

Genealogies  
of  
Conflict

Ran Greenstein

Class,  
Identity,  
and  
State  
in  
Palestine/Israel  
and  
South Africa

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## Preface

No scholarly work on highly charged political issues can itself avoid being implicated in controversy. It would be impossible to write about any aspect of Israeli/Palestinian and South African histories, let alone compare the two, without becoming involved in debates over basic issues of facts, figures, sources, and interpretations. This book is no exception. The mere suggestion that Israel and South Africa can be meaningfully compared, regardless of the focus and goals of the comparison, is highly contentious in the Israeli context, as it conflicts sharply with the self-image of most Israeli Jews, scholars and academics included. It is no wonder, then, that no comparative study of this nature has been undertaken from a mainstream Israeli position, and the few critical attempts to embark on such a project have met with strong public-academic condemnation. Not surprisingly, Palestinian Arabs are more open to the topic and, indeed, have used the comparison quite extensively as a political tool in the international arena. Serious scholarly attempts to explore the value and meaning of the comparison from a historical perspective have been rare, however.

The situation in South Africa is somewhat different. The notion that the two conflict situations exhibit many similarities is widespread, but it has been put to rather different political uses. The apartheid government in the past, and the Conservative Party and other right-wing forces in the present, have used the Israeli example to argue for white or Afrikaner right to national self-determination. The international recognition of Israel (in its pre-1967 boundaries) as a Jewish state has moved certain white South African forces to claim similar legitimacy for their own political projects. So much so in fact, that in late 1993 Alon Leal, then Israeli ambassador to South Africa, publicly requested the right-wing Afrikaner Volkfront to stop using the Israeli case to justify their own racially and ethnically exclusionary cause. On the other side of the political spectrum, identification with the Palestinian struggle has been common among the South African liberation movements, though the latter have never needed to bolster their cause by drawing on this analogy.

How does the present study stand in relation to this controversy? Although not

following an explicit political agenda, I am aware that the comparison itself, and the historical interpretations offered here, might lend themselves to political use and abuse. This is inevitable since knowledge cannot be evaluated and deployed independently of the power relations within which it is produced and consumed.

My main concern in this respect is not to reject political involvement but, rather, to establish the merits of this study as a scholarly project that has managed to give due consideration to the many differing and contradictory positions advanced in relation to the conflicts discussed here. That the outcome is not politically neutral has little to do with conscious bias in the selection of facts and figures; rather, it stems from a belief that there is no contradiction between scholarly objectivity in the identification and evaluation of relevant data on the one hand, and adopting positions with regard to politically and morally controversial issues on the other.

It would be useful, therefore, to set out the political context within which this project has been carried out. When I began working on a draft for the first chapter in late 1988, the political situation in both countries looked rather bleak. The high expectations generated by the popular uprisings in the black townships of South Africa and the refugee camps and towns of the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip had dissipated as those uprisings degenerated into a seemingly endless cycle of bloodshed and repression. By the time the last chapter in what had meanwhile become a Ph.D. dissertation was concluded in December 1991, the situation had changed for the better. The November 1991 Middle East peace conference in Madrid and the launching of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) in Johannesburg in the following month both signified, despite their significant shortcomings, important steps forward.

At the time these lines are written, the transition to a democratic political system in South Africa has been completed at the national level, while the future of the agreements between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization is still murky. Although the progress made in the former case is obviously more significant, there is room for cautious optimism in the latter as well, despite the numerous debilitating difficulties the process has encountered so far. Given the historical focus of the book, the changing political circumstances have had little direct impact on the theses advanced here.

However, as the divergent political dynamics within the two countries have become more distinct, my confidence has increased that the social dynamics of exclusion (in Palestine/Israel) and incorporation (in South Africa) identified in this work are not mere artifacts of my interpretive faculties. As mentioned earlier, this book originates in a Ph.D. dissertation in sociology, submitted to the University of Wisconsin-Madison in December 1991. Since then it has gone through substantial revision, both to incorporate new material and to cover several issues in greater detail and a more nuanced manner.

As is usual for projects of this nature, the work could not have been completed without the help and support provided by a number of people during its various

stages. In addition, the financial help of the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin, the Jennings Randolph Program of the United States Institute of Peace, and the Research Authority of Haifa University is gratefully acknowledged. Sammy Smooha of Haifa University has supported my academic work from its inception and made a crucial contribution to the task of formulating the questions underlying the project. His visit to Madison in 1988, and the many years before and since in which we have worked together, were essential to my thinking on the topic. Esmail Bagheri-Najmi provided support, peer pressure, and intellectual stimulation as a friend and a fellow graduate student. More than anyone else he has helped me tackle the theoretical issues involved in the project and significantly shaped my analytical approach.

I would also like to thank fellow graduate students Saraswati Sunindyo and Naline Tantuvanit for their support. My dissertation supervisor, Erik Olin Wright, offered extensive and valuable comments on the dissertation manuscript during its development. Gay Seidman provided essential help in getting me introduced to South Africa and has commented most usefully on successive drafts of the dissertation. During my stay in Madison I also benefited from discussions with Richard Lachmann, Gerry Marwell, Richard Ralston, and Herbert Hill. My frequent visits to South Africa were made fruitful by discussions with Carolyn Hamilton, Leslie Witz, and Mona Younis. My parents, Hava and Moshe, have shared the burden and joy of helping me complete my studies and I wish to express my gratitude to them. Above all, I would like to acknowledge the consistent support, useful insights, and emotional sustenance provided by Anriette Esterhuysen, to whom this work is dedicated.

*Johannesburg  
March 1995*

R.G.

## Genealogies of Conflict

Five years ago, a collection of essays titled *The Elusive Search for Peace* (Giliomee and Gagiano 1990) sought to demonstrate the intractable nature of political conflict in three of the most persistent conflict situations on earth: South Africa, Israel, and Northern Ireland. All three have since undergone striking changes in the nature of the political conflicts that shape and frame their ongoing development. This is particularly true for South Africa and Palestine/Israel—the two societies on which this study focuses. South Africa's interim constitution of December 1993, a product of over three years of negotiations, paved the way for the April 1994 general elections and the inauguration of the first democratically elected government in the country's history. Somewhat less dramatically, the September 1993 mutual recognition agreement between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the beginning of a phased Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, signal a new era of interaction between the two adversaries. In both cases, conflicts that have long been seen as having no solution seem closer than ever to a peaceful resolution.

These changes are particularly remarkable in view of the fact that only a few years ago political conflict in these two areas reached unprecedented levels of violence and acrimony. In the late 1980s the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories was characterized by massive grassroots mobilization and opposition to military rule, and it encountered equally massive and violent repression by the Israeli occupation forces. In a similar manner, the struggle of the South African masses against racial oppression had intensified since the mid-1980s, leading to the death and detention of thousands of activists and ordinary people alike. In both societies a change in the nature of conflict became evident with the direct intervention of popular forces in the political process. Armed clashes between states and cross-border raids against external enemies receded in importance, and the increasingly explosive internal arena rose to political prominence.

There are obvious similarities in these responses by members of the subordinate groups in both Palestine/Israel and South Africa, but the groups have adopted different attitudes toward the solutions to the conflicts. The growing awareness of the inevitability and desirability of the political incorporation of all South African citizens in a unified nonracial system, as demanded all along by antiapartheid forces, has led to the demise of the apartheid regime and the coming into being of the new South Africa. In contrast, significant segments of the Israeli and Palestinian populations have recognized the principles of national self-determination, making the eventual partition of the territory between them and the formation of two separate states likely developments.

