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Israel/Palestine, South Africa and the 'One-State Solution': The Case for an Apartheid Analysis

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ABSTRACT *The application of the term 'apartheid' to the policies and practices of the Israeli state forms a flashpoint in contemporary global politics. South Africa has provided a point of comparison for many state formations, and we suggest that, overall, the apartheid analysis serves as a useful contribution regarding Israel/Palestine within the framework of comparative political science. Moreover, because of the transformation evident in South Africa since 1994, the reference to the apartheid experience draws attention to the possibility of change, and has been a central element in discussions of the 'one-state solution' to the Middle East conflict. Adopting an approach consistent with the comparative method in political science, we see comparison as a means through which to highlight both similarities and differences between Israel (post-1948 and post-1967) and the apartheid-era South African context.*

Introduction: Apartheid—what's in a name?

The application of the term 'apartheid' to the policies and practices of the Israeli state forms a flashpoint in contemporary politics, far outside the geographic context of Israel/Palestine. In today's charged political atmosphere, the apartheid analysis of Israel/Palestine has often been taken away from a normalized analytical context. In the words of one article in the journal *Israel Studies*, it is claimed to be part of 'official Palestinian propaganda' (Inbar, 2006, p. 827). Clearly, comparisons between South Africa and Israel have been made not only by Palestinians, but also by many others of multiple identities, including Jewish critics and others whose identities fall between and/or outside these groupings.[1] More significantly, the dismissal as 'propaganda' omits the fact that there is an established tradition of scholarship that places Israel in comparative context with other settler societies, including South Africa (Will, 2007, p. 412; Rodinson, 1973; Cliff, 2000, p. 9; Pollak, 2009). Further, South Africa has provided a point of comparison for

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many state formations and policies, including those of the United States and Brazil (Marx, 1998).

Moreover, the analysis of state practices and policies as grounded in apartheid is increasingly part of the standard terminology adopted in comparative political analysis. The term has been frequently used—notably without major controversy or charges—in relation to a range of states and systems other than Israel, which are discussed in more detail below. As we have argued elsewhere, the concept of the racial contract, developed by Charles Mills as a means to understand systemic racism in power relations within and between states, is of considerable potential. For Mills, the modern world was created through a series of racial contracts, including those over slavery and colonialism, that propelled 'European whites' to the apex. As such, the racial contract is not between equal individuals, but between those who 'count' and those who do not (1997, p. 3). We have suggested the concept of 'racial contract' (Mills, 1997; Pateman and Mills, 2007) is applicable to the Israel/Palestine context. In particular, we have found it appropriate for understanding the hierarchy that elevates Jewish 'nationality' in Israel/Palestine in relation to non-Jews; the way Ashkenazi Jews originating from European/western countries have been accorded superordinate political, cultural and economic power in Israel; and the way an international racial contract between the state of Israel and powerful allies has worked to absent Palestinians through extreme repression and statelessness (Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008). The international terrain is complicated by the historically 'less than white' (Brodkin, 1999, p. 23) status of Jews in Europe and North America, culminating in the holocaust, where a population was socially constructed as a racialized 'other' subject to systemic anti-Semitism (anti-Jewish racism). However, the post-World War II ascendance of Zionism as an element of western ideological hegemony, the colonization of historic Palestine, and the attendant privileged status of European Jews in Israel as part of the state settler project, have altered the relations of race and class in the Middle East and internationally today. The consequent colonization, racialization and stereotyping of the Arab 'other' that has marked the Palestinian population demands an analysis of patterns of racialization.

The application of the term apartheid, meaning state-sponsored 'separateness' of 'races', is consistent with the racial contract framework, and draws attention to the exclusionary and violent character of the Israeli Zionist project regarding the indigenous Palestinian population. Moreover, while we do not minimize the continuing and serious inequalities based on race, class and gender in contemporary South Africa, because of the 1994 transformation, the reference to the apartheid experience remains notable insofar as it draws attention to the possibility of change. Many of those who advocate the need for profound structural transformation in order to address the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine, most notably a one-state solution, frame their arguments with reference to or in the context of a challenge to an apartheid-like system (Farsakh, 2002, 2005; Tilley, 2005; Karmi, 2007; Davis, 2003; Abunimah, 2005; Cook, 2006; Davis, 2003).

Building on our work which brings Israel into the purview of comparative analysis within a framework of critical race theory, in this article we seek to

advance discussions of Israel/Palestine by considering the implications of the apartheid analysis in the context of a social justice framing, including considerations of a one-state solution. We suggest that from the perspective of comparative political science, the notion of apartheid serves as a useful categorization of the Israeli state, applicable not only after 1967 but also since the state's establishment in 1948. The one-state perspective can be usefully linked to the apartheid analysis in that it not only suggests a framework for understanding the racialized and ethnically exclusive character of the Israeli state, but also presents a conceptualization that can point to an alternative—a post-apartheid reality. Therefore the apartheid framework offers a transformative normative positioning, an alternative to ethnic particularism, and a challenge to a discourse of Israeli exceptionalism.

Our analysis, however, does not rely upon an exact correlation between Israel/Palestine and apartheid South Africa. Adopting an approach consistent with the comparative method in political science, we see comparison as a means through which to highlight both similarities and differences. In fact, comparative studies that place Israel in the context of 'strong states', or that assume unproblematized similarities with western liberal democracies, blur characteristics that the apartheid framework serves to bring into focus (Ben-Rafael, 2004; Migdal, 2001). Both similarities and differences between Israel and apartheid South Africa can be usefully brought into relief, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the realities under study, not least patterns of racialization.

