

After 1967 Israel shifted its relationship to the US from that of strategic burden to strategic partner, and became a militarily significant actor throughout the region. Israel was allowed to acquire nuclear weapons in defiance of the non-proliferation treaty arrangements. After the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 Israel became even more valuable as the fall of the Shah meant the loss of the only other strategic ally of the West in a region strategically important for energy and control of major trade routes.

At the same time as Israel's apartheid regime engaged in dehumanizing modes of controlling Palestinian resistance and Israel became increasingly clear about its unwillingness to reach a political compromise achieved by bilateral negotiations, resulting in new assaults on its legitimacy became more widely questioned even in Western societies, but not by governments. This process was recently further intensified when the Netanyahu coalition government with Religious Zionism party took over in January 2023, and immediately greenlighted settler violence on the West Bank, violated the sanctity of Muslim sacred sites (especially Al-Aqsa Mosque), and displayed maps at the UN and elsewhere with only Israel present between 'the river and the sea.' Throughout this period Israel's control of the discourse, reinforced by the Zionist well funded network in the Global West used its discourse dominance to demonize its critics. It was helped by the adoption of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Association) definition of antisemitism, which treated any sharp criticism of Zionism or Israel, however justified by evidence and reasonable, as antisemitism. With possibly tragic irony such false branding seems to be producing real antisemitism in the world in its authentic form of hatred of Jews as an expression of hostility towards the behavior Zionism and Israel.

We hear or read a lot these days about the fact that Israel is an apartheid regime; what is apartheid, and how does Israel qualify as an apartheid state?

Most understandings of the nature of apartheid accept the definition set forth in Article II of the 1973 Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which reads, "For the purpose of the present Convention, the term 'the crime of apartheid,' which shall include similar policies and practices of racial segregation and discrimination as practised in southern Africa, shall apply to the following inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them:

(a) Denial to a member or members of a racial group or groups of the right to life and liberty of person: (i) By murder of members of a racial group or groups; (ii) By the infliction upon the members of a racial group or groups of serious bodily or mental harm, by the infringement of their freedom or dignity, or by subjecting them to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; (iii) By arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment of the members of a racial group or groups.

"(b) Deliberate imposition on a racial group or groups of living conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part; (c) Any legislative measures and other measures calculated to prevent a racial group or groups from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group or groups, in

particular by denying to members of a racial group or groups basic human rights and freedoms, including the right to work, the right to form recognized trade unions, the right to education, the right to leave and to return to their country, the right to a nationality, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; d) Any measures including legislative measures, designed to divide the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group or groups, the prohibition of mixed marriages among members of various racial groups, the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group or groups or to members thereof; (e) Exploitation of the labor of the members of a racial group or groups, in particular by submitting them to forced labour; (f) Persecution of organizations and persons, by depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms, because they oppose apartheid."

It was made clear in the understanding of the crime that although South African racial system of exploitative subjugation of the African indigenous population was the model for declaring apartheid to be a Crime Against Humanity, it is applicable to any arrangement that satisfies the treaty definition. It is so regarded by the International Criminal Court, see Article VII(1)(j). In Article VII(2)(h) the nature of the crime is clarified as such that "the crime of apartheid" means inhumane acts of a character similar to those referred to in paragraph 1, 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."

In the years since 2017 a series of reports sponsored by the UN and issued by widely respected human rights NGOs have confirmed the credibility of earlier allegations that the treatment of Palestinians qualifies in various ways as apartheid. (See detailed reports of UN ESCWA; Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International; B'Tselem). To some extent, the criminality of Israeli apartheid has been temporarily subordinated to allegations of genocide following the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023. If Israel's [attempts] falls short of its current genocidal effort to coerce Palestinians to leave their homeland, then concerns about Israel's policies and practices of apartheid would undoubtedly be renewed.

Given the recent momentum that the pro-Palestinian movement has gained, especially in the US, do you see any chance for a change in the essence or form of the US support for Israel in the short-term?

There has definitely been a shift in public opinion among the citizenry in Global West countries, but the governments, above all the US and UK continue their support of Israel despite spreading opposition to the devastation of the civilian population of Gaza, making the small crowded region totally unlivable without a massive reconstruction and relief effort.

The governments that continue to support Israel even after its recourse to genocide are influenced by a mixture of strategic interests and what might be called identity politics. The strategic and identity issues converge in relation to Israel as it combines strong military capabilities with a civilizational identity as a high-tech modern society with principal ties to the West, and having a series of hostile Islamic countries and non-governmental movements as its adversaries.