These current events have, as their immediate background, a relatively brief history. The political moves taken since February 1990 by the South African government and the major liberation organizations—the African National Congress and its allies—toward a negotiated settlement were based on an understanding that a viable solution must be based on integrative principles. Most parties to the South African conflict, as well as world public opinion, have come to share this perception. Radical forces on both sides of the racial divide, largely marginalized since the 1994 elections, do not pose a serious challenge to the notion that the South African state should incorporate all its citizens on an equal basis. The only exception is the extraparliamentary white right-wing, organized in the Conservative Party and the Afrikaner Volksfront, though even they do not call for an exclusively white South Africa, or part thereof, and satisfy themselves with a quest for an autonomous homeland that would retain cultural distinctness within the larger South African framework.

At the same time that South African forces were moving in the direction of political incorporation, Palestinians and Israelis were moving in a very different direction. The declaration of independence for the State of Palestine by the Palestine National Council in November 1988, the mutual recognition agreement with Israel, and the implementation of self-rule in the occupied territories in 1994 have set in motion processes of separation. Their culmination in the form of political independence is not preordained, however, although the majority of Palestinian Arabs, together with a substantial proportion of Israeli Jews, and virtually the entire international community, have expressed support for a solution based on the principle of separation of Jews from Arabs in the form of two independent states. Most opponents of such a two-state solution, and in particular those who are religiously motivated, do not offer an integrative alternative but advocate instead an exclusionary setup in which one group or the other is to be eliminated from the scene.

### Posing the Question

Why two apparently similar conflict situations, bringing to mind images of unarmed militant youth fighting for liberation against heavily armed occupation

forces, should call for such different solutions is the crucial question considered in this work. I argue that the nature of the recently negotiated solutions reflects a fundamental divergence in the locus of political conflict, manifested in various ways throughout the modern history of the two countries. Whereas in Palestine/Israel conflict has been defined as a process that primarily involves struggles between two external entities, in South Africa it has been defined as an internal struggle that takes place within a single political framework. This distinction has little to do with geography per se, but rather with the terms in which political actors in the two countries have come to perceive their situation.

A comparative historical study of the formative historical processes of class, identity, and state in Palestine/Israel and South Africa can provide insights into the emergence and evolution of the conflicts that have shaped the histories of these countries from their inception. By focusing on specific combinations of general historical factors in each of these cases, we can account for their similarities as well as their unique characteristics. The comparison can help us identify features particular to each case as well as those of more general relevance.

In principle, any society can be compared to any other society. Palestine/Israel and South Africa have several features in common that make the comparison particularly interesting. Both societies came into being in the course of conflict between indigenous people and settler immigrants. The process of settlement took place in the context of the overall expansion of European political and economic domination of the rest of the world, though in different historical periods. The majority of settlers, especially in Palestine/Israel, did not come from the ranks of the principal colonizing power—the British Empire. Before independence, then, both Palestine/Israel and South Africa could be seen as instances of what Scott Atran (1989) terms a “surrogate colonization” process. This should not be taken to mean that Zionist settlement before 1948, the State of Israel since then, and indeed twentieth-century South Africa exhibit all the features of classical European colonialism. Their similarities to other colonial projects, however, especially with regard to relations with indigenous people, are substantial enough to justify looking at their formative processes as part of the overall historical process of colonization of the non-European world.

In contrast to most other cases of colonial settlement, indigenous people in Palestine/Israel and South Africa have never ceased to pose a fundamental challenge to settler domination. Indigenous people in other colonies were largely exterminated, as happened in the Caribbean, North America, and Australia, or they merged to varying degrees with settlers, as in Central and South America. In other places, European powers took over Asian and African territories but later withdrew without leaving behind permanent settler populations. Only in a few places, most notably the two cases discussed here, is the conflict continuing as intensely as ever, and the originating violence, which always marks the founding of new states and nations, “remains at once excessive and powerless, insufficient in its result, lost in its own contradiction. It cannot manage to have itself forgotten, as in the case of states founded on a genocide or a quasi-extermination. Here, the

violence of the origin must repeat itself indefinitely and act out its rightfulness in a legislative apparatus whose monstrosity fails to pay back" (Derrida 1987: 18). While these words refer specifically to South Africa, they capture equally well the essence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The colonial analogy allows us to place the conflicts in a specific historical context, though it is not meant to serve an explanatory function in itself. It is not offered as a theoretical model, nor is colonialism regarded here as a type of society with its distinct laws of motion. In this sense, I distance myself from conceptions that define colonialism as a social formation characterized by a clash between total opposites, which by definition cannot share any common ground among themselves (Fanon 1963; Balandier 1966; Memmi 1967; Sartre 1976). While typologies that identify specific models of colonialism (plantation, occupation, exploitation) offer a more elaborate picture, they share the assumption that colonialism is a special type of society, governed by a logic distinct from that of "normal" societies.

These common views take for granted in an uncritical manner existing colonial categories, rather than looking at them as having been constructed in a historical process of formation of interests, identities, and organizations. I maintain, in contrast, that colonizers and colonized have frequently come to share such cultural characteristics as religion and language; their political institutions have varied enormously in the extent to which they have accommodated indigenous people's participation in the exercise of power; their class structures have not necessarily reflected a rigid dichotomy. In short, colonial categories should not be seen as immutable, pitting two irreconcilable groups against each other, but as "problematic, contested, and changing . . . [since] the otherness of the colonized person was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained; social boundaries that were at one point clear would not necessarily remain so" (Cooper and Stoler 1989: 609–10).

Colonial models are neither sufficiently historical nor properly analytical. Their largely ahistorical nature is manifested in a general inability to account for the variety and changes in the nature, dynamics, and internal relations in colonial societies in terms of preconceived models. Thus both South Africa and Israel are commonly classified as settler colonial states. The two societies, however, have followed divergent historical courses, rendering the model useless as a predictive tool of their trajectories.

From an analytical point of view, colonial models are flawed in that they do not present clear positions with regard to the operation of theoretical concepts. They do not tell us if and how colonial societies differ from noncolonial societies (whatever definition one adopts for these categories) in the ways class, identity, and state manifest themselves, or in the patterns of interaction between these forces. In other words, they do not establish any *specific social-theoretical dynamics*—as distinct from historical descriptions—unique to colonialism that might serve to distinguish it analytically from other types of societies. As an alternative, a strategy of dealing with the multiplicity of colonial and postcolonial structures

should involve a two-track approach: (1) study them in their historical specificity without imposing artificial boundaries between vaguely defined classes of cases (such as "mixed colonies"); (2) examine them by deploying general analytical concepts rather than by using idiosyncratic models (colonialism of a special type, deviant colonialism) that might serve as useful political labels but are not very helpful otherwise. The extension of this research strategy to the comparative field should not present special difficulties. The greater attention to the analytical dimension in comparative studies comes to some extent at the expense of historical specificity, but this could be justified in light of the potential rewards of stimulating research and making a contribution to theoretical elaboration.

