

# **Tel Aviv University**

**Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern  
and African Studies**

Researchers Forum

Lecture and Discussion on :

**South Africa, Israel and Palestine**

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It is a great pleasure and a privilege to be back at the University of Tel Aviv and to be giving a talk to you today. It is less of a lecture and more of a talk I hope, because I am not going to take that long: I would really like to hear your views on the subject as well. I would also like to offer thanks to Steve McQueen of the South African embassy who is shortly going to be leaving the embassy and going back to S. Africa and he has been enormously helpful in trying to cultivate a broader understanding about Israel in South Africa, and he has been extremely helpful in facilitating and setting up a range of meetings around this visit, as has Prof. Susser. There is a sort of a certain South African Mafia here, and I hope that long may it be perpetuated, in terms of improving understanding between our two countries. I am one of many who have always presumed that there was a whole lot in common between S. Africa and Israel, and particularly in the contemporary sense on the issue of conflict resolution, and I will be relating to some of those comparisons in a moment but I think that far too much is often taken for granted when it comes to making a comparison between S. Africa and Israel. I think S. Africans presume, very arrogantly because of the comparative success of our transition, that there is much that the international community can learn from the S. African transition and there's often much that we would like to teach the international community about the success of our transition. I do think that that is somewhat arrogant and I do think that it reveals a certain naiveté in terms of our approach and the lack of understanding in many instances. So with that caveat, I am going to make the following comments in the talk, which is entitled (because I think that I am aware of some of the degrees of difference between our respective countries more than the degrees of similarity now, after being here now for the second time) "The Illusion of Comparison". And I have to say that there is a certain advantage in that my co-conspirator, co-author, Tim Hughes, is not with us today (sadly) because if there is anything that you don't particularly like that I say, it's all Tim's, and if there's anything that you do – it definitely belongs to me! More seriously, I would like to acknowledge that this is a joint effort between Tim Hughes and myself.

I'm going to be running through some of the similarities between S. Africa and Israel and also the degrees of difference throughout this lecture, on number of different themes.

### **South Africa, Israel and Northern Ireland**

Of the three archetypal divided societies and conflict-ridden societies, which were often portrayed as case studies during the 1980's – which are South Africa, Northern Africa and Israel-Palestine – only S. Africa has reached a peaceful agreement despite repeated attempts on certainly the other two: the Good Friday Agreement being notable in Northern Ireland, and with Israel-Palestine the Camp David Accords and the Road Map for example. Perhaps this suggests – I started asking myself – the differences between these three case studies have precluded settlement in the other two, and in Israel in particular. In this regard S. Africa's situation with Israel has been compared in a number of respects: for example there has been the comparison between the Lost Tribes - the mutual depiction of Israelis as the Lost Tribe and the Afrikaners as the Lost White Tribe in their search for a modern homeland. There has also been a depiction of both in terms of the lessons from conflict resolution which I referred to earlier and this of course has inspired S. African involvement in various conflict resolution efforts around Israel, most noticeably the Spier talks which were held in Stellenbosch over a year ago.

Thirdly there's also been a depiction of the plight of the Palestinians being akin to that of Black South Africans, particularly in terms of not having equal rights to Israelis, and this is a depiction that many I think in S. Africa often utilize when judging Israel.

There is also the equation of Zionism with Apartheid and in some sectors in S. Africa, Israel's depiction as an Apartheid state, and I think it's important to recognize that as a reason for the belief in some sectors in S. Africa that South Africa can somehow teach these lessons of conflict resolution and political transition.

There is also the related depiction of areas set aside for Palestinians as (I use here an Israeli term) as "Palestans", reminiscent of the Bantustans established during the most repressive days of white rule in S. Africa. There have also been questions about human rights abuses by Israel on Palestinians, and again a paralleling of that with regard to the situation of Black South Africans in S. Africa during the years of Apartheid. There has also been a question of the use of military attacks by Israel on the neighbouring areas, seen as similar to the destabilization strategy that was pursued by Apartheid S. Africa in Southern Africa during the late 1970's and 1980's, which of course was part of setting the scene for the transition of the late 1980's and early 1990's. Let me, however, first examine the nature of the S. African conflict and try and identify a number of factors why it was soluble, and how this might contrast with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and then I want to go on to look at ten different areas of comparison: the first of these is history; the second - questions of identity; the third - demography; the fourth – geography, land, and territory; the fifth – religion; the sixth – politics and ideology; the seventh – the regional factors that I've alluded to; the eighth – the international factors; ninth – the question of leadership (and trying to compare and contrast S. African,

Palestinian and Israeli leadership) and finally – the tenth – I'm going to look at the whole question of process, particularly as it pertains to conflict resolution and try and draw some comparisons.

