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The Future of Palestine

Tim Anderson

Abstract:

The claim that Israel has a ‘right to exist’ is a contrived myth. In fact, apartheid states are crimes against humanity and must be dismantled. The pertinent question, addressed by this paper, is what are the future prospects for a democratic Palestine? The paper begins by reviewing the foundations of the Israeli state, including its racial ideology, the character of the Palestinian resistance, the ‘moral equivalence’ and false reformist arguments of ‘left Zionism’; and then the prospects for a democratic Palestine. The analysis identifies the key challenges of Zionist military occupation, powerful western allies, a fanatical Zionist mission and disunity amongst Palestinian factions and their allies. On the other hand the strengths are ongoing Palestinian resistance, the growing legitimacy of Palestine, the commitment of regional allies and the vulnerability of Israel’s allies to exposure of Zionist crimes. In sum the future of Palestine is clouded with divisions, pain and sacrifice but remains far from hopeless.

Palestine is often portrayed in clichés: ‘religious conflict’, ‘helpless victims’ and ‘terrorism’. None of these really help us understand the situation. But it is not too complicated. The roots of the conflict lie in a traditional project of colonisation, supported by Britain and the USA. It is aggravated by public brutality and ongoing dispossession. The last seven decades of dreadful conflict and violence do show currents and counter-currents, principally those of ethnic cleansing and resistance. A proper reading of these currents might help us see what prospects there might be for a democratic and peaceful Palestine.

Despite decades of brutalising assaults, Palestinian resistance to the racial Israeli state has not diminished, let alone disappeared. Indeed, in the middle of an apparently desperate situation, there are some rays of hope. Boundaries to the north and south have been placed on the expansion of the sectarian state, by the resistance in Gaza and in south Lebanon. Meanwhile, Palestinian people in the occupied territories remain on their land and steadfastly resist (*sumud*), while the new colonists cheer on each new seizure of Palestinian land. Three generations of resistance now shape social relations.

On the one hand there is conflict and violence, linked to polarised colonial and anti-colonial mindsets. On the other, there is a strange air of normality in the major Arab cities – Ramallah, Hebron and Nablus – islands in a landscape of fences, walls, classified racial zones, feeder roads and army bases. Dozens of walls throughout the West Bank protect the Zionist colonies. Unlike Jerusalem, which is a heavily policed ‘mixed’ zone, life in the Arab cities goes on with little day to day Israeli presence. Yet the storm troops come at night.

This paper considers the prospects for a democratic Palestine by reviewing the foundations of the Israeli state, including its racial ideology, the character of the Palestinian resistance, the ‘moral equivalence’ and reformist arguments of ‘left Zionism’; and then finally the prospects for a democratic Palestine. The conclusion is not pessimistic.

1. The European colony in Palestine

There is no need to waste too much time debating whether the Jewish state of Israel is a racial, apartheid regime. There can be no doubt that it is built on 'racial' privilege and has developed its thorough-going apartheid system with steady ethnic cleansing. The Adalah (2017) group, for example, has documented more than 65 laws that make Israel a racist state. The most recent authoritative report from the United Nations - by US lawyers Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley (2017) - makes it clear that Israel is indeed an 'apartheid state' and, therefore, a crime against humanity. It must be dismantled. The claim that the racial state of Israel has a 'right to exist' is a contrived myth. As Falk and Tilley (2017) point out: "the situation in Israel-Palestine constitutes an unmet obligation of the organized international community to resolve a conflict partially generated by its own actions".

While Palestine has an ancient history, with the city of Jericho, founded perhaps 10,000 years ago, and with the capture of the holy city of Jerusalem by a variety of empires over the centuries, the current state of Israel has a peculiar history. After the British and French captured the Levant and other Arab lands from the Ottoman Empire, in the early 20th century, they began a series of partitions. Most of that division was to weaken any Arab state that would emerge, and another part was to allocate lands to the Zionist movement of European Jews.

All 13 of Israel's Prime Ministers since 1948 have come from European families. Not one came from a family which had lived in Palestine more than one generation. Yet they all claimed a 'right of return' to a mythical ancestral land.

Zionism was and is a mostly secular, colonial project; but it drew on religious myth and came about after centuries of anti-Jewish discrimination within Europe. The religious myths were from Biblical texts (Genesis 15:18, about promised lands) and from the cult of Second Temple Revivalism, one strand within contemporary Judaism. This line suggests that Jewish people will not have their social and spiritual vindication until their Second Temple, destroyed in the Roman era, is reconstructed in Jerusalem (Isaacs 2005).

European Zionists managed to extract a promise (the 'Balfour Declaration' of 1917) for land in the Levant from the British Government, as it took possession of the region from the Ottomans. Politically, however, and as a keen British journalist of the 1920s pointed out, when it reaffirmed the Balfour Declaration in the 1920s, the British objective was 'to establish in a strategic corner in the Near East a body of people in close coalition with the British' (Jefferies 2014). This same British administration, headed by David Lloyd George, would similarly frustrate Irish independence claims with a partition in the island's north, maintained by Protestant 'loyalists'. The partition of India in the late 1940s and the creation of Pakistan was also aimed at maintaining a British ally in the region, as part of the 'great game' against the influence of the Soviet Union (Singh Sarila 2005). The French, for their part, created an artificial Christian majority in the Lebanon, imagining that the little country would maintain loyal to Europe and France.

A lot has been written about Zionism (e.g. Hertzberg 1959; Hart 2005), the British in Palestine (e.g. Tuchman 1956; Segev 1999), the Balfour declaration (e.g. Jefferies 2014; Anderson 2017), the Nazi Holocaust (e.g. Gilbert 2014; Arad, Gutman and Margalio 2014) and the independence struggles of the Arab peoples (e.g. Hourani 1991; Provence 2005; Khalidi et al 2010). This chapter will only briefly refer to that history, enough for a context to the contemporary creation of the Jewish state and repression of the Arab state.

The missionary force behind the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine had two rationales. The first was a Zionist mission to colonise (or to 're-occupy') what were claimed as ancestral lands,

based on scriptural history. The second was to seek refuge from centuries of discrimination against European Jews, which had its appalling culmination in the Nazi Holocaust of 1933-1945. That long standing discrimination had been generated throughout the Holy Roman Empire, where Jews were blamed for various things, including the killing of Jesus of Nazareth (Adams and Heß 2018). European Jews were often barred from holding land and public office, and were expelled from various European countries (Nirenberg 2013; Trachtenberg 2014). The Nazi Holocaust, an attempted genocide of European Jews, has been well documented, despite the conditions of war and the destruction of records and human remains (Gutman, and Berenbaum 1998). There is no doubt about that great crime; nor is there any doubt that European Jews in the 1940s were seeking safe refuge from persecution in Europe. Yet none of that justified the dispossession and ethnic cleansing of the Arab people of Palestine.