We suggest that in light of state practices of systemic differential treatment based on racialized and ethnicized characteristics that affect citizenship and rights, the apartheid analysis has significant empirical validity in the case of Israel/Palestine. Moreover, it operates as a useful normative tool, which supports an increasingly effective international mobilizing strategy. By providing a contextualization for 'comparative apartheid studies', unique characteristics of both Israel and South Africa can be valuably analysed. The apartheid framing of Israel/Palestine thus helps to open new discursive ground, challenging the silencing that inhibits comparative political analysis of those aspects claimed to be entirely *sui generis* in the Israeli context. And, regarding post-apartheid South Africa, such a perspective offers both the promise of transformation and stability within a liberal democratic unified state model, but also shows the limitations.

To illustrate the dimensions of our argument, we proceed from several points of entry to consider the relationship between the one-state solution and the apartheid analogy. In the first section, we offer a note on the extraordinary and contentious context of the application of the apartheid analysis in the case of Israel/Palestine. In the second section, we review the manner in which the notion of 'apartheid' has been a point of reference in comparative scholarship and international law, and how it informs authors who adopt the one-state perspective. In the third section we provide a selected literature review, indicating the various ways in which the apartheid framework has been considered useful in understanding the Israeli state. We then analyse, in the fourth section, the ways in which the context of Israel/Palestine is similar to, and different from, that of apartheid South Africa. We conclude by considering the value of the apartheid analysis of Israel/Palestine

from the perspective of its strategic significance, notably in advancing a framework of social solidarity with the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

A note on the contentious context

In light of the many contexts outside of apartheid South Africa that are labeled 'apartheid', we note that it becomes important to question the condemnations that have been so uniquely vociferous, and the international reverberations so uniquely intense, in the case of Israel. The 2007 soft cover publication of former American President Jimmy Carter's book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* features an author interview on Amazon.com. Consider that one pointed question directed to Carter captures the mixed reactions to the use of the analogy in the title: 'Your use of the term "apartheid" has been a lightning rod in the response to your book. Can you explain your choice? Were you surprised by the reaction?' (www.amazon.com, 2007). More recently, Israeli Apartheid Week activities, which began at the University of Toronto in 2005 and have since become international, drew attention from some of Canada's top political leaders in 2009 (IAW 2009; Ziadah, 2009). Canada's Conservative Minister of Citizenship and Immigration stated that he was 'deeply concerned' by Israeli Apartheid Week events on Canadian university campuses and rhetorically asked 'whether these activities are beneficial or are simply an effort to cloak hatred and intolerance in an outward appearance of "intellectual inquiry"' (Canada, Citizenship and Immigration, 2009). Similar expressions came from Liberal leader of the Official Opposition Michael Ignatieff, who pronounced that 'labeling Israel an "apartheid" state is a deliberate attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Jewish state itself' (Podur, 2009; NP Editor, 2009). Not least, there have been two United Nations-sponsored World Conferences Against Racism (2001 and 2009) which, while global in their focus, have been challenged by calls for countries to boycott the proceedings as a result of discussions of Israel in relation to international law, racism, and 'a new kind of apartheid' (Goodenough, 2008; Jackson and Faupin, 2008). The movement to withdraw from the 2009 conference was led by the Government of Canada under the leadership of minority Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Reuters, 2008).

Of course, on all of these fronts, there have been varied counter-positions advanced. To Amazon.com, Jimmy Carter replied: '[t]he book is about Palestine, the occupied territories, and not about Israel. Forced segregation in the West Bank and terrible oppression of the Palestinians create a situation accurately described by the word' (Amazon.com, 2007). To Jason Kenney, Canadian Professors Judy Rebick and Alan Sears (self-described 'Jews in Solidarity with Palestine') wrote a memo asserting that 'the misuse of equity claims to silence Palestinian voices is a setback in the advancement of a human rights agenda' (Rebick and Sears, 2009). To Michael Ignatieff, Toronto writer Jason Podur suggested that 'whether Israel is an apartheid state or not is a factual matter…' (Podur, 2009). And at the Durban 2009 conference, which actually took place in Geneva

(20–24 April), a 'Joint Statement of the Canadian Civil Society', signed by a broad range of organizations including the African Canadian Legal Clinic, the Canadian Arab Federation, the Canadian Labour Congress and Independent Jewish Voices, was presented by a delegation of Canadian observers. The statement noted: 'Canada's refusal to participate in the UN process is a demonstration of its failure to acknowledge the persistence of racism and state responsibility to address it' (African Legal Clinic et al., 2009).

The thrust of the campaigns to delegitimize discussions of 'apartheid' in Israel/Palestine not only hamper analytic understanding, but also serve to inhibit full and meaningful discussion of anti-racist strategies, including envisioning possible state models and paths to a just and lasting peace. This can be attributed substantively to what we call a *mythologized exceptionalism* surrounding analyses of Israel, which work to perpetuate the status quo (Abu-Laban and Bakan, forthcoming, 2010). Mythologized exceptionalism is seen in the portrayal of Israel as a uniquely 'Jewish' state, and as the only 'democratic' state in the context of the Middle East; it also serves to render practices considered unacceptable under international law beyond normative challenge (Dugard, 2009, p. xiii). Moreover, mythologized exceptionalism seems to absent Israel from the purview of mainstream scholarly discussions of racism, racialization and anti-racism, especially in comparative perspective (Lentin, 2008; Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008; Goldberg, 2009). In the argument developed below, we attempt to re-frame Israel/Palestine within such a comparative perspective.