### **The Nature of Conflict**

But what about the nature of the conflict as a way of setting the scene for what I have to say on these ten areas? I think the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is fundamentally more existential in nature than that in South Africa was for white South Africans at least because it is based on fundamental questions both of existence and of identity for both sides. As a result of this, security and the question of security threats are more intensive, more immediate, and more pervasive than during the S. African conflict. Whereas the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab conflicts have been marked by all-out territorial war, and occupation interspersed by periods of intense terrorism and de-stabilization, S. Africa by comparison engaged in so-called border wars, which is the term used for the wars in Namibia and in Angola during the 'seventies and 'eighties, which really were about low-intensity civil war and less intensive or brutal terrorism than this region has experienced. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and disputes by comparison were also characterized by a clash of perceived absolutes: the right to exist for example and about perceived rights: the right of return and non-negotiable issues such as sovereignty over Jerusalem. By comparison, in the S. African the only absolutes were political in nature; they were about constitutional protections, about full franchise and full enfranchisement of the population and about non-discrimination. They were not about the right to exist or about questions of the fundamental right to the existence of the State of Israel or the State of Palestine or the rights of Whites to be in South Africa; they were about constitutional dispensations, about protection of minority rights and so on. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict in my mind is being complicated by religious, cultural, race, ethnicity and diaspora refugee concerns; the South African conflict was primarily racial and political, and to a much lesser degree – despite what some people attempted to portray in the 1970's in particular and to a lesser extent in the 1980's – about ethnic issues in the country. Territory is absolutely crucial to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to its resolution; territory was never a serious impediment to a South African resolution: a quite fundamental difference between the two.

### **History**

Let me turn to each of these different factors that I want to compare and contrast: the first of these is the question of history: Jewish history clearly resides intrinsically in the soil of Palestine. It is deeper and more immutably tied to this region than Africa to White South Africans. White S. Africans have shown a degree of ability to move around; this was not necessarily their particular chosen land, although some people took on biblical connotations about the selection of territory in southern Africa. Clearly this was a fate of history much more than it was about an intrinsic

tie of the land to White South Africans. As a result the claim to a Jewish homeland was much more intrinsic than the claim that White South Africans had upon the land of South Africa. The legitimacy of the Jewish claim to a homeland is supported internationally, Arab states notwithstanding, and much less contested than notions of a White state ever were in the international community.

The history of Jewish persecution is, of course, of a completely different magnitude than the religious persecution suffered by the Huguenots in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17th centuries, from which the bulk of the Afrikaner population originates. The division of Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel has always been a matter involving the international community and in fact was sanctioned by international law, whereas the notions of a White state were opposed by the international community and the independent homelands created during the years of Apartheid were rejected in international law. The wars from 1948 over Israel have been fought on the basis of the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel. South African wars by comparison were frontier wars, they were economic and political wars and they were regional wars of destabilization, as I have already explained, and in the 1980's inside the country, it was essentially a low-level civil war. But it was never about the destruction of the South African state, which is another fundamental difference. And the South African state was never under serious threat, even at the height of regional and civil conflict.

### **Identity**

What about questions of identity? Clearly the notion of Jewish "chosenness", if I can use those terms, is qualitatively different from the notion of an Afrikaner Covenant. Jewish identity is bound by highly distinctive historical, biblical, racial, ethnic, linguistic and cultural markers. Afrikaner identity by comparison is historically much more recent, is much more disparate, it's much less distinctive, it's much less exclusive in spite of attempts to define it as such; and you see that in terms of the difficulty that the Afrikaners are having in developing the notion of an Afrikaner homeland within South Africa today. Most Afrikaners don't want to have anything to do with an Afrikaner homeland; they don't see any purpose or any need for it; it is much less a question of territory and identity and of Afrikanerdom being tied closely together.

