The Impact of Changing Narratives on American Public Opinion Toward the U.S.-Israel Relationship

Rana Kamal Odeh
Wright State University

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THE IMPACT OF CHANGING NARRATIVES ON AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

By

RANA ODEH
B.A. English, University of Dayton, 2009

2014
Wright State University
I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Rana Odeh ENTITLED The Impact of Changing Narratives on American Public Opinion Toward the U.S.-Israel Relationship BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts.

Vaughn Shannon, Ph.D.
Thesis Director

Laura M. Luehrmann, Ph.D.
Director, Master of Arts Program in International and Comparative Politics

Committee on Final Examination:

Vaughn Shannon, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science

R. William Ayres, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science

Karen Lahm, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology

Robert E. W. Fyffe, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Odeh, Rana. M.A., Department of Political Science, Wright State University, 2014. The Impact of Changing Narratives on American Public Opinion Toward the U.S.-Israel Relationship

This study assesses the impact of changing narratives on public opinion toward the Palestine-Israel conflict. In contrast to other U.S.-Israel relations studies, but in accordance with some media influence and public opinion research, this study emphasizes the potential role of American public opinion in shaping U.S.-Israel relations. Furthermore, this study attempts to attribute the pro-Israel American attitude shown in Gallup polls to the lack of information about the Palestine-Israel conflict in American mainstream media. This study tests whether public opinion will shift after being exposed to different narratives that falls under one of three major perceptions reported in the current rhetoric regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: 1) Israelis are the victims of Palestinian aggression 2) Israel is a geo-strategic ally of the U.S. in a hostile region, 3) Israel, like the United States, is a liberal democracy. This research includes three primary source surveys to test the impact of biased narratives and unconventional information about Palestine and Israel on public opinion toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

While some scholars argue that the U.S.-Israel relationship is primarily influenced by Israel’s strategic utility in the region, others argue that domestic politics more heavily influence U.S. policies toward Israel. My study is in accordance with the latter argument, suggesting that public opinion influences U.S. foreign policy. I conducted surveys to gain a better understanding of the source and strength of the American public’s support for Israel. Through a series of experimental surveys, this study tested whether the pro-Israel American attitude (that is consistently shown in public opinion polls) is due to a lack of information or misinformation about the conflict in American mainstream media, while controlling for political party affiliation, religious beliefs, gender, and education (specifically formal education on the Palestine-Israel conflict).

The next section briefly outlines the three major hypotheses that are used to explain the U.S.-Israel relationship. The following section outlines the methodology of this study, and the final section details the chapter breakdown.

Hypotheses about the U.S.-Israel relationship

The current arguments about the source of U.S. foreign policy toward Israel generally fall into one of the following three hypotheses: (1) domestic politics most heavily influence U.S. foreign policy toward Israel, (2) U.S. foreign policy toward Israel is shaped by geo-strategic considerations, and (3) American ideological connections with Israel most significantly influence U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. The first and third
Schools of thought are a part of a greater international relations (IR) debate that argues that domestic factors greatly influence foreign policy decisions.¹ The second realist school of thought emphasizes the significance of power and threat in foreign policy decision making.²

Scholars who argue that domestic politics play an important role in shaping U.S. foreign policy argue that public discourse on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict takes a pro-Israel stance, and consequently public opinion follows the same trend and supports the status quo relationship with Israel (see Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006; Slater, 2007; and Findley, 1985). One argument in the domestic politics debate is that the Israel lobby among other pro-Israel elites has the power to tilt American media, politics, and public debate about Israel in its favor. In accordance with the literature on biased public discourse about Israel, I argue that more open public discourse about Israeli policies and a better understanding of both the Palestinian and Israeli narratives would shift public opinion, and there would be more open debate about U.S.-Israel relations. The first survey I conducted focuses on respondents’ sympathies and victimhood in the Palestine-Israel conflict. The results of the victimhood survey are reported in chapter 3.

The second hypothesis is that the U.S. has developed and maintained its special relationship with Israel due to its political utility in the region (see Avnery, 2006; Oren, 2011; Bard and Pipes, 1997). This view is that Israel serves as a strategic U.S. ally: that because the U.S. and Israel have the same enemies, it is in the U.S. interest to support

¹ Scholars who follow this argument include John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (only in regards to the influence of the Israel lobby), Paul Findley, Steven Kull, Noam Chomsky, Uri Avnery, John Mueller, Miroslav Ninic, Bear Braumoeller, Bruce Jentleson, Philip Brenner, Patrick Haney, David Goldberg, Trevor Rubenzer, Walter Vanderbush, and John Western.
² The followers of this thought include Benjamin Miller, Will Moore, David Lanoue, Kenneth Waltz, Hans Morgenthau, Mearsheimer and Walt (with the exception of the role of the Israel lobby), and Michael Oren.
Israel in its fight against terrorism. Scholars in this school of thought conclude that Israel is a strategic utility for the U.S. and that the relationship with Israel is strongest when the two countries share common goals. Others argue that Israel is moving from being a strategic ally to a liability by creating more animosity from the Middle East, and fueling terrorism toward the U.S. (See Slater 2002, 2007; Mearsheimer and Walt 2009). The second survey I conducted focuses on Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. The results of the geo-strategic utility surveys are reported in chapter 4.

The third hypothesis in the literature regarding the U.S.-Israel relationship attributes the “special relationship” to strong ideological ties between the countries (see J. Goldberg, 2007; Oren, 2011; Avnery, 2003; and Slater 2002). Politicians, scholars, and the media often refer to Israel as a democracy, and sometimes as the “only democracy in the Middle East.” The third survey I conducted focuses on Israel’s political system. The results of the democracy surveys are reported in chapter 5. The following section will outline the methodology of the surveys conducted in this study.

**Methodology**

The purpose of my research is to gain insight on the impact of information on U.S. public opinion toward the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the implications it has on U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. This study’s dependent variable is American public opinion toward Israel. The independent variable is information on the following three topics (1) victimhood (how each party suffers from the conflict), (2) geo-strategic interests (how the relationship with Israel affects the U.S.), and (3) democracy (Israeli policies toward Arab-Israeli citizens). The surveys control for political party affiliation,
political ideology, religious beliefs, gender, and education (specifically formal education regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict).

To test the impact of biased information on American sympathies toward the Palestine-Israel conflict, I conducted a Solomon six experimental survey with U.S. college students as subjects. All six groups in the experiment received identical surveys for the pre-test and post-test (when applicable), that asked for their opinions and what their sources of information are when it comes to the Palestine-Israel conflict. The most central question in the survey is identical to the Gallup poll question: “in the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians.” This question will identify the opinions of students before any exposure, and is best suited to identify a significant shift of opinion post-exposure. The first group of students received a pre-test, was exposed to a clip that shows the victimization of Palestinians, but not Israelis, and then post-tested. Group two was exposed to the same pro-Palestine clip, and was then post-tested. Group three received a pre-test, was exposed to a media clip showing the victimization of Israelis but not Palestinians, and was then post-tested. Group four was exposed to the same pro-Israel clip and was then post-tested. Group five was pre-tested and then post-tested without any exposure. Group six was given a test without a pre-test and without exposure to the experiment to strengthen the internal validity of the experiment, and to control for any influences of pre-testing, and not pre-testing. Table 1.1 summarizes the Solomon six experiment below.

---

3 Three control groups did not receive a pre-test.
### Table 1.1: Solomon Six Experimental Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(X_p)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>(X_p)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>(X_i)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>(X_i)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \(X_p\) denotes group exposed to video showing Palestinian victims’ narrative  
* \(X_i\) denotes group exposed to video showing Israeli victims’ narrative

I conducted a second survey to test whether exposure to Middle Eastern public opinion polls showing a connection between the U.S.-Israel relationship and Middle Eastern animosity toward the U.S. will create a shift in respondents’ opinions regarding Israel’s political utility for the U.S. The central question in this survey asks students whether they think Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S. After receiving the initial survey, respondents were exposed to the Middle East opinion polls, and surveyed a second time to test if their opinions were affected by the treatment. Table 1.2 summarizes the survey below.

### Table 1.2: Geo-strategic utility survey design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle East public opinion polls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final survey in this study tests whether exposure to a fact-sheet about Israeli policies affects opinion about Israel’s state of democracy and the ideological similarities
between the U.S. and Israel. The facts were found on Freedom House’s website, which is considered to be the most legitimate democracy ranking organization. The central questions in this survey asks respondents about Israel’s overall political system and key democratic values. The democracy survey is summarized below in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3: Democracy survey design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Israel’s democracy fact sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I collected a total of 749 surveys from students at Wright State University and Denison University. All the survey questions were processed in SPSS to produce descriptive statistics, including frequencies and Chi-Square tests. My study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of each college.

**Survey Process and Issues**

All the respondents to this survey were recruited in college classes. I asked professors from a variety of disciplines for their permission to take approximately 15 minutes of class time to offer the voluntary survey to students. I briefly introduced myself and my study then handed out a cover letter that clearly stated the survey was voluntary, specified what was asked of the respondents in each group, and included my contact information. The IRB at Denison University had different requirements for the cover letters, so I have separate cover letters for each institution (see Appendix 6 for one example). I purposely avoided political science classes, and classes that covered the Palestine-Israel conflict as one step to control for course content. In total, I surveyed 28
classes (13 at Wright State University, and 15 at Denison University) and collected a total of 749 surveys. In order to keep track of the surveys that included a pre-test and post-test and to maintain their anonymity, I asked the students to write their university ID number at the top of the survey. The first set of questions on each of the three surveys are the following control questions shown below:

1. Which political affiliation would you align yourself with:
   a. Strong   b. Leaning   c. Independent   d. Leaning   e. Strong
      Democrat   Democrat   Republican   Republican

2. Which of the following best describes your political ideology?
   a. Strong liberal   b. Liberal   c. Moderate   d. Conservative   e. Strong Conservative

3. What religious affiliation do you align yourself with:
   a. Christian (Protestant, Catholic, etc.)
   b. Muslim
   c. Jewish
   d. Other
   e. None

4. Would you identify as Evangelical/Born Again?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Have you received any formal education on the Palestine-Israel conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female

7. You get your information about the Palestine-Israel conflict mostly from:
   a. Reading books/articles
   b. TV news
   c. Movies
   d. Parents
   e. Church
   f. Other
The level of measurement for political affiliation and political ideology are ordinal, and religious affiliation, Evangelical/Born Again, formal education, gender, and information are all nominal variables. The sympathies (#8 on all the surveys) and victim question on the victimhood survey are nominal variables, questions 10-18 are ordinal variables with a likert scale response category. Questions 19 and 20 are nominal variables (Appendix 1). Questions 9-13 on the geo-strategic utility survey are ordinal variables (Appendix 2). Questions 9-12 on the democracy survey are ordinal variables (Appendix 4). Since all my variables are either ordinal or nominal, and the sample size for each group is small, the most appropriate test to find a relationship between my variables was a Chi-Square crosstabulation and Cramer’s V for strength.

Sample size and demographics

All the respondents in my sample are college students. While I was able to gain a large number of respondents on college campuses, the range of age and demographics was limited. I did not ask for the respondents’ age, but the majority of respondents were traditional college students, thus the results of the surveys are not generalizable. Perhaps an older group of respondents would have more prior knowledge of the conflict, which I would likely affect their answers. I looked at the demographics from each institution and noted that they are very similar. I also noticed that I was getting similar responses on entire surveys from each group, regardless of the class or institution. While Ohio is viewed as a microcosm of the United States during Presidential elections, surveys about the Palestine-Israel conflict would produce drastically different results in cities with large Arab or Jewish communities (Detroit and New York respectively).
Issues with questions

The biggest issue I had with the questions on all the surveys is that the “neutral” answer choice on the likert scale questions was meant to indicate mid-point between “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree,” however, I believe that students were misunderstanding it to mean politically neutral, or choosing it in place of a “do not know” option. For future studies I would change “neutral” to “mid-level” or something that would more clearly indicate its rank on the scale, and I would also consider adding a “do not know” answer choice.

The following question on the victimhood survey seemed to present a problem for many respondents:

“Israel uses a proportional amount of force against Palestinians:”


I used the term proportional because it is a legal term used in international law in defining war tactics. Without the understanding of proportionality in war crimes, the question is confusing, and the respondents’ answers reflected their misunderstanding of the word. Many respondents who were selecting answer choices that showed they were more sympathetic with Palestinians answered “strongly agree” or “agree” to the above mentioned question, and many students whose answers were sympathetic with Israelis were answering “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” which contradicts the trend in their answer choices. The rest of each of the surveys seems to have been well understood by respondents, and I did not notice any other major discrepancies. The following section will highlight the chapter breakdown.
Chapter Breakdown

Considering that the basis of my argument is that Americans are more sympathetic with Israelis due to the distorted history of the conflict, the next chapter of this study includes a case study of the circumstances and narratives surrounding the creation of the state of Israel. Chapter three reviews the literature regarding public opinion, narrative framing, and reporting on the Palestine-Israel conflict; and reports the findings of the victimhood surveys. Chapter four reviews the literature regarding Israel’s geo-strategic utility to the U.S. and reports the findings of the geo-strategic utility surveys. Chapter five reviews the literature on ideological connections between the U.S. and Israel, examines Israel’s state of democracy, and reports the findings of the democracy survey. The concluding chapter discusses the implications of all the findings and will make suggestions for future research.
Chapter 2
Perception and Reality: the 1947-1949 Arab-Israeli war

Introduction

I begin this thesis with a case study about the circumstances and narratives surrounding the creation of the state of Israel; a historical backdrop that is necessary to have an accurate understanding of the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Said (1979) and Finkelstein (2008), among others, argue that the lack of historical knowledge of the conflict has allowed for the dominance of the Israeli-victim narrative and “almost unanimous support for Israel” (Said 1979, 14). The major misperceptions about the conflict are the following: 1) Zionism was a beneficent and well-meaning progressive movement; 2) Palestinians fled on their own accord; 3) Surrounding Arab armies attacked relatively weak Jewish forces (David and Goliath argument); and 4) Israel sought to make peace with its neighbors, but the Arabs obdurate and ungenerous refused all overtures (Morris 2007, 13-14). These misperceptions went unchallenged until the “New Historians” accessed documents that were released in the 1980s after the amendment of Israel’s Archive Law (Morris 2007, 14). The Old History, as Morris (2007) calls it has:

Shaped the way Israelis and diaspora Jews—or at least diaspora Zionists—have seen, and in large measure still see, Israel’s past; and it has also held sway over the way gentile Europeans and Americans (and their governments) see the past. This understanding of the past, in turn, has significantly influenced the attitude of diaspora Jews, as well as European and American non-Jews, toward present-day Israel—which effects government policies concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict (Morris 2007, 14).
While the recognition of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948 could be attributed to the immediate war that ensued between Arabs and Israel, to fully understand the sources of the 1948 conflict it is vital to consider the history of the Zionist movement and Arab resistance dating back to the 1800s. A look at both Zionist and Arab nationalist history provides a greater understanding of motivation, intentions, and organization of the two nationalist movements, which puts the conflict into a more accurate context of a century-old constructed conflict, rather than an old ethno-religious conflict as it is sometimes portrayed.

In agreement with Slater’s (2007) argument, I argue that a historical context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is vital for public discourse and U.S. policy changes toward Israel:

There are few indications that the leaders of either the Republican or Democratic Parties understand the necessity for policy changes. The combination of U.S. public and governmental ignorance, domestic politics, fundamentalist Christian ideology, right-wing Jewish influence, and a commendable but simplistic overall U.S. moral commitment to Israel has produced an astonishing immobilism in U.S. policy, reckless disregard for the easily observable and plainly disastrous consequences for the Israelis and the Palestinians, as well as for critical U.S. national interests. Yet, without a reeducation of U.S. officials and the public at large, it is unlikely that there will be serious changes in U.S. policies (Slater 2007, 120).

The following sections of this chapter will provide a historical backdrop of the conflict and will refute the misperceptions that were, as Morris argues, deliberately shaped by “Old History.”

**History of the Zionist movement**

Early religious Zionist leader Yehuda hai Alkalai began advocating for the establishment of Jewish colonies in Palestine in his 1834 book entitled *Shema Yisrael*
Alkalai expressed an unpopular view that the fate of the state of Israel is in the hands of Jews, not the Messiah. Another early pioneer of religious Zionism who rejected the idea of a messianic miracle was Zwi Hirsch Kalischer. In 1836 Kalischer expressed his commitment to Jewish settlement in Palestine in a letter to the head of the Berlin branch of the Rothschild family; he maintained that redemption will take place slowly through “awakening support from philanthropists and gaining the consent of other nations to the gathering of the Jewish people into the Holy Land” (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 5). Alkalai and Kirschner’s point of view was at variance with the traditional belief that the Messiah would come through an act of divine deliverance. Abraham Isaac Kook, and Zvi Ginsberg (later known as Ahad Ha-Am) were two other early pioneers of religious Zionism who dealt with the spiritual perplexities of Jews in the diaspora and advocated more specifically for a Jewish state.

Although Theodor Herzl is the most well-known secular Zionist, there were two prominent secular Zionists before him; Moses Hess, and Leon Pinsker were less concerned with religious and spiritual values, and more so with the problem of anti-Semitism. Hess believed that the existence of a Jewish state would act as a “spiritual centre for the Jewish people and all of humanity” (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 8). Impacted by the Russian pogroms, Pinsker exploited Jewish alienation in his 1882 book titled *Autoemancipation* in which he argued there is a “moral duty to ensure that persecuted Jews wherever they live will have a secure home” (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 9). Like Pinsker, Herzl was impacted by the persecution of Jews as he witnessed the Dreyfus affair in Paris. Herzl also called for the Jewish people to constitute themselves as one people to ensure the success of the creation of a Jewish state.
In 1895 Herzl requested an interview with Baron Maurice de Hirsch to interest him in the establishment of a Jewish state. When the Baron expressed little sympathy for the project, Herzl hoped he could appeal to the Rothschild family with a sixty-five page proposal outlining his views; which was an outline of his 1896 *The Jewish State*. The success of the Zionist movement, and the reason Herzl is most often attributed as the leader of Zionism, is due to his organization, ability to appeal to the highest diplomatic and political circles, and to his framework which laid out the detailed foundations (economic arrangements) for the creation of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East. On August 29, 1897, the First Zionist Congress opened in the concert hall of Basle Municipal Casino, hosting two-hundred men and women representing twenty-four states and territories (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 10-12).