Contrary to popular myth, the United Nations did not 'create' the state of Israel. In the late 1940s the British passed their League of Nations 'mandate' on Palestine to the newly formed United Nations. The UN formed a committee which reported on the 'Future Government of Palestine'. The majority report from this committee formed the basis of UNGA resolution 181, which recommended the creation of an Arab state, a Jewish state and a 'Special Regime' of international status for Jerusalem (UNGA 1947). Even though the population of Palestine in 1946 was 65% Arab and 33% Jewish, with 'no clear territorial separation of Jews and Arabs by large contiguous areas', the committee recommended that the area for the Jewish state be 55.5% of the total area of Palestine. Injustice to the Arab population, therefore, began with an unbalanced UN report and resolution. It was also controversial, at the time. Resolution 181 passed on 29 November 1947 with 33 votes in favour, 13 against and 10 abstentions (Hammond 2010; UNGA 1947). Both the British and the UN then left the Zionist groups to their dirty work.

On 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, proclaimed the establishment of a State of Israel. The declaration was immediately recognised by the government of the US, then the USSR and gradually many others. Almost a year later Israel was admitted as a member of the United Nations. However 25 states (Arab, Muslim and African states) have never recognised Israel, while seven countries (Iran, Chad, Cuba, Morocco, Tunisia, Oman and Qatar) subsequently revoked their earlier recognition (JVL 2018). Both preceding and accompanying the declaration was a terrible wave of Zionist violence which Arab Palestinians call 'The Catastrophe' (*al Nakba*), sweeping Palestinian people from hundreds of villages and from the land which they now call '1948 Palestine' (Sa'di, and Abu-Lughod 2007; Pappé 2006: Ch 4).

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has thoroughly documented the ethnic cleansing operation and, in particular, its planning. It was directed by a 'fourth and final' plan in March 1948 to 'ethnically cleanse the country as a whole'. Ben Gurion, leader of this operation, believed 80-90% of the British mandatory territory was needed and in 1947 he said that 'only a state with at least 80% Jews' would be 'a viable and stable [Jewish] state' (Pappé 2006: xii-xiii, 26, 48). To this end Plan C' had called for the killing of Palestinian political leaders, senior officials, inciters and financial supporters and the damaging of transport, water wells, mills, villages, clubs and cafes (Pappé 2006: 28). The fourth and final plan (Plan Dalet, 10 March 1948) added:

'These operations can be carried out in the following manner: either by destroying villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in their debris), and especially of those population centres ... In case of resistance, the armed force must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.' (Pappé 2006: 39; also Vidal 1997).

The outcome, highlighted by the Deir Yassin massacre of 9 April, where 107 villagers were killed, was a series of expulsions in which 531 villages and eleven urban neighbourhoods were

destroyed and 800,000 became refugees (Pappe 2006: xiii; Vidal 1997). The foundation of Israel, therefore, was built on a partial genocide and ethnic cleansing of the non-Jewish population of Palestine. Much later the former President of the World Jewish Congress, Nahum Goldmann, reported his colleague David Ben Gurion as saying:

‘Why should the Arabs make peace? If I were an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country ... They only see one thing: we have come here and stolen their country. Why should they accept that? They may perhaps forget in one or two generations' time, but for the moment there is no chance’ (in Goldmann 1978: 99).

The new Israeli state was not accepted by its Arab neighbours, who were taking in large numbers of refugees. And Israel had internal problems from the beginning. There was a failed attempt to create a constitution, then resort to a set of ‘basic laws’ which established some principles, while leaving others unresolved. The two key rationales for the racial state were spelt out: refuge and the ‘return from exile’: that is, refuge from the Nazi genocide and broader European persecution, and return to a supposedly ancestral land. In its Declaration of Independence Israel is called a ‘state of Jewish immigration’. The Zionist ‘Law of Return’, drafted by Ben-Gurion ‘in the shadow of the Holocaust’, argued that ‘whomever the Nazis called a Jew and sent to the death camps was to be offered refuge’ (Clayman 1995; Knesset 2014). However most of the early Zionist leadership came from Eastern European families; they and their families, like Ben Gurion, had been immigrants to Palestine before the Second World War. Ben-Gurion did not otherwise try to define who was a Jew. Clearly many of the subsequent European, Russian and American Jews who made use of that privileged migration regime had not been ‘sent to the death camps’.

Greater religious and essentialist racial overtones were added, with the idea that this law was for ‘the in-gathering of exiles’ (Knesset 2014), based on the myth that the ancestors of all Jewish people had been driven from the Levant, back in 70AD. Historical and genealogical evidence was then put forward in attempts to prove such a common ancestry.

Zionist racial ‘science’ adapted to the needs of the political project. Conventional Zionist historians these days maintain that all Jews have a common genetic makeup which comes from the Levant (e.g. Ostrer 2001). This theory tries to link the European (Ashkenazi) and Mediterranean (Sephardic) Jews to those of the Levant. It claims that those who were driven out of Palestine by the Romans, after the destruction of the Second Temple, went into exile along the Rhine river and other parts of Europe. World Jewry at the turn of the 21st century was estimated at 13 million, with 5.7m in the USA and 4.7 in Israel, but all were said to be biologically linked to ancestors in the Levant (Ostrer 2001). The implication is that European Jews might be said to be ‘returning’ to their ancestral home (e.g. Entine 2013; Rubin 2013).

Yet this ‘consensus’ has been seriously undermined. Professor Shlomo Sand, in his book *The Invention of the Jewish People* (Sand 2010), studied an earlier idea that Palestinian Arab villagers were descended from Jewish farmers. This was suggested by early Zionists David Ben Gurion and Chaim Weizmann, when they made common cause with Palestinian Arabs, before the creation of Israel. Yet Sand could find little evidence either of that or of the collective ‘exile’. He went on to argue that European Jews most likely were the descendants of those subject to mass conversions in north east Turkey, Europe and North Africa (Cohen 2009; Sand 2010). This explanation has support from historians who observed that millions of Jews lived in all the far reaches of the Roman Empire, the great majority outside Judea. Judaism was also a faith exported ‘to Yemen, Ethiopia, India and China’. Myths evolved about some of those as ‘lost tribes’ (Ostrer and Skorecki 2012:). The ‘Rhineland Theory’ tried to maintain the European Jewish link to Palestine, but was contradicted by the ‘Khazar Theory’ of mass conversions in the Caucasus.

Other arguments for the even wider origins of Europeans Jews drew on genetic, linguistic and documented evidence. Judaism, it seems, was more proselytising in the past than nowadays. Evidence for past ‘mass conversions’ undermines the ‘common ancestry’ theory and supports the view that Jewishness (like Christianity) spread more as a religion than through racial migration (Entine 2013, Rubin 2013). Yet Jewishness also became an supra-religious identity.

