

# **ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

## **PAST – PRESENT – FUTURE**

by

WILLIAM ALBERT ABRAMS

(Under the Direction of Loch Johnson)

### **ABSTRACT**

The United States maintains an unprecedented “special relationship” with the state of Israel and remains the most significant external arbiter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Using process tracing and historical analysis, this study examines the Zionist origins of U.S. support for Israel, the bipartisan and increasingly unconditional nature of that support, the contrasting Western European approaches to Israel and the Palestinians, the competing moral and strategic arguments for and against robust U.S.-Israeli relations, the impact of the Israel lobby, and the future of U.S.-Israeli relations in light of contemporary U.S. strategic interests. This study concludes that the United States should: 1) employ the strategy of offshore balancing to best secure its interests in the Middle East; 2) maintain a strong, but conditional alliance with Israel contingent upon progress towards peace with the Palestinians; and 3) reduce the influence of the Israel lobby on U.S. electoral politics and foreign policy.

**INDEX WORDS:** Israel, Palestine, United States, Europe, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Foreign Policy.

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B.A., Davidson College, 1997

Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Athens, Georgia

2008

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August 2008

## **DEDICATION**

As a patriotic citizen of the United States, I desire to promote the best interests of my country and also a more peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable human civilization on Earth. I truly admire the great successes achieved by the state of Israel over its sixty short years of development. While there is criticism of Israel and its policies in this document, my original concern for this subject grew out of my own genealogical and spiritual connection to Judaism. As a morally and socially engaged person, I have long been concerned by the violence and discord sown through the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I am particularly concerned with the struggles and suffering of disadvantaged, oppressed, and disenfranchised people wherever they may be found. This study is devoted to understanding the origins and evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the role of the United States and Western Europe in this conflict, as well as a means by which the United States might best help to achieve a just and last peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. I have made every attempt to be objective and reasonable in the historical and policy assessments presented and hope the ideas introduced here will help promote progress towards greater peace, prosperity, and stability throughout the entire Middle East region. I wish to thank the members of my Master's thesis committee as well as my family and friends for their support.

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to establish a sound understanding of the origins and evolution of U.S. support for the state of Israel as well as the best approach for future U.S.-Israeli relations in light of contemporary American strategic interests in the Middle East. Because the state of Israel is intimately linked with the fate of the Palestinian people, this study also examines the United States' role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Numerous books and articles in recent years have examined the United States' special relationship with the state of Israel. This special relationship is unparalleled in the history of U.S. foreign policy. Israel is, by far, the largest recipient of U.S. military and economic aid and the long-standing beneficiary of U.S. diplomatic protection in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Whether Israel has been engaged in military strikes against alleged Palestinian terrorist targets, Hezbollah, or neighboring states, the United States has offered virtually unconditional support over the last six decades and through successive presidential administrations. The United States has also facilitated many efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, most often in clear conformity with Israeli policy preferences.

Given the fundamental premise that foreign policy should be designed to best serve a state's own national strategic interests, one would expect to find substantive and long-standing benefits accruing to the United States from its strong alliance with

Israel. Yet, many scholars and journalists now regularly identify direct connections between U.S. support for Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the rise of anti-American terrorism. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has produced one of the most protracted struggles of the last century and is one primary reason for the rise of Islamic terrorism over the last 30 years. Osama bin Laden, as the leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist network, has cited the alliance between the U.S. and Israel coupled with offensive Israeli military operations and the ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people living under Israeli military occupation as significant motivations for jihad against the United States.<sup>1</sup> The 9/11 Commission confirmed that al Qaeda terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks were motivated in part by Israel's behavior toward the Palestinians and by U.S. support for Israel. The implication here is clear: nearly unconditional U.S. support for Israel has contributed to the rise of anti-American terrorism over the last two decades.

Given the increasingly controversial nature of the United States' special relationship with the state of Israel, a series of fundamental questions emerge. First, how did the United States become such a staunch supporter of Israel in the first place? Chapter I examines how the momentum for U.S.-Israeli relations can be traced back to U.S. support for Zionism and the founding of the Jewish state. Second, how has the United States' foreign policy towards Israel and the Palestinians changed over

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<sup>1</sup> The first-ever television interview with Osama bin Laden was conducted by Peter Arnett in eastern Afghanistan in late March 1997. In that interview, bin Laden said: "We declared jihad against the U.S. government because the US government is unjust, criminal and tyrannical. It has committed acts that are extremely unjust, hideous and criminal whether directly or through its support of the Israeli occupation of the Prophet's Night Travel Land (Palestine). And we believe the U.S. is directly responsible for those who were killed in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq... [I]t is our duty to make jihad so that God's word is the one exalted to the heights and so that we drive the Americans away from all Muslim countries." See transcript online: <http://anusha.com/osamaint.htm>.

successive presidential administrations? Chapter II traces the broad historical outlines of U.S.-Israeli relations and illustrates, with few exceptions, the increasingly unconditional and bipartisan nature of American support for Israel over time. Third, do Western European countries with similar democratic systems and strategic interests approach Israel and the Palestinians in the same manner as the United States? Chapter III isolates and explains the differences between U.S. and European relations with Israel and the Palestinians. Fourth, what are the reasons for the nearly unconditional U.S. support of Israel? Chapter IV examines the most prominent strategic and moral rationales for U.S. support of Israel as well as the impact of the Israel lobby on U.S. foreign policy. Fifth, what would be the best future course for U.S.-Israeli relations and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East given the United States' current strategic priorities? Chapter V outlines a new course for U.S.-Israeli relations and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

## CHAPTER I

### Origins of U.S. Support for Israel

#### Balfour Declaration

The earliest official roots of international support for Zionism, the Jewish national liberation movement, can be traced back to Great Britain's Balfour Declaration of 1917.<sup>2</sup> This Declaration was particularly controversial because the Arab alliance formed with Great Britain during World War I gave Arab leaders the impression that Arab self-government and political autonomy would be respected in an area including Palestine.<sup>3</sup> The endorsement of Zionism was authorized by the British cabinet in part to ensure that the United States, which had welcomed millions of Jewish immigrants in the late 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The original text of the Balfour Declaration: "Dear Lord Rothschild, I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet. 'His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors 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.' I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation. Yours sincerely, Arthur James Balfour. Online at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/The%20Balfour%20Declaration>.

<sup>3</sup> The Damascus Protocol (1914) and the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence (circa 1915) involved specific assurances by Great Britain to the Sharif of Mecca, Husayn bin Ali, that Arab political independence would be respected following World War I with certain key reservations. Emir Faisal was given similar assurances by Lawrence of Arabia during the successful Arab Revolt of 1916-18. However, the language specifying British reservations was ambiguous and ultimately the British insisted that Palestine was not included in the territories designated for full Arab sovereignty. Details online at the Jewish Virtual Library: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hussmac1.html>.

and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, would join the Entente Powers in WWI. The United States' first official support for the state of Israel can be traced back to the historic and precedent-setting endorsement of the Balfour Declaration by the U.S. Congress following WWI. In 1922, the U.S. Congress declared that: "the United States of America favors the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which will prejudice the civil and religious rights of Christian and all other non-Jewish communities in Palestine..."<sup>4</sup>

Two important preliminary points are relevant regarding this congressional action. First, congressional support for Zionism preceded the horrible events of World War II and the Nazi Holocaust. Many people in America today base their staunch support for Israel in part on the history of Jewish persecution in WWII and the need for the Jewish people as a whole to establish a safe homeland. However, support for Zionism clearly preceded these genocidal atrocities; this fact reveals that the initial support for an independent, sovereign Jewish homeland in Palestine was motivated by other factors. Second, the Balfour declaration was modest in its support by including language respecting the rights of the indigenous population. From the beginning, the United States and Great Britain affirmed in principle that the indigenous population was entitled to civil and religious rights. Unfortunately, this sensitivity to the rights of native groups would erode drastically on the ground over the next 20 years with the consolidation of Zionist power and influence in Palestine.

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<sup>4</sup> Public Resolution No. 73, 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session, September 21, 1922; See Jewish Virtual Library online at [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/History/Congress\\_Endorses\\_the\\_Balfour\\_Declaration.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/History/Congress_Endorses_the_Balfour_Declaration.html).

The United States' endorsement of Zionism at this early stage is perplexing for several reasons. At that time, Jews constituted the smallest minority of the indigenous population (roughly 5%) while Arab Muslims were in the majority (roughly 85%) and Arab Christians were the second largest group (roughly 10%).<sup>5</sup> Also, as the architect of the League of Nations and an out-spoken proponent of national self-determination, Woodrow Wilson stated in his famous Fourteen Points speech of 1918 that “[t]he Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development...”<sup>6</sup> Wilson made many statements championing the rights of colonized peoples, emphasizing that “national aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent.”<sup>7</sup> Clearly, both demographic obstacles and Wilson’s principled position on self-determination might cast doubt on the appropriateness or feasibility of the Zionist vision for a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

In addition, several U.S. Middle East experts argued forcefully against Zionism. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Otis Glazebrook, the U.S. consul in Jerusalem, submitted a “steady flow of reports on the grave dangers of the Zionist policy... His main argument was that the implementation of Zionist goals would lead to bloodshed in the area.” In Glazebrook’s own words: “There is no difference of opinion that the opposition of the Muslims and Christians to granting any exceptional privilege to the

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<sup>5</sup> McCarthy, Justin. 1990. *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate*. Columbia University Press: New York.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, Woodrow. Jan. 8, 1918. Speech entitled: “President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points.” Online at Yale Law School, Avalon Project: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wilson14.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, Woodrow. Feb. 11, 1918. Speech entitled: “President Wilson’s Address to Congress, Analyzing German and Austrian Peace Utterances.” Online at <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/www/1918/wilpeace.html>.

Jews in Palestine is real, intense, and universal.”<sup>8</sup> President Wilson was eventually convinced to dispatch the King-Crane Commission<sup>9</sup> to investigate the situation in Palestine in 1919. The Commission’s recommendations asserted that “a national home for the Jewish people is not equivalent to making Palestine into a Jewish State; nor can the erection of such a Jewish State be accomplished without the gravest trespass upon the ‘civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine...’ This would have to mean that Jewish immigration should be definitely limited, and that the project for making Palestine distinctly a Jewish commonwealth should be given up.”<sup>10</sup> Professor Edward Reed was one of a few men who testified before Congress in ardent opposition to a Congressional endorsement of the Balfour Declaration; Reed stated:

“President Wilson had promised all people in subjection to Turkish rule an ‘absolutely unmolested opportunity for autonomous development’... If that phrase means anything at all, it means that people in a country such as Palestine should have an unmolested chance to develop themselves... [H]ere is a country of 700,000 people and the Zionists compose just about one-tenth of the country, and here is a declaration that is going to change absolutely the whole status of the people of that country. Have they one word to say about it? Are they consulted? ...Where does it come from? It comes from the Zionist offices in America as well as in England... [I]t was not submitted to the people of the country that it affects... These people have been pillaged by the Turks and Germans; they have been reduced to poverty and should we now say that they

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, Hisham H. 1995. “Roots of Denial: American Stand on Palestinian Self-Determination from the Balfour Declaration to World War Two.” In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quote on pg. 36

<sup>9</sup> Also called the “Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey.” The Commission’s task was to assess the national and political aspirations of various populations in the formerly Ottoman territories of the Middle East.

<sup>10</sup> The King-Crane Commission Report, Aug. 28, 1919. Online at: <http://www.hri.org/docs/king-crane/>. Note: Charles Crane has been accurately characterized as anti-Semitic; he met with and supported Stalin and Hitler in programs against Jewish populations. His personal bias has called into question the impartiality of the King-Crane report. However, the report’s conclusions are in accord with other expert opinions regarding Arab opposition to Zionism.

shall be kept down and deprived of their rights in their country in order to build up this Jewish State? I do not think that is the way to build a State.”<sup>11</sup>

Given the demographic and political obstacles, why did President Wilson and the U.S. Congress ultimately endorse the Jewish vision of a homeland in Palestine? This early stage of U.S. support is best explained by the pervasive impact of Zionism as a movement for national self-determination. Most of the early Zionists were European Jews responding to anti-Semitism throughout Europe. These European Jews were well-versed in the institutional design of the modern nation-state and strategies to influence elites at the center of political power. Jewish lobbying efforts were a hallmark of the Zionist enterprise since the founding of the World Zionist Organization in 1897.<sup>12</sup> In addition, many prominent Christians in England and the United States supported restoration of the Jews in Palestine.<sup>13</sup> Jewish leaders, well-positioned in society and supported by generous financial backing, engaged in direct correspondence and dialogue with some of the most influential political leaders of that time. In the United States, the efforts of Felix Frankfurter and Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis were especially influential during the Wilson administration. There is no doubt that the diplomatic capacities of the Jewish national movement far exceeded those of the native Arab population in Palestine. In the Ottoman Middle East prior to World War I, most Arabs maintained rural, tribal lifestyles for centuries under the rule of kings or provincial

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<sup>11</sup> House of Representatives, 67<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session. Subcommittee of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs on H. CON. RES. 52* “Expressing Satisfaction at the Re-creation of Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish Race.”, pgs. 22-32.

<sup>12</sup> See WZO history online at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/wzo.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Note: Leaders of the British reformation wrote about the restoration of the Jews in the land of Israel as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the idea received more widespread support from a variety of sources. For instance, Puritans in Britain and America supported this position. See: <http://www.mideastweb.org/britzion.htm>.



religious leaders. With the exception of these rulers, most Middle Eastern people had little interaction with modern representative governments and minimal experience with self-organized political activity. This strategic advantage was fully exploited by the World Zionist Organization as well as like-minded Jewish and Christian groups, ultimately leading to the endorsement of Zionism by Great Britain and later by the United States.