During the First *Aliyah* (emigration wave) from 1882 to 1903, about twenty-five thousand Jews reached Palestine: the first village created was Rishon le-Zion (First to Zion), later supported by Baron Edmond de Rothschild. In 1883 Jews began building houses in Arab villages along the coastal plain, and by the 1850s Jews were a majority in Jerusalem. In the years following the creation of the Jewish National Fund at the beginning of the twentieth century, forty-three settlements had been created with a population of 120,000 (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 18). The majority of those who had immigrated to Palestine were from Russia and Romania; they either worked on the land as farmers or agricultural laborers or were employed as shopkeepers, artisans, and laborers. At this point, the Arab population became anxious about the influx of Jewish settlers, and began to engage in political activity: two Jerusalem Arabs were elected to the Ottoman Parliament in Constantinople as anti-Zionists, and in the summer of 1914 the
Turkish government imposed strict measures to curtail Jewish immigration (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 16-18).

In the midst of war, the Jews were anxious to create a Jewish legion to fight alongside the Allies against the Turks, “[i]t was the aim of this group to participate in the liberation of Palestine from Turkish control and to convince the Allies of the need for a Jewish homeland” (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 19). Prominent Jewish figures persuaded the British government to create a Jewish defense force, the Zion Mule Corps, to serve on the Gallipoli Peninsula where an Anglo-French force had landed. Although the Allied offensive at Gallipoli was unsuccessful, the efforts of the Jewish Zion Mule Corps were appreciated by the British: an outcome that encouraged the Allies to include Jewish troops in the conquest of Palestine (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 19).

**History of Palestinian Nationalism**

Scholars continue to debate the timing of the emergence of Palestinian nationalism, because a pre-Zionism movement implies that there were people already living in Palestine who had a strong connection to the land; contrary to old Zionist literature and discourse. Gerber (2003, 26) notes “though medieval Palestine was administratively subsumed under the province of Greater Syria, it also stood apart and was known as *Jund Filastin*, or the district of Palestine.” While the Mamluk state ceased using the term administratively in 1250, counter to the old assumption “that the ancient term fell into oblivion, a growing body of evidence shows that it was not forgotten” (Gerber 2003, 26). Although some contemporary scholars focus on the notion of nationalism, which is a post nineteenth century colonial concept, the evidence shows that
inhabitants of the land used the terms “Filastin,” and “ard or bilad” to describe the country they were living in. Most noticeable is a fifteenth century Jerusalemite scholar named Mujir al-Din al-‘Ulaymi who repeatedly used the term Filastin and “the Holy Land” (al-Ard al-Muqaddasa) to describe his homeland in a geographic reference dictionary (Gerber 2003, 26). While there was a pre-Zionism Palestinian identity connected to the Holy Land, there is a consensus that the Zionist incursion propelled Palestinian nationalism in the modern sense of the term.

Toward the end of World War I, organized Palestinian nationalism began to take form when Jaffa notables established a local “Muslim-Christian Association” (MCA). Similar MCAs, later all loosely connected, were established in other towns with clandestine help from British officers (Morris 1999, 34). The MCAs articulated their aspirations for self-rule and opposition to Zionism. Two political societies founded at the end of the war, al-Muntada al Adabi (the literary club) and al-Nadi al-Arabi (the Arab club), signaled the beginning of a full-fledged Palestinian nationalism. Al-Muntada, which was dominated by the Nashashibi family, promoted Arabic language and culture, Muslim values, and was infused with pan-Arab sentiment, advocating an independent united Syria-Palestine. Al-Nadi, founded at the end of the war in Damascus, was dominated by the Husseini clan (primarily Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini) and young Nabulsis, had similar goals (Morris 1999, 35). Gerber argues that the embrace of pan-Syrianism between 1918 and 1920 should not be overstated, as it was the first step toward Arab nationalism, and that Faysal installed as king of Syria seemed like a force capable of overpowering Zionism. This union was one “of convenience, not a deep-
seated union of hearts, and the Palestinians hastened to forget Syria with Faysal’s ouster in July 1920” (Gerber 2003, 28).

The anti-Zionist Palestinian national movement had gained the support of the masses and led to the Great Palestinian Revolt of 1936-39. While similar (but smaller) nationalist revolts in Iraq in 1920 and in Egypt in 1919 led these countries to independence and statehood, the British suppressed the Arab revolt through “brutal and cruel” acts that “would have been inconceivable” acts against Jews; “Britain’s commitment to Zionism made such an outcome inconceivable for Palestine” (Gerber 2003, 37).

**The Role of the British in the Fate of Palestine**

After more than a year of negotiations between the Zionists and the British government, the Balfour Declaration was issued. The letter from British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, to Lord Rothschild, dated 2 November 1917 called for a “national home” for the Jewish people in Palestine, but no such home for Palestinians:

> His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country (Balfour 1917).

Determined to create the Jewish National Homeland in Palestine, a Jewish delegation headed by Chaim Weizmann addressed the Paris Peace Conference on 27 February 1919. After listening to the “impassioned speeches by the delegates, including Menachem Ussishkin, the Paris Peace Conference agreed to grant the Palestine Mandate to Great
Britain, and accepted the need to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine as outlined by the Balfour Declaration” (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2002, 21). The League of Nations Council meeting in London on 24 July 1922 passed the Mandate for Palestine.

**Arab expulsion and the sources of conflict**

In order for the dream of the Jewish homeland to materialize, Jewish leaders knew they would have to systematically expel Jews: “‘[t]here is no hope that this new Jewish state will survive, to say nothing of develop, if the Arabs are as numerous as they are today’ […] [n]one of the members of the Executive disagreed with Ussishkin when he stated ‘[t]he worst is not that the Arabs would comprise 45 or 50 per cent of the population of the state but that 75 per cent of the land is owned by Arabs’” (Palumbo 1987, 1). This sentiment, shared by other Zionist leaders, promoted the perception that Jews and Arabs have incompatible aspirations. The source of this conflict, however, is not simply the differing interests of the parties, but rather that both parties perceive that the available options are incapable of satisfying both parties’ aspirations (Pruitt & Kim 16). As British policy continued to favor Israel, Zionist aspirations grew; in 1942 at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, Zionist leader (later to become Israel’s first Prime Minister) Ben Gurion expanded his demands for the commonwealth of Jewish people over the whole of Mandatory Palestine;

Thus, the geographical space coveted by the movement changed according to circumstances and opportunities, but the principal objective remained the same: the creation in Palestine of a purely Jewish state, both as a safe haven for Jews and as the cradle of a new Jewish nationalism. And this state had to be exclusively Jewish not only in its sociopolitical structure but also in its ethnic composition (Pappé 2006, 9).
As the history of Jewish persecution and the rhetoric of Zionism show, “[t]he identity of individuals and groups in part shapes how they see the world; the way people see the world shapes how and when they perceive threat, as well as how they formulate their goals, assess constraints, process information, and choose strategies” (Stein, 93). Considering the massacres in Russian pogroms, and the persecution of many Eastern European Jews, early Zionists such as Pinsker perceived the “other” as a threat, and thought that “judeophobia” was inevitable. Hence, anybody or anything in the way of an entirely Jewish homeland was seen as a threat; this became the predominant source of tension in the Palestine-Israel conflict. Ussishkin claimed that with a large Arab population “the Jewish state would face enormous problems of internal security and that there would be chaos in government. ‘Even a small Arab minority in parliament could disrupt the entire order of parliamentary life’” (Palumbo 1987, 1).

One of the most controversial issues in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the exodus of Palestinians and the Palestinian refugee problem. The 1948 exodus of Palestinians was not entirely an “unavoidable by-product of war,” but at least in part a systematically planned expulsion that was imbedded in early Zionist rhetoric (Finkelstein 1991, 70). During the 1900s, Zionists began to debate the expulsion of Arabs, and plans were being developed to carry out their goal. Morris (1999, 256) argues that there “while there was no blanket policy for expulsion, the Haganah’s Plan D clearly resulted in mass flight.” Although Morris denies that the Palestinian exodus was a systematic plan of expulsion, he adds that “commanders were authorized to clear the populace out of villages and certain urban districts, and to raze the villages if they felt a military need. Many commanders identified with the aim of ending up with a Jewish state
with as small an Arab minority as possible” (Morris 1999, 256). Morris also adds that the Haganah used tactics of psychological warfare and highlights the effects that the Deir Yassin massacre had on the Palestinian population. Both Finkelstein and Morris argue that such military offenses are the most important single factor in the exodus of April-June.

In 1946, even before the British announced their intentions to withdraw from Palestine, Ben Gurion began to devise a general strategy that could be implemented to deal with the Arabs once the British left. This strategy became Plan C (Gimel in Hebrew), which was a revised fusion of two earlier plans known as Plan A (Elimelech Plan), and Plan B. All three plans aimed to prepare the Jewish community’s military forces for the offensive campaigns they would be waging against rural and urban Palestine after the departure of the British (Pappé 2006, 16). Prior to the creation of the plans, Zionist photographers mapped out the villages for the military to study, which would later contribute to the success of the Jewish military forces. Plan C lacked specific details of what the Haganah (which later became the IDF) was supposed to do when the British left, and thus Plan D (Plan Dalet) was drawn up. Plan D contained direct references to the geographical parameters of the future Jewish state (the 78 percent provided for in the Jewish Agency map that Ben Gurion had to settle for after the terrorist bombing of the King David Hotel by Menachem Begin), and specifics about how to expel the Arabs through attacks and fear tactics (Pappé 2006, 16).

Plan D is seldom mentioned, and is often denied as an organized systematic plan to expel Arabs. There are many reasons for this denial, mainly that to take responsibility for the Arab exodus from Palestine would place responsibility on Israel to allow the right
of refugees to return, one of today’s most controversial issues. Instead, the Israeli government claims that Arab radio broadcasts ordered the evacuation of Palestinians, however, Khalidi (1988, 9) argues that “the Zionist emphasis on Arab evacuation orders is in fact a skillful propaganda tactic with manifold purposes: it shifts the moral responsibility for the refugees on to the Arabs themselves, puts them on the defensive, and shoulders them with the burden of refutation.”

Ilan Pappé (2006, 7) argues that Plan D, which covered both the rural and urban areas of Palestine, was the “inevitable result both of Zionism’s ideological drive for an exclusively Jewish presence in Palestine” and that it was a response to the rising tension on the ground following the British decision in February 1947 to end its Mandate over the country and to hand it over to the United Nations. Clashes with local Palestinian militias, especially after the UN partition resolution of November 1947, which Arabs rejected, provided the perfect context and pretext for implementing and justifying the ideological vision of an ethnically cleansed Palestine. Once Plan D was finalized on March 10, 1948, it took six months to complete the mission. When it was over, more than half of Palestine’s native population, estimated at 750,000 people had been uprooted, 531 villages had been destroyed, and 11 urban neighborhoods had been emptied of their inhabitants (Pappé 2006, 7). Pappé refers to this systematic expulsion of Palestinians as ethnic cleansing, and is bewildered by the denial of such a catastrophe, a denial of which has only fueled tensions between Arabs and Jews for the past sixty years:

When it comes to the dispossession by Israel of the Palestinians in 1948, there is a deep chasm between the reality and the representation. This is most bewildering, and it is difficult to understand how events perpetrated in modern times and witnessed by foreign reporters and UN observers could be systematically denied, not even recognized as historical fact, let alone acknowledged as a crime that needs to be confronted, politically as well as morally. Nonetheless, there is no
doubt that the ethnic cleansing of 1948, the most formative event in the modern history of the land of Palestine, has been almost entirely eradicated from the collective global memory and erased from the world’s conscience (Pappé 2006, 8).

As tensions between Jews and Arabs continued to rise, the perception of incompatible aspirations, and the other as a threat, became the dominant perception for both parties. Tahir al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem regarded the attempts of the Jews to buy land and enlarge their numbers in Palestine as a direct threat to the Arab community there. The expulsion of Palestinians only exacerbated this sentiment among the Arab community and led to the escalation of the conflict: the “expulsion from their homeland has embittered many Palestinians and made them eager for revenge. The world still suffers from the spiral of reprisals and counter reprisals which began in 1948” (Palumbo 1987, xiv).

UNSCOP and the making of the 1947-49 war

In February 1947 the Security Council was asked to investigate the question of Palestine, and on 2 April 1947 the Council decided to send an inquiry commission to Palestine. Britain asked the UN Secretary-General to summon a special session of the General Assembly for the creation of a commission to study Palestine and to submit a report on it to the organization. Trygve Lie, the Secretary-General, objected to the convention of a full session of the Assembly, and decided to transfer the issue to the Political Committee of the UN, an ad hoc committee representing the various regions and alliances in the organization. It was agreed that the inquiry mission should complete its work by September 1947, and should prepare a final report for the General Assembly.
session scheduled for that month. The special session of the Political Committee lasted two weeks from 29 April to 15 May 1947, and at the end of the two weeks the Committee decided on the establishment of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) which was to have eleven members (Pappé 1992, 17).

The U.S. deliberately decided to leave out the permanent members of the Council to limit Russian involvement in the future of Palestine, thus the members of UNSCOP knew very little about the situation in the Middle East, which was apparent when they suggested a Jewish state where half the population would be Arab (Pappé 1992, 18). After hearing views from the spokesman of the warring countries on 28 April 1947, UNSCOP was officially established and left for Palestine where they intended to hear the views of the Jewish and Palestinian leaders. The session of the Political Committee ended with an unexpected speech on 14 May 1947, in which the Russian representative Andrei Gromyko announced his support for the Partition of Palestine. Partition meant the creation of a Jewish state, therefore support for partition was considered to be pro-Zionist, the beginning of a significant shift in Russian policy: eventually Russia “effectively paved the way for Jewish independence” (Pappé 1992, 19-20). Aware of the pro-Zionist stance taken by the U.S. and Russia, “UNSCOP’s members left for Palestine with more than a faint idea of what the two superpowers’ consensus would consider to be a desirable solution” (Pappé 1992, 20). The members of UNSCOP were already in favor of partition prior to meeting any of the Arab representatives; the Exodus Jewish refugee ship affair tipped the balance further in favor of Jews. In the summer of 1947, the Exodus tried to break through a British blockade that was created to limit immigration into Palestine, however Britain captured the ship and turned it back to Germany. This
“insensitive British decision prompted UNSCOP to discuss the fate of the Jewish survivors instead of the Arab demand to determine the future of Palestine according to the demographic reality of 1947” (Pappé 1992, 24-25). To say the least, the Holocaust certainly affected the global attitude toward Jewish survivors and added to the sympathetic pro-Zionist stance that UNSCOP had taken.

Unable to unite and present a coherent stance, the Palestinian leadership left the political initiative in the hands of the Arab League, seated in Cairo, and allowed the Arab world to represent its case. The representatives of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Yemen met UNSCOP in the Palace of the Lebanese Foreign Office on July 22, 1947. After the meeting, the Arab League concluded that UNSCOP was biased in favor of the Zionists, and undetermined to create a Palestinian state; and UNSCOP concluded that the Arab countries were more interested in Arab rivalries than the fate of Palestine, and was doubtful that they favored a Palestinian state (Pappé 1992, 25-26). Transjordan did not attend the meeting on the basis that it was not a member of the UN; however the future actions of Jordan show it had no intention of supporting an independent Palestinian state. The weight of British, American, Russian, and UN support was undoubtedly in favor of the Zionists, and the little support that surrounding Arab countries claimed to have for the Palestinian cause did not help the Palestinians in the war, but rather their own interests. With the scale tipped so far to one side of the warring parties, it is no “miracle” that the Zionists had a great victory.

After the Arab Revolt that ended in 1939, Arab and Jewish fighting was at a relative calm; however Jewish underground movements grew hostile toward the British. The National Military Organization, known as Irgun, was established in 1936 with the
goal to gain Jewish control over all of Palestine and Transjordan. The Irgun, which was particularly active between 1945 and 1947, called for a persistent armed struggle against both the British and the Arabs, and was dissatisfied with the relatively low key operations of the Haganah (Pappé, 1992, 21). The other underground militia group was LEHI, also known as Stern Gang: in February 1947 the Irgun, following LEHI’s strategy, had moved from isolated attacks against the British to large-scale operations against the foreign occupation of Palestine (Pappé, 1992, 25). The goal of the Irgun and LEHI in attacking the British was to make the war too costly for the British. The British announcement in February that it planned to leave by May 1948 may have been coincidental timing, but it is more plausible that the Irgun and LEHI tactics of violence against the British impacted the decision.

The 1948 Arab-Israeli war really began to bubble in February 1947, with the British announcement of its decision to end its mandate over Palestine and to turn the problem over to the United Nations, thus the conflict should rather be referred to as the 1947-49 Arab-Israeli war (Pappé 2006, 3). This decision caused a stir, but the approval of the UN Partition Plan Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, which called for the division of Mandatory Palestine into a 56% Jewish state, 43% Palestinian state, and an international trusteeship regimein Jerusalem, is what triggered a wide outbreak of clashes (A/RES/181(II), 1947). The morning after the UN General Assembly ratified the partition resolution there was an outbreak of violence that signaled the beginning of the 1947-49 war. The first attacks after the ratification of the resolution were perpetrated by the Palestinians against Jews: Two Jewish buses were attacked near Lydda airport, and in

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4 When the Palestinian population outnumbered the Jewish population.
Jerusalem Arab youth ransacked the city’s Jewish market and shopping center on December 2, 1947 (Pappé, 1992, 76). Beginning that same day, the Arabs all over Palestine went on strike for three days, and there had been sporadic violence against Jewish shops, however according to a British police official these incidents “had undoubtedly not been organized but were the acts of individuals and groups” (Palumbo 1987, 34). The motivation and organization of Palestinians may have not been clear at this point, and exaggeration of the hostilities of the Palestinians was exploited by the Jewish militia groups: “the Irgun used the Arab rioting in early December 1947 as an excuse to launch a murderous terrorist campaign that claimed the lives of many civilians in numerous town and villages” (Palumbo 1987, 34). On December 12-13, 1947, 33 Palestinians were murdered by “Jewish terrorists,” and many more were injured, this amounted to a “declaration of war by the Yishuv against the Palestinian Arabs” (Palumbo 1987, 35). Even the British, who had taken a pro-Zionist stance, were not sympathetic to the Zionists’ terror attacks. The British High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham reported to London that the initial Arab outbreaks were “spontaneous and unorganized and were more demonstrations of displeasures at the UN decision than determined attacks on Jews” (Palumbo 1987, 35). Cunningham went on to deny that the dissident Irgun and Stern Gang were acting independently of the Jewish Agency: “[t]his has not in fact been the case and in any event the Haganah and the dissident groups are now working so closely together that the Agency’s claim that they cannot control the dissidents is inadmissible” (Palumbo 1987, 36).

