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## CONCEPTUALISING AND THEORISING ANTISEMITISM AND RACISM: THE STRUCTURAL CONTEXT OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper provides a basis for re-examining the contemporary connections of antisemitism and racism through an examination of the conceptual and theoretical parameters of the concept of racism. It argues that racism is a broad and dynamic category, the forms of which must be seen as varied and constantly changing. Thus although 'new antisemitism' arguments are wrong to propose a strong connection between opposition to Israel and antisemitism, they are correct to argue that antisemitism has changed and that its current forms are connected to the changes that Israel has brought about for the position of Jews. However, examining antisemitism as a variety of racism requires us to investigate racism in general in the conflicts in, and surrounding, Israel-Palestine. The paper argues for a structural concept of racism in these conflicts. While criticising the 'apartheid' framing of Israeli racism, it argues that anti-Palestinian racism is structurally embedded in Israeli society at many levels, and that recent wars have exacerbated this racism on a much larger scale than the antisemitism which they have also stimulated.

KEYWORDS: New Antisemitism, Racism, Islamophobia, Palestine-Israel, Apartheid

The structures of feeling<sup>1</sup> in Western societies surrounding Israel-Palestine and the wider Middle East have undergone noteworthy changes since

1 Raymond Williams (1977: 132) defined this concept as follows: 'The term is difficult, but 'feeling' is chosen to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of

mid-2014, following Israel's new assault on Gaza, the emergence of 'Islamic State', and the Paris and Copenhagen terrorist attacks. It is too early to gauge the medium-term political and ideological consequences of recent shifts, since much remains in flux. Nevertheless the new climate has undoubtedly brought into relief important underlying issues. In this essay I explore the conceptual and theoretical parameters of one of these issues, the relationships of antisemitism and racism, in order to shed light on the new conjuncture.

### **A new 'wave' of antisemitism?**

Shifts surrounding the question of antisemitism, especially in Europe, have been prominent in the new climate. Physical attacks on Jewish targets and individuals, already perpetrated on the continent and elsewhere in recent years, became much more symbolically and politically important following the *Hypercacher* mini-massacre in Paris.<sup>2</sup> Although the Islamist attacks in Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen combined Jewish with other targets (notably milieux perceived as having insulted Islam), the targeting of Jews as a group was emphasised. As always when unarmed civilians are newly subjected to terrorist violence, the shocking and indiscriminate character of the attacks had, as intended, an effect out of proportion to the scale of the direct harm caused.

The new context produced, therefore, a moral panic among some European Jews. If some claims which have emerged—such as that Jews would be physically safer in Israel and that 'there is no great future for Jews in Europe' (Goldberg 2015)—are manifestly hyperbolic, the new mood reflects genuine risks. In this sense, it could be said to have shifted attention back from the so-called 'new antisemitism' (in which opposition to Israel is alleged to be objectively antisemitic even where no hostility to Jews as such is expressed) to the classic form in which harm is manifestly directed at Jews as a group. However David Cesarani (2015) argues that there is no new 'wave' of antisemitism, only a physical threat 'from a tiny number of Jihadists and extreme Islamists' in the context, indeed, of unprecedented general protection of and solidarity towards Jews. This argument echoes Brian Klug's (2003) earlier repudiation of the existence of a new wave characterised by 'new' antisemitism, which he has repeated in response to the new situation (Klug 2015).

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"world-view" or "ideology"... We are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable...'. I use the term in the plural because it seems to me that the general change is matched by contradictory changes within as well as between different Western societies and segments of societies (Muslims, Jews, liberals, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> This could, of course, have been a larger massacre, but for the courageous intervention of a (Muslim) Malian migrant worker to save customers' lives.

These authors suggest that threats to Jews do not arise from 'racial' hatred against them; rather their rationale is the Islamist war against Israel and against the West of which Jews are an extended target. Their case would separate Islamist attacks from more diffuse anti-Jewish sentiment in Europe, which is currently fostered by some currents in both Muslim/Arab and nationalist/right-wing milieux. Clearly they are right that there may be different specific motives for attacks on Jewish targets, but it is not clear that racial/religious hatred and terrorist targeting are so sharply separated as this would imply. Islamist targeting of Jews sees them as extensions of Israel, certainly, but also as religious enemies. There is some interest in distinguishing between different types of anti-Jewish sentiment and action, but it is also clear that these may reinforce each other.