### Survey of Literature

A comparative study of the formation of conflict in the two societies offers a unique perspective from which to explore the various historical and theoretical issues raised in the context of settlement and resistance. Similarity does not mean identity, however, and pointing to certain common practices and structures should not imply that other, no less important, differences do not exist. Ethnic and racial conflicts are widespread phenomena and are not limited to South Africa and Palestine/Israel. And yet conflicts in these two places have consistently drawn extensive worldwide attention and have been frequently singled out by various bodies as, perhaps, the last major cases of colonial-type situations (Stevens and Elmessiri 1976: 183–214). In particular, military and economic relations between South Africa and Israel have been a controversial topic since the early 1970s. This issue led to a series of resolutions by international forums condemning Israel and demanding that it desist from and terminate all collaboration with South Africa. Several studies published in the last two decades seek to document the nature of these relations and assess their significance (Stevens and Elmessiri 1976; Chazan 1983; Adams 1984; Beit Hallahmi 1987; Hunter 1987; Joseph 1988). Only a few of these studies deal with the basic issue of concern here—the extent to which the two societies have historically developed in similar ways. Cooperation and similarity should not be confused, and they need to be analyzed separately. Extensive commercial and military cooperation do not indicate any necessary structural similarity between two societies, and political regimes of an identical nature do not always collaborate with each other. A growing body of literature confronts the question of similarity by examining South Africa and Palestine/Israel from a comparative perspective that seeks to describe and account for the many resemblances as well as the substantial differences between their patterns of national and political conflicts (Jabbour 1970; Farsoun 1976; Greenberg 1980; Houbert 1985; Chazan 1988; Smootha 1988; Adam 1989–90; Giliomee and Gagiano 1990; Ryan and Will 1990; Van den Berghe 1990; Younis 1995).

While many of these studies offer valuable insights into the dynamics of conflict



in the two societies (the work of Younis stands out in particular, and I have greatly benefited from Smootha's work—the first to have raised many of the issues addressed here), they generally suffer from two problems. The first is their ahistorical nature. They rarely engage in an in-depth historical analysis of the development of the socioeconomic, identity, and political systems in question, nor do they explore alternative historical courses that have been open at various points in time. The Israeli-Palestinian and the South African conflicts are products of long and complex historical processes. It is possible to discover general themes that run throughout their history, as attempted here, but one must be sensitive to variations on these themes, evaluate optional courses of development, and observe the specific manner in which they have been expressed in different periods. Most of the studies mentioned above deal only with the end result of the process, that is, these societies as they exist today. We need, however, to go beyond contemporary events to explore the formative processes that gave rise to present conditions and made them intelligible.

A second problem with the literature is its general lack of engagement with theoretical issues (Greenberg 1980 is a notable exception). Most of the studies remain at the descriptive level without elaborating on the relevance of the comparison to theory in areas such as race and class, economic dependency and development, identity and state. This absence makes it difficult to evaluate the contribution of such work to theoretical disciplines. In the present study I attempt to fill some of the historical and theoretical gaps evident in the literature. (For a critique of the comparative field in the South African context see Greenstein 1994.)

### A Comparative-Historical Method

A major difficulty in overcoming the limitations of previous work is the lack of synchronization between the two cases. Comparative studies of South Africa and the United States (Fredrickson 1981; Lamar and Thompson, 1981; Cell 1982) and the United States and Brazil (Degler 1971), to take a few examples, benefit from a close correspondence in terms of historical time between processes of conquest, slavery, emancipation, and segregation. To demonstrate this temporal dimension, Colin Bundy (1990) offers a "thumbnail sketch" of United States history that can serve equally well as an outline of South African history. Doing the same for Palestinian/Israeli and South African histories would require such a great deal of manipulation as to make the exercise meaningless. A possible solution to this problem is to make time itself—the world-historical context—an element of the explanatory framework and thus take a step toward bridging the gap separating the study of history from sociology (Braudel 1980).

I combine in this study the two classical comparative research strategies identified by J. S. Mill and use them in a loose manner as a general guide rather than as

strict experimental designs. The method of agreement poses the following question: given the substantial historical differences in timing, background factors, and nature of the conflicting parties, what makes the similarity between Palestine/Israel and South Africa so obvious to numerous political organizations, governments, scholars, and media? The answer to this question would focus on the similarity in the basic setting of territorial and political struggles between indigenous people and settlers in both situations. The method of difference takes these resemblances as a starting point and proceeds to pose another question: given the similarity of the conflicts, how can we account for the different solutions currently being implemented? The answer would focus on the different materials out of which the formative processes of class, identity, and state were fashioned in the two cases and use these to explain the differences between exclusionary (Palestine/Israel) and incorporationist (South Africa) historical dynamics.

In stating the overall goal of this study I am inclined toward the latter of the two comparative historical research strategies identified by Theda Skocpol, the first of which attempts "to discover casual regularities that account for specifically defined historical processes or outcomes, and explore alternative hypotheses to achieve that end," while the second uses "concepts to develop what might best be called meaningful historical interpretations" (1984: 362). The latter strategy is similar to what Charles Tilly (1984) terms the individualizing, as opposed to the universalizing, approach in comparative investigation. My first goal, then, is to contribute to the understanding of the origins and development of political conflicts in Palestine/Israel and South Africa. I use the comparative framework to highlight features frequently obscured when these societies are studied in isolation, distinguishing between more general and more specific factors that operate in each case.

My second goal is to address theoretical debates on the operation of class, identity (nation, race, ethnicity), and state formation processes and their role in political conflicts. It is through the use of analytical concepts in the study of historically concrete cases that we can advance theoretical knowledge. The conclusions of this comparative study would be particularly relevant to the analysis of those societies, mostly in Africa and the Americas, that came into being as a result of the twin processes of European colonial expansion and the formation of the world capitalist system since the fifteenth century (thus covering much of the same ground as Fredrickson 1988).

### Sources

A project of this nature requires the assimilation and reinterpretation of numerous, widely disparate, historical studies as well as primary documentary evidence. It is essential, however, to engage in a synthetic endeavor in order to compensate for the excessive specificity (from the point of view of a sociologist) characteristic of much historical work. As Janet Abu-Lughod puts it, "in the historians' matrix,

constituted vertically by time, horizontally by space, and third dimensionally by focus, there are only a few specialists situated at each of the thousands of unique intersections; there they dig long and deep . . . their work is the basis on which all generalists must depend. And yet the cost of such concentration is often a loss of peripheral vision" (Abu-Lughod 1989: ix).

Even with a broad nonspecialist agenda, it proved impossible to cover the entire historical development of the two societies. Major issues such as the Great Trek, the Anglo-Boer War, and the relations between labor and revisionist Zionism are discussed briefly or not at all. Though undoubtedly important, these and many other topics had to be left out to prevent the book from growing to unmanageable proportions. My choices of topics were not arbitrary, though one could possibly undertake a similar project and focus on different questions. In this sense, this work is not meant to be exhaustive. In addition, the large gaps that exist in historical research, primarily with regard to issues of identity, made the discussion somewhat fragmentary at times. My main concern has been to build a solid, historically grounded skeleton, fit to tackle the question of concern here—the exclusionary and incorporationist dynamics generated by political conflicts. Further research could proceed from this basis and put more flesh, so to speak, on the existing structure.

I use primary and secondary sources as raw material, going back and forth between historical narrative and theoretical reflection of an explicit as well as implicit nature. In fact, empirical evidence and abstract conceptualization are inseparable, one rather useless without the other. As E. P. Thompson argues in his essay "The Peculiarities of the English,"

a model is a metaphor of historical process. It indicates not only the significant parts of this process but the way in which they are interrelated and the way in which they change. In one sense, history remains irreducible; it remains all that happened. In another sense, history does not become history until there is a model: at the moment at which the most elementary notion of causation, process, or cultural patterning, intrudes, then some model is assumed. It may well be better than this should be made explicit. But the moment at which a model is made explicit it begins to petrify into axioms . . . at the best . . . we must expect a delicate equilibrium between the synthesizing and the empiric modes, a quarrel between the model and actuality. This is the creative quarrel at the heart of cognition. (Thompson 1978: 77–78).