Eran Elhaik used Geographical Population Structure (GPS) technology to study the geographical origins of Yiddish, the language of Ashkenazic Jews. His findings draw on some common genetic disorders in Iranian and Ashkenazic people which, through genetic evidence, show that Ashkenazic DNA comes from mixtures of Jews in Iran, Greece and North East Turkey (Elhaik 2016). More dramatically, others have concluded that, at the time of the destruction of the second temple in 70AD, more than 90% of Jews were living outside Judea, mainly in southern Europe (Ghose 2013). Their DNA analyses show, through maternal haplo-group evidence, that all the major sources of Ashkenazi mitochondrial DNA:

‘have ancestry in prehistoric Europe, rather than the Near East or Caucasus ... thus the great majority of Ashkenazi maternal lineages were not brought from the Levant, as commonly supposed, nor recruited in the Caucasus, as sometimes suggested, but assimilated within Europe’ (Costa et al 2013).

This evidence, for a greater diversity of Jewish origins outside the Levant, is quite strong. Yet perhaps even more significant have been the zionist efforts to construct a loyal racial ‘science’, which might bolster the zionist project and its ‘right to return’ regime. This effort privileges Jews and, without even any pretence at science, excludes Palestinian Arabs. The latter are often simply dismissed as uncivilised people without culture or law. It is a terrible irony that Jewish people, who suffered so much from racial theorising and genocidal practice in Europe, should create racial myths to justify their own colonial project.

Racial ‘science’ came to obsess many zionists, as it did the persecutors of the Jews in Nazi Germany. A special people with special rights and a historical mission, was always a manufactured device. Today, those most upset at critiques of this racial ‘science’ are both orthodox zionists and neo-Nazis. For example, former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke rejects the idea that Jewishness might be religious and not racial. He supports the zionist consensus, maintaining the essentialist idea of Jews as a separate race (Bridges 2016). Such ‘science’ is readily turned to racist purpose, to reject those outside the special class. That is why we see striking similarities between the essentialist racism of, for example, the Nazi ideologist Julius Streicher and the zionist historian Benzion Netanyahu. They set up similar classes of superior and inferior peoples, demonising their ‘racial’ enemies. In both cases this ideology laid a common foundation for ethnic cleansing and genocidal practice (see Table One).

Table 1: Racial ideologies, the basis for ethnic cleansing

<p>Julius Streicher (1885-1946). Nazi ideologist, executed for spreading hatred of the Jewish people.</p>	<p>Benzion Netanyahu (1910-2012). Zionist historian and father of Benjamin Netanyahu.</p>
<p>As a child “a first suspicion came into my life that the essence of the Jew was a peculiar one ... Who were the money lenders? They were those who were driven out of the temple by Christ himself ... [they] never worked but live on fraud ... The God of the Jews is ... the God of hatred.” (Streicher 1938, 1945)</p>	<p>“He has no respect for any law ... in the desert he can do as he pleases. The tendency towards conflict is the essence of the Arab. He is an enemy by essence ... It doesn’t matter what kind of resistance ... what price he will pay. His existence is one of perpetual war.” (Derfner 2012)</p>

The inability of the Jewish state to clearly define who is a Jew has led to significant internal tensions; although for the purpose of citizenship this task has been passed to the supervision of orthodox rabbis. The Jewish-Israeli population, said to be around 50% European, 30% Sephardic and 23% from the Levant (Ostrer 2001: 891), is dominated by Europeans. There is significant European prejudice against both Separdim and the Arab Jews, for their cultural and religious differences (Shasha 2010; Masalha 2017). On top of that, there is a large group of around one million Russian and Ukrainian migrants, who came after the great depression in Russia of the 1990s. They were welcomed by the Israeli elite, as helping with the Jew-Arab numbers game, but it seems that many were economic migrants. On arrival as many as half were not seen as Jewish; so they were forced to submit to a conversion process, as a condition of citizenship (Reeves 2013). The pressure of non-Jewish immigrants, on top of the growing Arab population inside Palestine, was said to be adding to the pressure on Israel ‘to choose between being a ‘Jewish’ state and a democracy’ (Brownfeld 2000).

Zionists often attempt to conscript Jewish people to their cause, and accuse others of racism if they oppose Israel. This requires a peculiar logic. For example Julie Nathan, Research Officer for the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, claims that Zionism ‘is not separate from Judaism ... Zionism is an intrinsic component of Judaism’ (Nathan 2017a). In that view of the world, any calls for an end to the ‘colonial apartheid state’ means the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Jewish people (Nathan 2017b). In this way, rejection of the Jewish apartheid state’s supposed ‘right to exist’ is falsely painted as a genocidal threat to the Jewish people.

Ethnic cleansing in Palestine has changed over time, but its ambitions remain. The often cited ‘Yinon Plan’ of 1982 was not so much a plan as a reiteration of older Zionist ambitions, to create a ‘Greater Israel’ (*Eretz Yisrael*), a Jewish State stretching from ‘from the Brook of Egypt [the Nile River] to the Euphrates’ (Herzl 1960: 711). Oded Yinon, senior Israeli advisor, wrote of what he saw as a civilizational crisis of the ‘West’, during the cold war. Israel, for its part, could only “survive as a state” if it seized the ‘immense opportunities’ to extend its territory against a fragmented ‘Moslem Arab world’, which he claimed was ‘built like a temporary house of cards put together by foreigners’ (Yinon 1982). He did not recognise that Israel had been far more decisively built by foreigners.

The ‘Allon Plan’, which set out parameters for absorption of the occupied West Bank, was put to an Israeli cabinet in the wake of the Zionist victory in the 1967 war. Labor Minister Yigal Allon opposed the idea of delegating the Palestinian problem to Jordan, seeing that country’s monarchy as an unreliable partner. Instead he suggested that Israel begin to carve the West Bank into an Israeli controlled strip along the Jordan river, with permanent Jewish colonies (‘settlements’) and army bases strategically placed across all the Palestinian territories. He said ‘the last thing we must do is to return one inch of the West Bank’ (Auerbach 1991; Shlaim 2001). On that basis negotiation could be opened for a separate and subordinate Palestinian entity (Pedatzur 2007). This plan was not accepted by the Israeli cabinet but, with its initial aim of colonising 40% of the West Bank, and it became de facto Labor policy for many years (Reinhart 2006: 51).

