October 23

“Contemporary Colonialisms: case study South Africa – Israel”
Critical Concept

“Internal Colonialism” or “re-colonisation”

• ‘legacy’ of colonialism where settler societies emerge (see ‘Overview’)
• also possible where Colonial Rule ‘wills’ power to selected elite/ethnic group
• also possible where ending Colonial Rule brought one group to power through armed struggle

See elements of each in South Africa – Israel comparison
Palestine: creation of state of Israel
South Africa: creation of Afrikaner state

- former from UN decree, war (ending British Mandate)
- latter from ballot box (war came later) – ended British influence
- Watershed in history both Africa and Middle East
- beginning ‘contemporary colonialism’
- Ended (at least as policy) in South Africa with democratic elections 1992
- Remains (in both policy and practice) in Middle East as block to fully democratic regime

Critical Date: 1948
In 1840, Lord Palmerston (later to become British Prime Minister) wrote:

“There exists at the present time among the Jews dispersed over Europe a strong notion that the time is approaching when their nation is to return to Palestine. It would be of manifest importance to the Sultan [Ottoman] to encourage the Jews to return and settle in Palestine because the wealth that they would bring with them would increase the resources of the Sultan's dominions, and the Jewish people if returning under the sanction and protection at the invitation of the Sultan would be a check upon any future evil designs of Egypt or its neighbours.

I wish to instruct your Excellency strongly to recommend to the Turkish government to hold out every just encouragement to the Jews of Europe to return to Palestine.”
Palestine: its colonial past

‘Balfour Declaration’, then comes as nothing new (1917):

“His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object,

The problem or issue arrises from the second half of the statement:

“it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine [most of which were Arab subjects of the now defunct Ottoman Empire], or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”
Sykes-Picot Agreement

Mandated Territories
Palestine: its colonial past

During mandate Britain alienated both groups:

• 1924-1928 – increased immigration of Jews to Palestine: whereas earlier settlers were poor -- farmers/herders with socialist leanings -- during 1920s more middle-class eastern European and Soviet Jews arrived.
• 1929 -- Western Wall riots; Palestinians killed dozens of Jews from Hebron's historic Jewish community, survivors evacuated town.
Palestine: its colonial past

• 1933-1935 – Hitler in power, new laws discriminating against Jews
  • many escaped Germany and German-controlled areas
  • sought immigration to Palestine.

• 1936-1939 – increased immigration led to revolt in Palestine
  • crushed ruthlessly by British
  • leaders expelled, executed
  • plight of Jews in Germany becoming more acute
“Kibbutz” 1920s
Palestine: its colonial past

• 1930s: ongoing ‘war’ Palestinian -- Jewish settlements

• 1937 British Peel Commission Report: recommended partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab areas
  • angered majority of Palestinian Arab population.

• 1939: concerns over ‘balance’ in territory led to further restrictions on Jewish immigration, land purchases
  • British called for establishment of independent, “bi-national” state in Palestine – within 10 years
Palestine: its colonial past

- Jews comprised 31 percent Palestine's inhabitants
- wanted continual immigration; opposed notion ‘bi-national’ state.
- during WW II Nazi Holocaust led to deaths of more than 6 million Jews
- 1945: U.N. established
- 100,000 eastern and central European Jews in "displaced persons" camps
- Palestinian question front and center.
Palestine: its colonial past

- U.N. trusteeship over Palestine recommended
- Palestinian - Jewish violence against British, each other escalated
- Jewish Holocaust survivors flee to Palestine
- clandestine routes, helped by underground Jewish groups.
- 1947: U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 called for Jewish state (57% of Palestine), an Arab state (43% of Palestine), international control over Bethlehem and Jerusalem
- Britain determined to escape Mandate within a year
9 April 1948, Deir Yassin massacre:

- for Arab Palestinians marks beginning of ‘statelessness’
- for Jews, beginning of the ‘state’
- International Red Cross report in aftermath:

"Three hundred persons were massacred ... without any military reason or provocation of any kind; old men women, children, newly-born were savagely murdered with grenades and knives by Jewish troops of the Irgun [underground militia unit], entirely under the control of their chiefs."
Civil War and the Birth of Israel

9 April 1948, Deir Yassin:

- Broadcast on radio –100s of thousands fled to neighbouring countries
- to control exodus, neighbouring Arab countries attacked in May
- in July, UN imposed a truce.
- Jewish fighters in control territory larger than original ‘bi-national’ partition: approx 77%-78% of former mandate
Palestinians emigrating across the River of Jordan (1948).
Civil War and the Birth of Israel

- UN supported idea of right of those who fled to return but this was denied by the new state of Israel
- Lands, property ‘abandoned’ were confiscated, made available to influx of Jewish settlers.