If a wider war breaks out it will be viewed as 'a clash of civilizations' recalling Samuel Huntington's 1993 prediction of the world after the end of the Cold War. Part of this overall picture of stability of Israel's relationship with the liberal democracies of the West despite its unabashed endorsement of genocide in addressing the Palestinian people is best explained by the effectiveness of Zionist funding of political opponents of elected officials critical of Israel, and financing of Israel friendly politicians in these countries where donor leverage remains strong at the national level. Also important, is the absence of organized Palestinian lobbying capabilities in the West that could somewhat diminish pro-Israeli foreign policy biases. If Israel succeeds in implementing its population transfer scenario in Gaza, forcing surviving Palestinians to become refugees in the region, ethnic cleansing will be added to the criminality of genocide in the form of a Crime Against Humanity. This would almost surely lead to mobilization of anti-Western forces throughout the Middle East, adding dangerous new stresses to the fraying bond tying the Global West to Israel. Also, uncertainties as to Israel's reaction to being treated as 'a pariah state' subject to boycotts and even sanctions, and surging militancy among global solidarity groups dedicated to a humane future for the Palestinian people, including more than seven million refugees and exiles living nearby and around the world.

As you've mentioned in your preface to the book, 'We Will Not be Silenced', in Israel's war against Gaza, "the people' become the enemy" and, therefore, to legitimize such a war, one has to dehumanize that people. How has Israel gone on about doing so from 1948 onwards? As Edward Said pointed out in his book, *Orientalism*, the colonial intellectual portrayal of the Arab is a prelude to dehumanization and a sense of Western civilization superiority, especially as assessed through an optic of technocratic modernity. As earlier discussed, Israel was established as the European colonial order was collapsing and in the aftermath of a monstrous genocide that the liberal democratic countries in the West did little to stop until Germany and Japan committed aggression imperiling their overall global hegemony. The early Zionist anticipated the current attempts to erase the Palestinians from their homeland as expressed by the dehumanizing saying: "a land for a people without land for a land without people."

What has complicated life for Israel is that the indigenous nationalism of the Global South as well as the defeat of European colonialism created a sense of the legitimacy of resistance, even armed resistance that has been incorporated to a controversial extent into contemporary international law. The recognition of the inalienable right of a people to national self-determination results in the set-

tlar colonial authority movements as being lawless undertakings, the overt enemy of indigenous populations as denigrated as backward or non-existent. If such tactics do not remove such obstacle, then the settler colonialist move by stages until reaching the genocidal conclusion that unless the indigenous population is utterly marginalized, exterminated, or expelled it will prevail over time. In this sense the settler colonial failed projects of South Africa and Algeria are instructive on the central point that superior military capabilities will not bring the settler regime reliable security, nor will its cruelty and exploitative policies exhibited by its imposed dominance. Despite the darkness of the skies over Palestine at present, it has never been closer to achieving some kind of victory and liberation that was unimaginable just a few months ago.

As my last question, I want to know, in your opinion, what hope is left for Palestinians? They are witnessing, on a daily basis, what seems to be a deadlock, created by the US's unconditional support for Israel, and they have no recourse to the international law.

The best hope for Palestine at this time is the escalation of civil society activism to stop the genocide, as sought by South African application to International Court of Justice, and to isolate Israel in meaningful ways through cultural, sports, and all types of boycotts.

Within the foreign policy of the Global West and in relation to Israel itself there is no basis for a just and sustainable peace being promoted diplomatically and strategically by leading governments or effectively by the UN. Geopolitical primacy in situations of strategic priority, as is the case for the US and Israel, overrides the guidance of international law and the morality of inter-governmental co-existence. This, short of geopolitical reassessment there is no realistic prospect for any sufficient change in the commitment of the West to Israel's security as it seeks to pursue it.

As mentioned before, only civil society activism can change the calculus of strategic interests in the West and Israel in the short run of 5-10 years. As the transformation of South Africa made clear, the impacts of becoming a pariah state in a variety of international arenas made it willing to transform the state from an apartheid regime to a constitutional democracy that facilitated transition by outstanding African leadership, a sympathetic world public opinion, and a focus on racial issue and political rights, which respecting the economic rights and social status of the displaced white settler elite. While Israel for all sorts of reasons cannot be compared to South Africa, there exists a zone of uncertainty that may generate some comparable solution that is above all able to find a framework based on racial/religious equality and a coexistence based on respect for the rule of law and human rights for all.