Immediately after the 1967 conflict, Israel began to build illegal settlements and demolish Palestinian housing in the annexed areas of East Jerusalem. Yet the UN has not shifted from its position that the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, since 1967, are under belligerent occupation and therefore protected by the 4th Geneva Convention (AIC 2011: 5-6). UN Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) demanded the ‘withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territory occupied in the recent conflict’, and emphasised ‘the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war’ (UNISPAL 1967). Disregarding this resolution, successive Israeli governments began to colonise the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A range of devices – purchase under duress,

seizure for state purposes, penal confiscations – were used to seize land. The large number of feeder roads, military bases and buffer zones also expanded the territory taken by the colonies. Best informed estimates today of the Palestinian land occupied in flagrant violation of international law (categorised under Israeli law as ‘Category C’, for exclusive Israeli use) is now over 60% of the West Bank. This includes more than 200 colonies, both ‘authorised’ and ‘non-authorised’, containing around 600,000 ‘Israeli citizens’, of which over 200,000 live in those parts of the West Bank around Jerusalem, which have been more recently annexed by the separation wall (DG EXPO 2013; TOI 2016; BTSELEM 2017).

After Israel’s forced withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000, Tel Aviv decided to concentrate on steadily encircling and dominating the West Bank and Gaza. It realised that, in the post-colonial world, there were some limits on the mass ethnic cleansings of 1948 and 1967. Yet the steady colonisation and popular uprisings acted to discredit both the Oslo accords and the notion of a ‘two state solution’ (Bishara 2001: 11-12).

In this context Israel began to construct its notorious 700km ‘Separation Barrier’, supposedly to protect Israelis from Palestinian ‘terrorism’, but also to annex more territory. The Israeli government ignored an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, saying that the barrier would be a violation of international law (UN News Centre 2004). This wall is these days a multilayered system of fences, with an average 60m exclusion zone, and concrete walls in the urban areas. It extends deep into the West Bank, enclosing all of Palestinian East Jerusalem and linking up with the large colony of Adumim. The wall put about 100,000 Palestinians in enclaves, while cutting off many more from their land, homes and workplaces. Colonists have privileged access to most of the gates and roads that pass through the wall, deepening the apartheid character of Israel (Hever 2007: 15-17, 20-21, 52-56). It makes even more complex the level of policing of Palestinians according to residence and Israeli determined rights of movement. There are at least 5 categories of Palestinian rights of movements, reflected in their Israeli-issued ID cards (Hever 2007: 12-13).

The ‘Zone A’ areas (only Arabs allowed) are reminiscent of the ‘bantustans’ of Apartheid South Africa. Put up as a substitute for racial equality, these ‘homelands’ created municipalities with similar local government roles, like those of the current Palestinian Authority. While suggesting ‘independent’ status, they actually segregated and stripped black South Africans of their citizenship. Their leaders were rejected as ‘puppets of the apartheid regime’ (Phillips, Lissoni and Chipkin 2014). The current occupied territories are remarkable similar, as isolated, non-viable islands, dependent on and controlled by the colonial state. Yet Zionists do not see it this way. Israeli and Jewish populations are encouraged to believe that, in the colonial manner, military conquest entitles Israel to Arab lands. Yet that colonial notion has nothing to do with contemporary international law.

2. Palestinian Resistance

In the face of relentless Zionist pressure to empty Palestine of its non-Jewish population, it is only Palestinian resistance that has slowed the ethnic cleansing. Resistance is passive, active and underestimated. First there is the simple fact of Palestinians remaining on their land. This is often referred to as *sumud*, steadfastness or resilient resistance. It has been said that too little attention is paid to this autonomous resistance, including ‘adaptation’ by women and families, in the face of extreme violence, simply ‘asserting Palestinian culture and identity’ (Ryan 2015).

Then there is active including armed resistance. There is no doubt this is legitimate, in context of violent colonisation. It is well recognised by international law. Vicious, at times genocidal incitements are made by Zionist leaders, supporting repeated attacks on Palestinian communities. These attacks are, in large part, to make Palestinian territories 'uninhabitable' and so drive them from the 'promised lands' (Wadi 2018). In that context both remaining and fighting back represent resistance. The Apartheid State occupies more Arab land than before; yet the uprisings in Palestine show that the new 'settlements', their military bases and feeder roads are not safe (Bishara 2001: 24). They can be blocked and they can be sniped; and such incidents do occur, almost every day.

The United Nations General Assembly has acknowledged on several occasions the right of colonised peoples, and in particular Palestinians, to resist 'by all available means, particularly armed struggle' (UNGA 1978). The General Assembly has also said it 'strongly condemns all Governments which do not recognize the right to self-determination and independence of peoples under colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation, notably the peoples of Africa and the Palestinian people' (UNGA 1974). The principle is understood by independently thinking Israelis. Academic Baruck Kimmerling acknowledged that 'after some 35 years of occupation, exploitation, uprooting and degradation, the Palestinian people have the right to use force to oppose the Israeli occupation which, in itself, is a brutal use of force' (Kimmerling in Bishara 2001: 25). It is less well understood by outsiders who find it easier to only contemplate passive resistance.

Who is resisting? In a 2018 survey of those in the Occupied Palestinian Territories 61% said they identified as Palestinian and 12% as Muslim (JMCC 2018). As there are Christian, Druze and Bedouin Palestinians, and as the colonial powers have always played on religious or ethnic divisions, the preferred identity remains 'Palestinian'. While most Palestinians are quite religious, only a tiny minority (2.2%) see that extremist Islamists such as ISIS/DAESH help their cause (JMCC 2016). Syrian scholar Ghada Hashem Talhami (2001) considers Palestinian nationalism as a special case of Arab nationalism. That link may help explain why there has been such a strong expectation that the neighbouring Arab nationalists of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, even the Gulf monarchies, would assist the Palestinian resistance.

In response, Zionists often promote the idea that Palestine 'does not exist'. The consequence of this myth is that there is no occupation (Ben-Meir 2016). The late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, at one time, also said 'there is no such thing as a Palestinian and Palestinians do not exist'. However as a reflective person she did not really believe it. After her death she had a message passed to her British journalist friend, Alan Hart, saying that the 'Palestine does not exist' statement was 'the silliest damn thing she ever said' (Hart 2005: 18-19). Nevertheless, such statements have been encouraged amongst Jewish communities, to help build a necessary myth of the colonial process.

Despite the appalling conditions of life, Palestinians have refused to go away. Demographic trends within Palestine/Israel demonstrate this very well. The Palestinian population is growing, relative to the Jewish population. Extreme Zionists often dismiss this 'demographic threat'. Faitelson (2009), for example, says that there is no demographic threat to the Zionist project, because of supposed declining Arab birth-rates and steady emigration, driven by extreme conditions. Similarly Yoram Ettinger, of the American-Israel Demographic Research Group, dismisses the 'demographic threat', saying that the figures are exaggerated (Eldar 2018). And Israel constantly seeks to recruit immigrant Jews.