At the beginning of April 1948, the Haganah went on the offensive, with the added help of weapons shipments from Czechoslovakia. In early April, one of the most
important Palestinian figures, Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni was killed, depriving the Palestinians of their most respected leaders: this incited revenge (Smith 2010, 198). On April 9, 1948, a joint Irgun-LEHI force attacked the village of Deir Yassin, where it slaughtered roughly 115 men, women, and children whose mutilated bodies were stuffed down wells (Smith 2010, 199). The Arabs retaliated on April 13, by killing seventy Jewish doctors and nurses in a medical convoy near Jerusalem. The killings, disposal of the Palestinian bodies, and the threatening loudspeaker messages became Jewish militia tactics of psychological warfare: “Zionist psychological warfare and terror tactics, which included the destruction of villages and the ousting of their populations, combined to produce a state of panic that resulted in the flight of over 300,000 Arabs by May 15” (Smith 2010, 199).

The creation of the Jewish state and escalation of the conflict

On May 14, 1948, Ben-Gurion and other leaders put their signatures to Israel’s Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv. The creation of the new state was a trigger that led to the escalation of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict, into an Arab-Israeli war. That same day, notices were posted throughout the city by the Haganah indicating that the new state was in imminent danger (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2012, 47). The next day U.S. President Truman personally instructed a member of the United Nations delegation to announce the United States’ de facto recognition of Israel, the first country to do so, followed immediately by Soviet recognition of the new state. Also on the same day began the invasion of five Arab fighting forces from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Transjordan with a token contingent from Saudi Arabia (Smith 2010, 200). Although the
war was now being fought between five Arab armies, and the Israeli forces, it was no David and Goliath war: “the Israelis held a manpower advantage over the Arab armies backed by superior military training and commitment; the only comparable units were those of Jordan’s Arab legion” (Smith 2010, 201). In addition to Israel’s military advantage, there was no coordination of Arab military movements because the participants were mutually suspicious of one another’s territorial ambitions. All the countries rightly suspected Transjordan’s King Abdullah of seeking to gain control of the area allotted to the Palestinian Arabs under the partition plan in order to incorporate it into his kingdom and to defeat the mufti in the process (Smith 2010, 201). Abdullah met with Zionist leader Golda Meir well before the 1947 war to reach an agreement to coordinate their diplomatic and military strategies, forestall the mufti, and prevent the other Arab states from intervening directly in Palestine (Shlaim 2007, 84). Abdullah met with Zionist leaders again in May 1948 to assure them of his acceptance of the partition, and to assure them his army will not stop the Israeli forces from their mission (Smith 2010, 201).

The five Arab armies did not have a common goal to support the creation of a Palestinian state by keeping the Israeli forces from occupying Palestinian territory, but rather they wanted to secure their own interests. On May 15, Syrian troops attacked in the Jordan valley capturing the town of Zemah, but were pushed back on May 20, when they attacked Degania. By May 23, the Syrians had withdrawn from Zemah (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2012, 47). In the north the Lebanese army invaded the northern Galilee but was stopped by an Israeli counter-attack. Other Arab forces did manage to penetrate into central Galilee, where they were greeted by Palestinian Arabs: at the same time the
Syrians continued their assault, capturing the border of Mishmar Hayarden. To the south of the Syrian, Lebanese, and voluntary Arab armies, the Iraq army attacked Gesher but was repulsed; nonetheless, they captured the settlement of Geulim but were later driven out by Israeli forces who captured the villages and town of Jenin. In the Negev desert, Egyptian forces attacked Israeli forces, but were halted at the settlement of Yad Mordehcai, south of Ashdod. On May 24, the settlement was evacuated and by May 29, the first Israeli fighter planes, four Messerschmitts, attacked the Egyptian column (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2012, 47).

On May 29 the UN Security Council called for a cease-fire and also prohibited the importation of arms or military personnel into Palestine or any Arab nations; no prohibition was written for the Israelis. On 11 June, the cease-fire came into effect and lasted for nearly a month; during that period the UN attempted to establish a lasting peace in the area. On June 27, the mediator in this conflict who was appointed by the Security Council, Count Folke Bernadotte, submitted a plan suggesting a union involving the whole of Mandate Palestine in which the country would be divided between Israel and Transjordan. In this plan, “Jordan would continue its possession of the West Bank territory including East Jerusalem; the Arabs would acquire the entire Negev; and Israel was to be allocated western Galilee” (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2012, 48). Jewish immigration would also be unlimited for two years then controlled by the UN agency, and finally, Bernadotte’s plan called for the return of all Arabs to their former homes. Not surprisingly, Bernadotte’s proposal was not received well by either the Arabs or Israel (he was eventually murdered by members of LEHI), and on July 8, the day before the truce
was set to expire, fighting broke out in the Negev which lasted for ten days (Cohn-Sherbok and el-Alami 2012, 49).

When the second truce was established in July 18, it lasted until October 15, 1948, when Israelis attacked the Egyptians, driving them out of the Negev and pushing them into the Sinai (Shlaim 2007, 98). The third truce came into force on October 31. On December 22, Israel again broke the truce by launching a second offensive in the south. The heavy offensive operation (Horev) “succeeded in compelling Egypt, the strongest Arab state with the best claim to lead the others, to open armistice negotiations with the State of Israel and thus to bring the war to an end. On January 7, 1949, the UN-decreed cease-fire went into force marking the formal end of the first Arab-Israeli war” (Shlaim 2007, 100).

Conclusion

While the Palestinians are often blamed for the 1948 war due to their rejection of the UN partition resolution, Zionist leaders had no intention of accepting the borders or demographic composition of their new state. Ben Gurion made this clear when he said to the Cabinet of the Mapai party “‘United Nations resolutions are not compulsory and we ought not to pin all our hopes and efforts on them’” (Palumbo 1987, 38). One of the main factors leading to the failure of UNSCOP’s mission and the UN Partition Plan is the fact that the two warring parties were not involved in creating the design. Neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis had a say in the specifics of the partition plan, and as noted above, the members of UNSCOP went into their inquiry mission very ignorant of the situation. Even during the inquiry, “[o]f the five intensive months UNSCOP devoted to
discussing the fate of post-Mandatory Palestine, only five weeks were spent in Palestine itself” (Pappé, 1992, 22). There were too many outside parties involved in deciding the fate of Palestine, and none of them were believed to have the commonwealth of Palestinians in mind.

The mentality of the parties and the relationship between them are also essential factors in conflict: if the parties have a zero-sum mentality, then by definition anything they concede is a loss to them. By the early 1900s, Zionists viewed the future of Palestine as a zero-sum situation: whatever land is given to the Palestinians is a loss to Jews, thus through Plan C and Plan D the Zionist movement organized to guarantee a Jewish homeland with as little Arabs in it as possible. Invidious comparisons also encouraged the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: when Palestinians developed an awareness that Jews were of no greater merit than themselves, yet Jews were being favored by the British, Americans, Russians, and the UN, then Palestinians reacted in an aggressive manner after the ratification of the UN Partition Plan (Pruitt & Kim, 23-24).

There are many factors that led to Israel’s success of the 1948 war, mainly its military advantage over the Arab armies, and the U.S., British, and Russian support that tilted the scale in its direction during many stages of the conflict. At the end of the war, it was Israel’s contentious attacks against Egypt that ultimately ended the war: the war became too costly for all the Arab parties involved, and they were no longer able to sustain the fighting. The Israeli forces completely took away the Arab armies’ ability to continue to fight, and thus the war ended, but it is clear today that the motivation still stands in the way of peace. The reason the UN Partition Plan was unsuccessful, is the same reason the many truces during the war were unsuccessful, and the reason the 1949
Armistice has not created lasting peace in Palestine and Israel: the agreements were not reached willingly by both parties involved, Palestinians did not represent themselves, they did not gain the legitimacy that Israel did, and they did not have the organization of the Zionist movement.

There are many misconceptions about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is partly the result of the deliberate attempts by “Old Historians” to portray the past in a light that would not reflect badly on Israel (Morris 2007, 14). Palestinians are often portrayed as the aggressors in the conflict, and while it is not helpful for both parties to continue to blame each other for the violence, it is important for the public to know the origins of the conflict in order to form a more balanced opinion of the situation. Considering that the U.S. provides Israel with military support which enables its military offenses, and roughly $3 billion annually, it is particularly important for the American public to understand both the Palestinian and Israeli narratives. The Zionist movement was not a beneficent one, the Palestinians were at least in part systematically expelled, Jewish military forces had the upper hand over the Arab armies, and Israel did not seek peace with its Arab neighbors.

In my study on the effects of information on American public opinion, I found that presenting an alternative Palestinian narrative changed the perceptions of victimhood for many respondents. Having an understanding of the order of events, and more background information on the conflict positively correlated with respondents’ sympathy for Palestinians. I will further discuss the findings of this study in the following chapters.
Chapter 3
Narrative Framing, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy

Introduction

One explanation of the “special relationship” between the U.S. and Israel is that the American public, including political elites, are more sympathetic with Israel because of the dominance of the Israeli narrative, and the marginalization of the Palestinian narrative in American public discourse. It is assumed that politicians answer to their constituents in a democracy; thus U.S. policies toward Israel may be the result of the pro-Israel sentiment shared by the American public. The debate on public opinion revolves around two central questions: does public opinion shape foreign policy and, if so, whose opinion really matters? This chapter will delve into different theories about whether public opinion has the potential to influence U.S. foreign policy, and how the American public forms its opinions on international affairs. Then it will assess various case studies of media influence on American public opinion and foreign policy. Finally, this chapter concludes with the findings of the victim-narrative experimental survey I conducted to test the impact of biased information on public opinion toward the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The Literature on Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

Philosophers and scholars have questioned the role of ordinary citizens in governing decisions for centuries, but the debate between realists and liberals has soared
since World War I, which is described as the “first public relations war.” Extensive research during the first two decades-following World War II, which coincided with the development of scientific polling, yielded a broad agreement known as the “Almond-Lippmann consensus,” centered on the following propositions about public opinion: “(1) it is volatile and thus provides inadequate foundations for stable and effective foreign policies (2) it lacks coherence or structure, but (3) in the final analysis, it has little if any impact on foreign policy” (Holsti 1992, 439).

On the other side of the spectrum, liberals argue that ordinary citizens are even more capable than elites in forming structured and consistent views about specific foreign policies based on more general and abstract beliefs versus partisanship (see Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). The Vietnam War was instrumental in shifting the notion that the public was incapable of forming rational thoughts about foreign policies. Mueller (2009), found public opinion to be a stable key factor in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq; as casualties mounted, support decreased. Jentleson (1992) also found public opinion to be stable; the public was generally more supportive of the use of force when the principle objective was to restrain, rather than remake government. Even Lippmann, whom only a decade earlier wrote about the life-threatening dangers of listening to the public, came to regard the public as more enlightened than the administration (Holsti 1992, 445).

While there are many differing views on the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy making, Sobel (2001) argues that public opinion “works more like the liberal theory of desirable and necessary public constraint than the realist theory of opinion as undesirable and unnecessary” (Sobel 2001, 12). There is a consensus that differing publics express their views through various forms, and that some individuals are
more influential than others. Though not everyone’s opinion is weighed equally, the public’s preferences are generally expected to prevail in a democracy, in which every citizen has potential access to power, and the political leadership is periodically subject to election. It is through the process of election and re-election that constituents place constraints on policy makers in a democracy (Sobel 2001, 10-11).

While some scholars doubt the potential influence of ordinary citizens, few scholars refute the notion that politically active elites and organized interest groups have influence over policy making. The pro-Israel interest groups in the U.S. are increasingly diversifying, and the divergence among pro-Israel elites could lead to policy changes toward Israel. For example, J-Street has taken a progressive approach to the conflict by supporting both Israel’s right to security, and Palestinian rights. If organizations such as J-Street grow in popularity, it would be difficult for hawkish pro-Israel organizations such as AIPAC to maintain their aggressive stance. The fear that dissenting pro-Israel groups or NGOs will effectively get their message to the mass public is one reason that AIPAC and other right-wing pro-Israel groups dedicate so many resources to monitoring the debate on Israel.

In their 1983 study, Page and Shapiro tracked public opinion and foreign policy changes from 1935-1979. They found substantial congruence between opinion and policy, and concluded that the congruence coupled “with the evidence that opinion tends to move before policy more than vice versa, indicates that opinion changes are important causes of policy change. When Americans’ policy preferences shift, it is likely that congruent changes in policy will follow” (Page and Shapiro 1983, 188-89). Page and Shapiro (1983, 189) warn that “one should be cautious about bestowing the normative
imprimatur of ‘democracy’ without taking account of the quality of that opinion: what kind of information it is based on, what has influenced it, and perhaps how closely it corresponds with objective standards of citizens’ interests.” With the assumption that public opinion is taken into consideration in the foreign policy making process, it is critical to study whether biased narratives, via media framing, affect public opinion on national issues.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) conducted an experiment to study citizens’ reactions to television news programs in two basic designs: sequential and assemblage. Participants in sequential experiments watched one thirty-minute newscast every day over the course of a week on the campus of Yale University and were told that they should not watch the evening national news at home during the length of the experiment (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 8). Before watching the news for the experiment, participants completed a questionnaire (a pre-test) that covered a variety of political topics. The most relevant to the experimenters’ interest in agenda-setting and priming, participants were asked to name the country’s most important problems and to evaluate the president’s performance in office (Iyengar and Kinder, 8). After completing the questionnaire, participants watched an unedited videotape recording of the previous evening’s national newscast drawn from one of the three major networks. Over the next four days, participants continued to view what they believed to be a recording of the previous evening’s newscast. In fact, and unknown to participants, Iyengar and Kinder had altered sections of the newscast ahead of time in order to “achieve systematic experimental variations in the amount and nature of coverage given national problems” (Iyengar and Kinder, 8). On the final day of the experiment, participants completed a second questionnaire (post-test)
that again inquired into their beliefs about the country’s problems and the president’s performance.

In assemblage experiments, participants viewed a collection of news stories taken from three major networks at a single sitting. The “presentations were described as a cross-section of typical news stories broadcast by the major networks during the past year” (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, 9). Participants in the assemblage experiments were questioned about their political views only immediately after the presentations (unlike in the sequential experiments that included a pre-test). Iyengar and Kinder (1987, 9) note that “the assemblage design is obviously less realistic, but in partial compensation, it enables us to pursue more subtle propositions regarding the power of television news.”

From their study, Iyengar and Kinder (1987: 33-110) conclude:

(1) Those problems that receive prominent attention on the national news become the problems the viewing public regards as the nation’s most important.

(2) Lead stories dominate the agenda-setting process.

(3) The impact of news coverage - the strength of the agenda-setting effect - depends in part on the characteristics of the audience, mainly political involvement. Independents are most likely to fall victim to agenda-setting.

(4) Television coverage is particularly effective in shaping the judgments of citizens with limited political resources and skills.

(5) Television news helps define the standards that viewers apply to presidential performance.

(6) The influence of television news coverage on Americans’ assessments of presidential performance depends partly on how the news portrays his responsibilities.
(7) Unlike agenda-setting, involvement does not condition susceptibility of priming, partisan attachments and theories of national problems do.

(8) The priorities that are the most important in voters’ minds as they go to the polls to select a president or a U.S. Representative appear to be powerfully shaped by the last-minute preoccupations of television news.

   Essentially, Iyengar and Kinder conclude that television news determines what is newsworthy, the general public is subject to either agenda-setting or priming regardless of involvement or partisanship (respectfully), and the public makes political decisions (voting) based on television news coverage. This is problematic when news coverage on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is biased in favor of the Israeli narrative (see the section on “Studies of the pro-Israel Bias in American Media” below).

   Steven Kull (2003) reveals that the American public was heavily persuaded by the television media coverage (or misinformation) about Iraq, and therefore acquired misperceptions of the events of 9/11, Iraq’s involvement, Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the world public opinion about the Iraq war. Kull showed that those who had misperceptions regarding Iraq’s involvement in the 9/11 attacks, due to the misinformation or biased reporting from television news media, were more likely to approve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq:

   Before and after the war, those who have held misperceptions have been far more supportive of the decision to go to war with Iraq. In the postwar period, those with none of the key misperceptions oppose the decision, while the presence of each additional misperception is accompanied by sharply higher support for the war (Kull 2003, 9).

   The relevance of Kull’s research to this study is to show that the American public receives biased media coverage, gains its knowledge or misperceptions from the media,
assumes it to be true, bases its opinions about important foreign policy decisions accordingly, and thus supports foreign policy or presidents’ decisions based on misinformation from the media. The serious implication is that this undermines civil society’s role in practicing constraints over elected officials. If the public receives one-sided coverage of an issue due to elite manipulation, then the public’s role in practicing constraints over elected officials would be undermined.

