

Whither Palestine?

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1. INTRODUCTION:

It is an honour to have been invited to present this commemorative lecture in recognition of a truly extraordinary human being, the late Abdelwahab Elmessiri, who I was fortunate to have known albeit briefly. We met in South Africa at an international conference on Palestine in 2006, just two years before his untimely death at the age of seventy.

His distinguished career; his vast range of knowledge and interests illustrated in his fifty published books, articles and essays, mark him out as a prodigious scholar who aimed to make our world a better place to live in. I have been moved by his passion for freedom and justice for all humanity, especially the Palestinian cause. I find as I strive to become better acquainted with the Palestinian issue and Zionist Israeli history that his legacy is of enduring relevance.

As an eminent scholar of English literature, Abdelwahab Elmessiri, who loved paradox and metaphor, would I think approve of my starting off with reference to Lewis Carroll's Victorian classic "Alice in Wonderland".

Alice wanders along a river bank and falls down a deep hole. She finds herself at a crossroad in a topsy-turvy land. She asks a caterpillar seated on a toadstool the way. But Alice does not know where she is going. The caterpillar, puffing on a hookah, answers: "If you do not know where you are going any road will do."

Certainly the Palestinians seem to find themselves in a quandary. And who can blame them, with the myriad of obstructions on their long dangerous journey in search of freedom and independence. Unlike Alice there is a Road Map, but one shared with another traveller whose intentions are by no means honourable - not to mention a Quartet of uneasy bedfellows who try to shepherd them. In fact we observe that our Palestinian Alice is in the company of somebody akin to a Mad Hatter or the Queen of Hearts yelling "off with her head." The metaphor is replete with bizarre likenesses down to a grinning Cheshire Cat reminding one of a former British Prime Minister of recent times meddling in the process and taking fat cheques in return - grinning all the way to the bank.

Hopefully with some of Abdelwahab Elmessiri's insights, coupled with lessons he believed could be learnt from the South African struggle, we might shed some light on the way ahead. As we meet in the week of the 67th anniversary of Palestine's *Nakba*, I wish to state quite unequivocally that the issue is one of a settler colonial power that has dispossessed an indigenous people of their land and birth right and that the project goes back to the later part of the nineteenth century.

In 1976 ELMESSIRI wrote "Israel and South Africa: The Progression of a Relationship", one of the earliest works to compare Zionism with Apartheid.^[i] His learned study of Jewish history, culminated in his eight volume "The Encyclopaedia of the Jews, Judaism and Zionism."^[ii]

2. SCOPE:

In examining apartheid South Africa, Elmessiri's concept of Israel as a "Functional Zionist State," (FZS) illustrates a symbiotic relationship between the settler colonialism of both entities. He presented this thesis at the 2006 conference and published under the title "From functional Jewish communities to the Functional Zionist State."^[iii]

We will consider some of the remarkable similarities between apartheid South Africa and Zionist Israel. These coincide even as far as milestone dates are concerned. The characterisation firmly places both within the category of colonial settler states. Such consideration will extend to forms of resistance and seek to draw lessons from the South African struggle.

To categorise a system is to understand its character and function, both in its general and specific traits, and to more correctly strategise how to go about replacing it. The South African model has been referred to as "Colonialism of a Special Type" (CST).

Conceptualising the character of the Zionist State has not been an easy matter considering the enormous mythology and deception, its unusual traits, and the long period the Zionist narrative held sway in the West.

Elmessiri drew particular similarities with apartheid South Africa. He wrote: "Despite differences between Israel and South Africa from the perspective of their initial formational period, subsequent historical developments ensured that the similarities between the two settlement enclaves outweighed the differences and gave them a higher explanatory power."

He points out that both began from different origins as settlement enclaves. These were to serve Western interests on multiple levels in exchange for support and protection. Both articulated similar biblical discourse justifying their worldview. Settlers are "Chosen People" with a mission of civilising a supposed wilderness promised by God.

In considering the advances made in the South African struggle leading to the opening of serious negotiations from 1990 and the formal ending of white minority apartheid rule four years later, we will consider the strategic formula termed "The Four Pillars of Struggle" that helped gain that victory.

The milestone of South Africa attaining democracy through national elections in April, 1994, coincides with the signing of the Oslo Accords, September 1993. These Accords offered mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel, and allowed the PLO to establish a governing Palestinian Authority (PA) in parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank from May 1994 onward.

We shall consider the subsequent downturn in fortunes at a conjunction today where the Middle East and beyond is in such a perilous state that many believe that prospects for the Palestinians have never appeared so bleak.^[iv]

The questions arise: Whither Palestine? Is freedom and independence possible? What way forward?

3. TWO COLONIAL SETTLER ENCLAVES:

The demographics of former settler colonies have a bearing on our study. Of the colonies which had relatively sizeable settler communities at independence, Algeria in 1962 (one million or 10%); Portugal's colonies of Angola and Mozambique in 1975 (350,000 and 250,000 respectively or 3% and 2% each); Zimbabwe before 1980 (250,000 or 3%); only South Africa (four million or 10% in 1994) retained the demographics – and of course Palestine as we once knew it today has over six million Jewish settlers (about 50%). Some settler families had lived in the country for generations and had put down deep roots - the south African word "Afrikaner" literally meaning "African".

Algeria's colons almost seamlessly relocated back to France; Zimbabwe's settlers moved to South Africa or Britain; and the Portuguese settlers chose South Africa or returned to country of origin. In 1946 Mandate Palestine of a population of 1.8 million some 600,000 were Jews (32%) from a mere 8,000 in 1882.^[v] Today's demographics for what formally comprised historic Palestine (Zionist Israel; West Bank and Gaza Strip) there are 6.2 million Palestinians and 6.1 million Jews.^[vi]

The aforementioned statistics are salient as to the future of both South Africa and Palestine. Both have sizable settler populations, many with roots going back several generations, and unlike the French colons in Algeria no metropolitan country to go back to – valid passports in hand.

Elmessiri had an excellent grasp of the origins and character of the colonial system and was adept at comparison. In considering particular turning points in the fate of the colonised peoples he writes of the sinister plots of the rulers of the British Empire in creating the Union of South Africa in 1909 and formulating the Balfour Declaration of 1917. In his essay on the Functional Zionist State he observes: "The Zionist state is a settler enclave like any other. It is by no means a coincidence that the Balfour Declaration and the South Africa Act of Union of 1909 [was] affected in 'large part by the same handful of politicians', namely Lord Milner, Lord Selbourne, Lord Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain, and [South Africa's] General Smuts [who had led a guerrilla struggle of Boer settlers against the British from 1899-1902]. In implanting and backing white settlers in South Africa and Zionist settlers in Palestine, the British Empire was founding two little pockets of settler-colonists who would owe allegiance to the imperial metropolis and would serve as bases of operations when the need arose."^[vii]

All this took place before the rise of the resistance movements in the Arab World. And likewise at the time when the armed resistance of spear and shield by tribal societies and kingdoms in Southern Africa had finally been crushed after 250 years of intermittent wars of reaction to colonial invasion, dispossession and occupation.

The years between the two world wars, and particularly the implications of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, have been documented but not readily understood outside Arab discourse given the domination of the Zionist narrative in the West and powerful

manipulative mainstream media at the service of imperialist and corporate power. The rise of Palestinian national consciousness in response to British rule and Zionist settler immigration saw its historic apogee in the 1936-39 Arab uprising which commenced with a six month strike. The length of the revolt and its ruthless crushing by the British, accounting for over one thousand insurgents killed and 112 executed, with 100 British soldiers dead, thousands placed in concentration camps, houses demolished, collective punishment meted out (methods copied by the Zionists a decade later) - left the Palestinian people exhausted, weakened and without leadership at a crucial turning point after World War Two. The embodiment of Palestinian resistance was illustrated in the martyrdom of the brilliant guerrilla leader Abdul Rahim Al Haj Mohammed who died in a British ambush. In fact the protracted uprising was quite extraordinary taking place a score of years before the anti-colonial armed struggles broke out in Cyprus, Kenya, Algeria, Burma, Malaya, Philippines, Vietnam etc. That glorious episode of Palestinian resistance is deserving of greater research and attention, and assists in explaining the depth of Palestinian perseverance summed up in the single word "*sumud*."

The Zionist project was able, with the complicity and deceit of the departing British, and in the face of the poorly organised and led response from weak Arab states, to seize the upper hand. The British had left the Zionist militia vast supplies of arms and equipment; many had served in Britain's war time forces; and they numbered more than the combined Arab armies that ultimately were despatched to protect the 45% territory apportioned to the Palestinians by the 1947 UN Partition Plan. Palestine at the strategic cross-roads between Europe, Africa and Asia, was vital to Britain's imperialist interests and Balfour's deal would, they believed, be to their advantage. Arthur Koestler, the writer, was to sum up Balfour's legacy in a brilliantly pithy manner: "One nation promised a second nation the land of a third nation." And that was taken with a vengeance in 1947-48.