Nevertheless, recent estimates do show a pro-Palestinian demographic shift. A report from Jerusalem in 2011 showed that the Palestinian population of that city had risen from 25.5% in 1967 to 38% in 2009. It also revealed that, while East Jerusalem comprised one third the population of the city and municipality, it received less than 10% the investment in roads, sewage, public parks, swimming pools, libraries and sports facilities, and only one percent the investment in children's playgrounds (AIC 2011: 10, 12). The colonising regime has demonstrated a consistent unwillingness to treat Palestinians with any sense of human equality.

The Jewish Virtual Library shows that the Jews of Israel / 1948 Palestine have declined from a peak of 88.9% in 1960 to 74.7% in 2017 (JVL 2017). In parallel, officials from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics and the military run civil administration of the Occupied Territories (COGAT) say that the Arab population of Gaza, the West Bank and Arab citizens of Israel, along with residents of the annexed East Jerusalem municipality, add up to 6.5 million, about the same number as 'Jews living between the Jordan Valley and the Mediterranean (Heller 2018).

The Palestinian population, for its part, supports its institutions, though they have little faith in the current parties. This disillusionment comes partly from divisions between the Islamists and the secular parties. Almost all (96%) reject a Palestinian state that does not have Jerusalem as its capital; and more than half (53%) do not trust any political personality (JMCC 2018). Only 46% regarded the Palestinian National Authority's performance as good, but 66% see the need to maintain it (JMCC 2017). In July 2016 Fatah maintained the highest support at 33%, followed by Hamas at 14% and the PFLP on 3.4%. More than a third (36%) said they did not support any faction (JMCC 2016). In other words, a large majority support their nation and their institutions but, in recent times, there has been a crisis of leadership.

International support for Palestine as a nation has increased in recent years, alongside the expansion of the colonies, precisely because of the popular resistance. This is reflected in foreign opinion polls and by voting at the United Nations. Zionist repression simply helps build this international support. It is remarkable that in 2018 an Israeli journalist published details of 2,700 assassinations carried out by Zionist secret services: 'more people [murdered] than any other country in the western world' (Bergman 2018: xxii). Many Israelis probably feel some pride in this 'accomplishment'. However the open arrogance over such 'achievements', the journalist says, blinds the leadership to its strategic failures (Bergman 2018: 629). Despite a powerful Israel lobby in Europe, for example, which tries to sanitise the occupation, 65% of Europeans believe that Israel engages in religious discrimination (Abdullah and Hewitt 2012: 41-42, 279). The Zionist argument that opposing Israel is seen as racist or 'anti-semitic' is losing ground in Europe. Just over half (53%) the Europeans over 55 years of age still believe this but only 45% of 18-24 year olds (Abdullah and Hewitt 2012: 292). Of course, 'semitic peoples' refers to Arabs, North Africans and some other Middle East groups, as well as to Hebrew speakers. So the very term 'anti-semitic' (anti-Jewish in a European context) is simply another false racial construct, in the Middle East.

Recognition of Palestine at the UN level has grown as that of Israel is weakening. In 1974 the UNGA recognised the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the representative of the Palestinian people and invited it to attend plenary meetings. In 1988 the UNGA acknowledged the proclamation of the state of Palestine and began to use 'Palestine' in place of the PLO, for the delegation. In 2011 Palestine was admitted to UNESCO (MSPUN 2013) and soon after the US stopped its membership payments to that UN body. In 2017 both Israel and the US withdrew as members of UNESCO, citing 'anti-Israel bias' (Beaumont 2017). That was an important advance for Palestine. When the UN's Human Rights Council passed several motions against Israel,

including the call for an arms embargo, the zionist state's foreign minister reacted by calling for Israel to withdraw from that body (JPost 2018).

In 2012 the UNGA accorded 'Non-member observer state' status to the delegation, 'marking the first time that the General Assembly considered Palestine to be a state' (UNGA 2012). By 2018 137 UN member states recognised the State of Palestine (MSPUN 2018). One of the advantages of this advance has been the new capacity of the Palestinian Authority to recognise and adopt treaties such as the Statute of Rome, allowing Palestine to refer to the International Criminal Court the zionist slaughter of civilians as 'crimes against humanity' (Morrison 2018). This was not possible before 2012.

Despite constant moves by the USA to normalise Israel and its ethnic cleansing, the international community (which the USA often pretends to represent) has held a firm line. When the Trump administration announced its plan to move its embassy to Jerusalem, in breach of numerous resolutions over the status of Jerusalem, the plan was rebuffed at the UN, with 128 states voting in favour (9 against with 35 abstentions) of the resolution declaring 'null and void' any actions to change the status of Jerusalem (UNGA 2017).

The zionist state depends heavily on US and UK veto power at the Security Council, but often expresses fears that it may be abandoned. A 2016 motion at the Security Council, to end Israeli 'settlements' in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, stalled only after Israeli pressure on the incoming Trump administration. Yet because it was not immediately rejected by the outgoing Obama administration, the Israeli government accused the US of a 'shameful move ... an abandonment of Israel, which breaks decades of US policy of protecting Israel at the UN' (Al Jazeera 2016).

At the ground level, the resistance has built some hard won victories. The expansion options for 'Greater Israel' have been contained, to the north and the south. Over 2005-06 the zionist colonies were withdrawn from the Gaza Strip. Soon after, in 2006, Israel was pushed back and humiliated after an adventurist incursion into Southern Lebanon.

Ariel Sharon, a brutal zionist leader who had led repeated attacks on Gaza, the West Bank and south Lebanon, said the reason for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza was 'to grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security' (Baker 2015). The underlying reason was unceasing resistance by the brave people of Gaza. Since that time the crowded Palestinian territory has been subject to a prison-like blockade and repeated collective punishment attacks. The apartheid state, in several operations, slaughtered thousands (Pappe 2014). Nevertheless, the retreat from Gaza set one boundary to the 'Greater Israel' project.

The following year, encouraged by Washington's imperious project of a 'New Middle East' (Bransten 2006), Israel once again invaded south Lebanon, attempting to disarm the Lebanese resistance party Hezbollah. That party was created after earlier Israeli invasions. Although zionist forces were able to kill many, they also suffered serious losses and were forced to withdraw, failing to meet any of their objectives (Crooke and Perry 2006). Israeli defence experts concluded that Israel could not defeat Hezbollah (Reuters 2010). In the subsequent decade, even though some Lebanese territory is still annexed, Tel Aviv has been wary of adventurism on the Lebanese border. Iran's leader Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out that, since the 1980s, 'the Zionist regime has not been able to transgress against new lands, it has also begun to retreat' (Khamenei 2017). The Palestinian resistance has played the 'major and determining role' in these retreats, he said.