Jon Western (2009) argues that in the cases of Bosnia and Somalia (1992), information was leaked to the press and NGOs and liberal humanitarianists began putting pressure on the Bush and Clinton administrations to intervene. Western also correlates the desire for re-election (for Bush), and election for Clinton, with their decisions to do something about Somalia and Bosnia respectively. Western argues that "Selective Engagers" portrayed the conflicts as ethnic hatreds in which the U.S. could do little. The media reflected this view that exaggerated the conflict as ethnic, and as one that would take up to 400,000 U.S. troops to initiate a ceasefire. The media exaggerated the situation and made it seem as though the U.S. could do little. The significance of this study is that Western finds that it was essentially public pressure that influenced the Bush and Clinton administrations to intervene. Americans have shown heightened interest in foreign affairs when human rights violations are made public, as in the cases of Bosnia, Somalia, Darfur, and Uganda (Kony). The cases that Western highlights, in which the public had the ability to influence recent foreign policy decisions, support my argument that the general public has the potential to shift foreign policy toward Israel. However, also similar to the cases Western presents, public opinion is unlikely to shift until the public debate about Israel shifts. I argue that if the American public were aware of the human rights
violations against Palestinians, more Americans would be concerned with the conflict. The following section will introduce the literature regarding American media coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Studies of the pro-Israel Bias in American Media

I now turn to the studies of the pro-Israel bias in American media. *If Americans Knew* (IAK) is a media watchdog that specializes in reporting inaccuracies and bias in the U.S. media about the Palestine-Israeli conflict. IAK compared the death tolls of Palestinians and Israelis with the number of deaths reported in the headlines and first paragraphs of news articles in the *New York Times*. IAK used data from *B’Tselem*, a widely respected Israeli human rights organization, and only included Israeli deaths directly caused by Palestinians, and vice versa. IAK made two separate reports, one of the cumulative death counts, and a separate report of children’s deaths because “each such event represents a universally recognized human tragedy” (IAK). Unfortunately, the reporting of children’s deaths is even more one-sided than of the cumulative death count. IAK reports that during the first year of the second Intifada (Sept. 29, 2000 – Sept. 28, 2001), 28 Israeli children and 131 Palestinian children were killed in the violence. According to IAK, the headlines and first paragraphs of news article in *The New York Times* report an additional 7 children’s deaths on the Israeli side due to repetition, while omitting the death of 107 Palestinian children.

In a separate study of television news, IAK found that *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News*, and *NBC Nightly News* also follow in the same trend as the *New York Times*. Due to repetition, *ABC* reports 200% of children’s deaths on the Israeli side, *CBS* reports 132%, and *NBC* reports 161%; while they report only 15%, 21%, and 13%
of the deaths of Palestinian children, respectively (IAK). A similar analysis of the reports of Palestinian and Israeli death totals in 2004 reveals that 4 out of 8 Israeli children’s deaths were omitted, while 164 out of 176 deaths of Palestinian children were omitted from *The New York Times*’ headlines and first paragraphs. During the same time period, of Israeli children’s deaths, *ABC* and *NBC* reported 100%, and *CBS* reported 50%. Of Palestinian children’s deaths, *ABC* reported 11%, *NBC* reported 10%, and *CBS* reported 4% (IAK). The omission of Palestinian children’s deaths in American mainstream media paints a picture of the conflict as one in which Israelis are the victims. Such biased reporting of such a heart-wrenching issue should be cause for concern in a democracy as liberal as the U.S.’ however, it is difficult for the public to know how subjective the reporting is when the bias comes in the form of omission.

In 2002, after two years of escalated violence in Palestine and Israel, *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* (FAIR) surveyed how the language of "retaliation" has been used on the nightly news shows on *ABC*, *CBS* and *NBC*. They found that from the start of the second Intifada in September 2000 through March 17, 2002, the nightly news shows of the three major networks used some variation of the word "retaliation" (retaliated, will retaliate, etc.) 150 times to describe attacks in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. About 79% of those references were to Israeli "retaliation" against Palestinians. Only 9% referred to Palestinian "retaliation" against Israelis, while approximately 12% were ambiguous or referred to both sides simultaneously (FAIR, 2002). Although the language of retaliation is just one factor of reporting on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is loaded with underlying messages; “the term ‘retaliation’ suggests a defensive stance undertaken in response to someone else's aggression. It also lays responsibility for the cycle of violence
at the doorstep of the party being ‘retaliated’ against, since they presumably initiated the conflict” (FAIR, 2002). With the history of the occupation essentially absent from mainstream media, as Slater (2007) argues, and the language of retaliation used 79% for Israelis compared to 9% for Palestinians, the stage is set for Israel to make its moral case and to reach for sympathy from American public.

Slater (2007) assessed the differences in public discourse on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in two of the most influential daily newspapers in the U.S. and Israel: the New York Times and Haaretz. He finds that U.S. media coverage is more sympathetic with the Israeli narrative, and consequently, has disregarded the devastating consequences of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians, Israel, and U.S. national interests. Slater argues that U.S. public officials, political elites, and the general public fail to understand the major consequences of unconditional U.S. support of Israeli policies because there is a lack of public discourse about the Palestinian narrative:

The prevailing view in the United States is that the Palestinians are overwhelmingly responsible for the continuing violence and political deadlock, and therefore there is little reason or justification for significant changes in the long-standing U.S. policy of nearly unconditional support of Israel. This article argues that a major explanation for this widespread but erroneous U.S. consensus is the largely uninformed and uncritical mainstream and even elite media coverage in the United States of Israeli policies, a consequence of which is that alarm bells that should be sounded loudly and clearly are muted (Slater 2007, 85).

Slater’s choice of the Times, as he suggests, is due to its ability to influence “elite public opinion in the United States, as well as in Congress and among other government officials” (Slater 2007, 87). He asserts that, although the Times is hardly monolithic or completely uncritical in its coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it has minimized serious and sustained criticism of Israeli policy (Slater 2007, 87). In agreement with
Iyengar and Kinder’s (1987) central argument about media framing, Slater argues that the *New York Times* does not merely report the news;

to a great extent, it also determines what will be considered important news and how that news is likely to be understood [...] by its decision as to what constitutes major news and what does not, as indicated by the placement and depth of coverage in its news pages; by what is omitted or, at least, de-emphasized in its reports; by whether it merely reports what public officials say or ‘perceive’ about issues and events, or goes beyond that to point to obvious contradictions between government statements and observable realities; and, perhaps most important, by whether or not its reportage includes vital historical context (Slater 2007, 87-88).

The most significant historical context that is omitted, Slater argues, is the overall Israeli occupation and its consequences; “the most important consequence, of course, has been the killing and wounding of thousands of innocent Palestinians. Beyond that are the political costs to the Palestinian people of being ruled by others, the psychological costs of the daily humiliation and harassment associated with the occupation, and, of course, the economic costs” (Slater 2007, 96).

In his comparison of the *New York Times* and *Haaretz*, Slater focuses on the differences in reporting on three aspects of the Israeli occupation: the moral issues, the consequences of erecting the Israeli “wall” or “separation barrier,” and the significance and implications of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 (Slater 2007, 96). He finds that the U.S. media in general, including the “prestigious and influential newspaper, the *New York Times*” are rarely as critical of Israeli policies as are the Israeli media, in particular the “prestigious and influential newspaper, *Haaretz*” (119). Slater argues that “the significance of the difference cannot be exaggerated: without full and critical debate, the prospects or changes in U.S. government policies are next to nil,” which has “dire consequences” for the U.S. (119).
Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) attribute the pro-Israel bias in American mainstream media to the power of the Israel lobby:

In addition to influencing government policy directly, the Lobby strives to shape public perceptions about Israel and the Middle East. It does not want an open debate on issues involving Israel, because an open debate might cause Americans to question the level of support that they currently provide. Accordingly, pro-Israel organizations work hard to influence the media, think tanks, and academia, because these institutions are critical in shaping popular opinion (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006, 45).

They argue that the lack of public debate about the Israeli occupation is unhealthy for democracy; “the inability of the U.S. Congress to conduct a genuine debate on these vital issues paralyzes the entire process of democratic deliberation” (63). They also argue that open debate “will expose the limits of the strategic and moral case for one-sided U.S. support,” and could “move the United States to a position more consistent with its own national interest” (63).

In accordance with the studies discussed above, I argue that public opinion plays an important role in U.S. foreign policy decisions, and that public opinion is often shaped by one-sided narratives. The next section will report the findings of the surveys I conducted to test whether presenting biased narratives has any impact on public opinion toward Palestine and Israel.

**Empirical Findings**

To test the impact of biased information on American public opinion toward Israel, I conducted a Solomon six experimental survey with U.S. college students as subjects (refer to Table 1.1). The purpose of the “Victimhood” surveys was to gain a better understanding of public opinion about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, mainly, who
respondents sympathize with, what their source of information is on the conflict, and whether presenting biased narratives has an impact on their views. The first set of questions on the survey are control variables: political affiliation, political ideology, religious affiliation, Evangelical views, formal education, respondents’ sex, and main source of information (see appendix 1 for the full survey). The central questions that indicate respondents’ sympathies in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are the following:

- “In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the:” (#8 on the survey)
  a. Israelis b. Palestinians c. Both d. Neither
- “Who do you view as the victim in the Palestine-Israel conflict:” (#9 on the survey)
  a. Israelis b. Palestinians c. Both d. Neither

The following question indicates respondents’ opinions on U.S. policy toward Israel:

- “The U.S. should unconditionally support Israel:” (#18 on the survey)

The Respondents in groups 1, 3, and 5 (refer to Table 1.1) filled out the survey before being exposed to either the Israeli or Palestinian narrative (video clip), then completed an identical survey immediately after viewing the video. The time frame between the pre-test and exposure ranged from two weeks to one month (I wanted to have at least a two-week time frame between the pre-test and exposure to control for course content and outside influences with the groups that received a pre-test). Table 3.1 reports the demographics of group 1. Considering that the demographics for all survey groups are similar, I will only report the demographics once.\(^5\)

\(^5\) The demographics for the other groups show a slightly higher percentage of respondents whose main source of information is TV News, and a lower percentage of respondents whose main source is reading books/articles.
Table 3.1: Demographics of Group 1 (pre-test, Pal. narrative, post-test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Affiliation</th>
<th>Strong Democrat</th>
<th>Leaning Democrat</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Leaning Republican</th>
<th>Leaning Democrat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>Strong Liberal</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>Strong Conservative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical/Born Again</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Education</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Information</td>
<td>Reading books/articles</td>
<td>TV News</td>
<td>Movies</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=107

Table 3.2 is a cumulative table showing the pre-test and post-test results for the sympathy question on the victimhood survey. In the pre-test, 23.4% of respondents in group 1 sympathize with Israelis, 11.2% sympathize with Palestinians, 34.6% sympathize with both, and 30.8% sympathize with neither. Two to four weeks after the pre-test, students viewed a ten-minute video clip edited from the documentary *Peace, Propaganda, and the Promised Land* (2004). The video showed journalists talking about the under-reporting of Palestinian suffering in mainstream media, Palestinians lined up at an Israeli checkpoint, and a house demolition, among other images and discussions of Israeli aggression against Palestinians. After viewing the video, 11.2% of the respondents
in group 1 sympathize with Israelis, 52.3% sympathize with Palestinians, 21.5% sympathize with both, and 15% sympathize with neither (Table 3.2). This shows that the Palestinian narrative had a positive impact on respondents’ opinions toward Palestinians.

Group 3 produced similar results; in the pre-test for group 3, 24.3% of respondents sympathize with Israelis, 11.7% sympathize with Palestinians, 30.1% sympathize with both, and 34% sympathize with neither. Two to four weeks after the pre-test, respondents in group 3 viewed the Israeli narrative video clip that is edited from several American television news clips. The video showed a discussion with a survivor of a Palestinian suicide bombing, a home interview of a fearful American family that moved to a targeted Israeli settlement, and an interview of a man who lost his wife from bullet shots while he was driving, among other discussions of Palestinian aggression against Israelis. In the post-test, 41.7% of respondents sympathize with Israelis, 8.7% sympathize with Palestinians, 22.3% sympathize with both, and 27.2% sympathize with neither (Table 3.2). This shows that exposure to the Israeli narrative had a positive impact on respondents’ opinion toward Israelis.
The pre-test results for the “victim” question (#9) yielded similar results as the “sympathies” question (#8), with a slightly more drastic shift in the post-test for group 1. In the pre-test for group 1, 18.7% of respondents view Israelis as the victim in the Palestine-Israel conflict, compared to 7.5% in the post-test; and 10.3% of respondents view Palestinians as the victim, compared to 57.9% in the post-test (Table 3.3). Again, the exposure had a similar effect on the “victim” question for group 3. In the pre-test, 18.4% of respondents view Israelis as the victim in the Palestine-Israel conflict, compared to 32% in the post-test; and 13.6% of respondents view Palestinians as the victim, compared to 6.8% in the post-test (Table 3.3). Overall, each group in the
victimhood experiment became more favorable toward the narrative to which they were exposed.

Table 3.3: Cumulative Table for Victimhood Groups: Victim Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who do you view as the victim</th>
<th>Pre-Post</th>
<th>Pre-Post</th>
<th>Pre-Post</th>
<th>Pre-Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the Palestine-Israel conflict:</td>
<td>Israelis</td>
<td>Palestinians</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Neither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 (Pal. exp.)</td>
<td>18.7%-7.5%</td>
<td>10.3%-57.9%</td>
<td>43.9%-28.0%</td>
<td>25.7%-6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2 (Pal. exp.)</td>
<td>NA-6.7%</td>
<td>NA-53.3%</td>
<td>NA-32.4%</td>
<td>NA-7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3 (Isr. exp.)</td>
<td>18.4%-32.0%</td>
<td>13.6%-6.8%</td>
<td>37.9%-47.6%</td>
<td>29.1%-13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4 (Isr. exp.)</td>
<td>NA-33.1%</td>
<td>NA-7.4%</td>
<td>NA-41.3%</td>
<td>NA-18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5 (no exp.)</td>
<td>17.1%-20.0%</td>
<td>11.4%-8.6%</td>
<td>48.6%-37.1%</td>
<td>22.9%-34.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 6 (no exp.)</td>
<td>NA-20.9%</td>
<td>NA-6.2%</td>
<td>NA-34.1%</td>
<td>NA-38.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the following statement on the pre-test, “The U.S. should unconditionally support Israel,” 1.9% of the respondents in group 1 strongly agree, 15.9% agree, 45.8% are neutral, 26.2% disagree, and 10.3% strongly disagree. In the post-test, 3.7% strongly agree, 4.7% agree, 29% are neutral, 37.4% disagree, and 25.2% strongly disagree. The shift from 30.5% of respondents in the pre-test who disagree to 62.6% in the post-test indicates that views on policy changed in the same direction as their sympathies. After being exposed to the Palestinian narrative, many more respondents sympathize with
Palestinians, and disagree that the U.S. should unconditionally support Israel (Table 3.4). 4.9% of the respondents in group 3 strongly agree, 9.7% agree, 50.5% are neutral, 25.2% disagree, and 9.7% strongly disagree. In the post-test 5.8% strongly agree, 18.4% agree, 39.8% are neutral, 25.2% disagree, and 10.7% strongly disagree. The respondents’ opinions about U.S. policy shifted in the same direction as their sympathies and views on victimhood.

Table 3.4: Cumulative Table for Victimhood Groups: U.S. Support for Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 (Pal. exp.)</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neutral</th>
<th>Pre-Post Disagree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.9%-3.7%</td>
<td>15.9%-4.7%</td>
<td>45.8%-29.0%</td>
<td>26.2%-37.4%</td>
<td>10.3%-25.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2 (Pal. exp.)</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neutral</th>
<th>Pre-Post Disagree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA-1.9%</td>
<td>NA-7.6%</td>
<td>NA-29.5%</td>
<td>NA-38.1%</td>
<td>NA-22.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 3 (Isr. exp.)</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neutral</th>
<th>Pre-Post Disagree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.9%-5.8%</td>
<td>9.7%-18.4%</td>
<td>50.5%-39.8%</td>
<td>25.2%-25.2%</td>
<td>9.7%-10.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 4 (Isr. exp.)</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neutral</th>
<th>Pre-Post Disagree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA-5%</td>
<td>NA-20.7%</td>
<td>NA-38.0%</td>
<td>NA-27.3%</td>
<td>NA-9.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 5 (no exp.)</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neutral</th>
<th>Pre-Post Disagree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.7%-5.7%</td>
<td>11.4%-2.9%</td>
<td>40.0%-57.1%</td>
<td>22.9%-22.9%</td>
<td>14.3%-11.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 6 (no exp.)</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Agree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neutral</th>
<th>Pre-Post Disagree</th>
<th>Pre-Post Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NA-3.9%</td>
<td>NA-17.1%</td>
<td>NA-53.5%</td>
<td>NA-17.8%</td>
<td>NA-7.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I ran a crosstabulation on all the demographics against the sympathies and victim questions in all the surveys. Unexpectedly, the crosstabulation of respondents’ sympathies in the Palestine-Israel conflict by respondent’s sex produced significant results for group 6 (Table 3.5). This particular group was a control group that did not
receive any pre-test or exposure. According to the table, of males, 42.4% sympathize with Israelis, 1.7% sympathize with Palestinians, 25.4% sympathize with both Israelis and Palestinians, and 30.5% sympathize with neither Israelis nor Palestinians. Of females, 7.1% sympathize with Israelis, 5.7% sympathize with Palestinians, 40% sympathize with both Israelis and Palestinians, and 47.1% sympathize with neither Israelis nor Palestinians. According to the Pearson Chi-Square, respondent’s sex and sympathies toward Israelis and Palestinians are related (alpha .05). The relationship between respondent’s sex and sympathies is a moderately strong one (Cramer’s V of .42). Although Cramer’s V does not give us the direction of the relationship, we can see that male respondents sympathize more with Israelis compared to female respondents.

Despite the fact that the majority of male and female respondents said their source of information on the Palestine-Israel conflict is “TV news,” they made drastically different conclusions: the majority of females sympathize with neither Israelis nor Palestinians, and the majority of males sympathize with Israelis.