What about the question of demography, thirdly? The Jews (need I point out to you in these surrounds?) are a tiny minority in the region, but always a majority within the State of Israel, whilst the Afrikaners by comparison, were always a tiny minority in the Southern African region and particularly in the African sub-continent, and a decreasing minority within South Africa, which made it much more imperative to find a solution. I'll return to the question of demographics in a second because clearly demographics increasingly, as I understand it, comes against the Jewish Israeli state and provide an increasing pressure to settle with the Palestinians. But this is altogether of a different sort from the situation of

the Afrikaner in South Africa. The Jewish Diaspora remains very significant in terms of the viability and in terms of the political support received for the State of Israel; yet the Diaspora was practically non-existent, and may well have militated against White rule in South Africa in terms of the stand taken by the Dutch for example and the French over Apartheid. Even governments such as Margaret Thatcher's during the last years of Apartheid also echoed this.

### **Geography, Land and Territory**

What about questions of geography, land and territory? Until 1978, there was more or less a blanket rejection of the State of Israel from the Arab community; a rejection of Palestinian partition and so on. And yet the State of South Africa was always recognized; it was never contested, even by African leaders, and its borders were fixed, as indeed was confirmed by the OAU in the early 1960's. It was a question of the illegitimacy of the government and of the regime being contested, not a question of the illegitimacy of the borders of the State of South Africa. The State of Palestine (I use these words in quotes) and the acceptance of the right of the State of Israel to exist – date only from Oslo and are still contested internally and externally, and I think that you see that contestation even present in contemporary documents such as the Geneva Accords for example.

In Israel-Palestine, land is very scarce, and because of that – not just because of these historical reasons and questions of identity – it becomes a major point of contention. Its resources are also relatively poor. And it is because of this, land is portrayed as an acute zero sum game. In South Africa of course, we have an extremely large landmass, which is richly endowed and it's relatively sparsely populated. There is a constant threat to the integrity of the territory of the State of Israel but there was never any external threat posed to the State of South Africa.

### **Religion**

What about the fifth factor – the question of religion? Fundamental and intrinsic to divisions and conflict between Israel and Palestine, and more acutely between Jews and Muslims has been the question of religion, particularly between those regarded as being Orthodox on the one side and those as Fundamentalist on the other. Despite the establishment of an exclusive Afrikaner Church, by comparison in South Africa, a more or less shared Christian identity across racial cleavages was, during the worst years of Apartheid, a force for unity; it was a force for mediation, it was a force for moderation and of reconciliation rather than division. In other words in South Africa, religion was a significant social glue before, during and after conflict resolution; although I would argue now that increasingly religious strains are appearing in South Africa, and they are particularly appearing around the Islamic community, which is about 850,000 people in South Africa, and to give you an indication of the size of the Jewish community – it is exactly 10 per cent of that number, approximately 85,000 people. And

there are increasing strains about the right of identity of these populations within South Africa and I think they are seen more – certainly the extremist elements in the Islamic community – as a source of social division rather than adding to the social fabric and social glue that I've spoken of. Of course in your part of the world, religion equates to one of the most implacable (or so it appears to me) elements to conflict around the Temple Mount and so on.

### **Politics, Democracy and Ideology**

What about my sixth point – the question of politics, democracy and ideology? Despite the racial oligarchy of Apartheid, for the enfranchised, South Africa was governed – ironically (and it made a very big difference in terms of the direction that we took) – along democratic principles and rules: we had parties, even though they may have been minority parties, the Democratic Alliance, the Democratic Party before the Progressive Federal Party was seen to be the Liberal party in S. Africa; we had of course the ruling National Party; and they fought very fierce elections and parliamentary debates in S. Africa during the worst years of Apartheid were much more contested than they are today, ironically. You think of figures which probably will have a resonance with this area of the world, such as Helen Suzman, who kept very much the flame of parliamentary debate and of opposition alive as the sole representative of the Progressive party in Parliament for a long period of time.