### Periodization

Periodization is always a problem when one deals with historical processes that stretch over a long time span. To facilitate the discussion, I have divided the historical narrative into two parts, starting with the early period of encounter and settlement. In the case of Palestine/Israel, the narrative begins in the nineteenth century and concludes with World War I. In the case of South Africa, it begins in the immediate precolonial period and concludes just before the social transforma-

tions that accompanied the mineral discoveries of the late nineteenth century. In both places this period allowed settlers to establish a basis for future expansion—more securely in South Africa than in Palestine—and created the setting for critical struggles over political and economic domination in subsequent periods. From there, I proceed to deal with the ensuing period of political and economic consolidation, concluding in both places in 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel and the launching of the apartheid era in South Africa. The principal features of political relations in both cases were set in place during that time, and the differences between the courses of the conflicts had become well entrenched by the end of the period.

Subsequent developments during the third period, from 1948 to the present, have further refined the trends in evidence by the end of the second. In this work, however, I discuss only the first two periods as they provide the essential background for understanding later events. The task of extending the historical analysis into the post-1948 period is best left for another study for reasons of time and space (but see Younis 1995 for a discussion of this latter period).

### Historical Outcomes

By the end of the period discussed in this work, the operation of class, identity, and state formation processes in Palestine/Israel had led to an exclusionary outcome—the partition of the country, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the creation of the Palestinian refugee population. In preceding decades a distinct Jewish society was established and achieved a large degree of autonomy, though not complete independence, from indigenous Arab society. The same was true for Palestinian-Arab society, which was less dependent on its Jewish counterpart to begin with. Ideological and political-institutional processes brought about the coexistence of two autonomous communities with limited overlapping affiliations and alliances between them. The ground for an exclusionary outcome was prepared, though the exact shape of the outcome was determined by the relative military strength of the opposing sides and the regional and international support they managed to mobilize.

In South Africa, the outcome of the formative historical processes was more complex. Industrialization and urbanization processes resulted in a growing incorporation of indigenous people into white-dominated economic structures in the course of the twentieth century. Economic integration created an arena for struggle over the terms of ideological and political incorporation of people of various backgrounds in state structures. The call of the white supremacist National Party for the implementation of apartheid was one response to that reality. It was an attempt by a section of the settler community to maintain the presence and role of indigenous people in the economic domain, without allowing it to extend into the social and political domains. African political movements as well as white

liberals called for accelerated integration in all spheres. The victory of the apartheid forces in 1948 resulted in a slowing down, and sometimes even a reversal, of incorporationist tendencies, but not in their complete halt.

### Recent Developments

In both places the post-1948 period saw a further elaboration of the earlier processes. A section of the Palestinian-Arab people residing within Israeli boundaries was incorporated into Jewish-controlled economic, social, and political structures. However, about 85 percent of the Palestinians found themselves residing outside of Israel. Consequently, the main arena of Palestinian political activity remained beyond the boundaries of the Israeli state in geographical, institutional, and ideological senses. The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 did not result in the integration of their inhabitants. Economic incorporation has taken significant steps forward, but without any parallel move in the spheres of identity and state.

The "green line" has emerged as a social and legal divide between the Jewish and Arab parts of Palestine/Israel, firmly in place today despite twenty-eight years of consistent attempts by successive Israeli governments to erase it. The line has been reintroduced whenever political circumstances have called for a clear distinction between Israel proper and the occupied territories (as demonstrated by the blanket curfews imposed on the territories in times of acute political tensions, as was the case during the Gulf War of 1991 and the frequent closures of the last two years). The dominant tendency is still that of exclusion. Whether through a partition of the territory into two independent entities or through the "transfer" of one group elsewhere, the majority of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs favor separatist arrangements. A two-state solution, seen by many interested parties as the way out of the conflict, would, if implemented, grant international legitimacy to the exclusionary dynamics that have been operating all along.

In South Africa, the erosion of apartheid since the early 1980s is testimony to the strength of the preexisting incorporationist tendencies which managed to survive and overcome decades of state planning and the implementation of segregationist policies enforced by massive political repression. By the 1980s, the South African state started relaxing its exclusionary policies. The 1983 constitution and the tricameral Parliament, the abolition of the Pass Laws in 1986 and of the Separate Amenities Act in 1990, the scrapping of the Land, Group Areas, and Population Registration Acts in 1991, the adoption of an interim constitution in 1993, and the elections of April 1994 are all steps taken in a new/old incorporationist direction, culminating with the incorporation of all citizens on a nonracial basis.

The strength of the historical dynamics of exclusion (Palestine/Israel) versus incorporation (South Africa) can also be seen by the fate of the attempts to reverse

them: a failure to *erase* boundaries between Israel and the occupied territories, and thus block the prospects of partition, in the former case; a failure to permanently *erect* artificial boundaries between South Africa and the Bantustans, and thus permanently partition the country into ethnic homelands, in the latter case.

In neither of the two countries do solutions to the conflicts promise to proceed smoothly. Forces with high stakes in maintaining relations of domination have attempted to subvert any movement to dismantle the old order. This applies in particular to Jewish settlers in the Palestinian occupied territories; the resistance of the white and black beneficiaries of apartheid, organized before the 1994 elections in the misnamed Freedom Alliance, has virtually collapsed by now. Although these forces represent a minority in both cases, their disruptive potential should not be underestimated. It is implausible, though, that they would be able to block the process of change. Peacefully or violently, the historical dynamics of exclusion in Palestine/Israel and incorporation in South Africa are likely to continue to assert themselves in coming years.

## 2 | Analytical Framework

The basic argument of this work is that an understanding of the dynamics of political conflicts can be gained by studying the effects of the interconnected processes of class, identity, and state formation. The choice of the three processes was determined in large part by utilitarian considerations such as the availability of numerous historical studies and sources that focus on these issues and provide the necessary raw materials for a comparative inquiry. It is not meant as a rigorous theoretical statement of the importance of some factors relative to others. At the abstract theoretical level one cannot assume the primacy of any of these processes. Ethnicity, race, nation, gender, class, state, demography, and ecology are all basic organizing principles of human social activity. Each of them may acquire greater or lesser importance depending on the phenomena to be explained, the historically specific conditions under which they operate, the goals of the investigation, and their potential for opening new avenues of exploration. The selection of some of these factors in any concrete inquiry is of necessity arbitrary, at least to some extent, if only for reasons of time and space that limit the reach of any particular study and make theoretical choices inevitable. It may be possible to specify historically contingent conditions under which some factors play a more prominent role than others, but the principal task of historical studies is to establish the concrete ways in which social processes interact over time and indicate the likelihood of certain configurations with general theoretical implications. In this we can attempt to bypass, without actually overcoming, "the inherent disciplinary resistance of history to self-conscious theorizing" (Hunt 1990: 96).

Class, identity, and state respectively correspond, though they are not identical, to the classical distinction between the economic, political, and ideological spheres, which dates back to Karl Marx and Max Weber, the "founding fathers" of historical sociology. From the perspective adopted here, however, economy is not to be equated with class, ideology with identity, and politics with state. Each of the

above spheres is itself shaped by class, identity, and state factors, the weight of which often shifts. We should avoid conflating two distinct issues here: the objects of historical inquiry on the one hand, and the theoretical perspectives used in analyzing them on the other. One could choose, say, the sphere of economic relations as a substantive area of investigation and analyze it from nonclass theoretical approaches which focus on identity, state, and gender. In a similar manner, one can study ideology within a class-analytic framework, dismissing identity as a theoretical factor. Many attempts have been made to address the relations of these factors, with varying results. In the following sections I discuss several of these approaches in a critical manner.

George Fredrickson constructs a comparative framework for the analysis of colonialism and racism. He regards class, race, and political power as equally independent explanatory factors, but leans toward granting the ideological dimension of race a primary role: "Racial attitudes arising from original or primal patterns of colonization became social and cultural norms for the dominant groups—ways of determining status and identity as well as rationalizations of direct economic interests"; consequently, "the status implications of the primal hierarchies outlived the material conditions of their genesis and inhibited the developments of the pure class situations that orthodox Marxists would expect to arise" (1988: 223).