Conceptually, moreover, it is not clear that we should separate strategic or tactical targeting of Jews from antisemitism. That would seem to confine 'antisemitism' to the expression of religious or racial sentiments. It might be tempting for critics of Zionism to embrace such a traditional notion, so as to emphasise the difference between 'genuine' antisemitism and 'legitimate' criticism of Israel. However, while supporting the need to protect the latter, I shall argue in this paper that it is difficult to give a coherent definition of antisemitism based on a specific type of sentiment. Furthermore, I shall contend that given the complex mixing of anti-Jewish actions and sentiments with the politics surrounding Israel, such a concept would artificially divide our conceptualisation of the actions in which hostility towards Jews as such is expressed. It seems obvious that 'Israel' questions are very central to current threats to Jews, and also one of the drivers of extreme Islamism, and so the attempt to write Israel wholly out of the question is unconvincing.

I shall argue therefore that a critical approach also needs to refound the notion of antisemitism for our times, in a way that takes account of the context in which the phenomenon has existed since the establishment of the state of Israel. If the idea of 'new antisemitism' has sometimes been abused to smear critics<sup>3</sup>, the idea that the expressions and sources of antisemitism have changed due to the role of Israel is not wrong. Yet because the 'new antisemitism' literature has often been suffused with Zionist apologetics, it has considerably mistaken the character, significance and causes of the novel manifestations of the phenomenon.

### **The changing concept of racism**

I shall deal first with the conceptual issue. In a critique of theories of racism, Glynis Cousins and Robert Fine (2012) argue that it is mistaken

<sup>3</sup> I have personally experienced this twice; in both cases the publishers of the libels apologised.

to define antisemitism apart from racism. They note that although each has older roots, both modern racism and antisemitism developed in the late nineteenth century: ‘It is difficult to dismiss as sheer coincidence the chronological correspondence between the development of pseudo-“scientific” race theories, which were developed in relation to both non-European and European people, and the politicisation of antisemitism’ (Cousins and Fine 2012: 168).

If this is correct, the problem is then to explain why these two linked phenomena were originally, and have remained, separated. I propose that we need to investigate the chronologies of critical ideas as well as the phenomena which they describe. We need to take into account the fact that while the idea of ‘antisemitism’ originated in the nineteenth century, the term ‘racism’ (even including its earlier form, ‘racialism’, which was more common in English until around the late 1960s), is of twentieth-century origin.<sup>4</sup> This sequence may be connected to the fact that while Jews were becoming emancipated in the nineteenth century—seminal antisemitic crises like the Dreyfus affair were reactions against this trend—‘racial’ differences linked to skin colour retained an almost natural character even in early twentieth-century European ‘civilisation’. Although there were movements for the emancipation of blacks and other ‘non-whites’ in earlier periods, it was only well after the Second World War that these gained overwhelming momentum, leading to the general adoption of the harder critical term ‘racism’.<sup>5</sup>

For most of the twentieth century rac(ial)ism was linked to ‘the colour question’, in which race was understood in terms of skin colour. Yet as anti-racism became more and more universally accepted, ‘race’ gradually lost its meaning as a coherent biological or sociological category. Max Weber (1964: 138) had actually dismissed race as a social category, in the sense of the ‘common social relationships’ connected to ‘a common biological inheritance’, in the early twentieth century. Weber gave the Jews as an example of his argument: ‘In the case of the Jews . . . , except for Zionist circles and the action of certain associations promoting specifically Jewish interests, there . . . exist communal relationships only to a relatively small extent: indeed Jews often repudiate the existence of a “Jewish” community’. Jewish communal relationships increased after Weber wrote,

4 While in general usage ‘racism’ has superseded ‘racialism’, Tzvetan Todorov proposes the use of the terms to distinguish everyday and ideological manifestations.