Apartheid considered: Comparative scholarship, international law, and one-state advocates

Many scholars and political analysts who adopt the one-state perspective as a solution to the crisis in the Middle East accept the assignment of apartheid as applicable to the state of Israel. This idea, if marginal between the 1940s and the 1970s, was largely circumvented by the expectation of a two-state model in the 1990s; recently, however, discussions of the one-state model have dramatically re-emerged. Edward Said's pivotal 1999 commentary in *The New York Times* titled 'The One State Solution' was indicative of an emerging new common sense. He stated:

> [I]t is time to question whether the entire process begun in Oslo in 1993 is the right instrument for bringing peace between Palestinians and Israelis… The alternatives are unpleasantly simple: either the war continues (along with the onerous cost of the current peace process) or a way out, based on peace and equality (as in South Africa after apartheid) is actively sought, despite the many obstacles (Said, 1999).

There is now expansive literature, matched by a proliferation of academic conferences, specifically dedicated to assessing the one-state strategy in terms of its policy implications for the Middle East conflict.[2] Ghada Karmi suggests a useful summation of the debates: '[T]he two-state solution, whatever its merits or drawbacks, stood little chance of being realized in practice. The obvious

alternative to it and to the variety of Israeli unilateralist proposals was the one-state solution' (Karmi, 2007, p. 229).

The notion of 'apartheid' has tended to bridge discussions of the one and two-state approaches. It has found resonance within Israel/Palestine in large measure in response to a perceived intensification of separation, associated with, rather than mitigated by, the two-state transitional policies and processes. Jonathan Cook indicates the inherent normative limitations of the two-state model, emphasizing that to the extent that it is accepted within Israeli civil society, it presumes the negation of inclusion of Palestinians, or 'Arab Israelis', in an even more exclusive Jewish-only Israeli state (Cook, 2006). In particular, the continued construction of the 'Separation Barrier', referred to by many locally as the 'Apartheid Wall', indicates that recurrent Israeli governments have envisioned a deepening divide. They have also refused to adhere to the ruling of the International Court of Justice that deemed the construction of the wall, which is constructed deep in Palestinian territory, illegal (Abu-Laban and Bakan, forthcoming). As one *Guardian* journalist observed, 'Comparisons between white rule in South Africa and Israel's system of control over the Arab peoples it governs are increasingly heard. Opponents of the vast steel and concrete barrier under construction through the West Bank and Jerusalem dubbed it the "apartheid wall" because it forces communities apart and grabs land' (McGreal, 2006).

The comparison with apartheid South Africa has therefore been raised within Israel. This includes the comments of former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, in the context of assessing the risk to Israel if the two-state model failed (Benn et al., 2007). In July 2008, the editor of the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, insisted on the accuracy of labelling Israel an apartheid state in comments addressing the United Nations. He then refused to retract the comments when challenged by a local synagogue hosting his visit in Britain, which was sponsored by the World Zionist Organization (HaLevi, 2008). And in February 2010, Ehud Barak, Israel's Defense Minister, was reported to have delivered 'an unusually blunt warning to his country that a failure to make peace with the Palestinians would leave either a state with no Jewish majority or an "apartheid" regime' (McCarthy, 2010). Also, and significantly in response to these realities, the contemporary civil society movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel has similarly popularized the notion of 'apartheid' in reference to Israel (Bakan and Abu-Laban, 2009; BNC, 2008). This movement responded to the call of over 170 Palestinian civil society groups, and has garnered increasing international support, including among Jewish spokespersons outside and inside Israel. For example, Canadian journalist and writer Naomi Klein and Israeli professor Neve Gordon have both written in support of BDS (Klein, 2009; Gordon, 2009a). Within Israel such groups as *Boycott from Within*, bringing together Jewish and Palestinian Israeli citizens, have endorsed the BDS call.

In the aftermath of the 31 May 2010 Israeli Defense Force armed attack on the international humanitarian aid convoy travelling to challenge the siege of Gaza, dubbed the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, new voices have joined in drawing comparisons between Israel's and South Africa's apartheid policies and supporting the

emerging BDS campaign. Among these are, for example, Stéphane Frédéric Hessel, a former French ambassador, survivor of the Nazi holocaust, and a participant in the anti-Nazi resistance in France, as well as one of the original drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Hessel, 2010).

In the context of this emerging discourse, the notion of apartheid is arguably gaining a specific meaning in the context of Israel/Palestine, where explicit comparisons with South Africa pale in importance. The adoption of 'apartheid' as a systemic framework of state practice and policy is certainly, however, rooted in the South African reality; the word 'apartheid' literally is an Afrikaans term meaning 'separateness'. The policy of legal racial separation was a self-identified ideology of the South African state associated with the National Party (Van den Berghe, 1965; Arrighi and Saul, 1973; Callinicos, 1992). However, it is not, we maintain, necessary to assume a reductive comparison, where the applicability of the apartheid analysis is dependent upon a search for exact similitude. Our argument maintains the applicability of an apartheid analysis in the case of Israel/Palestine in the context of a more general comparative discussion, where apartheid South Africa and Israel are taken as case studies of a more generalized phenomenon in the construction of capitalist state power relations and racial contracts.