Another approach that recognizes the multiplicity of causal factors is the pluralist perspective on race and ethnicity. Without denying the importance of class relations or of beliefs and attitudes, pluralists focus on the political dimension as the starting point for the study of multicultural societies: "Typically, the plural society is constituted by differential incorporation in the political structure, an unequal participation of the racial, ethnic or religious groups, prescribed by law or operative *de facto*" (Kuper 1980: 243). Once a system of domination is established, "there develops, over the years, an elaboration of [economic and cultural] social relations between the races on the basis of the original differential [political] incorporation" (255).

Orthodox Marxism relegated politics and ideology to the realm of the superstructure that was determined by its material base. In recent decades, numerous attempts to go beyond crude economic determinism and give larger weight to the relative autonomy of ideology and politics within a class analytic framework have been made. Erik Wright (1982) calls for incorporating "the political" in the very definition of class structures and modes of production, rather than treating it as an external and subordinate factor. In a similar vein, Harold Wolpe (1986) argues that classes are constituted through economic, political, and ideological processes in the sphere of production, making race an important factor in the shaping of class struggle under specific conditions (Burawoy 1985 and Miles 1987 present similar positions). These formulations represent a move toward more flexible versions of Marxism. They do not go far enough, however, in breaking out of the conceptual

fetters imposed by class determinism as they retain the mode of production as the framework within which all other social processes take place.

The difficulty Marxists face in moving further is expressed by John Solomos, who maintains that “the fundamental problem with abandoning the relative autonomy model is that of avoiding the trap of simple pluralism, which sees ‘race’ and class relationships as completely separate. This is why it seems to me that it is important to insist on the complexity of ‘determination in the last instance,’ while accepting that there is some form of determination of racism by other social relations” (1986: 105). It is argued here, though, in contrast to even the more nuanced versions of the relative autonomy thesis, that the historical processes by which class structures, collective identities, and state institutions are formed are interrelated and should not be reduced one to another or arranged in accordance with any hierarchical principles.

A useful way of looking at the relationship between different analytical factors is conveyed in Philip Cohen’s attempt to deal with the manifold representations of material realities through the (material) territory and (discursive) map metaphor, regarding the two as clearly interdependent though “their relation is not fixed and does not belong to some a priori principle of correspondence. Territory is not a *tabula rasa* of sense impressions awaiting the imprint of false consciousness; map does not model or reflect ‘external reality.’ Indeed, there are many ideological phenomena which cannot be located at either level, but are produced solely through particular forms of interaction between them. Their paradigm, perhaps appropriately, is the mirage. Neither a pure hallucination, nor a pure environmental effect, the mirage is produced at the intersection between certain climatic conditions in the desert and a certain movement of desire on the part of thirsty travellers” (Cohen 1988: 56). This approach suggests that no hierarchical relationship between analytical factors can or should be established. It thus joins the call for the development of a particular, local, regional knowledge that is “an autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established régimes of thought” (Foucault 1980: 81). Configurations of class, identity, and state are historically specific; they are not fixed and rigid, nor are they entirely random: “Just to say that everything is contingent, then, is an assertion that would only make sense for an inhabitant of Mars. . . . [Social agents] are therefore never in the position of the absolute chooser who, faced with the contingency of all possible courses of action, would have no reason to choose. On the contrary, what we always find is a limited and given situation in which objectivity is *partially* constituted and also *partially* threatened; and in which the boundaries between the contingent and the necessary are constantly displaced” (Laclau 1990: 27; italics in the original). Analytical constructions do not have a lawlike validity, then. They can, however, provide useful guidelines for investigating the conditions of possibility for the emergence and elaboration of racial and political orders. In this sense, one can combine broad but diffuse theoretical concerns with concrete historical inquiries so that they

illuminate and enrich one another without subordinating one to the other (West 1987; Hunt 1990).

### The Object of Inquiry

The central axis of my comparison between Palestine/Israel and South Africa is the extent to which exclusionary and incorporationist dynamics became dominant in the material practices and political discourses that governed their conflicts in the period discussed here. I argue that the three processes of class, identity, and state formation led to an overall stronger exclusionary trend in Palestine/Israel, expressed in the formation of two distinct societies, as compared to a stronger incorporationist trend in South Africa, expressed in the formation of one internally differentiated and highly inegalitarian society. The task of the historical analysis is to explain why this turned out to be the case. Two notes of caution are in order before proceeding further.

First, whereas exclusion has a quite conventional meaning of a movement toward the restriction of access to social, economic, identity, and political institutions and structures, the term “incorporation” has a specific meaning here. It refers to a movement toward institutional inclusion *but not necessarily on an egalitarian basis*. Notions of incorporation are frequently associated with equality. However, different forms of class relations such as slavery, indentured labor, and wage labor are considered here as instances of economic incorporation because members of different groups inhabit the same institutions, though within radically different work settings and hierarchies. Economic exclusion consists of the preservation or creation of independent economic sectors within the same boundaries, each with its own internal stratification, or the establishment of independent political entities with no integration of labor markets between them. In this respect, white-dominated societies in South Africa developed a large degree of dependence on black labor. Jewish society in Palestine/Israel was considerably less dependent on Arab labor. This difference had important effects on the course of the respective conflicts, as is explored in the following chapters.

Second, I refer to trends. These are not linear tendencies, inexorably working their way toward a predetermined future, but rather outcomes of specific historical processes that could have turned out differently had other circumstances prevailed. Palestine/Israel and South Africa show evidence of other trends, working in opposite and contradictory directions, which were quite strong at times but not strong enough to offset the overall direction taken by their conflicts. Discussion of trends should be seen, then, in relative rather than absolute terms.

In more general terms, the issue addressed here is the ways in which people create social boundaries in the process of constructing their collective identities, defining their class interests, and organizing as parties to political conflicts. Within this broad area I focus on the factors that affect the extent to which racial and

ethnic relations are defined by various parties in mutually exclusive or inclusive terms (as integrated or segregated, separate but equal, separate and unequal, etc.) in the spheres of economic organization, group identification, and political institutions.

In the historical sections of this work, chapters 3–6, I deploy three analytical factors to account for the divergent historical courses taken by the two conflicts in question. These factors are: (1) the world-historical context within which relations of confrontation and cooperation developed; (2) the capacities of indigenous people to respond to and shape the process of group encounter and conflict; and (3) the strategies adopted by settler and colonial forces in pursuit of their interests.

## Analytical Factors

### *World-Historical Context*

The concept of the world-historical context refers to the overall setting, which exists independently of the phenomena discussed here and has an effect on the unfolding of formative processes as well as their interrelationships. It is of particular importance when applied to comparative studies of intergroup encounters of a roughly similar nature, though undertaken in different periods. Such encounters can have dissimilar outcomes if they take place in different historical contexts.

To take a few examples, colonial settlement in the early era of commercial capitalism differed substantially from a comparable project unleashed in the later era of industrial capitalism. Political clashes between settlers and indigenous people developed in different ways, depending on whether they took place in the sixteenth century, before the emergence of a strong and centralized international state system, or in the nineteenth century, after the consolidation of such a system in Europe and its extension to other parts of the world. The nature and degree of incorporation at the level of identity varied enormously, depending on the prior appearance of nationalism as a major historical force in the last two centuries. Any theoretical conclusions we might reach would thus have to be historicized, that is to say, qualified in light of the temporal context.