5 It is also relevant to note that Cousins and Fine’s treatment, while illuminating, remains one-directional, in that it focuses only on how far critics of racism also included antisemitism in their focus, and not on whether critics of antisemitism made reference to racism. Thus they note that W.E.B. Du Bois and Franz Fanon made connections with antisemitism, but only with ‘equivocations’ (Cousins and Fine 2012: 169–72), but do not comment on how writers about antisemitism deal with its relationships to other forms of racism.

but this was due to Nazi genocide and Zionism's later successes. It was *not* due to the establishment of a common biological inheritance, the idea of which is as historically unfounded (Sand 2009) as it is biologically and sociologically implausible.

It took until the end of the twentieth century, but the argument that 'race' has no objective biological meaning is now also universally accepted. Although genetic advances have given interest in biological inheritance a new lease of life by establishing genetic clusters in different regions, they have finally undermined any idea that ethnic, let alone 'racial', groups as such have a given biological basis. Correspondingly, the social sciences now regard all such groups, not just 'nations', as 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983). Nevertheless, a more qualified idea of race as a socio-cultural construct is sometimes deployed, although this tendency has also long been criticised (Miles 2000). It is difficult to retain colour as a defining characteristic while regarding antisemitism as a form of racism, although George M. Frederickson (2003: 152) attempts to do so.

The rationale for this kind of approach is that a 'racial' element can be retained as an element in the definition, if it is stipulated that racism must involve 'biological' beliefs. Thus in 1967 UNESCO defined racism as 'antisocial beliefs and acts which are justified by the fallacy that discriminatory intergroup relations are justified on biological grounds' (quoted by Miles 2004: 66). However while this approach clearly enables us to conceptualise antisemitism and anti-black racism together, it excludes similar hostility directed at other kinds of group. Cousins and Fine (2012: 166) make the valid contention that 'prejudice and persecution in relation to Muslims, Jews and Black people are connected phenomena in the formation of European modernity'. Clearly prejudice and persecution in relation to Muslims and many other groups has much in common with prejudice and persecution against blacks or Jews, yet in such cases no biological element is attributed to the discriminated-against group. The biological criterion makes little difference to the *content* of 'racist' actions, only to how some groups are defined, and should not therefore be regarded as an essential element of the phenomenon.

The logical conclusion of the rejection of race as a category is, therefore, that we should define racism as having no necessary connection to anything we can objectively classify as race. I propose, therefore, that racism is best defined as *ideas and practices which express hostility towards population groups as such*, these groups being understood not just in terms of skin colour, but through any arbitrary concept of the perpetrator. Although other concepts like 'chauvinism' may also be used, and the parallel concept of 'sexism' (a late twentieth-century invention) may be used to describe hostility to gender-defined groups, 'racism' now makes most sense as a *general* concept of anti-group ideas and actions, which

accurately suggests their fundamental irrationality regardless of the specific rationales which they express.

This development in the understanding of racism parallels the transformation of the concept of genocide. In the 1940s, when Raphael Lemkin (1944) first proposed this idea and the United Nations defined it in its Convention, it was believed that 'ethnic(al)', 'national', 'religious' and of course 'racial' groups had an objective existence (in contrast to more transitory 'political groups') and that genocide was the destruction of such entities. Today, the argument proposed by Frank Chalk and Hans Jonahssohn (1990: 23), that the 'groups' attacked in genocide are 'defined by the perpetrators', is widely accepted. Genocide is not the destruction of an objectively existing 'genos' (Lemkin was wrong to believe this: Shaw 2015, 19–22), any more than racism is an attack on an objective 'race'. Both attack *imagined* enemies which are socially, culturally and politically constructed by the perpetrators, even if the latter's ideas draw on the ideas of their targets.

Certainly organised community groups, claiming to represent those discriminated against in racism (or targeted for destruction in genocide), tend to emphasise the reality of their communities and the distinctiveness of their particular targeting. In its meaning for professed Jews, antisemitism is different from other forms of racism because it is directed against themselves. The same applies to Islamophobia for Muslims, anti-black racism for blacks, and so on. Yet from the point of view of a general social-scientific conceptualisation (and a universal morality), it makes more sense to conceptualise all of these as variants of a general type, racism. Indeed the literature on 'new antisemitism' itself has recognised this in recent borrowings from the general understanding of racism, for example of the idea of 'institutional racism'.