Even though the findings of the King-Crane commission, written in 1919, reaffirmed that anti-Zionist sentiment was real and pervasive among Arabs in Palestine, active efforts by Zionists ultimately persuaded President Wilson and the U.S. Congress to avoid any serious consideration of the indigenous Palestinians' right to self-determination.<sup>14</sup> In fact, "[b]ecause the King-Crane report was unfavorable to Zionism and Anglo-French plans for the area, it was not published until 1922, three years after it was written" and a few months after the Congressional vote in favor of Zionism.<sup>15</sup> Thus, neither President Wilson's own idealistic statements regarding self-determination nor the serious indications of indigenous opposition to Zionism were considered sufficient justifications to challenge the Zionist vision for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. By the end of his final term, President Wilson had made repeated statements of support for Zionism, once saying: "I am... persuaded that the Allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our own Government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, Hisham H. 1995. "Roots of Denial: American Stand on Palestinian Self-Determination from the Balfour Declaration to World War Two." In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press.

<sup>15</sup> Farsoun, Samih & Zacharia, Christina. 1998. *Palestine and the Palestinians*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO. Quote on pg. 71

laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, the first and most crucial Congressional endorsement of Zionism in 1922 set the stage for the creation of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948. This decision, which was tantamount to an endorsement of Jewish colonization in Palestine during a period of increasingly rapid decolonization in other parts of the world, also helped lay the foundation for the present-day Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, long before the moral impact of the Holocaust, we find a decisive, unambiguous elevation of the rights of the Jewish people, a demographic minority in Palestine, above the rights of the indigenous Arab majority. Such an elevation of Jewish political rights is difficult to justify if the principle of self-determination is applied uniformly. Nonetheless, this basic favoritism for the Jewish cause and Jewish rights which underpinned this early endorsement of Zionism would continue to shape U.S.-Israeli relations following the creation of the state of Israel.

### **Creation of Israel**

Before the United States Congress made its official endorsement of Zionism, the Balfour Declaration had already been incorporated into the British Mandate of Palestine<sup>17</sup> through the League of Nations circa 1920.<sup>18</sup> This action made the goal of

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<sup>16</sup> Woodrow Wilson as quoted in: Manuel, Frank. 1949. *The Realities of American-Palestine Relations*. Public Affairs Press: Washington, D.C. See pg. 165.

<sup>17</sup> See original document text online at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/palmanda.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> The Palestine Mandate stated: “Whereas the Principal Allied Powers have also agreed that the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the [Balfour] declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917... in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might 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... [R]ecognition has thereby been given to the historical

establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine an article of international law. As predicted, the increasing levels of Jewish immigration to Palestine triggered violent Arab riots from 1920-21. But, the influx of Jewish immigrants gradually emboldened Zionist leaders, who began organizing their own militia, the Haganah, to protect their interests and lay the foundations for a sovereign state. Conflict between Jews and indigenous Arabs erupted again in the Arab Riots of 1936-39 over rising Jewish immigration and this time the British helped smother the more widespread Arab resistance and then actively disarmed the indigenous population.<sup>19</sup> This second wave of militant Arab resistance to Zionism forced the British to relax their active facilitation of Jewish immigration and overt support for an independent Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>20</sup> The British had a fundamental strategic interest in appeasing the Arabs to maintain stability in Egypt and control of oil production in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the Arab Emirates.

In the meantime, support for a Jewish state in Palestine received an enormous moral boost with the onset of Jewish persecution during the Nazi Holocaust. The United Nations (UN), as the successor to the League of Nations, attempted to resolve

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connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.” From preamble. Online: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/palmanda.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> The first Arab revolt in 1920-21 was a violent resistance against Jewish immigration. More concentrated and violent Arab revolts took place between 1936-39. The earlier revolts were the first signs of militant Palestinian resistance in response to Jewish colonization. During this period, Jewish casualties usually outnumbered Arab fatalities; but, following the formation of the Israeli state in 1948, Arabs have consistently suffered larger numbers of casualties. See statistical details online at: <http://www.palestinefacts.org>.

<sup>20</sup> The McDonald White Paper of 1939 declared that the British Mandate for Palestine was not intended to establish a Jewish State and that Jewish immigration would be severely curtailed. The British took a step back from their essentially unwavering support for Zionism, a move which was rejected by both sides. The Zionists were shocked at this so-called betrayal of the Mandate’s charter and Arabs rejected the proposition for not going far enough to curtail the Zionist program. See historical information online at: [http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf\\_mandate\\_whitepaper\\_1939.php](http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_mandate_whitepaper_1939.php).

the dispute between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine impartially through an independent committee, UNSCOP, composed of eleven states, none of which were Great Powers.<sup>21</sup> A majority of participating nations on UNSCOP recommended the partition of Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish states with Jerusalem and Bethlehem to remain under international control while a minority supported the creation of a single federated country containing both Jewish and Arab constituent states.<sup>22</sup> The Partition Plan was passed by the UN General Assembly in November of 1947 with the support of the United States, all Western European states, and the Soviet Union. All Arab members of the UN voted against the resolution and the Arab League officially rejected any Jewish right of self-determination in Palestine.<sup>23</sup> Though Jews were offered complete sovereignty over a portion of Palestine which was acceptable to mainstream Zionist groups, more militant Zionist groups including the Irgun and Lehi were unhappy because the proposed Jewish state was smaller than desired<sup>24</sup> and because an Arab state would be created in Palestine alongside Israel.

Fighting began even before the Partition Plan was approved. The Irgun and Lehi, having split off from the Haganah, began conducting systematic terrorist attacks and sabotage against the British Mandate government and its military installations in protest of British restrictions on Jewish immigration during the Holocaust. The Irgun

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<sup>21</sup> UNSCOP, formed in May of 1947, stands for United Nations Special Committee on Palestine.

<sup>22</sup> The Partition Plan allocated 56% of the former Palestine Mandate for a Jewish state, 43% for the Arab state. Countries on UNSCOP supporting partition included: Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, & Uruguay. Countries supporting a federated state of Palestine included India, Iran, & Yugoslavia. Australia abstained.

<sup>23</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 181; see online at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/res181.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> The original maps of Zionist plans for a Jewish State included all of "Eretz Yisrael Hashlemah", a term that denotes the boundaries for the biblical holy land of the Jewish people. These maps included present-day Israel, the Occupied territories, and land on the east bank of the Jordan River. Though this ambitious proposal was rejected from the outset by the British government, at the end of Israel's war of independence, the new state declared sovereignty over 77 percent of historical Palestine.

and Lehi wanted to hasten a British withdrawal. The Arab Jerusalem Riots of 1947 followed soon after the passage of the Partition Plan. Eager to extricate themselves from Zionist attacks and rising Jewish-Arab conflict, Britain withdrew its commitment to the Palestine Mandate which was due to expire on May 15, 1948. Britain refused to enforce the Partition Plan because of difficulties in arriving at a solution acceptable to both Jews and Arabs. Eager to establish a provisional government, Zionist leaders issued a Declaration of Independence for the State of Israel the day before the expiration of the Palestine Mandate. That same evening, the United States was the first foreign power to officially recognize the sovereignty of the new Jewish state.<sup>25</sup> Sadly, predictions of bloodshed and pervasive Arab resistance to Zionism were proven accurate when armies from Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt invaded Israel to resist Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. Surprisingly, Israel won its war of independence decisively by defeating these Arab armies on multiple fronts. The bloodshed was heavy with civilian massacres on both sides; according to Benny Morris, a noted Israeli historian, the aggression and brutality was greatest among the Jewish soldiers. By the end of the year-long conflict, Israel's victory was punctuated by the exodus or forceful expulsion of approximately 700,000 Arabs from Palestine.<sup>26</sup>

“In retrospect, it is clear that what occurred in 1948 in Palestine was a variety of ethnic cleansing of Arab areas by Jews. It is impossible to say how many of the 700,000 or so Palestinians who became refugees in 1948 were physically expelled, as distinct from simply fleeing a combat zone. What is certain is that almost all were barred by the Israeli government decision of June 1948 and,

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<sup>25</sup> Gerner, Deborah J. 1995. “Missed Opportunities and Roads Not Taken: The Eisenhower Administration and the Palestinians.” In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press.

<sup>26</sup> This tragedy is known today by Palestinians as the al-Nakba, “the catastrophe.”

consequently, by IDF [gun]fire, from returning to their homes or areas. Similarly, almost all of the four hundred or so Arab villages overrun and depopulated by Israel were in the course of 1948 or immediately thereafter razed to the ground, partly in order to prevent the refugees from returning.”<sup>27</sup>

With the declaration of Israeli independence, the stakes were raised exponentially. Israel successfully expanded its territorial claim well beyond the UN partition plan from 56% to 78% of Mandatory Palestine. This overwhelming Israeli victory was due in large part to the depletion of Arab armaments following the Arab Revolt of 1936-39 and the excellent organization of Zionist militias whose leaders were well-trained while fighting for the British during WWII. Following the war, the United States withdrew its support for the Partition Plan and supported Jordanian rule over the West Bank and Egyptian rule over the Gaza Strip. Thus, the UN Partition Plan's provision for the creation of a parallel Palestinian Arab state was never realized. The Balfour Declaration's insistence that “nothing shall be done which will prejudice the civil and religious rights of Christian and all other non-Jewish communities in Palestine...” was either forgotten or discarded. The Palestinians were denied the right of self-determination due in part to the supremacy of the Israeli military and its deliberate expulsion of Palestinian Arabs but also due to the uncompromising Arab rejection of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and prolonged disunity among Arab leaders.

The Palestinians faced a massive humanitarian refugee crisis.<sup>28</sup> Despite the definitive affirmation of the Palestinians' right of return to their prior homes in Palestine

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<sup>27</sup> Morris, Benny. “Arab-Israeli War.” Quote online: <http://www.crimesofwar.org/thebook/arab-israeli-war.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Neff, Donald. 1995. *Fallen Pillars: U.S. Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*. Institute for Palestine Studies: Washington, D.C. See also Farsoun & Zacharia, 1998.

through UN General Assembly Resolution 194 and Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Israel made repeated efforts to deny any such right for Palestinians, as a conquered people, to return to their land.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Israeli state policy granted an inherent right of return and a pathway to citizenship for any Jewish (or partly Jewish) individual living anywhere in the world. Though U.S. policy was officially in support of full repatriation and compensation for Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN declarations for over 40 years, U.S. leadership has now essentially withdrawn support for full repatriation due to decades of Israeli intransigence.<sup>30</sup> Not only were hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced, but the thousands of native-born Palestinians who did remain in Israel proper (roughly 10% of the population) were treated as second-class citizens subject to systematic discrimination, especially during the early decades of Israeli state building.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine preceded the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust. Great Britain's competing promises to Arab leaders and Zionists for sovereignty over Palestine laid the earliest foundation for today's Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States Congress and President Woodrow Wilson endorsed Zionism despite high-profile public support for the autonomous development and undoubted

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<sup>29</sup> UN General Assembly A/RES/194 passed on December 11, 1948; Online at: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/59c118f065c4465b852572a500625fea/c758572b78d1cd0085256bcf0077e51a!OpenDocument>.

<sup>30</sup> Note: Since 1949, no program of repatriation for displaced Palestinians was ever implemented.

<sup>31</sup> See Mossawa (June 2006) report entitled: "The Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel: Status, Opportunities and Challenges for an Israeli-Palestinian Peace." Online at [http://www.mossawacenter.org/files/files/File/The%20Palestinian%20Arab%20Citizens%20of%20Israel\\_Status...2006.pdf](http://www.mossawacenter.org/files/files/File/The%20Palestinian%20Arab%20Citizens%20of%20Israel_Status...2006.pdf). Several other articles documenting this discrimination can be found online at: <http://www.is-pal.net/greenliners.htm>.

security of life of nationalities formerly under Ottoman rule and despite the presence of a large non-Jewish Arab majority that openly rejected Jewish immigration or political sovereignty in Palestine. The Zionist lobby, the precursor to today's Israel lobby, was the driving force for the endorsement of a Jewish homeland in Palestine by Great Britain, the League of Nations, and the United States. The suppression of the King-Crane Commission report was evidence of systematic U.S. bias in favor of Jewish interests in Palestine. The fact that President Franklin Roosevelt had himself entertained a proposal to simply "transfer" the Palestinians out of Palestine reinforces the notion that "racial or ethnic prejudice toward Palestinian Arabs" was probably a significant factor at that time.<sup>32</sup> The UN Partition Plan was doomed to failure because Arab governments were unwilling to accept any Jewish sovereignty in Palestine while remaining divided in their visions for the future of Palestine.

Though the Balfour Declaration and subsequent endorsements of Zionism promised to protect the civil and religious rights of the indigenous people of Palestine, this promise was ultimately broken. The ethnic cleansing of Palestine, the resulting refugee crisis, the denial of the Palestinian right of return, and the treatment of the remaining Palestinians in Israel as second-class citizens all deepened the ill-will between Arabs and Jews. The fact that the United States was the first nation to recognize Israel was a testament to the pro-Zionist character of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. withdrawal of support for an Arab state in Palestine in favor of *de facto* Jordanian and Egyptian control was a pragmatic solution which sidestepped the Palestinian

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<sup>32</sup> Abu-Lughod, Ibrahim. 1990. "America's Palestine Policy." In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quote on pg. 236



demand for self-determination. The catastrophe (*al-Nakba*) for indigenous Arabs was apparently an acceptable tragedy in the eyes of British and American leaders whose empathy for Jewish suffering and desire for a close democratic ally in Palestine were paramount. Ultimately, the United States' early endorsements of Zionism and support for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, coupled with British and international support, served the interests of Jews to the detriment of the indigenous Arab population and helped fuel the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which continues to the present day.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, "The complete text of 'The Origin of the Palestine-Israel Conflict.'" Written by *Jews for Justice in the Middle East*. Online at: [www.wrmea.com/jews\\_for\\_justice/index.html](http://www.wrmea.com/jews_for_justice/index.html).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Evolution of U.S. Support for Israel**

Several books have been written on the evolution and development of the U.S.-Israeli strategic partnership since the early founding years. Though British support for Zionism was most responsible for the early victories of Zionism over Arab rights in Palestine, the United States increasingly replaced Great Britain as the primary sponsor of Zionism and Israel during the Cold War. This section does not attempt to comprehensively reconstruct these developments but rather to highlight certain key events under the leadership of successive presidents that illustrate, with occasional exceptions, the continued bias in favor of Jewish interests in Palestine.

