Seeking Mandela: Peacemaking between Israelis and Palestinians

Adam, Heribert & Moodley, Kogila 2006.
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The publication of this book could have not been timelier given the political evolution in the Israel and Palestine politics as well as the changing world order in which the conflict finds itself. The political evolution has to do, among other things, with the coming into power of Hamas, while at the same time there is a shifting political landscape in Israel with the formation of the Kadima Party. However, closer to home and directly related to the title of the book, *Seeking Mandela*, the publication of this book could have not been timelier. It comes at a time when the South African leadership and government are expected to contribute towards finding a solution to the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

The book is as much about the conflict in Israel-Palestine as it is about issues of leadership among other things. This is reflected in the first few pages of the book where the authors state that '… a social movement's policy is inevitably influenced by the moral clarity of leaders who are admired because of their principled guidance'. The book is as much about the conflict in Israel-Palestine

as it is about the extent to which similar cases, such as South Africa, could be employed to seek solutions to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Thus, in this way, the authors set out to first trace the evolution of the ideologies that informed the making of the former Apartheid State and to juxtapose this with the evolution of Zionism as an ideology on which the founding of the State of Israel was based. This examination of the history of these two situations is documented in chapters two and three of the book. In this sense, the book then sets out to discern some of what it calls myths of false analogies between the evolution of the politics in South Africa and in Israel. However, in exposing what the authors refer to as 'false analogies', the book delves into six core areas, namely, *economic interdependence, religion, third-party intervention, leadership, political culture and violence.* These six areas are explored within the context of evaluating their contribution to either progress or regress in finding a solution to the conflicts in South Africa on the one hand and Israel and Palestine on the other. In exploring these areas, the broad conclusion reached by the authors is that, while such conditions could have served as the motivating force for change and the eventual end of the conflict in South Africa, by and large, they have served as impediments in the case of Israel-Palestine.

The comparative review of these cases is explored in chapter four of the book, which begins with the examination of the economic interdependence argument. An illuminating section of this chapter is the one titled *Unifying versus divisive religion*, which points out how religious leaders from across the colour-line (the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the late Catholic Archbishop Dennis Hurley and the Dutch-Reformed Minister Beyers Naudé) used the pulpit to oppose a system of injustice. The authors argue that in the case of the Israel-Palestine conflict, religion was increasingly placed at the centre of the conflict, and as such, has served as a dividing force between the parties. For instance, 'Orthodox Jews have succeeded in imposing religious prescriptions on a multi-religious state that defines itself officially as Jewish' (p. 64). In this same section, the authors reflect on the support, particularly in the West, that the Zionist movement has been able to amass for the cause of Israel, which is something that the Afrikaner Calvinism could not quite accomplish. However, there seems to be no clear critical analysis or explanation of how such international support was accumulated.

Other illuminating sections of chapter four are about 'third party interventions and embattled leadership in controversial compromises' (p. 71 and p. 77). With regard to the issue of third party intervention, the authors bring a telling difference in the two cases. On the one hand, in the case of South Africa, the international isolation of the apartheid state as a pariah enhanced the conviction of victory from the internal forces that were opposed to it. On the other hand, in the case of Palestine, the ultimate end of the conflict has remained uncertain. The section on leadership and compromises compares and exposes the challenges that leadership face. For example, issues of legitimacy impact on the quality and impacts of compromises made. Again, in this section, the challenges faced by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), such as managing differences between a movement in exile and an internal movement, are discussed.

Having explored these areas and having highlighted the differences between the two cases, the authors note that, while there are indeed differences, it would be unjustified to conclude that the Middle East cannot learn lessons from the South African Negotiation process (p. 33).

Thus, the last two chapters of the book, 'After the violence' and 'Conclusions', among other things, draw lessons that can be learned from the South African process. The chapter on After the Violence is forward- looking in that it explores options that could be available for dealing with the past or what could be a people's collective memory of that past.

An issue that the book does not further explore is the one of *collective responsibility* (p. xi). The authors argue that there exists collective responsibility when crimes are committed in the name of your nation or when you have unwittingly benefited from your group's action. A further exploration of this concept would have helped the reader to understand if collective responsibility should translate into collective punishment. Nevertheless, the book is a very informative comparison of two case studies and the conflict processes involved. It will offer interesting insights to any conflict practitioner about the difficulties found in trying to manage a process towards peace as well as about the challenge placed on the leadership with regard to making the right choices and decisions.