Obviously there are always issues concerning the naming of particular types of racism, which often reflect particular historical circumstances in which they become important. One could replace 'antisemitism' as a term, with its historical baggage, with one more reflective of the generic concept, like 'anti-Jewish racism'. Yet while terminological innovation has its place in the social sciences, it seems inappropriate to abolish 'antisemitism' when it is generally used, any more than, for example, 'Islamophobia'. Such a move would offer unnecessary offence to Jewish sensibilities without any real analytical gain. As in many cases (the ideas of 'racism' and 'genocide' are themselves examples), it is better for social science to redefine the term which is in general use, rather than to abolish it.

However the implications of understanding antisemitism as a variant of racism are not straightforward. We need to take on board the considerable difficulty of the general concept, which concerns more than the difficulties of 'race' itself. It is evident that racism refers to a very broad and varied

set of phenomena: it is 'a versatile phenomenon' as Cousins and Fine (2012: 166) suggest. The contrasting ideas used to describe it, such as 'hatred' and 'discrimination', are suggestive of the variety. I referred above to 'ideas' and 'practices' which express hostility towards population groups: manifestly the two represent different dimensions, and each takes many different forms. Hatred is only a type or manifestation of racist ideas; discrimination is only one type of racist practice.

Racism manifests itself, historians and social scientists have shown, in diffuse cultural influences, institutionalised social practices, organised political ideologies, opportunist politics, popular and state violence. To define it *as* one or the other of these is to disregard important dimensions of hostility to population groups. Racism can be more subtle than the expression of 'hatred'; it does not have to take an overt ideological form; it can be institutionalised formally or informally (the term 'institutional racism' refers to the latter); it can be mobilised directly to attack a population group, or indirectly to serve political goals which are not primarily about racism; it can be a mainly cultural presence. It can take the form of discrimination or violence; in its most extreme form, it leads to the destruction of a society or a group's presence within a population, which we call genocide.

### **Beyond the 'new antisemitism'**

A consequence of understanding racism as a broad and diverse phenomenon is that we should attend to its mutability. Racism is constantly changing its character. In the Britain of my youth, rac(ial)ism was up front and black people were targeted with overt discrimination. Its principal ideological exponents were classical fascists, neo-Nazis and Tory imperialists, but in a less ideological sense it was pervasive across society. Its political uses could be as direct as 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour', the slogan of a particularly nasty Conservative candidate in the Smethwick by-election of 1964. Today, racist attitudes are more subtle, diffuse and underground; open ideological racism is out of fashion and even the insurgent English-nationalist United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which forefronts hostility to foreigners, has prominent non-white candidates. Fifty years later, the Smethwick slogan is echoed in the question posed by UKIP's leader, Nigel Farage: 'if a group of Romanian men moved in next to you, would you be concerned?' Yet in 2014, such a statement has to be followed by a disavowal of racist intent.

The 'new antisemitism' literature is not wrong, then, to suggest that antisemitism may also have changed. Nor is it wrong to propose that many of its contemporary manifestations are related to Israel. The creation of the state of Israel and the constant state of war in which it has existed

for nearly seven decades are surely the largest events in the history of world Jewry since the Nazis' attempted extermination, with which they are indirectly linked. It would surely be surprising if antisemitism had not mutated in response to these new realities. Israel's creation through war and the dispossession of the Palestinians, in a region awakening to nationalism, inevitably had large effects on others' attitudes towards Jews and the ways in which they were politically expressed. Indeed such effects were obvious in the Middle East from the beginning, for example in the expulsions and migrations of Jews from some Arab countries which followed the forcible removal of the majority of Palestinians.