#### **Truman Administration**

President Truman's approach to the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine was originally congruent with the United Nations Partition Plan proposed in 1947. However, U.S. and European failures to accurately gauge Arab resistance to Zionism and gain Arab support for the Partition Plan were substantially responsible for its collapse. Fred Lawson notes that three powerful forces were exerting pressure on Truman in favor of Jewish interests. First, "intensive lobbying... took place on behalf of the Zionist

movement by influential individuals with close personal ties to the President.” Second, “Truman’s closest advisers attached [great importance] to pro-Zionist Jewish voters as potential bases of electoral and financial support for the Democratic Party...”<sup>34</sup> And third, despite support for the partition plan among Truman’s trusted cabinet officials who favored equal rights of self-determination for Jews and Arabs, officials in the Pentagon and State Department who favored continued Anglo-American control over Palestine were most influential once Israel had secured its victory over its Arab rivals in 1949.

These three forces collectively pushed “U.S. policy in the direction of support for the creation of the Zionist state in Palestine at the expense of – or in complete disregard for – the interests of the territory’s Arab population.”<sup>35</sup> Jewish historical and religious claims to the land were given clear precedence; the land ownership rights of Arabs born in Palestine were continuously undermined. The crisis of Palestinian Arab refugees was characterized as “rapidly reaching catastrophic proportions” with hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees without shelter, medical supplies, sanitation, and food.<sup>36</sup> Though the Truman administration did make diplomatic efforts to encourage Israel to repatriate the Palestinian Arab refugees, these efforts were driven less by humanitarian empathy for the plight of the Palestinians than by the desire to prevent a broader destabilization that might invite Soviet interference in the Middle East region.

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<sup>34</sup> Lawson, Fred H. 1995. “The Truman Administration and the Palestinians.” In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quotes on pg. 59

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, pg. 60

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pgs. 62-63

## Eisenhower Administration

President Dwight Eisenhower inherited these conditions on the ground and sought to reinforce the legitimacy of the newly-created United Nations by playing a more evenhanded diplomatic role than successive presidents. For instance, Britain, France, and the United States successfully maintained an arms embargo against Israel and other Middle Eastern countries throughout the 1950's to further deter Soviet influence in the region<sup>37</sup>. On numerous occasions, Eisenhower sharply criticized Israeli military incursions across the 1949 armistice lines and he repeatedly expressed U.S. support for repatriation of the over 700,000 Palestinian refugees. When Israel began building a canal for diversion of the Jordan River in 1953 in violation of a UN-sponsored water sharing plan, Eisenhower halted the transfer of over \$26 million in economic assistance to Israel to force a halt to construction. The United States strongly opposed the attack on Egypt in 1956, an overt act of aggression orchestrated by Israel in cooperation with France and Great Britain. Washington's decisive call for an end to the offensive is remarkable in light of its unflinching support for Israeli acts of war in subsequent decades. This opposition was in keeping with U.S. strategic priorities of that era which included the final elimination of European colonial positions in the Middle East and the establishment of tight relations with newly independent Arab states to prevent Soviet penetration of the region. Following the Suez War, another U.S. threat to suspend economic assistance successfully pressured Israel to evacuate its military forces from

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<sup>37</sup> France secretly violated the embargo and supplied Israel with jet warplanes, battle tanks and heavy artillery, which enabled Israel to launch a heavy raid in the Gaza Strip in 1955; the Egyptian death toll shocked Nasser into procuring more substantial arms from the Soviet Union. This arms escalation was a principal catalyst for the 1956 Suez conflict. See: Neff, 1995. Chapter VIII, Arms.

Sharm al Sheikh in Egypt<sup>38</sup> and the Gaza Strip. Though the costs of Israeli compliance with U.S. demands were fairly minimal at that time, the Eisenhower administration did not hesitate to use economic pressure to force the Israeli government to alter policies incongruent with the international moral and political consensus. Unfortunately, economic leverage of this sort has not been employed by successive presidents even when confronted with far more grave and controversial Israeli actions.

### **Kennedy & Johnson Administrations**

President John F. Kennedy is renowned for stating that “[t]he ideals of Zionism have... been endorsed by both parties, and Americans of all ranks and in all sections. Friendship for Israel is not a partisan matter. It is a national commitment.”<sup>39</sup> Kennedy “came out of the 1960 election owing a significant debt to Jewish American voters. Over 80 percent of Jewish votes went to Kennedy.”<sup>40</sup> Though Kennedy attempted to address the Palestinian refugee crisis through the Johnson plan<sup>41</sup>, efforts to resolve the refugee crisis were repeatedly thwarted by Israeli denials of the Palestinian right of

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<sup>38</sup> Sharm al Sheikh is a key point for Israeli strategic defense. The adjacent Straits of Tiran were blocked by Nasser in 1956. To the West lies the Gulf of Suez (portal to the Suez Canal) and to the Northeast lies the Gulf of Aqaba which leads to Israel’s southern-most port. See map online at: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/egypt.gif>.

<sup>39</sup> Silverberg, Robert. 1970. *If I Forget Thee O Jerusalem: American Jews and the State of Israel*. William Morrow and Co., Inc: New York. See pg. 552. Quote from JFK’s speech to a Zionist national conference in 1960.

<sup>40</sup> Bustami, Zaha. 1995. “The Kennedy-Johnson Administrations and the Palestinian People.” In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quote on pg. 114

<sup>41</sup> The Joseph E. Johnson plan was based on Article 11 of UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (December 1948); this plan originally mirrored Eisenhower’s approach and promoted repatriation for all refugees and compensation for the destruction of property. However, Israeli positions on the refugee crisis favored resettlement of the vast majority of refugees in neighboring Arab countries. Arab countries distrusted the plan for failing to address Palestinian self-determination and concerns regarding Israel’s expansion of borders in 1948-49.

return. Despite Israel's resistance to comply with United Nations resolutions designed to enforce international law, Cold War rivalries fueled a Middle East arms race with the U.S. supplying Israel and the Soviet Union supplying Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states. Kennedy breached the long-standing tripartite Middle East arms embargo by permitting the sale of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel in 1962; Neff describes this as "Israel's greatest achievement in its relations with the United States up to that time."<sup>42</sup> By the end of the decade, Israel had received the latest in American warplanes and other offensive weapons. Thus, the Kennedy administration succeeded in opening the door to a burgeoning U.S.-Israeli arms trade which would ultimately further marginalize the power and political leverage of Palestinian Arabs. This arms trade, which was augmented by armaments from Western Europe, laid the military foundation for an Israeli victory in the Six-Day War of 1967.

Narratives of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War differ markedly in the significance attributed to various triggering events, but all accounts clearly indicate that Israel launched a pre-emptive military strike on Egypt. Jordan and Syria, acting in accordance with a common defense pact with Egypt, immediately attacked Israel. Egypt's blockade of the Straits of Tiran is often cited as the *casus belli*; however, Egypt's actions were deterrent in nature and based on faulty Russian intelligence indicating an imminent Israeli attack on Syria. Avi Shlaim emphasizes the role of "Israel's strategy of escalation on the Syrian front" as "probably the single most important factor in dragging the Middle

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<sup>42</sup> Neff, 1995. See pgs. 170-171

East to war in June 1967...”<sup>43</sup> Egyptian military actions posed minimal immediate security or economic threat to Israel. Yagil Levy states that “[a] massive military buildup was the main pillar on which the Six-Day War was grounded.” This buildup, facilitated by major arms shipments from the United States and Europe, was reinforced by “the institutionalization of Israel’s offensive doctrine” which oriented strategic military planning within a “strike-first” operational structure.<sup>44</sup> Despite the aggressive nature of Israeli military action and the subsequent military occupations of the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, President Johnson’s only public remarks indicated that the Egyptian blockade was a sufficient cause for these Israeli acts of war: “The 1967 War created a new status quo in the region, one which the Johnson administration did not oppose.”<sup>45</sup> Preoccupied by the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement, President Johnson paid little serious attention to Palestinian humanitarian distress and his administration’s passive endorsement of Israeli actions set the stage for Israel’s open-ended military occupation of Arab territories following the Six-Day War.

Though the United States did support the passage of UNSC resolution 242 which called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Arab territories, nothing was ever done to enforce this resolution. With the passage of UNSC Res. 242, the old Arab demand for Israel to withdraw from territories annexed during the 1948-49 war of independence was eclipsed by the less stringent demand for Israel to simply withdraw

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<sup>43</sup> Shlaim, Avi. 2000. *The iron wall: Israel and the Arab world*. New York: W.W. Norton. See pgs. 233-34. Note: Escalation entailed cultivation of land in the demilitarized zone “in a manner calculated to provoke clashes with the Syrians.”

<sup>44</sup> Levy, Yagil. 1997. *Trial and error: Israel’s route from war to de-escalation*. Albany, NY: SUNY. See pgs. 104-105

<sup>45</sup> Bustami, 1995. Quote on pg. 127

its armed forces from the newly occupied territories.<sup>46</sup> The post-war international consensus called for an Israeli withdrawal from East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights; Arab support for the resolution was predicated on promises from the United States that Israel would comply. However, “[r]esolution 242 had barely passed before Israel began challenging its generally accepted meaning... [T]he most successful Israeli argument turned out to be the assertion that the territories were not occupied. They were ‘liberated’.”<sup>47</sup> Israel claimed that the *de facto* rule of Gaza by Egypt and the West Bank by Jordan since 1949 was not officially sanctioned; only two countries, Britain and Pakistan, formally recognized Jordan’s annexation of the West Bank. Though this argument was rejected at the UN, this position and other novel Israeli interpretations of the resolution served as long-standing justifications for Israel’s open-ended policy of military occupation.

In step with its military occupation, Israel began the construction of new Jewish settlements. The first act of settlement was the destruction of the Islamic Maghrabi Quarter of the Old City in East Jerusalem; Israel then began a steady program of settlement construction in all of the occupied territories. President Johnson categorically abandoned previous U.S. policy in favor of the internationalization of Jerusalem in accordance with the UN partition plan of 1948. U.S. support for the idea that Jerusalem should remain an undivided city played into the hands of the Zionist leadership which leapt forward by declaring all of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and

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<sup>46</sup> Based upon the principle of “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.” See UNSC Resolution 242 online at: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/361eea1cc08301c485256cf600606959/7d35e1f729df491c85256ee700686136!OpenDocument>. UNSC Res. 242, along with UNSC Res. 338 regarding cessation of hostilities, formed the enduring basis for all future negotiations in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

<sup>47</sup> Neff, 1995. Quote on pg. 102



redrawing the city's municipal borders to create an "overwhelming Jewish majority."<sup>48</sup> This move by Israel was a major violation of UNSC Res. 242, a move which has since been endorsed on multiple occasions by the U.S. Congress.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately for the Palestinians, the Johnson administration tacitly condoned Israel's conquest and occupation of Palestinian territories, annexation of East Jerusalem, and construction of illegal settlements.<sup>50</sup> As we will see, later administrations followed suit, continuing the long tide of U.S. support for Jewish-Israeli actions in spite of drastically worsening conditions for the Palestinian Arab population now living under essentially authoritarian Israeli military rule.

### **Nixon & Ford Administrations**

In 1969, "Richard Nixon came to power... less encumbered by reliance on supporters of Israel or burdened by misconceptions of the Middle East than any president since... Eisenhower." Since Nixon had received only 15 percent of Jewish votes in 1968, he "had no political debts to Israel's powerful domestic supporters."<sup>51</sup> Early in the Nixon administration, William Rogers, Nixon's first Secretary of State, attempted to exert pressure at the UN to force an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and to begin negotiations over the future status of Jerusalem; the Israeli

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<sup>48</sup> Neff, 1995. Quoted text on pg. 140

<sup>49</sup> The Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act, passed during the tenure of President Clinton in 1995, recognized Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel. See text online at: [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/US-Israel/Jerusalem\\_Relocation\\_Act.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/US-Israel/Jerusalem_Relocation_Act.html).

<sup>50</sup> Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Conventions prohibits an occupying power from transferring its own citizens into the occupied territory. See text online at: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/92.htm>.

<sup>51</sup> Neff, Donald. 1995(2). "Nixon's Middle East Policy: From Balance to Bias." In: U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quote on pg. 133

cabinet simply rejected the resolution outright.<sup>52</sup> The so-called Rogers plan was eventually eclipsed by Henry Kissinger's staunch pro-Israeli stance. With Nixon facing the exploding Watergate scandal in 1973, Kissinger later noted that the President's "attention span for foreign policy was... declining. He would sign memoranda or accept my recommendations almost absentmindedly..."<sup>53</sup> Kissinger opposed direct talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) unless the Palestinian leadership, particularly Yasser Arafat, officially recognized the State of Israel, accepted UN Resolution 242 as the sole basis of future negotiations, and renounced violence and terrorism. This three-part negotiation standard introduced by Kissinger has remained official U.S. policy (first with the PLO, now with Hamas) and effectively delayed direct diplomatic engagement with the Palestinian leadership until the first Intifada during President Reagan's second term.<sup>54</sup> Instead of reinforcing the international consensus for a comprehensive settlement including an end to military occupation and repatriation of Palestinian refugees, Kissinger supported bilateral peace agreements with Israel's neighbors; this approach was consistent with Israeli preferences and established the pattern of U.S foreign policy for the next decade.

Arab governments, inflamed by Israel's acquisition of territory by war in 1967, threatened an oil embargo if Israel failed to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories. Israeli intransigence continued unabated. European governments suspended arms

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<sup>52</sup> UNSC 298 reasserted the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and declared invalid Israel's claim of a unified Jerusalem as its capital. See text online at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/unres298.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Hersh, Seymour. 1983. *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*. New York: Summit Books.