### *Indigenous Capacities*

Frequently, studies of colonial processes are presented from the perspectives of dominant groups. This does not mean that scholars identify with the goals and visions of such groups, but rather that they tend to regard them as the most significant actors in the making of the colonial world. This bias can and should be corrected by giving due consideration to the organization and activities of non-dominant actors which are generally no less critical to the analysis. Disregard for what James Scott (1990) calls hidden transcripts is a problem that plagues much of the comparative work on South Africa, and it affects almost all the studies mentioned in chapter 1, which mostly deal with the interests, strategies, concerns, and

visions of colonial and settler forces as the only factors relevant to the development of conflicts. This attitude tends to replicate, in the analysis, the marginalization of indigenous people, and relegates the latter to the status of “people without history” (Wolf 1982). The role of indigenous structures is essential to the analysis of historical developments, however.

In focusing on the role of indigenous structures, I make no claims to speak for indigenous people (or any other group for that matter), nor am I arguing that indigenous sources are more valuable to the analysis or that indigenous scholars offer more correct interpretations of past events. Rather, the concept of indigenous capacities is deployed here analytically to refer to the characteristics of indigenous structures that affect the differential capacity of people to organize at the levels of economy, identity, and state and to use their modes of organization to sustain and open up avenues of independent existence and development outside the control of colonial and settler forces.

A historical inquiry that addresses this dimension should help us account for the ways in which the unfolding of colonial processes and their outcomes were shaped by factors other than those on which scholarly study has focused so far—colonial interests and settler strategies. It is important, at the same time, not to confuse history *from the bottom up* with history *of the bottom* (Kaye 1984: 228; italics in the original). The social history school in general, and its followers in South Africa in particular, have offered innovative views of political conflicts and transformations by attempting to incorporate the role of subaltern and indigenous actors into the analysis. We should be careful, however, not to romanticize the struggles and achievements of those who found themselves, at least temporarily, at the losing end of history (Fox-Genovese and Genovese 1983: 179–212). The actions and reactions of all sides to the conflicts deserve thorough consideration.

### *Colonial and Settler Strategies*

Colonial and settler strategies have been extensively studied elsewhere and therefore do not require much discussion here (for typologies of colonial formations based on this factor see Fieldhouse 1966; Fredrickson 1988: 216–235). Colonial and settler forces defined in the course of conflicts their material and ideological interests. They devised strategies in order to realize such interests, frequently clashing among themselves in the process. No study of colonial processes, comparative or otherwise, could possibly proceed without taking these strategies into consideration. At the same time, they should not be dealt with solely in their own terms, as having existed prior to and independently of the colonial process itself. Rather than positing them as the primary explanatory factor, we need to outline and account for the ways in which they were shaped by the world-historical context and by indigenous capacities.

### Demography

A major factor frequently used in the analysis of racial and colonial situations is, of course, demography (see, for example, Fredrickson 1981). While all of the processes discussed so far were influenced by demographic realities, demography should not be regarded as an independent factor, at least not in the period preceding the consolidation of international boundaries. Rather, it was itself shaped by other formative processes. A few examples illustrate this point. If South Africa has had a black majority in its population, it is because of the expansionist nature of European settlement in the country. If Europeans had been confined to the area of original settlement—the southwestern Cape, which could support a dense settlement of hundreds of thousands—they would have been a majority there. They moved beyond the Cape because of the inadequate supplies of capital and labor needed to establish the Dutch intensive family-labor farm as the basis for settlement. In other words, the availability of capital, labor, and land resources determined demographic factors rather than the other way around.

Similarly, Jews are a majority in Israel today because a specific territory was targeted for settlement by the Zionist movement, and hundreds of thousands of Palestinian-Arabs were evicted to other Arab territories during the War of 1947–48. This fitted the plans of the Zionist movement to maintain a solid majority in the population and clear the way for massive Jewish immigration into the country. The drive toward these goals was due to the exclusionary nature of the identities and political institutions established in the pre-1948 period. The relative proportion of settlers and indigenous people in the population today appears thus as an *effect* of the formative processes and not their *cause*. Once demographic realities are firmly in place they have their own impact, of course, but they do not operate on their own and have no effect independently of the other social processes.

### Historical Processes

The three historical processes dealt with in this work are (1) class structure formation—the establishment of land and labor relations between and within different groups, and the changes these went through over time; (2) identity formation—the emergence, development, and consolidation of racial, national, and ethnic identities; and (3) state formation—the construction of political institutions and the ways in which they came to exercise authority over disparate territories and inhabitants. In the following sections I raise several theoretical issues that guide the concrete historical discussion in later chapters.

#### Class Structure Formation

Within the overall context of formation of class structures, this study primarily deals with control over land and labor resources. Several factors need be taken into

account: (a) *The background to the settlement process*: precolonial social forms and in particular indigenous land tenure and patterns of class differentiation; the nature of settler populations—sources of personnel and capital, their class divisions and interests; (b) *processes of economic development*: incorporation into the world system; changes in land tenure; industrialization and urbanization; and (c) *the changing class structure*: the transformation in class relations as a result of operation of the previous two factors; the nature of class relations formed between members of different groups and the extent to which systems of racial and ethnic stratification developed.

Several perspectives analyze class relations within the specific historical context of European colonial expansion. A common way of theorizing the contact between widely disparate societies and economic systems is modernization theory—a cluster of approaches that emphasize the distinction between the traditional and the modern (or some other similar dichotomy) as the key to understanding the nature of economic, social, and political developments. More specifically, this perspective regards the spread of European hegemony over the rest of the world as having led to the transformation of stagnant traditional societies under the impact of modern and dynamic values, methods of organization, and technology. European patterns of development served as a model to be followed by non-Western societies: “The Western model of modernization exhibits certain components and sequences whose relevance is global . . . [and it] reappears in virtually all modernizing societies on all continents of the world, regardless of variations in race, color, creed” (Lerner 1958: 46). Change is a process of convergence between different societies, and “it is therefore only a slight exaggeration to say that all contemporary societies are more or less modern” (Parsons 1977: 229).

The orthodox Marxist approach is, in a way, a variant of modernization theory. The *Communist Manifesto* asserts that “the bourgeoisie . . . compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image” (Marx 1977: 225). Another formulation repeats the same idea that “the country that is more developed industrially only shows to the less developed, the image of its own future” (416). In other writings Marx put stronger emphasis on the distorting effects of colonial domination, but he continued to maintain that the destruction of indigenous societies in the colonies was necessary for further progress, and that imperial powers were an unconscious tool of history in facilitating social revolution in Asia. (For a modern version of this approach, see Warren 1980.)

What modernization and (some) Marxist theories have in common, despite the use of very different concepts and value judgments to describe the process, is the assumption that the source of economic change is external. Colonialism has had the effect of pushing traditional, undeveloped, precapitalist societies to adopt modern, capitalist forms of economic organization. This process is seen as progressive, whether in its own right or as a necessary step toward further social transformations.

The dominance of modernization approaches has been increasingly challenged since the 1960s. Its most forceful critique came in the form of dependency, world-system, and articulation of modes of production theories. Common to all of the above is the rejection of notions of convergence and of the progressive elimination of the distinct characteristics of non-Western economic systems. Dependency theory asserts the opposite, in fact. Tradition and underdevelopment are *results* of modernization processes rather than their starting points: "Even a modest acquaintance with history shows that underdevelopment is not original or traditional and that neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped countries resembles in any important respect the past of the now developed countries. . . . Contemporary underdevelopment is in large part the historical product of past and continuing economic and other relations between the satellite underdeveloped and the now developed metropolitan countries" (Frank 1969: 4).