A similar land dispossession by Britain had occurred at the tip of Africa. South Africa for its vast mineral wealth, and strategic position on the sea route to the East, had become a coveted possession of Britain's. As a consequence of the discovery of diamonds in 1870 and gold in 1886 the years preceding the Act of Union witnessed the rapid industrialisation of the country. In parallel went the final stages of the crushing of the military organisation of the indigenous peoples. This enabled the final dispossession of their land; exploitation of their labour power, and enactment of strict race laws preceding the apartheid system. The system in South Africa was essentially about the exploitation of cheap black labour for super profits. Modernisation saw the emergence of 20th century political organisations and trade unions among the indigenous population.

The African National Congress (ANC) was formed in 1912 to unite the African people in response to white rule where Britain, as later in Palestine, had handed the land of the Africans to the nation of General Smuts's largely British and Dutch settlers. By the 1950's, through mass struggle and building alliances among all groups, it grew to represent the aspirations of all races and classes for a democratic state based on the inclusive principle: "South Africa Belongs to all who live in it" enshrined in a Freedom Charter which was a historic turning point. [\[viii\]](#)

The national liberation movement employed non-violent, but increasingly militant forms of struggle until the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.^[ix] On being outlawed and finding all avenues to peaceful change closed, the Movement resorted to methods of armed resistance in a fighting declaration that stated: “The time comes in the life of any nation to submit or fight: that time has now come to South Africa.”^[x]

Turning back the clock just over a decade, the year 1948 was one of the darkest for both the Palestinian and South African people; truly an *annus horribilis*.

For South Africans May 1948 marked the election of the Afrikaner apartheid government, (as opposed to domination by English-speaking business interests), consolidating over three centuries of Dutch and British colonial conquest and white supremacy, and the prelude to a forty-six year maelstrom for the black people.

For the Palestinians May 1948 marked the *Nakbah* - the catastrophic dispossession and ethnic cleansing at the hands of the rampant Zionist project.^[xi]

As is known the result was expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians from a land they had inhabited for millennia; with some 400,000 managing to remain behind in spite of the terror tactics and massacres perpetrated by the Zionists. Whilst apartheid South Africa has disappeared in form to be replaced by a democratic unitary state of equal citizens, the suffering and brutality endured by the Palestinians gets more excessive and horrific year by year.

4. ISRAEL AN APARTHEID STATE

The blatant apartheid character of Israel was referred to by Dr Hendrik Verwoerd – South Africa’s architect of grand-apartheid. In 1961, in expressing his deep admiration for Israel’s foundation and socio-political architecture, he remarked: “The Jews took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there for a thousand years. Israel like South Africa is an apartheid state.”^[xii]

He was irked by the criticism of apartheid policy and Harold Macmillan’s “Winds of Change” speech, in contrast to the West’s unconditional support for Israel.

To be sure Verwoerd was correct albeit erroneously calculating indigenous settlement from Islamic times. Both states preached and implemented a policy based on racial ethnicity; the sole claim of Jews in Israel and whites in South Africa to exclusive citizenship; monopolised rights in law regarding the ownership of land, property, business; privileged access to education, health, social, sporting and cultural amenities, pensions and municipal services at the expense of the indigenous population; exclusive service in the security forces, and privileged development along racial supremacist lines; even marriage laws protecting race purity. Israel’s institutional racial discrimination fits the United Nations definition of apartheid.

The UN Convention against the Crime of Apartheid outlawed such practices anywhere in the world in 1976 as follows: “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..." and defined the crime of Apartheid as "...inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group...over another racial group...and systematically oppressing them."[\[xiii\]](#)

The UN General Assembly succeeded in holding Israel to account as an Apartheid State in adopting a resolution which "determined that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination," although unfortunately revoked in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union.[\[xiv\]](#)

After coming to power in 1948 the apartheid regime soon began clearing South Africa's towns of so-called "black spots" - where the "non-whites" had resided, socialised, studied and traded - bulldozing homes, loading families onto trucks, and forcibly relocating them to distant dormitory settlements but unlike the Bantustans close enough to the industrial areas where they were employed and harshly exploited.

Although Verwoerd died prior to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, he would have admired the machinations that enclosed the Palestinians in ghettoised prisons. This was after all his grand plan, and the reason why Jimmy Carter could so readily identify the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) as being akin to apartheid where, in his words, "a horrible example of apartheid is being perpetrated against the Palestinians who live there."[\[xv\]](#)

In fact the disconnected Bantustans comprised 13% of apartheid South Africa, uncannily comparable to the fragmented territories that Israeli occupation, security grid system, Jewish-only roads, apartheid wall, water appropriation and illegal settlements, has reduced Palestinian West Bank living and farming space to.

The Bantustans represented dumping grounds for the apartheid system's reserve army of labour and this explains the crucial difference between South Africa and Israel. In the former the colonial settlers institutionalised racist exploitation; in the latter it institutionalised racist exclusion. Apartheid depended on black labour; Zionism never depended on Palestinian labour in the same way. This naturally militates against Palestinian resistance compared to the role the black working class could play in South Africa and needs to be strengthened in other ways.

What Verwoerd admired too was the impunity with which Israel exercised state violence to get its way, without hindrance from the West. An imperialist Israel was permitted to annexe territory by force against the rising tide of Arab nationalism in the region.

An unholy alliance developed and the two rogue states connived in secret arms deals and military cooperation. Israel helped South Africa upgrade its jet fighter squadrons, supplied war ships and missile systems and assisted in the development of seven nuclear devices undermining international sanctions. The arms industries of the two states became closely interlocked with billions of dollars of profits generated. Israel empowered Apartheid South Africa to crush its black population, carry out aggression against neighbouring African states and helped to perpetuate the racist system.

Solidarity between the ANC and PLO strengthened over the years supporting one another at the United Nations and elsewhere. Following Israel's invasion of the Lebanon in 1982, and the Sabra and Shatila massacres, Oliver Tambo, the ANC President, declared before the UN General Assembly: "The parallels between the Middle East and Southern Africa are as clear as they are sinister. The onslaught on the Lebanon, the massive massacre of Lebanese and Palestinians, the attempt to liquidate the PLO and Palestinian people, all of which were enacted with impunity by Israel have been followed minutely and with unconcealed interest and glee by the Pretoria racist regime which has designs for perpetrating the same kind of crime in Southern Africa in the expectation that, like Israel, it will be enabled by its allies to get away with murder."[\[xvii\]](#)

5. COLONIALISM OF A SPECIAL TYPE:

The classical form of colonialism, was a system based on greed and plunder, that entailed direct rule from the metropolitan country using its occupational administration and military might to further its brutal control over the indigenous people in the extraction of raw materials and bounty - at times in conjunction with local feudal rulers as in the Middle East.

Another form was where sufficient settler populations existed and consequently where political rule over the indigenous colonised people was handed to them. The South African liberation movement termed this model, 'Colonialism of a Special Type' (CST), with important consequences for strategy, methods of struggle and objectives.

CST as a theoretical framework was adopted by the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1962. As will be seen, Israel embodies similar features although the Zionist settler enclave has unique traits setting it apart - particularly in the origin of its settler population, its measures of de-population and consequently deliberate non-use of indigenous native labour. The racist capitalist system in South Africa required the labour power of the conquered indigenous masses and therefore needed their reproduction at minimal cost. To quote from the SACP programme: "The conceding of independence to South Africa by Britain in 1910 was not a victory over the forces of colonialism and imperialism. It was designed in the interests of imperialism. Power was transferred not into the hands of the masses of people of South Africa, but into the hands of the White minority alone. The evils of colonialism, insofar as the Non-White majority are concerned, were perpetuated and reinforced. A new type of colonialism was developed, in which the oppressing White nation occupied the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and lived side by side with them.

On one level, that of White South Africa, there are all the features of an advanced capitalist state in its final stage of imperialism...But on another level, that of Non White South Africa, there are all the features of a colony. The indigenous population is subjected to extreme national oppression, poverty and exploitation, lack of all democratic rights and political domination...The African Reserves [later to be termed Bantustans] show the complete lack of industry, communications and power resources which are characteristic of African territories under colonial rule throughout the Continent.

Typical too of imperialist rule, is the reliance by the state upon brute force and terror...Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself.