<sup>54</sup> Lesch, Ann. 1995. "The Reagan Administration's Policy Towards the Palestinians." In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press.

exports to Israel to deter the embargo, but the United States maintained open export channels.<sup>55</sup> When Syria and Egypt invaded Israel on Yom Kippur in 1973 to regain occupied territory, the U.S. provided a major shipment of arms to bolster the Israeli defense. Arab governments, through OPEC, initiated an oil embargo, “the biggest economic threat by a foreign country ever to face the United States.”<sup>56</sup> Though Israel overcame initial losses and decisively repelled the invading armies, continued U.S. support for Israel and its military occupations meant serious costs for individual Americans at the fuel pump and nearly triggered a much-feared confrontation with the Soviet Union, the main supplier of armaments to Egypt and Syria. One year after the ceasefire, Kissinger continued his strong support for Israel in the Sinai II agreement by promising a bounty of economic, military and diplomatic concessions in exchange for minor Israeli withdrawals from the area surrounding the Suez Canal. The deal included a promise of \$2 billion in annual economic aid, access to America’s latest weapons, and a guarantee of Israel’s oil needs. Donald Neff notes that this deal “not only committed the United States to the unique position of economically and militarily underwriting Israel’s existence but... also diplomatically coordinated – almost to the point of subordination – America’s policies to those of Israel.”<sup>57</sup>

Despite Nixon’s hopes of playing a more balanced role in the Middle East from the outset of his Presidency, “nearly six years later, Nixon had become the most pro-Israeli president up to that time.”<sup>58</sup> The U.S. further aligned itself with Israel, even to the point of degrading the value of the U.S. veto in the United Nations Security Council by

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<sup>55</sup> Horton, Sarah. “The 1973 Oil Crisis.” Online at <http://www.ccds.charlotte.nc.us/History/MidEast/04/horton/horton.htm>.

<sup>56</sup> Neff, 1995(2). Quote on pg. 154

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pg. 156

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, pg. 135

using it repeatedly to protect Israel.<sup>59</sup> The first veto blocked a condemnation of Israeli attacks on Southern Lebanon and Syria and the second veto struck down a resolution affirming the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The Ford administration, which continued with Kissinger at the helm in the Department of State, vetoed four more UNSC resolutions including one which deplored Israel's alteration of the status of Jerusalem and another which affirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Nixon and Ford administrations together marked the initiation of unprecedented levels of U.S. economic and military aid to Israel, a policy which continues to the present day.<sup>60</sup> The key point to highlight is that throughout these first 25 years of Israel's existence, U.S. policy continued to increasingly privilege Jewish-Zionist interests in Palestine despite equally legitimate claims for self-determination by the Palestinian people and despite the illegality of many Israeli actions under international law.

### **Carter Administration**

For the Palestinians, President Carter was a long-awaited ally. Carter's commitment to human rights and Christian principles led him to empathize with Palestinians suffering under Israeli military occupation. However, this empathy "immediately raised a red warning flag to Israel and its supporters in the United States..."

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<sup>59</sup> See the Appendix for a comprehensive list of vetoes cast by the United States to shield Israel from critical resolutions drafted in the United Nations Security Council.

<sup>60</sup> Neff, Donald. 1997. "January 1974: Unprecedented U.S. Aid to Israel Began Under the Sinai Agreements." In: *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Online at: <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0197/9701074.htm>. President George W. Bush has recently proposed another major increase (25%) in U.S. economic and military aid to Israel in conjunction with a major military aid package for the moderate Gulf/Arab states.

Most Zionists viewed the struggle as a zero sum game in which recognition of the Palestinians – on any level – was a loss for Israel; recognition of, or negotiation with, the Palestinians was therefore totally unacceptable.”<sup>61</sup> In sharp contrast to Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger, Carter supported a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, President Carter also refused to meet directly with the PLO leadership until Kissinger’s negotiation standard had been met.<sup>62</sup> Once Anwar Sadat conducted the first visit to Israel by an Egyptian head-of-state in 1977, Carter was drawn into Israel’s preferred strategy of bilateral peace negotiations.

With considerable personal effort, Carter successfully brokered the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty; however, the talks failed to include Palestinians, failed to address the Palestinian right to self-determination, and failed to address the repatriation of Palestinian refugees. The Arab world was now clear in its demand for a separate Palestinian state, but Israel was in a position to deny this possibility. President Carter was unable to incorporate Palestinian demands without alienating the Israeli leadership. “Carter wanted Palestinian participation in future negotiations and the cessation of all new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, but an independent Palestinian state was definitely not on his list of negotiation points for the Camp David meetings.”<sup>63</sup> This explains why the Carter administration vetoed a UNSC resolution affirming “that the Palestinian people, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, should be

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<sup>61</sup> Terry, Janice. 1995. “The Carter Administration and the Palestinians.” In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quote on pg. 164

<sup>62</sup> Neff, 1995. Quoted phrase on pg. 114

<sup>63</sup> Terry, 1995. Quote on pg. 168

enabled to exercise its inalienable national right of self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State in Palestine.”<sup>64</sup>

In the final peace treaty, Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai peninsula in exchange for the assurance of lasting peace with Egypt. For the United States, this treaty paved the way for increasingly favorable U.S.-Egyptian relations which helped to reduce Soviet influence in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Israel was free to maintain its military occupation of Palestinian lands in Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Though President Carter was categorically unsuccessful in pursuing a comprehensive peace settlement, he was the first U.S. President since the 1967 war to declare Israeli settlements in the occupied territories illegal in accordance with the Fourth Geneva Convention. Nonetheless, his efforts to prohibit further construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories were unsuccessful. William Quandt, a member of Carter’s National Security Council, has noted that President Carter “found... the constraints of the American political system came into play whenever he tried to deal with the Palestinian question. Even to refer to Palestinian rights or to a Palestinian homeland could set off shock waves within the American Jewish community. They would be instantly felt in Congress and relayed back to the White House. Before long Carter learned to say less in public.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, despite President Carter’s good intentions, little progress was made on the issues most salient to Palestinian refugees and those living under military occupation in Palestine.

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<sup>64</sup> UNSC S/13911, 28 April 1980; Online: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/bdd57d15a29f428d85256c3800701fc4/e819629c2575bc3e0525652900793664!OpenDocument>.

<sup>65</sup> Quandt, William. 1986. *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*. The Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C. Quote on pg. 322

## **Reagan & George H.W. Bush Administrations**

Under President Reagan, Secretary of State Alexander Haig originally hoped to build an alliance with Israel and other Arab countries aimed at opposing communist influence; however, his first diplomatic visit to the region revealed that “Arabs had no interest in cooperating with Israel in a ‘strategic consensus’ against the Soviet Union. Although they did not like the Soviet Union, they feared and disliked Israel more.”<sup>66</sup> Instead, policy shifted drastically in Israel’s favor; Haig urged Congress to draft the historic Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation with Israel. This move continued to advance the Cold War strategic partnership between the U.S. and Israel; in 1983, Reagan converted all military aid to Israel (and Egypt) into non-repayable grants instead of loans.

With the ongoing ascendancy of Zionism in Palestine, organized Palestinian terrorism was on the rise by the early 1980s. Though all forms of terrorism which target innocent civilians are reprehensible, the emergence of Palestinian terrorism is best viewed as a militant response to long-standing oppression and the refusal to include PLO leadership in any peace negotiations. Israel and the United States continued to deny the Palestinians a voice at the negotiation table; meanwhile, the new right-wing Likud leadership in Israel began engaging in highly controversial military actions. Israel violated the U.S. Arms Export Control Act<sup>67</sup> by using American-made F-16 warplanes to bomb Iraq’s nuclear facility outside Baghdad. Since this action was favorable to U.S.

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<sup>66</sup> Neff, 1995. Quote on pg. 179

<sup>67</sup> “Section 4 of the [U.S.] Arms Export Control Act requires that military items transferred to foreign governments by the United States be used solely for internal security and legitimate self-defense.” Neff, Donald. 1995. “Israel Bombs Iraq’s Osirak Nuclear Research Facility.” In: Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. See online at: <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0695/9506081.htm>.

strategic interests, the Reagan administration expressed approval; President Reagan described the action as “a terrific piece of bombing!”<sup>68</sup>

When Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Lebanon in June of 1982 to oust the PLO leadership and Syrian forces, the United States supported Israel’s primary justifications and goals. Fears of a superpower confrontation with the Soviet Union led the U.S. to initially support the UN Security Council’s demand that Israel withdraw from Lebanon immediately and unconditionally. However, the prospect of such a confrontation was quickly neutralized by an Israeli-Syrian truce and the U.S. then immediately vetoed further UNSC resolutions calling for Israel’s immediate withdrawal of troops. Instead of insisting on an Israeli withdrawal, the Reagan administration began backing Israel’s three key demands: 1) to remove all foreign forces (Palestinian and Syrian) from Lebanon; 2) to endorse the candidacy of pro-Western Bashir Gemayel for president; and 3) to establish a 40 kilometer security zone north of Israel’s border.<sup>69</sup>

To the Reagan administration’s credit, U.S. marines were on the ground with a multinational peacekeeping force to secure a ceasefire and supervise the safe evacuation of Yasser Arafat and his PLO troops.<sup>70</sup> Though the American role was mainly as peace-keeper, Osama bin Laden would later repeatedly reference the destruction in Beirut and the associated Palestinian and Lebanese civilian deaths at Sabra and Shatila as instances of U.S. sponsorship of Israeli atrocities. By this point in

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<sup>68</sup> Grinspan, Jon. 2006. “Attack on Iraq’s Nuke Plant.” Online at <http://www.americanheritage.com/places/articles/web/20060607-israel-iraq-nuclear-weapons-baghdad-saddam-hussein-alexander-haig-menachem-begin-osirak-preemptive-strike.shtml>.

<sup>69</sup> Richmond, Sheldon. 1991. “Ancient History: U.S. Conduct in the Middle East Since World War II and the Folly of Intervention.” *Cato Policy Analysis* No. 159, Cato Institute; See online at: <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-159.html>.

<sup>70</sup> See details of the 1982 Lebanon War online at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/lebtoc.html>.



time, it is clear that U.S. support for Israel had begun generating significant anti-U.S. sentiment in predominantly Arab and Muslim countries.<sup>71</sup> Though President Reagan began to openly acknowledge the need “to reconcile Israel’s legitimate security concerns with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians,” he also reassured Israel by declaring that the United States would “not support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.”<sup>72</sup>

As Israel’s most powerful ally and one of two superpowers, the United States had a major influence on the course of events and could have used diplomatic, economic or military pressure to tame or reverse Israeli actions. Yet, Reagan reversed President Carter’s position and undermined one key provision of the Fourth Geneva Convention by asserting that the building of Israeli settlements in the Occupied territories was, in his view, perfectly legal. When Israel unilaterally annexed the Golan Heights in 1981, President Reagan conveyed his surprise but made no efforts to challenge the move. When King Hussein of Jordan advanced a peace offer calling for an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders combined with the right of Palestinian self-determination within a proposed federated Arab state of Jordan and Palestine, the Reagan administration

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<sup>71</sup> Al Jazeera.net, Transcript of Osama bin Laden’s Speech (on video), Doha, Qatar, October 30, 2004. See text online at: <http://www.worldpress.org/Americas/1964.cfm#down>. Osama bin Laden: “The events that affected my soul in a direct way started in 1982 when America permitted the Israelis to invade Lebanon and the American Sixth Fleet helped them in that. This bombardment began and many were killed and injured and others were terrorized and displaced. I couldn’t forget those moving scenes, blood and severed limbs, women and children sprawled everywhere. Houses destroyed along with their occupants and high rises demolished over their residents, rockets raining down on our home without mercy... And as I looked at those demolished towers in Lebanon, it entered my mind that we should punish the oppressor in kind and that we should destroy towers in America in order that they taste some of what we tasted and so that they be deterred from killing our women and children.”

<sup>72</sup> Lesch, 1995. Quotes on pg. 179

refused the offer outright.<sup>73</sup> The inability to hear the demands of the Palestinian and Arab leadership coupled with the unwillingness to make real concessions consistent with the international consensus for comprehensive peace ultimately drove the Palestinian people towards collective, and largely non-violent, civil disobedience during the first Intifada.<sup>74</sup>

Under President Reagan, U.S. support for Israel was so strong that the U.S. cast an unprecedented eighteen UNSC vetoes to shield Israel from international pressure. Even news of Israel's secret nuclear program leaked by the *Sunday Times* of London was met with little surprise and no serious concern in Washington.<sup>75</sup> With the onset of the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987, the Reagan administration did briefly call on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with UNSC Res. 242. As usual, Israel refused. Alongside the aggressive and sometimes brutal suppression of the Palestinian uprising by Israel, Washington began to hold dialogues with Palestinian representatives outside the PLO. But, "the United States explicitly renounced the use of financial or military leverage against" Israel when confronted with the widespread human rights violations against the Palestinians to suppress the Intifada.<sup>76</sup> "...The United States was not prepared to use leverage to induce Israeli compliance [with UNSC resolutions] nor was it ready to undertake comprehensive talks with the Palestinians and to contemplate the possibility of a Palestinian state."<sup>77</sup> Thus, the eventful Reagan era, as with previous administrations, further endorsed Israeli actions

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<sup>73</sup> Cold War antagonism meant that the Reagan administration did not want to include the Soviet Union in any negotiations between Arabs and Jews.

<sup>74</sup> Lesch, 1995.

<sup>75</sup> See the Sunday Times online at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/article830147.ece>.

<sup>76</sup> Lesch, 1995. Quote on pg. 189

<sup>77</sup> Lesch, 1995. Quote on pg. 190

almost unconditionally and to the detriment of the indigenous and exiled Palestinian populations. The annexation of the Golan Heights, the invasion of Lebanon, the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements, and continued tolerance for an increasingly brutal military occupation were key indicators of continued neglect of Palestinian concerns within the U.S. government.

