

Mouna N. Younis. *Liberation and Democratization: The South African and Palestinian National Movements*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2000. (Social movements, protest, and contention ; v. 11). 264 pp. \$47.95 ISBN 0-8166-3299-5 (cloth) \$18.95 0-8166-3300-2 (paper)

In the last decade, the South African and Palestinian national liberation movements, the African National Congress and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, have been prominent in world politics. In September 1993, the PLO and Israel conclude their first hesitant peace treaty and in April 1994, South Africa held its first non-racial elections. However, the two movements share more than a synchronous history.

Mona Younis, in an impressive comparative study of the politics and history of both countries from the 1910s to the 1990s, draws many interesting parallels and differences between the two movements. Using a tightly argued theoretical framework situated in contemporary debates on elites, class, political alliances, and leadership, Younis firstly outlines many remarkable similarities in the historical and contemporary experiences of South African and Palestinian indigenous peoples, and then goes on to explain the varying successes of the two organizations.

In five chapters, Younis first discusses competing theories of comparative history, social movements, democratization and class formation, and then traces the history of "merging elites" in the formation of nation and movement (1910s to 1940), the rise of "middle-class hegemony and the containment of class" (1940s to 1970s), and finally the "merging class and nation" as popular struggles developed (1970s to 1990s).

Younis argues that in both countries the early phase of the national liberation movement was dominated by elites, that this gradually, after the 1940s, gave way to leadership by more mass-based forces, and large-scale uprisings in the 1980s drove the movements towards greater democratization and with it, greater success. To account for greater relative success of the ANC she highlights differences in the balance of class forces and resources of the movements, notably the greater strategic role of labour unions in South Africa. She also challenges prevailing interpretations of ANC and PLO history that largely emphasise demography, international support, and state strength, arguing that such factors are insufficient as they are functions of the very success or failure of the organizations. Instead, it is the social movements themselves are more significant. She does not deny structural influences, but rather see the nature of settler colonialism in each country, particularly whether it was inclusionary (South Africa) or exclusionary (Israel/Palestine) as decisive.

Similarities abound: analagous conflicts between colonizers and indigenous peoples; international branding of both countries as "pariah" racist states; armed struggles in which national liberation movement armies combined political functions; the chronological proximity of the Oslo and Groote Schuur accords. There also are significant contrasts: different "solutions" to national self-determination; a relatively more prosperous Palestinian elite and a more numerous and united South African working class; Yasir Arafat's autocratic tendencies and Nelson Mandela's magnanimity to Afrikaners; apartheid's limited legal recognition of blacks as opposed to Israel's "denationalization" of an estimated 75 per cent of Palestinians. the contrast between PLO and ANC leaderships; the fate of refugees or exiles;

Younis offers a highly readable, concise (if largely derivative) account of South African liberation politics and the transition to democracy in that country. She contrasts the greater democracy of ANC leaders to growing signs of autocracy of Arafat, a difference she traces to class forces within both groups, with the South African working class able to assert its power in the 1980s but in Palestine remaining small, divided and weak. At the same time, she warns that the ANC's post-1994 acceptance of neo-liberalism is likely to doom the black majority to poverty.

Whilst the theory is nuanced and convincing and the comparisons carefully balanced, some critical observations may be ventured. The author does not define at the outset what she understands by elite or class. For instance, teachers, who are wage earners and form labour unions, and in lower echelons in South Africa often earned less than some "workers," invariably are regarded by the author part of an "elite." It is never entirely clear why later leadership cabals, who replace elites, cannot also be seen as such. Younis does not probe deeply the antecedents and identities of the movements. Her sources are primarily a judicious selection of the wide ranging of the secondary literature, bolstered by her own interviews (ironically, the latter chiefly with the "elite"). In this regard, the separate work of Rashid Khalidi and Andre Odendaal, who both posit links between elites and masses, is instructive. Elites at times were radicalized and conscientized of their national identity through the expropriation and exploitation of peasants and workers by settlers, and sometimes by their interaction in national movements.

Cultural themes, identities, and personalities, whether nationalist leaders or 'ordinary people,' are largely missing. It would have been interesting to include more personal narratives and social history, for instance by incorporating the views of Palestinian refugee camp women or South African workers, particularly as Younis argues strongly against elite conceptions of history. More attention to literary sources might have added insights to historical lives (see, in this regard, Jacqueline Rose, *States of fantasy* (Oxford : Clarendon, 1996). Comparative foreign relations and solidarity

might also have been discussed. Apartheid and Zionist regimes maintained intimate defence relations, with Israel linked to Pretoria's nuclear and conventional arms programs and with mercenary forces deployed against the Frontline States.

There have been earlier comparative studies of the two countries (for instance, *Israel, An Apartheid State* by Uri Davis (London : Zed Books, 1987), and *Genealogies of Conflict: Class, Identity, and State in Palestine/Israel and South Africa* by Ran Greenstein (Hanover: University Press Of New England, 1995). However, *Liberation and Democratization* is the first comprehensive comparison of the two liberation movements. It is a major contribution to the theorizing of political change in settler states and relationships between democratization and transformation in such societies. It discusses key themes of postcolonial research such as resistance of colonized peoples to settler colonialism, the enduring centrality of the land question tied to colonial land appropriation and the role of classes in national liberation. Hence, it will be of considerable interest to scholars across a range of disciplines and area studies.

The contrasts and similarities remain as compelling today as in 1993-94. South African exiles have returned home, but Palestinian refugees have not. Despite the numerous peace plans proposed over the last decade, Palestinian land and labour resources remain firmly under Israeli control. Little respite appears likely under a Palestinian Authority client administration accused of corruption, patronage, and human rights violations. Israeli occupation has meant the absence of a Palestinian state or the possibility of democracy. Younis makes clear that further democratization of the PLO, along the lines of what transpired in South Africa, is a key to a more substantial liberation in Palestine.

Peter Limb