of the radical right terror group Irgun. Begin was the successor of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the pioneer of revisionist Zionism who flirted with Mussolini's fascism in the 1930s.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's father, a onetime assistant of Jabotinsky's secretary, befriended revisionists who dreamed of a Jewish fascist state in Palestine. Netanyahu himself has always advocated Jabotinsky's harsh "iron wall" security policies.

Algocide and atrocious complicity

Q: In *The Fall of Israel*, you coin new terms, such as "algocide," "ultra-apartheid," "necrotization" and so on. Why?

DS: New concepts are needed for new realities. In particular, the Israeli deployment of the Dahiya doctrine since 2007 has resulted in genocidal atrocities, which moved to a new phase in Gaza.

Q: You call them “algocide.” Why?

DS: Algocide means the systematic use of algorithmic war, or algorithms and artificial intelligence, in genocidal atrocities. That is, algo(rithm) + (geno)cide = algocide. Pioneered in Gaza, it has now spread to southern Lebanon.

Q: How can such devastation be allowed to happen?

DS: The atrocities will continue as long as the United States is willing to remain complicit and the international community fails to intervene. Without US weapons, monies and training, these massacres would not have occurred. It is devastation that could pave the way for much worse.

UN, UNRWA, UNIFIL, and undermined peace prospects

Q: Recently, Israel’s foreign minister Israel Katz, one of the architects of such atrocities in Gaza, declared UN chief António Guterres persona non grata banning him from entering Israel for kowtowing to Hamas and Hezbollah.

DS: An absurd allegation, but it’s nothing new. Like shelling the UN peacekeepers and seizing the UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem to make room for illegal settlements, it is a part of the long effort to keep the UN away from Israel/Palestine. As I show, the path to this surreal status quo was paved in the late 1940s when the UN’s first mediator Count Folke Bernadotte was assassinated in Jerusalem by the Stern group of far-right Jewish extremists. One of those who ordered the hit was Yitzhak Shamir, Israel’s future prime minister and head of Likud prior to Netanyahu.

Q: In the final chapter of *The Fall of Israel*, you argue that the tacit aim has been to undermine any major international effort at a binational state.

DS: On the basis of mounting historical evidence, that seems to be the case. Since then, too, the generic solution models – that is, confederation, federation, Palestinian autonomy – have been undermined, one after another.

Q: What’s left?

DS: If the international community will continue *not* to intervene, only the fourth model: a unitary state.

The unitary model

Q: Is it the secular, democratic state that many Palestinians hope for?

DS: No.

Q: But nor is it the two-state model that the Biden administration claims to support and the EU and the rest of the world community believe in?

DS: No. Given the absence of restraint by the Netanyahu cabinet and the Biden administration, and the tacit resignation of the international community, the effective outcome would be a unitary state under Jewish supremacy.

In Israel, the consensus for a unitary solution seems to be broadening. In July, the Israeli parliament voted overwhelmingly against Palestinian statehood.

Here’s the problem in a nutshell: How do you implement a two-state model

amid one-state realities?

For *The Fall of Israel: The Degradation of Israel's Politics, Economy and Military* (Clarity Press), see <https://www.claritypress.com/product/the-fall-of-israel/> Available also via [Amazon US](#) and [Amazon Canada](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [Indigo](#), [Bookshop](#) etc.

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