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In the three years since the outbreak of the second Intifada in October 2000, the policy making of the U.S. government has been haunted by the question of Palestine. The Intifada made briefly visible the consequences of Israel's continued occupation and expanded colonization of the West Bank and Gaza, an expansion facilitated by the Oslo accords of 1993 and disguised under the name of "the peace process." Within a year, however, the launching of the worldwide war on terror provided Washington with a new way to misrepresent the nature of Israel's war against the Palestinians. A century-long history of dispossession, expulsion, occupation, and resistance was reduced, once again, to a series of Palestinian acts of terror. A people's loss of their homes and homeland, of their freedom of movement and human dignity, of their personal security and political future, could instead be framed as a battle of civilization against terror, of democracy against hatred, of the West against Islam.

Under the banner of the war on terror, the United States then announced its plans for a war against Iraq as the cornerstone of an unapologetic project to remake the political order of the Middle East. Yet the question of Palestine refused to disappear. From the protests of up to half a million people in several cities of Europe to the revived antiwar activism of the campuses of North American universities (see Vincent Lloyd and Zia Mian's essay in this issue), an emergent peace movement in the West placed the issue of Palestinian rights, alongside the right of the Iraqi people to be spared the devastation of war, at the center of its politics. The importance attached to the Palestine question was a response to the obvious discrepancy between Washington's use of U.N. Security Council resolutions against Iraq, its disregard for council resolutions against Israel, and its vetoing of any international intervention on behalf of the Palestinians. But the importance reflected something larger. The injustice against the Palestinians has always been carried out in the name of the West. Washington supports, funds, and arms many forms of injustice in the Middle East. But only in the case of Israel is the injustice disguised and defended as a moral struggle of the West against the rest.

The Palestine question now haunts the West, much as the question of apartheid haunted a previous generation. We draw the analogy with apartheid not to make any simplistic historical comparison between Israel and South

Africa, but rather to place the Palestine question in a transnational and comparative frame, and to try to understand it in its historical complexity. In the aftermath of World War II, the hegemonic powers attempted to resolve the question of Palestine through a plan of partition. Postwar Europe sought to compensate for its deplorable record of genocidal practices toward Jewish communities of Europe by adopting a characteristically colonial solution—the partition of Palestine, and the displacement of its people from their lands to provide a state for European Jews. From the very beginning, therefore, the problem has been transnational, involving diverse populations, nation-states, and imperial powers, especially since the principle of the separation of Arabs and Jews had the concomitant effect of displacing Arab Jews from Arab countries (see the essay here by Ella Shohat). Furthermore, partition involved new articulations of nation and community, redefining the relationship between national identity and the nation-state. If the state was to be a nation-state, claiming to represent a singular national identity, then what was to be the relationship between the state and its multiple identities? Partition, as the example of the ethno-religious bifurcation of British India and Pakistan in 1947 shows, produced only further conflicts between the majority and the minority, and sparked majoritarian and exclusivist nation-building. It is no coincidence that the introduction of the policy of apartheid in South Africa in 1948 took place in the same period of colonial crisis. The establishing of apartheid was an attempt, in a sense, to use the principle of territorial partition to resolve a colonial conflict through a project of national-geographical separation.

Israel's policies toward the Palestinians today have often been compared with apartheid. The reasons for the failure of the Oslo accords, in particular, have been discussed in this light. While granting limited autonomy to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and in the major towns of the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem), the Israeli government broke these pockets of self-rule into noncontiguous islands and ringed them with expanded settlements, Jewish-only highways, and military control points. Historically, it will be recalled, apartheid was introduced in South Africa as a retreat from the more extreme colonial visions of race domination and as a long-term solution to the problem of multiple racial groups coexisting in the same territory. In Israel, too, apartheid describes not so much the existing situation of occupation and resistance as the solution that Israel and the United States envisage to the untenable politics of the present.

Other contrasts and comparisons can be made between the Israeli and South African cases. The essay here by Heribert Adam illuminates the multiple differences between the two cases, analyzing the lessons that can be learned from a transnational comparison. This contrasts with the prevailing Israeli rejection of the view that we have nothing to learn from

the comparison of Israel with other policies of territorial separation and population segregation. One lesson from the antiapartheid movement has been learned by diverse peace movements organized around the Palestinian issue. The resurgent student activism mentioned above has drawn inspiration for a series of university divestment campaigns from the earlier movement. For decades international activism on the left was reserved for the questions of Indochina, Latin America, and South Africa, while the Middle East was the realm of only a few. Today the U.S. Left is no longer afraid to speak about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The targeting of campus activism on the Palestine question by right-wing pressure groups is a small indication of this shift. Such activism is in part the product of a new wave of immigration to the United States, and a new diversity of student populations. But it is also one of the few positive results of the Oslo accords. The word *Palestine* and the cause it represents are no longer taboo. (See Lloyd and Mian's essay here on divestment campaigns.)