It is this combination of the worst features of both imperialism and colonialism, within a single national frontier, which determines the special nature of the South African system and has brought upon its rulers the justified hatred and contempt of progressive and democratic people throughout the world..."[\[xvii\]](#)

Replacing the words – “South Africa” with “Israel” or “Palestine” depending on the periods; “White South Africa” with the “Jewish settlers”; “Non-White” with “Palestinians”; and “African Reserves” (i.e. Bantustans) with “Gaza” and “West Bank” - we find a striking comparison between South African CST and that of Zionist Israel.

The conceding of independence by Britain to the white minority in South Africa in 1910 is comparable to the 1947 partition deal which paved the way for the handing over of power in Palestine to the Jewish minority which they violently seized in 1948 not only taking the 55% of territory allotted to them but seizing 78% by the truce of 1949.

6. THE ZIONIST COLONIAL AGENDA:

The early Zionists did not hide their colonial agenda. Their mind-set was influenced by the Congress of Berlin of 1886 when the European Colonial powers were carving up their respective areas of interest and possessions in Africa. Herzl and his circle used the same language in their search for a Jewish colony. Herzl was a client in search of a sponsor as he toured Europe's capitals, from Ottoman Constantinople, to Berlin, France and finally London where he found his benefactor in the anti-Semite Lord Balfour wanting to be rid of the Jews in return for a buffer state in the Middle East to secure the interests of the British Empire. Arthur Koestler, the author, best sums up the iniquitous nature of the 1917 Balfour Declaration: “One nation, promised the land of a second nation, to a third nation.”

Colonial settlement was the vogue in the language of early Zionism. Post World War Two, however, the colonial system was being dismantled as a shameful backward infamous legacy and the term was anathema. Zionism consequently had to present its project in a different guise and projected itself as a national independence movement like all others. Opponents of Zionism, must not cease from exposing Zionism for what it is: a colonial project from start to finish. This is imperative in the battle of ideas and legitimacy. Latter day Zionists rely on deception and outright lies to hide the truth of Israel's inequity and cynically manipulate people's emotions including their own who they befuddle with fear of the “other”. Yes, the trick of the oppressor, is to keep even their own people unconscious and blinded to reality. Hence any Jew who disagrees is dubbed a traitor and a “self-hating” Jew. Anyone opposed to Zionism or Israel's barbarism is an anti-Semite.

From Herzl to Ben Gurion we learn from the horse's mouth the true colonial nature and objectives of the Zionist project.

Herzl stated in 1896, when ethnic nationalism was on the rise in Poland and the Russian Empire, (influencing early Zionist thought where most Jews lived) once a

Jewish state was established the aim would be to: “Strip the penniless population (the Palestinians) across the borders and be rid of them.”[\[xviii\]](#)

Vladimir Jabotinsky, whose blunt 1930’s radicalism, admiration for Mussolini’s fascism, and disdain for the diplomatic niceties of rival Zionists, has triumphed in Fortress Israel, argued that Zionist colonisation had to be “carried out in defiance of the will of the native population”. He added: “This colonization can therefore continue and develop only under the protection of a force independent of the local population – an iron wall which the native population cannot break through. This is, in toto, our policy towards the Arabs. To formulate it any other way would be hypocrisy.”[\[xix\]](#)

Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, who unlike Jabotinsky, normally went to great lengths to conceal the true agenda, stated in an off-the-record discourse in the 1950s: “Why should the Arabs make peace? If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: We have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them. Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it’s true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis...but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we came here and stole their country”[\[xx\]](#)

General Moshe Dayan, as outspokenly hawkish as Jabotinsky, explained: “Before [the Palestinians] very eyes we are possessing the land and villages where they, and their ancestors, have lived...We are the generation of colonisers, and without the gun barrel we cannot plant a tree and build a home’.[\[xxi\]](#)

Secretly admitting Zionism’s intentions, Ben Gurion confided in 1938: “after we become a strong force, as the result of the creation of a state, we shall abolish partition and expand into the whole of Palestine.”[\[xxii\]](#)

Three decades later Moshe Dayan triumphantly recounted the milestones: “Our fathers had reached the frontiers which were recognized in the UN Partition Plan of 1947 [56% of the land]. Our generation reached the frontiers of 1949 [78% of the land]. Now the Six Day Generation [of 1967] has managed to reach Suez, Jordan and the Golan Heights. This is not the end.”[\[xxiii\]](#)

Such statements contextualised Zionism’s objectives and provide the clues as to why Israel has not been interested in real peace terms; cannot be a faithful negotiating partner; and that behind any short term or pragmatic objective is the quest for the Greater Israel from the Mediterranean to the River Jordan. Sharon and Netanyahu’s extreme cynicism and brutality exemplify this.

Given the consistency of such statements, it becomes obvious that Israel’s existence has been based on colonial conquest, annexation (whenever the time is ripe), ever expanding colonial settlements, and in the words of South Africa’s CST “constitute the reliance by the state upon brute force and terror”.

7. CST IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGISTS:

The question arises: does the CST analogy assist in understanding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, does it point to its resolution, and what relevance does it have for

activists within Palestine, Israel and internationally? Does it imply that descendants of settlers may be permitted to have a place in the sun once the indigenous people are emancipated and rule in their own house once again?

CST was formulated for South Africa during a different global context, and involved political formations and conditions specific to that country, but in characterising a colonial paradigm existing elsewhere it can be argued that it has universal applications. The South African academic, Shamil Jeppie, in utilising the views of French Marxists, Maxime Rodinson about Algeria and Palestine in 1967, approaches the possible decolonisation of Israel by applying that comparative methodology. [\[xxiv\]](#)

The importance of the CST characterisation, for both descriptive and strategic purposes, is that it demolishes the dangerous charade that Zionism is itself a national liberation movement, and that consequently both the claims of Israel and the Palestinians should be treated by the international community in a balanced and even-handed manner, on a par with one another, holding out the ultimate promise of a two-state solution. It is this mantra and misconception that has counter-acted against the efficacy of the Palestinian cause. With the Oslo effect, in the sphere of international solidarity, this deception has effectively reduced Palestine's natural allies, South Africa foremost among them, from playing the far more forthright role of isolating Israel that is urgently required. The reasoning goes: if the Palestinian leadership (read the PA) accepts the "two state" option then who are we to disagree?

The CST thesis cuts to the bone. It lifts the veil on the true nature of this historic struggle for land, and national rights, which requires full national self-determination and independence for the Palestinian people before all else. This is fundamental and the basis for solving the national question, which among other key elements calls for the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees and handing back their homes and property; and of abrogating the Law of Return which allows any Jew anywhere in the world from Paris to Patagonia, Brooklyn to Russia, to claim a place in Palestine, with additional subsidies if they reside in the West Bank settlement block which is illegal and contrary to international law.

It is only on the basis of the freedom, independence and equality of the colonized nation that the settlers and their descendants will find security and their place in the sun previously referred to. For such a goal there are consequences for the strategy and tactics required. It neither side-lines the refugees nor marginalises the internal 1948 Palestinians within Israel; nor ignores those in the diaspora whilst only focusing on the right to national self-determination of those living under occupation and giving them their own stunted statelet or bantustan. It demolishes Israel's attempts at divide and rule. It unites all contingents in their millions for their undivided land and with correct leadership and action can dramatically alter the balance of forces, so long stacked against the Palestinians. It provides a powerful vision and incentive for all. And by being inclusive it ultimately allays the existential fears of the settler community.

In 1964 when the PLO was initially formed by the Arab League the outlook was not conducive to a concept such as CST. It was bluntly a case of reclaiming the land and getting rid of the Jewish settlers. Although in the 1940's the idea of a bi-national state had featured in debates among Jewish progressives mainly communists, a full grasp

of the implications of the national question was not appreciated and distorted their judgement. For example after 1948 the Communist Party of Israel issued membership cards titled "The Communist Party of Israeli Patriots."[\[xxv\]](#) This psychological confusion persists among Israel's Jewish "left" to this day and inevitably militates against unity of progressive forces. In fact this is in contradistinction to South African communists understanding that justice for the indigenous African people, the restitution of land and rights, was the primary requirement and in fact would constitute the motor force for change. Whilst at the same time recognising the right of all to citizenship.

CST had emerged out of the socio-economic development in South Africa; the matured politics of the ANC-SACP Alliance; a shared experience of struggle against white minority rule which led to the unity of the people based on consultative processes, appropriate programs of action and common objectives. This deepened an analysis of both race and class contradictions; the need to isolate the centres of reaction; divide ones adversary and ultimately attract the broad populace to the necessity for change on the basis of common and equal citizenship rights.

The newly formed PLO in 1964, was composed of numerous factions that needed to be balanced, and was under the direct influence of the Arab League. However within two years, under Arafat's leadership, with the revolutionary fervour of leading components such as Fatah and Habash's PFLP and other militants, an independent banner of resistance was raised aloft. The PLO succeeded in raising the national consciousness of the scattered Palestinian people, who regained their national aspirations and hopes. In time came under Arafat came the acceptance of Jewish rights to live with their fellow Arabs as had been the case in the pre-Zionist times but by 1993, with the Oslo Accords, the debased segregated concept of two apartheid states was to emerge.