It is curious, therefore, that some form of 'new antisemitism' literature did not emerge before the twenty-first century, long after hostility to Jews first deepened in some circles in Arab and Muslim societies because of the conflicts in which Israel was involved. The paradox of the form in which it did emerge is explained, of course, by the fact that what concerns the theorists of the 'new antisemitism' is not so much the realities of discrimination against Jews in the Arab and Muslim worlds, as the perception that increasing criticism of and hostility towards Israel, primarily in the West and often accompanied by an explicit repudiation of anti-Jewish motives, nevertheless reflects an *implicit* antisemitism.

The obvious objection to characterising such criticism of Israel as antisemitic is countered, therefore, by an argument that criticism – especially when it is strongly expressed, opposes the Jewish character of the state or even questions the state's existence – is objectively antisemitic regardless of the professed beliefs or subjective motivation of the critics. It is not unreasonable, in view of what we know about the pervasiveness and insidiousness of racism, to believe that this hypothesis applies in some cases. However since the claim has been widely made against critics from liberal and left-wing milieux in which antisemitism has long been anathema, it is reasonably objected that this argument is frequently misdirected and abused.

The argument has been reinforced, moreover, by invoking the idea of 'institutional racism'. This idea, usually applied to state institutions like police and prisons, has been applied to anti-Israeli campaigning movements in the West, despite the fact that such movements invariably distinguish between the state of Israel and Jews in general, and often include considerable numbers of professed Jews. However the idea of institutional racism has been described as having been introduced and used with 'little analytical rigour' (Miles 2004: 69).

Standard responses of anti-Israel campaigners are to point to their own manifest antisemitic commitments and to accuse those who label them antisemitic of opportunistic arguments. Both replies are often valid, but they fail to address the source of the feeling among many Jews that hostility to Israel is in its very nature antisemitic. This appears to lie in the shared



perception of Israel as the answer to the historic victimisation of the Jews. Israel has proclaimed itself the state of *all* the Jews, and most Jewish communal organisations in the 'diaspora' identify to a greater or lesser extent with the state and its policies. Hence for many (but by no means all) professed Jews, above all but not only in Israel itself, Jewish and Israeli identities have become closely entwined. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that strong forms of criticism of Israel are genuinely felt as antisemitic by some Jews. This could explain why Zionists report more experiences of antisemitism than non-Zionist Jews.

It is surely wrong to dismiss the subjective experience of many Jews simply because some pro-Israelis abuse the 'new antisemitism' case. As Cousins and Fine (2012) put it, 'To treat concern over antisemitism as exclusively opportunist denies integrity to those vulnerable to it.' However taking concern over antisemitism seriously does not mean that those who claim to be its victims, any more than those who claim to be victims of any form of racism, can simply and always define when it occurs. Weber argued that in forming social-scientific concepts and developing structural explanations, sociologists should first attend to the points of views of the actors and attempt a theoretical reconciliation of their contrasting viewpoints. However Weber also insists on the *relational* character of social action: we have to attend to the subjective viewpoints of *all* the actors in a set of relationships. So to understand the 'new antisemitism', we need to understand the relationships between the subjective orientations of Israel's critics and some Jews' experience of their criticism as antisemitism. Thus far we have an impasse: the literature on 'new antisemitism' invalidates critics' professions of opposition to antisemitism, while the critics in their turn tend to ascribe opportunistic political motives to 'new antisemitism' theorists.

Weber argued that such a theoretical reconciliation should involve the construction of a 'structural concept' which would make sense of the divergent perspectives of the actors. What could such a concept consist of in this case? In my view, it would attend first to the transformations of identity (Jewish/Israeli and Palestinian) involved in the creation, expansion and maintenance of the state of Israel and the conflicts surrounding these processes. Second, it would address the potentials for new forms of racism, corresponding to changed identities, in these new social relations and the consequent conflicts.