- dispute continues over critical question: were Palestinians’ urged to leave by neighbouring Arab leaders? - if so, gives some legitimacy to confiscation of property, refusal to allow ‘returns’
Civil War and the Birth of Israel

- Also argued opposite true: massacre Deir Yassin widely broadcast but neighbours underestimated impact, had not meant to set in motion major exodus

• issue of ‘right of return’ remains central point in contemporary discussions

• however interpreted -- outcome of war was emergence of Israeli state
South Africa: colonial past

- British acquired Cape Colony beginning 19th century
- came into conflict with local African tribes
- main ‘adversaries’ were ‘Boers’ (Afrikaners) of Dutch/German descent
- settled mid-17th century to service Indian Ocean trade
- moved to interior to escape control British “Great Trek”
- fought violent wars against Zulu to acquire land
- negotiated with some other tribes
- accelerated Zulu state building, warfare north into central Africa
South Africa: colonial past

Boer War 1899-1902:

• moved into lands ['Transvaal'] rich in diamonds, gold.
• attracted British entrepreneur Cecil Rhodes
• attempted to overthrow of Boer government

• Britain followed: led to vicious war, guerilla warfare, scorched earth policy, concentration camps
• black Africans used and abused by both sides
South Africa: colonial past

• 1902 Boers agreed to Settlement
• 1902-1910 ‘era of reconstruction’
• 1910 Union of South Africa declared (included Cape Colony, eastern territory Natal plus Boer territories)

• but Afrikaners ‘lost the war, lost the peace’: political power in hands of British South Africans (whites)
• South Africa member of British Commonwealth

• South African Blacks incidental to process, no power
Colonial South Africa (above)
Union of South Africa (right)
South Africa: 1910-1948

- Afrikaners continued to battle for power: failed coup d’état 1914
- WWI: South Africa taken into war with Allies
- Afrikaners supported Germans – resented having to fight for ‘colonial masters’
- Growth of industry came -- largely in British hands
- Afrikaners mostly in agriculture
- Increasingly poor, found among industrial workers
- Lack economic power underscored by lack political power
- Some gains early 1920s: won sufficient number of votes to force ‘coalition government’ --- ‘shared’ power
South Africa: 1910-1948

- 1930s depression: emergence of large poor white class
- competed for jobs with blacks: unthinkable.
- Broederbond: supported by German post-war ‘sympathy’, political connections; ‘youth movement’ like Young Nazis
- 1938 “Great Trek” re-creation: cultural, political identity
- new generation self-conscious Afrikaners

- WWII enriched SA, stakes for political control higher
- same issues as in WWI: Afrikaners believed in Hitler – waiting on German victory to support their own cause
- loss of war: Afrikaner’s needed to win election 1948
South Africa: 1910-1948

- black Africans labourers, increasingly in industry, towns
- early pass laws from mines extended: keep black families out of towns
- 1913 Native Lands Act: restricted where Africans could own land
- ‘reserve system’: 13% land for 70% population
- aim: push Africans off land, free it for Whites
- make Africans into labourers (mines, agriculture)
- limited black voting rights eroded: permission to vote (linked to property, literacy) removed from last area mid-1930s.
South Africa: 1910-1948

- 1940s: war, politicizing new generation Black Africans: those with mission education, negotiated with British, worked through system for change seen as failures (eg African National Congress)
- ANC youth league: more aggressive resistance, especially after 1948
- Government policy ‘apartheid’ – apartness.
- Initial ‘enemy’ British – election to ‘take South Africa back’ for Afrikaners
- After election, new ‘colonial masters’ turned on blacks, coloureds, Indians
- Policies discrimination, ‘separateness’ official policy
1948: rebirth of colonialism

1948: both Afrikaners and Israelis ‘took control’ of land, power and (potentially) wealth

- South Africa: indigenous occupants forced off land over century of white settler control (by force, by law)
- culminated in ‘rule’ particular ethnic group – White Africkaners -- over 87% land

- Israel: indigenous occupants forced off the land through war (short, brutal), then by law (appropriation)
- culminated in ‘rule’ of particular ethnic group – Jewish Israelis -- over 77-78% land.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Difference in this new ‘colonial’ situation:
• Afrikaners wanted to keep indigenous people for labour,
• Israel wanted to keep indigenous people from returning – labour needs not central

Situation changed over years:
• South Africa became dependent modern technology, industry/business required skills, education, needs for unskilled black labour decreased
• Israel growing economy, diversification, increasingly needed unskilled labour to support skilled, educated Israeli society – drawn from among Palestinians.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Can one argue: South Africa ONE country, Israel-Palestine separate countries? Not clear.…