Two related questions arise: can something akin to the CST concept assist in uniting the Palestinian people and formations, and point a new way forward? And to what degree would it help prise the Israeli Jews away from the colonial settler paradigm to follow the example of progressive white South Africans and accept a unitary state of all the people? The views of Elmessiri are relevant in this respect and stem from his seminal essay on the Functional Zionist State, which has been referred to earlier.[\[xxvi\]](#)

8. THE FUNCTIONAL ZIONIST STATE

In his essay Elmessiri argues that the concept of the functional group and the functional state "is an analytical concept that has high explanatory power that can account for many aspects of the Zionist settler enclave, both in its general and specific traits and that this concept helps us understand the nature of the Arab-Israel conflict which would hopefully help us come up with some kind of permanent solution, and not simply a temporary one." Any arrangement dividing people can only be a temporary solution.

His study of the functional exploitation of the Jewish elite in Medieval Europe, and particularly the Poland of Herzl's inner circle and experience, has relevance. I quote from his thesis at some length to bring out its substance: "The Jewish functional

group, a commercial settler colonial quasi-military group that played the role of intermediary between feudal lords and peasants and serfs, and the noble's tool of ruthless exploitation, was transferred to Palestine to play the same role and discharge the same function within the framework of the Zionist functional state. The tripartite relationship (Polish nobles, Jewish colonial intermediaries and Ukrainian serfs) to a large extent resembles the tripartite relationship that currently dominates in the Middle East (American imperialism, Zionist colonial intermediaries, Arabs of Palestine). The Jewish element in both cases is a useful colonial one that is maintained not because of its intrinsic worth, but because of its utility."

Elmessiri continues: "As Theodor Herzl negotiated for a national homeland, he used this argument, time and again. His Zionist movement, he claimed, could help in 'draining off the surplus Jewish proletariat' [of Europe] and....once transferred....outside Europe, they would be assigned a new function to form a settler colonial state that would at once absorb the transferred surplus and serve the interests of the Western world. This would in return, guarantee its survival and continuity and provide it with financial, political and economic aid, necessary for its survival. In other words, it is a functional state."

Herzl could not have dreamt that it would take the Nazi Holocaust to attain his vision. Although so cruel and cynical, so elitist were those Zionists – indeed to present times – that records reveal the extent to which they despised the Yiddish proletarians as dispensable pawns in their ambitions. Jewish members of the Bund in South Africa, for example, were among the most heated opponents of Zionism in the 1930-40's.

Western leaders, post-World War Two, eager to be rid of displaced Jews, with no functional value, whom they were not interested to assimilate into their societies, found it strategically convenient and advantageous to facilitate the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Elmessiri continues: "This was done on the premise that the Jews in Palestine are an independent demographic element whose security could be guaranteed by the West, and for which it could realise a high standard of living, provided that the settler enclave performed the function of defending Western strategic interests in the region. Financial support was extended to a colonial and alien demographic element, in return for it performing a strategic military role. The said role is the basic commodity that the settler colonial enclave produces and that the West acquires in return for the financial, political, and military support it provides. Anything apart from this is no more than mere apologetics or marginal details that have very little explanatory power."

Herzl made no bones about placing a future Jewish state at the disposal of imperialism. Such a state, Herzl promised, would constitute for Europe in Palestine "a part of the wall against Asia, and serve as the vanguard of civilization against barbarism." [\[xxvii\]](#)

This prophetic "functionalism" was demonstrated soon after Israel's independence, in the joint invasion of Egypt in 1956, with Britain and France, and temporary seizure of the Suez Canal. Little wonder that back in 1921 Winston Churchill, then Britain's

Colonial Secretary, had observed: 'Zionism is good for the Jews and good for the British Empire'.[\[xxviii\]](#)

After the Suez intervention the USA soon demonstrated its willingness to become Israel's "chief backer". US military aid to Israel represents the largest transfer of funds from one country to another in history, estimated at \$100 billion from 1949 to the end of the 20th century.[\[xxix\]](#)

President George W. Bush magnanimously provided Israel with a \$30 billion dollar military aid programme announced in 2007 following Israel's onslaught on the Lebanon.[\[xxx\]](#)

Despite differences with Netanyahu, and the latter's insolence in baiting him, American President, Obama has readily replenished Israel's military arsenal to the tune of billions of dollars, after every horrifying assault on Gaza.

President Reagan explained in 1981 the reason for such lavish aid: 'With a combat experienced military, Israel is a force in the Middle East that is actually a benefit to us. If there were not Israel with that force, we'd have to supply it with our own.'[\[xxxi\]](#)

In fact on that basis America's \$5 billion dollars a year is a cheap price to pay for Israel's service. Billions more are pumped into NATO. Reagan was not simply articulating that Israel was a "tool" of the USA. It is much more than that. He was speaking of its functional utility. Paying for that was a bargain at any price.

An example of one of the most cynical functional services Israel performs is the turning of Gaza into a permanent shooting range for the periodic testing of the international arms industries state of the art weaponry and equipment. The people of the Gaza Strip are the guinea pigs in this war game. In fact Gaza has been turned into a vast open air laboratory for the testing of the latest munitions and weapons. This is a vital utility for 21st Century imperialism's military arsenal.[\[xxxii\]](#)

Such a nexus between America and Israel rules out any solid belief that the USA can perform the function of "honest broker". Israel's rulers are clearly aware that whatever their differences, Washington will stand by them. Netanyahu knows this better than most and plays the hand adroitly. In his slickness he well knows how to appeal to the western media who ultimately take their cue from American interests and have made global brainwashing an art in keeping with their obfuscatory role.

Palestinians seeking a negotiated settlement through American good will, are bound to come up against a dead end or should we say Herzl and Jabotinsky's "iron wall" – a wall not only to secure the Zionist state but to enable it to perform a function supporting USA and Western interests in the region and beyond.

Elmessiri points out that throughout history "functional groups" of ancient and medieval times, ultimately outlive their function, through the emergence of the modern nation state. They become a liability and their people are dispensed with or may become assimilated into the wider society. Some examples provided are Japanese Samurai, Hebrew mercenaries in the Hellenic period, Papal Swiss Guards, Ottoman Janissaries, Cossacks and Mamlukes, Prussian mercenaries who actually

served in South Africa and so on. Not only mercenaries, however, for he cites the many categories of traders such as Arab, Lebanese, Chinese who followed the trade routes from ancient times. He stresses that there is nothing intrinsic to the Jewish people about financial and commercial skills; rather that the acumen derives from the functional role. Outright collaborative regimes such as Vichy France, Quisling in Norway, South Africa's Bantustan leaders, might qualify more as temporary tools of an imperial or occupying power, of very transient worth, rather than fully fledged functional groups or states with their more organic socio-economic utility.

Many Israeli Jews, like white South Africans, do not have the convenient choice of former settlers to fall back on foreign passports. Furthermore many have come to acquire an identity with the country in which they have lived for generations. Afrikaner families can trace their ancestry back to 17th century settlers in the Cape; and English settlers to the 1820's. Israeli Sabras might not go back that long but are a very different kettle of fish to those transients latterly out of Russia and Brooklyn. Those prepared to accept equality with their fellow citizens have in South Africa been able to find a future after equal rights for all citizens has been guaranteed in the country's new constitution.

Whilst it is possible that the USA might in time find Zionist Israel a liability and of less import than other Arab interests this does not imply the end of the Jews in Palestine. The more those of settler origin come to share common values with the indigenous people, the stronger the process of nation building.

9. LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Archbishop Desmond Tutu summed up the affinity many South Africans have for the Palestinians when after a visit to the OPT's he declared: "I've been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa."[\[xxxiii\]](#) He has been echoed by many former freedom fighters stating that what the Palestinians experience under military occupation is far worse than what was experienced during the apartheid days.

On the surface, in some respects, prospects for the Palestinians appeared to be much better than that of the ANC in the hey-day of the PLO's rise to prominence in the late 1960's, when the Arab world was fired by Nasser's anti-imperialist nationalism.

Arafat's Fatah gained control of the PLO, and changed the discourse from a brand of old fashioned Pan-Arabism that promised to destroy Israel to a more focussed Palestinian nationalism. After guerrilla raids into Israel, the PLO's forces swiftly grew to assume the character of a regular army, to battalion and brigade strength. For a time they operated somewhat freely, if precariously, in Jordan and parts of the Lebanon, had a plentiful supply of weapons; support and funding from the Arab states; and a vital supply of recruits from the pool of refugees keen to take up arms and regain their lost land.

