the darkest instincts of the West. The leading Western powers had vital interests in the Middle East, especially with the discovery of oil in the early twentieth century. By dovetailing their own colonial project with Western imperialism the Zionists imposed a more deadly imperialism on the region.

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It supplied arms, intelligence, and military training to these countries. Israel's relations with South Africa were the closest. It helped the apartheid state to develop nuclear weapons in the 1970s. Israel also helped South Africa evade the mandatory arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council in 1977.

Israel also encouraged the colonial powers to create new white settler states in Africa when they faced nationalist resistance in their colonies. In 1960, when the Algerian resistance against the French occupation of their country was at its peak, David Ben Gurion urged the French President Charles de Gaulle to carve out a white settler state in coastal Algeria after expelling all indigenous Algerians. Luckily, both for the Algerians and France, de Gaulle ignored Israel's self-serving advice.

Israel understands too well that alliances based on interests alone are risky. Interests are a fickle thing. In order to protect themselves against shifting interests the Zionists have sought to create and deepen new emotional ties with Western audiences. Since the early twentieth century they have given encouragement to a new-fangled theology in the United States that looks upon the creation of Israel as a necessary prelude to the Second Coming. These Zionist Christians now constitute Israel's faithful foot soldiers in the Republican Party.

In more recent decades Israel has presented itself increasingly as the West's secular crusader state. It wraps itself in Western values. It ceaselessly reminds Western audiences that it is the "only democracy" in the Middle East. Many Westerners are willing to excuse Israeli excesses against Palestinians as a small price to pay for preserving a Western "democracy." More likely, many more see Israel as the last white outpost in the world of coloured peoples, valiantly holding back the hordes of brown, fanatical Muslims. As these perceptions have taken root -- with daily proddings from an Israel-friendly media -- defending Israel has become a vital Western interest.

With unrivalled Western dominance in the 1990s, Israel began to break through its isolation in the Third World. Most of the non-Muslim countries in Sub-Saharan Africa were persuaded to recognize Israel. In 1991, the US brought pressure on the UN General Assembly to revoke its resolution of 1975 which equated Zionism with racism.

Unofficially, most Arab countries ended their boycott of corporations that do business with Israel. Egypt, Jordan, and Mauritania recognized Israel. A few Gulf Arab countries established informal relations with Israel.

More recently, however, the winds have been blowing in a new direction. The US invasion of Iraq, so strongly pushed by Israel and its allies inside the United States, has produced a few unforeseen consequences.

Islamist Iran now openly contests both the US and Israel in the Middle East. The US- and Israel-friendly Arab regimes appear to be running out of time.

In the summer of 2006 Israel's deterrence power was eroded in a war it could not win against the Hizbullah. In Latin America the United States is unable to roll back the new shift towards the left, driven by the growing assertiveness of indigenous Americans. The region is not as friendly to Israel as it had once been under right-wing dictators. In several European countries, too, the changing Muslim demographics do not bode well for unconditional European support for Israel.

Perhaps it is this changing global scenario that is causing some Israelis to emphasize their root constituency: white solidarity. Is this why Ambassador Naftali Tamir is advising Israel to forge a deeper partnership with Australia? It is possible that, deep down, some Australians, too, feel beleaguered among a "sea of Asians," even though no Asian country threatens Australia.

Perhaps the ambassador speaks as an insider. Perhaps that is why he thinks it might be a good idea to exploit these Australian fears. It would be good policy, he argues, for Israel to "cooperate" with Australia -- her "white sister" off the eastern edge of Asia -- to "enhance its position in countries neighbouring Australia." Is this a signal to Australia that, with Israeli support, it should start casting its gaze beyond small fries, like East Timor, toward Malaysia and Indonesia?

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