Parliamentary politics were an extremely important part of our debate even during the worst years of Apartheid. The ANC, the African National Congress, the ruling party in S. Africa, the liberation and the political opposition inside S. Africa and outside S. Africa, fully accepted – at least by 1990 – and espoused the rules of the democratic game. Israel of course by comparison is still, may I point out the obvious to you, the only democracy in this region and democracy appears to be at least, from my vantage, still alien to some of the Palestinian leadership and to many of the regional governments. By contrast principles of political institutions and a broad form of government was not fundamentally contested between the major protagonists in S. Africa. Another question however arises in this regard: whether Zionism and Islamic Fundamentalism are however reconcilable in this respect. Whereas in S. Africa, the main ideological divide between the S. African government and the ANC in the run-up and throughout the period of political negotiations was broadly social democracy versus Afrikaner nationalism and as it turned out, these were not that far apart in terms of the final outcomes.

### **The Regional Dimension**

What about regional factors? To put it very simply, again from my vantage point, Israel has chosen its neighbours very badly. The region has been a blockage to peace, it's been a supporter and a funder of the Palestinian causes, both positive perhaps in terms of refugee camps, and negative in terms of terror networks. The Southern African region in contrast supported

the liberation movements such as the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress, the PAC, but was decreasingly (particularly after 1984 and the so-called Nkomati Accords and the similar security accord which then became public within South Africa and Swaziland) decreasingly able to offer this extent of support to those liberation movements.

What about wider international factors? As I mentioned earlier, Israel-Palestine would appear to be an existential questions for the United Nations and the international community. South Africa, again by comparison, was not. It was the system of Apartheid that was fundamentally in dispute. Israel and the Middle East of course remains a question of global strategic importance; S. Africa, in spite of the fact that Apartheid was seen as a crime against humanity, was less so. And there was never any real threat to S. Africa's mineral resources and its sea-routes, which were sometimes portrayed by the White government as the reason for engaging with Pretoria. Of course, very importantly, Israel has the United States as a hyper-power ally and of course the Diaspora within the United States remains an important group. South Africa, as I have already mentioned, never had such an ally as a supporter, a funder, and increasingly with the imposition of international sanctions, South Africa became more and more vulnerable to international opposition even from governments as well disposed as they were, such as the Reagan government and the Thatcher government. And in fact it was the imposition of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1985 by the Reagan government which really spelled the end of Apartheid in terms of finding ways to perpetuate at least the S. African economy as it had been constructed then.

Terror networks as webs with intensive international links, operate throughout this part of the world. In S. Africa the ANC and PAC, by comparison, operated rather ineffective liberation armies. In fact they were extraordinarily ineffective: there were really only three major terrorist, or guerrilla, whichever way you look at them, acts carried out in South Africa during the 1980s: the Church Street bomb, the Voortrekkerhoogte rocket attack and the Sasolburg limpet mine blasts. I suspect that probably you are having three a week in Israel at the moment, sadly; but that is an indication of the degree to which the ANC was effective in being able to penetrate and damage the South African security apparatus.

### **Leadership**

What about the question of leadership? Was there something unique about De Klerk and Mandela as political leaders? And I think the answer to this question is both Yes and No: in terms of yes – I think they were unique in the way that they were able to break with the past, the way in which they were able to take respective constituencies to conclusions which at the time were by definition unforeseen. In this regard Mandela's charisma, his force of personality, and his conciliatory nation-building qualities I think were unique, and I think they remain unique within South Africa, as probably they do within an international context. He is one of those people (and I have been fortunate enough to meet him on a number of occasions) who

makes you feel that you are the only person in the room; that he has got something special to say virtually about everybody. I don't know whether the same qualities apply in the case of the leadership in Israel and Palestine. I'll let you answer that.

