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Longing for the Homeland: The Palestinian American Diaspora and Palestinian Advocacy in the United States

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

LONGING FOR THE HOMELAND:
THE PALESTINIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA AND PALESTINIAN ADVOCACY IN
THE UNITED STATES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

by

Mohamed K. Ghumrawi

2022

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Mohamed K. Ghumrawi, and entitled Longing for the Homeland: The Palestinian American Diaspora and Palestinian Advocacy in the United States, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Eric Lob

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Date of Defense: March 15, 2022

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Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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THE PALESTINIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA AND PALESTINIAN ADVOCACY IN
THE UNITED STATES

By

Mohamed K. Ghumrawi

Florida International University, 2022

Professor Mohiaddin Mesbahi, Major Professor

This dissertation explores how Palestinian Americans in the diaspora connect with Palestine, Palestinian advocacy, and the Palestinian question. It analyzes and synthesizes the interaction of the Palestinian American diaspora and Palestinian advocacy, exploring its domestic and transnational linkages. It also explores the nexus of domestic and transnational aspects relating to Palestinian identity, political life, advocacy, culture, and politics. This project utilizes two main frameworks, the first is the tripartite composite state theory, focusing specifically on the normative-social structure. The second applies a framework of intersectionality, highlighting the interconnectedness of the Palestinian diaspora and the Palestinian question with other social and rights based movements.

First, this project provides a synopsis of Palestinian migratory patterns to the United States and explores the formation of Palestinian organizations and Palestinian advocacy groups in the United States, tracing how these organizations and institutions have emerged and evolved. It then frames and synthesizes the intersectionality of the

Palestinian question with U.S civil society and other U.S. social justice movements. It also explores transnational linkages and the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with other international rights movements. Finally, it investigates and assesses the dynamic interactions between Palestinian activism in the U.S. and the U.S. government, exploring how the Palestinian question interacts within the American political system, how it influences U.S. domestic politics, and how the Palestinian question has evolved and changed within U.S. political discourse over time.

This dissertation argues that when placed within the framework of the composite state theory, Israel maintains its hegemony over the coercive-military and economic-developmental structures, but has lost its domination of the normative-social structure. Additionally, it highlights the dual dichotomies of how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is assessed at the state/geopolitical level vs. the social and grassroot level. Finally, it argues that the Palestinian rights movement is no longer a singular issue, but is part of a broader global movement advocating for social and racial justice. As such, this project helps broaden the analytical scope to reflect both the domestic and internationalization of the Palestinian question and how it connects across multiple spectrums.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian-Israeli encounter remains one of the most contentious issues in contemporary politics. While the interwar years and post-World War II era saw states throughout the Middle East, Africa and Asia gain their independence, Palestinians have continued to have their independence and self-determination hindered. One of the consequences of this unsettled conflict is a significant Palestinian diaspora. This diaspora community has largely resettled in the Middle East, however, a part of this community has settled in the 'West' - including in Europe, Latin America, Canada and the United States. This diasporic community has been affected by the ebb and flow of the Palestinian struggle and to various degrees has been involved in political activism, organizing to form organizations or joining social movements in support of the Palestinian cause and increasingly in support of broader social issues in their respective home countries. The failure to find a resolution to this decades old conflict has led to increased Palestinian activism and advocacy through grassroots organizations in the United States, subsequently increasing awareness of the everyday realities facing Palestinians.

To date, minimal research has been conducted on Palestinian activism, and on Palestinian American political life in general, within the United States. Thus, this dissertation will broadly examine multiple dynamics within Palestinian American political life and addresses the following research questions:

How has Palestinian political life in the United States emerged, institutionalized, and evolved over time and what impact/influence has it had on Palestinian political advocacy?

How have Palestinians connected to non-Palestinian civil rights and social justice movements in the United States, as well as internationally?

What are the key elements of the transnational ties of the Palestinian Diaspora in the U.S.?

How has Palestinian political activism and advocacy interacted within the American political system, engaging with the different levels of government in attempting to influence U.S. policy and U.S. discourse towards the Palestinian question?

This dissertation focuses on the interaction of the Palestinian American diaspora and Palestinian advocacy, exploring its domestic and transnational dynamics. Thus, this dissertation explores the nexus of domestic and transnational aspects relating to Palestinian identity, political life, advocacy, culture, politics and more generally, the Palestinian question overall. It hopes to broaden the analytical scope to reflect both the domestic and internationalization of the Palestinian question.

Specifically, this dissertation provides a brief synopsis of Palestinian migratory patterns to the United States. It then explores the formation and evolution of Palestinian organizations and Palestinian advocacy groups in the United States, tracing how these organizations and institutions have emerged and evolved through time and space. It then frames and synthesizes the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with U.S. civil society and other U.S. social justice movements. It also explores transnational linkages and the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with other international rights movements. Finally, it investigates and assesses the dynamic interactions between Palestinian activism in the U.S. and the U.S. government, exploring how the Palestinian question interacts within the American political system, how it influences U.S. domestic politics, and how the Palestinian question has evolved and changed within U.S. political discourse over time.

Palestinian Americans in the United States and their political contributions have been under-researched. As first and second generations of Palestinian Americans begin to enter their early adulthood and enter professional careers, many dynamics associated with the Palestinian question continue to shift and evolve in the United States. These impacts are already beginning to show themselves as social rights movements continue to advocate for their causes within a framework of intersectionality, interconnecting their causes with other rights movements and creating a broader coalition of social justice activists.

Another example are the elections of Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), who have become not only the first two Muslim women in Congress, but Rep. Tlaib is also the first Palestinian American woman in Congress. Both representatives, in their short time in office, have drastically impacted the conversation on Israel and Palestine in American political discourse. As time goes on, there will without a doubt be more Palestinian Americans elected to important government offices, which will influence the Palestinian-Israeli issue within U.S. domestic politics. Another example is a shift in the normative/social framing of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the U.S., as unconditional support for Israel has come under increased scrutiny and more Americans become aware of the human rights abuses imposed on Palestinians by the Israeli government. Bernie Sanders, a presidential candidate in both 2016 and 2020, has also drastically impacted the discussion on Israel and Palestine within U.S. political discourse. These topics and more will be covered in depth in the following chapters.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation will take an eclectic approach, drawing from multiple discourses and assumptions; however, it will mostly be informed by the constructivist paradigm and at times will utilize *intersectionality* as a theoretical framework. A constructivist approach is best suited to analyze the conceptualization of the Palestinian question within American political discourse by emphasizing agency and normative behavior. Scholars such as Nicholas Onuf (1989), Alexander Wendt (1992, 1995), and Peter J. Katzenstein (1996) have emphasized the importance of these socially constructed dynamics and the impact they have on world affairs.¹ The interactions between the Palestinian diaspora, Palestinian advocacy/solidarity groups, transnational networks, and the United States government have been historically and socially constructed. Social meanings matter and norms, identity, and culture play an influential role when discussing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

This dissertation will also draw from the theoretical framework of the tripartite *composite state* theory to inform its argument. Mohiaddin Mesbahi places the international system within the framework of a tripartite system with three interrelated yet distinct structures- 1) the *coercive-military*, 2) the *normative-social*, and 3) the *economic-developmental*.² Mesbahi argues that the state is not a unitary actor within

¹ See Nicholas Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization*, vol. 46 (1992): 391-425, Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security*, vol. 20, no.1 (Summer 1995): 71-81, and Peter J. Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

² Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Free and Confined: Iran and the International System," *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* 2, no. 5 (2011): 11.

these three structures, but is rather a *composite* predisposed by the influence of both symbiotic and competing groups attempting to influence the agency of the state, revealing its inner components and associations (see figure 1.1.)³ Mesbahi argues that “each structure is used by the actors as a platform for domination and resistance, capacity building and denial”, and each interact with one another in a matter conducive to its own particular agenda and strategic interests.⁴ With the Palestinian question as the primary focus, this dissertation will utilize the *composite state* theory within this matrix of actors in order to examine their interactions with one another and how they influence the agency of the state within the three structures in relation to the Palestinian question.

Furthermore, the conceptualization of agency will expand beyond the Palestinian diaspora, and at times will include Palestinian *advocacy* as an agent itself. The Palestinian narrative and advocacy towards the Palestinian question hold its own unique agency, and is embedded within Palestinian identity, academia and intellectuals, social activists, political leaders and others. Thus, the normative conversation of Palestinian *advocacy* and the Palestinian *narrative* becomes an agent itself.⁵ This *advocacy* includes Palestinians, but also non-Palestinians, and expands to advocacy networks which advocate for Palestine and Palestinian rights. As such, the broadening and conceptualization of *advocacy* as an agent will at times be embedded within the following chapters.

³ Mohiaddin Mesbahi, “Free and Confined: Iran and the International System,” *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* 2, no. 5 (2011): 12.

⁴ Ibid: 11.

⁵ Mohiaddin Mesbahi, interview with the author, January 25th, 2022.

Furthermore, this dissertation will explore the idiosyncrasies of multiple individuals, leaders, elites, organizations and institutions within U.S. civil society and how their advocacy toward the Palestinian question attempts to influence the agency of the state within the *composite state* theory, especially the *normative-social* structure. By utilizing the *composite state* framework, the theory will help inform the dynamic interactions between these actors, the state, and the three structures. It will also inform the relationship between Palestinian advocacy groups and institutions, on the hand one, and their interactive relationship with U.S. domestic politics on the other hand.

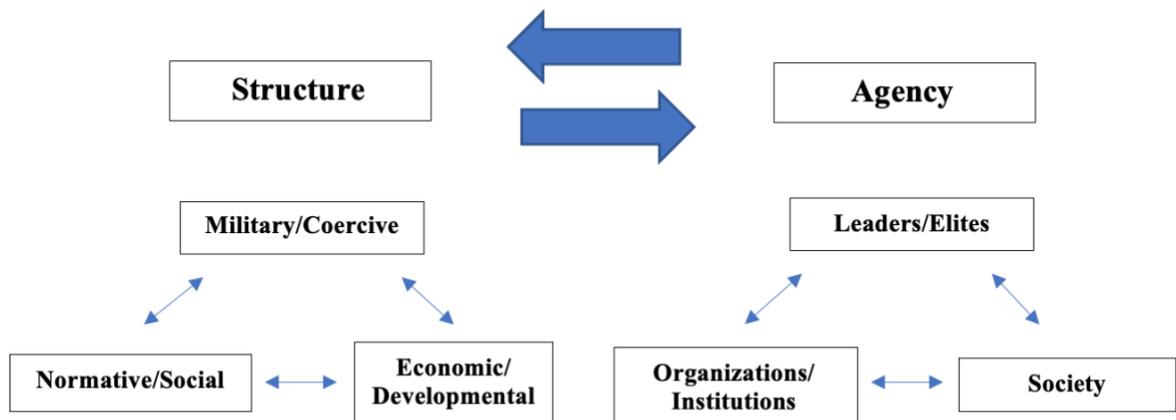


Figure 1.1: Composite State Theory Diagram

METHODOLOGY

For this study, I elected to use an interpretivist constructivist qualitative design. It utilizes interviews, digital archives, case studies, primary and secondary sources and a chronology of current events in the United States to inform its argument. It contains interviews with influential scholars, experts, high-ranking members of relevant Palestinian and Palestinian advocacy organizations, lobby groups, and other grassroots movement organizations. These include, but are not limited to, leaders of the Arab

American Institute (AAI), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), the Jerusalem Fund and Palestine Center, the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF) and more. The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions which aimed to reveal the evolution of these groups in terms of their founding, their mission and objectives, and how these have changed over time. Many of these individuals have a long history of Palestinian advocacy in the United States and are amongst the founders of Palestinian organizations and advocacy groups in America. The interviewees also discuss relevant information relating to the multiple topics covered within each chapter, of which are utilized and referenced to throughout this dissertation.

Moreover, in order to gauge the Palestinian American population in terms of demography and areas of concentration, this project utilizes statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Arab American Institute (AAI) and the State of Palestine's Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. I also intend to use this data in conjunction with the Arab American Institute's Census Information Center.⁶ The U.S. Census Bureau has designated AAI as its only census information center which focuses on analyzing data on the Arab-American community in the United States.⁷ However, it must be acknowledged that at the time of writing, the U.S. Census Bureau has yet to formally include a reporting category for Arab Americans on the U.S. Census form.⁸ This lack of a formal reporting category may reflect inaccuracies in official U.S. Census statistics. The findings and

⁶ See www.aaiusa.org.

⁷ Arab American Institute, "2020 Census: Reaching an Accurate Count," <http://www.aaiusa.org/2020census> (accessed October 1st, 2018).

⁸ Ibid.

conclusions drawn from this research are based on analysis of the data obtained, as well as my personal observations and participation with these groups and individuals. Finally, periodization is important to maintain as part of this project. Consequently, while this project covers important historical and contemporary events that have taken place before 1970 and after 2020; it essentially remains within the domain of periodization from 1970 to 2020.

BACKGROUND

Scholarship on the Palestinian-Israeli issue has taken many forms. Although it is difficult to place many of these scholars in a single category, some have approached it from a historical perspective (Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi, Hamid Dabashi, Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, Walid Khalidi, Norman Finkelstein and Sandy Tolan), while others have approached it in terms of diaspora studies and identity formation (Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi, Juliane Hammer, Helena Lindholm Schulz, and Fawaz Turki). Others have written on Palestinian literature and poetry, such as Hanan Ashrawi; while some are the producers of such poetry, such as Palestinian poets Harun Hashim Rashid and Mahmoud Darwish.

Unfortunately, few scholars have attempted to focus specifically on Palestinian Americans in the United States, especially as it relates to Palestinian political life and Palestinian advocacy. James Zogby, founder and President of the Arab American Institute (AAI), has written extensively on Arab, as well as Palestinian, politics in the United States. However, in his book, *Arab Voices: What They Are Saying to Us and Why it Matters* (2010), Zogby focuses on Arabs *outside* of the United States while showing little attention to Arabs (and specifically Palestinians) *inside* the United States. However,

Zogby and AAI routinely publish literature and policy papers on Arab-American issues in the United States.

Furthermore, Kathleen Christison conducted an in-depth study of Palestinian American attitudes and perceptions. She attempts to convey the Palestinian perspective by showcasing interviews which highlight individual political viewpoints of a small sample of Palestinian-Americans.⁹ Unfortunately, Christison's work is outdated, having been conducted during a time of optimism for Palestinians. At the time of writing, Christison's interviews are approximately thirty years old, originally being conducted between 1987-1992, and are no longer reflective of the current political climate regarding the Palestinian question. Much has changed in relation to Palestinian Americans since then and no work has contextualized how Palestinian activism in the U.S. has changed and evolved during this time.

May Seikaly writes on the Palestinian community in Detroit. By interviewing a small sample size of 50 Palestinians from the Detroit area, Seikaly also makes claims regarding Palestinian social and political identifications today.¹⁰ However, Seikaly's work makes no mention of specific Palestinian political activism or the evolution of that activism within the Palestinian diaspora.

Christison's work was conducted on the cusp of the Oslo Accord signing while Seikaly's was completed shortly after the accords were signed. The Oslo Accords, signed

⁹ See Kathleen Christison, *The Wound of Dispossession: Telling the Palestinian Story* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunlit Hills Press, 2002).

¹⁰ See May Seikaly, "Attachment and Identity: The Palestinian Community of Detroit," in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 25-38.

in 1993, are a memory of an optimistic time when there was “almost peace”; however, even with such recognizable gains, a final resolution and the creation of two sovereign states, one Israeli and one Palestinian, has yet to be achieved. Edward Said predicated the failure of the Oslo Accords shortly after it was signed in his article *The Morning After*, even while others were still invigorated with a sense of optimism.¹¹ The optimism from the Oslo era has since all but deteriorated, except among Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership which, at the writing of this project, seem to be holding on to a naïve sense of hope.

This dissertation also draws upon current diaspora and identity formation literature, specifically literature focused on national identity, identity formation and relationship to the homeland. Thomas Faist describes the term diaspora as a result of a traumatic event.¹² Robin Cohen discusses the concept and definition of diaspora and explores the relationship between homeland, migration, and identity in his work on global diasporas.¹³ When defining *diaspora*, the concept of “homeland” and a connection to other members of that diaspora is integral to conceptualizing the term.

Schulz and Hammer argue that diasporas require a transnational condition and that strong collective images of the homeland should exist.¹⁴ This “connection to the homeland” plays an important role in Palestinian identity formation, as well as

¹¹ Edward Said, “The Morning After,” *London Review of Book* 15, no. 20 (October 1993): 3-5, <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v15/n20/edward-said/the-morning-after/>.

¹² Thomas Faist, “Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23 (2000): 189-222.

¹³ Robin Cohen, *Global diasporas: An introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

¹⁴ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 9.

Palestinian advocacy in the U.S., as advocacy for Palestine helps drive this relationship to the homeland. Additionally, Ibrahim G. Aoudé discusses how Palestinians in the diaspora connect with one another across diasporic communities to maintain their culture. This connection, which he terms “diasporic interconnections”, is driven by interactions with other Palestinian Arabs within the diaspora which facilitate an increased connection to the homeland.¹⁵ This connection encompasses characteristics such as speaking Arabic and observing Palestinian customs and traditions.

Edward Said, perhaps one of the most influential Palestinian American scholars in the world, has written extensively on the topic of Palestine, Palestinian identity and Palestinian political activism. In *The Question of Palestine*, which remains a critical reading for anyone interested in the region and its future, Said discusses multiple aspects of Palestinian life and politics and how they have evolved over time.¹⁶ Rashid Khalidi also discusses the formation of Palestinian nationalism and identity, giving special focus to the connection of Palestinians with Jerusalem, but also expanding beyond that to include theoretical, historical and cultural dynamics which also influence Palestinian identity.¹⁷

Fawaz Turki discusses the phenomena of the condition of exile as the homeland itself. “We are all looking for Palestine. Till we returned. For Palestine became the world and we took the world with us. Palestine ceased to be the strip of land from which our

¹⁵ See Ibrahim G. Aoudé, “Maintaining Culture, Reclaiming Identity: Palestinian lives in the diaspora,” *Asian Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (2001): 153-167.

¹⁶ See Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992).

¹⁷ See Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.)

forefathers had come. We filled it with the frenzied passion of years of statelessness till it ceased to be a state and became a state of mind.”¹⁸ Turki discusses the concept of being Palestinian as intertwined with exile, that the Palestinian diaspora *is* Palestine and that being Palestinian is not only a place, but an “intangible consciousness”.¹⁹ In *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile*, Turki provides a journal-like account of a “Palestinian in exile”.²⁰ Turki provides a first-hand account using personal memories of what it was like to grow up in a Palestinian refugee camp and communicates the essence of his experience, until he would eventually move to the United States.

Furthermore, other scholarship has been conducted on diaspora groups in the U.S. and their impact on U.S. foreign policy making. Diaspora populations play an important role when it comes to influencing U.S. foreign policy towards their homelands. In Josh DeWind’s and Renata Segura’s edited volume *Diaspora Lobbies and the US government*, the authors discuss the impact of diaspora groups in shaping U.S. foreign policy, the manner in which they build relations with the different branches of government, the process in which they exert this influence, and the context in which their goals become U.S. foreign policy goals.²¹ Examples includes Irish, Jewish, Cuban, and Haitian minority groups, some of which have been more successful than others in influencing U.S. foreign policy. Nonetheless, it is critical to understand the way in which diaspora groups have the

¹⁸ Fawaz Turki, “To be a Palestinian,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid*: 7-9.

²⁰ See Fawaz Turki, *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile* (New York: Modern Reader, 1972.)

²¹ Josh DeWind and Renata Segura, “Diaspora-Government Relations in Forging US Foreign Policies,” in *Diaspora Lobbies and the US Government*, ed. by Josh DeWind and Renate Segura (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 4.

capability to influence U.S. policy-making in order for one to get a deeper understanding of the Palestinian movement's influence on U.S. foreign policy (and vis-versa: the influence of the Israeli lobby on U.S. foreign policy making).

Moreover, Emily Cury also discusses Muslim American policy within the framework of interest groups and how they contextualize the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within their foreign policy activism. Specifically, she focuses her analysis on two groups, the Council on American-Islamic relations (CAIR) and the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC), and examines *the process* through which narratives are produced, claims are legitimized, and how this translates into effective government lobbying.²²

Although CAIR and MPAC have had limited success in influencing major U.S. foreign policy changes toward the conflict (at least to date), these two organizations have been successful in framing and influencing the normative-social structure of Palestinian discourse in the U.S. While Cury's analysis focuses on two major Muslim institutions in the U.S. which place the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a central component of their advocacy work, there remains many other institutions within the U.S. which also advocate on behalf of Palestinians, but place it within different social contexts and frameworks. This dissertation will work to broaden and expand the focus of Cury's work beyond CAIR and MPAC, but will also include the diversity of approaches that other organizations and institutions pursue.

Furthermore, other scholarship has focused on the impact the "Arab Lobby" has had on U.S. foreign policy. Lanouar Ben Hafsa provides a historical account of

²² Emily Cury, "Muslim American Policy Advocacy and the Palestinian Israeli Conflict: Claims-making and the Pursuit of Group Rights," *Politics and Religion* 10 (2017): 417-439.

influential Arab organizations and advocacy groups and how they've transformed over time. Providing a special focus on Arab lobby groups and their influence on U.S. foreign policy, Ben Hafsa denotes the difference between the "informal" Arab lobby (those sponsored by rich oil countries), and the "formal" Arab Lobby, which includes the Arab American Institute (AAI) and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC).²³ However, Hafsa acknowledges that although these groups cannot claim to represent the entirety of "American Arabs" as a single political entity, they all seem to share one common concern- the question of Palestine.²⁴ However, the "Arab" lobby, (and Arab groups in general), are not the focus of this project. Rather, any group whether Arab or non-Arab, is encompassed in this dissertation in so long as the question of Palestine is somehow incorporated into their organizations platform.

Rabab Abdulhadi also provides a study of limited tracing from the 1960s onward of the development of Palestine-centered American activism and identification, or what she terms *Palestinianness*, in the United States. Essentially, Abdulhadi argues that the development of Palestinian identity was shaped by transformations in American politics, economy and culture, as well as by political and social developments in the Middle East and other regions.²⁵ Furthermore, Abdulhadi focuses on three distinct factors which have shaped Palestinian American activism: "1) the Palestinian struggle for self-determination,

²³ Lanouar Ben Hafsa, "The Role of Arab American Advocacy Groups in Shaping American Foreign Policy," *Springer Science and Business Media* 51 (2014): 513-523.

²⁴ Ibid: 513.

²⁵ Rabab Abdulhadi, "Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 231-54. Accessed March 2, 2020. doi:10.7312/chec12850.15.

on one hand, and U.S. Orientalist, anti-Arab, and pro-Israeli discourses and policies, on the other, 2) the experience of exile and dispersion, and 3) the politics of gender, class, and race relations in North America.” This history, she argues, has led to Palestinians in the U.S. to develop an intimate relationship with other groups of U.S. activists such as African Americans, feminist, and trade unionist.²⁶

While many of these works discuss the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, identity and identity formation of Palestinians, and the broader Palestinian diaspora, less attention has been given to the evolution of the Palestinian rights movement and Palestinian advocacy in the United States, how this movement has evolved and institutionalized over time, how these groups utilize intersectionality to build and increase domestic and transnational solidarity, and how U.S. domestic politics influence Palestinian-Israeli discourse in America. This dissertation will focus on analyzing and synthesizing these dynamics in a single compilation. It hopes to shed light on the Palestinian diaspora, specifically the life of Palestinian Americans in the U.S., how Palestinian activism and advocacy groups have evolved both domestically and transnationally in recent decades, and the interconnectivity of the Palestinian question as being simultaneously both a local U.S. domestic issue, as well as a transnational issue. While this dissertation is wide-ranging, its intent is to broaden the field by interconnecting multiple dynamics within the Palestinian question and providing multiple appendages for possible future research.

²⁶ Rabab Abdulhadi, “Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity,” in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 232-33. Accessed March 2, 2020. doi:10.7312/chec12850.15.

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

The following chapters of this dissertation will be laid out thematically. While each chapter will cover relatable and overlapping topics, each one will be treated as independent of the others. Chapter 2 provides an overview of Palestinian migratory patterns to the United States. It discusses when the first Arabs and Palestinians began migrating to the United States and why. Arab migration to the U.S. has occurred in “waves”, this chapter discusses these “waves” in detail. Furthermore, this chapter will provide the reader insight into who Palestinian Americans really are; when did they come, where do they live, and how did they become involved in American politics? It also reviews critical juncture points in Palestinian history and how they have impacted Palestinian migratory patterns. From this starting point, the chapter provides a context for the creation of the first political organizations and institutions created by Palestinian Americans.

Chapter 3 discusses the evolution of Palestinian American advocacy groups in the United States. Taking a typological approach, this chapter highlights certain groups which place Palestinian advocacy at the forefront of their platforms. It will discuss the larger and more well-known groups, organizations, and institutions that mobilize for the Palestinian cause and how they have evolved over time. This chapter will also highlight the different types of Palestinian advocacy organizations in the U.S., including Arab American and Muslim organization groups, academic centers and think-tanks, Palestinian lobby/advocacy groups, the BDS movement, American university student groups, Transnational Palestinian diaspora organizations, and “Visit Palestine” organizations. Using a systematic framework of analysis, this chapter assesses how each group was

founded, who their leaders are, what their objectives and goals are, their strategies for advocacy and mobilization, and how these have changed and evolved over time.

Chapter 4 discusses the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with U.S. civil society and other U.S. social justice movements. It discusses, in depth, the connection between the Palestinian question, Palestinian advocacy groups and how they relate with other social justice movements in the United States. It argues that the Palestinian question has become a symbol of social justice for many in the United States and holds parallels with other social justice movements in the U.S., for instance the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Even well before its association with more contemporary movements, Palestinian activism had a rich connection with the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter will assess how Palestinian political activism has bundled and connected across social issues from the civil rights movement to more modern day discrimination against African Americans, Native Americans, Jews, and others. It will also analyze the relationship of Palestinian activism and the Palestinian cause with non-Muslim and non-Arab organizations. As stated previously, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination has largely become an international issue of social justice rather than just a “Muslim” or “Arab” issue. There are many Christian and Jewish organizations, as well as non-denominational organizations, which support Palestinian rights and statehood.

Chapter 5 investigates the Palestinian question and its transnational linkages, including how the Palestinian struggle connects with other foreign movements for self-determination, how the Palestinian diaspora connects with Palestinians *in* Palestine, how they connect with other Arab states, and the role that Europe has played in Palestinian

advocacy. It explores transnational linkages between the Palestinian diaspora and how Palestinian activism in the U.S. connects with Palestinians living *in* Palestine. It also examines different themes within the process of connectivity between Palestinians worldwide. These themes include the impact of the internet and international conferences, and how they have influenced Palestinian mobilization transnationally. It highlights how internet platforms have helped connect Palestinians in the United States with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as Palestinians worldwide. It also discusses how some countries in Europe, as well as certain advocacy groups, have recognized the Palestinian call for statehood and the actions they have taken to support this call.

Finally, chapter 6 investigates the Palestinian question and its connection with American politics. Serving as a reference point, it provides a short overview of U.S. policy towards Israel-Palestine under the Obama and Trump administrations and traces the evolution of the domestic U.S. policy debate towards Israel and Palestine. It then examines important domestic debates such as the question of U.S. aid to Israel, as well as the growing influence of the BDS movement and the U.S. government's response to it. It also charts the impact of the Palestinian rights movement on U.S. political discourse towards Palestine and Israel, and considers the influence of the newly emerging "progressive" movement in Congress. Lastly, this chapter argues that changing dynamics within American politics, U.S. public discourse, and pop-culture, are all pushing the Palestinian rights movement to new frontiers.

CHAPTER II: PALESTINIAN IDENTITY AND MIGRATION TO THE WEST

Before discussing the Palestinian diaspora, it is useful to discuss Palestinian identity in general and how Palestinians relate to this identity through time and space. This chapter analyzes elements of Palestinian nationalism and Palestinian identity, and provides an overview of Palestinian migratory patterns. It discusses when the first Arabs and Palestinians began migrating to the United States and why. Arab migration to the U.S. has occurred in “waves”, this chapter discusses these “waves” in detail. Furthermore, this chapter will provide the reader insight into who Palestinian Americans are, when they came, where they live, and how they became involved in American politics. It also reviews critical juncture points in Palestinian history and how they have impacted Palestinian migratory patterns.

The Palestinian experience is a complex one, riddled with historical contexts and critical junctures. As the end of WWI came to a close and the fall of the Ottoman Empire was complete, the concept of nationalism began spreading throughout the Middle East. Many in the region expected to be awarded the right to self-determination, especially after Woodrow Wilson’s famous Fourteen Points speech. Unfortunately, conflicting agreements between the British and some of its allies would lead to a ‘mandate’ system and limited self-determination for some. However, the idea of a ‘national’ identity in the contemporary sense of the word would quickly overtake the region.

PALESTINIAN IDENTITY

Origin and Formation of a Palestinian National Self-Consciousness

There are multiple conceptualizations when discussing the notion of Palestinian identity, including elements of Palestinian identity and what that identity entails, as well

as the development of a Palestinian national self-consciousness. The idea of the modern nation-state has significantly impacted the Middle East, and as a result the Palestinians, especially after the fall of the Ottoman empire. As the West imported the notion of nationalism to the Middle East, national self-consciousness began to take hold throughout the region.

Several scholars have argued that nationalism is a social construct. Eric Hobsbawm stresses certain elements of artifact, invention and social engineering that are part of nation building.²⁷ Ernest Gellner also takes this approach, arguing that nationalism sometimes takes preexisting cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes *invents* them, and often obliterates preexisting ones.²⁸ Lastly, Benedict Anderson also provides his analysis on this subject, arguing that nation states are *imagined communities* based on a common culture, set of core values and the standardization of a national language; and that “nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.”²⁹

Taking this approach, one can begin to look at the early formation of Palestinian national identity and how that has impacted Palestinian identity today. In what manner does Palestinian identity form and how do the narratives differ? There are also levels of identity which exist in the region that influence Palestinian identity formation, such as supra-national identities (Pan-Arabism, Pan-Islamism) and sub-national identities

²⁷ See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁸ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

²⁹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Rise and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991). pp. 11-16.

(family, tribe, clan). As Edward Said notes, the construction of identity involves the construction of the 'other', and how one interprets and reinterprets this 'other' in relation to 'us'.³⁰

Between Palestinians and Israelis today, there is a constant clash of narratives within the domain of identity and how this identity relates to this specific territorial boundary. Some have argued that a Palestinian national identity emerged only as a response to Zionism, however, Khalidi argues that this would ignore a key fact: a universal process was unfolding in the region at the time which involved an increasing identification with the new states created by the post-World War I partitions.³¹

Many trends that were sweeping the Middle East during the twentieth century (Western powers' definition of state boundaries, Arabism, Islamism, Zionism, growth of nationalism) all affected the process of Palestinian self-definition.³² While it would be true to include Zionism on this list as it has impacted the formation of Palestinian identity, to say that a Palestinian national consciousness was created solely as a result of Zionism would be misleading. Additionally, the events of 1947-48 and the inability to have Palestinians fully absorbed and integrated with surrounding Arab nationalities (even though they already had many shared characteristics with these surrounding national identities) further illustrates that a basic core of Palestinian identity already existed which separated them from their Arab neighbors.

³⁰ See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1994).

³¹ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 20.

³² *Ibid*: 21.

Thus, the argument of “Palestine does not exist” or “Palestine has never existed” holds no validity.³³ Nearly all historical maps and writings prior to 1948 refer to the region as Palestine. In fact, the document which is argued by the Zionist movement to serve as the genesis of the State of Israel, the *Balfour Declaration*, explicitly states that “His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment *in Palestine* of a national home for the Jewish people (emphasis my own).” If Palestine did not exist, as is so argued, then what territory did the British offer to the Zionist national movement? The legality of the Balfour Declaration is in itself a separate argument. While I will not go into depth here, the British had no legal claim to Palestine and thus negates the legitimacy of the Balfour Declaration. The British government offered something which was not in its possession to give. Rather, the declaration is rooted in an imperialist mentality of the era and is essentially one people, giving the land of another people, to a third people. By modern day standards, such an idea would violate international laws and norms and would be condemned by the international community.

The “Palestine doesn’t exist” argument has diminished over the past few decades, and while it’s still made in some niche circles, it has all but disappeared from mainstream intellectual circles.³⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, if an individual said they were from Palestine, a common response would be “Palestine doesn’t exist.” The narrative then

³³ The “Palestine does not exist” argument has been repeated by some who deny a Palestinian identity (although this argument is less mainstream today, it can still be found in some niches). Golda Meir, former Prime Minister of Israel, made the comment in a famous interview with *The Sunday Times of London* in June 1969. Anat Berko, an MP of the Likud party, also made the comment in 2016 (see Matt Payton, “Israeli MP claims the Palestine Nation cannot exist ‘because they can’t pronounce the letter P,’ *The Independent*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/israeli-mp-says-palestine-cannot-exist-because-they-can-t-pronounce-the-letter-p-a6866736.html>.)

³⁴ This is discussed more in-depth in the authors interview with Rashid Khalidi, pgs 55-56.

shifted, when Palestinians finally did begin to exist, they existed as “terrorist”, especially during the first intifada. The second intifada and subsequent attacks of September 11th, 2001 would further entrench this narrative, and would not only transpose it to the groups responsible for the attacks, but the entirety of the Muslim world would begin to be seen within this lens. However, in the past two decades, grassroots mobilization has caused a discursive shift. The most dramatic shift has been the humanization of Palestinians. Previously, the narrative dehumanized Palestinians, subjecting them to a politics of negation- Palestinians don’t exist and therefore they don’t have any rights. While instances still exist where Palestinians are claimed to be “an invented people,” today it is much more difficult to make such ridiculous claims in the mainstream.

The Diaspora and Elements of Palestinian Identity

As discussed in chapter one, the terms *identity* and *diaspora* can carry several different meanings and connotations. The term can become even more complicated when referring to Palestinians. Who are the Palestinians? What is the condition of the Palestinian experience? How does one cope with this condition and how is it passed on through generations? The Palestinian diaspora is spread throughout the world. In 2018, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) estimated that Palestinian refugees numbered at approximately 5 million.³⁵ Most Palestinian refugees reside in the Palestinian territories or surrounding Arab countries; however, many diaspora Palestinians also reside in the United States, Latin America, and Europe.

³⁵ United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), “Palestine Refugees,” [unrwa.org](https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees). <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees> (accessed January 12, 2019).

The term “diaspora” itself has become a complicated word with its own definitional disputes. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary provides the definition of diaspora as “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland.”³⁶ However, many scholars in the field have debated specific conceptualizations of diaspora, including dynamics such as whether the term “diaspora” should include a connotation of forced removal or coerced dispersion within its definition.

Thomas Faist describes the term diaspora as a result of a traumatic event,³⁷ whereas Robin Cohen attaches multiple distinctions to the term which allows diasporas to include various forms, not all of which are an end result of force or trauma.³⁸ The concept of “homeland” and a connection to other members of that diaspora is also integral to conceptualizing the term. As mentioned earlier, Schulz and Hammer argue that diasporas require a transnational condition and that strong collective images of the homeland should exist.³⁹ By *transnational*, they imply an “exchange and interactions of various forms such as visiting, travelling, spending vacations, going to weddings, looking for jobs, i.e. activities that for dispersed populations are transnational/cross-border by their very nature.”⁴⁰

³⁶ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “diaspora”, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diasporas> (accessed January 14, 2019).

³⁷ Thomas Faist, “Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23 (2000): 189-222.

³⁸ Robin Cohen, *Global diasporas: An introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

³⁹ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*: 12.

However, while a sense of territoriality is tied to definitions of “diaspora” and “the homeland”, dynamics of identity and identity formation must also not be ignored. Thus, social connections and interactions between home/host countries and homeland, as well as within and amongst communities becomes an important factor. Schulz and Hammer refer to the condition of *hybridity* in identity formation, implying that while social interaction with other Palestinians around the world is important in identity formation, identity is also shaped in the process of meetings occurring through travels and movement, as well as interaction with the home/host country.⁴¹ By this account, the argument posits that diaspora identities become “hybrid” identities, mixing the cultures and practices of the homeland and home/host country to form a “new” hybrid identity.⁴²

As Hall details;

“What is distinctive about the cultures of contact zones or diasporas is that they never remain ‘pure’ to their origin. The new circumstances in which these cultures must survive begin to have consequences for how the ‘original’ culture is changed and adapted over time. The original cultures of the displaced groups come into contact and are obliged to negotiate with the cultures of the other groups with whom - on whatever terms – they establish a ‘co-presence’. The culture which evolves in diasporas is therefore usually the result of some never-contemplated, complex process of combining elements from different cultural repertoires to form ‘new’ cultures which are related to but which are not exactly like any of the originals.”⁴³

This characteristic has become common with Palestinians living in the diaspora, as many of them have maintained their connection and social interaction with the

⁴¹ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 12-14.

⁴² It is worth mentioning that others have argued that identity in and of itself is always mixed, and thus conforms to some standard of hybridity (Rushdie (1991), Tomlinson (1999), Hall (1995)).

⁴³ Stuart Hall, *New Cultures for Old*, ed. by Massey and Jess. (1995), cited in Schulz and Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 193.

“homeland”, while at the same time adopting many of the cultural customs, traditions, and languages of their home/host states (for example, many Palestinians in Chile speak Spanish as their first language, but still maintain a close connection with their Palestinian ancestry and as a result created a *Palestino* football club).

Furthermore, this connection with the homeland is also discussed by Edward Said. As Palestinians are dispersed throughout the world, and especially within the Arabian Gulf states, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, and in smaller numbers in Europe and North and South America, Said explains that although their conditions may be different, “behind every Palestinian there is a great general fact: that he once- and not so long ago- lived in a land of his own called Palestine, which is now no longer his homeland.”⁴⁴

Words such as tragedy, exile, dispossession, struggle; and conversely, terms such as resistance, defiance, enduring, innovative and prideful have become common words associated with Palestinian identity. Even as Palestinians continue to live in places outside of Palestine, their identity and connection to the homeland continue in numerous ways. Speaking Arabic, having Palestinian or Arab friends, cooking Arabic food, images of Jerusalem or the Dome of the Rock in family living rooms, embroidered dresses or *thobes*, mother-of-pearl decorated Qurans and plates, Palestinian flags, dancing *dabka* and other national and cultural representations are common within Palestinian households.

Beyond defining the diaspora, defining *Palestinian* also comes with a host of complications. To begin with, Palestinians currently living in Israel and Palestine can

⁴⁴ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), 115.

immediately be divided into four groups. First, there are the Palestinians who stayed in their villages and towns during the declaration of independence by Israel in 1948 and who today hold Israeli citizenship. Second, there are Palestinians from 1967 who now live under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank. Within this category, a third category of Palestinian could be mentioned, that of the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem who are subjected to different laws and policies than those living in the West Bank. Finally, there are the Palestinians who live in the Gaza Strip who are also subjected to different laws and conditions, including a complete siege around the territory imposed by Israel and assisted by the Egyptian government. Each of these 'categories' of Palestinians, although geographically close together, live completely different lives subject to different rules of governance and living conditions.

From there, Palestinians can be further separated to include those living as refugees in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria, Lebanon. This intermediate category of Palestinians respectively carry Jordanian passports, Syrian passports or Lebanese travel documents. However, travelers carrying the Jordanian or Syrian documents are largely singled out since it is well known by international security authorities that a large proportion of Jordanian passport holders are Palestinian, and the Syrian travel document explicitly identifies them as such.⁴⁵ Then there are the Palestinians who have migrated to other Arab States, including many Gulf states such as the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar. Finally, there are the Palestinians who live in non-Arab majority countries including states in Europe, Africa, Asia, North America

⁴⁵ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.)

and South America. Figure 2.1 highlights the location of Palestinians globally, providing a nuanced understanding of where Palestinians are located and live today.

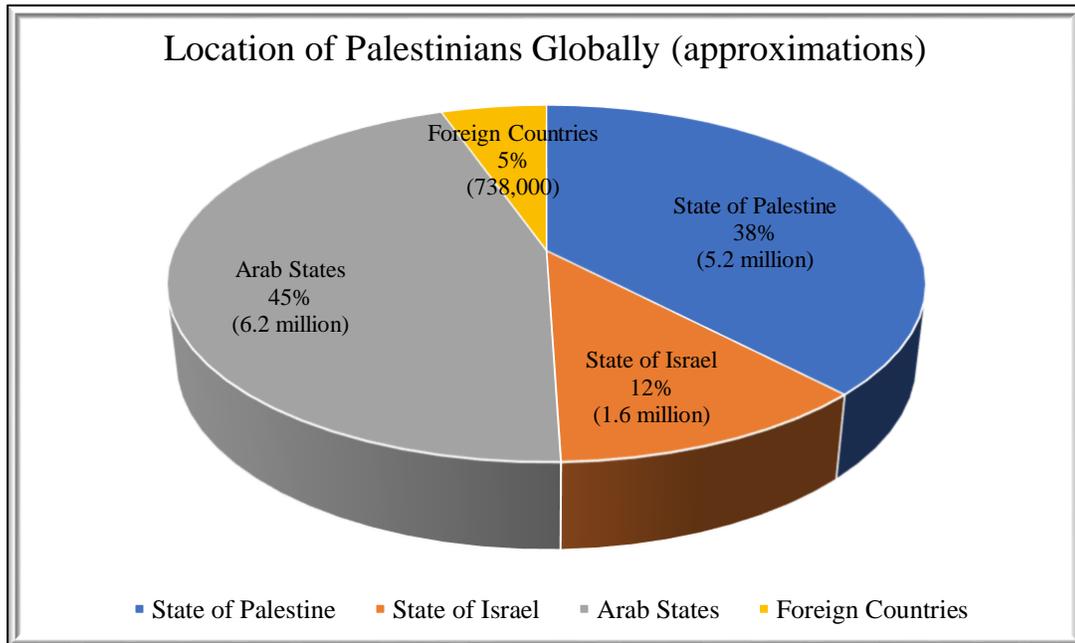


Figure 2.1: Location of Palestinians Globally (approximations)
Source: Ola Awad, "Status of the Palestinian people at the end of 2020," Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, December 31, 2020, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_31-12-2020-end-en.pdf.

This sense of not having a fixed home, drifting from place to place, is also a core dynamic of Palestinian identity. Schulz and Hammer argue that “the exile condition is by necessity a *rootless* condition, a condition of ‘wandering’ and unwanted ‘mobility’.

Rootlessness has a tendency to trigger sometimes desperate searches for roots that have been lost”.⁴⁶ This is evident in the younger generation of Palestinian Americans, who emphasize maintaining a close connection with their “Palestinian-ness” and with

⁴⁶ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 86.

Palestine in general, although many of them were not born there and have not been able to travel there, yet this “Palestinian-ness” is deeply imbedded in their identity.

“*The condition of being Palestinian is, then, to move. And if a person does not move much by her- or himself, then almost certainly he/she will have friends, family and kin who lead travelling lives, and family members residing elsewhere will come to visit. All these examples underline the profound meaning of such metaphors as ‘wanderers of the earth’, coined by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Palestinian identity is constituted in these journeys, but also through the suspicion, mistrust and outside categorization (cf. Daniel and Knudsen, 1995) with which Palestinians are met because of this homeless wandering.*”⁴⁷

Thus, the element of migration is closely tied to elements of Palestinian identity.

Edward Said describes Palestinian identity in a similar manner, arguing that Palestinian identity incorporates the same aspects of “dispossession, exile, dispersion, disenfranchisement (under Israeli military occupation), and, by no means least, an extraordinary widespread and stubborn resistance to these travails.”⁴⁸ As such, Palestinians must struggle to maintain their identity on at least two levels. The first as a Palestinian with regard to the historical encounter with Zionism and the loss of a homeland; second, as a Palestinian in the existential setting of day-to-day life, responding to pressures in their state of residence.⁴⁹ Christison further echoes this assertiveness for Palestinian Americans to maintain their identity:

“Palestinian communities in the United States... tend to have a high level of political consciousness and a high resistance to integration in the host society. This is particularly true here because of the strong Israeli-US relationship; precisely because Israel enjoys such powerful influence and popularity in the

⁴⁷ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 87.