The mainly Shia Muslim Islamic Republic of Iran has played a major role in supporting mainly Sunni Muslim Palestine. This is not sectarian support. The large regional power has paid money to Palestinian families of fallen resistance fighters, after they had their houses demolished in collective punishment rampages. Iran has also supported with training and weapons almost all the Palestinian militia which resist the apartheid state; even those groups linked to the anti-Shia Muslim Brotherhood (IIT 2012; 2016). Iran, Syria and Hezbollah remain valuable Palestinian allies.

But the core of resistance is on the ground. Zionist storm troops make regular raids on any part of the Palestinian territories, but particularly the ‘camps’: settlements created for refugees after 1948. These camps, after many decades, are now the outer suburbs of the major Palestinian cities. The Israeli troops make arrests, mostly of young men suspected of resistance activities. The raids are also signals of Zionist power and are sometimes even used as training exercises.

Ali, a young man in Dehaisheh camp, now part of the southern suburbs of Bethlehem, told me his camp had been created in 1950, to house some of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced by ‘1948 Israel’. They did not resettle, as they imagined they would be going home soon. They kept their land title deeds and keys. A UN agency later helped them build mostly 3 x 3 metre concrete box-dwellings. After the 1967 war, when Israeli troops took control of the West Bank, the camps were policed heavily. They were seen as hotbeds of resistance and were denied access to books, as well as to normal freedoms of movement and association (Ali 2018).

For three generations people in these urban ‘camps’ have had ‘no privacy and no property’. They had no individual titles to camp lands. In their little box houses, which could only expand upwards, those next door could hear everything. Yet these conditions also meant that camp communities maintained a strong collective spirit, with little crime and no voting, instead common consensus agreements. That spirit reinforced their resistance to the colonists (Ali 2018). Other experienced Palestinian activists, Naji (2018) and Amal (2018), who do not live in the camps, confirmed to me this special morale in the camps. That heightened sense of resistance amongst internal displaced communities may also help account for the resistance spirit of the Gaza community. Most of them are from families internally displaced from 1948 Palestine; and Gaza has the highest percentage (25%) of double-internally displaced people (BADIL Resource Centre 2015: 99).

While these ‘camp’ communities contain various groups and political parties, in Deheisheh the community has rejected religious sectarians. Israelis were already skilfully fomenting divisions between Muslims, Christians, Druze and Bedouins (Ali 2018). For decades the colonists treated sectarian Islamist groups favourably, knowing that they would fight with the secular leadership and divide Palestinians. According to former Israeli officials Avner Cohen and David Hacham, in the 1980s Israel encouraged Hamas, seeing them as a ‘counterweight’ to the PLO and Fatah (Tekuma 2009). Tel Aviv observed in the 1980s that ‘more violence [was] directed by ... the Muslim Brotherhood at nationalist Palestinian groups than at the Israeli occupation authorities’ (Shadid 1988: 658). The result was that the Brotherhood and the linked Islamists of Hamas were ‘treated less harshly than the nationalists’ (Shadid 1988: 674-675). In more recent years Raed Salah, leader of the Islamic Movement within Israel/Palestine, has been imprisoned several times, but his treatment seems much less harsh than that given to many secular activists (Lieber 2017; TOI 2018), who are often given long prison sentences or simply assassinated.

While sectarian Islamists were tolerated for ‘divide and rule’ reasons, the young men of the camps have been subject to savage brutality. Around 2016 a new Israeli commander (‘Captain Nidal’) began a wave of terror in the southern West Bank camps. He told the young men that

instead of killing he would ‘teach them a lesson’ they would not forget (Ali 2018). From there began a wave of ‘knee-capping’ (shooting in the knee, to cripple), which has been widely reported (Hamayel 2016; Hass 2016; Ashly 2017). Ali told me that over 200 young men had been crippled in this way. The young man said his community wanted international support, but resented western aid agencies which come to Palestine, pretending to help, but with their own ideas of ‘empowerment’. He recalls a young European woman preaching to experienced Palestinian mothers about ‘how to be a good mother’. Some of the women laughed, finding it hard to believe. Ali said ‘we are not helpless victims, we are people with a strong culture’.

3. ‘Left Zionists’ and other False Friends

The wide popularity and legitimacy of the Palestinian cause, alongside strong western support for the Jewish colony, has created a tension which spawns a great deal of double speak. Even those states which supply Israel with weapons speak of their alleged support for Palestinian statehood. Yet these self-proclaimed peace-brokers, especially the governments of the USA and Britain, have repeatedly betrayed the Palestinian cause.

There are ways to identify this duplicity, which comes from many western politicians, liberals and leftists. First these false friends declare their support for Palestinian statehood. Next they make that support conditional on ‘non-violent’ resistance, immediately denying the colonised their rights under international law. Finally they denounce both the armed resistance and the key regional allies of the resistance – Hezbollah, Syria and Iran – just as fiercely as do the most extreme Zionists.

False friends also have regular recourse to ‘moral equivalence’ arguments, where they denounce the colonisers and the colonised in the same breath. This is a type of arrogant cynicism, with the pretence of even-handedness. Those who act in this way, while pretending to abhor colonial Israel, seem to support the idea of a nicer, kinder apartheid state.

Former US President Barack Obama, for example, urged Palestinians ‘to pursue statehood by non-violent means’. An Arab critic says Obama failed to understand ‘the true nature of the struggle, by reducing the message to a statement about the undesirability of violence on the part of an oppressed people’. He says that in all anti-colonial struggles ‘there is never any question of the right of people being colonized to defend themselves’ (Qumsiyeh 2011: Ch 1 and 2). Obama’s eight year regime kept arming Israel, while practising doublespeak over Palestine and waging proxy wars against Libya, Syria and Iraq.

Within Zionist culture we can see many examples of ‘left Zionism’. Wring on the 70th anniversary of the creation of Israel, well known internal critic Gideon Levy was invited by Haaretz newspaper to say ‘70 things he loves about Israel’. Levy thought he could find only 7, but managed to find 67, many of which make him ‘proud’ of Israel. For example, he was proud of and ‘misses’ the Gaza Strip, as the Zionist state bans Israeli journalists from visiting Gaza (Levy 2018). Haaretz itself is sometimes celebrated as a critical media, but its critical content consists mostly of debates between Zionists and the left Zionists, the latter seeing themselves as temperamentally liberal, anti-racist and more humane.