Table 3.5: Sympathies by Respondent’s Sex Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sympathies</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israelis</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinians</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 129
Chi-Square = 22.70*
Cramer’s V= .42

*p < .05
Conclusion

The results of the Solomon six experiment support my argument that biased narratives influence public opinion; and public opinion on policy shifts in the same direction as the sympathies shift. I also found that while both narratives impacted respondents’ opinions, the exposure to the Palestinian narrative had a greater effect on public opinion than exposure to the Israeli narrative. A possible explanation for this result is that the Palestinian narrative is new to many respondents whose main source of information is TV News. The majority of the 749 respondents surveyed in my study said that TV news is their main source of information on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Considering that a 7-10 minute video clip had a substantial impact on public opinion about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and U.S. foreign policy toward Israel, then the effects of the pro-Israel bias in American media cannot be exaggerated. If the media and overall public discourse on the conflict become more open, then it is likely that public opinion will shift. Consequently foreign policy will follow in the direction of that shift to a more balanced approach toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The fact that the majority of respondents who sympathize with Israelis are male (in control group 6), is an interesting topic for future inquiries about the differences in male and female perceptions. I noted that the majority of questions and comments I received came from female respondents during the survey process. Many female respondents were reluctant to choose a side because they said they did not have enough information to answer certain questions, and others openly said that they were going to answer “neutral” on the likert scale questions because they did not know the answers. This is reflected in the female responses to the sympathies question to which the majority of female respondents
answered “both” or “neither.” Male respondents took a firmer stance in choosing a side to support, for reasons I cannot speculate on.
Chapter 4
Public Opinion on Israel’s Strategic Utility for the U.S.

Introduction

Some argue that because the U.S. and Israel have shared interests and common enemies, it is in the U.S. interest to support Israel in its fight against terrorism. Scholars in this school of thought conclude that Israel is strategic for the U.S. and that the relationship with Israel is strongest when the two countries share common goals. Others argue that Israel is moving from being a strategic ally to a liability by creating more animosity from the Middle East and fueling terrorism toward the U.S. (See Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006; Slater, 2002, 2007). Some scholars argue that the “special relationship” between the U.S. and Israel is not due to geo-strategic interests, but is rather attributed to domestic political influences (see Rubenzer, 2008; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2006; Slater, 2007, and Findley, 1989). I argue that Israel did serve a strategic purpose to contain Soviet and communist expansion during the Cold War, however, the Soviet threat is no longer there to validate the strategic utility argument. In the new world order of U.S. hegemony, the biased U.S. support of Israel has become a liability to its own national interests: “this situation gives extremists a powerful recruiting tool, increases the pool of potential terrorists and sympathizers, and contributes to Islamic radicalism around the world” (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006, 62). I also argue that if the American public discourse included the dangerous implications of the “special relationship” between the U.S. and Israel, then the American public would realize that Israel no longer plays the
strategic utility role for the U.S. The implication here is that more open debate on the subject would shift public opinion and U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. The following sections present the arguments made by scholars from the differing camps and will analyze the results of the public opinion surveys I collected on the subject of Israel’s utility for the U.S.

**U.S. Foreign Policy toward Israel: Domestic Influences or Strategic Utility?**

The fact that the U.S. has vetoed forty-two UN resolutions critical of Israel tells us that U.S. foreign policy toward Israel is one-sided. Hoffman (2008) argues that “much of the world—and not only the Arab world—considers America’s Israel policy to be biased,” and notes that “Israel, the smaller and dependent power, has been more successful in circumscribing the United States’ freedom to maneuver diplomatically in the region than the United States has been at getting Israel to enforce the UN resolutions adopted after the 1967 war” (Hoffman 2008, 49). Shannon (2003, 132) also argues that Arabs and Muslims “have not interpreted US policy as balanced but rather decidedly tilted towards Israel at the expense of the Palestinians”. He adds that, despite attempts to play a balancing act, the U.S. displays a “procedural bias” by making any policy related to the Arab-Israeli conflict include Israeli participation and approval (Shannon 2003, 132). The rest of this chapter explores the possible explanations for the special U.S.-Israel relationship, which generally fall into two categories: domestic considerations and geo-strategic politics.

One of the most contested topics in the debate about U.S. foreign policy toward Israel is the role of the pro-Israel lobby. While there is a great deal of literature regarding
the influence of ethnic interest groups on U.S. foreign policy, prior to 2008, none of the criteria thought to be necessary conditions for successful influence have been tested for generalizability across multiple cases. Trevor Rubenzer’s (2008) article, “Ethnic Minority Interest Group Attributes and U.S. Foreign Policy Influence,” tests the criteria that has been previously examined but never empirically tested to understand which factors are necessary for interest groups to have successful influence on U.S. foreign policy. Rubenzer examines the strength of the Israel lobby, and its ability to influence U.S. foreign policy, stating that the previous literature “lacks a systematic test of any of the criteria that are thought to condition ethnic minority influence on U.S. foreign policy” and has developed through an additive process by adding to the list of criteria without testing or reexamining existing criteria (Rubenzer 2008, 170). In his test, Rubenzer divides the prerequisite conditions for successful influence into two categories: contextual factors and attributes. The contextual conditions have the following criteria: strategic convergence, relative permeability, public convergence, and existing policy (Rubenzer 2008, 171). The attributes mentioned in Rubenzer’s study are: partial assimilation, political unity, organizational strength, legitimate tactics, diasporic empathy, high level of activity, numerical significance, weak opposition, financial resources, and sectoral dominance. Of the 15 total conditions, Rubenzer tests the six most referenced criteria (convergence, unity, numerous, activity, organization, and assimilation), and finds that none of the six criteria is sufficient to explain influence, but that “organizational strength and high levels of political activity are [the] necessary conditions for successful diasporic influence” (Rubenzer 2008, 180). Even if one accepts Rubenzer’s findings, it is important to note that one must not trivialize the other
conditions, but should rather study them on a case-by-case basis. With that said, Rubenzer provides an insightful analysis to understand the special relationship between the United States and Israel. Regardless of which side of the debate one supports, that the Israel lobby influences U.S. foreign policy, or that U.S. foreign policy reflects the national interest, Rubenzer has offered a seminal piece that illuminates the undeniable influential strength of the Israel lobby through its exhibition of strong organization and political activity.

Sheffer (1996) presents the Jewish diaspora as similar to other ethnic diasporas, but at the same time highlights many of Rubenzer’s conditions of influence (not all necessary, but perhaps influential) including: the Jewish survivalist strategy of isolationism (partial assimilation), a unified tie to the homeland (diasporic empathy), organization/dedication (organizational strength), and wealth (financial resources). Whether directly or indirectly, Sheffer (1996, 60) strengthens Rubenzer’s argument about the Israel lobby’s influence in his discussion about communalism, in which there is “an effort to create networks of voluntary organizations that complement host state organizations in catering to the needs of the diaspora […] the organizations fall into three categories: maintenance, defense, and promotion of the communities’ interests.” When the community’s interests include fulfilling the Zionist mission of creating a homeland for Jews with Jerusalem as its capital, it is likely that an organization such as AIPAC will exert influence over the host country (the U.S.) to support the movement simply by avoiding ending an occupation and settlement building in Palestine.

Bard and Pipes (1997, 7) emphasize the special relationship between the U.S. and Israel and argue that “no president today can credibly threaten a cutoff of aid, for
Congress would not support such action [...] further development of this remarkable relationship might be retarded, but not reversed.” Although the authors note that the U.S. support of Israel did not originate as a strategic relationship, but rather “from a consideration of Israel’s needs and from domestic political considerations,” they argue that it gradually developed into a mutually beneficial strategic relationship (Bard and Pipes 1997, 2). Bard and Pipes also attribute the “most family-like of relationships” to the religious Judeo-Christian heritage and they argue that “[t]he special feeling for Israel translates directly into policy” (Bard and Pipes 1997, 5).

While Paul Findley (1989) would agree that the U.S.’ special relationship with Israel translates into policy and that Congress would not allow a shift in policy, he argues that it is not due to any religious or ideological ties, but rather to the power of the Israel lobby. Although Findley refers to the broad Israel lobby, he recognizes the strength of AIPAC as the most important one:

AIPAC sometimes finds out what Congressman say about Middle East policy even in private conversations, and those who criticize Israel do so at their political peril […] it is no overstatement to say that AIPAC has effectively gained control of virtually all of Capitol Hill’s action on Middle East policy. Almost without exception, House and Senate members do its bidding, because most of them consider AIPAC to be the direct Capitol Hill representative of a political force that can make or break their chances at election time (Findley 1989, 25).

Findley largely attributes the power of the support of Israel to the fear of being labeled as anti-Semitic, a claim which the lobby helps to generate. He adds that the magnitude of the silencing power of the Israel lobby is unprecedented.

Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) support Rubenzer’s conclusion about the successful influence of the Israel lobby on U.S. policy to argue that U.S foreign policy on Israel is shaped by the Israel lobby to the detriment of the U.S. national interest.
Mearsheimer and Walt (2006, 33), against conventional wisdom, pose Israel as a “strategic liability” rather than a strategic asset, arguing that “Israel is, in fact, a liability in the war on terror and the broader effort to deal with rogue states.” The authors also argue that the special relationship between the U.S. and Israel cannot be explained by strategic or moral arguments, but rather by the political power of the Israel lobby: “[w]ere it not for the lobby’s ability to work effectively within the American political system, the relationship between Israel and the United States would be far less intimate than it is today” (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006, 40). Although Meirsheimer and Walt (2006, 40) vaguely define the Israel lobby as “the loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively work to shape U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction,” their argument is in line with Rubenzer’s findings that the pro-Israel interest groups are organized, politically active, and thus, very influential on U.S. foreign policy toward Israel.

As a response to Mearsheimer and Walt’s unequivocal 2006 argument, Chomsky (2006) argued that the U.S. has a special relationship with Israel because it is convenient for the U.S. and that the U.S. severs that tie when the U.S. national interest is at stake. This strategy that Chomsky refers to is similar to what Rubenzer (2008) calls the “strategic convergence criterion,” in which interest groups that advance foreign relations (AIPAC, CANF) are the most successful when they advance policies that the government already favors: Rubenzer’s criterion could be argued for state success in foreign relation policies as well (Rubenzer 2008, 171). Unlike Chomsky, however, Rubenzer (2002, 181) concludes that strategic convergence is not a necessary condition for ethnic interest group influence and argues that “ethnic identity groups have become more effective at framing their preferred policy option as falling within U.S. strategic interests,” and rather than
being a condition for influence, strategic convergence is “at times a manifestation of the very influence that we are trying to explain.” Although Chomsky refers to the state of Israel’s relationship with the U.S. and Rubenzer refers to ethnic interest groups, the two are closely related because according to Mearsheimer and Walt, U.S. foreign policy on Israel cannot be separated from the Israel lobby.

To support his argument that the U.S.-Israel relationship is one of convenience, Chomsky uses the case of the 1982 Lebanon war, which the U.S. originally supported until it reflected negatively on the U.S. image. At that point (after a very bloody massacre), “when the atrocities were becoming so severe that […] they were beginning to harm the US ‘national interest,’ Reagan ordered Israel to call off the invasion, then entered to complete the removal of the PLO from Lebanon, an outcome very welcome to both Israel and the US” (Chomsky 2006, 5). Chomsky argues that it is “pretty normal” to support a country when it is conducive to the national interest and to terminate its support when it is not (Chomsky 2006, 5). He considers the U.S. relationship with Israel to be a threat only during times of conflict, but not during relative calm. However, Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) and Slater (2002) argue that the special relationship with Israel even during times of calm is harmful to the U.S. national interest.

Slater (2002, 164) argues that the U.S.’ support of Israel “has effectively given Israel a green light to maintain and even to expand its occupation and repression of the Palestinians,” which he believes will lead to escalated conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Slater’s focus is not on Israel’s security or interests, but rather U.S. national interests; he argues that the escalated conflict in Palestine maintained by U.S. support creates a risk for the U.S. national interest:
The nearly unconditional support the United States gives to Israel has alienated the Muslim and Arab world; has contributed to the rise of the Islamic fanaticism that threatens Middle East stability, in general, and, in particular, the regimes of some of the closest U.S. allies in the region; has the potential to endanger U.S. access to oil in the future; and—perhaps above all—is increasing the dangers to the American homeland of Islamic terrorist attacks, particularly with weapons of mass destruction (Slater 2007, 119).

Slater argues that morals and ideology drive the U.S.-Israel relationship rather than national interest, but unlike Bard and Pipes who believe financial aid to Israel contributes to the peace process, Slater argues that despite the “moral obligation” to support Israel, “[i]f the United States really cares about the future of Israel—and it does—what Israel is desperately in need of today is not more weapons, money, and blind support, but Tough Love” (Slater 2002, 205).

Although Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) and Slater (2002, 2007) have opposing viewpoints about the U.S.-Israel relationship (lobby versus ideology, respectively), they both conclude that the relationship is not favorable to the U.S. national interest. Chomsky (2006) admits that sometimes the U.S.-Israel relationship is harmful to the U.S. national interest, but he argues that when that is the case (during conflicts), the U.S. distances itself from Israel. Although there are some instances that support Chomsky’s argument when the U.S. has gone against the wishes of Israel or the Israel lobby, those cases are few and do not change the overall relationship with Israel. At this point, it is not the violent actions of Israel and U.S. support of specific incidents that creates anti-Americanism in the Arab and Muslim world, but rather the overarching relationship with Israel even during times of relative peace. As Shannon argues, there is an overarching perception in the Arab and Muslim world that the U.S. is an accomplice to the aggressive Israeli occupation and that it would take a drastic change in U.S. policy toward Israel to
improve the fate of Palestinians, and ultimately, Israel and the U.S. (Shannon 2003, 133, 136).

The underlying problem in the U.S.-Israel relationship is that many Americans have yet to consider Israel as a strategic liability and have yet to correlate terrorist attacks with U.S. support of Israel. Thus, the public supports U.S. policies toward Israel, and with the lack of a strong Arab lobby, American politicians would not dare to take a tough stance on Israel. If there were a general understanding that the Arab and Muslim world resents America’s favoritism of Israel, there would be more debate about U.S. policy toward Israel. Mearsheimer and Walt argue that “open debate will expose the limits of the strategic and moral case for the one-sided U.S. support,” which could allow the U.S. to “advance the broader goals of fighting extremism and promoting democracy in the Middle East” (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006, 62-63). The current anti-American sentiment is dangerous for the U.S. image internationally and has serious implications over the national interests of the United States, regardless of how national interests are defined. The most plausible (yet still unlikely) solution to this problematic relationship is not necessarily a “Tough Love” approach as Slater advocates, but could begin gradually with a firmer stance against settlement building and conditional aid based on advancements toward peace negotiations. The following section presents the results of the strategic utility surveys that I conducted in order to gain a better understanding of American public opinion toward the U.S.-Israel relationship.
Empirical Findings

The strategic utility survey tests whether public opinion about Israel’s utility for the U.S. shifts after being exposed to opinion polls conducted in the Middle East that list the “continuing occupation of the Palestinian lands” and “U.S. interference in the Arab world” as the two greatest obstacles to peace and stability in the region. I argue that if Americans believed that anti-American sentiment is the result of U.S. support for Israel, they would not view Israel as a strategic ally to the U.S. I included the same demographic questions and sympathies question in the strategic utility survey (Appendix 2). The central questions in this survey are the following:

- “Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.:” (#10 on the survey)
- “The U.S. needs to maintain its close ties with Israel for American national security:” (# 12 on the survey)
- “It is favorable for the U.S. image internationally to unconditionally support Israel:” (#13 on the survey)

For which the answer choices are the following:


There were a total of 76 respondents in this group. The demographics of this group are similar to those of the victimhood groups, thus I will not report them here. The exposure for this group had little effect on the sympathies of respondents, and little effect on the post-test results for questions 12 and 13, however, it is worth noting that in the pre-test, 23% of respondents sympathize with Israelis compared to 18% in the post-test. The percentage remained constant for Palestinians. One possible explanation for the general lack of change between pre-test and post-test results for this survey is the weak
and/or confusing exposure. I ran a crosstabulation of each of the demographics variables against the central questions for the strategic utility survey and found one significant result shown in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Pre-Test Attitude on Israel’s utility for the U.S. by Respondent’s Sex Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 76  
Chi-Square = 7.985*  
Cramer’s V = .324  
*p < .05

Table 4.1 is a crosstab of attitudes toward Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. by respondent’s sex. The answers from this crosstab are responses to the following question from the geo-strategic utility survey “Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.: a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Neutral d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree.” The answer choices were collapsed to agree, neutral, and disagree, because only a few respondents answered either strongly agree or strongly disagree in this small sample size. According to Table 4.1, 58.8% of males agree with the statement “Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.,” 29.4% said neutral, and 11.8% disagree. Of females, 31.0% agree with the statement “Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.” 61.9% said neutral, and 7.1% disagree. According to the Pearson Chi-Square, respondent’s sex and attitudes toward Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. are related (alpha .05). The relationship between respondent’s sex and attitudes is a
moderately strong one (Cramer’s V of .324). The percentage of males who believe that Israel is a strategic utility for the U.S. is almost double that of females. Some scholars argue that males take a more “hawkish” approach to situations of conflict, while women tend to take a more peaceful approach. Another explanation may be that similar to the sympathies crosstabulation, female respondents did not want to choose a side when they did not have enough information, therefore the majority chose “neutral.”

For the post-test, I found the same relationship between respondents’ sex and beliefs about Israel’s utility for the U.S. The results are shown in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2: Post-Test Attitude on Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. by Respondent’s Sex Crosstabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n= 76  
Chi-Square = 16.077*  
Cramer’s V= .46  

*p < .05

Table 4.2 is a crosstab of the post-exposure attitudes toward Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. by respondent’s sex. According to Table 4.2, 69.7% of males agree with the statement “Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.,” 15.2% said neutral, and 15.2% disagree. Of females, 30.2% agree with the statement “Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.,” 60.5% said neutral, and 9.3% disagree. According to the Pearson Chi-Square,
respondent’s sex and attitudes toward Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. are related (alpha .05), and the relationship between respondent’s sex and attitudes after the exposure is a moderately strong one (Cramer’s V of .46). After being exposed to the Arab public opinion polls that list the “continuing occupation of the Palestinian lands” and “U.S. interference in the Arab world” as the two greatest obstacles to peace and stability in the region, the percentage of males who believe that Israel is a strategic utility for the U.S. increased from the pre-exposure and is more than double that of females. The percentages in all three female response categories changed by less than 2.5%. While this crosstab does not track individual changes from each respondent, it shows that the exposure had little to no effect on the overall attitude of women on Israel’s strategic utility for the U.S. The exposure seems to have had a more substantial effect on male respondents, however, it is the opposite of the expected outcome: there was a 10.9% increase in male respondents who agree that Israel is a strategic utility for the U.S. post-exposure. Male respondents could have misinterpreted the opinion polls, or considered Arab animosity to be more of a threat to the U.S., which to some male respondents even further reinforces the U.S.-Israel relationship as a strategic one.