This contextualization is, moreover, consistent with trends in current comparative scholarship. 'Apartheid' has been the term of choice to describe a number of phenomena marked by sharp inequalities associated with racialized barriers legitimated in state projects. The notion of 'global apartheid', for example, has become a common reference point to address the developmental gap and related policies that mark the divide between the global North and global South (Bond, 2001, 2004; Ginsburg, 2004). The close correlation between racialized division and class in Canada has been identified by Grace-Edward Galabuzi as a system of 'economic apartheid' (Galabuzi, 2006), a term also applied to consider the continued class and race divisions in South Africa in a post-political apartheid context (Bond, 2001, 2004). 'Apartheid' has been used to explain increasing immigration controls over the post-Cold War period towards migrants from the developing world in the wealthy countries of North America, Europe and Australasia (Richmond, 1994); the post-World War II urban segregation and poverty of African-Americans (Massey and Denton, 1993); and the under-recognized discrimination towards Korean minorities by the Japanese state today (Hicks, 1997).

Such an approach is also consistent with international law, where apartheid is identified as a crime (MacAllister, 2008; Jamjoum, 2009; White, 2009). The United Nations Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (referred to as the Apartheid Convention) was established specifically to challenge South African policy. However, it identified South Africa in violation of extant international law, and applied this generically regardless of country-specific context. The extension of international law based on a specific phenomenon is standard, as the crime of 'slavery' followed the Atlantic slave trade, and 'genocide' followed the actions of the Nazis in Germany (Jamjoum, 2009). However, rather than suggesting such crimes are unique to the example from which they derive, an international legal framework indicates the crime; as

such, state actions can be committed, resisted or halted in relationship to this crime. Much the same conclusion was reached by the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (June, 2009) when it released a 300-page report concluding that Israel practiced both colonialism and apartheid, as defined by international law, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

A summary of the international context by John Dugard, legal expert and former Special Rapporteur to the UN Commission on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, is apt:

> The Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid ... has its roots in the opposition of the United Nations to the discriminatory racial policies of the South African Government—known as apartheid—which lasted from 1948 to 1990. ... The Apartheid Convention was the ultimate step in the condemnation of apartheid as it not only declared that apartheid was unlawful because it violated the Charter of the United Nations, but in addition it declared apartheid to be criminal. The Apartheid Convention was adopted by the General Assembly on 30 November 1973.... It came into force on 18 July 1976. As of August 2008, it has been ratified by 107 States (Dugard, 2008).[3]

Further, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court established apartheid as one of a number of crimes against humanity. Such crimes include acts of murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, imprisonment or severe deprivation, or other inhumane acts 'committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack' (Rome Statute, 1998). Further, according to Article 7, section 2(h): '[t]he "crime of apartheid" means inhumane acts ... committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime' (Rome Statute, 1998).

The applicability of the apartheid analysis in the Israel/Palestine context has considerable resonance, and has attracted the attention of scholars for many years and in a variety of ways. While some suggest direct parallels with the South African context, more commonly apartheid is addressed as a generic policy associated with colonial settler states. Apartheid can therefore be seen as a policy framework consistent with racialized and/or ethnic exclusivity: one that can be legitimately challenged, debated, and also, importantly, superseded. Understood in this more generic sense it is, we maintain, not only useful analytically in the Israel/Palestine case, but it also incorporates variation and local differences into its basic defining parameters. It therefore disrupts the ostensible non-comparability of the Zionist ideological framework, which can be understood as one particular manifestation of apartheid.

Apartheid compared: South Africa, Israel and the one-state literature

A comprehensive review of the extensive interdisciplinary and international literature addressing the one-state solution based on drawing connections between Israeli and South African apartheid systems goes beyond the scope of

this discussion. However, a brief consideration of selected texts is useful in indicating the value of the apartheid analysis from the vantage point of transformation. Put differently, even recognizing that post-apartheid South African society continues to be marked by class, race and gender inequalities, the dismantling of formal–legal inequality (in the form of apartheid) remains a significant change.

Many of those who adopt a one-state vision of social change in Israel/Palestine incorporate the notion of apartheid as an analytical and comparative tool. Virginia Tilley, for example, in *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (2005), recurrently points to the contradictory realities of pre-1994 South Africa to highlight similar tensions in post-1967 Israel. A central point is the deep integration of the Occupied Territories in the infrastructure of the Israeli state, rendering moot the Oslo model of an effective Palestinian state. Her emphasis is that Israel is in effect already so deeply entrenched in the Occupied Territories that a move to a single democratic state is the only possible next step towards a peaceful solution to the conflict. Her analysis is more empirical than analytical, focusing on the realities of the Israel/Palestine case study. The case is made that Israel/Palestine is currently in a sense a single state, unstable in its apartheid framing, and that a single, democratic state is a necessary corrective.

Leila Farsakh (2002; 2005) also advocates explicitly for the one-state model. Her argument draws a close comparison with apartheid South Africa. However, she maintains that the positive correlations are not universal, but are specifically associated with labour recruitment policies. She holds that since the 1967 occupation, and even more so since the enactment of the economic and labour policies associated with Oslo accords in the 1990s, Israel/Palestine has been moving closer to the South African apartheid model. The analogy with apartheid South Africa is, therefore, in this view, on a trajectory of increasing similarity, even as South Africa itself, and international public opinion, move in the opposite direction. Specifically, Farsakh argues that negotiations ostensibly towards the creation of a viable Palestinian state, have in fact mimicked South African 'Bantustanization'. The fragmented and isolated Palestinian communities that have been separated by militarized checkpoints, labour restrictions, and the construction of the Apartheid Wall have in fact ensured the failure of a viable Palestinian state, destined to produce results similar to those that led to the failure of South African apartheid.