Similarly, in an article which purports to advocate an end to the two-state solution and ‘to stop Israeli apartheid’, internal Israeli critic A.B. Yehoshua uses both the ‘non-violent resistance’ and

‘moral equivalence’ arguments over colonisation, arguing that ‘it is the defective character of both the Jewish and the Palestinian national identities that is exacerbating the conflict’. He proposes ‘a non-violent partnership between Israelis and Palestinians’. What does this mean? At the end of a rambling article he calls for ending new colonies (‘settlements’) in the West Bank but, for the most part, maintaining the status quo, with Israel continuing to control the Palestinian territories, some concessions for Arab Israeli residents but no change to the Jewish ‘right of return’ (Yehoshua 2018). This is simply a failure to recognise colonial reality. Within Israel, those who agonise over the injustice of the regime yet continue to enjoy its privileges are taunted by conventional Zionists as those engaged in ‘shooting and crying’ (Harel 2009; Benton 2015).

Repeated ‘moral equivalence’ claims have come from many western ‘friends’ of Palestine, over the subject of alleged ‘indiscriminate rockets’ fired into Israel from Gaza. When people of the territories respond in self-defence their responses are condemned alongside calls for Israel to ‘show restraint’. For example, after the Zionist attacks on Gaza in 2014, Phillip Luther from Amnesty International said:

‘Palestinian armed groups, including the armed wing of Hamas, repeatedly launched unlawful attacks during the conflict killing and injuring civilians ... they displayed a flagrant disregard for international humanitarian law and for the consequences of their violations on civilians in both Israel and the Gaza Strip ... All the rockets used by Palestinian armed groups are unguided projectiles which cannot be accurately aimed at specific targets and are inherently indiscriminate; using such weapons is prohibited under international law and their use constitutes a war crime’ (Amnesty International 2015).

Similarly, but in a more understated way, after Israel’s 2008-09 assaults on Gaza, British-Australian academic Jake Lynch, an avowed supporter of Palestine and the BDS campaign, condemned what he said was the use of ‘indiscriminate weapons’ by Palestinian militia:

‘The home-made rockets that Hamas militiamen fired into Israel were indiscriminate weapons, and the 20 or so deaths they caused over several years are war crimes, but ... that pales into insignificance when compared with the impact of Israel's high-tech weaponry, which claimed 1300 lives’ (Lynch 2009).

Lynch, like Luther, repeats the popular myth that the Israeli punitive assaults were simply conflicts in which both sides committed crimes. Neither was prepared to accept that the character of colonial repression is quite different to that of anti-colonial self-defence. Many others, including the European Union (Ceren 2014) and the New York Times (Barnard and Rudoren 2014), take a similar approach. Yet repression and self-defence in this conflict are not only distinct in scale but also in character.

And have Palestinian retaliations really been ‘indiscriminate’? If we check from independent evidence, including Israeli sources, we find that the ‘indiscriminate’ assumptions about Palestinian retaliation have been unfounded. For example, during the 2014 assault on Gaza, the UN said that more than 75% of the 1,088 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces were civilians (AP 2014; Ma’an 2014). That is indeed indiscriminate. From the other side, only 6% of the 51 deaths from Palestinian attacks on Israel were of civilians; 48 or 94% were IDF soldiers (UWI 2014). That is far from ‘indiscriminate’. There is no moral equivalence here; neither in character, nor in scale nor in discriminate focus.

Table 2: The Israeli assault on Gaza, 2014

	Israeli forces	Palestinian Resistance
Deaths inflicted by	1088	51
Of which civilians	816 ‘at least’	3

% civilian deaths	75%	6%
Sources: AP 2014; UWI 2014, Ceren 2014; Ma'an 2014; Barnard and Rudoren 2014		

Moral equivalence seems to have become a type of ‘qualifying statement’ in western public debate. It is thought necessary to allow the interlocutor to be able to speak. Condemn the opponents of a western or western allied regime, before any criticism is allowed. We also see this argument from Australian ethics Professor Peter Singer. He said ‘I am critical of both [Hamas and Israel] ... and I think the situation is a tragic one ... clearly there are extremists on both sides ... both sides have gone to extremes ... you have to say, as far as Hamas is concerned ... they are a terrorist organisation, they are firing rockets into Israel, they are openly trying to kill Israelis where they can’ (in C. Anderson 2018). This is a popular but cynical ‘plague on both their houses’ argument. It just helps ‘qualify’ the discussant. Condemn Palestinian resistance as ‘criminal’, after that some criticism of Israeli repression may be allowed.

Those who pursue this type of ‘left-zionism’ – pretending to be friends of the Palestinian people while condemning their resistance – seem to imagine that there is room for reform of a regime based on colonial racism. They miss the lessons of apartheid South Africa. There can be no such thing as a nicer, friendlier, apartheid state. Even former officials from conservative US administrations have recognised that there is no future for a ‘two state’ solution (Leverett and Leverett 2014). As Falk and Tilley (2017) have summed up very clearly, an apartheid regime is a crime against humanity, it must be dismantled and the international community has the responsibility to see that done. No amount of ‘moral equivalence’ argument will help.

4. Towards a democratic Palestine

An apartheid state must be dismantled and South Africa is the best recent example of how to do so. A democratic Palestine would accept all its inhabitants as equal human beings. In this respect the experiment of a racialised Jewish state has failed badly. It only remains as an increasingly illegitimate agent of repression and a fomenter conflict in the entire region. In fact, it is supported by the big foreign powers for precisely this reason: to divide the people of the region and keep them vulnerable to outside domination.

So what are the prospects for a democratic Palestine? I feel the question is best answered by considering challenges and strengths. I outline these in Table 3 and explain below.

Table 3: Prospects for a Democratic Palestine	
Challenges	Strengths
Zionist military occupation	Ongoing Palestinian resistance
Western allies with military and media assets	Moral and international legitimacy
Fanatical Zionist mission and racial ideology	Strong and united regional allies
Disunity amongst Palestinian factions and their regional allies	Vulnerability of Israel’s allies (and Jewish supporters) to exposure of apartheid crimes

Of all the challenges, the Zionist military occupation appears to be a strength. However this is undermined by persistent resistance, exposure of repression and growing international illegitimacy. Whatever its main sponsor in Washington may say about Jerusalem or the occupied Golan Heights, international law has not changed in Israel's favour, over the past 50 years. The occupied peoples have not gone away and the repression and killings remain an open wound.

At the military level there has been the 'mad dog' doctrine. Israel's late Defence Minister Moshe Dayan said: 'Israel must be like a mad dog, too dangerous to bother' (Hirst 2003). Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon similarly threatened: 'Arabs may have the oil but we have the matches' (in Avishai 2014). Discussion within Israel is often more candid than the 'soft sell' practised in other countries. It is shocking, for example, for outsiders to hear those such as Israeli Professor Arnon Soffer saying that 'if we want to remain alive, we will have to kill and kill and kill; all day every day' (Soffer in Leibowitz 2007). That genocidal affirmation was in response to the 'demographic threat' of the growing Palestinian population (JVL 2017).