**Conclusion**

The results of the strategic utility exposure and post-test are inconclusive. I expected a decrease in the percentage of respondents who believe Israel is a strategic utility for the U.S. One possible explanation for the increase in male respondents who believe that Israel is a strategic utility for the U.S. after the exposure is that males interpreted the poll results that show the Arab public’s discontent with the continuing
occupation, and U.S. interference in the Arab world as a cause to be more defensive
toward, or weary of, the Arab world. From this perspective, Israel appears to be more of
an asset as a U.S. ally in a hostile region. That is the argument that scholars and
politicians have made to defend U.S. policies toward Israel. However, female
respondents may have taken a less hawkish stance in interpreting the polls. Overall, the
Middle East opinion polls were ineffective, considering the minor change in respondents’
beliefs about Israel’s utility after the exposure. The exposure may have been difficult to
understand if respondents had little prior knowledge about the Middle East situation, and
respondents may not have connected Middle Eastern opinions with the heightened
security threat in the U.S. in the last decade (see Appendix 3 for the strategic utility
exposure). However, I argue that if this were an openly debated issue among public
intellectuals, politicians, and journalists, the public would no longer believe the Cold War
rhetoric that is used to justify the “special relationship” in which the U.S. consistently
shields Israel’s violations of international law.
Chapter 5
The U.S.-Israel relationship: Perceived Ideological Connections

Introduction

The third hypothesis attributes the “special relationship” between the U.S. and Israel to supposed ideological similarities between the countries (see Goldberg, 2007; Oren, 2011; Avnery, 2003; and Slater, 2002). Goldberg (2007, 46-47) argues that “Americans, Jewish and otherwise, admire Israel” because “[b]oth Israel and America were founded by refugees from European religious intolerance; both are rooted in a common religious tradition; Israel is a lively democracy in a part of the world that lacks democracy; Israelis seem self-reliant in the manner of American pioneers; and Israel’s enemies, in many cases, seem to be America’s enemies as well.” Less than four years after making his argument about pro-Israel sentiment in America, Goldberg (2011) writes:

Israel may one day soon find itself with fewer friends in America—in particular on the coasts and among elites—than it previously had. The Arab revolts have inspired many Americans who will soon look at the West Bank and see unfree Arabs. Then they will look at who is suppressing these Arabs and see Israel; and then they will become confused by this, because they have heard many times that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East (Goldberg 2011, 1).

I argue that the strong U.S. public support for Israel is not due to real ideological similarities, but rather to perceived similarities regarding Israel’s state of democracy and its treatment of minority citizens of Israel. In accordance with Goldberg’s more recent argument, I also argue that if the public were more aware of discriminatory Israeli
policies it would not perceive Israel as a liberal democracy, nor would it support such policies.

Israel is often regarded as a “liberal democracy” by much of the western world; however, mainstream public discourse about Israel hardly highlights its discriminatory treatment of Arab Israelis and Palestinians. In fact, every U.S. President since Truman recognized the state of Israel has referred to Israel’s democratic nature and ideological similarities as the source of U.S. support for Israel (Jewish Virtual Library 2014). A thorough analysis of Israel’s democracy is necessary to further understand its lack of democratic development. The purpose of this chapter is to address the following questions: does the ethnic and religious exclusion of Israel’s Arab citizens delegitimize Israel as an often regarded “developed democracy,” or is the “Jewishness” of the state compatible with democracy? The second and perhaps more important question for this study is: does the state of Israel’s democracy and the treatment of its citizens affect the way Americans view Israel?

While Freedom House, which is considered by many to be the most legitimate democracy ranking organization, considers Israel to be a liberal democracy, there are many conflicting viewpoints among scholars of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that show the inherent contradiction between Israel’s Jewishness, and democracy. This chapter analyzes Israel’s state of democracy, reviews scholarly literature on the essentials of democracy, and analyzes the results of the democracy survey to find out what students thought about Israel’s democracy after being exposed to a fact sheet about Israel’s political system (refer to Table 1.3).
The “Jewish and Democratic State:” Israel’s veiled contradiction

Freedom House (hereafter FH) has given Israel a freedom score of 1.5 on a 7 point scale, with 1 being the most free (Freedom House 2011). FH gave Israel a score of 2 on civil liberties and a 1 on political rights, with 1 being the most democratic score. FH recognizes, however, that only about 10 percent of the Israeli Knesset is made up of Arab Israelis, while Arab Israeli’s account for roughly 20 percent of Israel’s total population. Israel also denies groups the freedom to run for Knesset if they question the Jewish and democratic character of the state (Basic Law: The Knesset, 7a). If challenging Israel’s “Jewish” status means political groups do not have the right to run for elections, there are not truly “free and fair” elections, which is the strongest pillar of democracy. The denial to such political parties reinforces the need to challenge the legitimacy of Israel’s democracy, yet FH does not seem to factor it into their calculation of Israel’s democracy score.

FH also notes on their report for Israel that Arab Israelis have to apply for citizenship, and if granted citizenship would have to carry identification cards (that differ from Jewish ID cards), while all Jewish immigrants are immediately granted citizenship under the “law of return.” There already appears to be a contradiction in FH’s rating of Israel’s democracy based on civil liberties and political rights alone, but there are other listed contradictions. FH reports that Israel has passed a law to temporarily deny citizenship to Palestinians who marry Arab Israelis. The law was upheld in 2006 by the Supreme Court, which continues to affect about 15,000 couples (FH 2011). If the many shortcomings of Israel’s democracy were popularly conveyed, Israel’s legitimacy would be undermined, which is why it censors its press under the guise of security: “[t]he
Government Press Office (GPO) has occasionally refused to provide press cards to journalists, especially Palestinians, to restrict them from entering Israel, claiming security considerations,” as FH indicates (FH 2011).

Oren Yiftachel (2002) sheds light on the factors that have played into the global perception of Israel as a democratic state, and presents the argument against the sophistication and durability of Israel’s current system in which Arab Israelis are treated as second class citizens. The global illusion of Israel as a democratic state, Yiftachel (2002, 3) argues, has “given internal and international legitimacy to Israel’s expansionist policies and practices, and helped foster and preserve a system of unequal citizenship”. Yiftachel argues that the unequal treatment of Arab citizens of Israel undermines the quality of democracy, and leads him to conclude that Israel is a control state rather than a democracy.

Smooha (1997) presents Israel as an “ethnic democracy,” which “is a system that combines the extension of civil and political rights to individuals and some collective rights to minorities, with institutionalization of majority control over the state” (Smooha 1997, 199). Unlike Yiftachel, however, Smooha believes that ethnic democracy such as the case of Israel is sustainable, and should be used as a successful example for other developing non-democracies or new democracies with large ethnic minority groups. Although Smooha claims that the “process of democratization that has advanced since the mid-1960s enables the state to cope with the problem of the Arab minority, more through consideration and compromise and less through intransigence and control,” he contradicts himself by stating “[s]o long as Israel remains a Jewish-Zionist state, Jews will continue to have a vested interest in sustaining Arabs as an ethnic minority in order to reduce the
danger of assimilation and intermarriage, as well as to prevent the transformation of Israel into an open, pluralistic society” (Smooha 1997, 235 emphasis added, 222). His use of the words “sustaining,” “danger,” and “prevent” imply methods of control rather than compromise. Although Smooha’s assumption about Israel’s methods of dealing with the problem of Arabs is flaky, he is dead on regarding Israel’s democracy:

Israel cannot be classified as an open, liberal democracy, because that would only hold true were the Jewish state to be transformed into an Israeli state—a state in which ethnicity is privatized, Arabs and Jews are free to assimilate with one another, and a new, all—Israeli identity, nationalism, and nation were to emerge. But in fact, there is no separation in Israel between religion and nationality, religion and ethnicity (that is, a person belonging to the Jewish people or born a Jew cannot simultaneously be a member of any religion other than Judaism), and religion and state—facts that prevent Israel from being a liberal democracy. Nor is Israel a consociational democracy, because, to be so, it would need to become a binational state, in which the status of Arabs and Jews is equal and resources are distributed proportionally (Smooha 1997, 202).

This statement is in line with the central argument of this chapter and with many of the scholars presented here: the question is, how does Israel maintain its image as a liberal democratic state despite documented and alleged civil/political rights violations? Smooha provides a probable explanation that is also prevalent in FH’s 2011 report on Israel:

Israel may make plausible use of the perceived threat to its survival to blur tensions emanating from its ethnic nature and to weather pressures of Israeli Arabs for equality and participation. Since Israeli Arabs are part of the Arab world, which presumably threatens Israel’s existence, restrictions of their rights can be plausibly justified (Smooha 1997, 208).

This is a well-known tactic of Israel to deter public scrutiny, less well known however, is the fact that FH uses this tactic in defense of Israel and their labeling of it as a liberal democracy.
Regarding Israel’s Arab citizens, and Arabs in the Occupied Territories of Gaza and the West Bank (which are considered Occupied under international law and by FH), FH reports:

[The noncitizens have the same rights as Israeli citizens, except the right to vote in national elections. They can vote in municipal as well as PA elections, and remain eligible to apply for Israeli citizenship. However, Israeli law strips such Arabs of their Jerusalem residency if they stay outside the city for more than three months; in 2009, the Interior Ministry revoked the residency rights of 4,570 Palestinians, representing more than a third of all such revocations since 1967. The city’s Arab population does not receive a share of municipal services proportionate to its numbers (FH 2011).]

It is not much to say that noncitizens have the same rights as Israeli citizens excluding voting, because as FH and other authors throughout this paper show, voting rights (for pre-approved parties) basically sum up the rights of Arab Israeli citizens.

Although they have full political rights, the roughly one million Arab citizens of Israel (about 19 percent of the population) receive inferior education, housing, and social services relative to the Jewish population. According to a 2010 report by the NGO Mosawa, Arab Israelis own only 3.5 percent of the land in Israel and receive 3 to 5 percent of government spending, figures that were challenged by the government. Arab Israelis, except for the Druze minority, are not subject to the military draft, though they may volunteer. Those who do not serve are ineligible for the associated benefits, including scholarships and housing loans (FH 2011).

FH also recognizes that Israeli checkpoints in the Occupied Territories, and the separation wall (which they refer to as a security barrier), have made life more difficult for the Arab non-citizen population. It is important to note that there are many Arab non-citizens who fall West of the separation wall, and East of the 1967 Green Line, which puts them in political limbo. Such Arabs have no voting rights in Israel, and have no access to voting or anything else on the Palestinian side of the wall. FH fails to mention that the “security barrier” crosses the Green Line, which defies international law, and has confiscated the livelihood of many Arabs.
Slater (2009) makes a succinct argument about Israel’s responsibility for Arabs living in the Occupied Territories:

[T]here are two major fallacies in the idea that Israel will face a “demography problem” in the future—but not yet. The first is the premise that the problem for Israeli democracy will exist only when the Arabs become a majority. The second inheres in the unrecognized premise that there is a crucial difference, in terms of democratic legitimacy, between formal, de jure rule and informal, de facto rule. In fact, in practice Israel has what amounts to as sovereignty over the occupied territories—including, in many crucial respects, over the population of Gaza, from which it supposedly withdrew. The consequence is that while the Israeli Arabs are, at best, second-class citizens, the Palestinian Arabs, effectively ruled by Israel, are oppressed noncitizens enjoying hardly any rights at all (Slater 2009, 38).

On another note of equal rights, despite the fact that the Jewish state of Israel does not recognize marriage between Jews and non-Jews, FH still claims that “freedom of religion is respected” (FH 2011). Contrary to this assumption, FH indicates that “Muslim and Christian religious authorities are occasionally discriminated against in resource allocation and upkeep of religious sites, though the state budget officially assigns funds according to need. Citing security concerns, Israel occasionally restricts Muslim worshippers’ access to the Temple Mount, or Haram al-Sharif, in Jerusalem, and did so in February and March 2010” (FH 2011). It is clear that Israel’s title of liberal democracy assigned by FH and recognized by the public needs to be challenged on many grounds. If not for all the civil liberty shortcomings that it chooses to discount, then for the political inequality and violation of basic procedural democracy in which “free and fair” elections are undermined.
Defining Democracy

Israel’s freedom score has certainly helped to generate the perception that Israel is a western-style liberal democracy, which has legitimized its government and shielded it from public scrutiny for its many undemocratic offenses toward Palestinians within Israel and the Occupied Territories (Yiftachel 2002). This thesis assesses the legitimacy of Israel’s democracy among varying viewpoints. While some scholars, including Smooha, say that having any form of representation for an ethnic minority is legitimate, democratic, and can sustain democracy, others including Yiftachel (2002), Diamond (1999), and Stepan (2000) argue that inequality between majority and minority ethnic groups creates instability and infringes on the quality of democracy. Further, some authors including Rouhana and Ghanem (1998) argue that the ethnic and Jewish character of the state not only undermine liberal democracy in Israel, but also undermine basic procedural democracy for its Arab citizens. Within the literature of “ethnic democracies,” and “ethnofederalism,” is the debate revolving around procedural versus substantive democracy, and stability versus instability. While Smooha considers Israel’s system to be stable, Rouhana and Ghanem predict that the Palestinians in Israel are facing a predicament that will lead to crisis. Although Smooha assumes stability for Israel, he does concur with the central argument of this paper: that Israel cannot be categorized as a liberal democracy. A closer look at Israel’s ethnic democracy will help to shed light on the complex relationship between ethnic group exclusion and its effect on democracy.

First, there must be a clear understanding of the varying definitions of democracy throughout the literature, ranging from procedural to substantive democracy. Starting with a very basic procedural definition of democracy, Joseph Shumpeter (1976) defines a
democracy as such: “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter 2003, 9).

Przeworski (1999), also uses a minimalist (procedural) definition and focuses on the election process including the outcome, to measure democracy. Przeworski argues that that people are more compliant when they have the opportunity to change a government, such systems are thus less violent, and that it is the result of voting that authorizes governments to govern; which gives the elected officials an incentive to represent the people during their term in office (Przeworski 1999, 16). Two other factors that affect the durability of democracy in Przeworski’s (1999, 16) point of view are the amount of control that one party shares (more than two-thirds of seats in the legislature will be more likely to fall), and the rate at which governments change (not too infrequently, but not as often as less than every two years). This argument implies that elections are not sufficient for conflicts to be resolved, and that scholars need to focus on the institutional design, which also implies that the quality of a democracy is significant in determining its durability.

Moving toward a slightly more qualitative (substantive) approach, Robert Dahl (2003) uses Schumpeter’s procedural definition of democracy to define what he calls polyarchies, and lists necessary conditions (ranging from inclusion and equality, to free and fair elections, opposition, and execution of orders) for polyarchies to further develop into democracies. Dahl believes that human organizations rarely, if ever meet all the conditions, thus it is “necessary to interpret each of the conditions as one end of a continuum or scale along which any given organization might be measured” (Dahl 2003,
This continuum is in line with FH’s method of measuring democracy, Israel’s score of 1.5 is on the end of most democratic, or most free. Israel, however, lacks many characteristics required of a democracy in the most basic procedural definitions.

Ghanem (2011) agrees with Dahl’s continuum and defines democracy as a “system of government based on several key principles: (a) equal and inclusive citizenship and civil rights; (b) popular sovereignty and universal suffrage; (c) protection of minorities; (d) periodic, universal, and free elections; and (e) separation of powers” (Ghanem 2011, 21). Ghanem’s definition highlights protection of minorities explicitly, with the consideration of Israel’s failure to protect its minority Arab citizens. Ghanem also lists separation of powers in the basic definition of democracy, which is problematic for Israel’s “Jewish State.”

Dahl’s continuum also leads to Larry Diamond’s (1999) substantive definition of liberal democracy. Diamond’s (1999, 3) definition of liberal is a “political system in which individual and group liberties are well protected and in which there exist autonomous spheres of civil society and private life, insulated from state control.” Diamond (1999, 11) lists ten components of a liberal democracy, one of which of the conditions states that “[c]ultural, ethnic, religious, and other minority groups (as well as historically disadvantaged majorities) are not prohibited (legally or in practice) from expressing their interests in the political process or from speaking their language or practicing their culture.” Diamond also lists the right to form and join independent associations and movements, alternative sources of information (including independent media), freedom of “belief, opinion, discussion, speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and petition,” political equality for all citizens, a non-discriminatory
judiciary, and protection from “unjustified detention, exile, terror, torture, and undue interference in their personal lives not only by the state but also by organized nonstate or antistate forces” (Diamond 1999 11-12).

It is important to note here that Israel has violated all of these stipulations of a liberal democracy. Although this definition of liberal democracy goes above and beyond basic standards for democracy, that is what Israel and the “West” claim is the standard to which Israel must be held. However, its constant incompetence to meet these conditions has not stripped the title away from Israel, due to the successful attempts to hide its faults. It is also imperative to highlight that Diamond holds not only the state to the high standards listed, but also organized “nonstate and antistate forces.” While the Palestinian Authority has failed to control violence by nonstate and antistate actors, it is reprimanded and publicly scrutinized for its incompetence. On the contrary, Israel not only escapes public scrutiny for its failure to control violence by nonstate and antistate actors, but it officially used the excuse of non-official involvement in the Plan Dalet evacuations and killings. Israel has managed to clear its name, enjoy legitimacy, and deny any involvement in the 1948 Arab evacuations to avoid responsibility for refugee’s right of return, despite the fact that it was not nonstate or antistate actors who committed the acts of terror, but rather Israeli military personnel. By claiming the military personnel were not given direct orders from the higher officials to raid Arab villages, the state of Israel has been able to avoid responsibility for one of the most tragic events in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Israel was not off to a strong democratic start, but that did not get in the way of its state recognition, which the PA has yet to enjoy over 60 years later.
Diamond argues that the ten components of a liberal democracy (ethnic, religious, and other minority rights, freedom of opinion and speech, to name a few) imply an eleventh: “if political authority is to be constrained and balanced, individual and minority rights protected, and a rule of law assured, democracy requires a constitution that is supreme. Liberal democracies in particular ‘are and have to be constitutional democracies’” (Diamond 1999, 12). This statement would automatically exclude Israel as a liberal democracy, because it is not a constitutional democracy. Rather than a constitution, Israel has a set of Basic Laws that were drafted and intended for a constitution, which never came into fruition.