Although the 1967 war further worsened the crisis of land dispossession and the plight of refugees, and was a huge setback for Egypt, Syria and Jordan, the PLO expanded as a military entity.

In contrast the ANC, after the capture of the cream of its leadership in 1962-63, including Nelson Mandela, the round up and imprisonment of thousands of its key activists, was virtually crushed as an organised force within South Africa. There was an estimated 8,000 political prisoners serving lengthy prison sentences in 1965 with scores having been either hanged or killed in custody. Exile for those who escaped meant working out of cramped offices in far off Dar Es Salaam, virtually cut off from borders up to 3,000 kilometres away, through hostile Rhodesian and Portuguese controlled territory, with a few hundred cadres undergoing training and little prospect of recruitment except in dribs and drabs.

Both the ANC and PLO mobilised international support through the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations, as well as the OAU and Arab League. Support from the Arab League did not prevent the PLO's expulsion from Jordan in the 1970-71 "Black September" crackdown; followed by the ejection from the Lebanon in 1982 and Israel's years of occupation.. The consequence was the PLO leadership having to operate from Tunis until the Oslo Accords permitted Arafat to relocate to Ramallah in the West Bank.

The guerrilla operations of the PLO had shown daring and courage, particularly evident at the battle of Karameh (March 21, 1968), when with Jordanian support they repulsed an invading Israeli force. Operations into Israel and the West Bank, took the form of raids, often as much as a score a day in the 1969-70 period, among these the cutting by commandos of the Haifa Highway. This phase ended in mounting casualties, as Israel tightened its border security and mounted reprisal operations into Lebanon and Jordan.

It has been generally accepted that the biggest defect was the absence of political work and lack of clarity regarding the objectives of armed struggle and its necessary connection with mass struggle. As frustrations grew the resort to the hijacking of aircraft and the attack on Israel's athletes at the Munich Olympic Games in September 1972 occurred.

Undoubtedly such actions were in response to Israel's state terrorism against the Palestinians and the ever present need resistance fighters have of demonstrating that they have not been defeated and have the capacity to strike back.

Whatever way the outside world chose to view such actions, the PLO's armed operations raised the national consciousness of the scattered Palestinian people after the disasters of 1948 and 1967.

The year 1974 consequently saw perhaps the greatest political success of the post-1967 phase, when linked to Arafat's "olive branch" speech to the United Nations General Assembly in November 1974, the UN granted the PLO observer status. Resolutions recognising the PLO as "representative of the Palestinian people" and their right to national self-determination were also adopted.[\[xxxiv\]](#)

This recognition was followed by the European Union, the USA and finally Israel from 2001 onwards. The downside was trapping the PLO into the Oslo process increasingly regarded as having become a dead letter. The armed struggle was abandoned by the PLO to be pursued by Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Whatever the failures and limitations, the Arafat-Habash generation achieved incalculable advances as commented on by Yazid Sayigh: “In retrospect, the armed struggle had allowed the founders of Fatah, the PFLP, and other guerrilla groups to achieve mass mobilization among the scattered Palestinians and to integrate them politically into the single, over-arching national framework of the PLO as a state-in-exile...In the process, Fatah succeeded in asserting its brand of pragmatic, state-centred nationalism that emphasized the establishment of a political and institutional identity distinct from Arab counterparts....Alternative nationalist discourses associated with pan-Arabism or the ‘total’ liberation of Palestine and unrelenting war with Israel were marginalized, although a new breed of Islamist groups – Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad – revived the discourse of ‘armed resistance’ from the mid-1980s.”[\[xxxv\]](#)

Eqbal Ahmed, the Pakistani academic and mentor of Edward Said, was of a more critical view in a 1994 article on the PLO and the ANC: “The most significant contrasts between the two are political...For the ANC, politics never lost primacy...all PLO factions perceived armed struggle in militaristic rather than political terms...”[\[xxxvi\]](#)

The ANC, however, had its own problems grappling with efforts to recover from the setback of the early 1960’s. It too was initially inclined to pursue guerrilla struggle as a primary method. In 1967 ANC and Zimbabwean combatants, entered Rhodesia from newly independent Zambia, to challenge Ian Smith’s settler forces. The ANC’s aim was to take the fight through to South African territory in the hope of establishing a presence back home. Incursions into Zimbabwe lasted over a year, and despite gains in combat experience were terminated. Although this led to heated internal debate calling for a move away from pure military activity, and intentions to focus on internal political work in tandem, only limited improvement occurred over the next decade and in fact was never satisfactorily resolved. What came to the ANC’s rescue were four important factors:

1. The emergence inside South Africa of worker and student militancy evidenced by a black consciousness movement; momentous strike wave in Durban in 1973; the growth of African trade unions; and protests by both black and white students culminating in a 1976 black students uprising that swept the country;
2. The development of armed struggles in Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe; the support and resolve of the front line African states; and exceptional support from Cuba, the USSR, and the socialist block;
3. The collapse of Portuguese colonialism as a consequence of its wars in Africa and revolt of the military in Lisbon in April 1974;
4. The growing isolation of South Africa as a result of the international boycott campaign which grew from strength to strength.

Independence in Angola and Mozambique greatly altered the balance of forces in Southern Africa. These two revolutionary countries provided staunch support and bases for the fraternal liberation movements. The 1976 student rebellion resulted in hundreds leaving the country in search of weapons and training. They joined the

ANC in droves. At that stage 1975-76 Cuba had come to Angola's assistance to defeat an invasion by the South African Defence Force (SADF) attempting to prevent the MPLA consolidating the power it had won over CIA and Apartheid proxies.

The ANC's armed struggle took on renewed vigour. During the next decade popular mass mobilisation with the emergence of a United Democratic Front, a militant trade union federation (COSATU) and workers strikes within South Africa began to dramatically change the picture. Zimbabwean independence in 1980 saw the further erosion of colonial racist domination in the region. The most decisive turning point occurred in Angola when in 1987-88 Cuban internationalist forces once again came to the MPLA government's assistance by repulsing the SADF at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, followed by a spectacular advance to the borders of Namibia. This spelt disaster for racist South Africa; paved the way for Namibia independence in 1990; and saw an upsurge in mass mobilisation and conditions for a negotiated settlement in South Africa. Fidel Castro hailed victory over the SADF as so significant that he stated in a victory speech "Henceforth the history of Africa will be written as before and after Cuito Cuanavale."[\[xxxvii\]](#)

Whilst ANC guerrilla operations had increased they never amounted to more than low intensity actions, more psychological and inspirational in effect than of military consequence but by no means inconsequential. They made a great impact in enthusing the black masses. Such operations however need to be appreciated in reinforcing the mass political struggle that effectively unbanned the ANC and freed Mandela and all political prisoners. It was the underlying contradictions within the system that led the ruling apartheid regime, and the white business community it served, to opt for reforms urged by Western interests to head-off a pending revolution. The collapse of the Soviet Union certainly influenced that decision since the ANC would no longer constitute the radical threat to capitalism it was believed it had previously posed. That the South African ruling class was prepared to take that chance, and carry the white electorate with them when the question was put to a vote in a 1992 referendum, showed that hardened attitudes could be altered by changing interests and exigencies. For the ruling elite, the ANC had policies they found they could largely accept, although they balked at those relating to nationalisation. Instead of civil war and perpetual conflict, the white community, with the encouragement of their rulers and the capitalist media, were prepared to see race laws rescinded. The reconciliation measures of Mandela and the ANC, with constitutional guarantees, greatly assisted in calming their worst fears.

10. THE FOUR PILLARS OF STRUGGLE

The strategy and tactics of the liberation struggle for South Africa was developed over many years, out of the crucible of experience, taking into account errors and achievements. The movement believed in consultation, providing leadership but learning from the people, and did not shirk from internal debate and criticism even in the difficult conditions of illegality. After the aborted incursions into Zimbabwe in 1967-68 a critical conference was held in Morogorro, Tanzania, to resolve pressing problems of the armed struggle, the need for political work within South Africa and leadership renewal.[\[xxxviii\]](#)

For another decade the ANC continued to grapple with the problem. Oliver Tambo, ANC President, wrote in his notebook after a visit to Vietnam in 1979: “We’ve been forced by events into a false, a bad strategic situation in which armed struggle is and remains the basis of political struggle – an impossible equation. [It is] necessary to correct this distortion...we see the struggle as being built up from outside, introduced from outside by people who are outside...This approach wholly excludes the people, the masses, as the decisive factor not only for victory, but for any progress at all in our struggle...[We] see a serious strategic problem to solve before we can hope to make advances. Hence the view that we slow down on [military] operations and work for a change in the order of priority as between political work and military operations.”[\[xxxix\]](#)

An appropriate strategy emerged following that top level visit to Vietnam, headed by Tambo, to acquire insight into that country’s victory over American imperialism. The ANC’s strategic formulation of Four Pillars of Struggle was formulated as a result.[\[xli\]](#)

These were (i) Political mass struggle; (ii) armed struggle; (iii) clandestine underground struggle; and (iv) the weapon of international solidarity.