The most egregious threat is known as the 'Samson option', the suggestion that, if the Zionist regime were to face military defeat, it would use its nuclear arsenal to take millions of lives with it as it went down. This idea has been around for some time. Back in the 1970s Prime Minister Golda Meir was asked: 'You are saying that if ever Israel was in danger of being defeated on the battlefield, it would be prepared to take the region and even the whole world down with it?'. Golda Meir: 'Yes, that's exactly what I am saying' (Hart 2005: xii). All this means that the defeat and dismantling of apartheid-Israel must be carefully managed.

Tel Aviv maintains strong western allies, who are the principal arms suppliers and diplomatic protectors. They defend Israel at the United Nations and promote its cause and ideology in various other ways. That support, alongside Jewish lobbies, help blunt and divert international reaction to apartheid crimes, by repeating the false slogans of Israel as 'the only democracy in the region', 'opposing terrorism', and so on. But this apparent strength is vulnerable to exposure.

The ideology and fanaticism of the Zionist mission does engender a degree of solidarity and passion amongst Israelis and large parts of the international Jewish community. The extended idea of Jewish people as victims, not just of past European regimes, but of current Arab and Muslim regimes, has served well in the past. But that solidarity is weakening, and there are counter-movements. For a start, there are groups of religious Jews who reject and denounce Israel, as a distortion of and an affront to Judaism (TTJ 2018; NKI 2018). Then there is secular disillusionment. While conservative Zionists speak hopefully of Palestinians leaving the occupied territories, at the same time many European and American Israelis are taking advantage of their dual nationality and abandoning Israel. There are reports that 40% (Klingbail and Shiloh 2012), or even 59% (Walker 2014) of Israelis think of emigrating. Around 100,000 Israelis hold German passports, and a 2014 survey found that 25% of young secular Israelis 'wanted to make a life away from Israel' (Walker 2014). The Jerusalem Post reported that between 200,000 and one million Israelis, including many professionals, are already living in the USA (Sales 2017). Further undermining the sense of unified mission is the fact that the dominant European group of Israeli-Jews does not enjoy such a harmonious cultural relationship with the Mediterranean and Oriental Jews. And the pseudo-science behind 'Second Temple Revivalism' has been undermined by more recent studies. As demonstrated above, most Jewish people have European roots.

A final obstacle to a democratic Palestine, and an asset to Zionism, is the disunity amongst Palestinian groups and parties, and divisions with its regional allies. Little peoples can never prevail while they are divided, that is a very old and well established lesson. Islamic sectarianism, in particular, has been a key divisive force and helps explain weakened support for the Palestinian

leadership. More than half (53%) do not trust any party (JMCC 2018). At the regional level, the main potential Arab ally and neighbour, Egypt, has done little to help Palestine, in recent decades. The resistance has had to rely on Iran, Syria and Hezbollah. Iran's leader Ayatollah Khamenei says differences between Palestinian groups are 'natural and understandable', but 'increasing cooperation and depth' was necessary. Greater unity would build popular confidence, assist in focus and organisation and allow new steps forward (Khamenei 2016).

On the strength side, popular resistance has not gone away, despite 70 years of repression, encirclement and ethnic cleansing. Resistance remains the principal asset, and includes holding ground, building the population and the various forms of active resistance. Resistance also remains the foundation of Palestine's growing moral and international legitimacy, stronger diplomatic relations, increasing rejection of Israel and greater UN recognition of Palestine as a nation. That legitimacy is also expressed powerfully with the relative growth of the Arab-Palestinian population (Reuters 2018; JVL 2017).

The strategic importance of Palestine's regional allies can be seen in the strenuous efforts the Zionist state has made to suppress Hezbollah in Lebanon, to join in the destruction of Syria and to mount constant hysteria over a generalised threat from Iran. These three happen to be the key sources of material support for the resistance. The Gulf Arab monarchies have provided some finance (fomenting corruption) but not weapons. For these reasons Israel fears a strengthened 'Axis of Resistance', after the war on Syria. That Axis will stretch from Tehran to Beirut and will most likely take back Syria's occupied Golan Heights. That, in turn, would be a great morale boost for the Palestinian resistance.

Finally, Israel and its allies remain vulnerable to exposure of ongoing apartheid crimes. That is why Tel Aviv has moved to ban filming of its troops in the occupied territories (DW 2018). Each new crime, such as arrests and killings of civilians, does damage to the Israel 'brand' and helps isolate the regime. Open atrocities and ethnic cleansing keep weakening the old claims that criticisms of Israel are attacks on historic 'victims', or are somehow 'anti-semitic'.

At the same time the well networked 'boycott, divestment and sanctions' movement agitates against Israel, on the principle that 'Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity' (BDS 2018). This may not pose a great threat to the Israeli economy in the short term; although the Rand Corporation has estimated 'potential costs at \$47bn over 10 years' (White 2017). Others point out that BDS is a 'cultural, psychological battle' more than an economic one. Israel has prepared a 'black list' of those who cannot enter 'the country' (including Palestine) because of links to BDS campaigns (Bahar and Sachs 2018).

The international Jewish community, an important part of this support network, is also being alienated by Israeli crimes. That international network is relied on for financial and moral support. Yet many European and American Jews see themselves as a liberal and tolerant people, and are mortified by identification with apartheid atrocities. They have reacted badly to the arrests and massacres of Palestinian protestors and civilians, both in Gaza and the West Bank (Weiss 2018). Even those who do not support the BDS movement shrink from Israel when there is bad publicity. For example the Israeli-born Hollywood actress Natalie Portman turned down \$2m and the Israeli 'Genesis' prize because she was too ashamed to be seen with Prime Minister Netanyahu (Spiro 2018). Demoralisation can be seen on a wider scale with the substantial emigration, particularly amongst the large group of Israelis with dual citizenship.

Richard Falk, former UN Special Rapporteur on Occupied Palestine, said he rejected the idea of Palestine as a 'lost cause', because it was winning the legitimacy battle: 'Palestine is winning what

in the end is the more important war, the struggle for legitimacy, which is most likely to determine the political outcome'. In the context of anti-colonial struggles, he continues, citing Vietnam, Algeria and Iraq, 'the side with the greater perseverance and resilience, not the side that controlled the battlefield, won in the end' (Falk 2014).

The future of Palestine is clouded with divisions, pain and sacrifice, and with fear of formidable enemies. But it is far from hopeless. There have been real gains in recent years. The Resistance has imposed limits on expansion of the colonial project, both in the north and the south. Attempts to smash and divide the 'Axis of Resistance' are failing. The key weakness has been disunity amongst the Palestinian factions and some fractures with regional allies. The key strength remains the consistent resistance of a battered but brave and resilient people.

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