⁴⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), vii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*: 121.

United States, Palestinians here feel challenged to maintain and assert their identity.”⁵⁰

For many Palestinians living in the United States, it is almost as if they are rejected by their host state, even American born Palestinians. Being Palestinian American means having ‘dual-identities’. For those in the United States who have never met a Palestinian before, the first Palestinian American they meet almost immediately becomes a representation of what every Palestinian must be like. While western media has continually portrayed Palestinians in a negative light, associating them with terrorism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Israel or anti-American attitudes, American-Palestinians are repeatedly forced to combat this false narrative. As a result of this response, there has been a progression of Palestinian advocacy at the grassroots level which has slowly institutionalized in the United States.

Ultimately, identity in general is highly subjective and difficult to deal with. There are multiple elements within Palestinian identity and many factors and dynamics which influence it, as has been illustrated above. However, as the focus is narrowed to the Palestinian diaspora, and even further to Palestinian Americans within that diaspora, it becomes possible to characterize elements of identity pertaining to a specific type of “Palestinian American” experience.

PALESTINIAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

The following section will provide an overview of Arab/Palestinian migratory patterns to the United States. It should be noted that the terms ‘Arab’ and ‘Palestinian’

⁵⁰ Kathleen Christison, *The Wound of Dispossession: Telling the Palestinian Story* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunlit Hills Press, 2002), 72.

will sometimes be used interchangeably in this section, with specific designations being used when appropriate. Unfortunately, at the time of writing there exist no reliable figures pertaining specifically to Arab or Palestinian migration to the United States, nor are there exact figures to the number of Arabs (or Palestinian Americans specifically) in the United States. Due to the classification system used by the U.S. Customs office, most migration from the Levant region to the United States (including “Greater Syria”, or modern day Syria, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Jordan) was mostly designated as “Asian” or “Ottoman” on official records, and has been grouped together in most literature as general “Arab” migration.

There is no doubt that Palestinian migration is a complex topic. While many tend to place Palestinian migration within the context of *al-nakba*⁵¹, Palestinian migration also took place within “waves” of general Arab migration.⁵² The first wave of Arab migration began near the end of the 18th century and lasted from 1880-1924, the second wave took place during the 1950s and 1960s, and the third or current wave started in the 1970s and continues today.⁵³ Many of the early Palestinian migrants from the first wave

⁵¹ The *al-nakba*, meaning “the catastrophe” in Arabic, uprooted nearly 750,000 indigenous Palestinians from their native lands during the creation of the State of Israel and is a fundamental tenant within the identity of Palestinians in both Palestine and abroad. This critical juncture can also be said to mark the creation of the “Palestinian refugee”, which would ultimately result in the creation of a Palestinian diaspora.

⁵² Many Arabs were migrating to the West at the end of the 18th century, a majority of them Lebanese and Syrian, but a portion of them also originated in Palestine. For a detailed historical account of Arab migration to the United States and Arabs in America see Alixa Naff’s *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (1985), Michael W. Suleiman’s *Arabs in America: Building a New Future* (1999), Gregory Orfalea’s *The Arab Americans: A History* (2006), Randa A. Kayyali’s *The Arab Americans* (2006), Anan Ameri and Holly Arida’s edited volume *Daily Life of Arab Americans in the 21st century* (2012), and Hani J. Bawardi’s *The Making of Arab Americans* (2014).

⁵³ Anan Ameri, “Arab American Immigration,” in *Daily Life of Arab Americans in the 21st Century*, ed. Anan Ameri and Holly Arida (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2012), 2-4.

were Christian and traveled to North and South America in search of economic opportunity. Being Christian allowed them to fit in easier with Christian society in the U.S. To a large extent, this first wave of Arab migrants were motivated by socio-economic conditions, personal interest, and family relations.⁵⁴ The first Palestinians most likely came to the U.S. around 1878, returning home with tales of money to be made in America after attending the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876.⁵⁵

Furthermore, prior to the *nakba*, politically motivated flight and migration patterns commenced.⁵⁶ The “Great Revolt”, which took place from 1936-1939 and culminated in a prolonged general strike, led to further emigration out of Palestine. By the time British forces violently quelled the uprising, many locals had already immigrated from Palestine to the United States. While Palestinians made up a portion of the Arab immigrants who traveled to the United States in the aforementioned waves, an additional set of migratory “waves” can also be mentioned in regards to Palestinian migration specifically. The first of these waves occurred in 1948, the second wave in 1967 and a third wave in 1970 after Palestinian-Jordanian relations were strained in the aftermath of Black September.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 23.

⁵⁵ Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 77.

⁵⁶ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 23.

⁵⁷ May Seikaly, “Attachment and Identity: The Palestinian Community of Detroit,” in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 26.

Moreover, 1948 would mark a critical juncture and create a significant shift in the migratory flows of Palestinians worldwide. After hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced and realized they would not be allowed to return to their former land and homes, many began looking for new places to live. A large number of Palestinians resettled in surrounding Arab states such as Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Currently, many of them still remain in these countries as official refugees waiting to one day be able to return to their homes lost in 1948.

A number of Palestinians were already in the United States by 1948 and had become U.S. citizens. With the outbreak of fighting which led to the creation of the State of Israel, many could not return back home. Within a short time, other events would unfold which would cause further displacement of Palestinians. As in 1948, the June War of 1967 would initiate another wave of Palestinian emigration when Israel occupied the remaining West Bank and Gaza, often referred to by Palestinians as *al-naksa*. Although a small number of Palestinians immigrated to the U.S. in 1936 and 1948, the bulk of Palestinian immigration to the United States would occur after the June War of 1967.⁵⁸ Many Palestinians took their few important belongings, leaving the rest behind, and contributed to the ever expanding Palestinian diaspora. Flows of increased Palestinian migration also took place in 1982 after Israel occupied South Lebanon, the PLO was expelled and the Sabra and Shatila massacres took place.⁵⁹ Finally, the result of the first

⁵⁸ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 81.

⁵⁹ May Seikaly, "Attachment and Identity: The Palestinian Community of Detroit," in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 26.

Gulf War (1990-1991) and expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait and most of the Gulf States also led to further Palestinian migration.

Up to this time, the majority of Arabs and Palestinians in the United States had been Christians. Muslim Palestinians would begin coming to America in greater numbers after 1967. Palestinians who came to the U.S. after 1967 were different from the earlier group, many of them were peasants whose lands were confiscated by the Israeli military. They came from Beit Hanina, Silwan, and Silwad (suburbs of Jerusalem) which were annexed and turned into the capital of Israel, later preventing them from being able to return home.⁶⁰ As Palestinians began arriving to the U.S., many originally migrated from the towns of Ramallah, Bethlehem and Beit Jala. Those from Ramallah especially, have established a close-knit community in certain American cities.⁶¹ Palestinians that arrived in the U.S. by the late 1960s came from diverse social backgrounds; some were peasants while others were refugees, some were highly educated and had professional skills, and all were in search of better social and economic opportunities.

Palestinians in the United States make up a very small minority group. In 2001, Christison estimates the number of Palestinians in the U.S. to be around 200,000.⁶² Although this figure is nearly 20 years old at the time of this writing, very limited sources exist to generalize an accurate number of Palestinians in the U.S. There are no accurate

⁶⁰ Rabab Abdulhadi, "Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity," in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 231-54. Accessed March 2, 2020. doi:10.7312/chec12850.15.

⁶¹ Kathleen Christison, *The Wound of Dispossession: Telling the Palestinian Story* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunlit Hills Press, 2002).

⁶² Ibid: 74.

census records and immigration statistics are lacking, thus we can only make educated estimates towards the actual number of Palestinians living in the United States. However, we do know that the greatest concentrations of Palestinians in the United States can be found in Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles.⁶³ Many Palestinians also live in Washington D.C. and the surrounding suburbs, which has become a hub for Arab American and Palestinian American institutions and advocacy organizations.

There are also sizable populations of Palestinian Americans in New York (Brooklyn) and San Francisco.⁶⁴ May Seikaly discusses the Palestinian community within Detroit, showing how a sizeable portion of Palestinian immigrants started their immigrant lives there.⁶⁵ In her interviews with 50 Palestinians from the area, Seikaly finds that most respondents recognized their communities' inadequate use of the U.S. political system to promote their aims.⁶⁶ This ineffectual use of the American political system has haunted Palestinians, regardless of where in the United States they live. Nevertheless, after the 1967 war and as first and second generation Palestinian Americans became more involved in the U.S. political system, a number of new Arab, Islamic and Palestinian organizations began to sprout up throughout the country. Most of them were aimed at

⁶³ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer. *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland*. (London: Routledge, 2003), 81.

⁶⁴ Anan Ameri, "Arab American Immigration," in *Daily Life of Arab Americans in the 21st Century*, ed. Anan Ameri and Holly Arida (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2012), 14.

⁶⁵ See May Seikaly, "Attachment and Identity: The Palestinian Community of Detroit," in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 25-38.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*: 35.

protecting the rights of Arabs/Palestinians in the U.S., while also trying to influence U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and Arab world.

CHAPTER III: THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. PALESTINIAN ADVOCACY GROUPS

The previous chapter discussed Palestinian identity and how a Palestinian diaspora community developed in the United States. Although slow at initially organizing, the community would eventually organize politically as do many other diaspora communities in the United States. Taking a typological approach, this chapter discusses the evolution of organizations in the United States which either directly or indirectly place an emphasis on Palestinian advocacy and the Palestinian question.

While there exist a large number of organizations, this chapter is by no means intended to provide a comprehensive analysis. Rather, it will focus on the larger and more well-known groups, organizations, and institutions that advocate for the Palestinian cause and how they have evolved over time. This chapter will also highlight the different types of Palestinian advocacy organizations in the U.S., including Arab American and Muslim organizations, academic centers and think-tanks, political advocacy/lobby groups, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, American university student groups, transnational Palestinian diaspora organizations, and “Visit Palestine” organizations. Using a systematic framework of analysis, this chapter assesses how each group was founded, who their leaders are, what their objectives and goals are, their strategies for advocacy and mobilization, and how these have changed and evolved over time.

Arab Americans and Palestinian Americans in the United States were slow to organize politically. It took even longer before Arab Americans began to enter official political positions within the United States government, although they eventually would. In 1972, the community’s first U.S. senator was elected, James Abourezk from South

Dakota. In 1974, Philip Habib was appointed Assistant Secretary of State and in 1988, John Sununu, the governor of New Hampshire, became the first President Bush's White House Chief of Staff. Under President Clinton, Donna Shalala became the first Arab cabinet member under a U.S. president serving as Health and Human Services Secretary who was followed by Spencer Abraham who became Secretary of Energy in 2001 serving under the second Bush.⁶⁷

While many Palestinians have assimilated within the U.S., their connection to Palestine remains steadfast. This illustrates itself not only within the private domain, but also within the public domain.⁶⁸ One of the key elements within the public domain has been advocacy and activism for Palestine. It has been noted by some that Palestinian Americans have either lacked political interests or have not been able to effectively organize politically in the U.S. In late 1989, Edward Said criticized the PLO in an Arabic language newspaper for failing to provide political guidance to Palestinian Americans and for making no effort in the United States to explain the Palestinian perspective through television appearances, writings, demonstrations, or efforts to mobilize grassroots organizations.⁶⁹

This has largely been a generational issue, as the first Palestinian migrants to America were not attune to politics, did not speak the native language, and focused more

⁶⁷ Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans: A History* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006), 214.

⁶⁸ As mentioned previously, Palestinian Americans maintain a strong connection to Palestine within their households and social networks. This illustrates itself by families maintaining Palestinian friends, speaking Arabic at home, and having national and cultural representations within the household (paintings, flags, ornaments, etc.).

⁶⁹ Kathleen Christison, *The Wound of Dispossession: Telling the Palestinian Story* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunlit Hills Press, 2002), 85.

on getting settled and building a better life for themselves and their families. The first generation of Palestinian decedents born in America and who consider themselves American would begin to change this. While Arab American and Palestinian American organizations and lobby groups in the U.S. may not hold the same power and influence as other diaspora groups, Arab Americans have recognized the benefits of getting involved in the political arena. Palestinian American and Arab American organizations are relatively younger than their counterparts, and although they have lacked focus and a central direction in the past, are becoming more visible in politics than in previous decades. Prior to 1967, most Arab American organizations were small-scale and consisted of local social networks. After the 1967 war, an influx of organizations were created to unify the Arab American community, as well as reach out to non-Arab audiences. From the late 1990s and onward, Palestinian American political activism increased in both number and intensity (see table 3.1).

Name of Organization	Year Founded <small>↕</small>
American Federation of Ramallah Palestine (AFRP)	1959
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)	1963
Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS)	1963
Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG)	1967
Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)	1971
National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA)	1972
The Jerusalem Fund	1977
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)	1980
Arab American Institute (AAI)	1985
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)	1988
American Muslim Alliance (AMA)	1989
The Palestine Center	1991
Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)	1994
Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF)	1998
Al-Awda: The Right to Return Coalition	2000
U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR)	2001
Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS)	2005
American Muslims for Palestine (AMP)	2006
Students for Justice in Palestine National Chapter (SJP)	2010
Know Thy Heritage (KTH)	2011

Table 3.1: Founding of organizations (those in red denote specific Palestinian and Palestinian advocacy organizations.)

The aim of many Palestinian advocacy organizations in the U.S. has been two-fold, the first being to put political focus on the Palestinian question and create counter narratives to dominant media representations which are considered highly inaccurate and unfair. The second serves a social function, fostering links between Palestinians and providing a setting to promote communal solidarity.⁷⁰ I add a third goal, that of educating the American public on the political realities faced by Palestinians in Palestine which are highly ignored, distorted and underrepresented in the mainstream media today. The following sections will discuss these ideas in further depth.

ARAB AMERICAN AND MUSLIM AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS

Promoting the Palestinian cause in the United States has traditionally been the work of national Arab American organizations and Muslim American organizations. One of the first Arab American groups was the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG), founded in 1967 by graduate students, professionals, university professors, lawyers and doctors.⁷¹ A number of intellectuals such as Edward Said, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Naseer Aruri, Abbas Nasrawi, Samih Farsoun, and Hisham Sharabi were part of the original founders, and their goal was to counter a growing sentiment of Orientalism and anti-Arab discrimination in the U.S., as well as to promote

⁷⁰ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 179.

⁷¹ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America*, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 17.

the Palestinian cause in U.S. academic and intellectual circles.⁷² An official note regarding AAUG's activities from Eastern Michigan University's archive reads:

“The organization was open to any university graduate of Arab origin and assisted in the development of the Arab world by donating the professional services of its members. The AAUG was a non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-political organization who published books, papers, and periodicals on Arab and Arab American affairs, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and U.S. foreign policy; held an annual convention and mid-year conferences that served as a forum for Middle East specialists and scholars from around the world; provided speakers on topics concerning the Arab world and its people and helped to bring its members professional skills to bear on socioeconomic and technological needs of the Arab world.”⁷³

The AAUG was an educational and cultural organization which fostered increased understanding between Arabs, Arab Americans and Americans, and promoted intellectual discussions on issues critical to the Arab world and United States. Its flagship publication, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, is still published today and is one of the most widely respected journals in the field. AAUG was disbanded in 2007.

Another early Palestine advocate was Mohammad T. Mehdi, an outspoken figure for Palestinian rights in the United States. Mehdi founded the Federation of Associations of Arab-American Relations to educate the American public and Congress about issues in the Middle East. An advocate of American values such as freedom, justice and democracy, he became disillusioned with the effectiveness of Arab identity when the

⁷² Rabab Abdulhadi, “Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity,” in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 231-54. Accessed March 2, 2020. doi:10.7312/chec12850.15.

⁷³ See Administrative history note, Association of Arab American University Graduates collection, Eastern Michigan University Archives, https://caine.emich.edu/archives/findingaids/html/Association_of_Arab_American_University_Graduates_collection.html#toc.

United States did not deliver on its promise of self-determination for the Palestinian people.⁷⁴ Mehdi believed that if Americans became aware of the injustices perpetrated against Palestinians at the expense of American taxpayer dollars, U.S. policy would change.⁷⁵ Essentially, Mohammad T. Mehdi would found multiple organizations and publish multiple books in support of his causes. He also heavily criticized the U.S. for ignoring Israeli policies which discriminated against its Christian and Muslim populations.⁷⁶

Another early organization was the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) which championed the Palestinian cause by presenting it to the American public and trying to influence public opinion, as well as to counter powerful Jewish lobbies in the U.S.⁷⁷ The NAAA was founded in 1972 and was a political advocacy organization for Americans with Arab heritage. It was the first Arab-American organization to register as a lobby group and form a Political Action Committee (PAC), and placed special emphasis on efforts to lobby the federal government on issues pertaining to the Arab-

⁷⁴ Mohammad T. Mehdi, *Of Lions Chained: An Arab Looks at America* (San Francisco: New World Press, 1962), cited in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America*. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 31.

⁷⁵ Mohammad T. Mehdi, *Terrorism: Why America is the Target* (New York: New World Press, 1988), cited in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 31.

⁷⁶ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 32.

⁷⁷ Helena Lindholm Schulz and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 81.

Israeli conflict.⁷⁸ The organization would eventually merge with the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) in January 2002.

A leading organization for Arab advocacy in the United States, the ADC was founded in 1980 by former Senator James Abourezk and James Zogby (both of Lebanese Christian origin). Modeled after the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the ADC was created to combat racism, prejudice and discrimination against Arabs. With chapters throughout the United States, it is currently the largest grassroots Arab organization in the U.S.⁷⁹ A civil rights organization committed to defending the rights of Arab-Americans and opposing racism and bigotry of any form, the ADC has five objectives: defend and promote human rights and the civil rights and liberties of Arab Americans, combat stereotypes and discrimination affecting the Arab-American community in the United States, serve as a public voice for the Arab American community in the U.S. on domestic and foreign policy issues, educate the American public to promote greater understanding of Arab history and culture, and advance the cause for transnational social justice with communities of color and oppressed people domestically and internationally.⁸⁰

In 1985, James Zogby split from the ADC and established the Arab American Institute (AAI). Based in Washington D.C., AAI has focused on getting Arab Americans involved in the U.S. political system, specifically the electoral process. Zogby explains

⁷⁸ Lanouar Ben Hafsa, "The Role of Arab American Advocacy Groups in Shaping American Foreign Policy," *Springer Science and Business Media* 51 (2014): 517.

⁷⁹ See American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, "About us," Accessed on April 13, 2020, <https://www.adc.org/about-us/>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

that the genesis for AAI was inspired by his work with Reverend Jesse Jackson's 1984 Presidential campaign:

“In 1984 Reverend Jesse Jackson asked me to be the Deputy campaign manager for his first Presidential campaign... the experience was every bit as remarkable as Jackson said it would be. First, just the experience of the Presidential campaign and the black church, and just the way I saw politics being done on that level. I got to meet everyone from the civil rights movement that had been with Dr. King. I'd known a number of them from the Palestine Human Rights Campaign...but this got me working with them very closely. And then the community itself, we [Arabs] had never been involved in a presidential campaign before. People didn't want Arab-American involvement. But the community turned out amazingly, fundraisers were done everywhere, people turned out to rallies. It's because Jackson spoke to the Arab-American community, addressed them directly, talked about Palestinian rights and justice issues, and it made a real impact.”⁸¹

Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984 was a turning point, both for Arab Americans in politics and for Palestinian advocacy in the United States. Until then, Arab Americans (and Palestinians by extension) in the U.S. had taken a back seat in terms of political engagement. However, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and his inclusion of Arab Americans marked a significant shift in Palestinian and Arab-American activism within American politics. It was the first time in American history that a presidential candidate embraced Palestinian and other Arab Americans, as well as called for an independent Palestinian state to be established. Arab community centers were especially important in Jackson's presidential bid: they set up town meetings, invited speakers from the Rainbow Coalition to address the membership, organized voter registration drives and collected contributions; and although initially recruited into the campaign as foot soldiers, Palestinians, especially from the Chicago community center, soon played advisory and

⁸¹ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

leading roles in Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.⁸² After working on the campaign, an energized Zogby wanted to promote and encourage Arab Americans to get involved in the political mainstream and ensure they had a voice in politics, as he reiterates:

“...The lesson we learned from the campaign was that Arab Americans wanted to get involved in politics and didn't have a vehicle to help them do it. So we created the Arab American Institute to have four objectives- register Arab American voters, get them into the political parties, support them running for office, and bring our [Arab] issues into the political mainstream... the founding of the institute was completely inspired by the work I did with the Jackson campaign... we took the energy of the campaign and instead of depending on him to continue to generate that energy, we decided to create our own energy, and sure enough it worked.”⁸³

Zogby recognized that the key to empowerment for the Arab American community was voting. As AAI's website highlights, “AAI represents the policy and community interests of Arab Americans throughout the United States and strives to promote Arab American participation in the U.S. electoral system. The institute focuses on two areas: campaigns and elections and policy formation and research.”⁸⁴ AAI also created a get-out-the-vote campaign called “Yalla Vote”, which has become the foundation of their voter mobilization and education program. It works to ensure Arab Americans are registered to vote, informed, engaged and encourages them to get out and vote on election day in order to have a strong Arab American turnout.⁸⁵ As Zogby details, “...the focus of our work is on a range of domestic policy issues, hate crimes, civil

⁸² Rabab Abdulhadi, “Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity,” in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 231-54. Accessed March 2, 2020. doi:10.7312/chec12850.15.

⁸³ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

⁸⁴ See <https://www.aaiusa.org>.

⁸⁵ For more information on the “Yalla Vote” program see <https://www.aaiusa.org/yalla-vote>.

liberties issues, and legislation... we also work a lot on the census and voting rights. Those are the major things we focus on.”⁸⁶

While AAI is intended to serve the Arab American community, the Palestinian question has always been a focal point of much of their work. Through their work, AAI’s main objective has been to influence U.S. policy, while also influencing American public opinion. Both domestic and foreign policy have been important factors within the mission of the institute, and the Palestinian question has always been included within that nexus.

“When we get to foreign policy, Palestine and Lebanon are the two biggest concerns [for Arab Americans]... Palestine is in a way definitional because it’s definitional for politicians. It’s like a smell test. If you have a politician who is good on everything else, but horrible on Palestine, people will feel like there’s a bad smell in the room... It’s not the soul criteria but it’s an important one. And we [Arab Americans] will gravitate to a Jackson, or gravitate to a Sanders, or gravitate to a congressperson who is good on everything else [including Palestine], we want them to be compassionate, thoughtful and progressive, but we’ll also want them to be excited, there’s an excitement when a candidate is good on Palestine, and doesn’t submit to the pressure of politics in Washington D.C. to say dumb things and do bad things.”⁸⁷

When asked about what role AAI has in advocating for Palestinian rights and whether he believes if a one-state or two-state solution is more likely, Zogby responds,

“Our politics is about *what should America do?* We think America should be more attentive to Palestinian rights, be more critical of Israeli human rights violations, condition U.S. support for Israel to its behavior on Palestinian rights. So for us, the watch words aren’t one-state or two-state, its *justice*, its *equality*, its *human rights*, its recognizing the humanity of the Palestinian people and treating them fairly. Those are the things we want, if that comes out to be one-state, fine... but people deserve justice, people deserve equality, people deserve fairness...I happen to personally think the two-state solution has been a dead issue for decades now, but it’s not up to me to decide that. What’s up to me is to say my

⁸⁶ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

government needs a policy that treats Palestinians with justice and treats Israel as a human rights violator because they don't respect Palestinian rights.”⁸⁸

In addition to Arab-American organizations, a number of Islamic organizations were also created. Two of the earliest in the United States were the *Islamic Society of North America* (ISNA, founded in 1963) and the *Islamic Circle of North America* (ICNA, founded in 1971). While the 1980s saw the development of Arab American organizations interested in public policy and promoting Arab participation in politics, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of several more Islamic organizations.⁸⁹ Some of these organizations included the *Muslim Public Affairs Council* (MPAC, founded in 1988), the *American Muslim Alliance* (AMA, founded in 1989), the *American Muslim Council* (AMC, founded in 1990), and the *Council on American Islamic Relations* (CAIR, founded in 1994). The importance of Palestinian advocacy (and the city of Jerusalem) is largely visible in many of these organizations. For instance, on the website of the *American Muslim Alliance*, the first page or “home” page immediately welcomes visitors to an image of the Dome of the Rock in the background.⁹⁰

The *Muslim Public Affairs Council* (MPAC) is a national public affairs nonprofit organization which promotes American pluralism by increasing understanding and improving policies that impact American Muslims.⁹¹ One of MPAC's main goals is to influence public policy by engaging the government, media and local communities; and

⁸⁸ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

⁸⁹ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Becoming American? The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 19-20.

⁹⁰ See amaweb.org, accessed February 5th, 2020.

⁹¹ Muslim Public Affairs Committee, “About MPAC,” <https://www.mpac.org/about.php>.

work to “improve policies on national security, civil liberties, immigration, public safety and religious freedom for all Americans.”⁹² Being both an American and Islamic organization, MPAC works toward merging Islamic values with American values including mercy, justice, peace, human dignity, freedom, and equality for all.

MPAC’s President, Salam Al-Marayati, explains that the Palestinian-Israeli issue has been a core issue for the organization,

“In a way, the genesis of MPAC and its creation in 1988 was the Palestinian Intifada. At that point, there was a human rights call that nobody was paying attention to. The U.S. government was distorting the intifada as ‘terrorism.’ We thought we needed to do more than just protest and demonstrate, so we wanted to form a government engagement body that could work towards changing policy. We would do this by creating alliances within government, as well as alliances outside of government, and establish an avenue to influence U.S. policy so that it would be more consistent with our shared values of human rights and human dignity. Since then, we got involved in politics and then in Hollywood, and our mission has been to change policies and public opinion on issues that impact us by creating strategic alliances and partnerships within American society.”⁹³

Furthermore, MPAC also frames and defines the Palestinian issue within an “American” framework. As Al-Marayati explains,

“We define it within an American framework as a domestic issue. It has impacted the way our kids learn history- or more accurately the omission and erasure of that history. Islamic and Arab curriculums are being attacked. Islamic history and Palestinian history are being erased. It also impacts how we approach human rights discourse. What we argue is that we need to have consistency in our human rights and values and apply them evenly. Unfortunately, when it comes to Palestine, the U.S. and its policies have not been consistent. If that’s not an American issue, then I don’t know what it.”⁹⁴

⁹² See mpac.org.

⁹³ Salam Al-Marayati, interview with the author, March 23, 2021.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Al-Marayati argues that the Palestinian question is one of the single most important issues to MPAC and its work. However, Al-Marayati believes that after September 11th, 2001, Palestinian advocacy took a hit and advocacy for Palestine lost some of its status in terms of being a priority for Arab American and Muslim American organizations. However, as far as current politics is concerned for MPAC, “the focus for Palestinian advocacy has now shifted to two fronts- the first is the BDS issue and academic freedom and protecting the rights of Americans to boycott, divest, and sanction. The second is to resist and prevent language and legislation being passed in the U.S. Congress that equates criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism.”⁹⁵ Even though the focus has slightly shifted, MPAC continues to regularly publish policy analysis papers and op-eds, many of which criticize the U.S. policy approach towards the Palestinian-Israeli issue and suggest recommendations to improve it.

Another well-known and one of the largest Islamic organization in the U.S. is the *Council on American Islamic Relations* or CAIR. Headquartered in Washington D.C., CAIR is a self-described grassroots civil rights and advocacy organization which aims to promote a positive image of Islam and Muslims in America.⁹⁶ Through lobbying, media relations, education and advocacy, CAIR seeks to empower American Muslims by enhancing understanding of Islam in the U.S., protecting civil rights and promoting justice. They also encourage American Muslims to participate in political and social

⁹⁵ Salam Al-Marayati, interview with the author, March 23, 2021.

⁹⁶ Council on American Islamic Relations, “CAIR at a glance,” https://www.cair.com/about_cair/cair-at-a-glance/.

activism. Part of their activism has included advocacy for Palestinian Americans as well as justice for Palestinians in Palestine.

ACADEMIC CENTERS, INSTITUTES AND THINK-TANKS

Palestinian advocacy has also entered the domain of academic centers and think tanks. Although already mentioned in the previous section, the Arab American Institute (AAI) is a leader in publishing materials related to the Palestinian issue. AAI routinely publishes analysis, domestic and foreign policy briefs relating to Israel and Palestine and consistently advocates for the rights of Palestinians. Although focused on the greater aspirations of Arab Americans in the U.S., AAI has shown a pronounced commitment to issues relating to Lebanon, Palestine and other countries in the region, and promotes a more balanced U.S. policy towards the Middle East.

In light of the U.S. governments response to Palestine activists and challenges to their free speech, AAI released a domestic policy issue brief titled “The First Amendment and Palestine: Protecting our Constitutional Right to Free Speech.” The document highlighted the increasing threats to free speech and activism on Palestine, anti-boycott legislation, and Israel’s exceptional status in U.S. law.⁹⁷ They have also released a number of other policy briefs and publications relating to Palestine and Israel, Palestinian rights and Palestine in U.S. domestic politics. In April of 2015, AAI released a policy brief entitled “The Domestic Implications of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”, providing a comprehensive examination of Palestinian-Israeli dynamics impacting domestic politics

⁹⁷ See Arab American Institute, “The First Amendment and Palestine: Protecting our Constitutional Right to Free Speech,” *Domestic Policy Issue Briefs*, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/aai/pages/9805/attachments/original/1558040611/2019LD_First_Amendment_and_Palestine_Issue_Brief.pdf?1558040611.

in areas such as college campuses, federal and state legislatures and U.S. law and enforcement.⁹⁸

Another leading academic center for Palestinian advocacy is *The Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development* (the Jerusalem Fund). Originally founded in 1977 as the *American Palestine Educational Foundation*, the Jerusalem Fund works towards fostering greater awareness about Palestine in both the U.S. and abroad, and aims to ameliorate the lives of Palestinians in Palestine and the diaspora.⁹⁹ Initially created to provide scholarships to Palestinian university students for study, the Jerusalem Fund would eventually expand its mission and focus to create three divisions: a humanitarian link, a cultural program and the *Palestine Center*. The Palestine Center, established in 1991, is an educational resource for current objective information on Palestine and focuses on communicating the Palestinian political experience to American policymakers, journalists, students and the public. “The Center studies the relationship between the United States and the Middle East, with particular emphasis on Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It focuses on the implications of specific U.S. policies with regard to Palestine, providing a much-needed Palestinian/Arab perspective to the political, academic, and media establishments of Washington, D.C. and the Arab world.”¹⁰⁰ The Palestine Center routinely holds lectures, conferences, panel discussions and other events and activities which directly contribute to the conversation on Palestine

⁹⁸ See <https://www.aaiusa.org/domestic-implications-of-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

⁹⁹ Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development. “Our Mission,” Accessed on May 3, 2020, <https://www.thejerusalemfund.org/about-us/our-mission>.

¹⁰⁰ Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development. “Our History,” Accessed on May 3, 2020, <https://www.thejerusalemfund.org/about-us/our-history>.

and Palestinians. They also routinely publish analysis, videos and transcripts on policies and current events relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestine Center also compiles a database of settler violence in the occupied Palestinian territories which tracks illegal infractions of Israeli settlers against Palestinians. The data is obtained from the Palestinian Monitoring Group (PMG), a sector of the Palestine Liberation Organization's Negotiation Affairs Department.¹⁰¹

Dr. Eid Mustafa, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors and Treasurer for the Jerusalem Fund, explains the Jerusalem Fund's founding and evolution:

“Palestinian intellectuals and the Palestinian community around Washington D.C., headed by Dr. Hisham Sharabi,... felt a need to support our people inside the 48' lines in the field of education. They were being discriminated against and did not have an opportunity for higher education because of the way the system was structured. So the Jerusalem Fund started as a scholarship program for our people [the Palestinians] inside the green line.. this lasted until 1991.. at which time [the Jerusalem Fund] started shifting in the direction of educating the American public about the Palestinian cause and for that reason established the Palestine Center- to educate the American public, to reach out to the people in government, to reach out to the people in media and in academia.

As the Intifada came along and the economic needs in Palestine became more acute, the issue of development came along and we began to support many projects [in Palestine] to help people establish themselves economically and support their families... also, to address the issue of stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. [the fund] started a program called the Cultural center which showcases Palestinian culture, music and various kinds of arts.”¹⁰²

The Jerusalem Fund and Palestine Center also participate in several initiatives and support projects. For instance, in 2009 the Fund established the Palestine Diabetes Institute to address the growing diabetes epidemic in Palestine. The first such facility in

¹⁰¹ To view the daily reports, see <https://www.nad.ps/en/violations-reports/daily-report>.

¹⁰² Eid Mustafa, interview with the author, March 24, 2021.

Palestine, it provides Palestinians suffering from diabetes access to treatment. In terms of the Palestine Center, its programming focuses on a domestic U.S. audience. Many of its programs are educational, cover a broad range of Palestine related topics and sometimes lean in the direction of activism or advocacy. As Mustafa details,

“Supporting Palestinians under occupation and in the refugee camps...is of utmost importance at this time, because of the policies that the occupation and occupation leaders have... so we support the ability [for Palestinians] to stay economically viable and to stay on the land. I think this is probably the most important thing that anybody who cares about Palestine can do at this time. Now here [in the United States], our struggle to educate the American public is endless. We have to continue doing that. You cannot do one program and ignore the others, we are not in an isolated world, they are all connected and it all feeds into what we want to change... there is no doubt that if we manage to change a good percentage of the American public opinion, that the politics in Washington will change. We realize it’s an uphill battle, but it’s a battle worth getting involved in... we like to invite speakers to speak to the issues and analyze the issues.

[Also] we are not locked into or fixed on certain programs. We keep our eyes open on what’s happening in Palestine and what’s happening in the United States, and we look for any opportunity to convey the message about our cause and to support our people. So whatever resources we have, whatever energies we have, we’re willing to deploy them in the most effective way to reach our goals.¹⁰³

Finally, Mustafa reiterates the importance of educating the American public and getting involved in American politics in order to influence policy. “As naturalized American citizens, I believe that it’s very necessary for anybody who becomes an American citizen to use that privilege to speak out and to open the eyes of people in this country on what’s right and what’s wrong. If you stay silent, then you’re not doing your job. This is an open country, it has a lot of resources ...[and] the politics of this country has a huge say in what happens to our people.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Eid Mustafa, interview with the author, March 24, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Lastly, one of the most important and oldest research institutes in the Arab world is the *Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS)*. Established in Beirut, Lebanon in 1963, it is one of the few research institutes solely concerned with providing analysis and publications relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question. Established as an independent non-profit research institution and with no political affiliations, *IPS* became a keystone for inter-Arab politics with the Palestinian question at its center. The idea of *IPS* was initially thought up by three Arab intellectuals, Constantine Zurayk (Syria), Walid Khalidi (Palestine) and Burhan Dajani (Palestine), whose vision was endorsed by other Lebanese and Palestinian intellectuals and public figures, eventually leading to the founding of the institute.¹⁰⁵ Today, *IPS* publishes three quarterly journals, the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *Jerusalem Quarterly*, and *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya* (published in Arabic), which are independently edited in Washington, Ramallah, and Beirut, respectively. They have also published over 800 books and occasional papers which are considered authoritative sources on the subject and hold numerous yearly conferences, workshops and lectures, including their annual conference held in Palestine.¹⁰⁶

Mouin Rabbani, a former Senior Fellow for IPS, discusses the mission of IPS and his time writing for them:

“In 2008, I was a senior fellow for IPS. In 2011, I was a visiting fellow at the Washington Office...IPS has primarily been an academic scholarly institution which has been mainly dedicated to collecting and disseminating information about Palestine and the question of Palestine in the English language through the *Journal of Palestine Studies* and their whole series of publications they used to

¹⁰⁵ Institute for Palestine Studies, “History,” <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/about/history>.

¹⁰⁶ Institute for Palestine Studies, “Programs,” <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/about/programs>.

do... when I was there, I started a new series...which intended to be more policy-oriented.

I think the thing that distinguished the Journal of Palestine Studies, certainly in the 1970s and 1980s, is that you didn't have to be a specialized academic or a scholar of Palestine to devour the new issue of the journal... it was a journal that not only served its official scholarly purpose but it was also a real resource... it [was] very valuable for Palestinian Americans [since back] in those days you couldn't just fly over to the Middle East every other month, so it was a useful way to stay in touch."¹⁰⁷

While *IPS* is originally an Arab research institute, it would eventually establish an office in the United States and take on a separate institutional identity as an American institution with a 501(c)3 status. Therefore, *IPS-USA* and its flagship publication, the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, will be the focus of this section. The *Journal of Palestine Studies* (*JPS*) has published papers on Palestinian affairs and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1971 and is a vital resource for anyone interested in Palestine and the Middle East. It is also the only journal out of the three published by *IPS* to be edited in the United States. At the time of writing, Rashid Khalidi, the Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University and prominent Palestinian scholar and intellectual, is the President and Chairman of *IPS-USA* and the Chief Editor for the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

Khalidi describes the journal as “essentially trying to establish a Palestinian narrative through a specific approach and through documentation.”¹⁰⁸ In *JPS*'s 50th anniversary publication, Khalidi reflects on the journal and how it has evolved over time:

“When I became editor, peer-reviewed articles, essays, interviews, and book reviews formed the core of *JPS* knowledge production on Palestine, featuring an

¹⁰⁷ Mouin Rabbani, interview with the author, April 21, 2021.

¹⁰⁸ Rashid Khalidi, interview with the author, May 5, 2021.

approach weighted heavily toward politics, history, international relations, and foreign policy questions. About half of every issue was dedicated to documentary material comprising a quarterly update on developments in and around Palestine; a chronology; separate sections devoted to key documents, to the Hebrew and Arabic press, and to Israeli settlements; and the Congressional Monitor (which as its name implies monitors all congressional actions pertaining to Palestine)... While the internet was no longer new in 2002, access to our material was gained via print copies of the *Journal*, which counted over two thousand institutional and individual subscribers.

Today, *JPS* content is primarily accessed digitally and no longer includes any of the documentary sections... This shift to a new format recognizes the fact that digital platforms are more agile and better suited to the purposes of documenting and covering rapidly moving events than a quarterly academic journal appearing three-six months after these events. With over 330,000 downloads of *JPS* material in 2020, up from 200,000 in 2019, it is clear that the vast majority of our readers access the *Journal*'s content online rather than in printed form."¹⁰⁹

Since its genesis 50 years ago, *JPS* has pursued a new vision for itself. Currently, the journal is focusing on expanding the number of articles, essays, interviews, and roundtables it publishes, and more importantly, on developing new conceptual frameworks, approaches, and analyses. Its long-term goal is to broaden the scholarly study of Palestine in conversation with other fields beyond those of just Palestine and Middle East studies.¹¹⁰

Moreover, *JPS* has helped facilitate and contribute to the broader normative political impact of the Palestinian cause in American intellectual circles. It's early years were defined by a sharp contrast in the taboo nature of the study of Palestine. In the 1970s and 80s, the term "Palestine" was taboo in American intellectual, academic, political and media circles. Conversely, in the Arab world the cause of Palestine was

¹⁰⁹ Rashid I. Khalidi, "The *Journal of Palestine Studies* in the Twenty-First Century: An Editor's Reflections," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 3 (2021): 6, doi:10.1080/0377919X.2021.1933101.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

extremely popular. As Khalidi explains, “to write about Palestine in the West could be a contentious, even hazardous, endeavor for students, academics, activists, and journalists, not to speak of politicians.”¹¹¹

Working to counter this, a circle of Palestinian intellectuals (and others who were not necessarily Palestinian but focused their scholarship on Palestine or relatable topics) began to manifest itself in the United States. Many of them focused on the Palestinian question and helped cement the study of Palestine as a legitimate and serious field of academic inquiry. Pioneers in this area, who helped open up this space, were Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Eqbal Ahmad, Edward Said, Lila Abu-Lughod, Hisham Sharabi, Jamal R. Nassar, Fouad Moughrabi, Hamid Dabashi, Rashid Khalidi, Fawaz Turki, James Zogby, and others. These scholars were instrumental in shaping discursive narratives and the overall discourse on Palestine in academia. In these early years, the discourse was influenced heavily by a politics of negation and countering the absurd argument that “Palestine or Palestinians don’t exist.” As Khalidi explains,

“Half a century ago, simply putting Palestine back on the map, and asserting that the study of Palestine and the Palestinians was a legitimate endeavor, represented an arduous and frustrating task in Western academia, media, and political circles, let alone popular culture. Hence the painstaking effort by the *Journal’s* founders to document, substantiate, and firmly establish a counter-narrative to the widespread, insistent denial of the very existence of a Palestinian people and of their claims and rights. That explains as well the largely political, historical, and documentary emphasis of much of the *Journal’s* output in its first few decades.”¹¹²

¹¹¹ Rashid I. Khalidi, “The *Journal of Palestine Studies* in the Twenty-First Century: An Editor’s Reflections,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 3 (2021): 7, doi:10.1080/0377919X.2021.1933101.

¹¹² Ibid.

As time has passed, the approach, context, and methods involving Palestinian studies has significantly shifted. It is no longer about having to argue whether or not Palestinians exist, but has expanded to become an interdisciplinary field of study encompassing a broad range of disciplines from history, politics, social justice, race and race relations, peace and conflict, gender studies, queer studies, and Native American and Indigenous studies.

“Scholarship that had to establish that Palestinians exists in an academic context or in terms of activism is not the issue anymore. Yes, there is a whole Zionist argument still that Palestinians don’t exist, but that has become more of a niche, rather than filling all of the space which is what it did in the 1950s and 1960s, “Palestinians don’t exist” was a given everywhere- political level, media, social circles... that changes in 1971... and that’s partly the result of the work of the first generation of scholars... interest expands from just the political and historical to culture, society, Palestine itself, the Palestinian people. It’s not *just the struggle, the conflict, dealing with the Zionist narrative*, those are still part of what the journal is involved in, but it’s also now discussing the study of Palestine and the Palestinians as an object of scholarship in and of themselves. More and more of the work of the journal has to do with *that* rather than proving that Palestinians exist...”¹¹³

In terms of Palestine studies in general, academic work on Palestine and Palestinians has become much more diverse. While traditional approaches are still pursued, much of the scholarly work on Palestine and the Palestinians has developed into an activist/advocacy based approach. While scholarly work has traditionally attempted to be objective and avoid a merging of academia and politics or academia and activism, the fact is it is hard to separate the two, especially when it comes to the Palestinian question. In any case, Palestine, Palestinians and the question of Palestine as a field of study has continued to mature and evolve, including at the institutional level. As Khalidi explains:

¹¹³ Rashid Khalidi, interview with the author, May 5th, 2021.

“At Columbia University, a Center for Palestine Studies, the first and only one of its kind in the Western Hemisphere, is celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2021. Similar centers have been established in the United Kingdom: at SOAS University of London and at Exeter University. Meanwhile, at Brown University, a chair has been named for the renowned Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, with the distinguished Palestinian historian Beshara Doumani, a member of the *JPS* Editorial Board, as its inaugural incumbent. Such advances were unimaginable two or three decades ago, and they are an indication of the fact that the study of Palestine has begun, despite strong opposition, to establish a place for itself in the U.S. and European academies.”¹¹⁴

In 2010, Columbia University launched the *Center for Palestine Studies (CPS)*¹¹⁵, a first of its kind in an academic institution in the United States. The center promotes the academic study of Palestine by supporting research, teaching, and intellectual collaboration among scholars, while also building connections with other institutions and scholars to strengthen the academic study of Palestine and Palestinians throughout the United States and the world. The center's programming and research areas include a *Jerusalem* project, *Palestine Cuts*, *Palestine Library*, *Palestine & Law*, *The Arts*, and *History of the Present*.¹¹⁶ There are also a number of projects CPS engages in, including the *Edward Said archive*, *Al-Quds archive*, and *Dreams of a Nation*, which is a film project dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Palestinian cinema, just to name a few.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Rashid I. Khalidi, “The *Journal of Palestine Studies* in the Twenty-First Century: An Editor’s Reflections,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 3 (2021): 12, doi:10.1080/0377919X.2021.1933101.