### **Transformations of identity and racism in and around Israel-Palestine**

This way of posing the transformations of antisemitism since 1948 situates them in a larger structural context which has transformed identities on both sides and has produced new kinds of racism against Palestinians as

well as Jews. Jewish identity had already undergone significant change as a result the Zionist campaign for a 'national home' in Palestine, from a mainly religious to an emergent national identity. The establishment of Israel intensified this trend, as most Jews worldwide identified to some degree with the new state, even if relatively few took up its offers of residence and citizenship. But the Jewish state was created only through the removal of most Palestinian Arabs from its territory, and so transformed Palestinian identity too. The expulsions were memorialised by Palestinians as the 'Nakba' or 'Catastrophe': like other peoples who have suffered historic defeats, Palestinians refounded their national identity through this victimisation. At the same time, the very recent genocide of the Jews meant that changing Jewish identities were informed by an even larger and deeper historic defeat, in Europe at the hands of Nazi Germany.

Stronger national identities do not necessarily imply racist attitudes between the groups that hold them. The historical sociologist Michael Mann (2005: 6) explains that 'mere difference does not cause conflict', which only occurs 'when one group exploits the other'. Likewise, political and armed conflicts do not necessarily imply racism. However there is much evidence that even interstate conflict unaccompanied by population expulsions or ethnically-driven killings tends to produce racist attitudes. This appears to be particularly true when war is 'total' and conceived as a struggle between nations as well as states. Among both US and British elites and populations during the Second World War, considerable anti-German and, especially, anti-Japanese racism developed. Even in relatively transient, non-total conflicts, like Britain's 1982 war against Argentina, racism is often evident, fanned by mass media.

From its beginnings, Zionism shared common European assumptions about the inferiority of non-European peoples, and often portrayed Palestinian Arabs in classically racist terms. Although some Zionists have manifested more liberal attitudes, the project of colonisation set up a structural conflict, in which (as in other situations of European colonisation) racism was fostered. After 1948, this was reinforced by the process of dispossessing Palestinians, and the continuing conflict which this set up. While Palestinians inside Israel became citizens, they were manifestly second-class, since they were not members of the 'Jewish nation' to whom the state belonged. Palestinians outside Israel were perceived as more dangerous for Israel, with their responses to dispossession seen as a source of violent threats. In this context, the potential for racism could be said to have become structural for Israeli Jews, even if the more enlightened among them resisted it and the manifestations of racism have varied considerably over time, not least (I shall argue) according to the occurrences of war and violence.

On the Palestinian side, too, a structural potential for racist characterisations of Jews was created. Israel had expelled or oppressed all Palestinians, in different ways, in the name of 'the Jewish nation'. Nearly all Jews whom most Palestinians encountered were involved in and benefited from relations of oppression and exploitation towards them. The Jewish state encouraged a homogenous view of 'Jews' and 'Israel': it is not surprising that some Palestinians also identified the two, extending hostility from the state to Jews as such, even if many Palestinians and organised currents in Palestinian life have always recognised a distinction. This 'subaltern' anti-Jewish sentiment may be called 'antisemitism', and sometimes borrowed anti-Jewish stereotypes from classical repertoires, but its causes were the structural situation in which Palestinians found themselves.

Clearly both these structural potentials for racism were much weaker outside Israel-Palestine. Most Jews in North America, Europe and elsewhere were not directly or even indirectly involved in oppressing Palestinians. Correspondingly Palestinians and critics of Israel outside the region could see much more easily the difference between Jews as such and the Israeli state. Cultural and ideological linkages undoubtedly produced some diffusion of racist beliefs and attitudes on both sides, and historic antisemitism and anti-Arab racism may have provided some ground in which they could grow. However there was much more space to differentiate population groups from political forces. In liberal Western societies, where 'group' thinking had been partially deligitimised and the idea of the individual was stronger, the structural space for non-antisemitic opposition to Israel was large. The liberal and left-wing milieux in which criticism of Israel flourished had been the most affected by anti-fascism. 'New antisemitism' theorists sometimes point to the history of Stalinist antisemitism in the Soviet bloc, but they have not been able to trace extensive linkages from this to the Western left many decades later.

Clearly this outline structural analysis needs to be corroborated by detailed evidence on racism against both Palestinians and Jews, in Israel-Palestine and elsewhere. The ideological positions on both sides of the conflict provide clues: Palestinians point to deep, extensive discrimination against them in Israeli society as well as in the Occupied Territories, and Israelis to antisemitic strands in the formal positions of some Palestinian organisations. Yet, following Weber's approach, such indicators are only a beginning of analysis.