Although separate, they were meant to develop and combine in a dialectical manner, so that each would mutually strengthen the other.

Political struggle was primary and not to be subordinated to the military.

Attention was paid to building an underground network throughout the country that could issue propaganda material, explain ANC policy, inspire protest actions, and root the armed struggle among the people i.e. Peoples War.

Whilst the development of popular organisation, mobilisation and people’s resistance within South Africa was fundamental in bringing about change, undoubtedly international solidarity helped tip the balance. It took some 30 years but the worldwide Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigns - launched in London in 1959 - for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) became an incalculable factor in:

(a)isolating and weakening the apartheid regime

(b)inspiring the struggling people

(c)undermining the resolve of those states that supported and benefited from relations with apartheid South Africa,

(d)generating a change of attitude amongst the South African white public generally, and the political, professional and business elite in particular. I was told by a former apartheid government minister that when the iconic British Barclays Bank announced it was closing business in South Africa after 150 years it was the last straw that for him “broke the camel’s back.”

BDS made apartheid’s beneficiaries feel the pinch in their pocket and their polecat status whether in the diplomatic arena, on the sporting fields, at academic or business conventions, in the world of theatre and the arts, in the area of commerce

and trade and so on. Arms sanctions weakened the efficiency of the SADF; disinvestment by trade unions and churches affected the economy as did the termination of banking ties by the likes of Chase Manhattan and Barclays banks; boycott of products from fruit to wine saw a downturn in trade; the disruption of sports events was a huge psychological blow; dockworkers refusing to handle ship's cargoes disrupted trade links. It could not be "business as usual." [\[xli\]](#)

By the 1980's with the development of the Four Pillars the difficulties of earlier years were being overcome. So promising was the rise in recruitment and the ability to train, supply and communicate with internal combat units, combined with the intensification of mass struggle and resistance, that the country was becoming ungovernable and apartheid made unworkable. Expectations arose of the possibility of a mass insurrection. This gave rise to the SACP as late as a Congress in April 1989, adopting an Insurrectionary Program as a Path to Power, without ruling out possibilities of negotiations. [\[xlii\]](#)

11. A WAY AHEAD?

For some time it has been evident that the Israeli ruling elite, corrupt, bereft of vision and divided, are finding that they can no longer rule in the old way. Military aggression and extreme chauvinism cannot solve their problems. Only a political solution can. The Palestinians have shown in no uncertain terms that they are willing to die for their cause and are not prepared to live under the old conditions.

At the start of the Arab Spring in 2011 there was enormous hope that a new balance of forces, favouring democracy and revolution, was in the making throughout the Middle East. With counter-revolution, civil war and barbaric internecine conflict those hopes seem to be dashed; although the democratic break-through in Tunisia survives despite fierce contestation.

Notwithstanding the perilous regional situation, the spirit of resistance of the Palestinian people is alive. Their levels of determination and vitality are high. There is cause for hope which is more important than the ebb and flow of optimism and pessimism. The following factors can be identified as contrary to the bleak and alarming developments in the Arab world:

Â. The heroic people of Gaza have shown remarkable tenacity in surviving the blockade and the barbaric onslaught by the IDF. Whatever one's view of the rocket fire into Israel, the IDF could not stop that form of resistance by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. As horrendously disproportionate as the fatalities were the innovative use of tunnels in Gaza from which counter-attacks against the IDF were launched in 2014, accounted for the deaths of 66 Israeli troops, and stopped the IDF in its tracks. The IDF like the SADF cannot carry the burden of fatalities. Demographics for Israel are a sensitive area. Gaza has become an international symbol of heroic resistance.

Â. Israel's rounds of aggression have failed to achieve any form of victory; their opponents proved to be potent adversaries willing to suffer harsh consequences. As an American national security adviser, Charles Freilich, has observed: "The ongoing inability of...the IDF to defeat...Hizbullah and Hamas is

troublesome....One cannot destroy the ideas they represent or eliminate the need for the services they provide [their people]. The difficulties Israel has encountered in dealing with them have been shared by all conventional armies dealing with asymmetric guerrilla confrontations..."[\[xliii\]](#)

Â· Protest within the West Bank continues and the possibility of a third Intifada simmers beneath the surface. It is in this space that the mobilisation of Palestinian civil society has emerged radiating a powerful promise of new forms of mobilisation and resistance. Bilin's weekly protest at the Wall, and other such activities, from Bethlehem to Hebron are indicative of an unquenchable thirst for freedom and justice.

Â· Within Israel a positive development has been the success of the Joint "Arab" List (formed by the Islamic Movement, communists Hadash, and nationalist Balad) winning 13 seats in the March 2015 elections.[\[xliv\]](#) As the third biggest block in the Knesset they may play a more significant role, transforming parliament into an ideological battlefield. Most significantly they transmit a non-sectarian signal to all Palestinians. Balad's secretary general, Awad Abdel Fattah, commented that the Joint List has "fundamentally changed the discourse among the Palestinians in Israel", and "puts the Arab parties on a shared path towards the much delayed goal of reorganising our community."[\[xlv\]](#) The Palestinians within Israel have been underestimated. Yet there have been plenty of signs of their rising spirit: from the turning point in 2000 when 13 protestors were killed in civil clashes with the police; demonstrations in Haifa and the Negev last year against the relocation of the Bedouin; to the more recent semi-uprising in East Jerusalem against the racist abduction and lynching of young Palestinians.

Â· Internal contradictions, both class and race, in a capitalist society like Israel, has seen simmering resentment under the surface among Mizrachi (Arab) Jews at their inferior status compared to the dominant Ashkanasi from Europe. Racial and class discrimination has been experienced even more so by the Ethiopian Jews who were brought to Israel three decades ago. Early May this year saw protests in Tel Aviv in angry retaliation to the police beating an Ethiopian army officer. These anti-racist protests have seen Jews and Palestinians joining Ethiopian demonstrators on the streets. This is a most important sign for such shared experience will surely grow in the future breaking down psychological barriers and enhancing solidarity actions. Underestimated too are the courageous actions of Jewish protestors and civic organisations from women monitoring the check-points, to journalists and writers such as Gideon Levy, Almira Hass, Ilan Pappé and Avi Shlaim bearing testimony, to activists against house demolitions and youth refusing army service prepared to go to jail. They might be relatively few in number compared to the racist mobs but they are of enormous symbolic importance – the pinch of yeast needed to bake the bread.

Â· BDS, in its tenth year, has emerged as a weapon internationally that is going from strength to strength at a faster rate than that of the Anti-Apartheid Movement of yesteryear. It has almost become impossible to keep pace with achievements as mounting successes are recorded from the academic and cultural boycott; cancellation of international contracts and concerts; divestment

by important institutions particularly in Scandinavia; growing opposition regarding sporting links; cutting of diplomatic ties by Latin American states; the spreading activism on university campuses, Durban dock workers refusing to handle Israeli cargo and so forth. In South Africa 14,000 schoolchildren marched last week against a leading store selling Israeli products. A recent poll reveals that one in six American Jews support boycotting Israeli products and 25% support settlement boycotts. An article by Omar Barghouti, leading BDS campaigner, in The New York Times, proclaims in bold letters: "Israeli Extremism Will Encourage Global Boycott" and continues, "Shedding democratic pretences and adopting unmasked colonial policies will enhance a movement that's been a serious threat to Israel."[\[xlvi\]](#)

Â· Flotilla 3 to Gaza, with boats from Canada and Scandinavia, is on the high seas, will hold rallies at ports *en route*, and send this message: "World opinion has begun to build around a positive future for the people of Palestine and restoring capacity for equitable international relationships. The time for opening the port of Gaza has come and the world knows it."[\[xlvii\]](#) Whatever the destiny of Flotilla 3, other flotillas will follow until the siege of Gaza is broken and Gaza as a window on the world for Palestinians will be an open port.

Â· The anti-Zionist hostility from the Arab street, and particular Egyptian, can ignite at any time. The actions of the Arab working class, students, professionals, women and youth, will not be blunted by authoritarian rule. Mass pressure on their governments for action against Israel could increase precisely in the space where the democratic process has been closed down in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The Arab masses are both part of international solidarity but at the same time almost organically tied to the Palestinian people. Egypt's powerful working class, in particular, is a source of strength for the Palestinian working class and people in general. In the week of *El Nakba* just passed Egyptian protestors chanted "Oh Palestine we are you, you are us."