¹¹⁵ See <http://palestine.mei.columbia.edu>.

¹¹⁶ For more on CPS’s programming and research areas, see <http://palestine.mei.columbia.edu/programming-areas>.

¹¹⁷ For a complete list of CPS’s projects, see <http://palestine.mei.columbia.edu/projects>.

The academic centers, think-tanks and institutes discussed in this sub-section have played pivotal roles in offering more accurate portrayals of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims. They have countered false, misleading and orientalist based representations of Arabs and Muslims in the West and will continue to do so. They work extensively *on* Palestine, and *for* Palestinians, in a multitude of ways, some by supporting Palestinian scholars and others by legitimizing Palestine as a field of study and creating scholarship within that field. Finally, they'll continue to develop, innovate and evolve in order to adapt to the ever changing dynamics within Palestine, Palestinian academia and Palestinian advocacy.

PALESTINIAN LOBBY AND POLITICAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

As mentioned previously, the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) was the first Arab-American organization to register as an official lobby group and form a PAC. It dedicated its efforts on lobbying the federal government on issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is a very robust and active Arab lobby within the United States, many of which are funded directly by Arab governments or Arab American citizens. These groups “lobby” on behalf of Arab interests and/or on behalf of Arab American rights in the U.S. Some of the most well-known groups include or included the NAAA, the Association of Arab American University Graduates, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and the Arab American Institute.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ I use the term “lobby group” loosely here, as some of these organizations are not official lobby entities, however, their advocacy work periodically aligns with the actions of traditional lobby groups on capitol hill, such as meeting with politicians on capitol hill and advocating for and/or applying pressure to endorse certain policies, etc.

However, within this set of Arab “lobby” groups exist a smaller and more specific subset of groups- which I refer to as “Palestinian Lobby and/or Political Advocacy organizations.” Although Arab lobby groups have traditionally advocated for Palestinian rights, a distinction should be made between “Arab” lobby groups and specific “Palestinian” lobby/political advocacy groups. For purposes of this dissertation, the later will be the focus of this section.

In June of 2003, a new Palestinian lobby group was formed. *The American Association for Palestinian Equal Rights* (AAPER) was founded by George Naggiar. The organization was divided into two divisions; one focused on education and the other focused on lobbying. The educational division focused on informing the American public about Palestinian rights and the role of the U.S. in the Arab-Israeli relationship. The lobbying division worked to shape U.S. foreign policy that recognized and advanced the human and national rights of the Palestinian people.¹¹⁹ In response to the absence of a Palestinian narrative on capitol hill, Naggiar founded AAPER with the hope that the group could shape public discourse in the U.S. that recognizes the cause of Palestinian rights as one of justice and equality.¹²⁰

Furthermore, the *U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights* (USCPR) was founded in 2001. Originally founded under the name “U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation,” the organization was renamed in 2016. A national coalition of hundreds of

¹¹⁹ “Pro-Palestine lobby group launched.” *The Electronic Intifada*, June 10, 2003. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/pro-palestine-lobby-group-launched/266>.

¹²⁰ For more information on AAPER and to read the transcript of an interview conducted with founder George Naggiar, see “Interview: AAPER, America’s Pro-Palestine, Pro-Peace Lobby.” *The Electronic Intifada*, June 14, 2003. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/interview-aaper-americas-pro-palestine-pro-peace-lobby/4617>.

groups, USCPR works to advocate for Palestinian rights and to shift U.S. policy towards a more even-handed approach in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.¹²¹ Although not officially registered as a lobby group, USCPR works extensively to influence U.S. policy which aligns it as a political advocacy organization. Their vision is “freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people in a world without racism and oppression,” which is directed by their core values of “solidarity, collective liberation, leadership, accountability, [and] integrity.”¹²² The organization also conducts campaigns on relevant issues to the Palestinian cause, including ending Israeli detention of children and the right to boycott and challenge ‘apartheid tourism’.¹²³

Finally, one of the largest and most active Palestine advocacy groups in Washington D.C. is *American Muslims for Palestine* (AMP). Founded in 2006, AMP is a national education and grassroots-based organization dedicated to educating the American public about the cause of Palestine and raises awareness of issues pertaining to Palestine and its rich cultural heritage.¹²⁴ Having started in Chicago and Milwaukee, AMP routinely disseminates educational materials, engages with community-based programming and works with broad coalitions consisting of faith-based organizations, minority communities, and civil society organizations. AMP is very direct on their position towards certain policy issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As highlighted on their website, “AMP calls for an end to the Israeli occupation of

¹²¹ See U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, “About Us.” <https://uscpr.org/about-us/>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ See U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, “Campaigns.” <https://uscpr.org/campaign/>.

¹²⁴ See American Muslims for Palestine, “About AMP.” <https://www.ampalastine.org/about-amp>.

Palestinian lands, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, an end to Israeli settlement construction and an end to Israeli's siege on Gaza. AMP supports the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions as a peaceful tool to force Israel to comply with international law."¹²⁵

AMP's Executive Director, Osama Abuirshaid, explains the history of the organization and why it was created:

"AMP was created... to fill a vacuum after 9/11 and the war on terrorism. Unfortunately, Palestinian [advocacy] work in the U.S. was subjected to government harassment.. and there were closures of Palestinian organizations in the U.S... the community was terrified... so in 2006, our founders decided there needs to be an organization that works for Palestine... and this organization became *American Muslims for Palestine*. It was a community organization...working within the Palestinian community in particular, and within the Arab and Muslim community in general. It wasn't limited to one place...and our reach [began to] expand to communities across the country.

In 2010, [AMP] started doing advocacy by reaching out to campuses across the U.S., to enlist and mobilize students, we reached out to churches and other organizations that [advocate] for Palestine but were not Arab or Muslims. However, in 2015, we decided this was not enough and that...we needed to expand our reach, we needed to be integrated into the larger Palestine solidarity movement in the U.S. and we needed to work with other groups- Jewish, Christian, and multi-ethnic groups, that work for social justice in the United States, and that we needed to do more advocacy in Washington D.C. That's when we started our first *Palestine Advocacy Day*."¹²⁶

One of AMP's most notable programs is their *Palestine Advocacy Day* (PAD). Since 2015, AMP has organized an annual PAD and training weekend.¹²⁷ The program educates students and community activists on civic engagement and policy exclusively related to the issue of Palestine. Participants engage with guest lecturers and instructors

¹²⁵ American Muslims for Palestine, "About AMP." <https://www.ampalestine.org/about-amp>.

¹²⁶ Osama Abuirshaid, interview with the author, April 14, 2021.

¹²⁷ See American Muslims for Palestine, "Palestine Advocacy Day." <https://palestineadvocacy.com>.

and join in courses on legislative advocacy and political processes in the U.S. which covers multiple subjects including structures of government, community and movement history, civic engagement, how to speak to elected officials and how to influence policy issues.¹²⁸ As Abuirshaid explains:

“Our first Palestine advocacy day was not that sophisticated. We had about two dozen people and went to capitol hill and met with some representatives, then we went to the State Department and had some meetings about Palestine. From that point on, we started to organize our PAD to become the largest Palestine advocacy day on capitol hill... We bring people to D.C. and provide them with 2 days of intensive training, we give them our asks and what exactly we’re advocating for or against. In 2019, we had over 500 people coming from 42 states and held over 140-150 meetings advocating for Palestine. In 2020, because of the pandemic, we had to do it virtually, we had over 750 people from 42 states and over 153 congressional meetings.”¹²⁹

Furthermore, Abuirshaid places AMP’s mission within three components, the first is *advocacy*, the second is *education*, and the third is *mobilization*. AMP disseminates literature, whether through digital or printed material, in order to raise awareness and inform Americans on the Palestinian issue. They also participate in visits to university campuses, synagogues, churches and mosques to help raise awareness on Palestine. Finally, there are over 10 chapters across the U.S. and hundreds of volunteers which help AMP mobilize on the ground for various causes, not only for the Palestinian cause, but for other social justice causes in the United States.¹³⁰

It should be noted that while AMP currently engages in minor lobbying efforts, the group does not define itself as a lobby group but rather as a political advocacy group.

¹²⁸ See Palestine Advocacy Day, “About Event.” <https://palestineadvocacy.com>.

¹²⁹ Osama Abuirshaid, interview with the author, April 14, 2021.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

However, at the time of writing, AMP is currently working on launching an affiliate organization, *Americans for Justice in Palestine Action* or *AJP Action*, registered under a 501(c)4, which would allow the group to focus solely on lobbying efforts and engage in broader lobbying work.

While Palestinian lobby/political advocacy groups have grown in recent years, they have achieved only limited success, especially when juxtaposed to Israeli lobby groups. As Mohammed Bamyeh notes, the reason for the absence of an effective Palestinian pressure group in the United States is not only the relative newness of Palestinian communities in the U.S., but also because political energies have been invested in building the PLO and Palestinian civil society in exile, cementing social bonds and maintaining a sense of Palestinian identity within a globally dispersed community.¹³¹ For the Palestinian diaspora, focusing on building a Palestinian ‘society’ seemed more important than focusing on lobbying efforts. Effective lobbying on behalf of Palestinians in the United States is not met without challenges. Much of the difficulties Palestinian activists face on capitol hill is due in part to the effectiveness of more powerful American Jewish and pro-Israel lobby groups, as well as right-wing Christian and Evangelical groups. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is one such example. There exists much controversy surrounding AIPAC and its influence on U.S. policy.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have argued that the pro-Israel lobby (AIPAC included) has powerfully influenced American policy in the Middle East.

¹³¹ Mohammed A. Bamyeh, “Palestinians, Diasporas, and US Foreign Policy,” in *Diaspora Lobbies and the US Government: Convergence and Divergence in Making Foreign Policy*, ed. Josh DeWind and Renata Segura (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 83.

Writing from a realist foreign policy perspective, they argue that America's unconditional support for Israel, including \$3.8 billion in yearly aid, has no strategic or moral rationale and has made America less safe and more vulnerable to terrorism. Their conclusion implies that America would be in a better position if it loosened its ties with Israel and took a more balanced foreign policy approach in the region.¹³² A hail-storm of controversy was unleashed after the publishing of the article with attacks coming from politicians, academics, editorial boards and donors.

What is more interesting is not the argument put forth by the authors themselves, but rather the impact the article had on the discourse of Israel, Palestine and the United States and its role in the Middle East (this is discussed further in chapter 6). The article placed the debate of the lobby and their influence in the U.S. at center stage. Responses were stifling, harsh and attempts to silence the critique were domineering. However, the paper served one overarching important purpose, by opening the debate it created a space for others to evaluate and analyze the influence lobby groups have on capitol hill, and whether or not the interests of these groups support or undermine U.S. national security interests. Essentially, the influence of these groups in Congress sometimes prevents debate on critical issues which may have consequences on the entire international system.

However, not all Israeli lobby groups take such a one-sided approach. For example, J Street is a pro-Israel, pro-peace organization representing American Jews who advocate for a more balanced approach towards resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

¹³² See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby," *London Review of Books* 28, no. 6 (March 2006). Their article was originally published in the *London Review of Books*, however, after the controversy caused by this article, the authors further elaborated on their argument in a book. For a more detailed account of their argument see John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.)

Advocates of a two-state solution, J Street grounds itself on 5 principles: 1) Committed to and support the people and the state of Israel, 2) The future of Israel depends on achieving a two-state solution with the Palestinian people, 3) Israel's supporters have the right and obligation to speak out when the policies or actions of the Israeli government harm the long-term interests of Israel and the Jewish people, 4) Vibrant but respectful debate about Israel benefits the American Jewish community and Israel, and 5) [J Street's] work is grounded on the Jewish and democratic values on which [Jews] were raised.¹³³ Principal's two, three, and four are perhaps the most important; where other pro-Israel lobby groups outright reject debate, criticism of Israel, and even the two-state solution, J Street prides itself on being able to openly discuss these topics and other controversial subjects concerning Israel and Palestine. It also understands that Israel is not always right, and as such, American Jews have a responsibility to occasionally question and be critical of Israel's policies and how they impact Israel's long-term future.

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT, SANCTIONS MOVEMENT

One of the most popular and fastest growing Palestinian advocacy movements has become the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement or BDS. Boycotts against Israel are not a recent development. In 1948, after the creation of the State of Israel, the Arab League organized a campaign for Arab states to boycott Israel and encouraged outside countries to join. While not overly successful, it was the first attempt at imposing economic pressure on the newly created state. In 2005, the BDS campaign officially launched as a "Palestinian-led movement for freedom, justice and equality."¹³⁴ The

¹³³ See J Street, "About Us," <https://jstreet.org/about-us/>.

¹³⁴ See Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions "What is BDS," <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>.

failure of world governments and international institutions to respond to the human rights abuses endured by Palestinians is the catalyst for the BDS movement. Taking a grassroots approach, BDS is modeled after the South African anti-apartheid movement and urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law by generating economic and political pressure. The movement was launched by “170 Palestinian unions, refugee networks, women’s organizations, professional associations, popular resistance committees, and other Palestinian civil society bodies.”¹³⁵ BDS views itself as a form of non-violent pressure on Israel, and vows to continue its work until Israel complies with three demands: 1) end its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands (West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights) and dismantle the wall; 2) recognize the fundamental rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and 3) respect, protect and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.¹³⁶

In 2004, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Israel’s separation wall was illegal and had to come down due to its route through Palestinian neighborhoods. Notably, there was no government or international response to this. According to Andrew Kadi, an organizer and steering committee member of the *U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights*, Palestinians had already been meeting with their South African counterparts around this time to get a better understanding of the struggle against South African apartheid. It was at this point that the coalition of Palestinian civil society organizations decided it was time to enforce the ICJ’s rule by calling for a South Africa style boycott,

¹³⁵ See <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

resulting in the creation of the BDS movement. The BDS movement serves multiple functions, including educating the general public on the Palestinian question as well as putting forward a call to action with the hope that this will eventually culminate in much needed change. When discussing the value of BDS, Kadi explains:

“The first and foremost value, I think, is that [BDS] focuses the discourse on what Israel is doing, and does not simply become a debate about whether there is or is not an occupation. It becomes a discussion of Palestinian rights. Ultimately, through campaigns, you are actually able to educate people about these issues – but with an end goal in mind, rather than simply having the debate, walking away, and nothing changing.”¹³⁷

The BDS movement attempts to frame the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within a normative or rights-based paradigm, emphasizing that this conflict is no longer just about states or land, but rather about human rights, justice and equality. It also takes multiple approaches towards boycotting, not limited to just economic boycotts but also including cultural, arts and academic boycotts. In its short history, the BDS campaign has had some great successes, but not without controversy. Frequently accused of anti-Semitism by antagonists, BDS makes it clear on its website that “BDS is an inclusive, anti-racist human rights movement that is opposed on principle to all forms of discrimination, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.”¹³⁸

In terms of impact, BDS has accomplished several key victories. In 2016, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly both made powerful decisions to engage with BDS, joining other faith-based communities in

¹³⁷ See Andrew Kadi, “The Palestinian BDS Campaign: What it is, How it is growing, and Why the Efforts to Stop it will fail,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 37, no. 3 (May 2018): 51-58. <http://ezproxy.fiu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=128893046&site=eds-live>.

¹³⁸ See <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>.

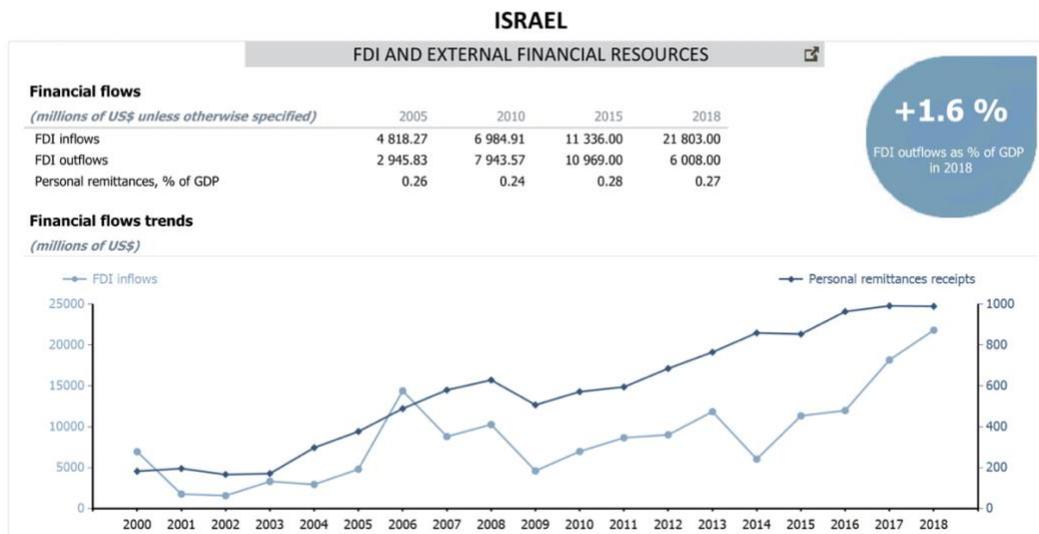
Palestinian solidarity. Other faith-based groups that have taken economic measures against Israel's occupation include the United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Quakers, Mennonite Central Committee, the Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and the Alliance of Baptists.¹³⁹

Additionally, from 2013 to 2014, there was a decrease in foreign direct investment (FDI) in Israel by nearly 50%. According to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in 2014 \$6.4 billion was invested in Israel, whereas in 2013 \$11.8 billion was invested- a decline of about 46%.¹⁴⁰ Some of this loss was attributed to the BDS movement.¹⁴¹ Israel's war against Hamas and the consequent bombing and invasion of Gaza in 2014 (dubbed "Operation Protection Edge" by Israel) also contributed to a drop in FDI that year, reflecting the international communities reaction. However, since 2014, FDI in Israel has steadily increased (see graph 3.1). While BDS hasn't caused an enormous loss to Israel's economy, the underlying message of BDS and what it stands for is what Israeli leaders view as a strategic threat.

¹³⁹ Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions, "US Churches Advance Effective Solidarity with Palestinian Freedom, Justice and Equality," July 3, 2016, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/us-churches-advance-effective-solidarity-palestinian-freedom-justice-and-equality>.

¹⁴⁰ Moshe Glantz, "Foreign investment in Israel cut by half in 2014," *Ynet News*, June 24, 2015, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4672509,00.html>.

¹⁴¹ "Experts report growing economic impact of BDS," <https://www.bdsmovement.net/economic-boycott>.



Graph 3.1: Foreign Direct Investment and External Financial Resources- Israel
 Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Statistics. Country Profile: Israel. Accessed May 21, 2020. <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/376/index.html>.

Furthermore, companies such as France’s Orange have responded to pressure from BDS, ending the relationship with their Israeli affiliates.¹⁴² Another French company, Veolia, sold off its Israeli operations in April 2015, in which it owned stakes in the *Jerusalem Light Rail* project.¹⁴³ Moreover, in December of 2016, the largest security company in the world, G4S, abandoned its deals with the Israeli prison service due to pressure from BDS.¹⁴⁴ While a big win for the BDS movement, G4S still holds contracts with the Israeli Ministry of National Security and Israeli National Police, thus BDS

¹⁴² For more information see Ali Abunimah, “Campaigners hail “inspiring” BDS victory as Orange quits Israel,” *Electronic Intifada*, January 11, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/campaigners-hail-inspiring-bds-victory-orange-quits-israel>.

¹⁴³ For more information see Palestinian BDS National Committee, “BDS Marks Another Victory As Veolia Sells Off All Israeli Operations,” September 1, 2015, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/bds-marks-another-victory-veolia-sells-all-israeli-operations>.

¹⁴⁴ See Palestinian BDS National Committee, “Under BDS Pressure, G4S Ends Most Illegal Business with Israel,” December 2, 2016. <https://bdsmovement.net/news/under-bds-pressure-g4s-ends-most-illegal-business-israel>.

continues its pressure on the company in the hope that they will also divest from these sectors.¹⁴⁵

BDS has also been successful in compelling major academic organizations such as the American Studies Association, National Women's Studies Association, African Literature Association, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association and many others to endorse an academic boycott of Israel.¹⁴⁶ There have also been a number of notable academics who have boycotted academic meetings and conferences in Israel, most notably the late Stephen Hawking, who in 2013 rejected an invitation to a conference at Hebrew University in Jerusalem hosted by then Israeli President Shimon Peres.¹⁴⁷ Protesting Israel's treatment of Palestinians, Hawking's withdrawal from the conference signaled a significant event in the academic community and opened the door for more academics to follow in his path.

While the movement has become increasingly popular in Europe, it has had its fair share of challenges in the United States. The movement was becoming so effective that on July 28th, 2015, a hearing before the Subcommittee on National Security of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in the U.S. House of Representatives was held. Titled "Impact of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement," the session heard witness testimony concerning the impact of BDS, describing it as

¹⁴⁵ For more information on the campaign against G4S see "Stop G4S Global Campaign," <https://bdsmovement.net/stop-g4s>.

¹⁴⁶ For a complete list of academic associations endorsing boycott resolutions see US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI), "Academic Associations Endorsing Boycott and Resolutions," <https://usacbi.org/academic-associations-endorsing-boycott/>.

¹⁴⁷ For more information see Harriet Sherwood and Matthew Kalman, "Stephen Hawking joins academic boycott of Israel," *The Guardian*, May 7, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/08/stephen-hawking-israel-academic-boycott>.

“economic warfare” and “attempts to delegitimize” the State of Israel.¹⁴⁸ The hearings transcript makes clear that the BDS movement is being taken seriously by allies of Israel, although often times unfairly targeted. As challenges to BDS grow, conflating legitimate criticism of Israeli policies with anti-Semitism has become a widespread and all too common attacking point. This has become more apparent as states in the U.S. pass increasingly aggressive anti-BDS legislation that infringes on Americans first amendment right to boycott (for more information on this, see chapter 6- *BDS in the U.S.*). As BDS continues to move forward with its agenda, so will political challenges against it.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENT GROUPS

University campuses have become hot spots for debate concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Consequently, this has guided college campuses to become hubs for Palestinian advocacy, led by groups such as *Students for Justice in Palestine* and *Muslim Students Association*. The Muslim Students Association (MSA) was first established in January 1963 to serve Muslim students, faculty and alumni and support them in establishing a platform for Muslim programming on campuses.¹⁴⁹ Since their founding, they have expanded nationally and opened numerous chapters on college campuses throughout the United States and Canada. While MSA chapters have occasionally co-sponsored events with groups such as SJP and can be said to support the Palestinian cause, MSA tends to be more religious than political in nature and Palestinian

¹⁴⁸ To review the transcript of this hearing see “Impact of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement,” Hearing before the Committee on National Security of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform House of Representatives, 114th Congress, First Session, Serial No. 114-41. July 28, 2015. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114hhrg96874/pdf/CHRG-114hhrg96874.pdf>.

¹⁴⁹ For more information see Muslim Students Association National, “About,” <https://www.msanational.org/about>.

advocacy is not at the forefront of their agenda. Average MSA activities include feeding the homeless, mentoring high school kids, and learning about your faith with other members in the group. Unfortunately, MSA groups have come under harassment from government officials (especially in New York and the Northeast) and have been subjected to illegal surveillance and monitoring without reasonable suspicion of any wrongdoing.¹⁵⁰

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), on the other hand, has become a leader in Palestinian advocacy on university campuses. SJP works to educate college campuses on the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the human rights abuses they experience. The National chapter of SJP (NSJP) was created in 2010 to coordinate efforts of SJP chapters across the country. Currently, there are about 200 chapters nationwide.¹⁵¹ While every SJP chapter operates independently, NSJP helps to coordinate their efforts as well as organize a yearly national conference. NSJP's work is centered on freedom, justice and equality for the Palestinian people; and acknowledging that all struggles for freedom, justice or equality are interconnected, NSJP "stands against homophobia, misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, classism, colonialism, ableism, and bigotry and discrimination of any form."¹⁵² Additionally, since 2011 NSJP has hosted an annual national conference where members of SJP's across the country can come together to meet, attend skill-building and political development workshops, and learn

¹⁵⁰ See Chris Hawley, "NYPD monitored Muslim students all over Northeast," *The Associated Press*. February 18, 2012, <https://www.ap.org/ap-in-the-news/2012/nypd-monitored-muslim-students-all-over-northeast>.

¹⁵¹ National Students for Justice in Palestine, "About," <https://www.nationalsjp.org/about-nsjp.html>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

about the history of their own and other social justice movements.¹⁵³ As the size and popularity of the national conference has grown, so have challenges to SJP and their functioning on college campuses.

In August 2019, students at Fordham University won a landmark legal case against the university which sought to prohibit them from creating an SJP club on campus.¹⁵⁴ Fordham's decision to arbitrarily deny a chapter of SJP on campus, even after the student governing council approved it, can be viewed within the wider context of efforts to silence voices that advocate for Palestine.

Other pro-Palestinian groups and events on college campuses are also no stranger to challenges. In March of 2019, an academic conference organized by the University of North Carolina (UNC) and Duke University were subjected to similar attacks. The conference, titled "Conflict Over Gaza: People, Politics, and Possibilities," intended to shed light on the realities of those living in the Gaza strip, as well as highlight Gazan culture, music, films, food, and art.¹⁵⁵ Attacks on the UNC-Duke conference were led by two conservative Republicans members of Congress from North Carolina, George Holding and Ted Budd, who sent letters to the Department of Education.¹⁵⁶ As Lara Friedman explained, the outrage over the conference was not about what panelists or

¹⁵³ For more information and a complete list of previous conferences hosted by NSJP, see National Students for Justice in Palestine, "Past Conferences," <https://www.nationalsjp.org/about-nsjp.html>.

¹⁵⁴ See "Fordham University students win landmark fight to establish Palestine club," *Palestine Legal*, August 6, 2019, <https://palestinelegal.org/news/2019/8/6/fordham-university-students-win-landmark-fight-to-establish-palestine-club>.

¹⁵⁵ See "Conflict Over Gaza: People, Politics, and Possibilities", www.gazaconference.web.unc.edu.

¹⁵⁶ See Lara Friedman, "Why So Much Fuss About a Conference in North Carolina," April 24, 2019, <https://lobelogs.com/why-so-much-fuss-about-a-conference-in-north-carolina/>.

attendees did or didn't discuss, the outrage "is over the fact that a conference that focused on the Palestinian side of the Israeli-Palestinian equation was allowed to take place at all."¹⁵⁷

This was not the only time that UNC and Duke universities have come under fire for their activities in regard to Middle East studies. The two universities, which run a joint Middle East studies program, have had their programs accused of "anti-Israel" bias and for not doing enough to promote a "positive" image of other religions in the region. Consequently, the Education Department accused the UNC-Duke program of violating Title VI of the Higher Education Act which awards federal funding to college programs and ordered them to submit a revised schedule of events it planned to support and a full list of course offerings.¹⁵⁸

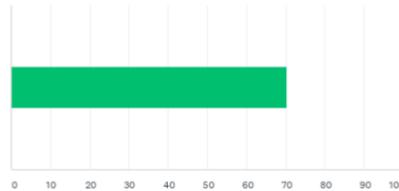
Challenges against Palestine advocates on college campuses are increasingly concerning. As early as 2006, Mearsheimer and Walt recognized pro-Israeli groups increasing their focus on stifling debate on college campuses. University campuses, bastions for critical thinking and objective research, have become hubs for debating and critically analyzing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Research has shown that younger American Jews, while still reflecting moderately strong support for Israel, are more critical of Israeli policies and more sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians than previous generations. A survey conducted by the *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, an

¹⁵⁷ Lara Friedman, "Why So Much Fuss About a Conference in North Carolina," April 24, 2019, <https://lobelog.com/why-so-much-fuss-about-a-conference-in-north-carolina/>.

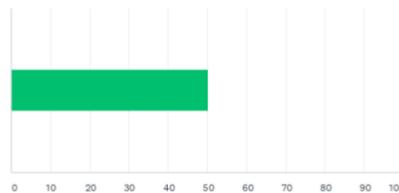
¹⁵⁸ See Erica L. Green, "U.S. Orders Duke and U.N.C. to Recast Tone in Mideast Studies," *New York Times*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/us/politics/anti-israel-bias-higher-education.html>.

independent research institute, found that self-identified “liberal” Jewish Americans had a 70% overall rating of being “pro-Israel”. Of that same group, sympathy for the Palestinian cause received a 50% rating (see graph 3.2).¹⁵⁹

Q3 On a scale of 1-100 (1=not at all, 100=Very much so) how “pro-Israel” would you describe yourself?



Q4 On a scale of 1-100 (1=not at all, 100=Very much so) , how sympathetic would you say you are to the PALESTINIAN cause?



Graph 3.2: American Jewry in Transition? How attitudes toward Israel may be shifting.

In 2013, Pew Research Center conducted a survey of American Jews (see graph 3.3.) When asked how emotionally attached to Israel they are, 30% responded “very attached,” 39% responded “somewhat” attached, and 31% responded “not very/not at all” attached. Of those same respondents, 44% said that the continuation of Israeli settlement building “hurts” Israel’s security.¹⁶⁰ Israel’s harsh policies towards Palestinians and continued settlement growth has made it harder for young people to enthusiastically and

¹⁵⁹ Irwin Mansdorf, “American Jewry in Transition? How attitudes toward Israel may be shifting,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, July 21, 2020, <https://jcpa.org/article/american-jewry-in-transition-how-attitudes-toward-israel-may-be-shifting/>.

¹⁶⁰ “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (October 1, 2013) <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.

unconditionally support the Jewish state. Dov Waxman, a professor of political science at Northeastern University, supports this viewpoint. He argues that younger American Jews are not necessarily emotionally detached and disconnected from Israel, but instead are actually more engaged with Israel, but that they are also more critical of Israeli government policies and feel more sympathetic towards the Palestinians than older American Jews.¹⁶¹ Waxman posits four major reasons for this- 1) they are more liberal than their older counterparts; 2) they are more oriented toward universalism and more concerned with social justice as central to their Jewish identities; 3) the Holocaust and anti-Semitism has had less of an impact on them; and 4) they have different “generational memories” of Israel than older generations.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ See Dov Waxman, “Young American Jews and Israel: Beyond Birthright and BDS,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 2 (Indiana University Press). 177-199. doi 10.2979/israelstudies.22.3.08.

¹⁶² Ibid: 178.

Attachment, Attitudes About Israel

<i>How emotionally attached are you to Israel?</i>	NET	Jews by religion	Jews of no religion
	%	%	%
Very attached	30	36	12
Somewhat	39	40	33
Not very/Not at all	31	23	55
Don't know/Refused	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>*</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Been to Israel?</i>			
Yes	43	49	23
No	57	51	77
Don't know	<u>*</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>0</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Impact of continued building of Jewish settlements on Israel's security</i>			
Helps	17	19	9
Hurts	44	40	56
Makes no difference	29	31	21
Don't know	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>14</u>
	100	100	100
<i>Believe God gave Israel to Jewish people?</i>			
Yes	40	47	16
No	27	27	27
Don't know	5	6	3
Don't believe in God [^]	<u>28</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>55</u>
	100	100	100

Source: Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of U.S. Jews, Feb. 20-June 13, 2013. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[^]Includes those who said "don't know" or declined to answer when asked whether they believe in God. For more details, see table on belief in God on page 74.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Graph 3.3: A Portrait of Jewish Americans Attitudes toward Israel
 Source: "A Portrait of Jewish Americans," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., (October 1, 2013)
<https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>.

In response to the growing criticism of Israel, new groups began to spring up on college campuses to counter the growing debate surrounding Israel. Groups such as *Caravan for Democracy* brought Israeli speakers to U.S. colleges, and other groups such

as *Hillel* and *Jewish Council for Public Affairs* joined in.¹⁶³ AIPAC more than tripled its spending on monitoring university activities and training young advocates on U.S. campuses in order to advance pro-Israel efforts.¹⁶⁴ In the broader context, freedom of speech and academic freedom should allow both perspectives and narratives to be permissible on U.S. campuses, as well as allow for intellectual debate by and between both sides. Students should be allowed to advocate for both Palestine and Israel and have a right to express their opinions on the subject from either side. Having debate silenced is not healthy for intellectual development, especially within a democracy. In fact, the opposite is true, debates on such critical issues are healthy and beneficial for any true functioning democracy and citizenry.

TRANSNATIONAL PALESTINIAN DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

The Palestinian American diaspora also maintains its connection to other Palestinian Americans through transnational Palestinian diaspora organizations or Palestinian community organizations. What distinguishes these groups from other Palestinian advocacy groups in the U.S. is that their main premise is focused on bilateral ties between Palestinian communities *in* America and Palestinian communities *in* Palestine. Many of these diaspora organizations are tied to communal cities in Palestine whose descendants have come to the United States. They act as a platform to connect its members, but also to serve and educate non-Arab, non-Palestinian audiences. While the

¹⁶³ John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby," *London Review of Books* 28, no. 6 (March 2006).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

organizations covered in this section are in no way a comprehensive list, it discusses some of the major organizations which I place under this category.

These groups include the *American Federation of Ramallah Palestine*, the *Al Bireh Society* and *Al-Awda: The Right to Return Coalition*. These groups serve multiple functions, such as establishing and maintaining a sense of Palestinian community in the U.S., facilitating and maintaining connections among Palestinians within the diaspora, holding annual conferences and gatherings, and mobilizing to advocate on behalf of the Palestinian cause.

The *American Federation of Ramallah Palestine* (AFRP) is one of the largest and oldest Palestinian diaspora organizations in the United States. Founded on September 7th, 1959 with its headquarters in Detroit, Michigan, the federation was created with the aim of having people in the U.S. stay in touch with one another so as to retain their cultural identity.¹⁶⁵ Today there are over 35,000 people from Ramallah living in the United States who are concentrated in cities such as San Francisco, San Jose, San Diego, Santa Rosa, and Los Angeles CA; Jacksonville, FL; Houston, TX; Detroit, MI; Chicago, IL; Washington, DC; Knoxville, TN; Lexington, KY; Greensboro, NC; Birmingham, AL; Cleveland, OH; Little Rock, AR; Buffalo and Hempstead, NY; Milwaukee, WI; and South Plainfield, NJ.¹⁶⁶ Each of these cities has a chapter which makes up the AFRP. AFRP also has a number of initiatives which include scholarship programs, medical missions, leadership programs, cultural preservation projects, professional networks and others.

¹⁶⁵ See American Federation of Ramallah Palestine, "About Us," <https://afrp.org/about-us/>.

¹⁶⁶ American Federation of Ramallah Palestine, "About Us- AFRP History," <https://afrp.org/about-us/>.

Similarly, the *Al Bireh Society* (ABS) is a Palestinian-American organization whose members derive from the original families of Al Bireh, Palestine (a Palestinian city in the central West Bank which borders Ramallah, Palestine). ABS's mission is to perpetuate the Al Bireh family by providing educational, humanitarian and cultural programs as well as social interaction, and promoting their heritage to the outside community and American public at large.¹⁶⁷ The organization also provides educational events and an annual convention (sometimes bi-annually) which are an opportunity for *Birawis* (those from Al Bireh) along with other Palestinians to get together and participate in educational workshops, cultural activities and much more. These Palestinian diaspora groups also facilitate a close connection with Palestinians back in Palestine, as well as with municipal officials. For instance, the Mayor of Al Bireh, Palestine wrote a letter which was published in the 2018 program of ABS's convention in which he remarks, "We are looking forward to foster and promote the joint relationship with our brothers' expatriates for the benefit and interest of the city and its citizens."¹⁶⁸

Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition is another grassroots organization in the United States with chapters throughout the country. Al-Awda is a non-partisan broad-based organization of grassroots activists and students committed to educating the public on the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands of origin in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, U.N.

¹⁶⁷ See Al Bireh Society, "About Us," <https://albirehsociety.com/about-us/about-us/>.

¹⁶⁸ See Al Bireh Program Book 2018, <https://albirehsociety.com/website/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Al-Bireh-Program-Book-2018-12618-b.pdf>.

resolutions, and International law.¹⁶⁹ Their objectives range from raising awareness concerning the legal and human rights of Palestinian refugees, fostering relationships with elected representatives, and strengthening efforts which support the Palestinian struggle for return, freedom and equality.

Anas Amireh, President of the Al-Awda Florida Chapter and Treasurer of the National Board, discusses the founding of Al-Awda and its mission:

“Al-Awda was created right before 2000... the PLO wanted Palestinians to accept the 1967 [peace deal framework] and wanted organizations to support the two-state solution but wanted to talk about the right of return [to 1948 lands] later. While we were happy to pursue peace, we couldn't give up the right of return for those Palestinians from the 1948 lands. So the founders started to look around and found that there were no Palestinian organizations in America calling for the right of return...so the goal for Al-Awda became ensuring that the right of return remained a priority for Palestinian advocacy groups in the U.S... our mission was to make sure the right of return is always integrated in Palestinian advocacy... that's why the organization was created...to make people realize that the right of return is not just a demand, but it's an international right and is protected by international laws, both by Rome Statutes and U.N. resolutions, and it's a natural right for any indigenous people to return to their lands.”

From there our mission expanded. Our work [is] to educate the public, even educate Palestinians, we try to educate about our cause and every cause that is going on in Palestine whether it be the apartheid wall, or Hebron, or if it's the water issues, import/export issues, the checkpoints issue, we wanted to bring all these issues to the forefront and tie it to the natural right of return for Palestinians.”¹⁷⁰

Each chapter of Al-Awda functions under its own autonomy, setting its own local agenda and plan of action, as long as it is within the confines of Al-Awda's broader mission and goals set by the national board. Amireh explains that each chapter advocates for Palestine in a form they find suitable, whether through protests or through events and

¹⁶⁹ Al-Awda: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, “About,” <https://al-awda.org/about/>.

¹⁷⁰ Anas Amireh, interview with the author, April 1, 2021.

programming. “Here in South Florida, if we need to protest we call for immediate action to protest. Other times we do our own events... we’ll bring guests, novelist, writers, filmmakers. For a few years we did a *maqluba** cookoff just to hold on to the Palestinian cuisine.”¹⁷¹ This is just one example of the cultural events and gatherings Al-Awda organizes to promote the right of return and Palestinian advocacy.

Lastly, The *Palestinian Youth Movement* (PYM) is a “transnational, independent, grassroots movement of young Palestinians *in* Palestine and in exile worldwide.” PYM has a unique members base, simultaneously made up of Palestinians in Palestine as well as Palestinians in the diaspora. Motivated by encouraging younger Palestinians to take a more active role in the national struggle for Palestine, PYM strives to ensure a better future for subsequent generations of Palestinians based on principles of freedom and justice.¹⁷² Its USA chapter works to bring Palestinian youth from across the United States together and empower them with the tools they need to continue growing the Palestinian grassroots movement both locally and abroad. Some of their work includes addressing the needs of Arab/Palestinian communities, organizing workshops and programming aimed at developing leadership skills, celebrating Palestinian culture and heritage, participating in events which challenge colonialism, racism and injustice, and building

¹⁷¹ Anas Amireh, interview with the author, April 1, 2021.

**Maqluba* is a traditional dish consisting of meat, rice and fried vegetables placed in a pot and then flipped upside down when serving, hence its name *maqluba* which is Arabic for “upside-down.”

¹⁷² See Palestinian Youth Movement, “About,” <https://www.pymusa.com/about>.

relationships with third world solidarity allies tying the Palestinian struggle to other indigenous peoples movements for liberation.¹⁷³

“VISIT PALESTINE” ORGANIZATIONS

As descendants of the Palestinian diaspora enter their first, second and even third generation of American born children, most of them have fully assimilated to their new home countries. Several younger diaspora Palestinians do not speak Arabic, know very little about their Palestinian background, and many have never visited Palestine. While very few have maintained a connection with their cultural roots, many others have not. To foster the connection to their Palestinian heritage, many organizations have formed “Visit Palestine” trips, somewhat similar to the more well-known Israeli “birthright” trip. These groups take young Palestinians in the diaspora back to visit Palestine, immersing them in their Palestinian heritage and culture for weeks at a time. One of the earliest of these types of organizations was *Roots*, which beginning in 1986 started familiarizing Palestinian American youth with their cultural heritage through summer camps, trips to the West Bank and Gaza, cultural events, and weekend workshops.¹⁷⁴ The *Know Thy Heritage* (KTH) and *Go Palestine* programs are endeavors whose efforts aim to immerse Palestinian Americans (and others in the diaspora) in their Palestinian heritage.

The *Know thy Heritage* program was founded in 2011 under the auspices of the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF). In 2017, building on its success, the program transitioned into a standalone organization, which is how it operates

¹⁷³ See Palestinian Youth Movement, “About,” <https://www.pymusa.com/about>.

¹⁷⁴ Kathleen Christison, *The Wound of Dispossession: Telling the Palestinian Story* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunlit Hills Press, 2002), 86.

today.¹⁷⁵ KTH's mission is to make the Palestinian birthright a reality and to connect Palestinian youth in the diaspora to their homeland of Palestine and to one another. The trip takes place annually and is open to adults ages 18-35. While the majority of participants are Palestinian Americans, the programs alumni consist of Palestinians from all over the world, including countries such as Australia, Canada, Chile, Columbia, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Nicaragua, Qatar, Spain, the United Kingdom and others.¹⁷⁶ The trip takes Palestinians back to Palestine and while traveling mostly through the West Bank, introduces them to the local language, cuisine, and rich cultural history. It includes a number of lectures by guest speakers, meetings with local leaders and government officials, and visits to the holy sites.¹⁷⁷

Sir Rateb Rabie, founder and current president of KTH, was born in Jordan as the son of Palestinian refugees displaced from Jerusalem. After moving to the United States, Rabie began mobilizing for the Palestinian cause. He quickly realized that there was no umbrella organization for Palestinians in the U.S., but rather a mix of small organizations and groups, making it difficult to maneuver the politics of advocating for Palestine. In 1998, his first organized event was “*50 years of Al-Nakba*,” an event organized under ADC and AAI which brought together a collection of quilts from refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine symbolizing the over 400 towns and villages destroyed in 1947/1948. After receiving thousands of dollars in donations and expecting

¹⁷⁵ Know thy Heritage, “About Us,” <https://kthps.org/about-us/>.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ For more information about the Know thy Heritage program and its activities, see <https://kthps.org/kth-journey/>.

nearly 5,000 people to attend the event being held in Washington D.C., only about 350 participants showed up to show their support. “After all the work and preparation I put into it, to have such a high expectation and then see such a small turnout, it was very disappointing. I felt done,” Rabie explains.¹⁷⁸ He then goes on to explain how he founded HCEF,

“...and then the priest of my Birzeit village was in the United States. He connected me with the Presbyterian Church, where I saw about 200 people talking about my people, my descendants, my cousins. I was shocked. Over 200 people are here talking about Palestinians, they are pro-Palestinian, and yet nobody knows about them. This gave me the idea to start a church partnership. I wanted to bridge the connection between Palestinian Christians and Christians in the United States. I thought this would help me raise awareness of the Palestinian issue, but through a Christian lens. I received some pushback from Palestinian and Arab groups because they thought I was creating divisions between Palestinian Christians and Palestinian Muslims. However, that was not my intent. I was simply trying to utilize all our resources. Yes, we are all Palestinian, but unfortunately the world doesn’t pay attention when human rights violations are committed against Muslims. But I thought, maybe if they know about Palestinian Christians, that we are not converts, that we are the original followers of Jesus, and that these human rights violations impact Palestinian Christians as well, maybe they would listen and it would change their hearts and minds. However, my goal was always to use this approach to bring attention to the greater Palestinian issue as a whole.”¹⁷⁹

From then on, Rabie focused on incorporating the struggle of Palestinian Christians into the greater mission of bringing awareness to the struggle of all Palestinians. This led him to create HCEF, and subsequently KTH. Rabie founded KTH with two goals in mind, the first was to empower Palestinian youth in the diaspora by strengthening their knowledge of Palestinian identity, culture, history and traditions. The second was to increase their understanding of the Palestinian economic environment,

¹⁷⁸ Rateb Rabie, interview with the author, February 26, 2021.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

political landscape and social structures. Rabie believed that by inspiring young Palestinians to visit Palestine, it would help them better understand the politics of Palestine:

“I wanted young Palestinians to understand the human rights issues in Palestine. I found a lot of young people didn’t know they were Palestinian. I gave a speech in Chile one time and a young girl came up to me afterwards and said “I wish I was Palestinian, but my grandfather was Palestinian.” Even though she was born and raised in Chile and considered herself Chilean, she was also a Palestinian since her ancestry was Palestinian. Yes we’ve traveled and we’ve mixed with other cultures and nationalities, but you also have Palestinian roots and you need to tap into those roots and learn about them. Young people in the diaspora were not educated on Palestine, I wanted to educate them, help them find their roots and help them build leadership. This was the purpose of KTH. I didn’t want to just have a summer camp type trip where youth go and visit places where they don’t get anything substantial out of it. I want them to have fun, but I wanted a program that would show them the real Palestine, that would help educate them, that would stimulate intellectual conversations, where they could meet local leaders and activists and learn about the real issues happening in Palestine and then help Palestine.”¹⁸⁰

For younger Palestinians in the diaspora, there is also the *Go Palestine* summer camp program. For Palestinians in the diaspora ages 14-17, the *Go Palestine* summer camp program gives high school aged Palestinians the opportunity to visit Palestine for a life altering summer experience. Fashioned in a more traditional summer camp style program, *Go Palestine* aims to connect Palestinian youth in the diaspora and international Quakers with local Palestinian youth. Beginning in 2010, the program has been hosted by the Ramallah Friends School (RFS), a Quaker educational institution founded in 1869 and guided by Quaker principles.¹⁸¹ RFS describes the Go Palestine program as “an opportunity for Palestinian youth and friends... in the diaspora to experience and explore

¹⁸⁰ Rateb Rabie, interview with the author, February 26, 2021.