### **Israeli racism and 'apartheid'**

The question of Israel as an 'apartheid state' particularly focuses the issue of Israeli racism, but it is not a wholly adequate frame for understanding it.

'Apartheid' has not been satisfactorily developed as a generic concept in the social sciences, despite its definition in the Statute of the International Criminal Court (2001) as 'an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime', and a previous looser UN definition. In practice 'apartheid' remains closely tied to the particular ideological foundation and systematic racial discrimination of the South African state in the half-century of Afrikaner Nationalist rule, which began in the same year that Israel was founded. The South African Nationalists were pseudo-scientific, ideological racists (Dubow 1995), mobilising religion to rationalise and systematise the embedded racial discrimination in pre-existing colonial society. Like the Nazis, they instigated a graded formal classification of racial groups.

Hence 'apartheid' is used to describe Israel by analogy, but the case differs in significant respects from South Africa. Israeli rule also rests on a history of colonisation, but the latter was much shorter than in South Africa. While the growth of the Jewish community had led to separate institutions and increasing power, there was not the same extensive dominance by Jews over Arabs that Whites had long held over all other groups in South Africa, or the same ingrained and formalised racism. Zionism's ideological traditions were not as focused on relations with the indigenous population as the South African Nationalists' were, and did not categorise them as racial inferiors in the same way. However the lack of dominance also meant that in order to create their state, Zionists perpetrated a concentrated episode of violence and expulsion, for which there was no close precedent in twentieth-century South African history. There European rule had already been consolidated through many colonial wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and although formal apartheid was established through a series of violent and coercive processes which may even have had genocidal components (Shaw 2013: 116–18), there was no destructive episode on the scale of the Nakba.

In this sense, we can argue that whereas apartheid was a consequence of long-ingrained and extensively institutionalised racism, modern Israeli racism (even if it had pre-1948 roots) is more a consequence of the way the state was established and the challenges of maintaining it as a predominantly Jewish entity. Thus Israel's discrimination against the Palestinians within its borders was extensive in the first years of the state, but relaxed as Israel became more secure in its control. The occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza changed this situation, however, leaving their inhabitants as third-class members of the sphere of Israeli rule, without the citizenship rights of 'Israeli Arabs' since their areas were not formally incorporated. It would be pointless for this essay to document the huge range of well-known discriminations and oppressions to which

Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have been, and remain, subject. Suffice it so say that the structural potentials for widespread racism were hugely reinforced.

Clearly we could loosely model three main tiers of Israel-Palestine society (Israeli Jews, Palestinians in Israel, and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories) onto the South African system, which also had its intermediate groups ('Coloureds' and 'Indians') with higher status and more rights and representation than the black majority. The way in which 'Israeli Arabs' remain forbidden from living in many Jewish-only settlements is reminiscent of South African zoning. Israel's ongoing territorial fragmentation of the Palestinian territories, allowing limited control to the Palestinian Authority, loosely resembles South Africa's 'bantustans', although South Africa never allowed an overall 'black' quasi-statal authority to develop, and the statelets never had any prospect of international recognition. Moreover this comparison would leave out the Palestinian refugees outside Israel-Palestine, whose exclusion is a fundamental parameter of Israeli racism.

However one may question the usefulness of these analogies. Noam Chomsky makes an important point when he says: 'The problem with the apartheid analogy is that in many ways it underestimates the situation in Israel-Palestine, and especially the dynamic character of Israeli power. The remorseless expropriation of Palestinian lands (which constitute an informal process of annexation) in the West Bank, the hollowing out of East Jerusalem and the ghettoisation of Gaza present constant and escalating threats to Palestinian society outside the 1948 boundaries. They have increasingly been complemented by loose threats of removal of the "Arab" minority from Israel, orchestrated by prominent governmental figures'.