While neither leader might have had a clear mandate to negotiate a final settlement in South Africa, they had sufficient authority and support to deliver. It's important also in this regard to note in South Africa the depth of the negotiating teams were present on both sides. This was not, despite the fact that they preferred perhaps to present it as such during various times, and that they shared in winning the Nobel Peace Prize, this was not a one-man or a two-man show. There was a considerable team behind each person: on the ANC side, Cyril Ramaphosa was very important; Thabo Mbeki had much more of a background role; Matthews Phosa and others, figures which perhaps you have never heard of before – they were very important in terms of building a wider constituency in the trade union movements, around the constitution in South Africa. Mandela was able to provide the over-arching leadership effect to bring all these people together.

I think De Klerk similarly had his own team, and important here was Roelf Meyer, who I know has made a number of trips to Israel in recent times, but very important in terms of his relationship with Cyril Ramaphosa, which was allegedly forged quite literally on a trout fishing expedition in the former Eastern Transvaal, which is now known as Mpumalanga, where Roelf Meyer had a fish-hook stuck in his finger and Ramaphosa helped get it out and so from that was, at least apocryphally formed a long-standing relationship. Both kind of dispute the story, but at least they were able to build some degree of trust which was important in taking the process forward, at least from the negotiating position, not just from the point of view of the leadership.

I think Mandela and De Klerk were driven by pragmatism and by the rapid foreclosing of choice and opportunity. They were smart enough and shrewd enough to realize that they both needed each other to deliver their respective constituencies, and were able to make important concessions at various times. They were very clearly able to realize that they both needed to strengthen the ability of each partner to deliver on key aspects of the negotiation, and in particular Mandela, although there was a time (particularly around the Boipatong massacres or shootings, whatever you want to call them in the middle of 1992) when there was a low ebb of trust between the two. Mandela still realized that if he was going to deliver a settlement, he had to make De Klerk strong enough to be able to deliver that settlement. Always strengthen your negotiating partner just enough, I suppose, is the lesson from that. I think it's important to realize that both had run out of other options however; there were structural reasons which led to this; there was a stalemate in this process and I'll get to the question of timing in a moment, but there was certainly a view in South Africa prevalent at the end of 1989 that this was no longer a zero sum game, that a win-win situation could be developed, that the Black South Africans needed for the most part White South Africans for a peaceful transition to occur,

and Black South Africans had long since realized that it was impossible to rule the country without there being a Black president in some form or shape. The negotiation process ultimately delivered that shape and form.

By contrast I would have to ask myself whether Arafat can deliver peace for the Palestinians, or on behalf of the Palestinians, whether he seeks a settlement in the same way that Mandela did for Black South Africans; if there is an end-game for Arafat, whether he would allow the Palestinian Authority to negotiate a peace, what sort of leader he wants to be remembered as, what his political legacy, or at least his mental image of himself is. There are also questions about why Israel has been unable, at least from the outside, to replace Rabin as a leader, and why it has elected leaders of the calibre (and I am not making a pejorative comment here) of Netanyahu and Sharon, and why have leaders such as Peres failed? Why did Barak fail, also? And whether Sharon, if he may be able to secure an element of security, can actually secure peace?

### **Process, Method and Timing**

What about the question of process and timing, to get to the last of my ten points, and of rightness? I think it is important to point out that there was no preconceived plan or - to use a term familiar to this part of the world - road map for the South African settlement in 1989. There was also no external brokering, interference or guidance; there was a famous moment in 1994, just before the first democratic election, just after I had joined the Institute, and one of the first speakers we had was Lord Carrington, former secretary-general of NATO, a person who had overseen the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe (I wonder if he realized what was going to happen there now...) a person who had tremendous international respect and who, along with Henry Kissinger, was going to bring the Zulu-based party, the Inkatha Freedom Party, into the negotiation process. And he was basically shown the door; that the South Africans would work this out themselves. So there was no external brokering, interference or guidance. There were no pre-conditions; these pre-conditions largely followed negotiations. They were part and parcel of the negotiation process; there were no exclusions in the peace process. The one notable factor about the CODESA peace process and the Kempton Park talks which followed, was that everyone was included except for those who excluded themselves, and the most notable group that excluded itself was of course the Afrikaner right wing in the form of the Conservative Party, the KP and the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, the Afrikaner Resistance Movement who actually mounted an attack on the Kempton Park World Trade Center using semi-armoured vehicles and tried to hijack the peace process. (I suspect many of them had been fortified by the morning and afternoon's intake; not for nothing were they known as the Brandy and Bypass Brigade!) After the Bophuthatswanainvasion that they attempted to stage at the start of 1994 and after the cold-blooded shooting of three of their members outside their vehicle, the Afrikaner right wing became a more or less neutralized force. So they may have excluded themselves but they also neutralized themselves by attempting a coup of