From the perspective of a critical race analysis rooted in history, it is also important to consider the ethnically exclusive character of Israel within the 1948 boundaries. The 1948 context is addressed by a number of scholars who convincingly trace apartheid to the origins of the Israeli state. In his classic study, Uri Davis emphasizes the applicability of the apartheid analysis to Israel since 1948, rooted in the notion of an exclusively 'Jewish' state. Explicitly addressing the comparison with South Africa, Davis sees Israel and South Africa as two examples of apartheid as defined in international law. Recognizing differences, Davis maintains that to reject the applicability of the apartheid analysis on the basis of differences alone serves to absent or distort the significant similarities. The specific, and contradictory,

character of Israeli apartheid is indicated in part by the state's historic rhetorical identification with liberal democracy (Davis, 2003, p. 87).

Ali Abunimah (2005), also an advocate of a one-state solution, similarly traces the apartheid character of Israel to the period of the original conquest of Palestinian land. He approaches the discussion from the entry point of the 1967 occupation and the failure of the two-state model. What Abunimah terms the 'impossible partition' of Israel/Palestine is not only a feature of the current crisis, but has a history dating back to 1930s colonialism (Abunimah, 2005, p. 19–54). The two-state model, popularized through the Oslo process, has been rendered increasingly less feasible as recent Israeli policy has strived to alter the 'demographic dilemma'—a racialized expression, common in Israeli discourse, of the fact of the rising Palestinian population relative to the Jewish population. Since August 2005 Jews in Israel have no longer constituted an absolute majority within the territory controlled by the state, and demographic projections point to a Palestinian majority in the near future. Israel's approach to a two-state model, rather than an accommodation to demands for Palestinian self-determination, is in fact, according to Abunimah, 'an effort to define boundaries for the state that assure a Jewish majority, but doesn't [sic] involve genuinely giving up control of the occupied territories…' (Abunimah, 2005, p. 57–58).

Abunimah's approach to the South Africa comparison specifically addresses distinctions, not least between the Afrikaner and Zionist self-images and historical narratives. He traces the foundational roots of both settler projects in the realities of colonialism, but indicates distinct local expressions. Noting Israeli Professor of Political Geography Oren Yiftachel in his critique of the 'exclusively Jewish discourse' that relegates Palestinians as a kind of 'silent backdrop or incidental stage setting', Abunimah addresses similarities in Zionist and Afrikaner founding ideologies (Abunimah, 2005, p. 138–9; Yiftachel, 2005).

Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley's comprehensive comparison of peacemaking in Israel/Palestine and South Africa focuses on a wide range of issues, from the political contexts of South African pre- and post-apartheid negotiations and the two-state model in the Middle East, to the roles of leadership, religion and political economy. Their emphasis in this comparison is to identify differences as more significant than similarities (Adam and Moodley, 2005, p. 19). Adam and Moodley also consider seriously the one-state model, in the context of a recognition that '[c]urrently, the very physical possibility of a Palestinian state is being destroyed' (2005, p. 175). However, the political context for a realistic one-state system is treated with skepticism in Israel/Palestine on the grounds that entrenched 'bicommunalism' could not be readily accommodated, and that security-consciousness is likely the most salient factor (Adam and Moodley, 2005, p. 179–80). The suggestion is that a viable two-state model might serve as an interim solution until greater trust is built and a unified state is possible (Adam and Moodley, 2005, p. 180).

From the perspective of comparative political science, the significant point in this context is not, however, merely differences versus similarities, but that Israel/Palestine finds a comparative context when considered in relation to

apartheid South Africa. The fact of the comparison challenges the claimed exceptionalism of the Israeli state, and compels a focus on racialized ethnic divisions. More to the point, these recent examples of applications of the apartheid analysis to Israel/Palestine, however relevant to contemporary global events, in fact build on earlier accounts. For example, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and Baha Abu-Laban (1974) offered foundational arguments in the current apartheid literature (Will, 2007, p. 412). They identify particularly 'the role of belief in racial superiority and manifest destiny in the colonialist position' in both Israel and apartheid South Africa (Abu-Lughod and Abu-Laban, 1974, p. viii).

Comparisons with South African apartheid have not always been rejected by Zionist advocates. Notably, the link is also traceable to the foundational roots of Israeli state ideology. Theodor Herzl, the Austro-Hungarian journalist and founder of modern Zionism in the late 1800s, compared his project to that of Cecil Rhodes, the British colonialist who spearheaded industrial settlement in South Africa and Rhodesia (the colonial predecessor of Zimbabwe). The commander of the South African Defence Force during World War I, Jan Smuts, was an early advocate of the 1917 Balfour Declaration that established British colonial support for Zionist settlement of Palestine (Weinstock, 1989). At the other end of the political spectrum, the comparison between Israel and South Africa has been raised by Marxist critics of Zionism to indicate the colonial settler character of the Israeli state (Rodinson, 1973). In his autobiography, Marxist Tony Cliff recalls how he drew the comparison regarding the apartheid system in his early years in mandate Palestine, as an anti-Zionist Jew, with his partner Charnie Rosenberg, a South African who originally came to Palestine as a socialist-Zionist but soon moved to an anti-Zionist position (Cliff, 2000, p. 9).

This brief review indicates that the apartheid analysis, including references that compare Israel/Palestine and apartheid South Africa, has both historic and contemporary relevance, and draws attention to a pattern of entrenched racism in Israel as well as the potential for radical transformation, particularly in terms of the one-state solution. At the same time, differences in the specific forms of apartheid are brought into relief. In the next section, we consider the nature of these similarities and differences between Israel and apartheid South Africa from the perspective of visioning a post-apartheid model.