The George H.W. Bush administration deserves credit for initiating more substantive talks with the Palestinians, helping set the stage for the 1993 Oslo Accords. President Bush also succeeded in prompting the new Rabin government to halt the building of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories by initially refusing to support \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel. Though President George H.W. Bush was more “even-handed” than his predecessor, his “administration [still] maintained the historical consistency of U.S. policy toward the Palestinians including rejection of the Palestinian right to self-determination, to an independent state, and to leaders of their own choosing.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, from the Balfour Declaration in the 1920s all the way through the George H.W. Bush administration, the United States consistently denied the Palestinian right of self-determination. According to Thomas Friedman at the New York Times, “...the Bush administration’s whole approach to peacemaking [was] almost entirely based on terms dictated by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir...”<sup>79</sup> Cheryl Rubenberg summarizes the pro-Israeli stance of U.S. foreign policy under President Bush as follows:

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<sup>78</sup> Rubenberg, Cheryl A. 1995. “The Bush Administration and the Palestinians: A Reassessment.” In: *U.S. Policy on Palestine: From Wilson to Clinton*. Edited by Michael Suleiman, AAUG Press. Quote on pg. 195

<sup>79</sup> Rubenberg, 1995. Quote from Friedman on pg. 196

“Evidence to support the contention that the Bush administration faithfully adhered to long-standing American policy on the Palestinians can be illustrated in numerous circumstances including its relentless campaign to discredit the PLO which involved strenuous efforts to block the Palestinian organization from membership in various international organizations; a cavalier disregard for massive Israeli human rights violations against Palestinians living in the Occupied territories; a vision of ‘peace’ between Israel and the Palestinians based on Israel’s rejectionist view; invariable opposition to United Nations resolutions (in both the General Assembly and the Security Council where it made frequent use of its veto) in support of Israel against the Palestinians, even when virtually the entire international community backed the Palestinians; a successful U.S. offensive in the United Nations to repeal the 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism; U.S. diplomatic, economic, and logistical support for massive Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel, as well as Ethiopian Jewish immigration; deepening U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation; and increasing amounts of financial assistance to the Jewish state even though it pursued policies that contradicted stated U.S. principles.”<sup>80</sup>

### **Clinton Administration**

The end of the Cold War, combined with the social unrest surrounding the Intifada, contributed to a renewal of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Of course, President Clinton’s administration is well-known for eventually embracing talks that included PLO leadership. However, all direct efforts by Clinton’s foreign policy team to reach a peace agreement were unsuccessful; surprisingly, secret negotiations between the PLO and Israeli leaders in Norway produced the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993. This agreement was based upon the United Nations “land for peace” formula outlined in UNSC resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>81</sup> Clearly, the agreement, which created provisional

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<sup>80</sup> Rubenberg, 1995. Excerpt on pgs. 195-196

<sup>81</sup> UNSC Resolution 338 was passed following the 1973 Yom Kippur war. The resolution called for a cessation of hostilities and reaffirmed UNSC resolution 242.

self-government in the occupied territories under the Palestinian Authority, yielded the single greatest Israeli concession to the Palestinians since the founding of the state of Israel. Elections soon took place and Palestinians were given control over most areas of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel redeploying its troops from the occupied territories. Despite this positive development in favor of the Palestinians, the final status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, security arrangements, and borders were all left unsettled. Critics of the Oslo Accords claimed that the agreement simply provided a weakened PLO with a resurgence of authority and relieved Israel's burden of administering the occupied territories without making any serious compromises on more crucial and contested matters.<sup>82</sup>

A five-year time table was set for the resolution of these remaining points of negotiation, but both efforts by President Clinton at Camp David in 2000 and at Taba, Egypt in 2001 to reach a final status agreement were unsuccessful. Mutual compromise was not achieved and critics have noted that Israel consistently expected the Palestinians to reach a compromise mostly on Israeli terms.<sup>83</sup> The notable progress towards self-government for the Palestinians was accompanied by no serious opposition from the Clinton administration to rapidly expanding Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories or to the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act passed by the Republican Congress. This Act essentially acknowledged an undivided Jerusalem as Israel's capital city in contravention of international law. The three UNSC vetoes under the Clinton administration likewise shielded Israel from international

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<sup>82</sup> Details on the Oslo Accords can be found online at: [http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf\\_1991to\\_now\\_oslo\\_accords.php](http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1991to_now_oslo_accords.php).

<sup>83</sup> *Democracy Now!*, "Norman Finkelstein & Former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami Debate: Complete Transcript." Online at: <http://democracynow.org/finkelstein-benami.shtml>.

pressure for expanding Jewish settlements and the annexation of additional land surrounding Jerusalem. These points of acquiescence on the part of Washington continued to reveal the United States' basic foreign policy pattern of tolerating Israeli actions even when those actions are condemned as illegal and a threat to peace in the most respected international institutions. The hope that Palestinian self-government would be accompanied in good faith by an end to further settlement activity and preparations for an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders was lost. Despite the Clinton administration's admirable efforts to reach a final status agreement, frustration over the failure of the Oslo process combined with the continued building of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza led to the second major Palestinian uprising known as the al-Aqsa Intifada (2001-05).<sup>84</sup>

### **George W. Bush Administration**

The renewal of collective Palestinian resistance, more violent than the first Intifada, led to a resurgence of oppressive tactics by the Israeli Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. The impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq led the Bush administration to disengage from the intensive negotiations that took place in the waning months of the Clinton administration. No peace negotiations were organized under U.S. auspices during the first six years of George W. Bush's tenure as President. Only recently did President Bush dispatch Condoleezza Rice to the area to propose peace talks which began at Annapolis,

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<sup>84</sup> Karon, Tony. May 6, 2002. "Did Bill Clinton Start the Intifada?" In: Time Magazine, Article online at: <http://www.time.com/time/columnist/karon/article/0,9565,214822,00.html>.

Maryland in November of 2007. Though President Bush has explicitly recognized the Palestinian right to self-determination and openly supported the two-state solution, no measurable progress towards peace has been achieved and the Oslo Accords continue to lay dead in the water.

Instead of moving towards lasting peace, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been complicated by the death of Yasser Arafat, the election of Hamas as the majority party in the Palestinian Authority, and attacks by Hezbollah which triggered another U.S.-supported Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in July-August of 2006.<sup>85</sup> Most of the nine UNSC vetoes cast during President Bush's tenure allowed Israel a free hand to conduct military strikes despite signs of excessive or indiscriminate use of force in the occupied territories and Lebanon.<sup>86</sup> The current attempt to reach a final status agreement has been complicated by the exclusion of Hamas from negotiations. Even though Hamas omitted calls for the destruction of Israel from its election platform, maintained a ceasefire with Israel for 16 months, and showed willingness to accept a peace formula similar to UNSC Res. 242, the United States and Israel refuse to grant the organization any stamp of legitimacy. The rejection of Hamas as a terrorist organization combined with the promotion of Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian National Authority, has contributed to intra-Palestinian violence and the

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<sup>85</sup> Zunes, Stephen. July 22, 2006. "Congress and the Israeli Attack on Lebanon: A Critical Reading." Also: August 21, 2006. "How Washington Goaded Israel." In: *Foreign Policy in Focus*, See articles online at: <http://www.fpif.org>. Zunes claims that U.S. support for the destruction of Hezbollah was instrumental since Israel's early planning stages of an attack in 2004. He also documents the bipartisan endorsement of Israel's attack on Lebanon in both houses of Congress.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed list of U.S. vetoes cast in the UNSC to shield Israel from criticism, see: Neff, Donald. May/June 2005. "An Updated List of Vetoes Cast by the United States to Shield Israel from Criticism by the U.N. Security Council. In: *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Online: [http://www.washington-report.org/archives/May-June\\_2005/0505014.html](http://www.washington-report.org/archives/May-June_2005/0505014.html) ; Also see Jewish Virtual Library Online: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/usvetoes.html>

renewal of Palestinian terrorist activities. The United States' current approach to Hamas is reminiscent of early dealings with the PLO. Both Palestinian groups were labeled terrorist organizations and both groups were repeatedly called upon to recognize Israel, renounce violence, and accept prior agreements as the basis for future negotiations.

Since the beginning of the second Intifada, poverty levels and unemployment have increased dramatically in the West Bank and Gaza; Palestinians have been suffering daily injustices due to curfews, Israeli military patrols, stringent border control, continued expansion of Israeli settlements, targeted assassinations of Palestinian leaders, and the construction of a new "security barrier" between the West Bank and Israel proper. The situation for Palestinians has deteriorated considerably. Though Ariel Sharon did preside over a unilateral withdrawal of Jewish settlers and Israeli Defense Forces from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israel's continued control over Gaza's borders and airspace has provided minimal genuine autonomy for Palestinian residents in the Strip. The current financial boycott of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, based upon legitimate concerns regarding Hamas' past and current sponsorship of terrorism against Israel, has further worsened the economic toll on everyday Palestinians with poverty levels now near 60%.<sup>87</sup> This multilateral boycott is, in effect, punishing the entire Palestinian population for exercising their voting rights in a manner inconsistent with Israeli or American wishes. Clearly, the circumstances for Palestinians living in the occupied territories have deteriorated profoundly and Palestinian self-determination

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<sup>87</sup> UN Radio Broadcast; Listen online at: <http://radio.un.org/story.asp?NewsID=7042>. "Poverty in Palestine: the human cost of the financial boycott." Oxfam International, Online at: [http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/briefingnotes/bn070413\\_palestinian\\_aid\\_boycott](http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/briefingnotes/bn070413_palestinian_aid_boycott).



remains unrealized. Taken as a whole, the current Bush administration has done little to push either Israel or the Palestinians to achieve a just and lasting peace settlement.

### **Conclusion**

Despite minor differences in policy over successive presidential administrations, the fundamental pattern of bi-partisan U.S. support for Israel has continued unabated. The United States' Congress endorsed Zionism in 1922 and, despite disunity in the Truman administration, formally sanctioned the creation of the Jewish state of Israel along with many European countries through the United Nations Partition Plan in 1947. The Eisenhower administration was the only presidential administration to openly oppose an Israeli war of aggression, the 1956 Suez war, and one of only two presidents willing to use economic leverage to force Israel to comply with U.S. and international policy preferences. John F. Kennedy set the precedent for bipartisan ideological support of Israel. Kennedy's decision to break the tripartite arms embargo by initiating arms transfers to Israel helped enable the Israeli military to execute its pre-emptive first-strike doctrine so successfully in the 1967 Six-Day War. The Lyndon Johnson administration, bogged down with the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement, tacitly condoned Israel's justification for starting the Six-Day War. Though the U.S. did support the passage of UNSC Res. 242, the Johnson administration applied no pressure on Israel to end its military occupation. Instead, the U.S. sat idly by while Israel declared Jerusalem its undivided capital city and began building settlements in the Occupied territories, acts which were clearly in contravention of international law.

After the failure of the Rogers plan, the Nixon and Ford administrations, dominated by Henry Kissinger, supported Israel to an unprecedented level by vastly increasing economic and military aid.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, support for Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war (Yom Kippur War) led OPEC to initiate an oil embargo which badly hurt European and American economies. The United States also began using its veto power in the UNSC to shield Israel from international pressure and criticism.<sup>89</sup>

President Carter, in part due to his genuine religious faith, was uniquely sensitive to the Arab-Israeli conflict and its Palestinian dimension. Carter was bold enough to declare Israeli settlements in the occupied territories illegal in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and the United Nations, but he was unable or unwilling to apply the necessary pressure to stop the building of those settlements. Carter's success in brokering the bilateral peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was a major step forward in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, but President Carter was ultimately unable to achieve any progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian impasse. President Reagan's administration facilitated the drafting of the Memorandum of Strategic Cooperation which cemented U.S.-Israeli arms transfers and led to even larger amounts of economic aid in the form of grants rather than loans. Reagan tacitly condoned Israel's attacks on Iraq and Lebanon, its annexation of the Golan Heights, and its development of nuclear

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<sup>88</sup> Today, Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid and foreign military assistance, receiving approximately \$3 billion per year, one-third of the total annual U.S. foreign aid budget. From: Zunes, Malthaner, & Curtiss. "U.S. Aid to Israel: Figures, Facts, and Impact." See Online at: [http://www.wrmea.com/html/us\\_aid\\_to\\_israel.htm](http://www.wrmea.com/html/us_aid_to_israel.htm) ; Also see: Bowles, M. "U.S. Aid: The Lifeblood of Occupation." See Online at: <http://www.wrmea.com/html/usaidtoisrael0001.htm> .

<sup>89</sup> Before 1972, the United States had never used its veto in the United Nations Security Council; since that time, the United States has cast over 35 vetoes to "shield Israel from criticism" by the world community. From: Neff, Donald. May/June 2005. "An Updated List of Vetoes Cast by the United States to Shield Israel from Criticism by the U.N. Security Council." In: Washington Report on Middle East Affairs. Available online: [http://www.washington-report.org/archives/May-June\\_2005/0505014.html](http://www.washington-report.org/archives/May-June_2005/0505014.html)

weapons. President Reagan reversed Carter's position on the illegality of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, dismissed a promising peace proposal from Jordan and, like his predecessors, refused to negotiate with the PLO. President George H.W. Bush continued largely in Reagan's footsteps with only minor changes in U.S. foreign policy including the willingness to hold low-level meetings that included Palestinian leaders and the respectable commitment to withhold loan guarantees from Israel until settlement construction ceased in the occupied territories.

President Clinton embraced a decidedly different approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, becoming the first U.S. president to openly embrace the two-state solution in accordance with UNSC resolutions 242 and 338. The Oslo Accords indicated considerable progress towards Palestinian self-government, but President Clinton's personal efforts to arrive at a final status agreement resolving the most contested issues (state borders, repatriation of Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, and Israeli settlements) were ultimately unsuccessful. President Clinton's unwillingness to pressure Israel to stop its settlement expansion, which curiously mushroomed following the Oslo Accords, and his signing of the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act were both signs of continuing tolerance for Israeli actions which threatened the prospects for peace. The current Bush administration has done little to follow up on the significant, though limited, progress of the Clinton presidency due primarily to the violence of the al-Aqsa Intifada and distractions in the War on Terror. Though President Bush has also endorsed the two-state solution, most experts do not expect the current peace process initiated in November of 2007 to be successful. The continued boycott of Hamas, the further expansion of Israeli settlements, and the

construction of a separation wall cutting off portions of the West Bank are indications that conflict is likely to persist.