¹⁸¹ Ramallah Friends School, “About Us,” <https://www.rfs.edu.ps/en/page/about-us?p=about-us>.

Palestine,” and welcomes campers back to “their homeland.”¹⁸² Similarly, *Go Palestine*’s aim is to allow “campers to develop a deeper understanding of their Palestinian identity, the diversity of Palestine, and the political situation in the region.”¹⁸³ They accomplish this through a specific curriculum which includes planned excursions and activities.¹⁸⁴

Trips to Palestine are not limited to just diaspora focused journeys. There are many organizations and companies which organize tours of the holy land; however, very few are able to provide an objective experience and tend to emphasize one sides narrative over the other. In response, many organizations have started tours of the holy land which expose attendees to both sides of the conflict but place special emphasis on ensuring the Palestinian narrative is included (a perspective which is usually lost through Israeli-based tours). The *Holy Land Trust* organizes customizable tours which emphasize interactions with locals on the ground and to meet with those who are marginalized and oppressed.¹⁸⁵ Some of their tours include olive harvest tours and rebuilding homes. *Discover Palestine* is a similar organization, introducing participants to “the real side of Palestine”. Aimed at combatting negative perceptions of Palestine, the group utilizes tourism to introduce visitors to local Palestinians and learn about their history as well as their daily realities under occupation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Ramallah Friends School, “About Us,” <https://www.rfs.edu.ps/en/page/about-us?p=about-us>.

¹⁸³ See *Go Palestine*, “Who we are,” <https://www.summerinpalestine.org/who-we-are>.

¹⁸⁴ For more information about the *Go Palestine* program and its activities, see <https://www.summerinpalestine.org>.

¹⁸⁵ For more information see Holy Land Trust, <https://holylandtrust.org>.

¹⁸⁶ For more information see Discover Palestine, “Home,” <https://discoverpalestine.org>.

Both the KTH and *Go Palestine* programs facilitate Palestinians in the diaspora participating in an opportunity to visit their ancestral homeland. As these programs take more and more diaspora Palestinians to experience Palestine, it is anticipated that these young people will further explore their cultural heritage and become motivated to apply themselves towards working for the Palestinian cause for freedom and equality. It is within this aspiration and broader context that these organizations operate.

This chapter has categorized and explored in-depth the founding, development and evolution of Palestinian advocacy organizations in the United States. It analyzes how Arab American and Muslim American organizations formed and how they placed the Palestinian question as one of their top advocacy issues. It also analyzes how exclusively Palestinian organizations would later develop and advocate for Palestine and Palestinians. A noticeable trend is that much of the work of these groups is framed within a broader context of human rights and solidarity with other anti-discrimination movements and oppressed peoples throughout the world. The next two chapters will explore this intersectionality and interconnectedness between the Palestinian question and other rights-based movements both domestically and transnationally.

CHAPTER IV: PALESTINIAN ADVOCACY AND THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF OTHER U.S. SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

The Palestinian experience of injustice is not a limited one, rather the Palestinian movement is one of several social justice movements advocating anti-racist, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist efforts, and has resonated with many others facing similar challenges. The following chapter argues that the Palestinian diaspora has worked to categorize the Palestinian question as a social justice issue in the United States, and that Palestinian advocacy intersects with other social justice movements in the U.S., for instance the “Black Lives Matter” movement. This chapter begins by providing a chronological overview of Black-Palestinian solidarity from the 1930s to today, and explores the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with African-American movements, Indigenous nation movements and liberal Jewish organization movements. It will frame and synthesize the intersectionality of these social justice movements with the Palestinian question and analyze how they interact with one another. It discusses, in depth, the connection between the Palestinian question, Palestinian advocacy groups and how Palestinian political activism bundles and connects across social justice issues, intertwining with and creating a broader coalition of social justice activists working towards combatting discrimination against Palestinians, African-Americans, Indigenous nations and any other minority or oppressed groups.

A pillar of Palestinian activism and advocacy has been its ability to synthesize with other social justice movements throughout the world. This is due to agency of the Palestinian narrative itself, shifting the Palestinian struggle from one traditionally viewed as an “Arab” or “Muslim” issue, to one that encompasses a broader social justice

coalition and framework, including many Christian and Jewish organizations, as well as non-denominational organizations, that also support Palestinian rights and statehood.

This framework of intersectionality has led to a wave of solidarity campaigns not only within the U.S., but also with international and transnational movements, consequently influencing the normative-social structure. From Hong Kong to Kashmir, from Xinjiang to Ferguson, Palestinians have joined these movements in solidarity, identifying them as sharing in a struggle similar to their own. As Edward Said exclaims, “There is an awareness in the nonwhite world that the tendency of modern politics to rule over masses of people as transferable, silent, and politically neutral populations has a specific illustration in what has happened to the Palestinians- and what in different ways is happening to the citizens of newly independent, formerly colonial territories ruled over by antidemocratic army regimes.”¹⁸⁷

As you attend Palestinian advocacy events, a trend which has become more evident is the changing demographic of attendees. Palestinians are no longer the sole leaders of the Palestine solidarity movement, rather Palestinian advocacy events now include a diverse crowd of Caucasians, African-Americans, Latinos, Indigenous and Native Americans, people from the LGBTQ community and Jews. Osama Abuirshaid, Executive Director of American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), highlights the demographic trends he’s witnessed at their annual Palestine Advocacy Day on capitol hill in Washington D.C.,

“Since 2015 to 2021, we have always had a significant number of participants who are not Palestinian, not Arab, not Muslim. Many of them are Jews, many of them Christians, many of them come from multi-ethnic backgrounds, Latinos and

¹⁸⁷ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), 125.

African-Americans in particular... [and they all] come and advocate for Palestine.¹⁸⁸

The word “Palestine”, and the Palestinian struggle in general, has become a symbol for progressive movements everywhere fighting against social injustice. A frequent slogan used by Egyptian students during demonstrations in the early seventies was “We are all Palestinians.” In 1978, Iranian demonstrators against the Shah also identified themselves with the Palestinians.¹⁸⁹ South African apartheid commonly draws parallels to the Palestinian struggle for freedom and equality. Even more modern day struggles, such as those of Muslims in Kashmir or the Uyghurs in China, have also created transnational connections with Palestine and Palestinians.

Within the United States, we see similar solidarity growing amongst grassroots movements which advocate for Palestinian rights as well as the rights of other minority groups. Common slogans at protests have become “From Palestine to Mexico, all the walls have got to go” or “Never Again for Anyone: From Warsaw to Palestine to the Rio Grande” (see images 4.1 and 4.2). Even more modern day movements have found affinities with the Palestinian struggle, including the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, Dream Defenders, Black4Palestine, Native American groups, LGBTQ and others.

¹⁸⁸ Osama Abuirshaid, interview with the author, April 14, 2021.

¹⁸⁹ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), 125.



Image 4.1



Image 4.2

Source: Jewish Voice for Peace (@Jewishvoiceforpeace), Instagram, August 23rd, 2019.
https://www.instagram.com/p/B1hT_ItgNwb/?igshid=4g2vgb40wdg1.

While commonly considered within a context of separate social justice movements, this chapter will discuss the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with these other movements and explore their parallels. Well before its association with more contemporary movements, Palestinian activism had a rich connection with the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, Palestinian political activism has bundled and connected across social justice issues- from the civil rights movement to the BLM movement, to indigenous nations and liberal Jewish organizations.

BLACK-PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY

Early Encounters

For centuries, African Americans have suffered at the hands of colonialism, imperialism and discriminatory capitalism. Black internationalism, or what Russell Rickford describes as the “global Black imaginary,” considers the American black struggle as a global one against racial capitalism and imperial domination. For nearly half a century, Black internationalist identified strongly with Zionism, believing that the

Jewish bid for a national homeland was analogous to the African American drive for autonomy and self-determination.¹⁹⁰ However, increased colonial aggression in the Middle East during the 1950s and 1960s led many African American progressives to rethink their position, increasingly coming to see Israel as an imperialist outpost and further viewing Palestinians as ideological peers.¹⁹¹

The interwar period of WWI and WWII saw an emphasis among intellectuals and activists towards anti-colonial attitudes throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East. This same time period was not void of Black-Palestinian interconnectedness. In the 1930s, Palestinian intellectuals in Palestine were introducing their audience to the conditions of Black Americans. Simultaneously, Harlem Renaissance writers in the United States were motivated by the discriminatory practices they experienced in the U.S., and their writings were being shared with Palestinian audiences.¹⁹² However, in the 1940's, the end of World War II, the creation of the State of Israel and subsequent *Nakba*, and Cold War dynamics towards the end of the decade would combine to influence Palestinian engagement with the Black freedom movement.

Maha Nassar argues that in the following decade, the bulk of Arabic language news coverage (specifically by *al-Ittihad*) shifted from focusing on antifascism and class revolution to that of how global imperialism was tied to violence against Black Americans. By 1959, the idea that both Black American and African peoples were

¹⁹⁰ Russell Rickford, "To Build a New World: Black American Internationalism and Palestine Solidarity," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 53.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Maha Nassar, "Palestinian Engagement with the Black Freedom Movement prior to 1967," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 20-21.

victims of racial and imperial violence came to the forefront, setting up a discursive shift that would continue into the next decade.¹⁹³

Famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish is arguably one of the first Palestinians to point out the parallels between the conditions facing Black Americans to that of Palestinian citizens of Israel, both being minoritized citizens in a state excluding them from equal rights. In 1966, Darwish published a pair of essays titled “Letter to a Negro” and “Second Letter to a Negro”. In the letters, Darwish highlights how race functions as a social category in both U.S. and Israeli societies, and refers to himself as a “negro” when pointing out the discrimination he faced in Israel being an Arab.¹⁹⁴ Around this same time, the U.S. was entering a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement, much of which would share a lasting connection with Palestinian advocacy to this day.

The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement during the 1960’s was achieving major reforms in the United States, including the signing into law of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The movement would have a long lasting connection with Palestinian advocacy as well. During the civil rights era, influential figures such as Malcolm X heralded anti-Zionist convictions. Following his departure from the Nation of Islam, the African-American leader met with Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) officials in Gaza in 1964, (then under Egyptian control). According to Palestinian poet Harun Hashim Rashid, who accompanied Malcolm on his visit, the black American

¹⁹³ Maha Nassar, “Palestinian Engagement with the Black Freedom Movement prior to 1967,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 25.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*: 20-21.

leader “came to Gaza with a strong desire to learn about the Palestinian cause,” and reportedly told his hosts, “We shall return!”¹⁹⁵ He would later author *Zionist Logic*, an essay that cast Israel as a defender of global capitalism and an enemy of the Third World.¹⁹⁶ In 1965, Malcolm X would be assassinated during one of his rallies, however, interest in the Palestinian cause would begin to grow among black internationalist in the years after.

Furthermore, one of the most prominent figures of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr., and his position towards Israel and Palestine requires an even deeper analytical investigation. A staunch supporter of civil rights, the black freedom movement and non-violence, most literature regarding King and his position towards the Palestinian struggle is contested amongst intellectuals (although this contestation tends to place itself within differing political ideologies and perspectives of history). In 1959, King and his wife Coretta took a trip to the West Bank and East Jerusalem, King being made fully aware of the extent of Palestinian suffering that was taking place in the region.¹⁹⁷ Later, in the 1960s, King became increasingly vocal regarding the United States’ role in Vietnam. In April of 1967, King delivered a speech at New York City’s Riverside church titled “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence,” in which he

¹⁹⁵ Maha Nassar, “What support for Ilhan Omar tells us about the left,” *Washington Post*, March 14, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/03/14/what-support-ilhan-omar-tells-us-about-left/>.

¹⁹⁶ Lenni Brenner and Matthew Quest, *Black Liberation and Palestine Solidarity* (Atlanta, GA: On Our Own Authority! Publishing, 2013), 58-63.

¹⁹⁷ Taurean J. Webb, “Troubling Idols: Black-Palestinian Solidarity in U.S. Afro-Christian Spaces,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019), 36.

highlights the obvious connection between the struggle for racial equality at home and struggles against the unjust war being conducted by the United States in Vietnam.¹⁹⁸

However, King's speech was largely absent regarding the Palestinians. The following month, King signed a statement by prominent Christian theologians that began to circulate on May 28, 1967, and eventually appeared as an advertisement in the *New York Times* on June 4. Entitled "The Moral Responsibility in the Middle East", the statement essentially called on the United States government to stand by Israel in defending its access to the Strait of Tiran, which Egypt had blockaded.¹⁹⁹ However, in a June 8th, 1967 phone call with his executive assistant, Andrew Young, King was worried that the statement which he signed was contradictory to his stance of non-violence.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, on June 11th, 1967 (just as the six-day war had ended), *Times* magazine published an essay by King entitled "Martin Luther King Defines 'Black Power'". The edition of *Times* magazine included multiple articles devoted to Israel's victory in the war; thus, it was striking that King's essay did not mention the Jewish state.²⁰¹

As Taurean J. Webb details, King's position towards the Palestinians "[ran] counter to his outspokenness against the Vietnam War. Certainly, for many years of his

¹⁹⁸ Martin Luther King Jr., "A Time to Break Silence," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 231-44, cited in Keith P. Feldman, "Representing Permanent War: Black Power's Palestine and the End(s) of Civil Rights," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 2 (2008): 210, accessed March 31, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/41949599.

¹⁹⁹ Martin Kramer, "In the Words of Martin Luther King," in *The War on Error: Israel, Islam, and the Middle East* ed. Martin Kramer (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2016), 254-55.

²⁰⁰ Taurean J. Webb, "Troubling Idols: Black-Palestinian Solidarity in U.S. Afro-Christian Spaces," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 36.

²⁰¹ Keith P. Feldman, "Representing Permanent War: Black Power's Palestine and the End(s) of Civil Rights," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 2 (2008): 211-12, accessed March 31, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/41949599.

professional career, King espoused a global consciousness, linking anti-colonial struggles to the domestic Black freedom movement. Justice in Palestine-Israel, however, challenged him in ways that other ethical dilemmas simply did not—and precisely because speaking against Israeli violence would put him in a precarious political position.”²⁰² Essentially, Webb argues that King was not as outspoken about the racial inequities facing Palestinians because it risked alienating his Jewish support base in the U.S, a base of U.S. Jews that strongly supported the civil rights movement.

Following up in the *New York Times*, in 2019, Michelle Alexander published a piece titled “Time to Break the Silence on Palestine”, in which she compares King’s critical stance towards the Vietnam War during his speech at the Riverside church to a similar stance that should take place today regarding Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians (in the title, Alexander gives a nod to King’s speech which similarly shared the title “Beyond Vietnam: Time to Break the Silence”).²⁰³ Just as it was controversial then, today it seems that speaking out against Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians is also controversial, causing many activists to fear charges of anti-Semitism, being black-listed, losing their employment, or having awards and recognitions rescinded. Alexander concludes that we must speak up when it comes to the injustice faced by the Palestinians and reminds us that if given the opportunity to evaluate Israel’s policies towards the Palestinians today, King would be a staunch critic.²⁰⁴ However, it should be noted that

²⁰² Taurean J. Webb, “Troubling Idols: Black-Palestinian Solidarity in U.S. Afro-Christian Spaces,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 36.

²⁰³ See Michelle Alexander, “Time to Break the Silence on Palestine,” *New York Times*, January 19, 2019. www.nytimes.com/2019/01/19/opinion/sunday/martin-luther-king-palestine-israel.html.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

King's position towards Israel-Palestine, and the greater Arab-Israeli confrontation, is still disputed today.²⁰⁵

The true watershed moment for African-American and Palestinian solidarity was in 1967. After Israel defeated its surrounding Arab neighbors and occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza strip, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, some believed that Israel was following an imperialist and military expansionist model. As Rickford remarks, the "victory underscored Israel's status as a militarized, expansionist power deeply enmeshed with Western imperialism".²⁰⁶ Furthermore, the statement issued in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) newsletter after the 1967 war titled "Third World Round-Up: The Palestine Problem: Test your Knowledge" was an important breaking point in the Black-Jewish civil rights alliance as it opened up spaces for the critique of the State of Israel and connected the Palestinian/Arab struggle to that of the Afro-American struggle and the larger global Black liberation movement.²⁰⁷

The SNCC was a champion for young black voices during the civil rights movement in the 1960's. The SNCC's shift towards a stricter pro-Palestinian position would come as the group realized the close military, economic and political alliance between the Israeli government and the apartheid regime in South Africa. Kwame Ture

²⁰⁵ For a critical analysis on Martin Luther King Jr. and his view towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, see Martin Kramer, "In the Words of Martin Luther King," in *The War on Error: Israel, Islam, and the Middle East* ed. Martin Kramer (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2016), 254-55.

²⁰⁶ Russell Rickford, "To Build a New World: Black American Internationalism and Palestine Solidarity," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 55.

²⁰⁷ See "Third World Round-Up: The Palestine Problem: Test Your Knowledge," *SNCC Newsletter*, June-July 1967, 4-5, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sv/6707_sncc_news-r.pdf.

(Stokely Carmichael), chairman of the SNCC at the time of release of the newsletter, notes that “discovering that the government of Israel was maintaining such a long, cozy, and warm relationship with the worst enemies of black people came as a real shock. A kind of betrayal... [and] we weren’t supposed to even talk about this? C’mon.”²⁰⁸

Furthermore, in his article “Representing Permanent War: Black Power’s Palestine and the End(s) of Civil Rights,” Keith Feldman gives a detailed account of the genealogy of African American scholarship and its relationship to the nexus of black liberation in the United States, colonialism, and the Palestinian struggle for freedom. Feldman articulates how the writings of Martin Luther King Jr., James Baldwin, W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Ture and others on the left encompassed this nexus and connected the struggles for black freedom with decolonizing movements around the globe.²⁰⁹ Moreover, at its August 1967 convention, the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) endorsed multiple resolutions declaring solidarity with Black struggles in the United States, Africa, and throughout the diaspora; one resolution even defended the SNCC from charges of anti-Semitism after the release of their newsletter.²¹⁰

The connection between Black Americans and Palestinian Americans developed and matured through the 1980s as Palestinians in the U.S. interacted with activists of color and developed a deeper understanding of the U.S. racial system. Rabab Abdulhadi

²⁰⁸ Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 559.

²⁰⁹ See Keith P. Feldman, “Representing Permanent War: Black Power’s Palestine and the End(s) of Civil Rights,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 2 (2008): 193-231, accessed March 31, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/41949599. Feldman also gives a detailed analytical review of the SNCC’s “The Palestine Problem” publication.

²¹⁰ Robin D.G. Kelley, “From the River to the Sea to Every Mountain Top: Solidarity as Worldmaking,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 78.

explains that the 1980s was an important period in which Palestinian Americans built networks with African American groups and expanded their understanding of global racial dynamics, allowing them to identify more closely with people of color, both in the U.S. and internationally.²¹¹

Palestinians began to view their struggle within a larger transnational context of supremacy, domination and subordination. In 1984, Adrien Wing was one of two U.S. representatives invited to attend the Palestine National Council in Amman, Jordan.²¹² In her speech, it was clear that she considered Black Americans and the Palestinian people as two peoples fighting the same struggle. In her comments, Wing remarked, “The Black American people and the Palestinian people are bound together in a common struggle” that is “symbolized by the U.N. General Assembly 1975 resolution which identified Zionism as a form of racism.”²¹³

Early civil rights leaders in the U.S. continued to support Palestinian rights, and as James Zogby explains were some of his earliest allies,

“When I started the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign our earliest endorsers were Reverend Jackson, Walter Fauntroy and Joseph Lowery, people who had been with Martin Luther King Jr. We had support from Indigenous tribes and tribal leaders, we had support from the Vietnam anti-war movement... and from across the board in civil society and social justice movements. My first office was in a building that had a Pilipino human rights group, a Salvadorean human rights group, and they were all our early endorsers. And during the Jackson campaign

²¹¹ Rabab Abdulhadi, “Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity,” in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 242-243. Accessed March 2, 2020, doi:10.7312/chech12850.15.

²¹² The second was James Sulton from Howard University, also a Black American.

²¹³ Samira Kavar, “Black U.S. Lawyer Lauds Palestinian Cause,” UPI, November 25, 1984. www.upi.com/Archives/1984/11/25/Black-US-lawyer-lauds-Palestinian-cause/3138470206800/.

that was the coalition we brought together. And it included progressive Jews, who in some ways faced as much difficulty as we did.²¹⁴

Moreover, 1984 continued to be an important year for Black-Palestinian American solidarity with the Presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson and the inclusion of Arab Americans in his Rainbow Coalition. Jackson's campaign was critical to turning out African American voters and getting them involved in the U.S. political system. However, Jackson's campaign had an impact beyond just the African American community. Prior to 1984, Arab-Americans had never been recognized by a national campaign as a constituency or been actively courted for their support.²¹⁵ By including Arab-Americans in his coalition, Jackson was doing something new and motivated Arab Americans to get involved in the political process. As James Zogby explains:

“He made the community proud to self-identify as Arab-Americans and he welcomed us into his Rainbow Coalition. I can still recall the excitement generated by the campaign. All across the country Arab Americans turned out for Jackson rallies; they registered new voters, gave money, and mobilized to turn out the vote on Election Day.

Not only did Jackson inspire the community, he gave voice to their concerns. Never before had the issues of Palestinian statehood, the sovereignty of Lebanon, the civil rights of Arab Americans, and the need to combat negative stereotyping and discrimination of people of Arab descent been raised in national debates or addressed from the podium of a major party's national convention.”²¹⁶

Jackson's campaign symbolized the connection between marginalized and under voiced communities in the United States, specifically that of African Americans and

²¹⁴ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

²¹⁵ James Zogby, “Jesse Jackson, 1984: A transformative campaign,” Arab American Institute, February 17, 2014. <https://www.aaiausa.org/jesse-jackson-1984-a-transformative-campaign>.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Arab-Americans, and bringing issues important to them on the national political stage, including the issue of Palestine and Israel.

The mid-1980s also heightened the visibility of the anti-apartheid movement with Palestinian Americans emphasizing the building of alliances with other struggles for justice. For example, Palestinian students at Columbia University joined their African American peers in staging protests to demand that the university divest from companies that did business with South Africa.²¹⁷ Additionally, the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) collaborated with members of the African National Congress of South Africa to organize an educational speaking tour across the United States titled “Israel and South Africa: The Apartheid Connection?” The tour was instrumental in educating college students and grassroots groups about Palestinian and South African struggles.²¹⁸

The first Palestinian Intifada in 1987 also strengthened relations between African Americans and Palestinian Americans. For instance, African American activists organized a “Days of Rage” campaign to protest the growing number of racist police attacks in New York city. The protests intentionally coincided with November 29, the “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”, in where hundreds of African Americans wearing keffiyehs (Palestinian scarves) linked hands across the United Nations demanding justice for both peoples.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Rabab Abdulhadi, “Activism and Exile: Palestinianness and the Politics of Solidarity,” in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power, and Public Life in America*, ed. by Checker Melissa and Fishman Maggie, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 242. Accessed March 2, 2020. doi:10.7312/chech12850.15.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid: 248-49.

Black-Palestinian solidarity in the U.S. has witnessed multiple critical junctures- from the early creation of the State of Israel, the fight against segregation in the United States, the civil rights movement and the war of 1967. All of these events have seemingly impacted the Black-Palestinian solidarity movement through the 1980s, the first Intifada, the Oslo Accords and the second Intifada. However, 2014 would mark a major revitalization of the Black-Palestinian special relationship, once again bringing together minorities, communities of color, Palestinians and Palestinian-Americans in the struggle for racial, social and economic justice.

Renewed Black-Palestinian solidarity

The 2012 killing of Florida teen Trayvon Martin was the beginning of a renewed confrontation in the United States between communities of color and the issue of unmitigated violence perpetuated by white citizens and police officers against black and brown citizens. Although police brutality towards communities of color was not a new development, the proliferation of the internet, social media, and the 24-hour news cycle facilitated the conditions which brought this issue to the national spotlight. This would eventually lead to a peaking point after the unarmed killing of Michael Brown by a Ferguson police officer on August 9th, 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. Black-Palestinian solidarity continued to evolve during the protests that would take place in Ferguson shortly afterwards (see image 4.3). Marc Lamont Hill provides a descriptive account of Black-Palestinian solidarity which he witnessed during the protest:

“As I walked through the Ferguson protests, I saw the usual mix of left-wing activist causes being promoted, from reproductive justice to anti-capitalism to freeing political prisoners. What was unusual, however, was the strong presence of Palestinian activists distributed throughout the crowd. Every day that I was in

Ferguson, I saw a larger-than-usual number (based on my activist experience) of self-identified Palestinians wearing traditional *keffiyah* and marching the streets along with the rest of the crowd. In addition to the normal array of signs calling to “Free Palestine” and “End the Occupation,” the majority of the Palestinian activists were holding signs calling for justice in the shooting of Mike Brown and shouting protest chants critical of white supremacy and racism in the United States criminal justice system. In my conversations with the Palestinian activists who attended the rally, many articulated some iteration of the phrase “showing up” to describe their presence at the Ferguson uprisings. For example, Hanan, a second-generation Palestinian-American and president of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at a local university, told me that her SJP chapter “finally realized that we need to show up for our Black family if we ever want them to support us too.”²²⁰



Image 4.3: SJP Instagram Post (Ferguson is Palestine and Palestine is Ferguson)
 Source: Students for Justice in Palestine, University of Massachusetts (@umass_sjp), Instagram, March 8th, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B9fD50Sgm6p/?igshid=zuzlq7t36clk>.

Furthermore, the timing of the Ferguson protests was on the back end of a third military assault on Gaza by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the Summer of 2014.

²²⁰ Marc Lamont Hill, “From Ferguson to Palestine: Reimagining Transnational Solidarity Through Difference,” *Biography* 41, no. 4 (2018): 948-49. doi:10.1353/bio.2018.0086.

Connecting their struggles, Palestinians began tweeting tips to the protestors in Ferguson on how to deal with tear gas, something very familiar to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza as tear gas is routinely used by the IDF to disperse protests (see image 4.4.)



Image 4.4

Source: Sarah Dougherty, "Palestinians have some advice for the people of Ferguson, Missouri." Public Radio International, August 14, 2014. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-08-14/palestinians-have-some-advice-people-ferguson-missouri>.

The Gaza-Ferguson link continued to revitalize solidarity amongst people of color and Palestinian communities. Activist drew connections between racialized state violence in Israel and the role Israeli security forces played in training U.S. police departments to behave in a similar manner. In both cases, each party is framed as acting within a

measure of “self-defense”, in a defensive posture. Police occupy the streets to protect and serve the citizenry in the name of public safety; in Israel-Palestine, wars of pacification and annihilation are branded as necessary measures to protect Israel from the threat of “terrorism”, the blockade on Gaza is also presented as necessary for Israel’s security.²²¹ Parallels between Israel and the U.S. also continue within the prison system, as private companies profit from incarceration and racially profiling/targeting specific groups.²²²

“Ferguson October” or the National Weekend of Resistance, was yet another mobilization of combatting anti-black racism in the U.S. and other modes of oppression both nationally and internationally.²²³ Black organizers welcomed a Palestinian contingent, which showed respect for “the specificities of anti-Black racism and the history of anti-Blackness in the United States while forging alliances and solidarities between overlapping struggles against state-sanctioned violence, dehumanization, and discrimination.”²²⁴

Following Ferguson October, Black and Palestinian activists continued to engage with one another. The 2014 National Students for Justice in Palestine Conference (NSJP) at Tufts University was organized under the theme of “Beyond Solidarity: Resisting

²²¹ Robin D.G. Kelley, “Yes, I said, ‘National Liberation,’” in *Letters to Palestine: Writers Respond to War and Occupation*, ed. Vijay Prashad (New York: Verso, 2015), 143.

²²² See Christina Maza, “Prison Systems in the US and Israel have Something in Common,” *Al-Jazeera*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/prison-systems-israel-common-190920142718509.html>.

²²³ For more information on “Ferguson October”, see Mariah Stewart, “‘Ferguson October’ Brings Hundreds of Protestors to the Streets,” *HuffPost*, October 11, 2014, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ferguson-october-protesters-streets_n_5971106.

²²⁴ Kristian Davis Bailey, “Black-Palestinian Solidarity in the Ferguson-Gaza Era,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015): 1019-1020, doi:10.1353/aq.2015.0060.

Racism and Colonialism from the US to Palestine” and focused on issues such as anti-Black racism, the ongoing colonization of indigenous lands and peoples, and violence against Black, indigenous, and migrant peoples.²²⁵ The conference focused on “joint struggle”, and NSJP’s makes clear their position of solidarity with other social justice movements and oppressed communities both locally and globally. Their website reads “Joint struggle means that a victory for one group should also strengthen and advance the movements we are connected with. It comes from an understanding that oppression will never cease to exist for a group unless all oppressed groups are free.”²²⁶

The murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota once again ignited comparisons between the treatment of Blacks in America and Palestinians in Israel. A few days after the Floyd incident, Israeli police shot and killed unarmed Palestinian Iyad Hallaq, a Palestinian resident from East Jerusalem, which swiftly drew comparisons to George Floyd.²²⁷ The similar incidents sparked outrage within both communities and saw an influx of solidarity between them, including joint protests and the sharing of images online. Many of those images drew comparisons of the structures

²²⁵ For a more detailed account of Black-Palestinian solidarity at the 2014 NSJP conference that year, see Kristian Davis Bailey, “Black-Palestinian Solidarity in the Ferguson-Gaza Era,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015): 1020-1021, doi:10.1353/aq.2015.0060.

²²⁶ On their website, NSJP defines “joint struggle” as “acting together to resist the systems that oppress our respective communities—sometimes in ways that overlap and other times in ways that are very specific.” Their letter for the 2014 conference theme establishes the focus that year on transnational solidarity, especially after the events which unfolded that summer in Gaza and Ferguson, Missouri. For more details on the NSJP conference that year see: <https://www.nationalsjp.org/2014-national.html/>.

²²⁷ See Ahmad Gharabli, “Israeli police killing of Palestinian man draws George Floyd Comparisons,” *CBS News*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iyad-halak-israel-police-killing-palestinian-man-with-autism-draws-george-floyd-comparisons/>.

of systematic and institutional racism both communities experience, as well as highlighted their solidarity (see images 4.5 to 4.11.)

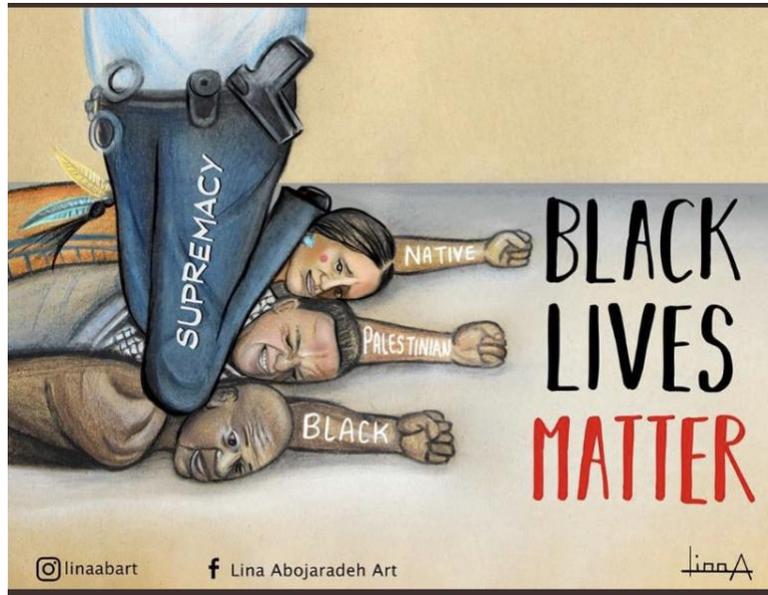


Image 4.5
Lina Abojaradeh, (@linaabart), Instagram, May 28, 2020,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CAvDEVED21e/?igshid=1wcuazpg0yfz5>.

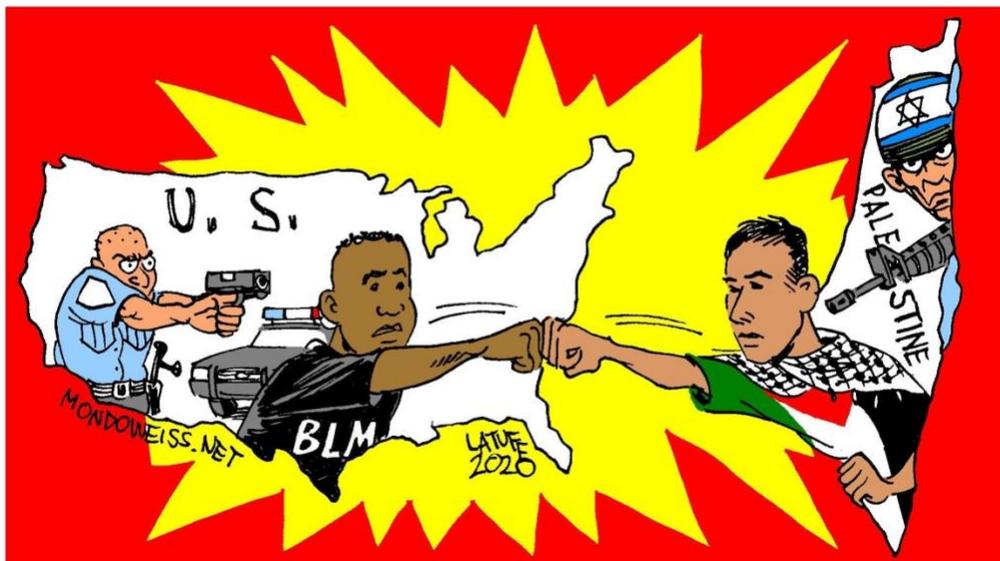


Image 4.6
Carlos Latuff (@carloslatuff), Instagram, June 1, 2020,
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CA6GbcHJYmi/?igshid=mmg2qsu8n4u3>.



Image 4.7
Source: Unknown



Image 4.8
Source: Unknown



Image 4.9
Source: Unknown



Image 4.10
Source: Unknown



Image 4.11
Source: Unknown

Delegations have also become a central feature of Black-Palestinian solidarity and have played an important role in social justice advocacy.²²⁸ Another opportunity for engagement came in November 2014 when a group of Palestinian students from the Right to Education Campaign (R2E) at Birzeit University, in collaboration with NSJP, took part in a speaking tour throughout the U.S. in which they visited forty-two U.S. campuses. The students met with members of the Don't Shoot Coalition, Tribe X and Freedom Fighters STL.²²⁹ The R2E program at Birzeit University, one of the most prominent Palestinian universities in the West Bank, has three goals: 1) to create linkages between the student movement in the U.S. and Palestine; 2) to build long-term, institutional relationships between universities; and 3) to exchange information between Palestinians and U.S. social movements fighting related issues of racism, colonialism, and attacks on education (e.g. indigenous, migrant and black struggles).²³⁰

This revitalization of Black-Palestinian solidarity was further strengthened during a trip in 2015 by a delegation of African American activist from the Dream Defenders, Black Lives Matter movement and reps from the city of Ferguson to the Occupied Palestinian territories.²³¹ As Marc Lamont Hill, a delegate on the trip, explains

²²⁸ For more information regarding the role of delegations and Black-Palestinian solidarity see Ahmad Abuznaid et al, "Roundtable on Solidarity Delegations," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019). 92-102.

²²⁹ Kristian Davis Bailey, "Black-Palestinian Solidarity in the Ferguson-Gaza Era," *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015): 1020-1021. doi:10.1353/aq.2015.0060.

²³⁰ See <https://right2edu.tumblr.com/tour>. For more information about the Right to Education campaign at Birzeit University see <http://right2edu.birzeit.edu/about-us/>.

²³¹ See Kristian Davis Bailey, "Dream Defenders, Black Lives Matter and Ferguson Reps Take Historic Trip to Palestine," *Ebony*, January 9, 2015, <https://www.ebony.com/news/dream-defenders-black-lives-matter-ferguson-reps-take-historic-trip-to-palestine/>.

immediately after his arrival through Ben Gurion airport and the perception of racism he experienced, “I immediately felt a sense of connection to the Palestinian freedom struggle through what I understood at the moment to be our shared experience of racism.”²³²

In his writing, Hill documents his experience during the delegation trip and how it curated a deeper analytical reconsideration of Black-Palestinian dynamics such as identity, “sameness”, “shared blackness”, and “showing up”. Hill argues that there is value in understanding and acknowledging differences between Black-American oppression vis-à-vis Palestinian oppression, and that this understanding can lead to deeper forms of solidarity and engagement.²³³

In understanding and acknowledging these differences, one should recognize the importance in reevaluating the relationship between Black-Palestinian solidarity. Is it truly a common experience of institutional racism, colonialism and oppression which leads to this solidarity, or is it based on common principles of justice and human rights? Robin D.G. Kelley argues that a vision of worldmaking rather than a politics of analogy or identity has been the real glue for Black-Palestinian solidarity.²³⁴ Thus, it is not a shared experience of oppression, but rather a shared commitment to create a world free of oppression which drives Black-Palestinian solidarity.

Moreover, Black churches have also joined in the call to end Israeli apartheid. Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA) and Black4Palestine launched a collaborative

²³² Marc Lamont Hill, “From Ferguson to Palestine: Reimagining Transnational Solidarity Through Difference,” *Biography* 41, no. 4 (2018): 944. doi:10.1353/bio.2018.0086.

²³³ Ibid: 954.

²³⁴ Robin D.G. Kelley, “From the River to the Sea to Every Mountain Top: Solidarity as Worldmaking ,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019). 73.

project entitled *Journeys toward Justice* which aims to increase awareness in Black congregations about Palestinian freedom and justice. The project offers training to congregations which provide them with the skills necessary to effectively promote the Palestinian cause within the context of the Black Christian experience.²³⁵

Unfortunately, organizing around the Black-Palestinian nexus of solidarity has not come without consequences. As efforts toward increased unity circulate within the Black, Palestinian and Palestinian-American communities, these efforts have not come without challenges from the pro-Israel community who are actively engaged in silencing criticism of Israel, even when morally or ethically inconsistent with American values.

Pushing back on Black-Palestinian solidarity

Black-Palestinian solidarity has become as much a target of the pro-Israel agenda as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) or other Pro-Palestinian-American activists. This has illustrated itself in recent noteworthy moments involving Black intellectuals who have advocated for Palestine. Some of these key moments include the firing of CNN commentator Marc Lamont Hill, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute's initial decision to rescind Angela Davis' human rights award and the German city of Dortmund withdrawing its Nelly Sachs award from Kamila Shamsie. Contrary to being a new occurrence, the U.S. has a long history of punishing black internationalists

²³⁵ For more information see "Journeys toward Justice Curriculum: A Black Church/Palestine collaboration," https://fosna.nationbuilder.com/journeys_toward_justice.

thinkers and organizations, as Noura Erakat argues in her opinion piece in the *Washington Post*.²³⁶

In 1967, Muhammad Ali was stripped of his heavyweight titles and blacklisted from professional boxing for refusing to fight in the Vietnam War (the Supreme Court would later overturn his conviction.) Additionally, Andrew Young, Martin Luther King Jr.'s former Executive Assistant, would eventually become the first black U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1979, Young was forced to resign from his position because of a brief meeting with Zuhdi Terzi, the PLO delegate at the United Nations.²³⁷ The political dynamics that pushed the Carter administration to force the first black UN ambassador to submit his resignation reflected the backlash of not only standing in solidarity with Palestinians, but of acting outside the status quo (although it could be argued that Young's intentions were less about solidarity and more about fulfilling his civic duty of bringing peace to a war stricken region.)

Aggressive attacks by the U.S. liberal establishment have continued within contemporary renewals of Black-Palestinian solidarity. On November 29, 2018, CNN fired Marc Lamont Hill after he gave a speech at the United Nations on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. In his speech, Hill invoked the phrase, "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free". A phrase commonly contorted, critics concentrated on it and used it to smear Hill, framing him as a hater of Jews and the State of Israel and a supporter of Hamas. Moreover, the context of this phrase has often times

²³⁶ See Noura Erakat, "Marc Lamont Hill and the Legacy of Punishing Black Internationalist," *Washington Post*, December 5th, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2018/12/05/marc-lamont-hill-legacy-punishing-black-internationalists/?utm_term=.58d946ddd7f1.

²³⁷ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), xxiii.

been distorted and abused by those attempting to weaken legitimate criticism of Israeli policy. In fact, the phrase in question was at one point a *Zionist* slogan. A similar slogan was included in the Likud Party's founding charter, eluding to a vision where "between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty."²³⁸ However, the phrase would eventually develop within the Palestinian national movement and would even be endorsed by leaders of Fatah, Hamas, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to mean a single democratic secular state that would supersede the ethno-religious state of Israel.²³⁹ Thus, the phrase does not invoke the exclusion or elimination of Jews living in Palestine, but rather emphasizes a secular state with equal rights for all regardless of religion or ethnicity "from the river to the sea". The phrase also invokes acknowledgement that Palestinians living in Israel with Israeli citizenship are still discriminated against, and thus implores that these Palestinians should also be "free" in terms of being viewed as equal to Jewish citizens under Israeli law.

Hill was not the only black intellectual whose advocacy for Palestine resulted in targeting by the mainstream political establishment. In January 2019, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) initially rescinded its invitation to give U.S. activist, scholar and professor Angela Davis its highest honor, the Fred Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award. In examining why the BCRI would make such a move, Davis indicated that her

²³⁸ Robin D.G. Kelley, "From the River to the Sea to Every Mountain Top: Solidarity as Worldmaking," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 48, no. 4 (Summer 2019): 78.

²³⁹ *Ibid*: 78.

“long term support of justice for Palestine was at issue”.²⁴⁰ Although the BCRI never officially gave a reason why, if Davis’ advocacy for Palestine was the true cause, the decision only elevated the question of Palestine within African American and civil rights circles. Eventually the BCRI would reverse its decision again, announcing that it would grant Davis the Shuttlesworth award, but not after having already caused controversy and effectively elevating the visibility of such political targeting.

Furthermore, Kamila Shamsie found herself in a similar situation when in September of 2019 the German city of Dortmund withdrew its Nelly Sachs book award due to Shamsie’s support of BDS. Shamsie, a prestigious author and writer, was appalled at the decision. In her response, she expressed sadness and outrage that her support of a non-violent campaign to pressure Israel to change its policies would be controversial, all while Israeli leaders announce plans to illegally annex parts of the West Bank, continue construction of illegal settlements and use excessive force against Palestinians.²⁴¹ The book award, bestowed to a person for literary contributions that promote understanding and bridge building between societies, would ironically be withdrawn from Shamsie whose very position highlights her commitment to those exact values. These cases underscore the tactic of international political silencing and new McCarthyism-like policies within the nexus of Palestinian advocacy.