• South Africa created ‘Bantustans’: logical next step from ‘colour code’
• settled particular ‘tribes’ in same region, taught tribal languages, customs; permitted ‘white’ areas only to work
• 1960s: ‘grand apartheid – creation of separate ‘countries’ from Bantustans
• people needed passports to enter South Africa.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

• Maximum ‘colonial’ control: colonies took responsibility health and education, ‘mother South Africa’ controlled military, foreign affairs; benefited from labour
• Attempt made legally to create ‘countries within a country’
• some tribal chiefs saw advantages; most refused

• Second part of policy: large townships on outskirts cities like Johannesburg
• SOWETO surrounded by fence/barbed wire, controlled entrances, exits – could be closed off to control trouble
1948: rebirth of colonialism

- Palestine: taken in pieces during six day war 1967
- Gaza strip, West bank, Sinai Peninsula, Golan Heights
- Gaza, West bank now ‘occupied territories’, controlled by military check points
- impoverished areas dependent on working in Israel.
- total economy dependent on Israel

- need to look at ‘greater Israel’, not just national boundaries, to understand colonial ‘process’ taking place.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

This is reference to central concept of ‘re-colonisation’/‘internal colonisation’:

• former ‘victims’ (Afrikaners, Jews) saw victory from British control (in one case by ballot box, in other by British fleeing war and resistance),
• then took over power, ‘colonizing’ remaining groups -- Black Africans in case South Africa, Arab Palestinians in case of Israel
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Readings:

• draw on different ways ‘Apartheid’ paradigm useful for analyzing Palestinian question
• would argue the colonialism/legacies comparisons are even more comprehensive.

• Why?
1948: rebirth of colonialism

‘Paradigm’, ‘comparison’ does not reveal change:

- apartheid NOT simply policy but long-term process, evolving, just like Palestinian situation
- paradigm not evident in terms of applicability to 1920s, 1930s, even 1940s
- has become increasingly so recently
- Most important factor: Oslo agreement to establish ‘interim self-government’ Gaza and West Bank
- to be regarded as ‘single territory’, ‘elected Council’ as government
- issues of dismantling settler communities, returning refugees not negotiated
*Israel-occupied territory, subject to the Israeli-Palestinian interim agreement - permanent status to be determined through further negotiations.
One significant difference between South Africa and Palestine:

• Israeli settlements in Golan Heights and West Bank (and East Jerusalem) were built with purpose of laying claim ‘by possession’ to land in otherwise Arab territories.
  • at various times some abandoned, new settlements established (number of new settlements since 2000), reflecting current political situation

• differs from nature of Bantustans but equally part of colonial process
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Complicated plans to ‘allow’ Palestinian state:

• ‘by-pass’ roads constructed to link settlements – effectively surround Palestinian areas
• proposed ‘independent’ Palestine would exist in pieces, surrounded by Israeli controlled roads (including buffer territory on either side)
• could be ‘cut off’ from supplies, transport etc any time (just as gates currently do with respect to daily work traffic into Israel).
• reinforced by the building of a ‘Wall’ (‘the Apartheid Wall')
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Key issue in evolution both ‘processes’: security

- In each case ‘numbers’ are a concern: Black Africans outnumbered whites, Palestinians outnumbered Jews
- Even more a concern when ‘greater Palestine’ is considered: the Arab states that surround both Palestine and Israel
- Initially, this concern even greater for Palestine – period 1920s through 1940s, influx Jews great
- British controlled immigration,
- Huge numbers attempt to immigrate during, following WWII
- British tried to control having Palestinians swamped.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

• By the time of independence, numbers much more ‘even’
• But ‘threat’ of surrounding Arab states remained

Like all settler societies, fear of indigenous people is real and voiced in many ways:
• fear of physical violence
• fear of ‘take over’ (political, economic)
• fear of loss of identity (for the Afrikaners –seige mentality ‘laager’)

Identical fear expressed by Israel, then and now:

- Country born of war, surrounded by ‘the enemy’, nowhere to go,
- Invasions of neighbouring countries as well as crackdowns on Arabs within state ‘necessary’ as pro-active, pre-emptive ‘strikes’
- Settlement policy in part ‘strategic’: defensive outposts (eg. Golan Heights)
- Roads and wall necessary for security in any situation of ‘independent’ Palestine
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Concomitant with fear:
- discrimination, separation of ‘living’ quarters, pass laws
- creation of ‘other’ (see Said’ in ‘Resources’): creation of idea that ‘other’ is different in important ways
  - range from obvious (skin colour), religion,
  - to less obvious – personal characteristics, hygiene, purported ‘tendencies’
  - frequency with which colonized were ‘lazy’, in need of education to learn to work…
  - dirty, smelly, references ‘dirty Arab’, similar references to ‘dirty black, dirty kaffir’;
  - violent or with a ‘tendency to violence’, hates us!
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Ideology:
• black south Africans communists, terrorists
• SA sold itself to West as ‘bastion’ of capitalism, protecting continent from ‘domino effect’
• Palestinians Muslims, portrayed as believing in fundamentalism, terrorism, can’t be trusted
• Israel friend to west, capitalism – to ‘civilisation’ (Said)
• Recollects earlier argument with British: support ‘home for Jews’ in Palestine to serve as bastion of western interests in ‘sea of Arabs’ with German sympathies.

•Same arguments used, same PROCESS of ‘othering’ going on in South Africa
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Process *created* ‘races’:
- South Africa: connection ‘skin colour and other’ more evident than Palestine, ‘other’ both Arab and Muslim.
- even in South Africa definition ‘race’ not so clear
- Coloureds, Indians accepted into ‘White world’, kept distance from ‘Black issues’
- many whites made common cause with Blacks; intersection of communist party interests
- in Palestine: not all Arabs are Palestinians *per se* – many live in Israel
- many Jews work with Palestinians in occupied territories and in Israel (‘Peace Now’ movement etc).
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Relevance overall argument holds:

• importance of creating an ‘other’
• giving yourself characteristics that do not necessarily hold to whole community – language, religion, ‘culture’ in general.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Irrony in the reality:
• South Africa: Afrikaners ‘trekked’ into interior with herds, slaves (often drawn from local peoples)
• lived exactly like African neighbours: herders cattle, some agriculture, self-sufficient, hunters
• learned from Africans, ‘shared’ land until access to diamonds and gold ‘split’ the way they saw the land.
• Often said the only differences between the Boer and the African was the bible – and even that became less and less an ‘issue’ as Africans began to convert.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Irony is the reality:

• Same true in Palestine
• initial Jewish immigrants lived similarly to Palestinians – farmers, sheep herders
• ‘shared’ the land in the sense of using it in same ways
• often interacted socially at village level
1948: rebirth of colonialism

- situation changed when Afrikaners had new economic opportunities
- similarly, in Palestine, situation in 1920s worsened as next wave Jews better off, educated
- invested modern agriculture, business
- purchased land Arabs no longer able to afford
- differences in manner, standard living became increasingly obvious – just as in South Africa
- see reflected in ‘histories’ written of early colonial days: contrast made between civilized, modernized, educated Afrikaners, Jews and barbarous, traditional, uneducated Blacks and Arabs (both with inferior, unprofitable economies).
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Argument, in both cases:
• ‘what IS today is because of Afrikaner/Israeli investment and development’.

Interesting parallel between rewriting of those early days:
• while there clearly WERE black indigenous people on the land, just as there clearly WERE Arab indigenous people on the land, working side by side -- myth perpetuated in both countries that land was basically empty
• follows from notion that the ‘colonial’ power developed it and therefore has rights to it.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

• Articles ['Readings'] interesting: take different angles at comparing Apartheid to Palestinian question

• what takes us further to understanding dynamics of situation is tracing process of internal colonialism in these largely parallel situations and understand that ‘parallism’ in terms of process itself, not merely the result.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

- Two are examples of most pernicious legacy of colonialism: the creation of race.

- this is different ‘history’ of racism than presented by Guy Thompson:
- he argued in terms of ‘legacy’ of Atlantic slave trade.
- this ‘story’ particular to the Atlantic world whose legacies permeated other worlds, intersected other histories
- process identified in this comparative study is ‘settler colonialism’ : particular histories different but outcomes horrifyingly similar.
1948: rebirth of colonialism

Concluding point:
Apartheid as political system brought to an end as a consequence of
• international pressures (economic divestment, boycotts etc. similar to what is being proposed today against Israel)
• internal resistance and revolution (similar to what we have seen with the intifada, election of Hamas, increasingly public Israeli rejection of gov’t policies)
• bloody war (the ‘burning necklace’, Inkatha massacres, torturing and killing of informants, just as we have seen within ‘greater israel’ with suicide bombings, and invasion of Lebanon).
However, within South Africa itself, many people argue they are still living in an apartheid state – or at least, living with the poverty and racism that apartheid state created.

And in ‘Palestine’, the war continues with no immediate end in sight for the Israeli colonial rule – in spite of growing internal pressures and domestic dissension within Israel itself.