Alfred Stepan (2000) agrees that “no matter how free and fair the elections and no matter how large the government’s majority, democracy must also have a constitution that itself is democratic in that it respects fundamental liberties and offers considerable protections for minority rights” (Stepan 2000, 39). Stepan also argues that “democratically elected government must rule within the confines of its constitution and be bound by the law and by a complex set of vertical and horizontal institutions that help to ensure accountability,” and that “it is clear that democracy should not be considered consolidated in a country unless there is the opportunity for the development of a robust and critical civil society that helps check the state and constantly generates alternatives” (Stepan 2000, 29). Based on this standard of democracy, Israel would be altogether redefined as a still developing democracy at best, certainly nowhere near the standard of a consolidated, liberal democracy.

The definition of liberal democracy is a focus point for this chapter, considering that “Western” democracies, are referred to as liberal, and Israel’s democracy has been
grouped into the same category. Diamond argues that “there is no reason that electoral democracy and liberty must go together,” and notes that “there are many illiberal democracies, with human rights abuses and civil strife. It is important to highlight Diamond’s statement, that “FH is the best available empirical indicator of liberal democracy,” and that “there are real differences even between the average scores of 3.0 and 2.5, which is the cutoff point for liberal democracy” (Diamond 1999, 12). Despite Israel’s failure to meet the ten conditions, and the eleventh absolutely necessary condition, Israel still received a score of 1 for political rights, and 2 for civil liberties, which are both well within the liberal scoring of FH. A further look at Israel’s democratic system will reemphasize its democratic shortcomings, and will denounce Israel as a consolidated liberal democracy. It is questionable that FH has noted many of Israel’s civil liberty and political liberty violations, yet has given it an overall score of 1.5, which safeguards its spot as liberal. If there are “real differences” between 2.5 and 3, then there should be real differences between 1.5 and 2.5, which is the cutoff point. FH could have considered giving Israel a “free” score, and could have even considered it to be liberal, on a much more humble level. However, by labeling Israel 1.5 rather than 2.5, it is more legitimized and its democratic status is unquestioned; this has helped to prolong the many civil and political rights violations that FH has itself listed.

Israel: A Liberal Democracy, Ethnic Democracy, or Theocracy?

Rouhana and Ghanem (1998) differentiate between a liberal-democratic multi-ethnic state as one that “serves the collective needs of all its citizens regardless of their ethnic affiliation” in which citizenship is the sole criterion for belonging to the state and
for granting equal opportunity to all members of the system, and an ethnic state in which the “state serves the national goals of one ethnic group only to the exclusion of the other ethno-national groups within the state, regardless of their citizenship status” (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 321). Rouhana and Ghanem classify Israel as a constitutionally exclusive ethnic state because it is “one of the few states that proclaims itself to be a liberal democracy and yet anchors its ethnic exclusivity in its constitutional law” (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 323). The authors argue that Israel deviates from the definition of a western democratic nation-state

because Israel officially defines Jewishness and not Israeli citizenship as the criterion for inclusion in the state definition, and it constitutionally (not only by policy and practice) excludes from its identity all citizens who are non-Jews. At the same time, it includes all citizens who are Jewish, regardless of any ideological commitment, sentimental attachment, national consciousness, or indeed desire on their part to be part of the state, but just on the basis of the single criterion of fitting the state’s definition of who is a Jew (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 323).

Rouhana and Ghanem use the term “constitution” to refer to Israel’s set of Basic Laws that were supposed to be implemented into a constitution.

The special status given to Jews in Israel creates a “contradiction between democracy and [the] constitutional structure of the ethnic state,” and the authors argue that this contradiction will put the Palestinian citizens of Israel in a predicament and on the course toward crisis (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 323). Rouhana and Ghanem’s definition of Israel as a constitutionally exclusive ethnic state and their prediction that this predicament the Arab Israelis are in will lead to a crisis, the likes of an Arab civil war, has clear implications about the effects of ethnic exclusion in “democratic” states.

In his 2009 article, Uri Ram writes about the tensions in the “Jewish democracy” and the constitutional challenge of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Ram argues that the
“demographic boundaries” of the state do not overlap with the “geographical boundaries,” because Israel was created through the Zionist movement for a Jewish state, yet nearly 20 percent of the residents and citizens of Israel are Palestinian Arabs, and are perceived as “foreign” (Ram 2009, 524). The tension stems from the fact that the “foreign” (Arab) citizens of Israel are not granted equal status within Israel, yet “foreign citizens who happen to be Jewish, are perceived as part of the nation. Even if they stay abroad and have no concern with Israel “the Law of Return guarantees immediate citizenship for any Jew once he wishes it […] this incongruity [sic] between geography and demography is the root-cause of the tensions that the Israeli democracy experiences” (Ram 2009, 524).

Ram focuses on the Palestinian Arab community’s frontal challenge against the Jewish ethnic supremacy in the state, namely through the construction of the Visionary Documents. These documents address issues of national identity, colonialist history, civil rights, equal citizenship, and power sharing. The Visionary Documents also demand an autonomous representative body of the Palestinian Arabs, and/or that their parliamentary representative will receive a veto power over Knesset decisions and enactments in order to secure minority rights and to prevent majority rule (Ram 2009, 526). Ram’s critique of the Visionary Documents is that it envisions ethno-national restitution, not democratic resolution, that is, the push for a bi-national state speaks the same language of separatism and it “fails to engage in the vision of a non-national state, or a post-national state, or a democratic state of its citizens” (Ram 2009, 535). Ram concludes that the Visionary Documents are an expression of the suffering Palestinians within Israel faced from expropriation and exclusion, but they do not hold a genuine hope for a better future: “the
inhabitants of the region has [sic] suffered all too long and all too much from the consequences of ethno-national ‘visions.’ It is time they discover the vision of universal democratic citizenship” (Ram 2009, 535). Ram highlights the inequality that Israel’s contradiction between democracy and religion has created, along with the Palestinian response to fight for their minority rights, but he realizes that neither Israel’s proposal nor the Palestinian-Israeli’s proposals encompass universal democratic citizenship.

More on ethnic and religious exclusion, Kopelowitz (2001) analyzes how religious and secular political parties in Israel negotiate political coalitions in the context of ethnic democracy. He argues that a "structured ambivalence" emerges when "religious political parties disengage from elements of their doctrinal end goals in order to engage secular Jews" (Kopelowitz 2001, 167). The structured ambivalence that ensues from this disengagement represents a continuous gap between religious ideas and democratic realities. In the case of Israel's parliamentary democracy, it is the majority in the legislative branch that will also automatically control the executive branch. Therefore, the formation of coalitions is a prerequisite to control the government. Kopelowitz argues that there is an informal understanding between all political parties that any ruling coalition must always exclude Arab political parties and strongly uphold the importance of the Jewishness of Israel, which some have described as "civil religion." According to Kopelowitz, this ethno-national hegemonic exclusion of Arabs in the political arena is a fundamental impediment to democracy. To put it simply, he asserts that "where hegemony begins, ambivalence and democracy end" (Kopelowitz 2001, 168). Kopelowitz concludes that it is futile to speak of "democratic values" or "ethnic democratic political culture" without seriously taking into consideration the level of
flexibility that different religious political parties exhibit in terms of religious nationalism.

Ian Lustick’s seminal (1980) book, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel’s Control of a National Minority*, also presents the situation of Palestinian-Israeli’s as stable, and attributes the source of stability to Israel’s method of control, contrary to Smooha’s argument. While Lustick posits that Israel is “officially, an open and democratic society whose citizens are equal before the law and whose laws do not discriminate with regard to religion,” he does point out that there has never been a principle of proportionality for the Palestinian-Israelis, nor have “concessions been made by the stronger Jewish communal group to the Arab minority” (Lustick 1980, 4-5). Lustick also points to the discontent of the Palestinian community in Israel due to military rule and the defense regulations, expropriation of Arab lands, displacement of the Arabs, denial of their national affiliation, and the economic and social discrimination practiced against Arabs (Lustick 1980, 10). Lustick also notes that even the Arab writers in Israel who called for cooperation between Arabs and the Israeli establishment “nonetheless demanded equal rights for Arabs, criticized the government for failing to live up to its democratic principles, and were deeply disturbed at the failure of Israel to make significant progress toward the full integration of Arabs into the state” (Lustick 1980, 9).

One very significant factor of Arab discontent in Israel is economic disparity, in which Jewish settlements had developed highways, electricity, and water pipelines immediately, while Arabs were forced to wait and pay large sums of money to obtain any of these services (Lustick 1980, 20). Although Lustick argues that Israel’s system of control is thus far stable, he argues this inequality imbedded in Israeli society is in
conflict with democracy: “the stability of ethnic politics in Israel would also seem to clash with that country’s image as a Middle Eastern version of American liberal democracy, where every minority has ‘the right to organize itself in order to insist through legal means on the abrogation of the injustice done it, be this a real or even imaginary injustice’” (Lustick 1980, 25).

The aim of Lustick’s book is to understand the relative stability and quiescence of the Arab community in Israel, which he attributes to three main aspects: segmentation, dependence, and cooptation. The Arabs of Israel have been fragmented which has made the Arab population susceptible to effective control “by inhibiting the formation of political alliances within the Arab population or between Arabs and dissident Jewish groups and by providing the regime with an array of primordial identities and divisions which can be reinforced and exploited by appropriate ‘segmentalist’ policies” (Lustick 1980, 82). The second component of control that Lustick presents is dependence in which there is an “overall reliance of Israeli Arabs on the Jewish sector for jobs, permits, status, and other economic, social and political resources” (Lustick 1980, 151). The dependence component of control, Lustick argues, has made it “less likely that the disunited and isolate segments of the Arab population could launch sustained drives for social, economic, or political change, and it has made it less necessary than otherwise would have been the case for the regime to employ coercive and more costly methods of control” (Lustick 1980, 197). The final component of control Lustick presents is cooptation which he argues; “the penetration of Arab societies by the Israeli regime has been accomplished by the cooptation of two types of opinion leaders and authority figures,” traditional patriarchs and other notables (Lustick 1980, 200). Lustick concludes
by noting that this effective, stable, and low cost mechanism of control is beginning to weaken and that Israel must “adapt its techniques to new circumstances if it is to maintain that level of control over the Arab minority to which it has been accustomed” (Lustick 1980, 237).

While Lustick predicts a gradual change in the sustainability of Israel’s system, Rouhana and Ghanem (1998) argue very adamantly and urgently that the Palestinian’s of Israel are in a predicament that will lead them to a crisis stemming from three domains; the Israeli, the Palestinian, and the internal; as they are unable to integrate into Israeli society, yet they are living in Israel and not with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. This crisis approach refutes the “normal development” approach, which is the dominant analytical framework within the Israeli social sciences, in which scholars posit that the “Palestinians in Israel [have] been undergoing an accelerated and normal process of development” (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 327). Rouhana and Ghanem argue that the Palestinian community in Israel, as the minority in an ethnic state, confronts existential political predicaments that emanate from the ethnic structure of the state; specifically the predicament will emanate from the “state’s strategic refusal of its demands for equality, belonging, and equity within the system” (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 327). The authors also argue that every ethnic group that seeks to be a part of a state system will naturally seek to achieve “equality, belonging, and identity, as those are basic human needs that cannot be negotiated, washed away, or permanently repressed” (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 327). However, due to the ethnic mission of Israel, its policies make equality unachievable by constitutional law (Basic Law), which is why the minority faces “an existential predicament that permeates its collective existence in many spheres” (Rouhana
and Ghanem 1998, 328). The further divide of Arabs within Israel and in the Occupied Territories would further benefit Israel’s goal to undermine Palestinian representation, and to halt the process of a Palestinian state. Arabs within Israel would therefore have to decide whether they want to continue to live in Israel with minimal demands and unequal rights, or to live in a deeply fractioned Palestine. This leads directly to the next point of the Arab-Israeli identity dilemma.

Rebecca Kook (1996) focuses on the shrinking political rights of Arab Israelis, as well as the identity constraints that stand in the way of full Arab integration into Israeli society. Kook reviews Israeli laws that create perpetual inequality between Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis, and criticizes the exclusive title of Israel as a “Jewish State.” An amendment made to Israeli Basic Law in 1985 excludes political parties in Israel that question the democratic character of the state. With the amendment, it is up to the Knesset to interpret what is explicit or implicit negation of the current state of Israel, to which it can deny that party the right to run for elections. Such an amendment, Kook argues, “placed a legal boundary on the limits to free association and free speech,” and thus by the widely conceived standard of free and fair elections, the status of such a state does not meet the basic procedural standards of a democracy (Kook 1996, 216).

Similarly, Joel Migdal (1996) discusses the exclusive nature of Israeli society, based on both ethnicity, and civic tendency. Societal development based on ethnicity excludes all members who do not have a historical or supposed blood tie to the majority ethnic group, and the civic tendency has the potential to be equally exclusive by giving membership only to those who practice their civil duties or who contribute to the pursuit of “common interests.” When such common interests are implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) defined
by the Zionist movement, an immediate conflict arises for Arab Israelis. Migdal argues that in Israel, “civic rights and national rights were one and the same, and only the Jews had such rights” (Migdal 1996, 194). Migdal’s argument contributes to the debate of the procedural and substantive characteristics of a democracy in which there are great cleavages in civic rights based on ethnicity, and highlights that Israel’s lack of normative values toward the Arab minority inhibits its development into a full liberal democracy.

Although there remains the debate about Israel’s democratic status, the authors mentioned above have given ample evidence to show that Israel has not developed into a liberal democracy as many claim. Israel is a Jewish state which has many implications for its Jewish majority and Arab minority. The unequal advantage that Jews enjoy in the Jewish state contradicts the notion of Israel as a liberal democracy and even undermines its status as a basic consolidated democracy. Despite the differing definitions of democracy, and the varying views on Israel’s stability, there is a general consensus among scholars that Israel is not a liberal democracy, and I argue is thus undeserving of its FH score. A liberal democracy for a specific majority of citizens, yet not all citizens, defies the very essence of liberal democracy: this is a detrimental violation of democracy for which Israel’s system must be further studied and re-defined. Despite the empirical record, the question is do Americans perceive Israel to be a liberal democracy, and would exposure to this information effect their opinions? The following section presents the results of the democracy surveys that I conducted to gain a better understanding of American public opinion about Israel’s state of democracy.
Empirical Findings

I conducted surveys in order to see if public opinion follows public discourse about Israel’s liberal and democratic nature (as it is referred to by every U.S. President since the creation of the state) and to find out if exposure to Israel’s discriminatory policies toward Arab Israelis has any effect on public opinion. This survey consisted of a pre-test with a set of 12 questions (see Appendix 4 for the full survey), a hand-out exposure of facts about Israel’s democracy found on Freedom House’s website (Appendix 5), and a post-test, which is identical to the pre-test. The central questions in this survey are the following:

- “Israel’s political system is best described as:” (#9 on the survey)
  a. A liberal democracy similar to the U.S.’
  b. A liberal democracy different from the U.S.’
  c. A partial democracy
  d. Not a democracy
  e. A theocracy

- “All Israeli citizens have equal rights:” (#10 on the survey)

- “The state of Israel does not discriminate based on religion or race:” (#11 on the survey)

- “The Israeli government has the same democratic principles as the United States:” (#12 on the survey)

The latter three questions have a Likert scale response of:


There were a total of 73 respondents in this group. The demographics of this group were similar to the other groups, thus I will not report them here. In the pre-test, the percentage of respondents who view Israel as a liberal democracy similar to the U.S.
is 15.1% compared to 8.2% in the post-test. The majority of respondents, both before and after the exposure to the fact sheet, view Israel as at least a partial democracy (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Democracy Survey: Israel’s Political System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israel’s political system is best described as:</th>
<th>Pre-Post Liberal dem. similar to U.S.</th>
<th>Pre-Post Liberal dem. diff. from U.S.</th>
<th>Pre-Post Partial Dem.</th>
<th>Pre-Post Not a Dem.</th>
<th>Pre-Post A Theocracy</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.1%-8.2%</td>
<td>16.4%-20.5%</td>
<td>32.9%-27.4%</td>
<td>28.8%-35.6%</td>
<td>2.7%-6.8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The three Likert scale questions were combined to get a sense of a general shift in opinion about Israel’s democracy. The lowest possible score for the Likert scale is 3 (indicates the strongest opinion that Israel defies democratic values) and the highest is 15 (indicates the strongest opinion that Israel upholds democratic values). A score of 9 indicates that the respondent answered neutral for each question. In the pre-test, the range of scores was from 5 to 15; the median and mode were 9. In the post test, the range of scores was from 3 to 12; the median and mode were 6. The percent of respondents who had a score of 10 or higher went from 20.8% in the pre-test to 1.4% in the post-test. The percentage of respondents who had a score of 8 or less in the pre-test is 45.8%, compared to 86.3% in the post-test. This shows that there was a substantial shift in opinion; after the exposure to the fact-sheet, an overwhelming majority of respondents did not share the view that Israel upholds democratic values.