²⁴⁰ See “Angela Davis says decision to rescind civil rights award due to her Palestine activism,” *Middle East Eye*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/angela-davis-says-decision-rescind-civil-rights-award-due-her-palestine-activism>.

²⁴¹ For more information see Alison Flood, “Kamila Shamsie’s book award withdrawn over her part in Israel boycott,” *The Guardian*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/19/kamila-shamsies-book-award-withdrawn-over-her-part-in-israel-boycott>.

INDIGENOUS NATIONS, JEWISH GROUPS & PALESTINIAN SOLIDARITY

Up to now, this chapter has focused on the history of Black-Palestinian solidarity and the reinvigoration of that relationship. However, there is a plethora of grassroots movements in the U.S. and North America that either draw affinities with the Palestinian struggle or advocate for Palestinians. This includes indigenous nations in both the U.S. and Canada who are also victims of colonialism and land theft, as well as numerous Jewish and Christian advocacy groups.

In 2019, the Red Nation released a statement of solidarity with the Palestinian people and encouraged other indigenous nations to join them. In the statement, the Red Nation advocates for a strengthening of ties between indigenous nations in North America and Palestinians. They explain, “We urge Palestinians and Indigenous nations in North America to create, foster, and strengthen political ties through mutual recognition, aid, and support. Allying with Palestinian nationhood offers an alternative path for anti-colonial Indigenous nationhood that doesn’t normalize settler colonial regimes—whether its Israel, the United States, or Canada.”²⁴² Additionally, in February of 2020 the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC) and the Palestinian Youth movement declared their solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en nation after the Royal Canadian Mounted Police asserted control of Wet’suwet’en land for construction of the TransCanada Coastal Gaslink pipeline.²⁴³ Solidarity between indigenous nations in North America and

²⁴² “The Liberation of Palestine Represents an Alternative Path for Native Nations,” *The Red Nation*, September 6, 2019, https://therednation.org/2019/09/07/the-liberation-of-palestine-represents-an-alternative-path-for-native-nations/amp/?__twitter_impression=true.

²⁴³ For further details see “Palestinians stand in solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en nation,” *Palestinian BDS National Committee*, February 13, 2020, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/palestinians-stand-solidarity->

Palestinian advocacy groups has led to the creation of catchy slogans such as “Resilience from Turtle Island to Palestine” (see image 4.12.)



Image 4.12

Source: Institute for Middle East Understanding, (@theimeu), “Today, we honor indigenous resilience in Turtle Island & Palestine”, Instagram, November 28, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B5aq_scgjA-/?igshid=zrl6s7cyp981.

There are also a considerable number of progressive Jewish organizations in the U.S. which focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Some of these groups include Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), IfNotNow, and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ). All of these groups either advocate on behalf of Palestinians or are in support of

wetsuweten-nation-and-land-defenders and “The Palestinian Youth Movement Stands with Wet’suwet’en,” *Palestinian Youth Movement*, February 24, 2020, <https://www.pymusa.com/wetsuweten>.

Palestinian advocacy indirectly; and as profoundly Jewish organizations have organized around the mantra “not in our names,” eluding to the misconception that Israel acts on behalf of Jews worldwide.

Founded in 1996, JVP began in San Francisco as an Israel and Palestine peace group. In 2002, the group shifted their focus on impacting U.S. policy in the region. “JVP is a community of people dedicated to supporting and leading winnable campaigns to change U.S. policy, shift US discourse, and even the playing field in order to create the political conditions that will allow Israelis and Palestinians to achieve a just and lasting peace.”²⁴⁴ As per their website, JVP’s mission statement (adopted in 2009) states that “Jewish Voice for Peace opposes anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab bigotry and oppression. JVP seeks an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; security and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians; a just solution for Palestinian refugees based on principles established in international law; an end to violence against civilians; and peace and justice for all peoples of the Middle East.”²⁴⁵

JVP’s work has been instrumental in giving a voice to progressive leftist Jews who are critical of Israeli policy. They have a large grassroots base and their members are organized nationally with different chapters throughout the country. JVP is also vocal in their support of the BDS movement and have even called for American military aid to be withheld until Israel ends its occupation.

²⁴⁴ See Jewish Voice for Peace, “About JVP,” <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/faq/>.

²⁴⁵ See Jewish Voice for Peace, “Mission,” <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/mission/>.

Another noteworthy Jewish organization which advocates towards ending the Israeli occupation is IfNotNow. Founded in 2014 during Israel's Operation Protective Edge attacks against Gaza, IfNotNow is still relatively young and aims to change the discourse towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the American Jewish community. As their website highlights, "IfNotNow is building a movement of Jews to end Israel's occupation and transform the American Jewish community."²⁴⁶ Moreover, IfNotNow has organized its movement around a number of guiding principles, some of which include seeking to "end American Jewish support for the occupation", "[stay] grounded in the values of Jewish tradition", "focus on what unites rather than what divides us", practice nonviolence and "show up for others."²⁴⁷

Finally, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ) is a group based in New York City which pursues "racial and economic justice... by advancing systemic changes that result in concrete improvements in people's everyday lives."²⁴⁸ Inspired by Jewish tradition, the group is actively involved in rallies, marches and city hearings where they voice their demands for political change. Interestingly enough, at the time of this writing, JFREJ did not actively have any information on their website pertaining to their activism or position towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, according to Donna Nevel, who is a founding member of the group, JFREJ takes an active stand against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Nevertheless, while JFREJ fully supports Palestinian justice, equality and an end to the occupation; Nevel clarifies that there are many other Jewish

²⁴⁶ See IfNotNow, "About," <https://www.ifnotnowmovement.org/about>.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ See Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, "About Us," <https://jfrej.org/about-us/>.

groups focused on justice for Palestine and that JFREJ's intent was to have an alternative Jewish voice that focused on racial and economic injustice in New York city specifically.²⁴⁹ It should be noted however that JFREJ currently does have an active section on their website denouncing Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, two dynamics which largely impact the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The section reads "With our coalition partners, JFREJ stands up to Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, and brings a clear Jewish voice to the call for an end to unconstitutional surveillance and harassment of Muslim and Arab communities."²⁵⁰

While this section has briefly touched on a number of Indigenous nations and Jewish organizations which either exclusively focus on Palestinian rights or are part of the coalition for Palestinian rights, there remains a number of Jewish organizations dedicated to justice in Palestine. These include, but are not limited to, Jews Say No!, Jews Against Anti-Muslim Racism (JAAMR) and Breaking the Silence. Indigenous peoples, as well as many within the liberal/progressive Jewish community, have shown their dedication to fighting racism and injustice globally through these organizations. They have not only supported an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but are part of a larger coalition of grassroot organizations in the U.S. demanding justice and equality for all oppressed groups be them minorities, immigrants, African-Americans or the LGBTQ community.

²⁴⁹ See Donna Nevel, "JFREJ has taken strong stand against the occupation," *Mondoweiss*, November 15, 2011, <https://mondoweiss.net/2011/11/jfrej-has-taken-strong-stand-against-the-occupation/>.

²⁵⁰ See Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, "Get Involved," <https://jfrej.org/get-involved/>.

Moreover, a distinction should be made between Jewish organizations and pro-Zionist organizations, Zionism originally being associated with the idea of self-determination and statehood for the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland. However, one view holds that the maturation of building a modern Jewish state has progressively morphed into an apartheid state and has become associated with the goal of maintaining sovereignty and exclusivity of one group [Jews] over another group [Palestinian Arabs] in historical Palestine.²⁵¹ Many pro-Zionist organizations have continued to support Israel within this maturation, even at the expense of Palestinian human rights. Furthermore, in the United States, a narrative seems to exist which argues that Palestinian groups do not want to work with Jewish organizations. In fact, the opposite is true. Almost all Palestinian and Palestinian advocacy organizations not only encourage working with Jewish organizations but *want* to work with Jewish organizations, especially under the banner of interfaith, mutual respect, and a shared world-view (as highlighted by the interviews below with leaders of Palestinian advocacy organizations.) Thus, when enmity occurs between some of these groups, the issue is not religiosity, but rather a difference in ideology which contradicts a shared view of worldmaking- a world where Palestinians

²⁵¹ For this argument I refer to Israel's "Nation-State" law, for more information see Miriam Berger, "Israel's hugely controversial "nation-state" law, explained," *Vox*, last updated July 31, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/world/2018/7/31/17623978/israel-jewish-nation-state-law-bill-explained-apartheid-netanyahu-democracy>. For an unofficial translation of the law see Susan Hattis Rolef, "Basic Law: Israel-The Nation State of the Jewish People," <https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/activity/Documents/BasicLawsPDF/BasicLawNationState.pdf>. See also Human Rights Watch report, "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution," April 27, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution> and Amnesty International Report, "Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity," February 1, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>.

and Israelis are viewed as equals instead of one group maintaining supremacy over the other.

James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute (AAI), provides further insight into the relationship between Jews and the Palestinian question:

“They [Jewish groups] were all allies, and in the Jackson campaign we had a lot of Jewish Americans supporting our planks on Palestinian rights. That coalition has stayed together, but today its getting a whole new breath of life. I think in part it is due to changes here in America, no doubt, and the politics of what’s happening in the country, but also the ever increasing rightward drift in Israel.”²⁵²

Rashid Khalidi also reiterates this intricate relationship, highlighting Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) as examples,

“The fact that the biggest network of student groups for Justice in Palestine, SJP, is allied with the biggest progressive Jewish student network, JVP, its *intersectional*... in a sense there is an intersectionality there. [Khalidi provides clarity that although JVP and SJP have a diverse set of members with diverse backgrounds, religions and ethnicities, in a symbolic sense they could be considered an “Arab” group and a “Jewish” group, thus symbolizing an intersectionality between the two].²⁵³

Moreover, the interconnectedness of the Palestinian question not only with Jewish groups, but with other social justice movements is reiterated by many leaders of Palestinian advocacy organizations in the United States. For example, Anas Amireh, President of the Al-Awda Right to Return Coalition Florida Chapter, discusses the importance of partnering with other movements and explains how his organization has emphasized this dynamic since their founding;

“We are called the Al-Awda Right to Return *Coalition*. We meant to put that from day one because we know...that we’re not as effective all by ourselves, so we

²⁵² James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

²⁵³ Rashid Khalidi, interview with the author, May 5th, 2021.

always want to have a coalition with other organizations to make our case stronger, to make our voices louder... [We worked] with Students for Justice in Palestine, American Muslims for Palestine, USCPN... we are team players and have always been fighting for that. From day one we called it coalition, and we didn't just say it we applied it and implemented it.”

“We work with Black Lives Matter, we work with Dream Defenders, we work with a few Latino groups in New York and Miami...we work with them because if we're quite about any kind of injustice towards the indigenous people, if we're quite about any injustice towards our black brothers and sisters, to our Latinos, to our migrants, then everybody would be quite and will not support us. So we don't only support our cause...we're not the only ones in this world that have been subjected to supremacist ideas, but there are other people that are also fighting the good cause. We always keep working with them, they invite us and we invite them constantly, simply because it's one fight... it's a fight against an entire way of thinking- a colonialist [mindset] against the indigenous and minorities.

“When they [Native Americans] were fighting to stop the pipeline through their lands, you found members of Al Awda and other Palestinians there [protesting] with them. When Black Lives Matter protested in St. Louis, you found us there with them... Any event we have...we always have Black Lives Matter and Dream Defenders representatives and people from other organizations.”²⁵⁴

Osama Abuirshaid, Executive Director of American Muslims for Palestine,

explains how reciprocating solidarity with other social justice movements in the United

States fits into the broader social justice movement taking place:

“[AMP] is integrated in the broader social justice movement in the U.S. We were in Ferguson in 2014, we were in Minnesota for George Floyd...we were on the southern borders in 2019 [to protest] the brutal treatment of Latino immigrants, we were in Dakota with the Natives protesting the pipeline. So we took the work for Palestine from being singularly focused on Palestine to being part of the broader social justice movement in the United States.”²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Anas Amireh, interview with the author, April 1, 2021.

²⁵⁵ Osama Abuirshaid, interview with the author, April 14, 2021.

Finally, Eid Mustafa, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors and Treasurer for the Jerusalem Fund, believes that enhancing these types of coalitions are important and will eventually translate into political change:

“If we want to change the political scene and public opinion [in America], we should start by aligning ourselves with people from South America, with Black Lives Matter, with Asian-Americans who are now seeing the effects of discrimination. We’re in the same boat. This country is based on a pluralistic society, it should act as such. And as minorities, we should stand together and fight for our rights, whether they are domestic or international. That’s really our best hope for changing the way things are.”²⁵⁶

As these leaders have highlighted, and this chapter has illustrated, is that a framework of intersectionality and solidarity amongst civil society groups is what’s driving a discursive shift in the way the Palestinian-Israeli issue is approached. The Palestinian Authority has done very little and are nearly non-existent in terms of diplomatic presence. Israeli leaders have also done very little to pursue peace, and without accountability for their actions, continue to make the reality on the ground worst. The United Nations and international governments around the world have also failed to put any pressure on Israel or force it to make meaningful change in its policies towards the Palestinians. In this gap has stepped in U.S. civil society to push for change and to advocate on behalf of Palestinians. This relationship is reciprocal, as Palestinian Americans have also “showed up” for their allies in the United States. This chapter has highlighted the intersectionality of these justice based movements and has shown the strong connection they share with the Palestinian movement both in the U.S. and abroad.

²⁵⁶ Eid Mustafa, interview with the author, March 24, 2021.

As these movements continue the fight for racial and social justice, so too will the collaboration and solidarity between them.

CHAPTER V: THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AND TRANSNATIONAL LINKAGES

As the previous chapter has highlighted, the Palestinian question within the U.S. domestic domain intersects across multiple social justice movements. However, this intersectionality is not limited to only the domestic domain, but also connects transnationally. The following chapter argues that the Palestinian question is intrinsically associated with transnational social justice elements. It investigates these transnational linkages; specifically how the Palestinian issue connects with other international movements for self-determination, how the Palestinian diaspora connects with each other and Palestinians *in* Palestine using the internet, the diasporas relations with other Arab states, and the role that Europe has played within the Palestinian movement for independence.

The agency of Palestinian advocacy broadens this social rights network to expand beyond just U.S. domestic movements, but also transnational rights movements. The Palestinian narrative holds a uniqueness which allows it to not only intersect, but serve as a reference point for other movements across the globe fighting against injustice. This uniqueness attributes to the shift in the normative-social framework, especially at the non-state level.

FROM KASHMIR TO HONG KONG TO XINJIANG

Palestinians are not alone in dealing with the remnants of British colonialism. In fact, social justice movements in Kashmir, Hong Kong and even Xinjiang bear a familiar chronicle in what has happened in Palestine. While none of these cases have amounted to settler colonialism as in the Palestinian case (where a large proportion of the population

was expelled and replaced by a settler population,) all four bear a striking resemblance in their struggles for freedom, justice and/or equality. The Palestinian diaspora and advocates for Palestine are well aware of the parallels these cases share and frequently connect them to the struggle for Palestine (and vis-versa).

Amy Hawkins discusses how the British empire left behind remnants of chaos which was inherited by the local populations. Hawkins argues that British colonialism paved the way for conflict in both Kashmir and Hong Kong, leaving both territories struggling for autonomy and self-determination, as well as battling central governments persistent on pursuing cultural homogenization in these territories.²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, Hawkins leaves out a crucial case in her writing- the case of Palestine, where the British departure left a disaster for the indigenous population.

Hamid Dabashi also writes that the most obvious historical source that unites Palestine, Hong Kong and Kashmir are their shared histories of British imperialism.²⁵⁸ Britain took control of Hong Kong in 1842 (handing it over to China in 1997), brought Kashmir under its influence in 1846 (only to allow it to become part of the problematic partition of India and Pakistan), and brought Palestine under its “mandate” in 1920 after the end of WWI and the fall of the Ottoman empire. In all three cases, the British packed up their bags and left behind a legacy of colonialism which the indigenous populations are still paying the price for today.

²⁵⁷ Amy Hawkins, “The World is Reaping the Chaos the British Empire Sowed,” *Foreign Policy*, August 13, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/13/the-world-is-reaping-the-chaos-the-british-empire-sowed/>.

²⁵⁸ See Hamid Dabashi, “Hong Kong, Kashmir, Palestine: Ruins of British empire on fire,” *Al Jazeera*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/hong-kong-kashmir-palestine-ruins-british-empire-fire-190925122530155.html>.

As Dabashi details,

“In revolting against China, India, and Israel, these three nations in Hong Kong, Kashmir, and Palestine have become three nuclei of resistance, of refusal to let go of their homelands. They have narrated themselves into a history written by powers who have systematically tried to erase them and their collective memories. “Homeland” is not just a piece of land. It is a memorial presence of a history.”

“Today people in Palestine, Kashmir, and Hong Kong see themselves as stateless nations ruled with brutish military occupation. In the postcolonial game of state formation, they have been denied their national sovereignty. The more brutally they are repressed and denied their sovereignty, the more adamantly they will demand and exact it.”²⁵⁹

Kashmiri solidarity with Palestinians can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s, when the Kashmiri liberation movement aligned itself with other anti-imperialist movements. Then Indian Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru publicly championed the Palestinian cause but also permitted the opening of an Israeli consulate in Mumbai in 1953. The consulate gathers information on India’s Evacuee Property Laws, which would later serve as a model for Israel’s Absentee Property Law, a legal tool which allows the state to expropriate lands belonging to Palestinians.²⁶⁰ The fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s would help propel Indian-Israeli relations, as India would seek a new supplier for arms and military technology, eventually becoming Israel’s largest purchaser of military weapons.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Hamid Dabashi, “Hong Kong, Kashmir, Palestine: Ruins of British empire on fire,” *Al Jazeera*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/hong-kong-kashmir-palestine-ruins-british-empire-fire-190925122530155.html>.

²⁶⁰ Abdulla Moaswes, “What’s happening in Kashmir looks a lot like Israel’s rule over Palestine,” *+972 Magazine*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.972mag.com/kashmir-india-israel-palestine-occupation/142735/>.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

As Indian-Israeli relations increased, so did their ideological affinities. The first area of convergence are the political ideologies of Zionism and “Hindutva”, or Hindu Nationalism. As Sumantra Bose highlights, generations of Hindu nationalist have shown a deep affinity with Israel going back to the 1920s. Bose argues that Israel and India both share the ideal of creating an “ethnic democracy”, endeavoring to create a state which is simultaneously “democratic” and “supremacist”.²⁶² Following the prototype of Israel, which self-describes itself as a “Jewish and democratic” state, Hindu nationalism is attempting to remake India into a similar “Hindu and democratic” state. This objective was furthered in December 2019 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) passed the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA), fast tracking Indian citizenship for people from “Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Parsi, Jain or Christian communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan”, but distinctively leaving out Muslims.²⁶³

The second area of convergence is Israel’s handling of the Palestinians and the idea that India could follow these same “guidelines” in its approach to Kashmir. Israel insisted that Kashmir was a matter of Indian domestic concern, and in 1992 then Indian Defense Minister Sharad Pawar acknowledged Indian-Israeli cooperation on issues of counterterrorism and the exchange of information, or in other words the exchange of strategies, methods and tactics of occupation and domination.²⁶⁴ India has imitated Israeli

²⁶² See Sumantra Bose, “Why India’s Hindu nationalists worship Israel’s nation-state model,” *The Conversation*, February 14, 2019, <https://theconversation.com/why-indias-hindu-nationalists-worship-israels-nation-state-model-111450>.

²⁶³ See “Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019,” Indian Ministry of Law and Justice, No. 47 of 2019, The Gazette of India Extraordinary, December 12, 2019, <http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/214646.pdf>.

²⁶⁴ Abdulla Moaswes, “What’s happening in Kashmir looks a lot like Israel’s rule over Palestine,” +972 *Magazine*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.972mag.com/kashmir-india-israel-palestine-occupation/142735/>.

practices in Palestine and have applied these tactics to Kashmir. One method includes building Israeli-style Hindu-only settlements in Kashmir in an attempt to shift the demographic make-up of Kashmir. Other similarities include tactics used to control the civilian population of Kashmir such as “arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, curfews, collective punishment, administrative detention, torture, rape and sexual abuse, the suppression of freedom of speech and assembly, house demolitions,” etc.²⁶⁵

With so many similarities, it is no surprise a strong bond of solidarity exists between Palestinians and Kashmiris. Going back to the 1960s when protests erupted in Kashmir over Israel’s behavior surrounding Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, Abdulla Moaswes loosely places Kashmiri-Palestinian solidarity within three stages. The first stage began in the 1960s, when the Kashmiri Plebiscite Front cast India as an “imperial state”, and aligned itself with similar global causes for self-determination including the Vietnamese struggle against the United States, the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, and the Palestinian struggle against Israel. The second stage began in the 1980s when the basis of solidarity shifted from a language of anti-imperialism and nationalism to concepts of jihad and Islamic solidarity, reflecting the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union and the rise of Islamist resistance groups such as Hamas in Palestine and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in Kashmir. The third and current stage of Kashmiri-Palestinian solidarity is a response to the growing ties between India and Israel, seeing both states not as

²⁶⁵ Abdulla Moaswes, “What’s happening in Kashmir looks a lot like Israel’s rule over Palestine,” *+972 Magazine*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.972mag.com/kashmir-india-israel-palestine-occupation/142735/>.

comparable oppressors but rather “partners in occupation.”²⁶⁶ This partnership will lead to further similarities in policy approaches of Israel to Palestine and India to Kashmir.

Recognizing these parallels, the Palestinian diaspora has also shown its solidarity with Kashmir, especially in 2019 when India revoked Article 370 of India’s constitution that guaranteed semi-autonomy to the Muslim-majority state and Indian military forces moved into Kashmir.²⁶⁷ In August of 2019, the Palestinian Youth Movement expressed their solidarity with the people of Kashmir by releasing a statement highlighting the similarities shared between both Kashmiris and Palestinians in their resistance to occupation (see image 5.1.)

²⁶⁶ Abdulla Moaswes, “What’s happening in Kashmir looks a lot like Israel’s rule over Palestine,” *+972 Magazine*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.972mag.com/kashmir-india-israel-palestine-occupation/142735/>.

²⁶⁷ See “Kashmir under lockdown,” *Al Jazeera*, Last modified October 27, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/india-revokes-kashmir-special-status-latest-updates-190806134011673.html>.



1,033 likes

palestinianyouthmovement [Edited 8/7/19] We, the Palestinian Youth Movement, express our solidarity with the people of Kashmir as they continue to bravely resist occupation by Indian military forces.

For decades, the people of Kashmir have fought for their right to political sovereignty and autonomous recognition from India as a nation and a people. Although Article 370 of India's constitution gave Kashmir some degree of autonomy by designating it a special administrative region, the Indian state's limited role on paper has never reflected the reality of the Occupation, which extends deeply into the everyday lives of Kashmiris and has long denied them their right to self-determination.

The revoking of Article 370 this month is but one of an exhaustive list of the Indian state's repeated violations of Kashmir's sovereignty and the dignity of its people. In recent weeks, the Indian military has taken particularly extreme measures to enforce the revoking of Article 370, deploying Indian military forces there to enforce the new political reality.

In Kashmir today, one million Indian forces are actively occupying universities, student hostels, police stations, court chambers, and other government buildings to enforce the Occupation. All telephone and internet services have been shut down to prevent communication to the outside world.

As Palestinian youth, we are all too familiar with the realities of foreign and military occupation at the cost of a people's right to self-determination. Moreover, India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is actually the first in history to visit Israel and has worked to forge a personal, political, and militaristic relationship with the Zionist state. His foreign imposition of Indian nationalism on a people and land who have long fought for their own national autonomy is a denial of the right to self-determination, as much as the Zionist state's actions are a denial of our right to self-determination to reclaim our homeland as Palestinians.

We firmly stand with the people of Kashmir in their struggle for liberation as they continue to bravely resist occupation of their land. #StandWithKashmir #Kashmir

View all 13 comments

August 6, 2019

Image 5.1

Palestinian Youth Movement (@palestinianyouthmovement), Instagram, April 6, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B006KBTg5Xq/?igshid=yjxnekez4so8>.

Kashmir is only one case of transnational solidarity between Palestinians and other movements for self-determination. Events in Hong Kong have also drawn comparisons to what is happening in Palestine. Many have expressed their struggle in post-colonial Hong Kong as one of “defending their homeland,” a narrative similar to that of the Palestinians.

In an Al Jazeera interview, Lam Hing Lun and Fee Chan discuss their participation in protests in Hong Kong. Having tasted tear gas for the first time in the occupied West Bank, Lun explains that his experience in Palestine has inspired his struggle against the government in his homeland of Hong Kong.²⁶⁸ For weeks, villagers near Ramallah would walk up to a chain-link fence to protest only to be met with tear gas from Israeli soldiers on the other side, “It hadn’t stopped them. They have persisted for decades, for generations,” Lun and Chan explain.²⁶⁹ Drawing comparisons from Palestinians to Hong Kongers, Pip Meyer highlights the similarities; Palestine and Hong Kong were both possessed by Great Britain, both were “handed over” to third parties to secure their futures (Palestine to the United Nations and Hong Kong to China), both have growing economic and military superpowers threatening their already limited autonomy, both have failed to be recognized internationally as autonomous and both feel a sense that there is nothing left to do but protest.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Violet Law, “Nothing to lose: The Hong Kong protestors taking on China,” *Al Jazeera*, July 11, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/lose-hong-kong-protesters-china-190710062708453.html>.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Pip Meyer, “‘The taste of tear gas’: Hong Kong resemblances to Palestine,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, July 30, 2019, <https://www.pij.org/blogs/473/‘the-taste-of-tear-gas’%3A-hong-kong-resemblances-to-palestine>.

Another case, which ironically has drawn very little criticism from Arab Muslim nations, has been that of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region of China (or East Turkestan as many Uyghurs refer to it). In 2002, Dru Gladney argued that China risks turning Xinjiang into a “West Bank model”, and that “if China does not explore other options besides repression, restriction, and investment, millions of Uyghur Muslims might become increasingly marginalized and disenfranchised...”²⁷¹ In 2007, Wang Lixiong points out the “Palestinization” of the conflict in Xinjiang in his book *My West China: Your East Turkestan*. Wang uses the term “Palestinization” to describe “the full mobilization of a people and the full extent of its hatred. To me, Xinjiang is Palestinizing. It has not boiled to the surface as much, but it has been fermenting in the heart of the indigenous peoples.”²⁷²

For Wang, the closest parallel to what is happening in Xinjiang is Palestine. He argues that escalating ethnic tensions in the region are on a path that if continued would result in a point of no return, where “all opportunities for healthy interaction will be lost, and a vicious cycle pushes the two sides farther and farther apart.”²⁷³ This argument echoes a close resemblance to the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, where each side has a deep-seated mistrust of the other. In any matter, all three of the before-mentioned case studies contain overlapping parallels and deep rooted interconnectedness to the situation in Palestine, resulting in international calls of solidarity.

²⁷¹ Dru Gladney, “Xinjiang: China’s Future West Bank?,” *Current History* (September 2002): 267-270.

²⁷² Wang Lixiong, “Excerpts from ‘My West China, Your East Turkestan’- My view on the Kunming Incident,” *China Change*, March 3, 2014, <https://chinachange.org/2014/03/03/excerpts-from-my-west-china-your-east-turkestan-my-view-on-the-kunming-incident/>.

²⁷³ Ibid.

PALESTINIANS IN CYBERSPACE: TRANSNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND THE USE OF THE INTERNET

As previously mentioned, an essential component of identity within the Palestinian diaspora is maintaining a strong connection with Palestine. This is achieved through numerous outlets, including gatherings and conferences, the internet, and visits to Palestine. Beyond *physical* connections to Palestine exists a new space for *virtual* connections to Palestine in cyberspace through the use of the internet. These connections serve as a tool to not only increase advocacy, but aid in influencing the normative-social structure. While chapter 4 discussed the intricate relationship between Black and Palestinian solidarity, a transnational element was simultaneously taking place. The connections between Gaza and Ferguson, Missouri during the protests of 2014 after the killing of Michael Brown illustrates how Palestinians *in* Palestine were bonding with Black Americans over collective experiences (in this case, the use of tear gas by security forces). Much of this “bonding” was facilitated by the use of the internet, which has become important in not only building identity, but also in creating transnational linkages between marginalized groups.

The newest way of connecting with Palestine is through the internet. The global reach of the internet and growing popularity of social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have completely changed how Palestine and Palestinians connect with the world. The internet has not only changed how Palestinians connect with one another, but it has also transformed how western media covers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their news coverage. Previously holding a monopoly on information coming out of Israel and Palestine which has generally tilted towards favoring Israel, media

outlets are increasingly forced to take a more even-handed approach when reporting on news from the region or risk being accused of bias. With images and videos capable of being shared within minutes on social media to the increasingly internet-connected world, the true reality of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation is now easily shared and has global reach. Rashid Khalidi echoes this argument, as he explains,

“The mainstream corporate media was everything 20 years ago. You only had newspapers and three networks, and later on cable. Today, if you were to ask anybody under 40 where do you get your news, maybe 10% of them get their news from mainstream corporate media... but now people get their information from a huge range of sources, some of them bad, some of them good. The point is the absolute monopoly of the mainstream corporate media on discourse is broken.²⁷⁴

Media outlets have somewhat balanced their reporting as it becomes more difficult to portray Palestinians as the only conveyors of misconduct. When Israel raids the West Bank, uses tear gas against peaceful protestors, demolishes Palestinian homes or bombs civilian homes and infrastructure in Gaza, the images and videos of the destruction and deceased bodies are quickly shared with the outside world. However, I emphasize that only a minimal shift in bias media reporting has taken place. Mainstream U.S. media still tends to tilt towards favoring the Israeli narrative, leading to the use of ambiguous language which generally ignores the larger context of what takes place between Palestinians and Israelis.

Furthermore, a multilateral relationship exists within a nexus of the internet, resistance, and solidarity. This nexus utilizes the internet to serve as both *a space* and *a tool*. As a *space*, the internet and information technology has drastically influenced the

²⁷⁴ Rashid Khalidi, interview with the author, May 5, 2021.

ways in which the Palestinian diaspora not only connect with one another, but also how they connect with those *in* Palestine (and vice versa, how those in Palestine connect with the outside world). The internet hosts everything from chat rooms to the websites of diaspora groups, to official Palestinian Authority (PA) websites, as well as those of various groups and organizations in the West Bank and Gaza. The internet essentially transcends geographical boundaries and distance and brings Palestinians “together” no matter where they are. However, it should be noted that access to the internet is somewhat limited in the West Bank and Gaza. Some refugee camps have set up computer centers and internet cafes, and in 1999 Birzeit University launched the *Across Borders Project* which created a “virtual space” for refugees to communicate without the restrictions of borders and checkpoints.²⁷⁵ However, the internet has become somewhat more readily available in Palestine over time, but not without impositions from the Israeli government.

One of the leading experts in the “Palestinian internet”, Miriyam Aouragh, discusses *mobility* and *immobility* in the context of Palestinians and the Palestinian diaspora in cyberspace. The *Palestinian internet* is a general reference to Palestinian consumption/utilization and production/dissemination of internet technology.²⁷⁶ Mobility for Palestinians within the context of a “virtual space” (i.e., the internet) is heavily influenced by factors of occupation and exile. For instance, whereas many diaspora groups could send letters or use telephones to maintain some connectivity, this was not an

²⁷⁵ Schulz, Helena Lindholm and Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (London: Routledge, 2003), 181.

²⁷⁶ Miriyam Aouragh, “Confined Offline, Traversing Online Palestinian Mobility through the Prism of the Internet,” *Mobilities* 6, no. 3 (2011): 377, doi: 10.1080/17450101.2011.590036.

option for Palestinians in the diaspora (especially for those in poor refugee camps). It wasn't until the internet became accessible that Palestinians could maintain ties and connect with others scattered in the diaspora or under occupation.²⁷⁷ Aouragh argues that the internet serves as a platform which actually strengthens Palestinian national identity through multiple outlets. The introduction of emails, mailing lists, web browsing, and chat forums transformed everyday communications between Palestinians both in Palestine and in exile, allowing them to communicate with family members around the world, organize protests and debate, write and disseminate articles, keep up with Palestinian music and culture, etc.²⁷⁸ Fortunately, the internet has largely helped Palestinians overcome the dualism of mobility/immobility.

In regard to activism, as *a tool* the internet has facilitated increased resistance and activism, especially at the grassroots level. The use of the internet and social networking sites as a tool of resistance against oppressive governments has become more common in the last decade. A major example are the events that took place during the Arab Spring of 2011, where protestors in multiple Arab states were able to mobilize using social networking sites. In Palestine, the possibility of organizing public meetings is severely limited by closures and military repression. This led to a new type of pro-Palestine local and global political mobilization (a cyber mobilization), which Aouragh has termed *cyber intifada*.²⁷⁹ Aouragh distinguishes between two specific methods of *cyber intifada*, the

²⁷⁷ Miriyam Aouragh, "Confined Offline, Traversing Online Palestinian Mobility through the Prism of the Internet," *Mobilities* 6, no. 3 (2011): 381, doi: 10.1080/17450101.2011.590036.

²⁷⁸ Ibid: 385.

²⁷⁹ Miriyam Aouragh, "Everyday resistance on the internet: the Palestinian context," *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research* 1, no. 2 (2008): 110, doi: 10.1386/jammr.1.2.109/1.

first is the internet as a tool to tell the Palestinian narrative to international audiences (media activism), the second is to recruit activists and organize local and global protests (mobilization).²⁸⁰ Moreover, transnational support from diaspora Palestinians to those in Palestine is a meaningful symbol of solidarity. “When Palestinians inside the occupied Palestinian territories receive solidarity messages, it is a boost and helps them carry on for a while. Immediate appeals to evoke sympathy or express solidarity would have required far more organizing and coordination before the internet.”²⁸¹ Today, shared acts of transnational solidarity continue, especially as social movements across the world find common ground in their causes. This transnational proclamation of solidarity illustrates itself in shared images, videos and tweets from the United States to Palestine to Hong Kong, Kashmir, East Turkestan/Xinjiang and beyond.

Moreover, the virtual space of the internet, although not physical, offers a virtual presence that essentially “exists” in reality. Palestinians have increasingly attempted to use this space as they take steps towards achieving self-determination. For example, on May 2, 2013, following in the footsteps of international organizations and the United Nations, Google replaced the words “Palestinian territories” with “Palestine” on all of its sites and products. Almost immediately, Israeli deputy foreign minister Ze’ev Elkin sent a letter to Google’s CEO urging him to reconsider the decision because it essentially recognized the existence of a Palestinian state.²⁸² Dynamics such as these allow Palestine

²⁸⁰ Miriyam Aouragh, “Everyday resistance on the internet: the Palestinian context,” *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research* 1, no. 2 (2008): 110, doi: 10.1386/jammr.1.2.109/1.

²⁸¹ Ibid: 112.

²⁸² Helga Tawil-Souri and Miriyam Aouragh, “Intifada 3.0? Cyber colonialism and Palestinian resistance,” *Arab Studies Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 102. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24877901>.

to “exist” on Google or in other “virtual” ways, which Palestinians view as a step towards liberation and eventual statehood.

Other websites, such as *Palestine Remembered*, creates a medium for refugees and diaspora Palestinians to communicate and organize, share their stories, photos, memories and much more.²⁸³ Perhaps most importantly though, Palestine Remembered focuses on pre-1948 Palestine and the many “lost” or “erased” villages and neighborhoods, including details on land loss, personal historical accounts and old photographs. The site doesn’t only provide a space for these testimonies, but also “re-creates” and “preserves” Palestine in the cyber-realm, constructing a memorialization that emphasizes Palestinians’ historical claims.²⁸⁴

The Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy (PIPD) is another independent, non-governmental organization based in Palestine. Led by prominent Palestinians from the private sector, academia, and civil society, PIPD aims to share the story of Palestine to the world by sharing personal stories from Palestine. PIPD invests in developing Palestinian public diplomacy capabilities at home, and ensures that Palestinians themselves share their personal stories with the world in order for the world to understand the human side of Palestine and its struggle for freedom and basic rights.²⁸⁵ Websites and organizations such as these serve as a medium to tell the Palestinian story.

²⁸³ See <https://www.palestineremembered.com>.

²⁸⁴ Helga Tawil-Souri and Miriyam Aouragh, “Intifada 3.0? Cyber colonialism and Palestinian resistance,” *Arab Studies Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 124. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24877901>.

²⁸⁵ See Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy, “About,” www.thepipd.com.

The internet is not a full proof tool for activists and revolutionaries. In fact, it has become such a powerful instrument that governments now take precautions in regards to online mobilization, some states going as far as to even “turn off” the internet as a counter measure. As Tawil-Souri and Aouragh highlight, the internet includes downsides for Palestinians which lead to what they deem acts of *cyber-colonialism*. While Palestinians can use social media to mobilize and inform, it also exposes them to surveillance and possible arrest. They can launch Facebook pages, but must abide by the corporations rules or risk being shut down. Also, for Palestinians *in* Palestine, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas routinely monitor and crack down on internet use if deemed threatening to their own authority. Lastly, Israeli policy overly controls and severely limits Palestinians in the cyber realm. The Israeli military defines what equipment can be installed and how, can confiscate equipment, delay approval of equipment and routinely destroys Palestinian equipment and infrastructure during military operations.²⁸⁶

For Palestinians in the diaspora, the internet mostly serves as a tool for connecting, organizing, educating, informing, supporting and showing acts of solidarity. While all of these are still positive actions and a good moral boost, it does little to change the actual reality on the ground or swing international institutions to take any concrete action towards holding Israel accountable. On the contrary, many corporations and western governments are complicit in these acts of cyber-colonialism and creating oppressive structures within the virtual realm of cyberspace. Consequently, it goes

²⁸⁶ Helga Tawil-Souri and Miriyam Aouragh, “Intifada 3.0? Cyber colonialism and Palestinian resistance,” *Arab Studies Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 128-129. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24877901>.

without saying that the internet has completely changed and modified (for better and for worse) how Palestinians, the Palestinian diaspora and those throughout the world interact and connect with Palestinian activism and advocacy.

THE MIDDLE EAST, ARAB STATES, AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

Dynamics within the Arab world and Arab relations with the United States, Europe and Israel have had a tremendous impact on the politics of Palestine. This historical relationship dates as far back as the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the King-Crane commission in 1919. The Hussein-McMahon correspondence was a series of letters between Sherif Hussein ibn Ali, the Amir of Mecca, and Lieutenant Colonel Sir Henry McMahon. The letters essentially promised Hussein an Arab state in exchange for a revolt against Istanbul and the Ottomans. The Balfour declaration was a promise from the British to the Zionist movement that they would support the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Sykes-Picot would divide the Middle East between the British and the French after the end of World War I. The King-Crane commission, appointed by Woodrow Wilson, found that the aspirations of the Arab peoples in Syria, Iraq and Palestine favored self-determination as opposed to the “mandate” system they received.

It is surprising that the U.S. and Britain would support the Zionist movement, even though both countries pride themselves on creating secular national states based on equality of citizens regardless of religion or ethnicity. In fact, the Palestinian national movement during the British mandate called for a democratic state to be created which would include the various ethnic and religious communities in historical Palestine, made up of Muslims, Jews and Christians. However, this envisioned secular democratic state

wouldn't come to fruition and instead the United Nations would put forth the Majority plan in which two separate states would be created, one Arab and the other Jewish.

When British forces withdrew from the region and Israel declared its independence in 1948, the surrounding Arab nations declared war on the new Jewish state. The well-armed Zionist forces (made up of the Lehi, Irgun, and the Haganah), would quickly defeat the Arab armies. In essence, this would mark the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arab states would quickly play a definitive role within the matrix of U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian relations. The time period was marked by growing sentiment and increased support of Pan-Arabism and Arab unity, led by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The Suez crisis of 1956, when Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez canal and Israeli, French and British forces invaded Egypt, was a major win for Egypt and boosted the morale of surrounding Arab states. It illustrated that a victory was possible, even against major powers such as France and Britain (albeit with American assistance). However, Arab optimism would quickly be shattered in the following decade.

The war of 1967 was a watershed moment not only for Palestinians, but also for the surrounding Arab countries. Gamal Abdel Nasser's ideas of Arab unity, anti-imperialism, and revolutionary struggle were largely owed to his Palestinian experiences.²⁸⁷ However, after the war of 1967 and the quick defeat of Arab armies by Israel, the ideology of Pan-Arabism quickly faded and Israel solidified itself as a regional hegemon.

²⁸⁷ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), 135.

Moreover, Arab nations would play a pivotal role in the Palestinian-Israeli debacle before 1967 and most certainly after 1967. In 1959, Yasser Arafat would create Fatah while in Kuwait. In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization would be created by the Arab League. By 1969, Fatah would take over the PLO, with Arafat as its leader. In essence, the PLO was created as a government in exile by diaspora Palestinians. The PLO would operate out of multiple Arab states including Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. Eventually, after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the PLO headquarters would be moved to Ramallah, where it remains today.

Relations between Arab States and Israel would continue to be peculiar. For instance, on April 21, 1965, President Bourguiba of Tunisia suggested in a speech that the Arab world pursue a more pragmatic approach towards Israel. He proposed that Arab states recognize Israel and seek peace, and in return Israel would withdraw to the allotted U.N. borders of 1947. Not only was the offer totally rejected by Israel, the Arabs were appalled at the suggested rapprochement with Israel and Bourguiba's government was condemned at the Arab League.²⁸⁸

The dynamic of Arab leaders and their rhetoric towards Israel and the Palestinians is noteworthy to say the least. On the one hand, Arab leaders have been fervent supporters of the Palestinian cause and have had to take staunch hard line positions towards Israel publicly. On the other hand, many Arab nations have had clandestine relations with Israel through underground channels for years. Fawaz Turki suggest that

²⁸⁸ Fawaz Turki, *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile* (New York: Modern Reader, 1972), 33.

after 1967, the rhetoric of Arab nations toward Israel was nothing more than lip-service.

He details:

“Politically, “usurped Palestine” became a catch phrase to use in speeches by [Arab] government leaders with a thirst for prestige and popularity. Pronunciamentos about liberating Palestine were heard continually. “The noble cause” was given all the vehemence that radio commentators could muster and the fierce passion with which draconian threats were made against Israel, promising its ultimate destruction, was indeed frightening. All made, presumably, on behalf of the Palestinians. But except for the Arab masses... and the Palestinians, who continued to wait, it was known to all that the Arab governments had put the solution of the Palestine issue at the bottom of their list of priorities.”²⁸⁹

Arab states and their leaders continued to use the Palestinian cause to garner support from their constituents but in reality didn't take any tangible steps which truly helped the Palestinians. In Egypt for instance, it was impossible to integrate Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip into Egypt's already economically deteriorating society. In Syria, continuous coups d'etat led to a struggling state with budget issues which could not handle a constructive settlement program for Palestinians. Lebanon was hostile towards welcoming any Palestinians that could upset its already precarious legislative structure. Finally, Jordan already had almost half its population made up of Palestinians, but underdevelopment in the East Bank made any large-scale resettlement program doomed to fail. Ultimately, Palestinian refugees living in surrounding Arab states were routinely treated as a nuisance. All these scenarios aside, Arab governments continued to oppose plans of integration on the grounds that it would indicate defeat by Israel and in fact would be what the Zionist movement wanted.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Fawaz Turki, *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile* (New York: Modern Reader, 1972), 40.

²⁹⁰ Ibid: 36-37.