Apartheid Israel in a post-apartheid era: Challenge and transformation

The complexities associated with the democratic project in post-apartheid South Africa, regarding critical issues such as institutional structures and continuing and new configurations of racialized politics (see Shepherd, 2009; Peberdy and Crush, 2007) certainly merit concerted attention. However, the transition from apartheid to formal democracy is itself a significant event, and has compelled comparative attention. We suggest that the transition from an apartheid to a post-apartheid state in South Africa has altered the frame of consideration regarding other states. Notwithstanding the continuing realities of deep inequality in South Africa, commonly referred to as 'economic apartheid', a transition on

this scale in a major country of the global South has served as an inspiration to those who identify with the particularized oppression experienced by the South African black population. It is also an indication that post-apartheid society is not a utopia, but merely a necessary first step in expanding democratic rights to those who have been victims of colonial settlement. Nelson Mandela, once imprisoned for life and labelled a 'terrorist', now stands as a moral icon of leadership, even if he also symbolizes an era of high expectations that were not fulfilled by outcomes. While there are obvious limitations in efforts to directly imitate the search for a 'new' Mandela (Adam and Moodley, 2005), the potential for transformation has significantly motivated attention to the one-state solution in the Middle East.

The sense of accomplishment in achieving a peaceful transition to a post-apartheid South Africa has been expressed, in part, by United Nations representatives attentive to Israel/Palestine. For example, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockman urged the UN to use the term 'apartheid' to describe Israeli policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, noting particularly the resonance of the sanctions campaign against South Africa in the UN historically (Brockman, 2008). In his report as Special Rapporteur to the UN, titled *Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied Since 1967*, Richard Falk 'takes particular note of the fact that the military occupation of the Palestinian territory has gone on for more than 40 years and that it possesses characteristics of colonialism and apartheid' (Falk, 2008).

According to Virginia Tilley, Israel's model of 'ethnic democracy' is notably outdated in light of an emerging post-apartheid global pattern. It marks an increasingly 'intolerable embarrassment, as the model is long obsolete elsewhere… The shift rose to catch South Africa and quickly discredited apartheid' (Tilley, 2005, p. 181). Tilley also lists Milosovic's 'Greater Serbia', the 'White Australia' project, and the official and unofficial policies of racial exclusion associated with pre-1960s Southern US states, as similarly outdated models. Israel suffers, according to Tilley, from exceptionally poor timing; international trends since World War II have, albeit at a slow pace, indicated a move away from ethnically exclusive principles in democratic states (Tilley, 2005, p. 182).

Seen through a post-apartheid lens, both apartheid South Africa and contemporary Israel can be understood to violate the principle of the equal moral worth of human beings. For instance, Daryl Glaser acknowledges not only the empirical similarities between apartheid South Africa and Israel, but moral ones relating to such ideals as individual liberty, substantive equality and democracy (2003, p. 405–6). For Glaser the comparison between apartheid South Africa and Israel is at its strongest in the West Bank and Gaza. He notes that 'Israeli Zionism is as bad as apartheid morally, and that it is as bad in similar ways' (Glaser, 2003, p. 404).

Raef Zreik suggests that an emphasis on South African experiences tends to privilege a focus on law and rights, and this may come at the expense of historical specificity and complexity of the Palestinian experience because of their distinct, and continuing, post-1948 fragmentation. He acknowledges that apartheid is

especially obvious regarding the situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in light of the Apartheid Wall, parallel laws, pass system, separate roads for Jews only, and so on (Zriek, 2004, p. 72). However, he notes that the national context is different, and specifically suggests that the chances for a 'civic' (as opposed to 'ethnic') form of nationalism were higher in South Africa.

> Whereas in South Africa the blacks, whites, and 'coloreds' all considered themselves South Africans . . . in Israel . . . even in the best of times the civic 'we' that had tentatively begun to emerge was always permeated and even overridden on both sides by a national 'we' (Zriek, 2004, p. 76).

The apartheid framework can, however, be aptly applied regarding the experiences of Palestinians from the period of Israel's establishment in 1948. Hence, as established above, a major point of similarity relates to the European settler-colonial foundation of South Africa and the Israeli Zionist project, and how each came to include both the expropriation of resources from the indigenous population, and legal differentiation between identifiable groups (Farsakh, 2005, p. 232). However, the Zionist narrative highlights unique traits associated specifically with Israeli apartheid. As Gabriel Piterberg notes, Israel, in its original ethnic cleansing and forced exile of indigenous Palestinians, as well as in its foundational myths, offers an example of settler colonialism, where 'the Zionist superstructure, even though it has its distinguishing features, is nonetheless typical of a settler society and comparable to those of other settler societies' (Piterberg, 2008, p. 54).

As Mark Marshall suggests, legal differences promoting separateness can be seen to operate in the way the Absentee Property Law of 1950 served to prevent the return of Nakba (catastrophe) refugees (referring to the original inhabitants of mandate Palestine in 1948), as well as the exclusion of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza—for over 40 years—from citizenship (Marshall, 1995, p. 19). Marshall likens Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and voting rights to 'the privileged minority of Blacks who were allowed to live in White areas' (1995, p. 19) while being denied power in South Africa. Ben White, who advocates the applicability of the apartheid analysis in the case of Israel/Palestine, sees as the 'main difference' with the South African case that 'Israel has not practiced so-called "petty apartheid"—in other words, there are no public toilets marked "Jews" and "Non-Jews"' (White, 2009, p. 7). White further maintains that this is less a reflection of dissimilar practice than an indication of avoidance of overtly discriminatory discourse that would jeopardize Israel's 'outside support' (White, 2009, p. 8). Despite this difference from the South African context, continued violations of the civil rights of Arab Israelis are sharply exposed, and can be morally and politically challenged from the vantage point of the apartheid framework. In a post-apartheid era, denial of basic civil rights of Palestinians inside the Green Line comes into explicit focus, despite formal recognition of rights of Arab Israelis. As noted by Jonathan Cook, the founding document of the Israeli state, the 'Declaration of Independence', promises to 'uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of religion, race or sex' (Cook, 2004a). However, since 1948, Israel has