Â· The once dominant Zionist narrative has been overturned by the sustained research, writings, journalism of Arab and Israeli historians and commentators; and by the advocacy of Palestine solidarity organisations around the world, trade unions and Jewish anti-Zionist opponents; the TV exposure of Israeli war crimes; the hearings of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine; the Gaza flotilla etc. The influence of AIPAC (American-Israel Public Affairs Committee) diminishes as younger American Jews refuse to show blind loyalty to Israel.

Â· Whatever the weaknesses of the United Nations and of Israel's flouting of international law concerning military occupation and war crimes, the global community continues to hold Zionist Israel to account. This raises the ultimate threat of enactment of the raft of resolutions Israel defies, including the Rights of the Refugees.

In short the narrative has changed; the legitimacy of Israel is challenged from many directions with a realisation that it is a colonial-type Apartheid State; the Palestinians in all sectors maintain their spirit of resistance and will inevitably forge chains of unity

against chains of colonial oppression. The many points of contradiction within the Zionist colonial and functional system are combustible elements that can ignite and spread like a forest fire. Civil resistance is becoming a concrete force as a key road forward in which the demand of full equality for all is becoming the unifying clarion call.

An outstanding question relates to Israel's functional utility for the USA. To what extent might this be loosened or undermined? Contradictions between the USA and Israel are appearing in differences over America's strategic concerns including its relations with Iran. As the Arab world is torn asunder the Saudis, the Turks, the Egyptians are America's more functionally important allies. It is difficult to see which way things may develop. However, the USA government and corporate rulers, by no means stand by Israel for sentimental reasons. True the USA represents the most powerful force in the world but it does not get its own way; suffers severe internal contradictions; faces mounting opposition to its policies at home and abroad and will choose what suits it best. In time functional groups lose their function and become dispensable.

12. CONCLUSION

Abdelwahab Elmessiri, a profoundly humanistic person, expressed the following hope in 2006: "Why should the South African model not serve as a model for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, keeping in mind the specific nature of the Zionist enclave? [Apartheid] South Africa was dismantled, and the white (settler) population was absorbed in the new regime. The 'destruction' of the racist regime did not mean the destruction (the extermination or the expulsion) of the alien demographic element that was transferred from Europe. A similar situation could obtain in occupied Palestine. To start with, the Zionist state should normalise itself, namely to be a state for its citizens.... This means that the racist Law of Return should be rescinded and the Palestinians' right of return should be recognised and implemented.... the Arabs....should recognise the right of the Israeli citizenry to have full political, legal, and human rights, and to be able to give full expression to their religious and ethnic identity, provided that their definition of identity does not encroach on the rights of the others. A multi-ethnic, multi-religious state could integrate all...."

Netanyahu and Zionists of his ilk, caught up in the frenzy of Israel's colonial racism, impelling shifts to the extreme right, will not find their way out of the morass. The road sign Netanyahu follows is inscribed: "Impasse". Reactionaries throughout history underestimate a people's spirit of resistance which they ignore at their peril and can never subdue or surmount in the long term. As far as time is concerned Arab culture like that of the East is patient"!..but history has that potency of surprising us all. It happened far quicker than we anticipated in South Africa.

Having quoted a former unlamented South African apartheid Prime Minister, like all despots a very arrogant and therefore stupid man, I conclude by quoting from the country's first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela, hosting a delegation led by Yasser Arafat in 1997 to Pretoria: "The UN took a strong stand against apartheid; and over the years, an international consensus was built, which

helped to bring an end to this iniquitous system. But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”[\[xlviii\]](#)

Our Palestinian Alice with a clear destination in mind, and a fighting spirit personified by the word *sumud*, is aware of Nelson Mandela’s autobiography entitled “No easy walk to freedom,” and with no illusions is bound like him to find the best route home. Like lovers of freedom and justice everywhere we walk with Alice. She is not alone. Inshallah!

Ronnie Kasrils born Johannesburg 1938 of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, was a promising athlete who graduated from high school in 1956 and briefly became a script writer for a film company before becoming involved in politics. He served in the South African freedom struggle all his adult years from 1960 onwards, was banned in his country, involved in the initial armed actions in 1961, before becoming a leader in exile in both the ANC and SACP; chief of intelligence in the ANC’s military wing and served in the underground in the country in 1990. With the advent of democracy he was appointed deputy minister defence under Mandela 1994-99; Minister Water Affairs & Forestry 1999-2004; Minister Intelligence Services 2004-08 when he resigned from government. He penned a petition “Not in my Name” in protest against Israel’s policies in 2001 whilst still a minister, which garnered several hundred signatures from Jewish personalities in South Africa; visited Gaza and the West Bank on two occasions before being barred further entry by Israel; is internationally active in BDS and Palestine solidarity; is a social activist involved in the recently formed United Front in South Africa which protests against corruption and injustice; and is involved in numerous national and international causes. He serves on the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, and on the International Verification Commission dealing with ETA’s unilateral ceasefire the Basque Country of Spain. He has written three books about Bertrand Russell, a memoir of the struggle against apartheid “Armed and Dangerous” in its record 4th edition (Jacana 2013); and an award winning book “The Unlikely Secret Agent” (Jacana 2010). He has written numerous articles and published poetry.

ENDNOTES

[i] Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri (1976), *Israel and South Africa: The Progression of a Relationship*, (New Brunswick, NJ: North American).

[ii] Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri (1998), *Encyclopedia of the Jews, Judaism, and Zionism: A New Explanatory Paradigm*, Eight Volumes (in Arabic), (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk).

[iii] Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri (2007) “From functional Jewish communities to the functional Zionist State,” in *The Future of Palestine and Israel: From Colonial Roots to Postcolonial Realities*, edited by Aslam Farouk-Alli, (Midrand, South Africa: Institute for Global Dialogue).

[iv] For example noted commentator Tariq Ali has this to say: “The Middle East is now in a total mess: the central, most important power is Israel, expanding away; the Palestinians have been defeated and will remain defeated for a very long time to come... all the principal Arab countries are wrecked, first Iraq, now Syria; Egypt, with a brutal military dictatorship in power, is torturing and killing as if the Arab Spring had never happened – and for the military leaders it hasn’t.... As for Israel, the blind support it gets from the US is an old story.... It’s inconceivable that any Israeli government is going to grant the Palestinians a state. As the late Edward Said warned us, the Oslo Accords were a Palestinian Treaty of Versailles. Actually, they are much worse than that.” For more details

see: <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/04/17/the-new-world-disorder/>

[v] For more details see: Maxime Rodinson (1982), *Israel and the Arabs* (London: Pelican Books).

[vi] Today’s demographics of approximately 6.2m Palestinians - within Israel 1.4m; West Bank 2.7m; and Gaza 1.7 - is almost on a par with Israel’s 6.1 million Jews of whom 500,000 are illegal settlers in the West Bank. Sourced from official Israel and Palestinian figures. For more details

see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic_history_of_Palestine

[vii] Elmessiri (2007), “From functional Jewish communities to the functional Zionist State,” p. 153. The Union Act of 1909 came into being in 1910 when the white or European settlers of South Africa were granted independence to rule in partnership with British capital over the indigenous African people and those of mixed race or shipped over from Malaya and Indonesia as slaves by the Dutch from as early as the 17th century or as indentured labour by the British from the mid-1850’s] Jan Christian Smuts, the Boer commander who had fought the British in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, became South Africa’s Prime Minister and trusted ally of the British from the First World War onwards.

[viii] The Freedom Charter was adopted at a historic Congress of the People, at Kliptown, Johannesburg, on June 26, 1955. Its preamble declares: “We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: That South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people; That our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality; That our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities; That only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief; And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter, And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.” For more details see: <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=72>

[ix] The Sharpeville massacre: 69 unarmed protestors engaged in a peaceful protest in a township near Johannesburg on 21 March, 1960 were killed by police action. For more details see: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/sharpeville-massacre-21-march-1960>

[x] *Umkhonto weSizwe* – The Spear of the Nation, announced its existence through bomb attacks in several cities, 16 December, 1961. Its founding Manifesto declared: “It is well known that the main national liberation organisations have conducted themselves peaceably at all times; they have done so because the people prefer peaceful methods of change to achieve their aspirations without the suffering and bitterness of civil war. But the people’s patience is not endless. The time comes in the life of any nation where there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back; in defence of our people, our future and our freedom. We hope - even at this late hour – that our first actions will awaken everyone to a realisation of the disastrous situation to which the Nationalist Party is leading; before matters reach a desperate state of civil war.” For more details see: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/umkhonto-wesizwe-mk>

[xi] Ilan Pappé (2007), *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (Oxford: Oneworld). Some 750,000 Palestinians either fled or were forced from their homes and land in May 1948 and relocated as refugees in Jordan, Syria, West Bank and Gaza Strip accounting for 60% of their number. Approximately 500,000 remained in Israel.