In terms of the relationship between Palestinians and the Palestinian American diaspora, the United States, and Arab states, prior to the signing of Oslo it was extremely difficult for the PLO to engage with or operate in the United States directly due to its “terrorist organization” categorization. As such, Palestinian leadership found it much more sensible to engage U.S. policy makers through surrogates such as Arab governments that had good relations with the U.S. However, this strategy had its shortcomings. As Mohammed Bamyeh highlights, this strategy at best only reaches the executive branch, leaving no notable impression on Congress. The interests of the Palestinian diaspora also had no natural convergence with the primary goals of most Arab governments, that goal being their own survival.²⁹¹

How then can the Palestinian diaspora make significant gains in their objectives through Arab governments? Arab states, especially the Gulf states, are deemed too important to U.S. interests that policy must be grounded in a strategic and clearly defined manner. As time has passed, the notion of an “Arab-Israeli” conflict has withered. Multiple Arab states have signed peace treaties with Israel, including Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, which ended official enmity between the countries. For those that have not signed official peace treaties, back channel communications exists and coordinated actions sometimes take place (this was the case for the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan before they announced official peace deals with Israel through the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020.)

²⁹¹ Mohammed A. Bamyeh, “Palestinians, Diasporas, and US Foreign Policy,” in *Diaspora Lobbies and the US Government: Convergence and Divergence in Making Foreign Policy*, ed. Josh DeWind and Renata Segura (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 84.

While a majority of Arab leaders still pronounce their strong support for the Palestinian cause, most have pursued a pragmatic approach in their relations with Israel in convergence with their own interests. For instance, Israel's relations with Arab countries continue to normalize (especially when their anti-Israel rhetoric is put aside). In October of 2018, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the Gulf state of Oman to meet with Omani leader Sultan Qaboos.²⁹² Though uncommon, Israeli leaders have visited the country in the past, including Yitzhak Rabin in 1994 and Shimon Peres in 1996. On November 8th, 2018, the incoming ambassadors to Israel from Jordan and Egypt recommitted their countries respective peace agreements with Israel during a visit to Israeli President Rivlin's home in Jerusalem.²⁹³

The warming ties between Arab Gulf states and Israel are in large part motivated by a perceived common threat from Iran and its proxies in the region. One example is when in 2019 Gulf elites and politicians cheered on Israel as it bombed sites in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, all of which were purportedly against groups supported by Iran (Hezbollah and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces).²⁹⁴ Bahrain's foreign minister, Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, defended Israel's attacks in a tweet, saying "Iran is the one

²⁹² See "Israeli PM Netanyahu makes rare visit to Oman," *Reuters*, October 26, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-oman/israeli-pm-netanyahu-makes-rare-visit-to-oman-idUSKCN1N01WN>.

²⁹³ See Raphael Ahren, "In Jerusalem, new envoys from Cairo and Amman recommit to peace with Israel," *Times of Israel*, November 8, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-jerusalem-new-envoys-from-cairo-and-amman-recommit-to-peace-with-israel/>.

²⁹⁴ Tamara Nassar, "Gulf elites cheer Israeli attacks on Arab countries," *Electronic Intifada*, August 30, 2019, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/tamara-nassar/gulf-elites-cheer-israeli-attacks-arab-countries>.

who declared war on us, with its Revolutionary Guards, its Lebanese party, its popular mobilization in Iraq, its Houthi arm in Yemen and others.”²⁹⁵

Some Gulf elites have gone as far as to suggest that the idea of Israel being an “enemy” is preposterous. Around the same time, Saudi journalist Abd al-Hamid al-Ghabin wrote “Israel is a logical future partner for us as we have mutual enemies: Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda and a handful of reckless rulers who remain in power in our region,” (he seemed unaware that Israel had actually supported and even armed al-Qaeda linked militias in Syria).²⁹⁶

Whatever the reasons, it is clear that an anti-Iran coalition formed during that time, which included the U.S., Israel and Gulf Arab states. Why this anti-Iran sentiment is forming in the region and whether or not it is a rational reaction is up for debate. As Mohamed Mohamed argues, Israel is exaggerating this “existential threat” from Iran. Israel is widely known to possess nuclear weapons while Iran has none, Israel’s air force is also one of the strongest in the world and the strongest in the region, both Israel and the Gulf Arab countries have the full backing of the U.S. military, and economic sanctions have crippled Iran. Combined with the massive military force it would encounter, it would not be in Iran’s best interest to start a military confrontation with Israel or its allies.²⁹⁷ The emphasis on the Iran threat has only helped Israel divert attention away from its ongoing occupation and oppression of the Palestinians. Moreover, while Arab

²⁹⁵ Tamara Nassar, “Gulf elites cheer Israeli attacks on Arab countries,” *Electronic Intifada*, August 30, 2019, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/tamara-nassar/gulf-elites-cheer-israeli-attacks-arab-countries>.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Mohamed Mohamed, “Arab Normalization with Israel,” *The Jerusalem Fund*, March 7, 2019, <https://thejerusalemfund.org/24425/arab-normalization-with-israel>.

states continue to try and normalize relations with Israel, the majority of the general public in these countries do not approve of these attempts to normalize relations with Israel.²⁹⁸ Although state-state normalization may be taking place, people-people normalization is not.

The importance of Arab states was further illustrated during the Trump administration's peace efforts between Palestinians and Israelis. In February of 2019, a U.S.-led conference took place in Warsaw, Poland which many argue was effectively an attempt to create a global anti-Iran coalition.²⁹⁹ Jared Kushner, President Trump's senior advisor and son-in-law and also the man tasked with leading the peace efforts between Israelis and Palestinians, met with Arab leaders to discuss security issues in the region. Kushner also took part in discussions on how to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and attempted to get Arab states on board with the "Deal of the Century" peace plan. The Palestinian Authority was not invited to the conference and the Palestinians Authority's foreign ministry called the meeting "an American conspiracy intended to get the participants to adopt the U.S. views on issues of the region, particularly the Palestine question."³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ "2019-20 Arab Opinion Index," *Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies*, <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/Lists/ACRPS-PDFDocumentLibrary/Arab-Opinion-Index-2019-2020-Inbreef-English-Version.pdf>, pgs. 55-57.

²⁹⁹ For more information on the conference see Jan Smolenski and Virginia Pietromarchi. "US-led Middle East conference in Warsaw: All you need to know," *Al Jazeera*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/led-middle-east-summit-warsaw-190212230343271.html>.

³⁰⁰ "Palestinian Authority brands US-led Middle East meeting an 'American conspiracy'," *Times of Israel*, February 7, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinian-authority-brands-us-led-middle-east-meeting-an-american-conspiracy/>.

Kushner would later travel to multiple Arab states to begin bolstering up support for the Trump administration's "Deal of the Century" that would later be presented to Palestinians and Israelis.³⁰¹ The economic portion of the peace plan was unveiled during a June 2019 "Peace to Prosperity" conference in Bahrain, a conference in which no Palestinian Authority representation was present once again (although influential Palestinian businessmen did attend). While officials from key Arab states were in attendance, including representatives from Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the conference avoided discussing any political resolutions between Palestinians and Israelis concerning borders, security or refugees.³⁰² However, the conference did incentivize influential business leaders from surrounding Arab states to get excited at the prospect of economic opportunities in the West Bank and Gaza. Shortly after the conclusion of the conference, Kushner once again made visits to several Arab states in an effort to continue momentum for his plan. His trip included official stops in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Morocco in an attempt to outline how a peace plan could benefit the Palestinian economy.³⁰³

With Kushner routinely visiting Arab states, it was obvious that their support was essential in making any peace plan come to fruition, even if it didn't include input from

³⁰¹ See "Kushner to visit Middle East to garner backing for peace plan," *Al Jazeera*, February 8, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/kushner-visit-middle-east-garner-backing-peace-plan-190208094508690.html>.

³⁰² See Felicia Schwartz, "Jared Kushner Pushes Trump Peace Plan in Bahrain," *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/jared-kushner-pushes-trump-peace-plan-in-bahrain-11561489033?mod=article_inline&mod=article_inline.

³⁰³ See Felicia Schwartz, "Kushner promotes peace plan during Middle East trip," *Wall Street Journal*, August 1, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/kushner-promotes-peace-plan-during-middle-east-trip-11564669183>.

the Palestinians themselves. Even after strong efforts, the Trump administration's peace plan was unable to garner the Arab support it had so dearly hoped for. Once unveiled, not only did the peace plan not include Palestinian statehood (at least not what is typically defined as a "state"), it also gave Israel much of what it wanted including control over all of Jerusalem and the annexation of West Bank settlements. The plan effectively created a system of Bantustans and land annexations that cemented an already ongoing policy of *de facto* apartheid into *de jure* apartheid, and giving Palestinians semi-autonomy while simultaneously having them remain under full Israeli security control (the Bantustan system comparison was made by former Israeli ambassadors to South Africa, Ilan Baruch and Alon Liel.)³⁰⁴ Arab leaders were put in a peculiar position, on the one hand they wanted to maintain their close relationship and security protection from Washington while avoiding falling out of favor by outright condemning the plan; on the other hand, they were fully aware that they would receive public backlash from their own citizens if they supported a plan that did not include a Palestinian state.

Arab leaders were forced to play a balancing act towards the peace plan. After the unveiling of the deal, Riyadh reiterated their support for the Palestinians saying it was "steadfast" and that it appreciated the American efforts for peace. Abu Dhabi called it "an important starting point", while Cairo said it deserved closer examination, Qatar welcomed the initiative but stressed its support for a Palestinian state and Jordan reiterated their commitment to a Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders.³⁰⁵ Many

³⁰⁴ See Ilan Baruch and Alon Liel "It's apartheid, say Israeli ambassadors to South Africa," *The Ground Up*, June 8, 2021, <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/israeli-ambassadors-compare-israel-south-africa/>.

³⁰⁵ "Arab states in perilous balancing act on US peace plan." *Al Monitor*, January 29, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/contents/afp/2020/01/israel-palestinians-conflict-us-diplomacy-mideast.html>.

experts acknowledged that these reactions were expected. Abdallah al-Chayeji, a political science professor at the University of Kuwait, noted that the nearly uniform stances are forged by a desire to align with Washington against the perceived threat posed by Iran. Ahmed Abd Rabou, a visiting assistant professor at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, described the responses of Riyadh and Cairo as "very conservative", and that "they simply didn't want to upset Trump whom they ally with, but they can't upset the general public as well, so they decided to go for a middle-ground solution."³⁰⁶

A major development occurred in the Summer of 2020 when two Gulf Arab nations announced they were normalizing relations with Israel. On August 13th, 2020 the United Arab Emirates and Israel announced the establishment of full diplomatic ties between the two nations.³⁰⁷ This marked only the third Arab country to publicly announce relations with Israel, following Egypt and Jordan. In exchange for the deal, Netanyahu simply had to agree to "suspend" the planned annexation of parts of the West Bank. The wording hints that annexation is not completely off the table, but is something that could be revisited in the future. Relations between the UAE and Israel were not new, the two countries have had backdoor diplomacy for years.³⁰⁸ However, the UAE-Israel deal shifted the order of Middle East politics, expanding the anti-Iran coalition in the

³⁰⁶ "Arab states in perilous balancing act on US peace plan." *Al Monitor*, January 29, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/contents/afp/2020/01/israel-palestinians-conflict-us-diplomacy-mideast.html>.

³⁰⁷ See Maha El Dahan, et al., "Israel, UAE to normalize relations in shift in Mideast politics; West Bank annexations on hold," *Reuters*, August 13th, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-emirates-trump/israel-uae-agree-to-normalise-relations-with-help-from-trump-idUSKCN25926W>.

³⁰⁸ For more on the history of UAE-Israeli diplomatic ties see Mohamed Mohamed, "Normalization at the expense of Palestinians," *The Jerusalem Fund*, August 14, 2020, <https://thejerusalemfund.org/36800/normalization-at-the-expense-of-palestinians>.

region and opened the door for the UAE to purchase additional military weapons from the United States.³⁰⁹

Shortly after the UAE-Israel announcement, Bahrain followed suit. Once again, without Israel making any concessions or progress towards peace with the Palestinians, Bahrain announced the establishment of full diplomatic ties with Israel on September 11, 2020.³¹⁰ President Trump announced the deal via Twitter while simultaneously releasing a joint statement by the United States, Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Israel (see image 5.2.) All this culminated in the signing of the *Abraham Accords* agreement at the White House on September 15th, 2020.³¹¹

³⁰⁹ See “Israel-UAE deal could open up U.S. weapons sales to Gulf kingdom, experts say,” *Reuters*, August 14, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-emirates-usa-arms/israel-uae-deal-could-open-up-u-s-weapons-sales-to-gulf-kingdom-experts-say-idUSKCN25A2VI> and Amanda Macias, “Peace deal between UAE and Israel could lead to more U.S. arms business, GOP Sen. Tom Cotton says,” *CNBC*, August 18, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/18/uae-and-israel-deal-could-lead-to-more-us-arms-business-tom-cotton-says.html>.

³¹⁰ See “Bahrain follows UAE to normalise ties with Israel,” *Al Jazeera*, September 11, 2020, last modified September 12, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/09/israel-bahrain-agree-establish-full-diplomatic-ties-200911171014685.html> and “Trump announces 'peace deal' between Bahrain and Israel,” *BBC News*, September 11, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54124996>.

³¹¹ Gordon Lubold and Felicia Schwartz, “U.S., Israel, U.A.E., Bahrain Sign Peace Accord,” *Wall Street Journal*, last updated September 15, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-israel-u-a-e-bahrain-sign-peace-accord-11600191303?mod=djem10point>.



Donald J. Trump 
@realDonaldTrump



Joint Statement of the United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the State of Israel

Joint Statement of the United States, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the State of Israel

President Donald J. Trump, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel spoke today and agreed to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This is a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East. Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region.

The United States expresses its gratitude to the Kingdom of Bahrain for hosting the historic Peace to Prosperity workshop in Manama on June 25, 2019, to advance the cause of peace, dignity, and economic opportunity for the Palestinian people. The parties will continue their efforts in this regard to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to enable the Palestinian people to realize their full potential. Israel affirmed that as set forth in the Vision for Peace, all Muslims who come in peace may visit and pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem's other holy sites will remain open for peaceful worshippers of all faiths.

King Hamad and Prime Minister Netanyahu express their deep appreciation to President Trump for his dedication to peace in the region, his focus on shared challenges, and the pragmatic and unique approach he has taken to bringing their nations together.

The parties commend the United Arab Emirates and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed for his leadership on August 13, 2020, in announcing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also accepted President Trump's invitation to join Israel and the United Arab Emirates at the historic signing ceremony on September 15, 2020, at the White House where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani of Bahrain will be signing a historic Declaration of Peace.

1:00 PM · 11 Sep 20 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

Image 5.2

Source: Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Twitter, September 11, 2020, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304464848831631361?s=20>.

The signing of these peace deals would soon create a domino effect in the region, pushing other Arab states to take advantage of the political opportunity and join the Abraham Accords. On October 23rd, 2020, Israel and Sudan opened economic ties as a pathway towards normalized relations. In return, the United States removed Sudan from an American list of state sponsors of terrorism.³¹² Likewise, on December 10th, 2020, just weeks before President Trump was set to leave office, Morocco agreed to a

³¹² Lara Jakes et al., "Trump announces Sudan will move to normalize relations with Israel," *New York Times*, last updated December 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/23/world/middleeast/sudan-israel-trump-terrorism.html>.

rapprochement with Israel in return for American recognition of Moroccan sovereignty over the disputed Western Sahara territory.³¹³

These agreements further highlight the changing dynamics surrounding power relations in the Middle East. The anti-Iran coalition forming between the U.S, Israel and Arab Gulf states continues to isolate Tehran and further complicates the relationship between the Palestinian diaspora and Middle East states. These states have also been motivated by economic and technological motivations, as well as weapon sales incentives.³¹⁴

As Arab gulf states become preoccupied with domestic matters, changing spheres of influence in the region and the geopolitical challenge of Iran (much of which correlates with their recent decision to enter into ‘peace’ deals with Israel), the Palestinians and Palestinian diaspora have considered the agreements a betrayal of the Palestinian movement.³¹⁵

Other states in the Middle East, such as Turkey, have taken different approaches. One of the most ardent supporters of the Palestinian cause has been Turkey, especially under the leadership of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The last few years have seen a growing political and economic relationship between Palestinians and Ankara. Turkey plays host to a number of Palestinians who have been exiled and now reside in

³¹³ See Lara Jakes et al., “Morocco joins list of Arab nations to begin normalizing relations with Israel,” *New York Times*, December 10, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/10/world/middleeast/israel-morocco-trump.html>.

³¹⁴ See AP, TOI staff and Jacob Magid, “Pompeo announces \$23b sale of F-35s, other arms to UAE, links it to Israel peace,” *Times of Israel*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pompeo-announces-sale-of-f-35s-to-uae-links-move-to-israel-accord/>.

³¹⁵ See Elad Benari, “Abbas: Israel-UAE agreement 'a stab in the back',” *Israel National News*, August 19, 2020, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/285518>.

the country. Turkey is also a major trade and economic partner with the Palestinians, having dedicated over \$10 million in grant money to the Palestinians as well as an annual humanitarian aid budget between \$10 and \$20 million, and with annual trade between them worth around \$400 million.³¹⁶

In February of 2017, a Palestinians Abroad conference was held in Istanbul. The conference was a gathering of over 4,000 men and women from 50 different countries, all representing the Palestinian diaspora.³¹⁷ The idea of a mass gathering of the Palestinian diaspora had been discussed for some time and the Turkish government welcomed the opportunity to host. A major theme of the conference was diaspora involvement in a solution to the conflict, the level of which seems to hold different generational viewpoints. While the older generation seems more attached to the idea that the PLO should remain the umbrella representation for all Palestinians, younger Palestinians seem to crave a new beginning, one that creates new leadership in Palestine and pursues new approaches divorced from the Oslo accords.³¹⁸ Whatever approach is encouraged, one thing remains clear, the current approach by Palestinian leadership has not been successful in achieving national statehood aspirations.

Another influential event within the matrix of Palestinian-Turkish-Israeli relations was the *Mavi Marmara* case. In May 2010, Israeli naval forces stormed the *Mavi Marmara* ship, which was part of a flotilla headed to Gaza to provide its residents with

³¹⁶ Adnan Abu Amer, "Turkey-Palestine relations are growing," *Middle East Monitor*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190529-turkey-palestine-relations-are-growing/>.

³¹⁷ Daud Abdullah, "A challenge from the Palestinian diaspora," *Middle East Monitor*, February 26, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170226-a-challenge-from-the-palestinian-diaspora/>.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

much needed aid and supplies. While it was going to attempt to break Israel's blockade of Gaza, the flotilla was still in international waters when Israeli naval forces intercepted and boarded the ship.³¹⁹ The raid resulted in the killing of ten activists by Israeli commandos, giving the incident international attention and leading to a temporary rift in Turkish-Israeli relations.

Needless to say, Palestinians and the Palestinian diaspora have enjoyed strong support from Turkey. This support is widespread across the political spectrum as Turkey maintains relations with Fatah, Hamas and allows major gatherings of the Palestinian diaspora within its borders. As this chapter has illustrated, Palestinian relations with Arab states and non-Arab states in the Middle East is a complicated one. While nearly all have publicly voiced their support for the Palestinians, their actions help decipher a different tale of strategic and pragmatic approaches to the Palestinian question. While nations in the Middle East play a back and forth game between the Palestinians, Israel and Washington D.C., some western nations, especially those in Europe, have also been re-evaluating their approach toward the Palestinian question.

EUROPE AND THE POLITICS OF PALESTINE

Europe has played a significant role in the Palestinian-Israeli encounter. However, as dynamics evolve within the conflict, several nations in Europe have altered their approach when dealing with Palestinian rights, much of which is largely owed to the Palestinian diaspora. Several commentators have argued that Britain in large part holds some accountability for the current status quo and impasse between Israelis and

³¹⁹ For a detailed account of this event see Robert Booth, "Israeli attack on Gaza flotilla sparks international outrage," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/31/israeli-attacks-gaza-flotilla-activists>.

Palestinians. As Arab nations are beginning to open up to the idea of normalizing relations with Israel, many European nations have recently been reversing course, passing policies that increase pressure on Israel and hold it accountable for its human rights violations against Palestinians.

One European country leading the charge has been Ireland. In 2018, independent Irish Senator Frances Black introduced the “Occupied Territories Bill” (or officially the “Control of Economic Activity Bill”) in the Irish parliament. Senator Black acted as a huge proponent of the bill and pushed for its passage (see image 5.3). The bill, aimed at banning the purchase of goods and services from illegal Israeli settlements, was passed by both the upper house (the Senate) and lower house (the Dail) of the Irish parliament, marking a major win in Irish-Palestinian solidarity.³²⁰ The bill would impose fines on merchants in Ireland who sell products from illegal settlements in the West Bank, Golan Heights or East Jerusalem. However, on the heels of this monumental legislation, the new Irish government which took over in 2020 did not implement the bill, leaving out mention of the legislation in their 126-page government program, while simultaneously reaffirming their commitment to the two state solution and a peaceful settlement between sides.³²¹

³²⁰ See “Irish lower house passes bill to ban Israeli settlement goods,” *Al Jazeera*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/irish-parliament-votes-favour-bill-ban-settlement-goods-190125080743863.html>.

³²¹ “Settlement boycott bill left out of new Irish government’s plans,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/settlement-boycott-bill-left-out-of-new-irish-governments-plans-631660>.



Image 5.3

Source: Frances Black (@frances_black), Twitter, December 5, 2018.

The British Labour Party in the UK has also made symbolic strides in Palestinian solidarity. In September of 2019, the party voted in favor of a motion that would have saw Britain cease trade with Israel if it did not begin to comply with international human rights laws.³²² The motion would have gone into effect if the Labor Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn at the time, won the general election and the motion was adopted in UK's Parliament. However, the Conservative party, led by Boris Johnson, won the elections essentially branding the motion as more symbolic than anything.

³²² "UK Labour Party votes to stop arms trade with Israel," *Middle East Monitor*, September 24, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190924-uk-labour-party-votes-to-stop-arms-trade-with-israel/>.

In November of 2019, the European Court of Justice ruled that European Union (EU) states must label products from Israeli settlements.³²³ The ruling marked another win for pro-Palestinian activists. Shortly after the ruling, the Dutch parliament tabled a motion calling on the Dutch government to not implement the ruling by the European Court of Justice arguing that it unfairly targeted Israel. The Dutch government rejected parliament's allegations, emphasizing its commitment to EU regulations saying they are meant to help European consumers make more informed decisions about the products they purchase.³²⁴

In December of 2019, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Jean Asselborn, called on European Union member states to recognize a Palestinian state after the U.S. shifted its position on the legality of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.³²⁵ In the letter written by Asselborn, he remarked "The recognition of Palestine as a state would neither be a favour, nor a blank check, but a simple recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to their own state. In no way would it be directed against Israel. Indeed, if we want to contribute to solving the conflict between Israel and Palestine, we must never lose sight

³²³ See Noa Landau and DPA, "EU States Must Label Products From Israeli Settlements, Top Court Says," *Haaretz*, November 12, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/premium-eu-states-must-identify-products-from-israeli-settlements-top-court-says-1.8119332>.

³²⁴ Noa Landau, "Dutch Gov't Defends Labeling Israeli Settlement Products Despite Challenge From Parliament," *Haaretz*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-dutch-gov-t-defends-labeling-settlement-products-despite-challenge-from-parliament-1.8188823>.

³²⁵ See "Luxembourg pushes for recognition of 'Palestine' after US shift on settlements," *Jewish News Syndicate*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.jns.org/luxembourg-pushes-for-recognition-of-palestine-following-us-policy-shift-on-settlements/>.

of Israel's security conditions, as well as of justice and dignity for the Palestinian people."³²⁶

Elements of European solidarity with Palestine has not only exhibited itself at the state level, but increasingly so at the grassroots level. "Memories of Palestine: Stories from Palestinians in the Diaspora" is an online based blog/archive founded by Frank Ostyn in Gent, Belgium.³²⁷ Mr. Ostyn started *Memories of Palestine* because he felt that the stories of Palestinians in the diaspora needed to be recorded, told and retold. The project aims to keep the stories of Palestinians in the diaspora alive and explores interviewees stories about leaving Palestine, their memories of Palestine and what it's like to live in a new homeland. Once a year, Mr. Ostyn travels to a new city with a Palestinian community and meets with people who are willing to share their stories.

In 2018, Swedish activist Benjamin Ladraa commenced a 5,000km walk from Sweden to Palestine to raise awareness about human rights violations in the occupied territories.³²⁸ I had the pleasure of personally meeting Mr. Ladraa and talked to him about his experience during the journey. He remarked that each day of his expedition was different and that sometimes locals and activists he met along the way would offer him money, food and a place to rest at night. Mr. Ladraa's journey is documented through his Facebook and Instagram accounts, @solidarityrising and #walktopalestine respectively.

³²⁶ "Luxembourg pushes for recognition of 'Palestine' after US shift on settlements," *Jewish News Syndicate*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.jns.org/luxembourg-pushes-for-recognition-of-palestine-following-us-policy-shift-on-settlements/>.

³²⁷ See <https://memoriesofpalestine.com>.

³²⁸ "Walk to Palestine: Activist walking 5,000km," *Al Jazeera*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/walk-palestine-activist-walk-5000-kilometers-180210120435856.html>.

Today, Mr. Ladraa continues his activism work by taking part in campaigns to promote Palestinian rights and giving lectures in Europe and the United States on his experience.

European grassroots organizations have also been at the forefront of multiple *Freedom Flotilla* missions. Flotillas have been trying to access Gaza since Israel imposed an illegal blockade on the territory in 2008. No international ship has reached the port since. Despite the dangers, evidenced by Israel's attack on the Mavi Marmara in 2010 and resulting deaths of passengers onboard, European activists continue their attempts to break Israel's illegal blockade of Gaza and deliver vital food and medical supplies to residents in the strip. In July of 2018, a four-ship Freedom Flotilla set sail with stops in multiple European ports along its tour before ending in Gaza. One of the vessels, named "Al Awda" (*The Return*) began its voyage in Bergen, Norway before stopping in Gothenburg, Sweden and eventually linked up with three other boats in Copenhagen, Denmark before continuing on through the Mediterranean to Gaza.³²⁹ Ann Wright, a co-coordinator of the U.S. campaign supporting the fleet, said that the flotilla intended to "give hope to the people of Gaza that they are not forgotten by the international community," and to raise awareness of the conditions and humanitarian crisis in the strip.³³⁰

As the above cases have highlighted, Europe has been on the leading edge of a shift in public opinion towards the Palestinian question and how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is approached. Needless to say, even with these positive developments in

³²⁹ David Brennan, "Humanitarians on the High Seas: Freedom Flotilla Sets Sail for Gaza," *Newsweek*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/humanitarians-high-seas-freedom-flotilla-sets-sail-gaza-929083>.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

European approaches towards the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, much more can and still needs to be done. For instance, as Israel announced formal plans to annex parts of the West Bank in the Summer of 2020, Avi Shlaim argued in an opinion piece that it was the perfect time for Britain to put pressure on Israel by recognizing a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and helping to right the wrongs of the Balfour Declaration and have Britain end up on the right side of history.³³¹ Not only should Britain fulfill this action, but it should be matched by all European countries and the EU, and should be advocated from across the political spectrum. By taking such action, not only would it be a symbolic gesture of support for Palestinian human rights, it could also pressure Israel to comply with international law and end its decades long occupation of Palestinian territory.

³³¹ Avi Shlaim, "By recognizing Palestine, Britain can help right the wrongs of the Balfour declaration," *Guardian*, June 22, 2020, https://amp.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/22/palestine-britain-balfour-declaration-colonialism-uk-israeli-annexations?CMP=share_btn_tw&__twitter_impression=true.

CHAPTER VI: THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, DOMESTIC POLITICS, AND A CHANGING DISCOURSE

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict's framing within the American political sphere is an important factor insofar as its influence within the normative-social structure.

Diaspora groups have a long history of influencing both U.S. foreign policy towards their homelands, but also U.S. domestic politics. Examples include the Cuban diaspora, which highly influence both U.S. domestic and foreign policy, especially in South Florida. Other examples include Jewish, Haitian and Iraqi diaspora populations.

While the U.S. has historically held a pro-Israel tilt, grassroots organizing has slowly challenged this status quo. The following chapter examines the intricate relationship between American politics and the Palestinian question and argues that discourse in the United States towards Israel-Palestine has shifted in recent years. This shift has been most dramatic at the grassroots/social level, although certain elements at the state level have also followed. More specifically, this chapter begins by giving a short overview of U.S. foreign policy towards Israel-Palestine under the Obama and Trump administrations. This serves as a reference point and provides context for the current state of the U.S. domestic policy debate towards Israel-Palestine. From there, it analyzes important debates such as the question of U.S. aid to Israel and the BDS movement within the U.S. political arena. Finally, it concludes by arguing that changing dynamics and a discursive shift are taking place in the U.S. at the non-state level that continue to influence the normative-social structure in favor of Palestinian advocacy and the Palestinian narrative. These dynamics will continue to impact the future of the U.S.-Palestine relationship, especially in regards to the United States' foreign policy approach.

Edward Said, as far back as 1979, highlighted the double standard within the U.S. media when discussing Israel and Palestine. When Israel takes action, it is viewed within the framework of “being necessary” or “critical for security”. Conversely, when Palestinians take action it is placed with a context of “violence or terrorism”, or “counterproductive to the peace process.” Said also notably mentions the treatment of Arabs within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and how this information is diffused in American media (or its lack thereof). “No liberal would be silenced from championing the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union, or Chile, or Africa. Yet when it comes to similar matters in Israel, there is almost total silence”.³³²

In his 1979 account, Said aptly noted:

“For years now the Israeli League of Human Rights has been diffusing information on such matters as the demolition of Arab houses, the expropriation of Arab lands, the treatment of Arab workers, torture and illegal detention of Arabs- all cases documented principally by translations of articles in Israeli journals and newspapers. None of these items ever sees the light of day in the United States.... There are literally tens of Israeli news services, liberal newsletters, and liberal quarterlies regularly covering treatment of Arab Palestinians both inside pre-1967 Israel and in the Occupied Territories- to say nothing of United Nations reports, accounts written by former UN border and armistice supervisors, reports of international agencies like Amnesty International, the Red Cross, dozens of Arab and Arab-American studies- none of which is ever released for wide distribution and dissemination in the United States.”³³³

Even in contemporary times, this issue is still ongoing within American political discourse and especially in mainstream American media. Even when credible and legitimate criticisms of Israel are made among public figures or academics, or any person with a reasonable amount of influence, the reaction against that individual is swift and

³³² Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), 42.

³³³ Ibid.

harsh. Such recent examples include Marc Lamont Hill, Angela Davis and Kamila Shamsie (see chapter 4).

American media networks aside, U.S.-Palestinian relations at the state level have had a turbulent history. The PLO and its creation represented a considerable transformation in how the Palestinian question was viewed. On the one hand, the movement was symbolic of resistance, revolutionary vision, and anti-imperialist ideals. However, as the PLO grew and institutionalized over time, it began to reflect the early makings of a national state; a secular democratic state. This was the PLO's most important achievement, as Edward Said explains, the PLO represents Palestinians and makes a place for Palestinians anywhere, and despite the shortcomings of its policies or leadership, the PLO keeps the Palestinian question alive.³³⁴ However, due to its designation as a *terrorist organization* in the United States, it was very difficult for the PLO to engage in direct relations with the United States. Only after the Oslo accords were signed did the United States begin to have formal and normalized relations with the PLO. Even after the signing of the Oslo Accords, the attacks on U.S. soil on September 11th, 2001 continued to create difficulties for Palestinian advocacy. It wouldn't be until the election of President Barack Obama that hope for a new U.S. approach towards the Middle East would take place, a hope that would quickly diminish.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION (2009-2016)

The Palestinian diaspora and Palestine advocates thought that the election of President Barack Obama would bring about a significant shift in the U.S. approach

³³⁴ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1992), 165.

towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (and the Middle East region in general). During his presidential campaign in 2008, President Barack Obama stated, “no one is suffering more than the Palestinian people.” After making those comments, he was immediately met with warnings that he may be ceding pro-Israel votes to his main rival, Hillary Clinton.³³⁵ The early days of Obama’s candidacy seemed hopeful- Obama had previously come into contact with Dr. Rashid Khalidi while he was a community organizer in Chicago (suggesting he may have a slight understanding of the “Palestinian perspective” of the conflict), and in a 2008 campaign speech before AIPAC he endorsed a two-state solution. After his election, Obama appointed former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (an Arab American of Lebanese decent) as his special representative for the Middle East and who was considered relatively balanced on the Arab-Israeli conflict.³³⁶ In June 2009, Obama delivered a landmark speech at Cairo University in which he called for “a new beginning” between the United States and the Middle East.³³⁷

The early actions of Obama’s administration inspired hope among Palestinians that the pro-Israel tilt of the peace process teams under Clinton and Bush would change under Obama. In Obama’s first meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in May 2009, Obama remarked that “the establishment of a Palestinian state is a

³³⁵ Michael C. Hudson, “Palestine in the American Political Arena: Is a “Reset” Possible?,” in *Palestine and the Palestinians in the 21st Century*, ed. Rochelle Davis and Mimi Kirk (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 195.

³³⁶ Ibid: 202.

³³⁷ For a transcript of President Obama’s Cairo speech see Remarks by the President at Cairo University, June 4, 2009, The White House, President Barack Obama Archives, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.

must for me personally,” and Palestinian lead negotiator Saeb Erekat pronounced to his staff that “the Washington I went to last week isn’t the Washington I knew before.”³³⁸

The optimism surrounding an Obama administration peace process quickly faded once Obama’s shift in rhetoric failed to carry over into policy. During the December 2008 Israeli bombing of Gaza (just a month before he took office), Obama was unwilling to outright criticize Israel for its brutal tactics. He choose Hillary Clinton, a hawkish supporter of Israel, as his Secretary of State, and failed to stand up to AIPAC when the group attacked Ambassador Chas Freeman, Obama’s pick for head of the National Intelligence Council. When Obama criticized Israel’s policy of settlement expansion, a defiant Netanyahu announced new settlement projects on the eve of a March 2010 visit by then Vice President Joe Biden, at which the president was reportedly furious about but took no action to underscore his discontent. Rather, in February 2011 he vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the settlements.³³⁹ Obama’s inability to stand up to the Israel lobby, put pressure on Israel to halt settlement construction or consider threatening Israel with sanctions illustrates his administration’s continuation of a bias U.S.-brokered peace process.

President Obama also had to deal with a new dynamic in the Middle East, the Arab Spring of 2011 and the popular democratic aspirations of citizens in Arab countries. Obama offered verbal support for the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and

³³⁸ See “Meeting Minutes: Dr. Saeb Erakat Meeting with the Negotiations Support Unit,” diplomatic correspondence, *The Palestine Papers*, Al Jazeera, June 2, 2009, <http://transparency.aljazeera.net/files/4625.pdf>.

³³⁹ See Michael C. Hudson, “Palestine in the American Political Arena: Is a “Reset” Possible?,” in *Palestine and the Palestinians in the 21st Century*, ed. Rochelle Davis and Mimi Kirk (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 202-203.

Libya. Obama then returned his attention to the decades long struggle of the Palestinians, stating during a speech that “the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps.”³⁴⁰ The reaction by Netanyahu and pro-Israel supporters was swift and defiant, openly declaring that Israel would accept no such thing (even though the borders of 1967 are a fundamental parameter for peace negotiations as set out by UNSC resolution 242). This, combined with the Syrian civil war and Iran nuclear deal, would result in a difficult period of relations between the Middle East and United States; and especially the Obama-Netanyahu relationship. While the media would create a narrative of Netanyahu and Obama having strained relations (which was true in some respects), in practice, Obama showed strong support for Israel. While Netanyahu continued to undermine Obama’s foreign policy approach towards the region at every turn, during his tenure Obama would increase U.S. aid to Israel from \$30 billion over 10 years to \$38 billion over 10 years and continued to protect Israel by exercising the U.S. veto power at the United Nations Security Council.

When retrospectively analyzed, the Obama administration ultimately served as Israel’s protector at the U.N., supported Israel’s ongoing illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip and boosted military aid and cooperation with Israel to unprecedented levels.³⁴¹ The administration also made a concerted effort to block a Palestinian bid for statehood and

³⁴⁰ Michael C. Hudson, “Palestine in the American Political Arena: Is a “Reset” Possible?,” in *Palestine and the Palestinians in the 21st Century*, ed. Rochelle Davis and Mimi Kirk (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 204.

³⁴¹ For a detailed analysis of the Obama administration’s policy towards Israel and Palestine see Josh Ruebner, “Obama’s Legacy on Israel/Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 1. (Autumn 2016): 50-64, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2016.46.1.50>.

full membership in the UN.³⁴² It wouldn't be until his last days in office that Obama would break from decades of U.S. policy at the U.N. and allow the passage of a resolution condemning Israeli settlements (although the U.S. would only abstain from the vote).

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION (2017-2020)

Under the Trump administration, the U.S.-Palestinian relationship would significantly begin to deteriorate. Trump drastically shifted U.S. policy heavily in favor of Israel, and while making many of the same promises as presidential candidates before him (i.e. proposing a new peace plan, moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem,) unlike his predecessors Trump would follow through on many of these promises.

After just one month in office, President Trump announced that his administration would drop the long-standing U.S. commitment to a two-state solution and would be open to a possible one-state solution. His comments created much uncertainty regarding what a one-state solution would look like: would it be a bi-national state with equality for all its citizens or an apartheid state with Arabs treated as second-class citizens?

Following his election, Trump appointed his son-in-law Jared Kushner as a senior advisor in the White House, raising questions about nepotism. Kushner was put in charge of the Trump administrations Middle East peace process, even though he had no former diplomatic experience or experience in the Middle East. His personal ties with Benjamin Netanyahu and family's business dealings with Israeli companies also raised concerns regarding his ability to serve as an honest and unbiased broker in the peace process.

³⁴² Josh Ruebner, "Obama's Legacy on Israel/Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 1. (Autumn 2016): 57, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2016.46.1.50>.

Kushner's family real estate company had ongoing business deals with major Israeli financial institutions as well as links to the settler movement in the West Bank.³⁴³ On March 29, 2017, David Friedman, Trump's nomination as U.S. ambassador to Israel, was sworn in.³⁴⁴ Friedman had been a vocal supporter of building illegal settlements on Palestinian land. His nomination raised concerns that the Trump administration's approach towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would take a heavy tilt towards favoring Israel, however, his appointment was welcomed by the Israeli right.

Trump's first major decision impacting the conflict would happen on December 6, 2017. Trump announced that his administration would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and began plans to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.³⁴⁵ Breaking with decades of U.S. policy, the controversial move was condemned by the international community and especially by the Palestinians. The American embassy officially relocated to Jerusalem and opened on May 14, 2018, a tribute to the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, but marked by Palestinians as the *nakba* or "catastrophe".³⁴⁶ As the dedication ceremony was taking place in Jerusalem to mark the occasion, Israeli forces shot live ammunition rounds at Palestinian protestors near the

³⁴³ See Daniel Estrin, "Trump son-in-law's ties to Israel raise questions of bias," *Times of Israel*, March 25, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-son-in-laws-ties-to-israel-raise-questions-of-bias/#gs.g7mqax>.

³⁴⁴ See "Ambassador David Melech Friedman," U.S. Embassy in Israel, accessed September 22, 2020, <https://il.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/our-ambassador/>.

³⁴⁵ See Mark Landler, "Trump Recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's Capital and Orders U.S. Embassy to Move," *New York Times*, December 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/06/world/middleeast/trump-jerusalem-israel-capital.html>.

³⁴⁶ See Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "Jerusalem Embassy Is a Victory for Trump, and a Complication for Middle East Peace," *New York Times*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/14/us/politics/trump-jerusalem-embassy-middle-east-peace.html>.

Gaza-Israel border. The celebration ceremony was a glaring contrast to the violence taking place just a few miles away. By days end, over 50 Palestinians had been killed and more than 1,350 were wounded by gun fire.³⁴⁷

The decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital broke with decades of U.S. precedent, U.N. resolutions and countered the foundation of the Oslo Accords which recognize East Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian state. In response, President Abbas and the Palestinians ceased all communications with the Trump administration. Trump was furious by the move, and in a series of tweets threatened to cut off all aid to the Palestinians (see image 6.1). At the time, U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority stood at about \$300 million a year. By comparison, the U.S. was giving Israel annual military aid in the amount of about \$3.1 billion (which was set to increase in 2019 to \$3.8 billion a year.)



Image 6.1

Source: Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Twitter, January 2, 2018, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948322497602220032?s=20>.

³⁴⁷ David M. Halbfinger et al. “Israel Kills Dozens at Gaza Border as U.S. Embassy Opens in Jerusalem,” *New York Times*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/14/world/middleeast/gaza-protests-palestinians-us-embassy.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>.

Trump would make good on his threat, and in January 2018 the United States announced it would withhold \$65 million out of a \$125 million aid package to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (or UNRWA).³⁴⁸ The move was a major setback for the organization, which offers support in the form of food, education, jobs, healthcare and social services to thousands of Palestinian refugees. The cuts would not end there; in August of 2018 President Trump ordered the State Department to redirect over \$200 million budgeted for development aid to the Palestinians to unspecified “high-priority projects elsewhere.”³⁴⁹ The money was intended to aid Palestinians with good governance, education, health and funding for social services, causing further strain on the resources of the Palestinian Authority. Just days after this announcement, on August 31, 2018, the Trump administration announced it was cutting off all funding to UNRWA, a move that many interpreted as an attempt to delegitimize Palestinian refugees and to counter a main sticking point in peace negotiations- the right of return.³⁵⁰ Trump wouldn’t stop there, nearly a week later his administration continued its chain of monetary cuts when it slashed \$25 million in aid to Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ “US cuts UNRWA funding by more than half,” *Al Jazeera*, January 17, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/17/us-cuts-unrwa-funding-by-more-than-half/>.

³⁴⁹ “US cuts over \$200m in aid to Palestinians,” *Al Jazeera*, August 24, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/24/us-cuts-over-200m-in-aid-to-palestinians/>.

³⁵⁰ Peter Beaumont and Oliver Holmes, “US confirms end to funding for UN Palestinian refugees,” *The Guardian*, August 31, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/31/trump-to-cut-all-us-funding-for-uns-main-palestinian-refugee-programme>.

³⁵¹ “Trump cuts \$25 million in aid for Palestinians in East Jerusalem hospitals,” *Reuters*, September 8, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-palestinians-hospitals/trump-cuts-25-million-in-aid-for-palestinians-in-east-jerusalem-hospitals-idUSKCN1LO000>.

Trump's assault on Palestinians continued when in September 2018 the PLO office in Washington D.C. was forced to close.³⁵² This caused the Palestinians to lose their only official representation in Washington D.C. By the start of 2019, the U.S. had effectively cut off all aid to the Palestinians and halted nearly all diplomatic communications.³⁵³ The chain of aid cuts mostly hurt already vulnerable Palestinians and worried experts and the international community due to its potential to cause further poverty, anger and instability in the region. Trump's strategy seemed to be one of "monetary asphyxiation." The strategy suggested that the United States was using aid allocation as a political tool to force the Palestinians back to the "negotiating" table. By cutting funding, Trump was attempting to place monetary pressure on the Palestinians, hoping it would result in the Palestinian leadership succumbing to U.S. and Israeli demands to enter into peace talks. The message became 'accept our terms or we will cut your funding.' The moves by the Trump administration also served as an abdication of any American impartiality in leading peace talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Palestinians responded by reaffirming their commitment to their struggle for national sovereignty and their rights. In a statement, PLO Executive Committee member Hanan Ashrawi responded, "The rights of the Palestinian people are not for sale... there is no glory in constantly bullying and punishing a people under occupation. The U.S.

³⁵² See "Trump administration announces closure of Washington PLO office," *Al Jazeera*, September 10, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/trump-administration-close-plo-office-washington-dc-180910064915646.html>.