From this perspective, then, colonialism incorporated non-European societies into an economic world system in a dependent position, as suppliers of raw materials and cheap labor and as markets for goods produced by the dominant elements in the system. The capitalist world economy is based on a transfer of surplus from the periphery to the core, thereby making the relationship highly profitable for the latter and disastrous for the former. The goal of the core is not to transform the periphery in its own image, but to maintain it in its subordinate role. What seem to be traditional structures (serfdom, coercive agriculture) are either new forms emerging from the incorporation into the world system (Wallerstein 1974) or old forms that were retained in a new context because they served capitalist interests in that way: "Far from banishing pre-capitalist forms, it [the capitalist world economy] not only coexists with them but buttresses them, and even on occasions devilishly conjures them up *ex nihilo*" (Foster-Carter 1978: 51).

Despite the obvious differences between the perspectives presented thus far, they all treat precolonial social forces as passive objects, totally overwhelmed by the colonial invasion and the transformations brought about in its aftermath. Whether they regard these processes in a positive or negative vein, modernization, dependency, and world-system perspectives emphasize the European impact and its ability to impose visions and designs on the rest of the world.

A different focus is presented by Steven Stern in a thorough critique of the world-system perspective. He argues for an analytical framework based on the need to take seriously three motors of development: "the European world-system, popular strategies of resistance and survival within the periphery and the mercantile and elite interests joined to . . . [local] 'centers of gravity'. It is in the contradictory interplay between these three grand motors, and in the divisions and contradictions internal to each of them, that we will find keys to a deeper understanding of the structures, changes, and driving forces of colonial economic life" (Stern 1988: 871). This approach directs our attention to class divisions and conflicts not only between colonizers and colonized (or core and periphery), but also within these categories. It serves to bring the role of popular and indigenous

forces back into the picture. Having said that, it is obvious that the capacity of indigenous people to resist encroachment on their land and labor power, to take advantage of newly opened opportunities, and to participate in new economic orders on an equal footing has varied tremendously. Precolonial social differentiation, prior exposure to the operation of market forces, and the adaptability of their political institutions have all affected local responses to the economic challenges posed by colonial forces.

Patterns of class interaction can be seen, then, as outcomes of conflicts between various segments of settler and indigenous populations over terms of incorporation (or lack thereof) in the domains of land and labor. These patterns should not simply be considered results of conscious strategies pursued by colonial powers (and settlers), though those were important of course. The historical chapters of this work analyze the evolution of class relations from a perspective that seeks to account for divergent social dynamics in terms of material interests and organizational capacities of all sides, dominant and nondominant alike. The comparative study should allow us to evaluate the conditions which give rise to different constellations of class relations in the context of settlement and resistance.

The nature of the politico-economic project pursued by settlers determined the ways they defined their interests with regard to indigenous people's land and labor. In confronting this project, indigenous people in societies that had had prior experience of settled agriculture and production for the market were able to defend themselves from incorporation into a subordinate class position. Furthermore, certain segments within these societies could benefit from the opening of new economic opportunities. The ability of local elements to gain (or retain) independent access to capital and land resources allowed them to develop their economic autonomy. Internal class differentiation and incorporation into the world system on terms not defined by settler interests created a space for separate economic development. Different historical trajectories have thus been shaped in a process of interaction between the class interests and capacities of imperial, settler, and indigenous forces.

#### *Identity Formation*

Of particular importance in analyzing identity formation is the extent to which the formative processes of group identities (that is, the ways in which people define themselves as belonging to larger collectives perceived in various group terms such as nation, race, ethnicity, and religion) shape the nature of conflicts and are shaped, in turn, by them. The existence of parties to conflicts as cohesive and self-conscious groups cannot be taken for granted. Collective identities are contingent in nature; they emerge and decline under specific historical circumstances in a process that frequently involves struggles over definitions of terms. The issues of concern here are as follows: (a) *pre-encounter group identities*—the identities prevalent among different indigenous and settler forces before the colonial en-



counter; (b) *the process of group formation*—the extent to which people managed to overcome internal divisions on various grounds and construct coherent group identities; and (c) *blueprints*—the manner in which the unfolding of conflict was affected by the existence, or lack thereof, of conscious designs formulated by members of groups with regard to the society they want to build and the ways to get there.

Parties to conflicts attempt to overcome internal obstacles to the construction of a common identity among their members. The more successful groups in this respect gain an advantage over their opponents. Furthermore, they frequently use their power to make it more difficult for others to bridge over their own divisions in the framework of a divide and rule strategy. At the same time, the experience of living together within the same structures can result in the construction of new identities or the reinforcement of unifying old elements. The degree of cohesion of identities is not easy to detect. It is less obvious than other material or institutional realities since it has a larger hidden and unarticulated dimension. Nevertheless, we can attempt to deduce beliefs and attitudes from the analysis of activities, alliances, and forms of organization. In addition, social phenomena which do not clearly belong to the realm of “ideas,” such as relations across the color line, the emergence of mixed populations, linguistic heritage, and church membership, can be indicative of the workings of group formation.

One instance of identity, of great importance in the context of this work, which emerges and takes shape as part of a political process, is nationalism. Nations (as well as ethnic and racial groups) have not existed from time immemorial in their present form, nor have they sprung into existence out of nowhere. They come into being as the culmination of a formative process in which they become a focus of identification for people who share common descent, or at least a belief in such an origin. Identity is a construct, and it exists in the mind of people as a subjective experience, not as an objective reality existing “out there.” Nation, thus, “is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. . . . In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined” (Anderson 1983: 15).

National consciousness and nationalist movements are historically new phenomena in much of the world, and their existence is not obvious. As Ernest Gellner argues, “nationalism tends to treat itself as a manifest and self-evident principle, accessible as such to all men, and violated only through some perverse blindness, when in fact it owes its plausibility and compelling nature only to a very special set of circumstances, which do indeed obtain now, but which were alien to most of humanity and history” (Gellner 1983: 125). The need of nationalists to construct a credible common identity can be seen as a process of creating and maintaining ethnic and national boundaries which reflect group attitudes based on myths, symbols, and means of communication, rather than mere geographical or physical divisions, although the latter are also crucially important (Armstrong 1982).

As part of the process of creating boundaries, and thereby constructing viable symbolic communities, nationalists usually advance reasons and justifications for engaging in such a project of identity formation. Of particular interest are legitimations used by leaders and members of a group to account for their right to exist and prosper in specific times and places. Anthony Smith (1984) lists six essential myths that play an important role in every national movement and that can be used as a framework for the study of variations in the way nationalism is expressed. His categories could be grouped into myths of origin (time, place, and ancestry), which are set in remotest times, and myths of political developments, more historical in nature, which deal with the rise, decline, and regeneration of the group.

Much nationalist mythology is a conscious creation by intellectuals who take it upon themselves to construct a viable identity for their own group. This process frequently involves the “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983)—the use of new cultural elements that are disguised, for purposes of legitimation, as old and traditional artifacts. A variation on this theme, particularly important in the African context, is the “creation of tribalism” (Vail 1989)—the existence of tribal identities not as relics from precolonial times but as new institutions created during the colonial period. This process has often been initiated by outsiders such as missionaries, colonial administrators, and social scientists, sometimes in collaboration with local elements. The obvious manipulative aspects of these phenomena, emphasized by the literature discussed earlier, should not lead us to conclude that the people, in whose name and for whose supposed benefit these identities are constructed, are passive in this process. Their active intervention in the form of constructing their own traditions of group consciousness, and of setting limits on, accepting, or rejecting externally induced identities, plays a vital role. A fruitful approach to the study of the formation of identities should consider all contributions to the process, by external and internal elites as well as by the masses.