[xii] *Rand Daily Mail*, Johannesburg, November 23, 1961. Verwoerd was reacting to Western criticism of apartheid whilst they supported Israel and overlooked its dispossession of Palestinian land and rights. He erroneously calculated Arab settlement from Islamic times ignoring indigenous Palestinian settlement from time immemorial.

[xiii] International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3068 (XXVIII) of 30 November 1973 – entered into force 18 July 1976.

[xiv] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, adopted on November 10, 1975 by a vote of 72 to 35 (with 32 abstentions), “determine[d] that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination”. The vote took place approximately one year after UNGA 3237 granted the PLO “observer status”, following Yasser Arafat’s “olive branch” speech to the General Assembly in November 1974. The resolution was passed with the support of the Soviet bloc and other then Soviet-aligned nations, in addition to the Arab and Islamic majority countries. The resolution was revoked in 1991 with UN General Assembly Resolution 46/86, shortly following the end of the Cold War.

[xv] Jimmy Carter (2007), *Palestine – Peace not Apartheid*, (New York: Simon and Schuster).

[xvi] Oliver Tambo speech, 9th November 1982. For more details see Ronnie Kasrils (2015), “Birds of a Feather,” in *Peoples Apart: Israel, South Africa and the Apartheid Question*, edited by Ilan Pappé, (London: Zed Books). [To be published in October 2015].

[xvii] Programme of the South African Communist Party, *The Road to South African Freedom*, 1962. For more details

see: <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1962/road-freedom.htm>

[xviii] Theodor Herzl (1961), *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, 5 vols., edited by Raphael Patai; translated by Harry Zohn. (New York and London: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff).

[xix] Nur Masalha (1992), *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought*, (Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies).

[xx] Nahum Goldmann (1978), *The Jewish Paradox* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

[xxi] Benjamin Beit-Hallahm (1998), *Original Sins: Reflections on the History of Zionism and Israel*, (New York: Interlink Publishing Group); see also Tom Segev (1986), *1949: The First Israelis*, (New York: The Free Press).

[xxii] Goldmann (1978), *The Jewish Paradox*.

[xxiii] *The London Times*, June 25, 1969.

[xxiv] Shamil Jeppie (2007), "Israel: A colonial settler state? What kind of decolonisation? Some reflections from Africa," in *The Future of Palestine and Israel: From Colonial Roots to Postcolonial Realities*, edited by Aslam Farouk-Alli, (Midrand, South Africa: Institute for Global Dialogue), pp. 66 - 80. Jeppie takes as his starting point an essay by the French historian Maxime Rodinson written after the Six Day War; for more details see Maxime Rodinson (1973), *Israel: A Colonial Settler State?* (New York: Anchor Books). This work has similar considerations as manifest in the CST paradigm.

[xxv] For more details see Awad Abdelfattah: <http://972mag.com/the-joint-list-isnt-turning-its-back-on-israeli-society/104048/>

[xxvi] According to Elmessiri the "functional state" whilst serving its own interests willingly ingratiate itself as functionary of a more powerful state's interests in much the same way as professional functionary groups in history serve their masters. Elmessiri makes fascinating reference to warrior castes such as the Japanese Samurai, Janasseries of the Ottoman Empire, and the Mamlukes who were slaughtered on a Cairo parade ground by their monarch when they became dispensable. Most relevant is his objective study of the role of the medieval Jewish financial elite (with salient reference to Jewish historiography). Employed by the courts of Europe, classical in Poland, for their usury skills and as tax collectors from peasants and serfs, they received protection and privileges in return. Their Polish *shtetels* (villages) were guarded by the king's or nobles soldiers and synagogues fortified against the rebellion of the masses. He shows how aspects of this, including issues of mistrust and survival (for often they suffered from the duplicity of their masters) came to influence the mind-set of the likes of Herzl and later Zionists. Herzl and company patently sought to impress on Europe's rulers the functional role a Jewish state could offer their interests. It is quite intriguing to consider the legacy of this in the existential machinations of latter day Zionists. For

more details see Elmessiri (2007), "From functional Jewish communities to the functional Zionist State," pp. 108-160.

[xxvii] Herzl (1961), *The Complete Diaries*, Op. cit.

[xxviii] David Schafer (2002), "Triumph and Catastrophe", *The Humanist*, Nov-Dec.

[xxix] For more details see: "USA Jews for Justice," www.peacenow.org

[xxx] "US and Israel in \$30bn arms deal," *BBC News*, 16 August 2007.

[xxxi] Nasser Aruri (2003), *Dishonest Broker: The US Role in Israel and Palestine*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press).

[xxxii] This "function" has been brilliantly exposed in a documentary film, *The Lab*, by an Israeli journalist, Yotam Feldman. For more details on the film see: <http://www.gumfilms.com/projects/lab>. For a critical appraisal of the documentary

see: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/08/201381410565517125.html>

[xxxiii] For more details See Tutu's article in the London-based *Guardian* Newspaper: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/29/comment>

[xxxiv] The UN granted the PLO observer status on 22 November 1974 as per UNGA resolution 3237. UNGA resolutions 3210 and 3236 recognised the PLO as "representative of the Palestinian people."

[xxxv] Yazid Sayigh, "The PLO and the Palestinian Armed Struggle," *The Middle East Online: Series 1: Arab-Israeli Relations, 1917-1970*. www.gale.cengage.com/pdf/whitepapers/gdc/PLOAndPalestinian.pdf

[xxxvi] Eqbal Ahmed (1994), "The PLO and the ANC – Painful Contrasts" in *Selected Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press).

[xxxvii] Ronnie Kasrils (2009), "Battle for Angola: Turning Point at Cuito Cuanavale," in *The Sunday Independent*, September 21. <http://www.iol.co.za/news/world/turning-point-at-cuito-cuanavale-1.393891#.VVDbDfmUck0>

[xxxviii] "Forward to Freedom: Strategy, Tactics and Programme of the ANC," deliberated upon at the Morogorro Conference in Tanzania in May 1969, where a new approach to the development of the armed and political struggle was adopted. For more details see: http://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/sadet1_chap14.pdf; see also: Joe Slovo (1973), "Southern Africa: Problems of Armed Struggle" in *Socialist Register*, (London: Merlin Press); Benny Turok (1974), *Strategic Problems in South Africa's Liberation Struggle: A Critical Analysis* (Richmond, Canada: LSM).

[xxxix] Luli Callinicos (2004), *Oliver Tambo, Beyond the Engeli Mountains*, (Cape Town: David Philip), p. 527; Martin Legassick (2007), *Towards Socialist Democracy*, (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press), p. 26.

[xli] “The Green Book,” findings of a leadership study visit to Vietnam. For further details see: Karis and Gerhart (eds) (2013), “Report of the Politico-Military Strategy Commission to the ANC NEC August 1979,” in *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol 5, (Johannesburg: Jacana), pp. 720-34.

[xlii] Christabel Guerny (2000), “A Great Cause: The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959–March 1960,” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), March, pp. 123–44.

[xliii] “Path to Power”, Programme of SACP, 1989.” See also: J. Nxumalo (Mzala) (1986), “Towards People’s War and Insurrection” *Sechaba*, February; Ronnie Kasrils (1986), “People’s War, Revolution and Insurrection,” *Sechaba*, May; Graham Bloch (1991), “Insurrection in South Africa,” *Work in Progress*, No. 74, May.

[xliv] Charles D. Freilich (2015), “Why Can’t Israel Win Wars Any More?” *Survival*, Vol 57 No.2, April-May, p. 83.

[xlv] The Joint List received 446,583 votes (10.46%) of the 4.2 million votes cast in the March, 2015 elections; giving them 13 seats in the 120 seat Knesset. Netanyahu’s Likud came top with 30 seats (23.4% of the vote). The Zionist Camp of Hertzog and Livni got 24 seats (18.67%). The Joint List followed in third place.

[xlvi] For more details see Awad Abdelfattah: <http://972mag.com/the-joint-list-isnt-turning-its-back-on-israeli-society/104048/>

[xlvii] Omar Barghouti (2015), “Israeli Extremism will Encourage Global Boycott,” in *New York Times*, May 8. <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/05/08/can-the-us-make-peace-with-netanyahus-new-government/israeli-extremism-will-encourage-global-boycott>

[xlviii] For more details on the Gaza Flotilla see: <https://shiptogaza.se/en>

[xlix] Nelson Mandela, speech at banquet for Yasser Arafat, Pretoria, December 4th, 1997. For the full text of the speech see: <http://anc.org.za/show.php?id=3384>