³⁵³ See Joseph Krauss, "US aid cuts hit Palestinians, further dimming hope for peace," *Associated Press*, January 22, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/3fad5d9e1fb94159a95decb08623e7d2> and Yolande Knell, "US stops all aid to Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza," *BBC News*, February 1st, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-middle-east-47095082?__twitter_impression=true.

administration has already demonstrated meanness of spirit in its collusion with the Israeli occupation and its theft of land and resources; now it is exercising economic meanness by punishing the Palestinian victims of this occupation.”³⁵⁴

The Trump administration continued to undermine the peace process and break with international norms when the U.S. State Department, under Secretary Mike Pompeo, dropped the word “occupied” when referring to the Golan Heights and West Bank in its annual human rights report. On March 25th, 2019 the U.S. government officially recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.³⁵⁵ In January 2020, the administration unveiled its “Peace to Prosperity” plan to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Not only was the plan devised without a single Palestinian present, the roadmap did not even include an independent Palestinian state.³⁵⁶ Rather, it solidified an apartheid-like reality similar to that which had occurred in South Africa. The South African analogy was so similar to the situation in Israel-Palestine that it triggered Alon Liel, (Israel’s former ambassador to South Africa from 1992-1994,) to write a piece explicitly comparing the plan to the Bantustan-style apartheid he witnessed in South Africa. Liel recalls of the close security cooperation between Israel and the apartheid regime in

³⁵⁴ See “US cuts over \$200m in aid to Palestinians,” *Al Jazeera*, August 24, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/24/us-cuts-over-200m-in-aid-to-palestinians/>.

³⁵⁵ For the official proclamation see Donald J. Trump, “Proclamation on Recognizing the Golan Heights as Part of the State of Israel,” [Whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-recognizing-golan-heights-part-state-israel/), March 25, 2019. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-recognizing-golan-heights-part-state-israel/>.

³⁵⁶ The full “Peace to Prosperity” plan can be found here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/peacetoprosperty/>.

South Africa, exclaiming that Bantustans didn't work in South Africa then and won't work elsewhere now.³⁵⁷

During the Trump administration's final days, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo continued to show his extreme bias and support towards Israel and the Israeli right. In the lead up to the 2020 election, Pompeo mixed diplomacy with partisan politics when on a trip to Israel he used Jerusalem as the backdrop for a speech to the Republican National Convention.³⁵⁸ The speech was met with controversy, with those against the move arguing that Pompeo should not be mixing State Department resources to shore up Republican support for Trump's re-election. Pompeo essentially used Jerusalem as a prop to excite Trump's evangelical base. However, a spokesperson from the State Department countered that Pompeo spoke in a "personal capacity" and that no State Department resources were used.³⁵⁹ Pompeo didn't stop there. Just a few weeks after the 2020 U.S. Presidential election and victory by Joe Biden, Secretary of State Pompeo once again visited Israel. During this visit in November 2020, he announced that the United States would henceforth label the boycott-Israel movement as "anti-Semitic," and that goods imported to the United States from illegal settlements in the West Bank would now be marked as "made in Israel." Pompeo also did something unprecedented; he visited the

³⁵⁷ To view the full article see Alon Liel, "Trump's Plan for Palestine Looks a Lot Like Apartheid," *Foreign Policy*, February 27, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/27/trumps-plan-for-palestine-looks-a-lot-like-apartheid/>.

³⁵⁸ See Isabel Kershner and David M. Halbfinger, "On Mideast Trip, Pompeo Mixes Diplomacy With Partisan Politics," *New York Times*, August 24, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/world/middleeast/pompeo-jerusalem-rnc.html>.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

illegal Israeli settlement of Psagot, becoming the highest senior American official to visit an Israeli settlement in the Occupied West Bank.³⁶⁰

The alliance between the U.S. and Israel was incessantly strengthened during the Trump-Netanyahu era, but was void of any moral or ethical foundations and further dimmed future hopes for a just and fair peace agreement between Palestinians and Israelis. Trump's administration was arguably one of the most favorable U.S. administrations towards Israel in recent memory and broke from multiple precedents of previous administrations. The enmity exhibited by the Trump administration towards the Palestinians not only damaged prospects for achieving a solution between Palestinians and Israelis, but also delegitimized the U.S. position as a fair arbitrator in negotiations between the parties.

One discusses the dynamics surrounding these two administrations because it highlights the nature of U.S. policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict at the structural/state level. When juxtaposed to what is taking place at the grassroots/normative level, notable differences can be identified. Through these differences, we can determine how two major political questions in terms of Palestinian advocacy are impacted in the U.S.- U.S. aid to Israel and the BDS movement, and how dynamics surrounding both of these political debates are leading to a changing discourse.

³⁶⁰ See David M. Halbfinger and Isabel Kershner, "Pompeo Visits West Bank Settlement and offers Parting Gifts to Israeli Right," *New York Times*, updated Dec. 3, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/19/world/middleeast/pompeo-bds-golan-heights-west-bank.html>.

U.S. AID TO ISRAEL: SACROSANCT OR DEBATABLE?

Israel is the largest recipient of United States aid dollars, which averaged \$3 billion per year for decades and which currently stands at \$3.8 billion at the time of writing.³⁶¹ Israel has mostly enjoyed bi-partisan support in the United States with most Republicans and Democrats refusing to debate the slightest cut in aid to Israel. It seems the question of U.S. funding to Israel in the halls of congress is supported unconditionally and immune to any human rights violations Israel may commit. The history of debating U.S. aid to Israel in Congress is minimal and there are very few people who have been courageous enough to publicly question the U.S-Israel relationship, especially when it comes to aid dollars.

In the fall of 1979, an amendment circulated Congress proposing a ten percent reduction in U.S. military aid to Israel. Senators in support argued that the ally was misusing U.S. weapons and violating American arms laws by preemptively bombing targets in Lebanon and that a ten percent reduction in aid would be symbolic of American disapproval.³⁶² In the end, no senator offered the amendment. However, on September 25th, after a Senate Appropriation Committee meetup in which a vote was held to cut aid to Pakistan, Senator Mark Hatfield (R-OR) proposed that U.S. law be applied equally, then proposing his amendment to cut aid to Israel by ten percent. An immediate counter came from Senator DeConcini (D-AZ), arguing “Violating the AECA calls for stopping all arms shipments to a country. We’re not going to do that to Israel.” Sensing a quick defeat, Hatfield withdrew his amendment, but ended with “Israel’s priorities are wrong

³⁶¹ See <https://foreignassistance.gov/cd/israel/>.

³⁶² Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans: A History*, (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006), 226.

and we know it. We know why we're enforcing our export law on Pakistan and not Israel. We don't have a Pakistani lobby."³⁶³

Hatfield didn't give up there, on October 11, 1979, he once again offered his amendment in a near empty hall of the Senate.³⁶⁴ It was the first time a reduction in aid tied to Israel and its policies would be voted on by the U.S. Senate. The amendment caused an uproar with Senators rushing to argue against it and reiterate their support for Israel. Only two Senators spoke in favor of Hatfield: Adlai Stevenson (D-IL) and James McClure (R-ID), and only 7 Senators voted in favor of the bill (the amendment was tabled 78-7.) A vote in favor of the amendment cost Senator Gravel (D-AK) his seat the following year, the other six didn't last much longer in the Senate.³⁶⁵

The big issue in the 1980s became that of Israeli settlements. While U.S. aid cuts to Israel had previously been connected to Israel's preemptive bombing of Southern Lebanon, the argument had now shifted by connecting it with Israel's fast-paced settlement construction. On June 17, 1980, Adlai Stevenson offered an amendment to cut aid to Israel by \$150 million over settlements (the amount was based on an estimate of the cost of settlements.)³⁶⁶ Once again, there was near universal condemnation of the proposal in the Senate, with very little space allowed to debate the issue.

While the motion failed, what is significant is that an amendment was proposed in the first place. It was a sign of the first shift in how U.S. aid to Israel was being

³⁶³ Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans: A History*, (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006), 227.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid: 228.

³⁶⁶ Ibid: 230-231.

questioned over Israel's controversial policies, especially that of settlements. The discussion was also migrating to the public sphere. During the first intifada, the ADC conducted a subway ad blitz in Washington placing 350 posters on subways urging riders to "just say no" to unconditional aid to Israel.³⁶⁷ In a January 16th, 1990 op-ed piece in the New York Times, Senator Robert Dole called for a 5% cut in aid appropriation to the "Big Five", which included Israel, Egypt, the Philippines, Turkey, and Pakistan.³⁶⁸ Dole was mostly isolated on the issue (although he did receive support from one senator,) but the fact that a decrease in aid was once again brought up is of symbolic significance. It was again one of the few times U.S. aid to Israel was being brought up within U.S. political discourse, and it also coincided under the first Bush presidency when loan guarantees to Israel were withheld.

As time has passed, the taboo nature of questioning U.S. aid to Israel has begun to slightly shift. While some politicians continue to argue that aid to Israel should continue unabated and without questioning, others are beginning to place the issue of U.S. aid to Israel within the political mainstream conversation, especially among progressives. The elections of Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar in 2018 marked a significant shift in the U.S.-Israel relationship debate. While many have attempted to frame them as inherently "anti-Semitic" or "anti-Israel" because of the simple fact that they are Muslim, both Tlaib and Omar (along with others) have only catapulted a long overdue conversation to the forefront of U.S. domestic politics.

³⁶⁷ Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans: A History*, (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006), 271.

³⁶⁸ Geoffrey Aronson, "Questioning Sacred Cows," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 111.

In fact, the presidential election of 2020 perhaps saw one of the most dramatic shifts in political discourse relating to the U.S-Israel relationship. While Republicans were boasting of their strong and unconditional support for Israel (with Trump’s Secretary of State Pompeo going as far as to use Jerusalem as a prop during the Republican National Convention³⁶⁹), Democrats on the other hand were having a completely different conversation. At liberal Jewish group J Street’s National Conference in 2019, several Democratic presidential candidates said they were open and willing to leverage U.S. aid to Israel in order to pressure the country to stop building new settlements or annex parts of the West Bank.

Senator Bernie Sanders remained steadfast in his support for Palestinians at the conference, suggesting that he would use U.S. aid to Israel as “leverage” and may even go as far as repurposing some of the assistance to Israel as humanitarian aid for Palestinians. Sanders exclaimed, “I would use the leverage- \$3.8 billion is a lot of money, and we cannot give it, carte blanche, to the Israeli government or for that matter to any government at all. We have a right to demand respect for human rights and democracy.”³⁷⁰

Senator Elizabeth Warren also reiterated the need for a two-state solution to the conflict. In her remarks, she said that U.S. assistance to Israel should not be used to annex parts of the West Bank (a threat Benjamin Netanyahu would consistently make during the

³⁶⁹ See previous section on U.S.-Palestinian relations under the Trump Administration for more details.

³⁷⁰ See Ali Harb, “Conditioning US aid to Israel? Here’s what 2020 Democrats had to say about it,” *Middle East Eye*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/US-aid-to-Israel-2020-Democrats-J-Street-conference> and Jodi Rudoren, “At J Street Conference, Democratic Candidates Pressed on Cutting Israel Aid,” *Forward*, October 28, 2019, <https://forward.com/news/national/433839/j-street-israel-aid-buttigieg-castro-klobuchar-bernie-sanders/>.

Trump presidency). The senator also did not rule out the possibility that she would leverage U.S. aid to halt settlement-building.³⁷¹

Similarly, Mayor Pete Buttigieg echoed the same thoughts as Sanders and Warren, declaring that a President Buttigieg wouldn't allow U.S. assistance to be used for settlement expansion or annexation. In fact, a week earlier during a speaking engagement at the University of Chicago, Buttigieg suggested that pressuring Israel to preserve the two-state solution was in its long-term interest and believed that U.S. aid "is leverage to guide Israel in the right direction."³⁷² While not explicitly promising to reduce aid to Israel if he were elected, he did suggest that it was a possibility.

These changing dynamics once again culminated together when in June 2020, four Democratic Members of Congress circulated a letter among their House colleagues warning of political implications that could result from Israel's planned annexation of portions of the West Bank. The letter, addressed to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and circulated by Reps Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Betty McCollum (D-MN), warned that if Israel annexed parts of the West Bank they would "pursue conditions on the \$3.8 billion in U.S. military funding to Israel, including human rights conditions and withholding funds for the off-shore procurement of Israeli weapons equal to or exceeding the amount the Israeli government

³⁷¹ Ali Harb, "Conditioning US aid to Israel? Here's what 2020 Democrats had to say about it," *Middle East Eye*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/US-aid-to-Israel-2020-Democrats-J-Street-conference>.

³⁷² Eric Cortellessa, "Buttigieg: US aid should be used as 'leverage' to change Israeli policies," *Times of Israel*, October 22, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/buttigieg-us-aid-should-be-used-as-leverage-to-change-israeli-policies/>.

spends annually to fund settlements, as well as the policies and practices that sustain and enable them.”³⁷³

Circulated letters such as the one described above are few and far between, especially within the halls of Congress. Moreover, the fact that the debate of U.S. aid to Israel came up during the 2020 presidential cycle, nonetheless at a pro-Israel Jewish organizations event, is of symbolic importance. It shows the shifting landscape of the U.S.-Israel relationship and opens the door for pro-Palestinian advocates to get involved in the political conversation while simultaneously encouraging it. The question of U.S. aid to Israel demands serious inquiry. When U.S. aid is used in creating policies which directly contradict American values and challenge U.S. foreign policy interests, considerations for restrictions to that aid should be made, or at the very least be open for debate.

BDS IN THE U.S.

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement (BDS), has arguably become one of the most popular movements for Pro-Palestinian advocates. Boycotts are perhaps one of the best non-violent methods to enact political change and have been used in multiple rights based movements in history- for instance to end apartheid in South Africa, or segregation on the buses of Jim Crow Montgomery, Alabama. However, the popularity of BDS has not come without consequences. With the potential to threaten Israel economically, BDS quickly became a target on Capitol hill. In 2014, opponents of BDS

³⁷³ Jacob Kornbluh, “Four progressive congresswomen circulate letter threatening to condition aid to Israel over annexation,” *Jewish Insider*, June 29, 2020, <https://jewishinsider.com/2020/06/four-progressive-congresswomen-circulate-letter-threatening-to-condition-aid-to-israel-over-annexation/>. A copy of the letter can also be viewed at the link.

began promoting legislation that would criminalize boycotts of Israel. Some proposed legislation has gone as far as to make it completely illegal to boycott Israel in the United States, even though the right to boycott is constitutionally protected under the first amendment. Other legislation has mandated that Israeli settlements (illegal under international law) be treated as part of sovereign Israel, erasing any distinction between Israel and settlements in the West Bank. This tactic has punished businesses and individuals who may boycott settlements and the occupation, but don't boycott Israel itself.

Anti-BDS laws stifle free speech and potentially open the door for the criminalization of other political movements. These attempts are also among the first in American history to criminalize political boycotts at the federal level. As of March 11, 2020, 30 states have either passed or enacted laws targeting boycotts of Israel and/or Israel & settlements.³⁷⁴ The most perpetuated attack against the BDS movement is the claim that it is anti-Semitic. However, proponents argue that BDS isn't about anti-Semitism, but in fact is a non-violent social justice movement advocating for Palestinian human rights and self-determination. Thus, legislation against BDS isn't attempting to prevent anti-Semitism, but is instead an attempt to combat the Palestinian rights movement which has adopted the tactics of boycott, divestment and sanctions.

In 2017, the 115th Congress (2017-2018) introduced S.170 or the "Combatting BDS Act of 2017." Introduced by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) on January 17th, 2017,

³⁷⁴ For a complete list of states which have passed anti-BDS related bills/laws, see Lara Friedman, "The Stealth Campaign to Use U.S. Law to Support Settlements: Taking the Battle to the States, 2014-2020," Foundation for Middle East Peace, last updated July 14, 2020, <https://fmep.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/State-BDS-and-Settlement-legislation-table.pdf>.

the legislation was read twice and then referred to the committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.³⁷⁵ Two months later, on March 23, 2017, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) introduced S. 720 or the “Israel Anti-Boycott Act” (the House version would become H.R. 1697).³⁷⁶ Perhaps the most shocking aspect of this attempted legislation (besides the attack on Americans free speech) were the included punishments- a person guilty of violating the prohibitions would face a minimum civil penalty of \$250,000 and a maximum criminal penalty of \$1 million and 20 years in prison. It wasn’t until the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) interfered and released an official letter opposing the bill, urging Senators to reconsider their support due to the controversial nature of the proposed law, that the legislation was given second consideration.³⁷⁷

During the next session of Congress (116th), S.1 or the “Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019” was once again introduced by Senator Marco Rubio.³⁷⁸ This time, the anti-BDS portion of the bill was tied in with other provisions such as extending defense cooperation with Jordan and additional sanctions on the Assad regime relating to the civil war in Syria. It was also the first bill introduced in the Senate in the midst of the 2018-2019 government shutdown, a shutdown that was the longest

³⁷⁵ For more information see “S.170- (Combating BDS Act of 2017)”, (United States Congress, Congress.gov, 2017), last accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/170?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22s.170%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=3>.

³⁷⁶ See “S.720 - (Israel Anti-Boycott Act)”, (United States Congress, Congress.gov, 2017), last accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/720>.

³⁷⁷ See “ACLU Letter to the Senate Opposing Israel Anti-Boycott Act,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.aclu.org/letter/aclu-letter-senate-opposing-israel-anti-boycott-act>.

³⁷⁸ See “S.1- (Strengthening America’s Security in the Middle East Act of 2019)”, (United States Congress, Congress.gov, 2019), last accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1>.

ever in American history to date. The shutdown took place from December 22nd, 2018- January 25th, 2019, lasting a total of 35 days. It is noteworthy to mention that the first bill introduced in the new Congress during the shutdown was not one that prioritized re-opening the government or supporting American workers and companies, but was rather legislation concerning foreign policy coupled with an anti-BDS provision. The measure passed the senate on February 5th, 2019, by a vote of 77-23, although it did not make it through the house.

Members of Congress, such as Bernie Sanders (D-VT) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), were quick to point out the absurd timing of the legislation and publicly denounce it (see image 6.2). Rep. Tlaib, the first Palestinian-American women in Congress, criticized the legislation insinuating that Senators who voted in favor “forgot what country they represent”.



Image 6.2

Source: Rashida Tlaib (@RashidaTlaib) Twitter, January 6, 2019, <https://twitter.com/RashidaTlaib/status/1082095303325609984>.

In an opinion piece, Juan Cole, professor of history at the University of Michigan, commented that the legislation was a betrayal of the Constitution and “gutted the first

amendment.”³⁷⁹ The pattern of introducing anti-BDS legislation continued the following year. On January 13, 2020, Rep. Lee M. Zeldin (R-NY) sponsored house bill H.R. 5595, or the “Israel Anti-Boycott Act”.³⁸⁰ The bill specifically called out boycotts of Israel and acquired 64 co-sponsors.³⁸¹

Osama Abuirshaid, Executive Director of American Muslims for Palestine

(AMP), discusses the inherent hypocrisy of such laws:

“Here in America, you can call for a boycott of any state. Most recently, in Georgia [after passing voter suppression legislation in 2021], Major League Baseball called for a boycott in Georgia and didn’t hold their All-Star game there. Nobody said this was un-American. There were other calls before. California called for a boycott against the state of Arizona because of the treatment of undocumented immigrants in the United States. There were other calls to boycott North Carolina when they passed the transgender bathroom bill. No one said this was un-American. In fact, we say that this *is* an American thing to do... But when it comes for calling to boycott Israel and divesting from the Israeli occupation, suddenly it becomes un-American. Suddenly it becomes anti-Semitic. Suddenly any criticism of Israel is equivalent to anti-Semitism. That is an infringement, [it’s] an attack on the first amendment here in the U.S... and it’s unconstitutional.”³⁸²

While anti-BDS bills continue to be introduced in Congress, two federal judges have already ruled that state laws punishing individuals partaking in BDS are unconstitutional. In January 2018, a federal judge in Kansas blocked enforcement of a

³⁷⁹ See Juan Cole, “Senate guts 1st Amendment to Guard Israel from Boycott, but Ilhan Omar can’t Bring up AIPAC,” *Palestine Square*, February 12, 2019. <https://palestinesquare.com/2019/02/12/senate-guts-1st-amendment-to-guard-israel-from-boycott-but-ilhan-omar-cant-bring-up-aipac/>.

³⁸⁰ See “H.R. 5595- (“Israel Anti-Boycott Act”)", (United States Congress, Congress.gov, 2020), last accessed December 28, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5595/text>.

³⁸¹ For a breakdown of what this bill actually says and does, see “The NEW Israel Anti-Boycott Act- what it actually says/does,” *Foundation for Middle East Peace*, January 14, 2020, <https://fmep.org/resource/the-new-israel-anti-boycott-act-what-it-actually-says-does/>.

³⁸² Osama Abuirshaid, interview with the author, April 14, 2021.

Kansas law targeting boycotts of Israel. The law mandated that any person or company that contracts with the state sign a statement certifying that they are “not currently engaged in a boycott of Israel.”³⁸³ In the lawsuit filed by the ACLU on behalf of Esther Koontz, a schoolteacher who refused to sign the certification, the judge blocked enforcement of the law, reaffirming that the first amendment protects political boycotts and the right to engage in them.³⁸⁴ In Arizona, a similar case took place. In September 2018, U.S. District Court Judge Diane J. Humetewa of Arizona issued a preliminary injunction in a case where the plaintiff lost a government contract due to his refusal to sign an oath pledging not to boycott Israel.³⁸⁵ The court agreed with the ACLU, who took the case on behalf of the plaintiff, that the Arizona law violated contractors’ free speech rights under the first amendment.

Moreover, even though federal judges have made rulings confirming that anti-BDS legislation is unconstitutional, these laws have continued to impact individuals and companies at the state level. In December 2018, a children’s speech pathologist in Austin, Texas was told she could no longer work for the school district after she refused to sign an oath vowing that she “does not” and “will not” engage in a boycott of Israel. Bahia Amawi, a U.S. citizen, worked 9 years with the school district assisting disabled, autistic

³⁸³ Vera Eidelman, “Laws Targeting Israel Boycotts Fail First Legal Test,” *ACLU*, January 30, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/free-speech/rights-protesters/laws-targeting-israel-boycotts-fail-first-legal-test>.

³⁸⁴ For more details on this case see *Esther Koontz vs. Randall D. Watson* (Kansas Commissioner of Education), 17-4099-DDC-KGS, (U.S. District Court of Kansas, 2018), <https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/koontz-v-watson-opinion>.

³⁸⁵ For more details on this case see *Mikkel Jordahl vs. Mark Brnovich*, CV-17-08263-PCT-DJH, (U.S. District Court of Arizona, 2018), https://www.acluaz.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/order_granting_plaintiffs_motion_for_preliminary_injunction.pdf.

and speech-impaired elementary school students. Upon renewal of her contract, she noticed a new addition, a certification she was required to sign pledging that she “does not currently boycott Israel,” that she “will not boycott Israel during the term of the contract,” and that she refrain from any action “that is intended to penalize, inflict economic harm on, or limit commercial relations with Israel, or with a person or entity doing business in Israeli or in an Israel-controlled territory.”³⁸⁶ Amawi refused to sign the certification.

An interesting case also took place in Florida concerning the home-sharing company Airbnb. In November 2018, Airbnb announced that it was banning all listings from properties located inside illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The announcement of the new policy caused an uproar amongst supporters of Israel, claiming the new policy was discriminatory. In April 2019, after multiple lawsuits and public condemnation, Airbnb succumbed to the pressure and reversed its ban on Israeli settlements, even though most of the world considers the settlements to be a violation of international law and even Israeli courts have deemed illegal some of the unauthorized outposts where Airbnb properties can be found.³⁸⁷ Ron DeSantis, governor of Florida at the time, was appalled by the announcement from Airbnb regarding the ban that he announced a state boycott of the company, ensuring that no state funds could be used towards Airbnb. DeSantis later boasted about how his action pressured Airbnb to reverse

³⁸⁶ Glenn Greenwald, “A Texas Elementary School Speech Pathologist Refused to Sign a Pro-Israel Oath, Now Mandatory in Many States- so She Lost Her Job,” *The Intercept*, December 17, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/12/17/israel-texas-anti-bds-law/>.

³⁸⁷ See Julia Jacobs, “Airbnb Reverses Policy Banning Listings in Israeli Settlements in West Bank,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/09/world/middleeast/airbnb-israel-west-bank.html>.

its policy, remarking that “there is no place for BDS in the State of Florida... Lo and Behold, because of our leadership and the leadership of others, just recently Airbnb reversed its discriminatory policy.”³⁸⁸

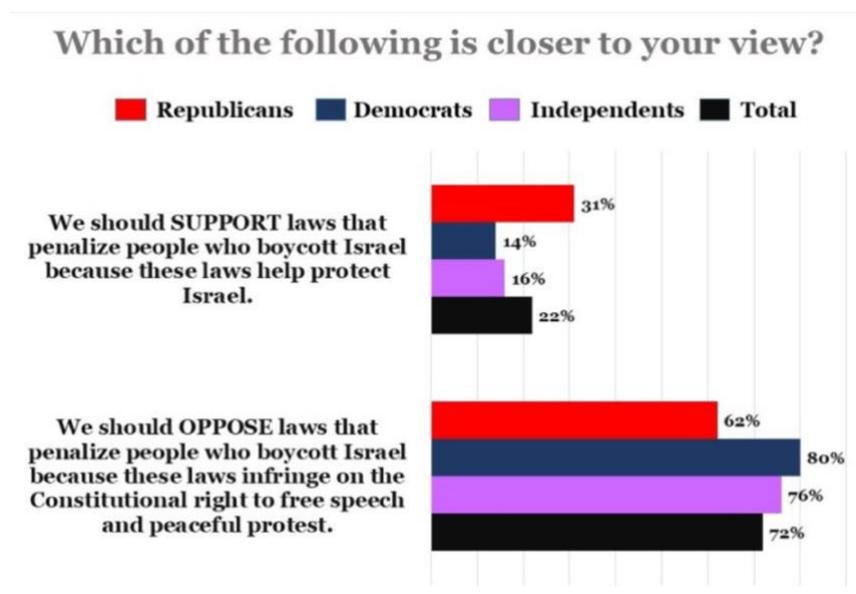
The case of Airbnb and Ron DeSantis utilizing his power within his official position as governor of the state illustrates, paradoxically, that states are essentially using the same mechanism of “boycotting, divesting, or sanctioning” companies and individuals to ‘punish’ boycotters of Israel. Simply put, boycotters of Israel are being punished with boycotts. This is just one example of how state governors and local politicians have wielded their power to protect Israel and speaks volumes about the state of U.S. politics, freedom of expression, and how the issue of Palestine-Israel influences U.S. domestic policymaking.

Accordingly, the question remains, what do Americans think about the BDS movement? In a University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll, Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse surveyed a random sample of American adults on their views towards BDS.³⁸⁹ Conducted in October 2019, the survey revealed that nearly 49% of respondents had heard of BDS at least “a little”. Among those who said they have heard of the movement, a majority of those who identified as Republican said they opposed the movement. However, the story was different among Democrats- nearly 48% of democrats said they

³⁸⁸ Steve Linde, “U.S. says NO to BDS,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 18, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/BDS-THREAT/US-says-NO-to-BDS-592877>.

³⁸⁹ For a more detailed analysis of this survey as well as for the raw statistical data, see Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse, “American Attitudes toward the Middle East,” *Critical Issues Poll*, University of Maryland, October 2019, <https://criticalissues.umd.edu/sites/criticalissues.umd.edu/files/UMCIP%20Middle%20East%20Questionnaire.pdf> and Shibley Telhami, “What do Americans think of the BDS movement, aimed at Israel?,” *Brookings Institution*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/01/08/what-do-americans-think-of-the-bds-movement-aimed-at-israel/>.

supported the movement, while only 15% said they opposed it.³⁹⁰ The poll suggests that a growing divide is occurring between Republicans and Democrats in regards to the BDS movement, as well as where the U.S. should position itself within the Palestinian-Israeli debacle. Republicans are more supportive of a U.S. foreign policy which favors Israel, whereas Democrats prefer that the U.S. take neither side in the conflict or remain neutral. However, in regards to anti-BDS legislation, the survey found that the majority of Republicans, Democrats and Independents all opposed legislation that penalizes boycotts of Israel (see graph 6.1).



Graph 6.1

Source: Shibley Telhami, “What do Americans think of the BDS movement, aimed at Israel?,” *Brookings Institution*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/01/08/what-do-americans-think-of-the-bds-movement-aimed-at-israel/>. (Data for this graph was collected in October 2019).

³⁹⁰ Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse, “American Attitudes toward the Middle East,” *Critical Issues Poll*, University of Maryland, October 2019, <https://criticalissues.umd.edu/sites/criticalissues.umd.edu/files/UMCIP%20Middle%20East%20Questionnaire.pdf> and Shibley Telhami, “What do Americans think of the BDS movement, aimed at Israel?,” *Brookings Institution*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/01/08/what-do-americans-think-of-the-bds-movement-aimed-at-israel/>.

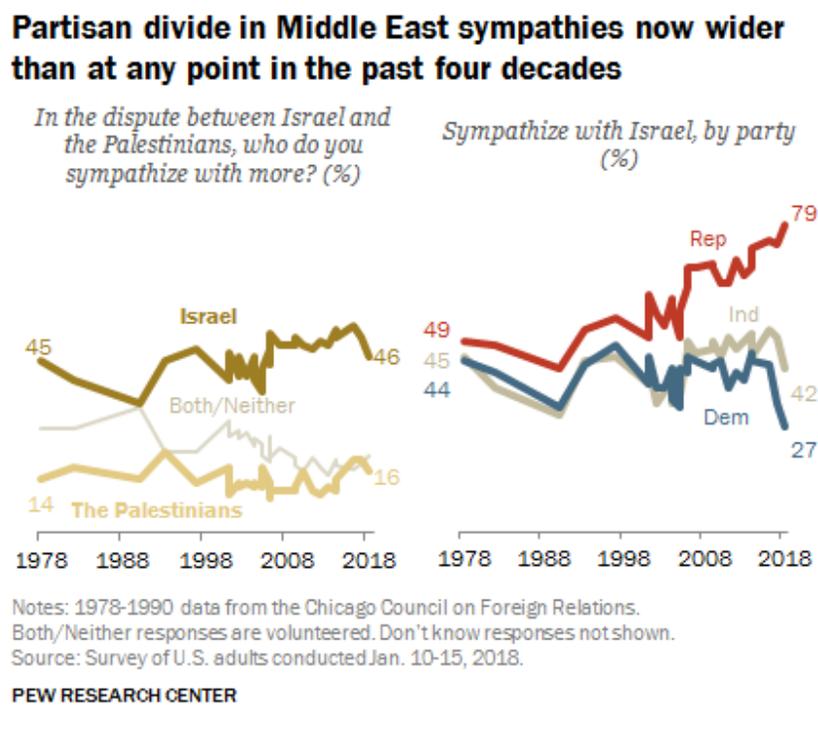
The BDS movement in the United States will continue to be a point of contention. When two newly elected members of Congress, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, publicly announced their support for BDS, it almost immediately propelled the movement into the mainstream debate. Prior to this new found spotlight, little was known about BDS to the average American, but that has quickly changed. Politicians, individuals and American companies alike will continue to deal with the changing dynamics that anti-BDS measures impose, especially with new legislation sure to continue being proposed in Congress. While proposed legislation against BDS continues, so too will the fight against it.

A CHANGING DISCOURSE AND THE FUTURE OF THE U.S.-PALESTINE RELATIONSHIP

Historically, the U.S.-Palestine relationship has been a disparaging one. As this chapter has highlighted, on multiple occasions the U.S. government has taken policy positions which tend to favor Israel over the Palestinians. Even when virtually the entire world condemns Israeli acts of aggression, declares settlements illegal or calls out Israel's numerous human rights violations, the U.S. Congress in almost complete harmony unites against the global consensus and defends the Israeli government. Recently however, fundamental dynamics surrounding the U.S.-Israel-Palestine tripartite relationship have started to shift.

One of the most important changing dynamics has been the growing divide between Republicans and Democrats on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Historically, Democrats and Republicans reported about equal levels of sympathy for Israel. However, in the past decade, poll after poll has shown a growing gap between the parties in their

view towards Israel and Palestine (see Graph 6.2). According to a Pew Research survey conducted in 2018, 79% of Republicans said they sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians, compared with just 27% of Democrats.³⁹¹ The gap is the widest ever since the 1970s. Since 2001, the share of Republicans sympathizing more with Israel than the Palestinians has increased 29 percentage points, from 50% to 79%. Over the same period, the share of Democrats saying this has declined 11 points, from 38% to 27%.³⁹²



Graph 6.2

Source: “Republicans and Democrats Grow Even Further Apart in Views of Israel, Palestinians,” *Pew Research Center*, Washington, D.C. (January 23, 2018) <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/01/23/republicans-and-democrats-grow-even-further-apart-in-views-of-israel-palestinians/>.

³⁹¹ “Republicans and Democrats Grow Even Further Apart in Views of Israel, Palestinians,” *Pew Research Center*, Washington, D.C. (January 23, 2018) <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/01/23/republicans-and-democrats-grow-even-further-apart-in-views-of-israel-palestinians/>.

³⁹² Ibid.

Similarly, in a February 2021 Gallup poll researchers found that while Israel remains well-liked in the U.S., the percentage of Americans sympathizing more with the Palestinians than the Israelis was at a new high (25%), as was Americans’ view of the Palestinian authority (30%) (see Graph 6.3). Support for emphasizing pressure on Israel to resolve the conflict was also at a new high of 34%, with a majority of democrats taking this position for the first time.³⁹³ This illustrates a substantive change in the way Democrats view U.S. policy towards Israel and Palestine.

Recent Trend in U.S. Views on Israel and the Palestinians				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
	%	%	%	%
Favorable ratings				
Israel	74	69	74	75
Palestinian Authority	21	21	23	30
Mideast sympathies				
More with the Israelis	64	59	60	58
More with the Palestinians	19	21	23	25
Neither/Both/No opinion	16	20	17	17
U.S. pressure to make compromises				
More on the Palestinians	50	--	--	44
More on the Israelis	27	--	--	34
Both/Neither/No opinion	23	--	--	22
Palestinian statehood				
Favor	47	50	55	52
Oppose	39	39	34	37

Polls conducted in February of each year

GALLUP

Graph 6.3

Source: Lydia Saad, “Americans still favor Israel while warming to Palestinians.” Gallup, (March 19, 2021) <https://news.gallup.com/poll/340331/americans-favor-israel-warming-palestinians.aspx>.

Israel has become as much a partisan issue as health care or immigration. The Congressional elections of 2018 also influenced the party divides. The elections resulted

³⁹³ Lydia Saad, “Americans still favor Israel while warming to Palestinians,” *Gallup*, (March 19, 2021) <https://news.gallup.com/poll/340331/americans-favor-israel-warming-palestinians.aspx>.

in two Muslim-American Congresswomen being elected, Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), which sparked a new litmus test on how politicians in Congress speak of the U.S. relationship towards Israel and Palestine. During a Trump presidency which saw significant political gains granted to Israel, a different scene was unfolding back in the U.S. court of public opinion. Public criticism of Israel was reaching a new level, and this time it was happening in the halls of Congress. Omar and Tlaib forced the Democratic party to reconcile a growing call from younger members of the party to take a more progressive approach towards Middle East policy, and especially the creation of a Palestinian state. Although Omar and Tlaib have been outspoken critics of human rights violations in numerous countries (China, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar etc.), their criticism of Israel received the most attention. The two have been accused of being anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic, accusations they both have denied. However, their criticisms of Israel have ignited a debate within the democratic party between members who have been traditional supporters of Israel and a wave of new, younger, progressive democrats who are increasingly supportive of Palestinian rights.

Republicans, especially then President Donald Trump, were quick to categorize Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib as a new wave of Israeli hating democrats who were taking the party in a dangerous direction (see images 6.3 and 6.4). Creating a fracture in the Democratic party, Omar and Tlaib both criticized harsh Israeli policies as well as AIPACs influence in Washington. Omar, in a February 2019 tweet, said “It’s all about the Benjamins baby”, referring to AIPACs monetary influence on Capitol Hill. The tweet ignited bipartisan backlash and Omar was accused of anti-Semitism and of bringing up negative and harmful stereotypes of Jewish Americans. Omar later apologized,

acknowledging that she was learning about the painful history of anti-Semitic tropes, but defended her criticism of AIPACs lobbying (see image 6.5).



Image 6.3
Source: Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Twitter, August 15, 2019.



Image 6.4
Source: Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) Twitter, August 15, 2019.



Image 6.5
Source: Ilhan Omar (@IlhanMN) Twitter, February 11, 2019,
<https://twitter.com/IlhanMN/status/1095046561254567937>.

Following the controversy, at a bookstore event on February 27th, 2019, Omar discussed her position, explaining "I want to talk about the political influence in this country that says it is OK for people to push for allegiance to a foreign country. I want to ask why is it OK for me to talk about the influence of the NRA (National Rifle Association), of fossil fuel industries or Big Pharma, and not talk about a powerful lobbying group that is influencing policies?"³⁹⁴

A refugee from Somalia, a woman, a woman of color, and a Muslim who wears the hijab, Omar became a political target for Republicans and pro-Israel hawks in Washington. It seemed that anything either Rep. Omar or Tlaib said about Israel garnered instant accusations of anti-Semitism because they were Muslims. This prevented a

³⁹⁴ Cody Nelson, "Minnesota Congresswoman Ignites Debate On Israel And Anti-Semitism," *NPR*, March 7, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/07/700901834/minnesota-congresswoman-ignites-debate-on-israel-and-anti-semitism>.

broader debate that should have been taking place, one regarding Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. In fact, when Republican politicians have made similar references to anti-Semitic tropes, the comments almost go entirely unnoticed. For instance, in October 2018, then House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), in a now deleted tweet, said "We cannot allow Soros, Steyer, and Bloomberg to BUY this election! Get out and vote Republican November 6th. #MAGA."³⁹⁵ Soros, Steyer and Bloomberg are all Jewish, and all three men are significant donors to Democratic campaigns and causes. The comments invoked Jewish stereotypes and while the remarks drew some criticism, it did not receive nearly the same attention or backlash as Omar's tweet.

Similarly, in the 2018 election cycle, the Jewish Democratic Council of America (JDCA) officially rebuked only three Democratic candidates, all of them minorities: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar. During the same election cycle, Betty McCollum (D-MN), a white congresswoman, used the word "massacre" to describe Israel's killing of scores of unarmed civilians in Gaza, and said that Israel was advancing apartheid within its pre-1967 and replacing democratic values with "bigotry, racism and segregation." The chairman of the JDCA board, Ron Klein, said that McCollum's remarks were "inflammatory and wrong," but the group issued no formal condemnation in the same way they did against AOC, Tlaib and Omar.³⁹⁶ In fact, while Donald Trump constantly "twitter" attacked Omar, Tlaib and AOC during his

³⁹⁵ See Devan Cole, "House majority leader deletes tweet saying Soros, Bloomberg, Steyer are trying to 'buy' election," *CNN*, October 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/28/politics/tom-steyer-mccarthy-tweet/index.html>.

³⁹⁶ See Nathan Thrall, "How the Battle Over Israel and Anti-Semitism Is Fracturing American Politics," *New York Times Magazine*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/28/magazine/battle-over-bds-israel-palestinians-antisemitism.html>.

presidency, he never once tweeted McCollum's name, even though she was an outspoken critic of Israeli policy.³⁹⁷ This highlights the fact that the Palestinian question cannot be discussed without also bringing attention to its placement within a nexus of racism and Islamophobia.

Furthermore, Rep. McCollum has proven herself to be a champion for Palestinian rights. In November of 2017, during the 115th Congress (2017-2018), Rep. McCollum introduced H.R. 4391 or the "Promoting Human Rights by Ending Israeli Military Detention of Palestinian Children Act." The bill received 30 co-sponsors and was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.³⁹⁸ It was a landmark bill and the first time legislation was introduced in the house that challenged U.S. aid being used to support the military detention, interrogation, abuse, or ill-treatment of Palestinian children in violation of international humanitarian law. Two years later, during the 116th Congress (2019-2020), in April 2019 McCollum reintroduced the bill, this time as H.R. 2407- "Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act."³⁹⁹ Similarly, on April 15th, 2021, McCollum introduced the most comprehensive legislation to date promoting Palestinian human rights. During the 117th

³⁹⁷ Jessica Schulberg, "The Minnesota Congresswoman who can criticize Israel," *Huffpost*, October 11, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/betty-mccollum-minnesota-israeli-palestinian_n_5d926349e4b0e9e760514c1f.

³⁹⁸ See "H.R. 4391- ("Promoting Human Rights by Ending Israeli Military Detention of Palestinian Children Act")", (United States Congress, [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov), 2017), last accessed January 8th, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4391?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr4391%22%5D%7D&r=2&s=1>.

³⁹⁹ See "H.R. 2407- ("Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act.")", (United States Congress, [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov), 2019), last accessed January 8th, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2407?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr2407%22%5D%7D&s=3&r=1>.

Congress (2021-2022), McCollum introduced H.R. 2590, which reiterated her position on ensuring U.S. taxpayer dollars are not used towards the ill-treatment of Palestinian children by Israel and expands those conditions to ensure U.S. funds are not used to demolish Palestinian homes or permanently annex Palestinian lands. The bill had 15 co-sponsors, but perhaps most notably is the fact that J Street, a liberal pro-Israeli organization, supported the bill making it the first time the organization has publicly supported legislation that seeks to condition weapons and aid to Israel.⁴⁰⁰

While these bills often fall short of garnishing enough support to pass and become law, it is important to note the introduction of these bills in the halls of Congress, and how they illustrate the changing landscape and narrative on Israel and Palestine within the highest levels of government. As Dr. Eid Mustafa, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors and Treasurer for the Jerusalem Fund, explains:

“Recent changes in the composition of Congress are encouraging and I think having a few vocal smart people speak about the issues in the halls of Congress is bound to open some eyes and hearts. I think if the political system changes where it does not depend on money, I believe that you would see a huge change in the way government policy is run....”⁴⁰¹

Moreover, in March of 2006, two well-established neo-realist foreign policy experts and scholars named John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt published their now

⁴⁰⁰ See “H.R. 2590- (“To promote and protect the human rights of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation and to ensure that United States taxpayer funds are not used by the Government of Israel to support the military detention of Palestinian children, the unlawful seizure, appropriation, and destruction of Palestinian property and forcible transfer of civilians in the West Bank, or further annexation of Palestinian land in violation of international law,”), (United States Congress, Congress.gov, 2021,) last accessed April 21st, 2021, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2590>.

⁴⁰¹ Eid Mustafa, interview with the author, March 24, 2021.

infamous “The Israel Lobby” in the *London Review of Books*.⁴⁰² They argued that U.S. support for Israel made little sense in a post-Cold War context and attributed the continuation of this irrational policy to effective lobbying by pro-Israel groups. While much has not changed, a lot *has* changed. There have been three devastating assaults on Gaza (now four as of May 2021), massive settlement expansion continues amidst a seemingly endless occupation, U.S. sponsored peace negotiations have stalled and there appears to be a non-existent Israeli “left.” Similar to Omar, in 2006 critics lined up to take their shots at Mearsheimer and Walt. However, over a decade later, there seems to be hopeful optimism. Social media has challenged traditional mainstream U.S. media coverage of Israel and Palestine, critical voices are becoming increasingly accepted and space for debate is slowly opening up. Representatives like Betty McCollum are challenging the status quo and instead of repeating the scene of 2006, this time leftist Jews rushed to the defense of Omar. Some declared that Omar was right about AIPAC, and accusations of her being anti-Semitic were opportunistic and absurd.⁴⁰³ Many of them reiterated the importance of distinguishing the difference between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism. It seemed that from 2006 to 2019, the standards for critiquing Israel had shifted.

Prominent progressives, such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), joined Omar, Tlaib and McCollum in their criticisms of Israeli policy and sparked an unprecedented debate over U.S. support for Israel within the Democratic

⁴⁰² See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “The Israel Lobby,” *London Review of Books* 28, no. 6 (March 2006).