The principles presented above can serve as organizing tools in analyzing identity formation. We should look at it as a process rather than as a fixed inventory of elements that always exhibit themselves in the same way. Specific movements draw upon different symbolic repertoires in order to enhance cohesion and solidify a sense of common destiny. The success of some identity projects, but not others, depends on the plausibility of their constructions in the eyes of their potential constituents, and their ability to mobilize mass support behind them. The existence of objective linguistic, religious, and other preconditions for such movements facilitates their task.

In addition to nation, race and ethnicity also function as principles of organization of collective identity. All these are not mutually exclusive principles but rather partially overlapping and partially competing foci of identity formation. In a manner similar to the concept of nation itself, race can be seen as “an unstable and ‘decentered’ complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by

political struggle" (Omi and Winant 1986: 68). The concept of racial formation as used by these writers outlines a strategy of investigation, similar to the one pursued here, of showing "how the widely disparate circumstances of individual and group racial identities, and of the racial institutions and social practices with which these identities are intertwined, are formed and transformed over time . . . through political contestation over racial meanings" (69).

The process of identity formation shapes the overall direction of conflicts. Exclusionary and incorporationist outcomes are affected by struggles between and within groups. The varying capacities of groups (or segments thereof) to build clear and mutually exclusive identities depend on their prior historical experience. If such identities had already been in existence, or in a process of being formed, in the precolonial period, the prospect of exclusionary developments in subsequent periods became more likely. In contrast, in situations in which no rigid boundaries between groups had been formed, more space existed for the construction of comprehensive identities later on.

#### *State Formation*

The third process, the formation of political institutions, is discussed with a focus on the following factors: (a) *the nature of precolonial political realities*—the scale and bases of organization of the political structures of indigenous people; (b) *indigenous resistance*—indigenous people's political and military capacities, including the ability to resist settler expansion; and (c) *imperial and settler control*—the consequences of the modes of organization of settlers and their relations to larger colonial or imperial projects.

State formation is a process of extension of centralized rule over geographically disparate areas, previously independent or autonomous, and the concomitant establishment of administrative institutions for the governing of these territories and their inhabitants. A variant of this is the carving of new states out of larger political units. These processes consist of military and political struggles over territorial control and legitimacy. The formation of state institutions and the consolidation of their territorially bound authority have an internal dimension, focused on the elimination of alternative power centers (ending a situation of "multiple sovereignties" as Charles Tilly puts it), and an external dimension, focused on interstate relations and international legitimacy.

The orientation of nondominant groups toward state power is a key element of these processes. They may seek to incorporate themselves within established structures on an equal basis, to destroy existing structures and create entirely new ones, or to adopt intermediate strategies. Choices made in this respect, even when they take place outside of the state apparatus proper, greatly affect the locus of the entire political process.

An important dimension of state formation, particularly relevant in the context of this work, is the expansion of European domination over much of the rest of the

world. This movement transformed the nature, scale, and capacities of state structures in Asian, African, and American territories. It led to the creation of new states where none had existed and to the modification of political organization in existing states that became incorporated into larger transnational networks. Even states that had never been colonized (such as Thailand, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire) underwent adaptation to the new political environment. State formation in peripheral regions, then, should be analyzed in terms of its own dynamics as well as in the framework of a European-centered process.

The importance of the study of political developments in the context of the international system of states has been emphasized by Theda Skocpol (1979). A key ingredient of colonial expansion, seen in this context, is the violent encounter between political systems based on widely different forms of organization. The occupation of new territories, and the imposition of administrative control over them, presented new dilemmas for which the European experience offered no ready-made solutions. The extension of rule over hostile and culturally alien populations, spread out over large territories in remote areas, had to be tackled by using innovative methods of control.

One of the aspects of colonial rule particularly relevant here is the relations established between expanding empires and local elites. A provocative thesis dealing with the non-European foundations of colonialism claims that "the financial sinew, the military and administrative muscle of imperialism was drawn through the mediation of indigenous elites from the invaded countries themselves." The central mechanism of this development was expressed in "meshing the incoming processes of European expansion into indigenous social politics and in achieving some kind of evolving equilibrium between the two" (Robinson 1972: 120). One does not need to assume that the entire colonial project was driven by these factors to realize that the strength of collaborative mechanisms greatly affected the development of the colonial state and its postcolonial successors.

The compatibility of the political interests of indigenous and external forces usually varied with the power of settlers relative to empires. In places where there was a substantial body of settlers of European origin, the potential for conflict between them and the colonial authorities was ever present. This was especially the case when the colonizing power was not the mother country of the settlers. Policies toward the "Native Question" were a particular source of clashes among colonizers. The various social and political forces involved in settlement processes (missionaries, imperial authorities, local officials, traders, and landlords) formulated their interests in different ways. The drive for territorial expansion served some of these interests, while others benefited from alternative arrangements based on treaties and indirect rule over indigenous populations. Indigenous elites had their own interests in collaborating with or resisting colonial forces. Their own processes of state formation were frequently entangled with colonial expansion and led to clashes as well as to cooperation. The relative strengths of the various contenders for power played a major role in affecting the results.

An important element accompanying the process of state formation from its beginnings is popular resistance. The quantity and quality of resources allocated for the pacification of indigenous peoples were a function of their capacity and determination to maintain or regain their independence. Their military and organizational capacities were determined, in turn, by the internal cohesion of their political institutions, the openness of the colonial political system, independent access to advanced military technology, and the ability to forge alliances and take advantage of conflicts among their opponents. Similar factors affected the ability of empires and settlers to formulate and achieve their own political goals.

In cases in which indigenous political organization was fragmentary in nature, factional fighting resulted in greater openness to colonial intervention. In a similar manner, when settlers were split among themselves, or entered a conflict with the colonizing power, more space for politics of collaboration was created. In such cases parties struggling for power tended not to phrase their conflicts in mutually exclusive terms. In contrast, when internally coherent parties faced each other in a struggle over resources, the conflict was usually constructed in zero-sum terms. The higher the degree of internal consolidation of parties to the conflict, the less likely it was to lead to incorporationist politics or to interpenetration of political processes among the different groups.

These analytical reflections provide a framework for discussing the formative historical processes outlined earlier in the chapter, beginning with class structure formation during the early period of settlement.

### 3 | Land, Labor, and Territorial Expansion

The first part of this chapter deals with economic development, land regime, labor relations, and their effects on political conflict in Palestine/Israel, seen in the historical context of the late Ottoman Middle East. The second part does the same for the territories that became part of South Africa in the precolonial and early colonial periods. In the third part I compare the two countries. My main argument is that precolonial social and economic structures shape the ways in which indigenous societies met the challenges posed by the arrival of European immigrants in possession of different technologies and modes of organization.<sup>1</sup> Further, I argue that indigenous capacities not merely determined the responses of indigenous people to the strategies pursued by settlers but also affected the formulation of these very strategies and the ability of settlers to implement their policies. Overall, the clashes between various indigenous and settler forces resulted in a larger degree of economic incorporation between the different groups in South Africa as compared to Palestine/Israel.

#### Palestine/Israel

##### *The Middle Eastern Context*

For four hundred years, between 1517 and 1917, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire and was ruled from the capital of Istanbul (Constantinople). Its economic development in that period should be seen in the context of the social and economic relations in the empire as a whole, and in particular in its Syrian provinces—Bilad al-Sham (present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, and Jor-

1. While the term “precolonial” has a straightforward meaning in South Africa, it is ambiguous in Palestine/Israel. In this latter case indigenous people were not subject to settler economic and political domination before 1948. I do use it to refer to the pre-1882 period, however, in order to focus attention on developments among indigenous people that took place prior to any impact of Zionist settlement.