maintained its 'emergency status' inherited from the British mandate government. In a condition of martial law, Palestinians are treated as suspected terrorists, and apartheid conditions are normalized despite the rhetoric of legal democracy. A series of specific laws and practices instituted in the name of 'security' apply specifically to those suspected of 'terrorism'. These laws include administrative detention, where imprisonment of Palestinians without charges is common, creating a political climate of constant threat of incarceration, wiretapping, and censorship.

Apartheid is also manifest in an absence of law in some areas of civil life. For example, Israel has not enshrined freedom of speech into law. Instead, under an emergency regulation, the Press Ordinance of 1933, also inherited from the British mandate period, the government can arbitrarily close down news media, a measure used repeatedly against Arabic media (Cook, 2004a). Regarding education, on the grounds that Arabs and Jews speak two different languages and have distinct cultures, and are largely geographically segregated, Israel has two educational systems until university entry. There are also two systems in terms of educational resources. Arab students according to 2004 data comprised one-third of the total school population, but their schools received only 7% of the education ministry budget. A 2001 Human Rights Watch report found that systematic discrimination in education occurred in Israel against Palestinian children (Human Rights Watch, 2001). This formally segregated system nominally ends with integration among Arab and Jewish students at the college and university level. However, Palestinian students in the post-secondary age group constitute about 25% of Israelis, but comprise only 8% of the university student population. Academic testing favours the Hebrew language over Arabic, using a point system that offers a higher value to Hebrew. Psychometric tests are also used for university admission, which have been demonstrated to include cultural references that bias them towards higher scores among Jewish students. There are also admissions interviews, which are conducted in Hebrew. Notably, these inherent biases against Arabic-speaking students were identified and corrected in 2003; this was later changed again, however, on the grounds that it was 'seen to be at the expense of Jewish children', who are expected to be the overwhelming majority in the post-secondary education system (Cook, 2004a).

More profound distinctions between Israel/Palestine and the South African contexts, however, are suggested by the Zionist project which attempted to exclude the indigenous Palestinian population entirely from the exclusively 'Jewish state'. Zionism, a political strategy to address western anti-Semitism—here meaning anti-Jewish racism—through the establishment of an ethnically exclusive national capitalist state, saw no place for an Arab working class. As Leila Farsakh points out, Palestinian labour after 1948 was a minority of the workforce, in contrast to Black South Africans who constituted the majority of the labour force between 1913 and 1948 (Farsakh, 2005, p. 232–33). Consequently, Labour Zionists excluded Palestinian labour (part of the mythical Zionist notion of a 'land for a people for a people without a land'), and constructed the

collectivist tradition of *kibbutzim* on occupied land (Piterberg, 2008; Shafir and Peled, 2002).

Through the specific nature of Israeli apartheid, therefore, Palestinians were rendered a demographic minority in post-1948 Israel; in contrast, Black South Africans were the majority (Farsakh, 2005, p. 233). The strategic role of the Black working class in challenging South African apartheid, including the role of labour unions and strike action (Callinicos, 1992), is not matched in the Israel/Palestine context. These unique features combine with the fact that Zionism claims to be a progressive ideology in the west (even though it serves to advance a colonialist settler exclusivist practice). In addition to its symbolic 'collectivism' through labour Zionism, the post-World War II positioning of Zionist ideology in the west presents within a framework of claimed 'anti-racism.' This is clearly different than the more widely recognized racist position presented by proponents of apartheid in South Africa. Israeli Zionism specifically is underpinned by a network in the west, particularly in the United States, (in both civil society and state organizations) that asserts an uninterrupted position of victimhood, typically claiming that any challenge to the Israeli state and its policies is tantamount to anti-Semitism (Finkelstein, 2003; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007). The centrality of education, debate and a normalized atmosphere of discussion in assessing the apartheid nature of Israel/Palestine is therefore heightened relative to the South African example.

Strategic implications of the apartheid analysis

The preceding argument underlines both the empirical relevance and normative significance of the apartheid analysis regarding Israel's policies toward Palestinians. A focus on the entrenched discriminatory treatment of Palestinians—within the Occupied Territories, inside the Green Line, and in the global diaspora—indicates the commonalities of a population dispersed by decades of colonial occupation. Moreover, framing Israel as a specifically apartheid state suggests a challenge not only to Israel's racialized policies and practices, but also to the mythologized *idea* of 'Israel' portrayed in the dominant Zionist narrative in post-World War II western ideology.

In a post-apartheid era, it is notable that many western governments are moving to accommodate demands of communities historically marginalized and racialized through colonial systems. In the US, the historic election of the first African-American president, Barack Obama, has been met with mass recognition of a moment of transition in the US polity, even if there is caution regarding the depth of the promises for change. In Australia, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's historic apology to Aborigines recognized the 'indignity and degradation' of a 60-year policy, ending only in 1970, of 'stealing' children from their families and placing them in dormitories or industrial schools where they endured oppressive and abusive practices (CNN, 2008). Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, not known for his adherence to progressive or anti-racist policies, has been compelled to formally apologize to Canada's indigenous peoples for the

apartheid-like treatment standardized in the Residential School system (CBC News, 2008). In 2008 the Canadian government formed the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the legacy and implications of this policy.