Taken as a whole, the U.S.-Israeli special relationship has contributed both to the creation and the perpetuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. U.S. foreign policy has consistently endorsed Zionism and contributed substantively to the ongoing denial of the Palestinian Arab right to self-determination. The fulfillment of the Zionist vision for a Jewish state in Palestine has entailed significant, long-standing costs for Palestinians. Palestinians' civil and political rights remain circumscribed and their human rights are violated routinely in the occupied territories. To Israel's credit, the country has become one of the most prosperous and powerful nations in the world. Actions by successive U.S. administrations have enabled Israel to grow in military and economic strength. That strength has allowed Israel to justifiably defend itself against invasion and terrorism, but has also allowed Israel to conduct offensive wars and expand its territorial control through both annexation and military occupation with little or no U.S. resistance. Despite U.S. protection at the United Nations, the vast majority of nations are united in condemnation of numerous and repeated Israeli violations of international law and Palestinian human rights. While the United States has attempted to serve as an honest broker and facilitator in peace negotiations for decades, all negotiations sponsored by the United States have fallen short of a comprehensive settlement. In fact, the United States' diplomatic role in resolving the conflict has been increasingly undermined by widespread perceptions of U.S. bias in favor of Israel. Even though the United States is now showing significant signs of diplomatic progress by openly supporting the two-state solution and Palestinian self-determination, no president has been willing to apply the

much needed economic and diplomatic pressure to force compromise on terms reasonable to both sides.

## CHAPTER III

### Western European Relations with Israel: A Contrasting Viewpoint

Do Western European countries with similar democratic systems and strategic interests approach Israel and the Palestinians in the same manner as the United States? As we have seen, the United States is widely known for its special relationship with the state of Israel, a diplomatic, economic, and military partnership unparalleled in the history of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. is the most influential international actor in the Middle East region and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. And, the United States' media and government are also frequently characterized as exhibiting a decidedly pro-Israel bias.<sup>90</sup> Western European countries also maintain strong economic and trade-related ties with Israel. However, Western European governments are well-known for their willingness to openly criticize the policies of the state of Israel in European media, at the European Union (EU), and in the United Nations. Western Europe also began supporting the Palestinian struggle for self-determination prior to the United States and has served as a secondary contributor to the peace process for decades. Today, both the United States and the EU are members of the Quartet for Middle East Peace which is currently working to promote a comprehensive settlement to

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<sup>90</sup> See Pew Research Center: "Religion and Politics: Contention and Consensus." Online at: <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=725>.

the sixty year Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the importance of both the United States and Western Europe in resolving this long-standing conflict, this section examines the historically divergent approaches of Western European nations towards Israel, the Palestinians, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Creation of Israel**

The presence of Great Britain and France as colonial powers in the Middle East directly shaped the international response to the Palestine question and the creation of Israel. Under the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916, Great Britain and France tentatively carved the Middle East into two spheres of influence and authority. Under the mandate system of the League of Nations, France gained *de facto* control over Syria and Lebanon while Great Britain gained control over present-day Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt. “The immediate consequence of European penetration into the eastern Mediterranean was to introduce the idea of nationalism and the reality of the nation-state in the region... which means that the two countries bore a large responsibility for the ‘crystallization’ of conflicts (along religious and ethnic lines).”<sup>91</sup>

As described in detail in Section I, Great Britain had promised to recognize full Arab independence over Palestine during WWI but then endorsed the Zionist vision for a Jewish homeland in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration in November 1917.

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<sup>91</sup> Dieckhoff, Alain. 1988. “Europe and the Arab World: The Difficult Dialogue.” *Europe and Israel: Troubled Neighbors*. Eds. I. Greilsammar & J.H.H. Weiler; Walter de Gruyter \$ Co., Berlin. Quote on pg. 257

Great Britain then facilitated massive Jewish immigration into Palestine which “led to outbreaks of violence between Arabs and Jews, notably in 1929 and 1936...”<sup>92</sup> Facing the devastation of WWII, Zionist terrorism against the British Mandate government, a rising conflict between Jews and indigenous Palestinians, and deadlock regarding the UN Partition Plan, the British withdrew unilaterally from the Palestine Mandate and the state of Israel declared its independence. Both Great Britain and the United States endorsed Zionism without serious concern for the indigenous Arab population of Palestine.

After declaring independence, Israel was immediately invaded by neighboring Arab states which rejected Jewish self-determination in Palestine. Facing a UN arms embargo (1947-49) over all of Palestine, the Zionists turned to Czechoslovakia, a proxy for the Soviet Union, to secretly obtain the guns, ammunition, tanks, airplanes, and technical training needed to defend themselves. These Czech weapons effectively saved Israel as a country; David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, once stated: “The Czech arms deal was the greatest help we then had, it saved us and without it I very much doubt if we could have survived the first month.”<sup>93</sup> The combination of a high number of Jewish immigrant soldiers, munitions from Western Europe, and the superior organizational capacity of Israeli military officers trained by the British during WWII helped propel Israel to victory in the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli war. Israel expanded its borders to exercise sovereignty over 78% of former Mandatory Palestine.

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<sup>92</sup> Dieckhoff, 1988. Quote on pg. 258

<sup>93</sup> Bialer, Uri. 1990. *Between East and West: Israel's foreign policy orientation 1948-1956*. Cambridge University Press: New York. Quote on pg. 181



## **Suez War of 1956**

In May of 1950, the United States, Britain, and France jointly issued a Tripartite Declaration which created the Near East Arms Coordinating Committee to limit arms sales to all parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The aim of the Western powers was to contain the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to focus the attention of Middle Eastern nations on anti-Soviet defense plans. The United States sold virtually no arms in the Middle East and the tripartite agreement worked well for several years. However, Egypt's drive to become the leader of the Arab world shifted the European role in the Middle East. In 1952, the Egyptian monarch (King Farouk I) was overthrown in a military coup that would soon install Gamal Nasser as the second president of the new Egyptian Republic. Egypt's regime change coupled with domestic economic hardship and resentment for the British role in creating a Jewish state on Arab land led to increasing Egyptian antagonism towards the British military presence along the Suez Canal.

Facing rising hostilities in a climate of growing pan-Arab nationalism, Britain agreed to remove its 80,000 troops from Egypt in early 1956 while retaining full use of the Suez Canal. Meanwhile, Nasser became alarmed by Great Britain's Baghdad Pact which he viewed as a neo-colonial endeavor to preserve British influence in the Middle East. Egyptian efforts to undermine the Pact drew considerable British ire. Also, Nasser's support for Arab nationalism and independence movements in colonial North Africa (especially Algeria) succeeded in antagonizing the French. Israel was also put on the defensive by Nasser's threatening rhetoric: "We must be strong in order to regain

the rights of the Palestinians by force.”<sup>94</sup> “There will be no peace on Israel's border because we demand vengeance, and vengeance is Israel's death.”<sup>95</sup> Nasser’s ominous threats were accompanied by frequent militant attacks on Israel from Arab Fedayeen trained and equipped in Egypt.

Following a Soviet-sponsored arms deal (again via Czechoslovakia) in September 1955 which promised to deliver \$250 million in modern weaponry to Egypt, Israel’s balance of power with its Arab neighbors was seriously threatened. The Tripartite Declaration on arms control to the Middle East was hereafter undermined when France sought to balance against the influx of Soviet weapons to Egypt by agreeing to the “farthest-reaching arms transaction in Israel’s history” as of June 1956.<sup>96</sup> The French quickly fortified the Israeli military in the months before the 1956 Suez War. The burgeoning influence of the Soviet Union in Egypt led the United Kingdom and the United States to withdraw funding for Egypt’s crucial Aswan Dam project. President Nasser responded by blockading the Straits of Tiran and nationalizing the Suez Canal. This act blocked Israel’s main southern port, greatly threatened Britain’s access to its far-flung empire, and disrupted oil imports to Britain and France.<sup>97</sup> In the meantime, Israel was facing an ongoing and extensive series of economic sanctions enforced by all neighboring Arab countries. With the United States choosing a conciliatory approach towards Nasser designed to discourage further Soviet influence, Britain, France, and

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<sup>94</sup> Sachar, Howard M. 1999. *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.: New York. Quote on pg. 85

<sup>95</sup> Palestine Facts: Israel 1948-1967. Quote online: [http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf\\_1948to1967\\_sinai\\_backgd.php](http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_1948to1967_sinai_backgd.php).

<sup>96</sup> Sachar, 1999. See pg 84

<sup>97</sup> Note: 75% of British and French oil imports passed through the Suez Canal at that time.

Israel forged a secret partnership to invade Egypt, restore Israeli access to the Straits of Tiran, and regain control of the Suez Canal.

The Suez War of 1956 was a military success for Israel and its allies, but a diplomatic and political failure. The vestiges of colonialism and imperialism were clearly visible in the conduct of Britain and France, whose sense of entitlement to control of the Suez Canal and subsequent aggressive, militaristic approach was rejected outright by the United States and the United Nations. This “Anglo-French intervention at Suez... was the last sign of direct [military] involvement of European countries in the [eastern Mediterranean] in order to protect their strategic interests...”<sup>98</sup> The Eisenhower administration immediately forced a cease-fire on Britain, Israel, and France after the Soviet Union threatened to enter the war on Egypt’s side. Most importantly, in the 1950s, it was the United States, led by President Eisenhower, which rejected Israeli military action and threatened serious sanctions against all three countries to force an end to hostilities and military withdrawal. It was Eisenhower and the United States which sought to bolster the newly created United Nations by rejecting offensive war and spearheading the installation of the UN’s first international peacekeeping force at the Suez Canal for the next decade.

### **Six Day War of 1967**

The decade following the Suez War would see a drastic shift in the approaches adopted by European countries and the United States towards Israel and the Arab-

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<sup>98</sup> Dieckhoff, 1988. See pg. 258

Israeli conflict. The Suez episode signaled the further decline of European military power and the rise of Cold War rivalries between the two remaining super powers. A bold and effective Soviet policy of penetration in the region saw both Egypt and Syria receive the latest in Soviet aircraft and weaponry. The willingness of Arab countries to rely on Soviet weapons and personnel led the United States and European powers to tighten their ties with Israel.

Commercial exports to Israel from Britain and France increased multifold over the next decade and France continued as Israel's largest supplier of armaments. Starting in 1957, several hundred French engineers and technicians traveled to Israel on long-term contracts to construct Israel's first nuclear reactor, the prerequisite for Israel's nuclear weapons program. West Germany sought normalization of relations with Israel as a means of restitution for Nazi war crimes; David Ben-Gurion facilitated Jewish acceptance of this difficult relationship by securing massive loans and transfers of second-hand arms from West Germany. President Kennedy joined the mix by lifting the embargo on weapons sales to the Middle East and authorizing multiple arms sales to Israel. All of these trade flows enabled Israel to hasten its economic and military development in the context of an increasingly volatile Middle East arms race fueled by European, American, and Soviet weapons. Until the next outbreak of war, European nations were essentially in agreement with the United States on the terms of diplomatic, economic, and military support for the state of Israel.

In early 1967, the prospect of another violent conflict loomed over Israel and its Arab neighbors. No Arab state had recognized Israeli sovereignty. Cross border skirmishes were common on the Syrian and Jordanian borders. Israel repeatedly

provoked conflict with Syria in the Golan Heights to gain access to water resources and land. Arab nationalism was reaching its height as Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq joined in a common defense pact to deter more serious Israeli attacks. Nasser continued with hostile rhetoric calling for the destruction of the state of Israel. Responding to inaccurate Soviet intelligence claiming Israeli troops were amassing along the Syrian border, Egypt dismissed the UN peacekeeping force at the Suez Canal and again blocked the Straits of Tiran in contravention of international law. Feeling that an Arab attack was imminent, Israel chose to launch a pre-emptive military strike. Syria and Jordan, in keeping with the defense pact, began attacking Israel immediately. In six short days, Israel defeated Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and began a military occupation of the Sinai peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights.

European countries initiated an arms embargo on Israel following the Six-Day War; however, European diplomatic responses varied widely. “France followed her ‘Arab strategy’ [by] criticizing harshly Israel’s military intervention while [West] Germany declared her neutrality...” With the history of the Holocaust in its collective memory, West Germany (along with the Netherlands and Denmark) maintained the strongest moral commitment to solidarity with Israel while France, Greece, Italy, and Ireland were most sympathetic to Arab concerns. Great Britain and Belgium occupied a midpoint between these two poles. These positions or polarities are illustrative of the division of opinion held in Europe in response to the Six-Day War.<sup>99</sup> However, the response at the United Nations was quite explicit through UNSC Resolution 242 which stipulated “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war... [and called for the] withdrawal of

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<sup>99</sup> Dieckhoff, 1988. See pg. 270

Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict...”<sup>100</sup> One of the great ironies of the American and European diplomatic roles in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the years following the Six-Day War was the divergence in country positions despite unanimous agreement on UNSC Res. 242.

### **Yom Kippur War of 1973 & the Euro-Arab Dialogue**

In the wake of the Six-Day War, eight Arab countries signed the Khartoum Resolution declaring: “No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel.” Israel’s continued occupation of the Sinai peninsula and Golan Heights was unacceptable to Egypt and Syria. The Arab response was the War of Attrition which entailed intermittent attacks amongst Egypt, Syria, and Israel between 1967-70. The PLO also gained prominence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at this time as a political and military organization devoted to Palestinian nationalism and self-determination; thus, the Palestinian problem came into clearer view in international institutions. In 1973, with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, Egypt and Syria successfully landed blows to Israel’s defenses before suffering eventual defeat.<sup>101</sup> During this conflict, the Arab world imposed an oil embargo against the United States

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<sup>100</sup> UNSC 242; Text online: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/IMG/NR024094.pdf?OpenElement>. The Resolution also called for the “ Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force” and “freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area” as well as “achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem...”