enough of an African so-called homeland, and they were more or less self-marginalized. The process involved the release of all political prisoners, a very important part – and one of the first stumbling blocks which were overcome during the so-called Groote Schuur meetings of early 1990 after Mandela was released on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February.

Everything was thus on the table for discussion. As I said, there was emphasis on absolute inclusivity and the cardinal principle of negotiations was over the issue of violence and the essential rejection of violence by all the political parties, although it was very difficult that they all stuck to this, as my earlier reference to Boipatong points out. Negotiations were always put back on track each time they struck stalemate by the protagonists themselves. The protagonists had a vested interest in ensuring that the negotiations stayed on course. Despite assassinations, most notably of Chris Hani, the leader of the South African communist party who was shot by a Polish immigrant outside his house in 1993, by other spoilers and by other dirty tricks brigades, the negotiations were always put on track. My reference to the fish-hook episode between Ramaphosa and Meyer was at a particularly low ebb in the negotiation process; they were hosted by a South African business person; they were able to build and keep those discussions going all throughout the worst moments of the negotiations.

### **Lessons from Conflict Resolution**

The lessons thus of the conflict-resolution experience, or the pointers as it were, I won't be so bold as to imply that they were lessons, can be seen notably in terms of strengthening your opponent, making concessions which F.W. de Klerk highlights as being critical in building trust in the sense of mutual reward and loss, and establishing a formal methodology and a partner with whom one can do business. I will leave you to make your own conclusions about what appears to be a slightly fragmented and disjointed civil society second first-track peace process that you have here in Israel and Palestine.

Another lesson that I think is often overlooked is the value of protracted negotiations such as in South Africa, as well as the need for transitional steps in the building of the new government. Regarding the South African experience, when Mandela was released and the ANC and its allies, the Communist party and the labour unions, demanded that the government be immediately disbanded and elections held within six months for a constituent assembly which would then negotiate the constitution (which was a way of them saying to the white minority that basically, we're going to negotiate the constitution). This of course was really ended by the government, along ultimately with the ANC, being intent on taking a much longer view. In the event, instead of six months, the negotiation process stretched over four years where of course the White minority's interest was staying in power and finding a formula to try and protect White rule. The slow transition, I would argue, was critical in the South African instance to success, and showed both parties that their involvement and consensus was required for that success to occur. It gave them time in other words, to put

it very crudely – to discover what they had in common and not only the factors that divided them. And that I think was the principal value of that four-year period.

### **Conclusion: The Illusion of Comparison**

Let me turn to summarise: What I would call the illusion is that South Africa and Israel are dissimilar in the following respects: there has been no disenfranchising of Palestinians yet, and this goes to the question of demographics, which you know better than I do. There have been innumerable peace processes with international intervention in this part of the world. This only happened in S. Africa at the end of the 1980s when there was a different regional and international strategic context, and in fact it happened without international assistance, which may be a lesson in itself. I am a real cynic about the value of conflict-resolution, or at least the creation of a conflict-resolution industry in Africa, and I have recently written a comparative paper comparing the process in Somalia with the process in Somaliland, one of which had an indigenous process of peace-building because the international community largely left it alone; and Somalia, which has had 14 peace processes. The current one – on which the international community has spent some ten million Euro – is running out its life near Nairobi, and is no more likely to find peace than the previous thirteen. But perhaps that's going to be a question of debate later on.

One other big difference is the fact that there were no mandatory sanctions against Israel as there were against South Africa, which gradually ratcheted up from 1963 onwards with the voluntary arms embargo through the 1977 mandatory arms embargo by the United Nations, and increasing financial, commercial, public and private sanctions throughout the nineteen eighties, culminating in the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in a range of Commonwealth sanctions as well. Indeed Israel, unlike South Africa, could legitimately claim to be the aggrieved party in 1948 and since. In fact any settlement of the Israel-Palestine issue cannot base its assumptions, at least in terms of international law, on the illegitimacy of the State of Israel, as indeed the assumptions around transition in South Africa were based around the illegitimacy of white South African rule.