⁴⁰³ See Ben Ehrenreich, “This Is What the Beginning of a Real Israel Debate Looks Like,” *New Republic*, February 15, 2019, <https://newrepublic.com/article/153118/beginning-real-israel-debate-looks-like>.

party. In June of 2016, the committee tasked with drafting the new Democratic Party platform held its hearings in Washington. The platform is re-written every presidential-election year and expresses the consensus among Democrats of which issues the party will prioritize. Part of the hearings included the selection of a committee responsible for drafting the platform language on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) decided to allow the two leading candidates, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, to select part of that committee's 15 members. Sanders selected five members, Clinton selected six, and the DNC selected the remaining four. All of Sanders' selections were minorities and included James Zogby, Cornel West, and the Native American activist Deborah Parker. The representatives selected by Hillary Clinton (and the remaining ones by the DNC) were all Jewish and included retired congressman Howard Berman, former undersecretary of state for political affairs Wendy Sherman, and Florida philanthropist and Clinton campaign donor Bonnie Schaefer.⁴⁰⁴

During the hearing, one of Clinton's appointees, Robert Wexler, was introduced as "an outspoken advocate for the unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel." Wexler advocated for the two-state solution and argued against including the words "occupation" and "settlements" in the party platform. Zogby took issue with Wexler's opposition to mentioning the words. Cornel West expressed concern that for too long the Democratic party has been beholden to AIPAC, a lobbying group which "didn't take seriously the humanity of Palestinian brothers and sisters."⁴⁰⁵ As the committee went

⁴⁰⁴ Nathan Thrall, "How the Battle Over Israel and Anti-Semitism Is Fracturing American Politics," *New York Times Magazine*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/28/magazine/battle-over-bds-israel-palestinians-antisemitism.html>.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

back and forth with its arguments, it was clear that although members of the same party, each side had differing views on how to approach the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the end, the Clinton team prevailed- the text excluded the word “occupation,” made no mention of settlements, referred to Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Israel alone, and opposed any and all efforts to delegitimize Israel.⁴⁰⁶

However, what is important to recognize here is that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, the settlements, the strategic value of the U.S.-Israel relationship, and the blockade on Gaza was being discussed and debated as a legitimate campaign issue during the 2016 DNC. Phyllis Bennis discusses the role that the 2016 Sander’s campaign had on shifting the discourse on Palestine-Israel within the democratic party, and how that momentum carried on into the 2020 Presidential campaign. Bennis argues that the 2016 Sander’s presidential campaign catapulted to center stage the critique of Israeli policy and the questioning of unconditional U.S. support for Israel. Sanders’ willingness to challenge the traditional notion that criticism of Israel entailed political suicide reflected both his personal commitment, as well as the degree to which political, media, and public discourse on Palestine-Israel in the United States had transformed in the preceding ten-fifteen years.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Nathan Thrall, “How the Battle Over Israel and Anti-Semitism Is Fracturing American Politics,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/28/magazine/battle-over-bds-israel-palestinians-antisemitism.html>.

⁴⁰⁷ Phyllis Bennis, “The 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign: Changing Discourse on Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 1 (Autumn 2016), 35.

Zogby echoes the impact that the Sanders campaign has had on Palestine discourse in the U.S., arguing that Sanders has not only fed off the base of the Palestinian rights movement, but has also helped it grow:

“As he began to campaign [he] saw the [positive] response he was getting. I remember one debate in particular with Hillary Clinton in New York, and he talked about Palestinians and the crowd cheered. I said to myself then, ‘oh he’s getting it now’. This is not just the right thing to do, but it’s also a politically good thing to do. There’s going to be a lot of support for it and his support only got stronger. If there weren’t a support base already there, Bernie couldn’t have raised [this issue]. But he did raise it, and as he raised it he helped the support base grow... there was a dialectic there- he fed *off* of it, and then he fed it.⁴⁰⁸

Sanders’ impact on the discursive change in the U.S. towards the Palestinian-Israeli issue is also reflective of a broader coalition, consisting of younger activists and people of color, who are redefining a progressive movement centered around economic and racial justice. Since then, the Palestinian rights movement, strengthened by its focus on human rights and emphasizing U.S. policy as its target, has had increasing success in influencing public discourse.⁴⁰⁹ While this shift is taking place in the realm of public opinion, it has had much less success in impacting actual American foreign policy, at least to date.

During the 2020 Presidential election cycle, pressure on the DNC to amend the party’s platform on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict continued. J Street launched a campaign to pressure Democratic candidates to oppose Israel’s presence in the West Bank and to amend the platform to expressly condemn settlement expansion and support

⁴⁰⁸ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5th, 2021.

⁴⁰⁹ Phyllis Bennis, “The 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign: Changing Discourse on Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 1 (Autumn 2016), 36.

Palestinian aspirations.⁴¹⁰ The movement was slightly successful. While progressives failed to persuade moderates to include reference to Israel’s “occupation” of the West Bank in the platform, they were able to convince them to include language opposing Israel’s settlement expansion.⁴¹¹ It marked a win for progressives, and demonstrated the slow shift of pushing the party more to the left. James Zogby, commenting on these shifts, told *Mondoweiss* “We never know where pro-Israel groups – AIPAC in particular – will draw their red lines... In ’88 when I was representing Jackson in the platform fight, they wouldn’t allow the ‘P’ word. I was told that if we raised it, ‘you will destroy the Democratic Party.’ We pushed back and had a debate from the podium calling for ‘mutual recognition, territorial compromise, and self-determination for both.’ Not controversial by today’s standards, but they went crazy over it. In 2016 we were set to raise a number of issues and never expected that AIPAC would draw the line at mention of settlements and occupation.”⁴¹²

Zogby was referencing the presidential campaign of Rev. Jesse Jackson in 1988, which also marked a turning point for Palestinian politics within the democratic party. With the Arab community motivated, a “Palestine: Statehood Now!” campaign became part of the platform debate at the national nominating convention of the Democratic party. In response to successive U.S. presidential administrations favoring Israeli

⁴¹⁰ Eric Cortellessa, “J Street launches bid to push anti-occupation stance in DNC platform,” *Times of Israel*, October 27, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/j-street-launches-bid-to-push-anti-occupation-stance-in-dnc-platform/>.

⁴¹¹ Holly Otterbein, “Where progressives won — and lost — in the Democratic platform,” *Politico*, July 22, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/progress-settle-medicare-biden-378348>.

⁴¹² Michael Arria, “J Street urges DNC to adopt anti-occupation language in their platform,” *Mondoweiss*, March 11, 2020, <https://mondoweiss.net/2020/03/j-street-urges-dnc-to-adopt-anti-occupation-language-in-their-platform/>.

positions, Arab Americans rallied behind Jackson's platform which explicitly called for the creation of a Palestinian state, and many Arabs ran as convention delegates for the first time.⁴¹³ Statehood for Palestinians and an end to the Israeli occupation became official talking points and were included as part of the national convention agenda being held in Atlanta, Georgia. Their inclusion represented the first time that the specific issue of Palestinian rights was discussed at a national party convention.⁴¹⁴

From the Presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson in 1988 to the Democratic Presidential campaigns of 2020, the standard for language traditionally 'allowed' when speaking of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict shifted remarkably. The "red line" has slowly been pushed further and further back. Zogby explains how he has observed this evolution through time,

"The most significant change today is that the issue of accountability is on the front burner. During the Jackson years, what we were elevating was that Palestinians have rights, period. They should just be recognized. Back then, I remember the pushback I got in 1988 on the Democratic party platform... was if the "P" word is even in the platform, all hell will break loose. The "P" word was Palestine and Palestinians. That has clearly changed. But what I think the *big change* now is the issue of accountability, that Israel has to be held accountable. [Back] when we started the Palestinian Human Rights campaign, that was our number one concern- that U.S. aid should be conditioned on Israeli behavior, that U.S. human rights legislation should be enforced. We couldn't get to first base on that. Today, it's actively being debated, and that is the big progress we've made."⁴¹⁵

The presidential election of 2020 proved it's a new age on how Democrats speak about Israel. Not only did conditioning aid to Israel become a topic of discussion, but

⁴¹³ Helen Hatab Samhan, "Public and Political Life," in *Daily Life of Arab Americans in the 21st Century*, ed. Anan Ameri and Holly Arida (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2012), 169.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid: 170.

⁴¹⁵ James Zogby, interview with the author, April 5, 2021.

issues such as settlement expansion, the occupation, annexation and the future of a two-state solution have also inserted themselves into the conversation. Bernie Sanders, at the J Street conference in 2019, made multiple remarks in support of Palestinians and threatened to leverage U.S. aid over the Jewish state. It wasn't the first time he spoke of leveraging U.S. aid to Israel. In an interview with Mehdi Hasan in the fall of 2017, Senator Sanders remarked that he believed the U.S. was somewhat complicit in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and would consider voting to reduce U.S. aid to Israel, although he included that "Israel is [not] the only party at fault."⁴¹⁶

This time, Sanders continued to expand the limits on criticizing Israel and rethinking the U.S.-Palestinian relationship. At J Street, Sanders pronounced "What is going on in Gaza right now is absolutely inhumane, it is unacceptable, it is unsustainable," he continued, "My solution is to say to Israel: You get \$3.8 billion every year. If you want military aid, you're going to have to fundamentally change your relationship to the people of Gaza. In fact, I think it is fair to say that some of that should go right now into humanitarian aid in Gaza."⁴¹⁷ Sanders was referring to Israel's decades-plus-long blockade of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, which has left the area completely impoverished and devastated. Previously, such statements would have been painted as sympathetic to the militant group and would have resulted in political suicide.

⁴¹⁶ Bernie Sanders, "Bernie Sanders to Democrats: This is what a radical foreign policy looks like," interview by Mehdi Hasan, *The Intercept*, September 22, 2017. <https://theintercept.com/2017/09/22/bernie-sanders-interview-foreign-policy/>.

⁴¹⁷ Mehdi Hasan, "Bernie Sanders Says Denying Aid Because of Hamas Is 'Part of an Effort to Dehumanize Palestinians,'" *The Intercept*, November 1, 2019, https://theintercept.com/2019/11/01/bernie-sanders-palestine-aid-hamas/?fbclid=IwAR2P67ECLJazp1nTh6qOc_wuS6NinzNRoPUqROzbSpYP11lZ0IK1zUyKmWg.

Sanders has dispelled this myth and has proven that you can speak out about Israeli human rights violations and still have a prosperous political career.

During a democratic presidential debate on November 20th, 2019, Bernie Sanders was the only candidate to mention the Palestinians. “It is no longer good enough for us simply to be pro-Israel. I am pro-Israel,” said the Vermont Senator, “But we must treat the Palestinian people with the respect and dignity they deserve. What is going on in Gaza right now, where youth unemployment is 60, 70 percent, is unsustainable.”⁴¹⁸ Sanders’s remarks drew a huge applause from the audience, and many progressives were quick to acknowledge the comments on social media, including Yousef Munayyer (Executive Director of the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights) and Peter Beinart (The Atlantic) (see images 6.6 & 6.7). Even filmmaker Michael Moore praised Sanders for his statements, commenting on MSNBC’s post-debate segment that “Tonight he [Sanders] said something that I don’t think I’ve ever heard at a Democratic debate...he said that the Palestinians were human beings. He said that we cannot support Israel and be against the Palestinian people. We’re being hypocritical if we do that. We support Israel, but that means we have to support the Palestinians. That got a huge applause.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Michael Arria, “Bernie Sanders gets ‘huge applause’ during debate for being only candidate to mention Palestinians,” *Mondoweiss*, November 21, 2019, <https://mondoweiss.net/2019/11/bernie-sanders-gets-huge-applause-during-debate-for-being-only-candidate-to-mention-palestinians/>.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*



Image 6.6
Source: Yousef Munayyer (@YousefMunayyer) Twitter, November 20, 2019,
<https://twitter.com/YousefMunayyer/status/1197354900692389888>.



Image 6.7
Source: Peter Beinart (@PeterBeinart) Twitter, November 20, 2019,
<https://twitter.com/PeterBeinart/status/1197356244555780096>.

As Akbar Shahid Ahmed points out, Sanders’ remarks represent a bold departure from the norm and is part of an evolutionary process in the Democratic party which has seen it warm up to putting conditions on American security assistance in order to push Israeli officials to negotiate with the Palestinians.⁴²⁰ Such remarks would normally prompt a harsh response from other party members (which it did); however, some party

⁴²⁰ Akbar Shahid Ahmed, “Bernie Sanders just proved it’s a new era for how Democratic candidates talk about Israel,” *Huffpost*, October 28, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bernie-sanders-israel-palestinians_n_5db7a36fe4b02aee7d351cfd?guccounter=1.

members began to join Sanders and have gravitated towards this new “realignment” on the U.S.-Israel-Palestine relationship. This new realignment consists of a political discourse which respects Palestinians and criticizes Israel’s unjust policies and its hardline politicians. Dr. Eid Mustafa reiterates the impact of Bernie Sanders and his comments,

“There has been a change, and most of the credit goes to the Sanders campaign. Having a Jewish man speak very loudly about [Palestinian] issues, [if it was one of us] we would be described as being bias, instead it comes from Sanders, and AOC and recently Jamal Bowman and many others. One of our goals is to support these people and give them a forum to speak out. It’s not lobbying necessarily, but giving them a forum and distributing their ideas to persuade public opinion. But they [have] made a difference and the scene is not like how it was 15-20 years ago. The issue has always been in the media, but it was always one-sided. Right now, the recent campaign by Sanders...and also the availability of social media, have changed that.”⁴²¹

During an event at Columbia University on November 21st, 2019, just a day after Sanders made his remarks at the Democratic Presidential debate, Rashid Khalidi noted that his comments were a sign of progress. Speaking of a time when he protested a lecture by Golda Meir at Yale University Law School in the 1960s, Khalidi reminisced “there were only four of us,” he continued, “Things are obviously very different today. You heard a presidential candidate last night on network television talking about things that could not have been spoken anywhere in the Democratic Party, ever, under any circumstances in the 60s. And things are happening on college campuses. Things are happening in churches. Things are happening in the Jewish community, which paint a

⁴²¹ Eid Mustafa, interview with the author, March 24, 2021.

very different picture than the United States in the 60s and 70s.”⁴²² Khalidi’s comments further highlight how dynamics surrounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in U.S. political discourse have transformed since the 1960s and 1970s to now.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass) has also made bold remarks about the U.S. relationship towards Israel and Palestine. In 2019, while acknowledging the need for a strong Israel, she remarked “we need to think about what our support for Israel means... a good ally is an ally that promotes peace.”⁴²³ During a campaign event on October 19, 2019, when a reporter asked Warren if she would make aid to Israel conditional on freezing settlement expansion, Warren responded “Right now, Netanyahu says he is going to take Israel in a direction of increasing settlements; that does not move us toward a two-state solution. It is the official policy of the United States of America to support a two-state solution, and if Israel is moving in the opposite direction, then everything is on the table.”⁴²⁴

The 2020 Democratic congressional election cycle also witnessed important developments for the U.S.-Palestine relationship, and highlighted the waning influence of pro-Israel PACs, lobbyist and the large sums of money they contribute to campaigns. Ocasio-Cortez, Omar, and Tlaib all won re-election in 2020 and defeated their opponents

⁴²² Philip Weiss, “Sanders statement on Palestinians ‘could not have been spoken anywhere in Dem Party, ever, in 60s’ —Khalidi,” *Mondoweiss*, November 22, 2019, https://mondoweiss.net/2019/11/sanders-statement-on-palestinians-could-not-have-been-spoken-anywhere-in-dem-party-ever-in-60s-khalidi/?fbclid=IwAR0hS63NI4_0nupaUrK6pvq_rZul8EVCu_yat0NmH5cwtEukVCELuGz-aoI.

⁴²³ “Elizabeth Warren Urges Two-state Solution, Says U.S. Needs to Think ‘What Our Support for Israel Means’”, *Haaretz*, December 2, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/elizabeth-warren-urges-two-state-solution-after-announcing-presidential-bid-1.6932372>.

⁴²⁴ Aaron Bandler, “Warren says ‘everything on the table’ to halt settlement expansion,” *Jewish News Syndicate*, October 22, 2019, <https://www.jns.org/warren-everything-on-the-table-to-halt-settlements/>.

by large margins. Likewise, newcomer progressives such as Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush joined their ranks, winning election campaigns in 2020. Both Bowman and Bush were vocal critics of Israeli policies and have advocated support for Palestinian rights. Bowman (D-NY) defeated longtime incumbent Elliot Engel in a shocking upset, unseating him after three decades in office. Engel was a staunch supporter of Israel and opposed the Iran nuclear deal under President Obama, supported Trump's controversial decision to relocate the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and co-sponsored the Anti-Israel Boycott Act. Engel had received over \$2.7 million in campaign donations from pro-Israel groups, but was still unable to defeat Bowman.⁴²⁵ According to Mairav Zonszein, a well-known Israeli-American journalist who covers politics in Israel, Palestine and the United States., Engel's loss to Bowman represents a huge victory for the progressive movement within the Democratic party in general and is a "blow to knee-jerk pro-Israel politics."⁴²⁶ During his campaign, Bowman advocated for Palestinian rights and expressed willingness to condition military aid to Israel. Similarly, Cori Bush (D-MO), a Black Lives Matter activist and supporter of Palestinian rights, defeated St. Louis Congressman Lacy Clay in an upset.

These election victories all signaled that it is no longer a political liability to express support for Palestinian rights and push for a shift in U.S. policy towards Israel. In fact, liberal politicians would traditionally draw the line of their progressive politics when it came to Palestine, but this is slowly shifting. Anas Amireh discusses how the

⁴²⁵ See Mairav Zonszein, "How this year's primary season demonstrated the waning influence of pro-Israel hawks," *Responsible Statecraft*, August 19, 2020, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/08/19/democratic-primary-waning-influence-of-pro-israel-hawks/>.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

breakthrough of the progressive movement is the fact that they are now progressive including Palestine:

“What we’re seeing... is a breakthrough in the so-called “progressive movement.” It was always progressive except for Palestine, always! Now you have real hard core progressives like Bernie Sanders...that are ‘progressive progressive’... It’s very important that [they’re] finally coming out because they allow other people to be brave and stand up and be ‘progressive progressive,’ because you can’t be progressive except on Palestine, if you’re progressive you have to be progressive all the way... they also give optimism to others who want to enter the arena of politics and still be progressive on Palestine...before it was a losing cause because everyone who was so called progressive was progressive on everything except on Palestine... now people [who are progressive on Palestine] can enter [politics] and win seats and have a voice and have [positions] in government. These people also have amazing mass audiences... and for them to be progressive [on Palestine] *in public* is a win-win for us [Palestinians]... We could throw the biggest event in the world and we would still not get as big an audience for the Palestinian cause as Bernie Sanders or AOC get.”⁴²⁷

Amireh’s use of term “progressive progressive” is referencing the idea that progressive politicians have always drawn the line of their progressive politics at Palestine. As the late Michael Ratner referred to it, the “Palestine exception” was an important dynamic when speaking of the commitments of liberals to progressive politics.⁴²⁸

Similarly, during the 2020 election cycle, Samelys Lopez ran as a candidate to represent New York’s 15th congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives. Lopez, a community organizer from South Bronx, was an outspoken supporter of Palestinian human rights, endorsed conditioning U.S. aid to Israel, and defended the right to boycott Israel. Although she was defeated in the primaries, Lopez’s candidacy is

⁴²⁷ Anas Amireh, interview with the author, April 1, 2021.

⁴²⁸ For more on the concept of “progressive except for Palestine”, see Marc Lamont Hill and Mitchell Plitnick, *Except for Palestine: The Limits of Progressive Politics* (New York: The New Press, 2021).

another example of how the movement for Palestinian rights is being integrated into the broader progressive movement and shifting the democratic party. When asked about why she speaks out on Palestine, Lopez explained “it’s really important. There are a lot of Palestinians who live in [my] congressional district and my community and beyond, and I see advocacy as always centering the voices of people that have been marginalized... At the end of the day, [Congress is] not only a national and local position. It has an international component too. You can use your platform to talk about oppressed people and their plight.”⁴²⁹

In regard to those using their platform to raise awareness of oppressed peoples, progressive politicians running for office are not the only ones speaking out about Palestinian rights. A number of celebrities and high-profile figures have also become increasingly more outspoken about the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and are using social media platforms to raise awareness amongst their fan bases. In February 2019, award-winning singer and songwriter John Legend stood in solidarity with Palestinians, voicing his support during a guest appearance on HBO’s *Real Time with Bill Maher* show. When asked about the recent remarks of Rep. Ilhan Omar, Legend explained, “As progressives, we should also speak up for the human rights for Palestinians, and for too long, I think, it has been out of bounds for progressives to speak up for the rights of Palestinians.”⁴³⁰ It wasn’t the first time Legend spoke in support of

⁴²⁹ See Samelys Lopez, “Meet the South Bronx congressional candidate speaking out on Palestinian rights,” interview by Alex Kane, *+972 Magazine*, May 26, 2020. <https://www.972mag.com/samelys-lopez-bronx-bds-palestinians/>.

⁴³⁰ For a link to the video segment see Institute for Middle East Understanding (@IMEU) Twitter, February 16, 2019, <https://twitter.com/theIMEU/status/1096808878031945730>.

Palestine. In 2014, Legend delivered a speech to University of Pennsylvania graduates in which he also made sympathetic comments about Palestinians. “[Love is] a pretty radical notion... it means American lives don’t count more than Iraqi lives... it means we see a young Palestinian kid not as a future security threat or demographic challenge, but as a future father, mother and lover,” Legend said.⁴³¹

Bella Hadid, a Palestinian-Dutch supermodel with over 43 million followers on Instagram (as of this writing), has also used her platform to speak out about Palestinian rights. In July of 2020, she called out Instagram for removing one of her post on Palestine. Hadid proudly posted a photo of her father’s passport showing his birthplace as Palestine (see image 6.8). Hadid added the comment “My baba and his birthplace of Palestine.”⁴³² Shortly after the post, Instagram removed it citing that it violated their community guidelines, including harassment and bullying. Hadid was outraged and hit back at the platform, her post reading “What part of me being proud of my father’s birthplace of Palestine is 'bullying, harassment, graphic, or sexual nudity'? Are we not allowed to be Palestinian on Instagram? This, to me, is bullying (see image 6.9).”⁴³³ Instagram later apologized for the incident, issuing a statement acknowledging that the platform does not allow personal information such as passport numbers on Instagram, but in this case Hadid had already blurred the numbers out before posting the image. The

⁴³¹ Steven Salaita, “John Legend implores us to love Palestinians,” *Electronic Intifada*, May 22, 2014, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/steven-salaita/john-legend-implores-us-love-palestinians>.

⁴³² Nadda Osman, “Bella Hadid calls out Instagram for censoring Palestine post,” *Middle East Eye*, July 8, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestine-bella-hadid-instagram-censoring-post>.

⁴³³ Ibid.

incident sparked a wider conversation about growing concerns over social media outlets silencing Palestinians.⁴³⁴



Image 6.8

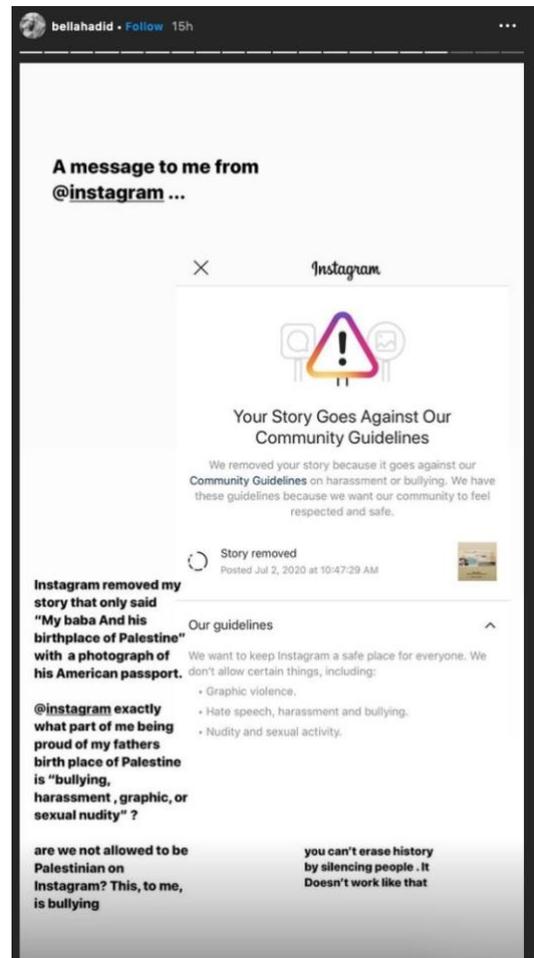


Image 6.9

Source: Nadda Osman, “Bella Hadid calls out Instagram for censoring Palestine post,” *Middle East Eye*, July 8, 2020, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestine-bella-hadid-instagram-censoring-post>.

The increase of outspokenness among progressives and big name celebrities has undoubtedly impacted the discourse on Palestine-Israel in the United States. The prominent voices of celebrities and social media “influencers” has changed the

⁴³⁴ For more on the increasing trend of silencing Palestinian voices and Palestinian activists, see James Zogby, “Palestinians: Victims of ‘cancel culture’,” *Responsible Statecraft*, December 7, 2020, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2020/12/07/palestinians-victims-of-cancel-culture/?emci=48cd8ae6-6139-eb11-9fb4-00155d43b2cd&emdi=ea000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000001&ceid=390324>.

normative, cultural, and political views towards this decades old conflict, especially amongst young people. As Salam Al-Marayati, President of MPAC emphasizes,

“The outspokenness of artists, celebrities, cultural icons and influencers on Palestine is one of our best paths towards reconciliation of the Palestinian question and justice for Palestinians. Doing it with the government straight on is not as effective. Obviously, we still need those relationships in government, but things don’t change as quickly at the state level without a force pushing it to change. We need cultural leaders to influence the discussion, and as they do we hope that Congress will follow.”⁴³⁵

As this chapter has demonstrated, U.S.-Palestine relations have been tumultuous and turbulent at times. Every presidential administration since the 1970s (and even before) has had to deal with the Palestinian-Israeli issue at one time or another during their tenure, each in a different capacity. While some have approached it with optimism, the outcome has always been the same. The status quo has continued for decades, without much progress towards a fair and just peace agreement which recognizes the freedom, equality and right to live in peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. U.S. aid to Israel continues unabated, and while some politicians have argued that U.S. citizens should never question the U.S.-Israel relationship, younger voices are beginning to challenge that narrative. The democratic party is slowly realizing this, as Israel has previously enjoyed bi-partisan support in Congress, younger newly elected progressive democrats have created a rift in the party in terms of their position towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The BDS movement has also impacted capitol hill, with the first U.S. Congresswomen endorsing the movement and laws being passed to criminalize its

⁴³⁵ Salam Al-Marayati, interview with the author, March 23, 2021.

supporters. Changing dynamics continue to shape U.S. domestic politics towards Israel and Palestine, and with the 2020 election trend of democratic presidential candidates speaking tough on the U.S.-Israel relationship without career-ending consequences, there are signs that the trend could continue. There has also been a discursive shift in the way Palestinians are portrayed in pop-culture and recently many big name celebrities have come out in support of Palestinian human rights. The future is optimistic as Palestinians, the Palestinian diaspora and other advocates for Palestine in the United States continue to work towards a fair, just and peaceful resolution to the conflict.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has analyzed and synthesized the interaction of the Palestinian American diaspora and Palestinian advocacy, surveying both its domestic and transnational linkages. It has explored multiple dynamics relating to Palestine and Palestinians, including Palestinian diasporic identity, political life, advocacy, culture, politics and international relations. As such, it has attempted to broaden the analytical scope and shed deeper insight into the domestic and internationalization of the Palestinian question and how it connects across multiple spectrums. Overall, this project has explored how Palestinian Americans in the diaspora connect with Palestine, Palestinian advocacy, and the Palestinian question.

Chapter 2 discussed the formation of a Palestinian identity and a Palestinian national self-consciousness. It argues that while the majority of Palestinians today are displaced refugees, living in exile, and are part of a diasporic community, they are still able to maintain a strong Palestinian identity and connection to their homeland. It also explores elements of this identity and how they're passed down generation to generation. Finally, it briefly describes the story of Palestinians migrating to America, who they are, where they're from, and where they settled.

Chapter 3 discussed the evolution of Palestinian American organizations in the United States, as well as Palestinian advocacy organizations in the United States. It argues that many of these organizations are grassroots community organizations created to fill voids in Palestinian advocacy. Organizations which advocate for Palestine tend to fall within two camps, both of which present conflicting dynamics. The first camp sees the question of Palestine within a larger broad based coalition for global social justice and

therefore places the Palestinian issue within a framework of intersectionality, mobilizing at the grassroots level and working with other social justice groups and organizations in order to influence change. This camp follows a bottom-up approach. The second camp places the Palestinian question within a framework of top-down politics, which places priority on influencing political leaders, elites and decision makers. Unfortunately, a large failure for Palestinian Americans has been their inability to adopt a comprehensive strategy. Some who take a popular mobilization approach are sometimes hesitant to build bridges with establishment politicians, and those who work within the establishment can be very much disconnected with the grassroots level. However, the specific organizations discussed in this chapter cover a broad base of strategies related to social activism and advocacy for Palestine- from academia, lobbying, BDS, university institutions, community groups and finally by promoting visits to Palestine itself. This illustrates just how broad the categories for advocacy and activism for Palestine can be.

Chapter 4 discussed the intersectionality of the Palestinian question with other U.S. social justice movements, including with African American movements, Black Lives Matter, Indigenous nations, and progressive Jewish organizations. It argues that Arab Americans and Palestinian Americans are embedded in American civic society, having evolved from a deep history of solidarity and interconnectedness from Black internationalism to the civil rights movement, and also play an integral part in pushing back against more contemporary social justice issues such as police brutality, racial discrimination, racial profiling, unwarranted surveillance, and other issues impacting American minorities. This intersectionality extends beyond just Black-Palestinian solidarity and includes others such as indigenous nations and their fight against

development on their lands, and progressive Jewish organizations and their fight against anti-Semitism. While not explicitly covered in this section, future research can explore further intersectionality with other issues and organizations, including LGBTQ+, immigrants and environmentalist movements.

Chapter 5 discussed how the Palestinian question transcends borders, its transnational linkages, and briefly touched on the impact of the internet. It argues that the internet, and social media specifically, have completely changed how the Palestinian-Israeli issue is viewed and perceived around the world, especially by younger people. Instagram, Facebook, and Tik Tok have allowed Palestinian voices to be heard like never before. The mainstream media no longer holds the monopoly on the narrative of this conflict, and Palestinians are finally taking back the narrative and letting their voices be heard. The 11-days of violence between Israel and Hamas in May 2021 provided further evidence to this argument.

It also argues that the Palestinian question connects to other oppressed peoples and global movements for self-determination- from Kashmir to Hong Kong to Xinjiang. The common denominator between Palestine, Kashmir and Hong Kong are the remnants of British imperialism and its impact, much of which is still felt today. This chapter also discussed the Palestinian diaspora and its relations with other Middle East and Arab states, a tumultuous relationship indeed. At the time of writing, four nations have so far signed on to the *Abraham Accords* (UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.) Only time will reveal what long term effect these agreements will have and if it will lead to any improvement in the lives of Palestinians. Unfortunately, one is not optimistic about these agreements as they ignore many of the root causes of the conflict- the occupation, the

siege on Gaza, suppression of Palestinian society, lack of socio-economic development, and the unequal status of Palestinians under Israeli law. The only benefits deemed to result from these agreements seem to be economic and military benefits for the parties involved, but blatantly leave the Palestinians out.

As these Arab states forfeit their soft power for normalization in return for economic and military benefits, some European states are leading the charge on Palestinian advocacy. Public opinion in Europe seems to recognize and favor the Palestinian position, although this still hasn't manifested itself at the political level. Some states, such as Ireland, have taken the lead. Ireland is once again on the front lines of challenging the status quo on the relationship between Israel and Western countries. On May 26th, 2021, just days after a cease fire was reached between Israel and Hamas, the Irish parliament passed a bill which recognized Israel's "de facto annexation" of Palestinian land. While it's a good first step, it also falls short in many ways and the motion to impose sanctions on Israel failed. Whether or not other European Union countries follow will be closely monitored.

Finally, Chapter 6 discussed the Palestinian question within American politics. It gives a brief overview of U.S. foreign policy towards Israel-Palestine under the Obama and Trump administrations, and the nature of the debate towards this conflict within the U.S. political sphere. It also analyzes important U.S. domestic political questions such as the question of U.S. aid to Israel and the BDS movement. U.S. aid to Israel is the highest amount of aid given to any foreign country (\$3.8 billion per year as of writing), yet the topic is rarely debated in Congress. The mere thought of discussing or debating the issue has historically been refused, as Israel has enjoyed strong bi-partisan support in

Washington D.C. However, the chapter argues that the tide is shifting as increasingly more progressive politicians are calling for debate and discussion on the topic and are advocating for conditioning U.S. aid to Israel.

BDS also plays a role in this dynamic, as its popularity increases at the grassroots level and it continually attempts to put non-violent pressure on Israel to change its policies towards Palestinians and to respect international law. As lawmakers attempt to pass anti-BDS legislation, states are beginning to strike these laws, which many consider to be unconstitutional, down. As of this writing, five states have ruled that anti-BDS legislation is illegal, including Kansas, Arizona, Arkansas, Texas and Georgia.

Lastly, the changing discourse on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the U.S. is giving new hope to an optimistic future. This discursive shift was once again catapulted to new heights in May 2021, when the pending expulsion of Arab residents in Sheikh Jarrah and Israeli raids of Al-Aqsa mosque resulted in an outbreak of violence between Israel and Hamas. The unfolding events shortly afterwards signaled not only a change in discourse in the U.S., but a change in discourse globally at the grassroots level. Never had there been a steady stream of progressive politicians on the United States House floor advocating for Palestinian human rights, never had there been such large scale protests in support of Palestinian human rights in the U.S. (and globally) and never had the crowds been so diverse in race, ethnicity and religion. This change in discourse is partially a result of the relentless work done from the organizations discussed in this dissertation, especially Palestinian diaspora organizations. It is the direct result of continuous efforts to educate the public, educate politicians and decisionmakers, and educate Palestinians in the diaspora on their history, culture and heritage.

A few important observations can be noted from this project. First, the Palestinian rights movement in the United States has shifted its political approach. Advocacy groups no longer focus only on *condemning Israel*, but have shifted the focus to *advocating for Palestinian rights* and amplifying Palestinians voices. In essence, the language of Palestinian advocacy has changed. This has been the general trend amongst nearly all Palestinian advocacy groups referenced in this project. Essentially, the Palestinian rights movement is no longer a singular issue, but is part of a broader global movement advocating for social and racial justice. This movement frames the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within a normative and rights-based discourse, emphasizing that this “conflict” is no longer just about a state or land, but rather about human rights, justice, and equality. This is exemplified in the intersectionality framework applied throughout this project.

Second, there is an interconnectedness with the Palestinian question and an overall anti-war rhetoric and push by the left to scale back U.S. military activities and budgets, and to reinvest that money back into American communities. This ties into a new approach driven by activists to redevelop a vision of foreign policy which centers around human rights rather than a strong military apparatus. The U.S. relationship with Israel is a center point of this dynamic, with more than \$3.8 billion of U.S. taxpayer money going annually to Israel which helps support and fund its military occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, its siege on Gaza, its settlement enterprise and construction of its separation wall- all illegal under international law and all tremendous hurdles which prevent a true and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. There is an increasing awareness by Americans of this relationship and many younger Americans are beginning to question it.

The first contribution this dissertation has demonstrated is that when placed within the framework of the tripartite *composite state* theory, Israel continues to maintain its hegemony over the *coercive-military* and *economic-developmental* structures. However, as this project has illustrated, Israel has lost its domination of the *normative-social* structure, both globally and within the United States. The agency of civil society and organizations/institutions have influenced the *normative-social* structure, increasing broader awareness of the Palestinian narrative, especially within the U.S.

As such, I argue this project implicitly makes a second major contribution. It illustrates the dual dichotomies of what is taking place at the state and geopolitical level, and what is taking place at the social and grassroots level. Support for the Palestinian cause has spread throughout the globe, it draws affinities and intersectionality with human rights and social justice movements throughout the world (BLM, Rohingya, Uyghurs, etc.). However, leaders at the governmental and state level have not reacted to this change in discourse. For the Gulf Arab states and a few others, the opposite can be said as they normalize relations with Israel at the dismay of their citizenry and give up the bargaining chip of normalization that could have helped pressure Israel to reenter negotiations and reach a resolution with the Palestinians.

The question thus becomes, when will these two dichotomies merge? When will actions at the governmental and state level match that of the dominant global public opinion? At the time of writing, 138 of 193 United Nations member states recognize the State of Palestine (almost all are in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.) For the countries that don't officially recognize the State of Palestine, most of them are "western" countries, including the USA, Canada, most EU member countries and Australia. Only

when these two dichotomies merge will we see tangible change and progress in the peace process. Until then, as long as there remains no substantial international pressure on Israel, especially from politically and economically stronger “western” countries, its oppressive policies towards Palestinians will continue.

Another contribution this work makes is that it categorizes and analyzes some of the major Palestinian organizations and Palestinian advocacy groups in the United States. It articulates the creation of these groups and provides a historical account of why and how these organizations were founded. This can help serve as a resource and reference guide for young activists who are interested in getting more involved in Palestinian advocacy but don’t know where to start. Additionally, this project also provides an overview of U.S.-Palestinian relations from 1970-2020. Lastly, this entire project can serve as a resource and reference guide for those interested in the numerous dynamics of the Palestinian question and how it operates within the United States.

Furthermore, this work has highlighted how political dynamics within the United States have resulted in its inability to act as a fair mediator between the two sides. There are narrow circumstances in which the United States exerts consistent moral and ethical practices in its foreign policy approach, especially when it comes to Israel-Palestine. The U.S. routinely protects Israel by exercising its veto power at the United Nations Security Council and actively prevents or blocks Palestinian actions at international institutions, whether it be the United Nations (UN), International Criminal Court (ICC), or others. When Palestinians resist peacefully, whether it be through protest, BDS, or by taking action at the UN or ICC, they are criticized, blocked, and accused of being bad partners for peace. When Palestinians resist through armed resistance, they are criticized, blocked,

called terrorist, and accused of being bad partners for peace. This beckons the question, what should the Palestinians do? Where should the Palestinians turn? Who should they go to for justice? It seems they have been left with very few options, except capitulation.

This has been most exemplified in the ongoing “peace process”, a process which the United States and Israel exert complete control over. Both continually reaffirm their commitment to a two-state solution while simultaneously allowing or pursuing actions on the ground which prevent the possibility of a future two-state solution from being possible. Essentially, new language is being imposed on the peace process. It’s no longer a negotiation process in which two parties engage with a non-biased arbitrator, make mutual concessions, and then come to an agreement. Rather, due to the power imbalance, peace terms are dictated by one party to the other. Conditions and terms are presented, and the Palestinians can either choose to accept or decline. In either case, the status quo and reality on the ground continue unabated. Until the United States can be consistent in its policy approach and act as a fair arbitrator, the Palestinians are left with either putting their trust in the international community to help or putting their trust in themselves.

This project also opens the door for future research within many fields. A growing front within the Palestinian-Israeli issue has become the working definition of anti-Semitism, and the conflation of anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism. More research needs to be done on how these definitions interact and correlate with one another, especially as it relates towards legitimate criticism of the State of Israel. Additionally, there is a growing “battle” in American universities and on college campuses, both at the faculty/staff level and the student level. Future research can explore how faculty are being denied tenure based on their pro-Palestinian stances, how pro-Palestinian voices are being silenced on

campuses, and how pro-Palestinian students are being singled out and shamed by both high-level university administration and highly funded pro-Israel groups. Finally, interesting research can also be done on demographic trends and the difference in views between older generations and younger generations. For instance, many older diaspora Palestinians believe that a two-state solution is still the best solution to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli issue. However, many younger diaspora Palestinians believe that we are heading towards a secular one-state solution as the only viable solution. There are also generational differences across a spectrum of questions and topics, such as how Palestine-Israel is perceived by older vs. younger Americans, and even how Israel is perceived by older vs. younger American Jews. Future research should delve into these generational differences, giving insight into what the future may look like as younger Americans increasingly enter politics and positions of leadership with new and fresh perspectives.

James Baldwin famously wrote, “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.” As an Arab American with Palestinian and Lebanese heritage born and raised in the United States, I’ve observed the U.S. portray itself as a global moral authority. It promotes values of democracy, freedom and equality, all universal values that should be ubiquitous throughout the world regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. However, these values must go beyond just rhetoric. If America truly espouses to promote these values, then it must also live by them. Unfortunately, U.S. policy makers have been inconsistent in their values and at times exercise inconsistent practices and approaches. While they support human rights and democracy in some countries, they turn a blind eye to others.

This has historically been based on the United States' strategic and geopolitical interest. The U.S. supports human rights and democracy all over the world- until it jeopardizes ones strategic or geopolitical interests. This is true not only in Palestine-Israel, but within many other foreign policy arenas. Israel is not immune from this approach and at times (although rarely) the United States has shown that it will deviate from its pro-Israel stance in cases of serious national security or American vital interest, the case of Iran and the JCPOA being an example of one such case.

If the U.S. wants to reclaim its authority as a leader in international politics and create a better world for future generations, then it must be consistent in its policy formation, both domestically and internationally. This means the U.S. cannot claim the moral high-ground when it accuses Russia and China of abusing human rights while simultaneously being guilty of carrying out its own human rights abuses. The U.S. has exercised similar hypocrisy in instances of holding a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic games, while simultaneously passing anti-BDS laws which punish boycotters of Israel; or criticizing Russia for annexing Crimea, while simultaneously refusing to condemn Israeli annexation of Palestinian land (or even aiding in illegal annexation of lands, as in the case of the Golan Heights or East Jerusalem). For the United States to restore its global image as a moral authority in the world, it must reform its policies to be consistent with these universal values. Amending its relationship and approach to Palestine-Israel, and the Palestinian question specifically, would be a good place to start and set a human rights precedent that the rest of the world can follow. In the meantime, the Palestinian diaspora, Palestinian advocacy groups, human rights and social

justice movements, and civil society in general, will continue their work towards building a world of equality, justice, and freedom for all- regardless of religion, race, or ethnicity.

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Julian, Paryaneh and Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (2014). "Muslims and Jews: The Untold Friendship." *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews*.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (April 2015). "La Convivencia from the Muslim/Arab perspective". Presented at The Arts of St. Johns Church in Miami Beach, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (August 2015) "Socio-Economic Development and the State of Palestine". Presented at the Conference of Palestinian Diaspora in Ramallah, Palestine.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (October 2015). “Developing Palestinian Economics”. Roundtable discussion presented at HCEF International Conference in Washington D.C.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (2016). “Muslims and Jews in 7th century Jerusalem.” *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews*.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (October 2016) “The Contemporary Politics of Israel and Palestine”. Invited lecture presented at Florida International University in Miami, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (January 2017). “Arab Nationalism and the *Umma*”. Presented at the Islamic Center of South Florida in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (April 2017). “The Future of Palestinian and Israeli Peace Talks”. Presented at Florida International University in Miami, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (May 2017). “Arab-American Heritage: Proud of our Heritage and Proud to be American”. Invited lecture presented to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and US Department of Homeland Security at Miami International Airport in Miami, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (November 2017). “Does the Muslim vote matter? Muslim voting patterns in the US”. Paper presented at ISA Northeast Annual Conference in Providence, Rhode Island.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (November 2018). “Israel and Palestine: Conflict, Religion and Prospects for Peace”. Presented at Florida International University in Miami, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (April 2019) “Reflections of a Palestinian Diaspora”. Invited lecture at the Know Thy Heritage Palestinian Leadership conference in Washington D.C.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (July 2019). “Mobilizing the Palestinian Diaspora”. Invited roundtable presentation at Birzeit University in Birzeit, Palestine.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (October 2019). “History of the Middle East and US Intervention in the region since World War I”. Invited lecture presented at US Army ROTC Leadership Symposium in Miami, Florida.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (April 2021). “From Palestine to Ferguson: The Intersectionality of the Palestinian Question and U.S. Social Justice Movements”. Paper presented at ISA 2021 Annual Convention.

Ghumrawi, Mohamed K. (March 2022). “The Palestinian Question: A Changing Discourse and the Future of American-Palestinian Relations”. Paper presented at ISA 2022 Annual Convention in Nashville, Tennessee.