<sup>101</sup> Note: Egypt initiated the 1973 Yom Kippur War to regain the Sinai Peninsula. The Egyptian strategy was limited in scope, falling far short of a full scale invasion.

and the Netherlands for their continuing military and diplomatic support of Israel.<sup>102</sup> The neutrality of the United Kingdom, France, and most other members of the European Economic Community (EEC) was rewarded by almost uninterrupted oil supplies, but cuts in production and sharp rises in oil prices by OPEC placed serious economic strain on European nations. At that time, seventy-one percent of EEC oil was imported from the Arab world. The ongoing threat of economic recession catalyzed a “rapprochement of the national foreign policies of France and West Germany.”<sup>103</sup> In conjunction with the legal implications of Israel’s unwillingness to withdraw from the territories acquired by force in 1967, the oil crisis was the key external economic factor which incited the European Community to launch a dialogue with the Arab countries. The so-called *Euro-Arab Dialogue* sought to secure a stable and reasonably priced oil supply by developing lasting sensitivity to Arab political concerns.<sup>104</sup>

Having adopted European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1970, European nations issued the Schumann Report (1971) as the first tangible embodiment of an autonomous European position on the Middle East. The Report reaffirmed the central position of UNSC Res. 242 in any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The failure of the Rogers Plan produced by the Nixon administration and related UN efforts to resolve the conflict left a vacuum in which “the Europeans felt free to concert an approach of their own to the question of the Middle East conflict.”<sup>105</sup> The fruits of the Euro-Arab Dialogue became increasingly evident. In November of 1973, the EPC

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<sup>102</sup> Note: The Dutch angered the Arab states by allowing the United States to use their airfields to transport arms to Israel during the Yom Kippur war.

<sup>103</sup> Dieckhoff, 1988. See pgs. 270-272

<sup>104</sup> Hallaba, Saadallah. 1984. *Euro-Arab Dialogue*. Amana Books: Brattleboro, Vermont.

<sup>105</sup> Dieckhoff, 1988. See pgs. 262-263

became the first world body outside of the UN and the Arab League to officially recognize “the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.” Between 1974 and 1977, the EPC recognized successively the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and the need for a Palestinian homeland. In 1974, EPC member nations supported awarding the PLO observer status in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The UNGA subsequently passed a resolution that reaffirmed “...the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in Palestine, including: the right to self-determination without external interference; the right to national independence and sovereignty;... [and] the inalienable right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted.”<sup>106</sup> Alain Deichhoff captures the European political mood during this period:

“Europe had to integrate the Arab political variable which had been too long neglected. The rise of Palestinian nationalism, the continuous occupation of the territories taken over in 1967, and the hardening of Israel’s policy under Begin could no longer be tolerated in silence. Coupled with the energy problems which forced the European countries to concern themselves with their Arab partners, the geo-political situation of the Middle East had an influence over the pro-Israeli [European] countries, compelling them to take the Arab factor into account... Europe was [therefore] able to make a set of common political achievements, mainly in the form of declarations.”<sup>107</sup>

### **Venice Declaration of 1980**

West Germany’s foreign policy, which had long been rooted in an unquestioned and conservative loyalty to Israel, became more in line with the liberal, pro-Arab

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<sup>106</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Twenty-Ninth Session, 3236: “Question of Palestine.” Online at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/738/38/IMG/NR073838.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>107</sup> Diechoff, 1988. See pg. 273



leanings of French foreign policy. In fact, formerly significant differences of opinion between members of the EPC were now restricted within the limits of an increasingly well-defined consensus. The culmination of the Euro-Arab Dialogue produced a consensus statement known as the Venice Declaration of June 1980.<sup>108</sup> The Venice Declaration reaffirmed that European proposals were grounded upon UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338; the Declaration called for the following: 1) the right of all countries in the area, including Israel, to coexist in peace and security; 2) the renunciation of force or the threatened use of force by all parties; 3) the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; 4) the pursuit of a comprehensive peace settlement including provisions for Palestinian self-determination; 5) the association of the PLO with future negotiations; 6) the rejection of unilateral actions by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem; 7) an end to the military occupation begun by Israel in 1967; and 8) the illegality of Israeli settlements in the Occupied territories under international law. Clearly, Europe arrived at a consensus regarding the rights of the Palestinians, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all states in the region.

Though the Venice Declaration was bold in its recognition of Palestinian concerns, it failed to include two major Arab demands: the call for a Palestinian state and full recognition of the PLO. Still, Arab states strongly approved, widely affirming the importance of a European role in achieving a just and lasting peace to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The PLO itself focused the Arab response by asserting that “concrete measures had to be adopted by the EPC to end the Israeli occupation and that

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<sup>108</sup> Venice Declaration, June 13, 1980; Full Text online at: [http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/venice\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/venice_eng.htm).

economic sanctions were both possible and required... against Israel.”<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, suspicions of European anti-Semitism circulated widely inside Israel and such suspicions would subsequently resurface whenever European nations advanced similar proposals sympathetic to Arab or Palestinian concerns. The Venice Declaration’s emphasis on the Palestinian right of self-determination and the need to associate the PLO with any future peace negotiations was rejected outright by Israel and the United States. The U.S. was still pursuing the policy set by Henry Kissinger which required the PLO to renounce violence, recognize Israel’s legitimacy, and consent to UNSC Res. 242 as the basis for future negotiations prior to inclusion in any peace negotiations.

The objective of the Venice declaration was to promote a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace for the Eastern Mediterranean region. The provisions of the Venice Declaration represented a giant leap forward in recognizing Palestinian rights and the political demands of Arab nations and would, in retrospect, serve as a basic foundation for the common set of principles adopted at Oslo in 1993. In reality, however, the Venice Declaration was eclipsed on the world stage by President Carter’s Camp David talks and the subsequent bilateral Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty signed in 1979. Egypt, once the leader in pan-Arab nationalism and a champion of the Palestinian cause, was expelled from the Arab League for breaking ranks with fellow Arab nations and for dropping the Palestinian problem from the agenda. This tumult within the Arab League brought the Euro-Arab Dialogue to a premature halt. European governments initially opposed the Camp David process because it failed to incorporate the Palestinian problem. Ultimately, European countries did not have the political will or diplomatic

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<sup>109</sup> Hallaba, 1984. See pg. 12

capacity to facilitate a more comprehensive diplomatic initiative. Alas, the Venice Declaration was, like previous European efforts, confined to a statement of principles lacking concrete measures to force an end to the Israeli occupation. This sequence of events underscored the greater importance and leverage of the United States in brokering Arab-Israeli peace agreements and also shed abundant light on the substantial gap between European and U.S. diplomacy vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Saadallah Hallaba captures this dynamic lucidly:

“The paradox at work in the European relationship to the Middle East peace process is that while the Europeans, through the Venice Declaration, have articulated the international consensus on Middle East peace, they lack the will to impose a peaceful solution on the parties in the area. The United States, on the other hand, has the potential leverage over the principals in the area but [was] unwilling to move toward imposing a formulation that is acceptable to [all] parties in the area.”<sup>110</sup>

### **Israeli Invasion of Lebanon in 1982**

After several years of conflict on the northern border, many Israeli leaders wanted to expel the PLO from southern Lebanon by the early 1980s. Despite British intelligence indicating that the PLO was not responsible for the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador to London, Israel used this event to justify its invasion and use of military force. Israel's concern for the facts was overridden by its desire to remove the PLO from Lebanon once and for all. Apart from the initial consensus to condemn the Israeli invasion and later to offer humanitarian assistance, European countries were divided in their response to the war. France, Greece, and Ireland wanted to preserve

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<sup>110</sup> Hallaba, 1984. See pg. 64

the moderate leadership within the PLO and France was even in support of the Palestinians' right to build a state, but the more conservative European governments prevented the adoption of any policy going beyond the Venice Declaration. Instead, Europe supported a single UNSC resolution calling for a ceasefire. No economic sanctions were adopted in the EEC or at the United Nations despite Israel's violation of Lebanese sovereignty. The Reagan administration kept a low profile towards the Palestinian problem and supported the Israeli invasion diplomatically. Since the United States was the most influential international actor, its initial refusal to condemn Israeli bombardments of Beirut combined with multiple vetoes of UNSC resolutions calling for an Israeli withdrawal restricted the impact of European resistance to the Israeli invasion.

However, the Reagan Plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was clearly influenced by the European perspective articulated in the Venice Declaration. Whereas no provisions for Palestinian rights were included in the U.S.-sponsored Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, the Reagan Plan reaffirmed UNSC Res. 242 as the basis for negotiations, recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, proposed self-government for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and called for a freeze on the construction of Israeli settlements. The Reagan Plan opposed complete annexation of the occupied territories by Israel and any change in the official status of Jerusalem absent proper negotiations. Yet, important differences separated the Reagan Plan and the Venice Declaration. Reagan avoided evoking a possible role of the PLO in peace negotiations and did not speak of Palestinian self-determination within an independent state but instead self-government in association with Jordan. Despite the introduction of an American peace proposal with serious recognition of Palestinian

rights, the Reagan Plan was rejected by Israel and the PLO. Only the moderate Arab regimes approved it.<sup>111</sup> Still, European diplomacy, through the Euro-Arab Dialogue and culminating in the Venice Declaration, had begun to shift the diplomatic discussion in the United States in favor of recognizing the national aspirations and legitimate rights of the indigenous Palestinian population. What remained missing was sufficient pressure on all parties, especially the PLO and Israel, to renounce violence and embrace mutual recognition of Israeli and Palestinian rights in the interest of peace.

### **Intifada, Oslo Accords, & Beyond**

Unlike the years following the Yom Kippur War, the decade leading up to the 1993 Oslo Accords was characterized by little European activity vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Britain and France continued their arms embargo against Israel into the early 1990s while Germany resumed arms trade with Israel in 1989. The continued preoccupation of the Western powers on both sides of the Atlantic was to maintain the exclusive preponderance of Western influence over the whole of the Middle East while preventing the penetration of Soviet influence. Naturally, the first Palestinian Intifada dramatically raised international awareness of the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But, it wasn't until after the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993 that European nations assumed a more tangible role in supporting the Palestinians. The European Union (EU) became the most important financial contributor to the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA). The EU's financial

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<sup>111</sup> Greilsammer, 1988. See pgs. 297-299

assistance encouraged social and economic development as well as effective rule of law. At last, Europe was buttressing its long-standing political support for Palestinian self-determination with concrete action.

In 1999, Europe issued the Berlin Declaration which declared the creation of a viable, democratic, and peaceful Palestinian state as the “best guarantee of Israel’s security and Israel’s acceptance as an equal partner in the region.”<sup>112</sup> However, the EU’s financial aid policy did not have the expected result. The Palestinian economy remained largely stagnant, sometimes even registering negative growth on certain measures like unemployment or the number of Palestinians living in poverty. This lack of economic development was due to the combination of restrictive Israeli security policies, the lack of good governance within the PA, and increasing violence. The emergence of the al-Aqsa Intifada signaled the failure of the Oslo Accords to produce a comprehensive solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel withdrew tax revenue which supported 60% of the PA’s administrative workforce. Witnessing the rising tide of conflict, Britain, France, and Germany suspended arms trade with Israel intermittently.<sup>113</sup> The EU channeled additional financial aid to keep the PA afloat and to provide emergency humanitarian assistance. In June 2002, the EU published the Seville Declaration which insisted that negotiation is the only means to resolve the conflict. “The objective is an end to the [Israeli military] occupation and the early establishment of a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign State of Palestine on the

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<sup>112</sup> European Council. March 1999. “Presidency Conclusions.” Online at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/ACFB2.html](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/ACFB2.html) ; See Part IV.

<sup>113</sup> Note: Despite these suspensions in arms trade, since the Oslo Accords, Germany has become the second largest exporter of arms to Israel after the United States while France and Britain remain major suppliers.

basis of the 1967 borders, if necessary with minor adjustments agreed by the parties. The end result should be two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbors.”<sup>114</sup>

As a member of the Quartet on the Middle East, the EU continues to stand firm, along with the United States, Russia, and the UN, in support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unfortunately, EU efforts to promote democratic reform of the PA have fallen apart since the election of the Hamas-led government in January of 2006. In a sign of diplomatic convergence, both the United States and the EU have labeled Hamas a terrorist organization and frozen direct budget support for the PA through economic sanctions. Instead of funding the PA, a temporary international channel has been created to provide direct humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. In addition, the provisional Fatah government in the West Bank receives some direct funds. The Quartet continues to call for a new Palestinian government capable of meeting and implementing the three principles of non-violence, recognition of Israel’s right to exist, and acceptance of existing agreements and obligations. For now, the European role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains focused on delivering financial and humanitarian assistance as well as promoting a negotiated settlement. Meanwhile, most European nations maintain strong diplomatic ties and commercial trade with Israel.

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<sup>114</sup> Council of the European Union. Oct. 24, 2002. “Presidency Conclusions.” Online at: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72638.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/72638.pdf) ; See Annex VI, pg. 36

## **Conclusion**

Like the United States, Western European nations, especially Great Britain, were instrumental in the creation of Israel through the endorsement of Zionism. Many Western European countries, as members of the League of Nations and United Nations, sanctioned the creation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Czechoslovakia, as a proxy for the USSR, was instrumental in arming Israel for its war of independence. France was heavily involved in arming Israel in the months leading up to the 1956 Suez War in which both Great Britain and France joined forces with Israel. This unpopular war, rejected by President Eisenhower, marked the last serious colonial-era military operation by France and Great Britain in the Middle East. Subsequently, both countries would deal with Arab nations and Israel on strictly diplomatic and economic levels. Nonetheless, without European diplomatic and military support in this crucial first decade of state building, Israel may not have become the powerful and prosperous nation that it is today.