Unexpectedly, I found that the exposure to the fact-sheet also had an effect on respondents’ sympathies toward Israelis and Palestinians. In response to the sympathies question; “In the Middle East Situation, are your sympathies more with the:” the
percentage of respondents who sympathize with Palestinians is 6.8% in the pre-test, compared to 21.9% in the post test. The percentage of respondents who sympathize with Israelis did not differ much from the pre-test to the post-test (16.4% compared to 17.8% respectfully), nor did the percentage of respondents who replied both (35.6% in the pre-test compared to 34.2% in the post test). However, the exposure to the fact-sheet about Israel’s discriminatory policies toward Palestinians had a substantial impact on the opinion of respondents who originally said they sympathize with neither; 41.1% in the pre-test compared to 26% in the post-test (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Democracy: Sympathies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Middle East situation, your sympathies are more with:</th>
<th>Pre-Post Israelis</th>
<th>Pre-Post Palestinians</th>
<th>Pre-Post Both</th>
<th>Pre-Post Neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.4%-17.8%</td>
<td>6.8%-21.9%</td>
<td>35.6%-34.2%</td>
<td>41.1%-26.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

The results of the democracy survey show that the majority of respondents view Israel as at least a partial democracy, and the exposure to the Israeli democracy fact-sheet had little effect on respondent’s views about Israel’s state of democracy. However, the exposure did have an impact on respondents’ opinions about specific democratic values and the likeness of such values to the U.S.’ There was also an unexpectedly substantial shift in respondents’ sympathies toward Palestinians. After respondents read about Israel’s discriminatory policies against Arab-Israelis and Palestinians, there was a 15.1%
increase in the percentage of respondents who sympathize with Palestinians. There are three plausible explanations for the seeming contradiction in opinion: (1) The statistics do not reflect individual changes of opinion, thus it is difficult to know if the stagnancy of opinion about Israel’s political system is due to a lack of opinion change; or if individual opinions were impacted by the exposure but unobserved due to the fact that the overall percentage remained constant. (2) The small sample size could have affected the results. (3) Respondents may have a low standard for liberal democracy, and thus do not consider Israel’s flaws as a blow to its liberal nature. Despite the fact that respondents’ overall opinions about Israel’s values shifted in the direction of less democratic, they may not perceive this to mean less liberal or not democratic. The lack of a clear scale could have contributed to the misunderstanding; if the answer options ranged from very democratic to less democratic, the connection between values and democracy would have been clearer.

Despite the insignificant shift in opinion about Israel’s political system, the shift in sympathies toward Palestinians confirms the findings in chapter 1; that open debate on the mistreatment of Palestinians impacts public opinion. The democracy fact sheet was less effective than the Palestinian-narrative video, however it still shows that the Palestinian narrative is powerful enough to shift their sympathies toward Palestinians. This implies that public opinion about U.S. support of Israel’s discriminatory policies would also shift in favor of the Palestinians.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

Considering the role of the U.S. in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (U.S. military and financial aid, and its use of its veto power at the UN), and that public opinion has the potential to influence U.S. foreign policy, it is imperative to understand how biased narratives impact American public opinion toward the conflict. This study tested whether public opinion shifts after being exposed to a biased narrative that falls under one of three major perceptions reported in the current rhetoric regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: 1) Israelis are the victims of Palestinian aggression, 2) Israel is a geo-strategic ally of the U.S. in a hostile region, and 3) Israel, like the United States, is a liberal democracy. Hollander (2009, 168) argues that the U.S. has “developed policies and attitudes so consistently pro-Israel that the narrative of the Palestinians has been virtually disappeared,” and that Americans have a special responsibility to understand the role of the U.S. in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I argue that providing the historical context of the conflict and publicly presenting the Palestinian narrative are the first steps toward creating more balanced policies toward Israel and Palestine.

Through a series of experimental surveys I conducted to test whether the pro-Israel American attitude (that is consistently shown in public opinion polls) is due to a lack of information or misinformation about the conflict in American mainstream media, I found that respondents were influenced by the narratives they were exposed to. Not surprisingly, I found the victimhood narrative videos to be the most influential exposure
(compared to an opinion poll and fact-sheet), and the Palestinian narrative video had a greater impact on public opinion than the Israeli narrative video. Respondents in group 1 of the Solomon six experiment were given a pre-test, then were exposed to a biased video clip showing Palestinian suffering. The percentage of respondents in that group who sympathize with Israel on the pre-test was 11.2%, compared to 52.3% on the post-test. The percentage of respondents in group 1 who sympathize with Israelis went down from 23.4% to 11.2% after the exposure. Group 3 received a pre-test, was then exposed to the biased Israeli narrative video, and was given a post-test. The percentage of respondents who sympathize with Israelis went from 24.3% on the pre-test to 41.7% on the post-test. The percentage of respondents in group 3 who sympathize with Palestinians went from 11.7% on the pre-test to 8.7% on the post-test. I also found a significant relationship between respondents’ sympathies and respondents’ sex in the control group that did not receive a pre-test or exposure. A significant amount of males in that group sympathize with Israelis, whereas the majority of females sympathize with both or neither.

The exposure to Middle Eastern opinion polls for the geo-strategic utility survey was overall ineffective. However, I found a significant relationship between respondents who believe that Israel is a strategic ally and respondent’s sex. More males than females agree with that statement on the pre-test and post-test. This may be because male respondents felt the need to choose a side to favor while female respondents were reluctant to side with either Israelis or Palestinians with insufficient information (as some respondents mentioned). This may also be because females tend to be “doves” while makes tend to be “hawks” in situations of conflict as some scholars argue.
While the democracy fact-sheet had an impact on respondents’ sympathies with Palestinians and Israelis, and their views on Israel’s democratic values, it had little effect on overall views of Israel’s political system. The majority of respondents believe that Israel at least a partial democracy (or even a liberal democracy) both before and after the exposure to the fact-sheet. Since the purpose of this study is to see if unconventional narratives influence public opinion about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the results of the democracy survey are substantial. The fact that the exposure to discriminatory Israeli policies toward Palestinians affected respondents’ sympathies toward Palestinians is perhaps an even more substantial finding than respondents’ views on Israel’s political system, as sympathies would be more telling of views on U.S. policies toward Israel.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Although the results of my surveys, excluding the strategic-utility survey, support my hypothesis that biased narratives impact public opinion toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, I understand the limits of the generalizability of this study. All the respondents I surveyed are college students, which does not represent the general American public, nor does it include specifics on respondents’ political involvement. Needless to say, the opinion of a constituent who votes is more valuable than a citizen who does not. Although I collected a total of 749 surveys, they were stretched thin into 8 different groups. While including many control groups helped to strengthen the internal validity of this study, it also made my sample sizes too small to run more detailed tests. The small sample size could also be responsible for the apparent lack of change in the strategic-utility survey, and the contradiction I found in the democracy survey. To say that the
percentage of respondents in an answer category remained constant, is not to say that the
same respondents chose the same answer for the pre-test and post-test. In a study that
tests the impact of narratives on public opinion, it is essential to track individual changes
in responses. Since I found similar responses between the Solomon six groups who
received a pre-test before an exposure and those who did not, I would consolidate the
groups to increase my sample size.

Considering the ineffectiveness of the Middle Eastern opinion polls, I would
change the form of exposure to test whether opinion would shift about Israel’s strategic
utility for the U.S. The opinion polls may have been difficult to interpret, and/or
respondents may not have made the connection between Arab attitudes and U.S. national
security. Seeing that I found video narratives to be the most influential, I would more
carefully design a video exposure for the strategic-utility survey. The unexpectedly
significant relationship between sex and sympathies for the victimhood survey, and sex
and the view that Israel is a strategic ally in the strategic-utility survey, is an interesting
inquiry for future research. It would be worthwhile to focus on the different attitudes of
males and females to further investigate the notion that women in power would be more
peaceful or less hawkish than men, particularly as it pertains to ending the Palestinian-
Israeli conflict. Another explanation could be that female respondents simply were more
reluctant to take sides with little background information, unlike their male counterparts.

Overall, the exposure to unconventional information about the Palestinian-Israeli
conflict had a substantial impact on public opinion toward the conflict. This has many
implications; mainly that more open debate on the conflict will generate dissenting views
that will challenge the status-quo relationship between the U.S. and Israel. While some
scholars doubt the public’s role in influencing foreign policy, the cases of Bosnia and Somalia would suggest otherwise. It was not strategic for the U.S. to intervene in Bosnia or Somalia and both situations were costly to the U.S. Therefore, it is likely that Bush and Clinton chose to intervene due to the public’s push for intervention and their desire for re-election and election respectively. Openness in the debate about the Palestine-Israel conflict will allow for more flexibility in U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. If the humanitarian issues were more generally known, I argue they would gain popularity as in the cases of Bosnia, Somalia, Darfur, and Uganda (Kony). Americans have generally stood for human rights and have arguably been successful at pressuring the government to intervene abroad. In this case the U.S. could use its aid to Israel as leverage for peace negotiations. The U.S. could make aid to Israel conditional on Israel’s compliance with international law. That includes withdrawing troops and settlements to the 1967 borders. This type of policy change would greatly shift the status of the conflict; however it is unlikely to happen unless there is mass public support for such a shift.
Appendix 1

Victimhood Survey

UID______________________________________________________ (your UID will not be used to identify your name)

*Please circle one answer that best fits your views for each question

1. Which political affiliation would you align yourself with:
   a. Strong     b. Leaning      c. Independent      d. Leaning      e. Strong
      Democrat   Democrat             Republican  Republican

2. Which of the following best describes your political ideology?
   a. Strong Liberal  b. Liberal  c. Moderate  d. Conservative  e. Strong Conservative

3. What religious affiliation do you align yourself with:
   a. Christian (Protestant, Catholic, etc.)
   b. Muslim
   c. Jewish
   d. Other
   e. None

4. Would you identify as Evangelical/Born Again?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Have you received any formal education on the Palestine-Israel conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female

7. You get your information about the Palestine-Israel conflict mostly from:
   a. Reading books/articles
   b. TV news
   c. Movies
   d. Parents
   e. Church
   f. Other
8. In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the:
   a. Israelis
   b. Palestinians
   c. Both
   d. Neither

9. Who do you view as the victim in the Palestine-Israel conflict:
   a. Israelis
   b. Palestinians
   c. Both
   d. Neither

10. Israel uses violence only in self defense:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

11. Israel does not target civilians:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

12. Palestinians are more violent than Israelis:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

13. Palestinians use violence only in self defense:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

14. Israelis suffer more from the conflict than Palestinians:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

15. Israel commits human rights abuses against Palestinians:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

16. Israel uses a proportional amount of force against Palestinians:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

17. Israel is illegally occupying Palestinian territories:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

18. The U.S. should unconditionally support Israel
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

19. Which of the following do you think best explains the U.S.-Israel relationship:
    a. Israel is a strategic ally
    b. Israel is a moral obligation
    c. The power of the Israel lobby in the U.S.
    d. All of the above
    e. None of the above
20. The U.S. media portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict is:
   a. Pro-Israel
   b. Pro-Palestine
   c. Balanced
   d. Do not know
Appendix 2
Geo-Strategic Utility Survey

UID__________________________ (your UID will not be used to identify your name)

*Please circle one answer that best fits your views for each question*

1. Which political affiliation would you align yourself with:
   a. Strong   b. Leaning   c. Independent   d. Leaning   e. Strong
      Democrat     Democrat     Republican     Republican

2. Which of the following best describes your political ideology?
   a. Strong Liberal   b. Liberal   c. Moderate   d. Conservative   e. Strong Conservative

3. What religious affiliation do you align yourself with:
   a. Christian (Protestant, Catholic, etc.)
   b. Muslim
   c. Jewish
   d. Other
   e. None

4. Would you identify as Evangelical/Born Again?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Have you received any formal education on the Palestine-Israel conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female

7. You get your information about the Palestine-Israel conflict mostly from:
   a. Reading books/articles
   b. TV news
   c. Movies
   d. Parents
   e. Church
   f. Other
8. In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the:
   a. Israelis
   b. Palestinians
   c. Both
   d. Neither

9. If the U.S. government supported a Palestinian state, would surrounding Middle Eastern and Muslim countries be:
   a. More hostile to the U.S.
   b. Less hostile to the U.S.
   c. Would not change

10. Israel is a strategic ally for the U.S.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

11. The U.S. supports Israel because Israel is helping to fight the War on Terror:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

12. The U.S. needs to maintain its close ties with Israel for American national security:
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

13. It is favorable for the U.S. image internationally to unconditionally support Israel
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neutral
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree
Appendix 3

Strategic Utility Exposure

*While reading the results of the following Middle Eastern opinion polls that were conducted in the Middle East, think about the U.S. national interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D.</th>
<th>Morocco</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>KSA</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. interference in the Arab world</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of democracy in Arab countries</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic inequality</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing occupation of Palestinian lands</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran’s interference in Arab affairs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number represents percentage responding “very much”

D. Overall, Arabs view the two greatest threats to the region’s peace and stability to be “the continuing occupation of Palestinian lands” and “U.S. interference in the Arab world.” Only in Saudi Arabia does the concern with “Iran’s interference in Arab affairs” rank as a top concern.
18. If you had to choose one thing from the list below, which is the greatest obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East? (Choose one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morocco</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>Lebanon</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>KSA</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing occupation of Palestinian lands</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. interference in the Arab world</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of democracy in Arab countries</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic inequality</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran’s interference in Arab affairs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. When asked to choose “the greatest obstacle to peace and stability in the Middle East,” once again the “occupation of Palestinian lands” and “U.S. interference in the Arab world” rank as the top two concerns.
Appendix 4
Democracy Survey

UID____________________ (your UID will not be used to identify your name)

*Please circle one answer that best fits your views for each question*

1. Which political affiliation would you align yourself with:
   a. Strong       b. Leaning       c. Independent       d. Leaning       e. Strong
      Democrat      Democrat      Republican      Republican

2. Which of the following best describes your political ideology?
   a. Strong Liberal       b. Liberal       c. Moderate       d. Conservative       e. Strong Conservative

3. What religious affiliation do you align yourself with:
   a. Christian (Protestant, Catholic, etc.)
   b. Muslim
   c. Jewish
   d. Other
   e. None

4. Would you identify as Evangelical/Born Again?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Have you received any formal education on the Palestine-Israel conflict?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female

7. You get your information about the Palestine-Israel conflict mostly from:
   a. Reading books/articles
   b. TV news
   c. Movies
   d. Parents
   e. Church
   f. Other
8. In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the:
   a. Israelis
   b. Palestinians
   c. Both
   d. Neither

9. Israel’s political system is best described as:
   a. A liberal democracy similar to the U.S.’
   b. A liberal democracy different from the U.S.’
   c. A partial democracy
   d. Not a democracy
   e. A theocracy

10. All Israeli citizens have equal rights:

11. The state of Israel does not discriminate based on religion or race:

12. The Israeli government has the same democratic principles as the United States:
Appendix 5
Democracy Exposure

The following assertions can be found on Freedom House’s website. *Freedom House is regarded as the most legitimate democracy ranking source.

- Israel is called “the Jewish State” with distinct rights granted to Jewish citizens (Freedom House, 2011).

- Arab Israelis have to apply for citizenship and, if granted citizenship, have to carry identification cards (that differ from Jewish ID cards), while all Jewish immigrants are immediately granted citizenship under the “law of return” (Freedom House, 2011).

- Approximately 20% of Israeli citizens are Palestinian-Arabs. About 10% of the Israeli Parliament (Knesset) is made up of Arab citizens of Israel (Freedom House, 2011).

- “Parties or candidates that deny the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, oppose the democratic system, or incite racism are prohibited” (Freedom House 2011).

- Israel is illegally occupying the West Bank and Gaza (Freedom House, 2011).

- “Israel maintains about 35 external and 50 internal checkpoints in the West Bank, as well as over 450 roadblocks. These measures impose extensive delays on local travel, stunt trade within the territory and with the outside world, and restrict Palestinian access to jobs, hospitals, and schools. Israel’s security barrier has also cut off many Palestinians from their farms and other parts of the West Bank” (Freedom House, 2010).

- Israel has passed a law to temporarily deny citizenship to Palestinians who marry Arab Israelis. The law was upheld in 2006 by the Supreme Court, which continues to affect about 15,000 couples (Freedom House 2011).

- “The roughly one million Arab citizens of Israel (about 19 percent of the population) receive inferior education, housing, and social services relative to the Jewish population” (Freedom House, 2011).

- “Israel occasionally restricts Muslim worshippers’ access to the Temple Mount, or Haram al-Sharif, in Jerusalem, and did so in February and March 2010” (Freedom House, 2011).

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Appendix 6

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines public opinion on Israel and Palestine. My name is Rana Odeh, I am a graduate student in the International and Politics Program at Wright State University, and I am conducting this research for my thesis.

In this study, you will be asked to complete an initial survey that should not take longer than 5 minutes to complete. On a follow up visit you will be asked to watch a video clip regarding Israel and Palestine, which should not take longer than 11 minutes, and then you will be asked to take another 5 minute survey. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Neither your participation, nor your non-participation will incur any loss of benefits, and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time without prejudice.

While this study asks that you write your university identification number (UID) on your surveys to track your answers, I will not be able to identify you, and I will maintain the confidentiality of your surveys. I will not have access to the information linking your UID with your name, and nobody other than me will have access to the surveys. Upon completion of this study, all surveys with your UID will be shredded and discarded in a secure manner. There is a slight risk that some video content may be upsetting. While you will not experience any direct benefits from participation, information collected in this study may benefit research in the field of U.S.-Israel relations.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the survey or this research project in general, please contact me at odeh.6@wright.edu or 937-775-5767. You may also contact my thesis advisor, Vaughn Shannon, Ph.D. at vaughn.shannon@wright.edu or 937-775-5767. You may contact my Advisor or me if you would like to obtain a copy of my thesis, which should be completed within one year of this study. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB Coordinator of Wright State University, Robyn Wilks, at robyn.wilks@wright.edu or (937) 775-4462.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me with my thesis research. Completion and return of the surveys indicates your consent to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

Rana Odeh, International and Comparative Politics, Wright State University
odeh.6@wright.edu, 937-775-5767
Vaughn Shannon, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Political Science, Wright State University
vaughn.shannon@wright.edu, 937-775-5767
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