The active aggression towards Palestinians of these various forms of Israeli expansionism is heightened by the war context in which Israeli society exists. Although apartheid South Africa fought a frontier war in Angola and stood behind the counterinsurgency war of White Rhodesia, war was mostly safely distant from South African cities and the African National Congress's 'armed struggle' was mostly a minor terrorist nuisance to the state. Israel, in contrast, has faced more significant threats, in the past from Arab states and more or less continuously from Palestinian armed groups which have been able to provoke it, even if they have never seriously threatened it.

My hypothesis, therefore, is that the dynamic character of Israeli expansionism and the constant presence of war in Israeli society conditions a more active, potentially dangerous racism towards Palestinians than the oppressive but formally institutionalised racism of apartheid. Correspondingly, responses to Israeli expansionism and militarism may

condition antisemitic views among some Palestinians and within those sectors of their global supporters who see the Israel–Palestinian conflict in terms of ‘group’ conflicts between Arabs and/or Muslims and Jews.

### **The escalation of racism in 2014–15**

If this approach is correct, then we would expect increasing violence and especially open war in Israel–Palestine to condition an increase in both anti-Palestinian racism and antisemitism. Attention in Europe and North America has been focused on the incidence of antisemitic events in these regions. Although reported levels may be increasingly affected by ‘new antisemitism’ ideas which classify anti-Israel activism as antisemitism, there seems little reason to doubt the *trends* for racist insults on and attacks on Jews and Jewish sites to increase in recent years in which the Israel–Palestine conflict has worsened, with strong spikes around the Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2008–9 and 2014.

What has been given less attention, however, is the far more radical deterioration in the situation in Israel–Palestine itself. Here all levels of racism – attitudinal, physical, institutional and legal – have been accentuated over recent years, driven by the state’s relentless expansion. The 2014 crisis saw a dramatic escalation in both popular and official Israeli racism: in response to the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish youths, the Netanyahu government orchestrated organised violence by the army against whole swathes of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, encouraging settler groups to their unofficial violence too, before proceeding to an all-out assault on the Palestinian population of Gaza. Although presented as an anti-terrorist campaign accompanied by concern for civilians, the wholesale destruction of neighbourhoods and blowing up of homes, causing over two thousand deaths and making hundreds of thousands homeless, represented a strategy in which Gaza’s Palestinian population was effectively targeted *en bloc*. This process extensively fostered racist attitudes among Israelis, both on the part of soldiers directly encouraged to treat Palestinians as such as enemies, and among civilians for whom ‘Israeli Arabs’ were the internal enemy. The Gaza campaign was accompanied by overt genocidal agendas on the part of right-wing Israeli politicians, and followed in the 2015 election by Netanyahu’s notorious racist warning that ‘the Arabs are coming’ (to the polling booths).

### **Conclusions**

I have argued in this paper that the new manifestations of antisemitism in Europe are misunderstood if they are presented as separate not just from Israel’s violence in 2014, but from the wider pattern of racism

which that violence stimulated. Yet no official or academic study of this antisemitism has simultaneously problematised the anti-Palestinian racism which has been produced in Israel, despite the fact that this has been on a much larger scale and has had much more serious consequences than the expressions of antisemitism in Europe. These failings, I have contended, reflect deeper failures in the literature on antisemitism and racism. Even the most sophisticated academic attempts to assimilate antisemitism to the larger field of racism have raised only one side of the significance of Israel for racism, namely the ‘new antisemitism’ involved in some opposition to Israel. They have neglected the larger complex of racism of which contemporary antisemitism is a part.

I have argued both for new definitions of racism in general and of antisemitism as a particular form, and for a structural approach to understanding these phenomena. Taking on board both the literature’s recognition of the links between antisemitism and racism and its substantive claim that antisemitism cannot be separated from the controversies surrounding Israel, I have proposed that an adequate conceptualisation of antisemitism as racism will lead us to examine the general field of racism in and surrounding the structural context of Israel-Palestine. Such an examination should explore the relationship between antisemitism in Europe, on which recent debate has focused, and the more extensive and deepening anti-Palestinian racism in Israel-Palestine. In so doing, re-evaluating the general field of racism surrounding this conflict could enable the debate over antisemitism to move on from the sterile, over-politicised debate about the ‘new antisemitism’.

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