Zionism, unlike Apartheid, is not seen as a crime against humanity or stipulated as a crime against humanity in spite of attempts, such as those that we saw at the world conference against racism which, I am embarrassed to say, took place in my country.

The Palestinians were essentially offered, unlike Black South Africans, what they wanted. The difference is that they did not take it. The ANC was offered much less than what they wanted, but they took it.

Israel is a democracy, to reinforce that point; the rest of the region is not. The opposite situation to an extent applied in Southern Africa, particularly after the collapse of White rule in the Portuguese territories of Mozambique and Angola in the mid-seventies and of white rule in Rhodesia at the end of the 1970's.

And the last major difference is the fact that the United States is and has been fully supportive of Israel, even during the time of the Clinton Administration, and this factor cannot be under-estimated. South Africa, as I have said, never enjoyed significant backing during the Apartheid years.

What about the legitimate comparisons? I think there are more positive similarities between the contemporary Middle East situation and South Africa in terms of the rewards of political negotiation and the rewards of political compromise and the need for prescient timing and of leadership and of the importance of finding international and regional dialogue, and of creating international and regional dialogue and consensus in achieving peaceful solutions. I think to a great extent this is reinforced by the shared history and values of S. Africa and Israel and by the contemporary economic and investment linkages. I think the existence of the Jewish Diaspora in South Africa reinforces that sense of shared identity and of shared purpose and of the resonance of some of these lessons.

Why then, in conclusion, are frequent comparisons made between S. Africa and Israel? I think this partly relates to the history and the close connection between Israel and the Apartheid state, an alliance of course during the 1970's which was born out of mutual ostracism and necessity and not out of empathy, particularly given the National Party's links with Nazism. This of course was a relationship founded and forged as it were around the issue of arms sales and arms transfers during the 1970's and 1980's, and so I think that, given the linkages between White South Africa and Israel during that time, frequent comparisons are made now about the issue of transition. It is partly because of the history of the African National Congress in South Africa and the close symbiotic and personal relationships that were enjoyed with other liberation movements around the world, including the Palestinians. It is also partly due to the involvement of prominent members of S. African Jewry on the ANC side, particularly key individuals such as Ronnie Kasrils, the minister for water and forestry; and Nadine Gordimer, the Nobel winner for literature and many others. It is also partly due, as I have already said, to the existence of a vociferous and a powerful S. African Muslim community numbering 850,000, or about 2 per cent of the South African population but, as I have said, about ten times the size of the Jewish community. This presence and this radicalisation of the issue in S. Africa is felt most notably in South African mainstream newspapers which carry an inordinate amount of Middle East coverage. It is extraordinary in fact, the amount of Middle East coverage that we do have in our newspapers, with writers such as Robert Fisk, who may be known to some of you, receiving center stage. In most cases the coverage appears to represent a case really (and certainly you see this now with the coverage of Iraq) of wishful thinking outstripping rational analysis for the most part. Israel is a useful, a relatively easy whipping boy, not that the Israeli government particularly helps itself in this regard. This is partly also due to the sometimes reactionary nature of the S. African Jewish community. It is perhaps an understandable reaction from a community that feels itself to be continuously under threat and most importantly it is partly because (and this

is why I think the comparison is made much more in a contemporary sense and in the policy environment) the S. African government wants to place itself at the centre of international affairs issue, particularly the government of Thabo Mbeki, and Israel, Palestine, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, is unfortunately at the core of issues in the Middle East, particularly given a post-Saddam Iraq. In this sense, our somewhat narcissistic fascination with Israel has less to do with South Africa's past and the lessons that we might offer in terms of transition, than about the role which S. Africa sees for itself on the international stage. It's less perhaps about our altruism and possible offering of a model than a perhaps unconscious attempt at self-promotion in line with our government's broader international ambitions.

Thanks very much.