The transnationalization of the question of Palestine is also central to us as citizens or residents of the United States, whose government speaks on our behalf on the world stage. U.S. policy might be ignored if it were not for the fact that the occupying power—Israel—is its key ally in the oil-rich Middle East. Not surprisingly, then, the American media depict Israel as the only democracy in the region, conveniently overlooking the fact that its self-definition as a Jewish state discriminates against its Arab citizenry (see Samera Esmeir's and Ahmad Sa'di's essays in this issue). The euphemism of the "peace process" similarly rewrites the struggle against occupation as a negotiation between two relatively equal sides, sidestepping the question of rights and justice. Recently, Christian fundamentalists have joined the campaign to deny Palestinian rights by endorsing Israel's claim to the biblical land. The U.S. print and television media, for their part, have joined the U.S. administration and the Israeli government in demonizing the Palestinians. They continue to reiterate the Clinton administration's claim that Arafat rejected peace by walking away from Ehud Barak's "generous offer" at Camp David in July 2000. In fact, the Palestinians never walked away but continued to negotiate until Barak broke off the negotiations in January 2001 to unsuccessfully contest the Israeli election, and it was the incoming Sharon and Bush administrations that refused to resume them. The media also wash away Sharon's blood-stained record as the military commander who allowed the Phalangists in Lebanon to carry out massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982, and his longstanding opposition to any accommodation with the Palestinians; instead, he was lauded by the Bush administration as a "man of peace," while Arafat is reviled as complicit with terrorism.

As the pro-Israeli lobby worked the media and the U.S. Congress in

the wake of the September 11 attacks, and as the hysteria about militant Islam gripped the pundits, the Palestinian resistance against occupation was deftly redefined as terrorism. Yet the double standard in U.S. Middle East policy became increasingly obvious. The Bush administration was obliged to seek resolutions from the U.N. Security Council to build support for a war against Iraq. This entitles one to ask: what about the case of Israel? Flouting U.N. resolutions and international law, it has steadfastly built settlements over territories seized in 1967; since the Oslo agreements of 1993, successive Israeli governments, both Labour and Likud, have doubled the number of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. While the United States has always been allied to and supportive of Israel, since September 11 its policy has shifted even closer to the Israeli regional agenda (see Joel Beinin's essay here), as one is noticing a rift with another traditional U.S. ally—Saudi Arabia.

With the second Intifada, the human toll exacted by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories has reached unprecedented levels. The West Bank and Gaza have experienced horrific assaults by the Israeli military, which has exploited each act of violence on Israeli civilians and the army to attack and demonize all legitimate resistance as terrorism. Under Ariel Sharon, Israel has carried out a war against the Palestinian society as such, itself. The consequences are there for all to see. The Palestinian civilian infrastructure and life are wrecked, and observers report sharp escalations in unemployment and malnutrition. One can only imagine what it feels like to live under such catastrophic conditions.

And what have the Israelis gained from this violent escalation in military occupation? Contrary to Sharon's fantasy of terrorizing the occupied population into submission, Palestinian resistance remains as unbending as ever. Nor have Jewish-Israeli citizens gained from this aggressive policy; in fact, poverty rates have risen, the tourist economy has been devastated, there are increased levels of migration, and a general state of anxiety, fear, and depression reigns.

The essays in this issue, taken together, highlight aspects of the conflict usually rendered invisible in the dominant representation. Israeli national identity is often imagined as strictly made up of European Jews, in line with the Zionist construction of the Jewish Nation—a Western state on the frontiers, pitting civilization against savagery, peace against terror. Ella Shohat's essay investigates the close links between Zionist discourse and the production of scholarly knowledge about Israel/Palestine, arguing that the isolationist approach to the study of "Jewish History" was "crucial to a quite anomalous project in which the State created the Nation—not simply in the metaphorical sense of fabrication, but also in the literal sense of engineering the transplant of populations from all over

the world.” While Shohat’s essay deconstructs Zionist and post-Zionist narratives of a homogenous Jewish Nation (largely through silencing the links between Arab Jews and the question of Palestine), Salah Hassan’s piece examines the construction of the Palestinian nation through the practice of literary anthologizing. The essays by Ahmad Sa’di and Samera Esmeir, meanwhile, contest the idea of Palestinians as always simply “outside” the State of Israel. Sa’di’s essay on collaboration addresses the way Palestinian citizens of Israel have been used within the Israeli state apparatus, and how they have resisted. Esmeir’s essay, meanwhile, tackles the invisibility of the past, suggesting that the Palestinian experience of Al-Nakbah (the catastrophe) of 1948 is rendered invisible through norms of legal and historical discourse. Indeed, the emphasis on terrorism has marginalized a thorough discussion of different modes of Palestinian resistance both within and outside the State of Israel and the occupied territories, from local food distribution networks, doctors’ rescue units, organized legal battles against land appropriation, and house demolitions. Amahl Bishara’s essay highlights such organized efforts in East Jerusalem to redefine spaces of belonging, creating de facto coexistence and even alternative visions for the future.