However, this post-apartheid trend, regardless of its limitations, is starkly absent in Israel today. The current government of Israel, in fact, shows all the signs of moving in the opposite direction, towards a more entrenched commitment to the apartheid system in Israel. In January 2009, during the war on Gaza, current Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Avigdor Lieberman stated that Israel 'must continue to fight Hamas just like the United States did with the Japanese in the second world war'. He was referring to the two atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima (Gordon, 2009b). As Phyllis Bennis (2009) has noted, the last election in Israel marks a notable turn to the right. By June 2010 there were new efforts to pass legislation in the Israeli Knesset that would criminalize Israelis (as well as non-Israelis) who advocate for a boycott, potentially making resistance to these trends even more difficult.

Palestinians, or 'Israeli Arabs', are treated almost exclusively as a 'demographic threat', a risk to the domination of the Jewish majority because of larger average family size. In 2003, then Finance Minister and now Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, was quoted in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, stating, 'If there is a demographic problem, and there is, it is with the Israeli Arabs who will remain Israeli citizens'. The report also noted Netanyahu's assurance that the 'Declaration of Independence said Israel should be a Jewish and democratic state, but to ensure the Jewish character was not engulfed by demography, it was necessary to ensure a Jewish majority' (Benn and Alon, 2003).

There is hence a polarization between the global positioning of the Israeli state and the Zionist ideology in the west that adopts an uncritical defence of that state, and the post-apartheid direction of many states and UN representatives. Donald Will suggests that Israeli and Palestinian activists (including progressive peace activists) face 'formidable challenges to working in effective coalitions' of the type that characterized South Africa (Will, 2007, p. 421). Indeed, despite certain concessions to anti-racist reforms, international pressure on Israel remains minimal and, where it is present, largely rhetorical. Israel's repeated violations of international law have not met with reprisal or limitation. A number of scholars have highlighted a major difference in the degree of support in the international community for challenging the South African apartheid system (including through sanctions and via the United Nations) in contrast to Israel (Will, 2007, p. 420; Farsakh, 2005, p. 237).

This disjuncture goes some way to explain the fraught context of debate suggested in the introduction to this article. Ian Urbina notes of American university campuses that the climate of debate regarding Israel/Palestine is distinctive (Urbina, 2002, p. 64). In order to advance a strategic anti-apartheid movement in the case of Israel/Palestine, a progressive, anti-racist deconstruction of the hegemonic role of Zionism is called for, as a necessary condition to extending solidarity with the Palestinian movement for self-determination and equal

rights. This solidarity is expressed most clearly in the example of the BDS movement (Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2009).

Emerging within a post-apartheid era, the vision of a single democratic state grounded in principles of democratic inclusion and equality can offer some hope and optimism in conditions that appear to be otherwise permanently mired in violent conflict. Omar Barghouti, a founding scholar in the BDS movement and also an advocate of the one-state solution, has advanced the strategic inspiration of BDS, not least as an alternative to the response of the NGO community. As he puts it, 'only by ending the occupation and apartheid can we get there. And, experience tells us, the most reliable, morally justifiable way to do that is by treating Israel as apartheid South Africa was, by applying various, context-sensitive and evolving measures of BDS against it' (Barghouti, 2008).

As George Bisharat notes, the 2005 BDS call of over 170 Palestinian civil society groups has articulated 'rights that are not easily accommodated within a two-state framework' (Bisharat, 2008, p. 29; Global BDS Movement). The issues being framed by many of those using the apartheid analogy are also difficult to meet through the two-state solution (Bisharat, 2008, p. 34). As Bisharat notes, the case for a one-state solution is a normative one. Put differently, it may presently be viewed as an 'ideal' vision, in light of the stated solutions posed by state actors in the region. Still, there is enough evident support and discussion of the one-state solution to lead some to ask: 'is the two-state solution dead?' (Sussman, 2004).

Conclusion

The significance of the apartheid analysis is not only grounded in sound comparative political science as a methodology, but also in the potential it offers for advancing a movement of global solidarity and inspiring a movement for equality, peace and justice in the Middle East. Associated with the transformative vision of a single democratic state of all its citizens in the Middle East, a post-apartheid Israel/Palestine offers a normative stance that is both critical and optimistic, and has the potential to move from being marginal to one that is attractive to a wide layer of civil society advocates internationally. As such, the case for an apartheid analysis is about the value of the comparative method in relation to real world states, as well as expanding our collective political imagination when it comes to thinking about change in Israel/Palestine.

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Notes

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1. For the purposes of clarity, in a series of articles on the subject of Israel/Palestine we have identified our positioning as authors. Specifically, Bakan is of Jewish background, and Abu-Laban is part of the Palestinian diaspora (Abu-Laban and Bakan, 2008, p. 639).
2. These conferences include: Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada (22–24 June 2009); One State for Palestine/Israel: A Country for All its Citizens?, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts, US (28–29 March 2009); Re-envisioning Israel/Palestine, an International Conference organized by The Middle East Project of the Democracy and Governance Programme, Human Sciences and Research Council, Cape Town, South Africa (12–14 June 2009); and Challenging the Boundaries: A Single State in Palestine/Israel (17–18 November 2007), SOAS, London, UK.
3. In some accounts, apartheid is considered to have ended in South Africa in 1994, with the first general election utilizing a universal franchise; in others the ending is rooted in developments from 1990 (including lifting the ban on the African National Congress, and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison).

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