The 1967 Six-Day War marked the beginning of a diplomatic divide between the United States and Europe regarding how to approach the state of Israel and the Palestinian population. Though European nations have maintained strong and long-standing import-export relationships with Israel, Western European countries actively opposed the ongoing military occupation of the Palestinian territories and therefore maintained a lengthy arms embargo against Israel which continued roughly until the Oslo Accords in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, the United States steadily increased arms trade and financial assistance to Israel. The diplomatic divide was crystallized following the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the subsequent oil embargo initiated by OPEC. The oil



embargo prompted European nations to initiate the Euro-Arab dialogue which culminated in the Venice Declaration of 1980. The Venice Declaration recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, the right of Palestinian self-determination, the illegality of Israeli settlements in occupied territory, and the need for a comprehensive settlement through the renunciation of force by all parties. Western European nations formally recognized Palestinian self-determination more than a decade earlier than the United States. While the United States supported the Israeli strategy of bilateral peace negotiations which sidestepped Palestinian calls for self-determination, European governments were attempting to promote a more comprehensive resolution that included the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Venice Declaration was a pivotal turning point in collective European diplomacy and an important, though limited, victory in the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Following the unpleasant events of the 1982 Lebanon War, the Reagan Plan, unlike the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, began to incorporate Palestinian and Arab political demands into U.S. diplomacy. The advent of the first Intifada won the Palestinians much needed sympathy and leverage which led to the negotiation of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Following Oslo and the creation of a common foreign and security policy apparatus through the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the EU extended its diplomacy beyond mere declarations by offering the largest amount of annual financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Conditional aid became an effective tool for ushering in political, social, and economic development and reform. The Israelis came to terms with the new European diplomatic role in the conflict even though there were crucial points of divergence between the two parties. The Israeli government rejected

European condemnations of settlement expansion in the occupied territories, construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank, extra-judicial killings and collective punishment, and the withholding of much-needed tax and custom duties owed to the PA. Despite the regular clash of principles between Israel and Europe, the EU has succeeded in establishing a post-Oslo diplomatic role complementary to the United States and will continue, as a member of the Quartet, to play a significant role in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Three principal characteristics of Western Europe and the European Union best explain strong European support for the Palestinians and Palestinian self-determination. First, European sensibilities and the high level of political integration demand a more stringent adherence to human rights standards and international law.<sup>115</sup> This commitment to international legal regimes and human rights has frequently led to condemnations of Israeli actions and occasionally to condemnations of Palestinian actions as well. Second, political integration has provided Europe with lasting regional peace, a robust commitment to diplomatic compromise, and a sense of responsibility to promote peace and diplomacy in other regions. Though European political will is often insufficient to press for needed changes in Palestine or elsewhere, this pervasive commitment to peace which emerged in post-colonial Europe does directly shape the EU's common foreign and security policy.<sup>116</sup> And third, close proximity and extensive

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<sup>115</sup> Note: The Council of Europe, created by the European Convention on Human Rights and enforced by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), is the oldest institution working for European integration and perhaps the best example of the strong European commitment to human rights and binding international legal regimes. See details online: <http://www.coe.int/>.

<sup>116</sup> "Emanuele Ottolenghi, an expert on Israel and Europe at Oxford University, argues that 'Europeans see Israel as the embodiment of the demons of their own past.' The European Union is supposed to have traded in war, nationalism and conflict for love, peace and federalism. But Israel now reminds

commercial trade relationships with the Arab world, substantial Muslim populations at home<sup>117</sup>, and particularly high levels of dependence on Persian Gulf fossil fuels<sup>118</sup> necessitate a measured European accommodation of Arab and Muslim political demands. Ever since the oil embargo of 1973, Europe has sought to avoid any offenses against Arab nations that might inflate the price of oil and thereby damage European markets. In addition, Richard Baehr has suggested that the relatively small number of European Jews, the decline of Christianity in Europe, rivalry with the United States, and perhaps a historical pattern of anti-Semitism may all contribute to Europe's tilt in favor of the Palestinian cause.<sup>119</sup> Thus, for legal, moral, economic, and cultural reasons, European countries have developed an abiding sensitivity to the suffering and dispossession of the Palestinian people and have therefore sought to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that respects the interests of the Israelis and the Palestinians as fairly and equally as possible.

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Europeans of darker forces and darker days." *The Economist*, Aug. 17, 2006. "To Israel with hate—and guilt: Why Europe, unlike America, finds it so hard to love Israel." Online at: [http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=7796479](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=7796479).

<sup>117</sup> Some 5% of the E.U., or nearly 20 million persons, presently identify themselves as Muslims; should current trends continue, that number could reach 10% by 2020. See: Pipes, Daniel. May 11, 2004. "Muslim Europe." In: *New York Sun*, Online at: <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/1796>.

<sup>118</sup> The U.S. Energy Information Administration's official statistical reports show that OECD countries typically acquire half of their petroleum from the Persian Gulf while the United States obtains only one-third of its petroleum from the same sources. See: <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/international/oiltrade.html>.

<sup>119</sup> Baehr, Richard. Jan. 13, 2007. "Why Europe Abandoned Israel?" In: *American Thinker*, Online at: [http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/01/why\\_europe\\_abandoned\\_israel\\_1.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2007/01/why_europe_abandoned_israel_1.html).

## CHAPTER IV

### Why is U.S. Support for Israel Nearly Unconditional?

Increased scrutiny in recent years has resulted in a heated debate on the nature of U.S. foreign policy towards Israel. A host of new historians, seasoned political scientists, and journalists have cast new light on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israeli domestic politics, and the reasons for such strong U.S. support. There is no shortage of strong advocates and critics of Israel and of U.S. foreign policy towards Israel. Advocates for strong, nearly unconditional U.S. support of Israel are often more well-received in the mainstream U.S. media, on Capitol Hill, and in the executive branch while critics are most well-received in European countries or Arab and Muslim parts of the world. In fact, many Israeli scholars have commented on the irony that criticism of the Israeli government is often more well-received in Israel itself than in the United States. Clearly, there is a well-established consensus among American citizens, pundits, and elected officials that Israel is a genuine ally of the United States.<sup>120</sup> The heated debate focuses not on whether the U.S. should be allied with Israel but on whether the partnership with Israel warrants nearly unconditional U.S. support. The

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<sup>120</sup> Note: Americans continue to side with Israel in its dispute with the Palestinians. Currently, 41% say they sympathize more with Israel, while 13% sympathize more with the Palestinians, a margin that has remained relatively stable in recent years; 8% volunteer feelings of sympathy for both sides of the conflict, and 18% for neither. See: Pew Research Center, Survey Report: July 24, 2003. Online at: <http://people-press.org/report/?pageid=725>

principal questions addressed here are: 1) what are the prevailing rationales for strong U.S.-Israeli relations? and 2) do these prevailing rationales sufficiently justify nearly unconditional U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military support for the state of Israel?

### **Strategic Rationales for Robust U.S.-Israeli Relations**

There are several discrete strategic rationales which have been used to justify strong U.S. ties with Israel. Recall that the U.S. Congress endorsed the Balfour Declaration in 1922, long before the Nazi Holocaust. The Balfour Declaration promised to respect the Palestinian right to autonomous development. Support for Zionism was closely linked to the strategic benefits of a pro-Western democracy in Palestine. Also, on the domestic front, Zionist leaders were “able to secure direct access to the highest echelons of the American government” and Zionism “became so entangled in party politics that the Democratic Party’s platform of 1948 contained planks specifying policies identical to the interests of Zionists.”<sup>121</sup> From a historical perspective, it is clear that the political organization, financial resources, and lobbying efforts of Zionists directly shaped U.S. electoral politics and early support for a Jewish state in Palestine. However, because conflict was widely anticipated with the creation of such a Jewish state, the U.S. endorsed the U.N. partition plan to ensure both Jewish and Palestinian self-determination. Unfortunately for the Palestinians, Arab disunity, the absolute rejection of Jewish sovereignty, and military defeat in the 1947-49 war undermined the creation of a Palestinian state in 1948 and contributed to the United States’

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<sup>121</sup> Rubenberg, Cheryl A. 1986. *Israel and the American National Interest: A Critical Examination*. University of Illinois Press: Chicago. See pgs. 9-10

abandonment of Palestinian self-determination in favor of *de facto* sovereignty by Jordan and Egypt. Most importantly, early U.S. support for Israel was not based simply upon empathy for Jewish suffering during WWII; that suffering reinforced a preexisting trend of U.S. support for Zionism based upon the strategic benefits of a pro-Western democracy in the Middle East and Zionism's influence on U.S. electoral politics.

During the Cold War, Israel emerged as a key strategic ally. Eisenhower had sought to maintain U.S. neutrality and even-handedness in the Arab-Israeli conflict to strengthen the United Nations and deter Soviet penetration of the Middle East. Under the Eisenhower administration, support for Israel was conditional and measured. With a sharp change in foreign policy, President Kennedy set the precedent for steadfast ideological support of Israel and later initiated heavy arms sales to bolster Israel's military. Kennedy was beholden to the Jewish electorate which had overwhelming supported his candidacy for President. Here again, the Zionist lobby was influential. But, policy experts also commonly argued that Israel promoted American interests during the Cold War by acting as a barrier against Soviet penetration of the region. This argument was supported by the simple fact that Israel defeated Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states which relied on Soviet armaments.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, Israeli intelligence provided the United States with crucial information about the design and flaws of Soviet-made weaponry confiscated on the battlefield.

However, there is a contrary view: "the existence of Israel and the policies it has pursued... made Arabs susceptible to Soviet influence and... enabled Moscow to

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<sup>122</sup> Note: Israel defeated enemies armed with Soviet weapons in the following instances: Egypt in 1956, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967 and 1973, and the PLO in Lebanon in 1982.

extend its penetration of the region.”<sup>123</sup> According to Cheryl Rubenberg, the growth of Soviet influence in the Middle East was too often directly related to Israeli policies. For instance, Israel engaged in a large-scale unprovoked raid on the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip in 1955 which triggered the Soviet Union's first significant opening into the Middle East. Nasser immediately sought armaments from Western countries including the United States to defend Egyptian territory. When Nasser was rebuffed by the U.S., France, and Britain, he pursued the famous Soviet-sponsored Czech arms deal of September 1955. France then violated the tripartite arms embargo to fortify Israel's military and President Kennedy later followed suit; the Egyptian-Israeli arms race was underway. Egypt received no arms from the West and eventually became dependent on arms from the Soviet Union for the next two decades. Similarly, Israeli military action prompted Syria to pursue Soviet weapons. Israel not only sought to eradicate the PLO presence in Southern Lebanon in 1982 but also dealt Syria a humiliating defeat by knocking out major missile batteries and destroying nearly one-third of its air force. “Subsequently the Soviet Union provided Syria with more highly sophisticated weapons... including SAM 5 [rockets] which were accompanied by a coterie of Soviet advisors.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, on at least two occasions, Israel pursued courses of action which undermined the crucial American interest of curbing Soviet influence in the Middle East.

Today, Israel is considered a key ally in the projection of American power in the Middle East by helping to maintain the current regional balance of power. The United States is dedicated to maintaining an unfettered flow of oil and natural gas from the

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<sup>123</sup> Rubenberg, 1986. See pg. 2

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. See pg. 7

fossil-fuel rich Middle East as well as access to commercial markets and investment opportunities. Some argue that as the regional hegemon, Israel helps to contain the expansionist ambitions of other states and deter conflicts which might adversely affect petroleum exports, commerce, or commodity prices. However, there is little evidence that Israel promotes this kind of regional stability. Whether through outright war, security competition, the occupation of Palestinian land, or lobbying efforts, Israel or its advocates have jeopardized U.S. economic interests in the wider Middle East on numerous occasions. Israel has initiated four wars against Arab states (1956, 1967, 1978, and 1982) and has contributed significantly to the onset or escalation of other conflicts. Israel's clandestine acquisition and possession of nuclear weapons has created a strong motivation for Iraq, Iran, and now perhaps Syria to pursue nuclear weapons capability. Such security competition is not a stabilizing factor for the region. In 1967, it was Israel that chose not to withdraw from Palestinian Arab territory occupied following the Six-Day War. This occupation prompted the Yom Kippur War in 1973 in which U.S. support for Israel triggered the economically devastating OPEC oil embargo, fuel shortages, and massive increases in petroleum prices. Though Israel maintains extensive and favorable commercial trade and security cooperation with the United States in the area of military armaments and technology, taken as a whole, America's regional economic objectives which require stability and market access have not been particularly enhanced by strong U.S.-Israeli ties. In fact, Israel or its supporters in the Israel lobby have successfully pushed on several occasions to prevent the U.S. Congress from approving major arms transfers to Jordan and Saudi Arabia despite clear economic benefits for the United States.



Furthermore, the ongoing nature of the Israeli occupation continues to engender varying levels of antipathy for Israel among Arab or predominantly Muslim countries of the Middle East. Resentment towards Israel is inherently a destabilizing factor in the Middle East which has prohibited Israel from normalizing relations with several countries in the region. And, virtually unconditional U.S. support for Israel perpetuates major differences of opinion between the U.S. and Arab nations on the Palestinian issue and ongoing Israeli occupation practices such as settlement expansion and the disproportionate use of military force. “Two new polls, conducted separately in 2005 and 2006, show that anti-American feeling in Arab nations is at an all-time high. The surveys, carried out by Zogby International and the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, show that it's not just that feelings are running against the US, it's that Arabs and Muslims are "giving up on [the US] – on our ability to make good decisions, to solve problems, to play the role of honest broker.” The Times of London reports that the War on Terror has radicalized even formerly moderate, well-educated Muslims to unprecedented levels. However, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa insisted that most Arabs do not hate the United States but oppose its double standards. For instance, Arabs do not openly embrace U.S. opposition to Iran’s nuclear program because Israel’s was ignored. Reuters reported the good news that 67 percent of those surveyed said that the US could substantially repair its image if it brokered peace in the region.<sup>125</sup> Clearly, U.S. support for Israel and its expansionist policies has engendered Arab and Muslim resentment toward the United States. Such anti-American sentiment

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<sup>125</sup> Regan, Tom. 2007. “Polls Show that Anti-American Feelings at an All-Time High in Muslim Countries.” In: *Christian Science Monitor*, Online at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0222/p99s01-duts.html>.

harms the United States' soft power<sup>126</sup> throughout the region and may limit American access to certain Arab markets. The priority given to U.S. financial and military support for Israel is one key reason the United States has been unable or unwilling to pursue full diplomatic engagement and healthy, respectful relations with all predominantly Arab or Muslim countries of the Middle East.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Israel has been identified as a key ally in the War on Terror. Israel has faced serious terrorist attacks from Islamic or Arab extremists on a regular basis for decades. Like the United States, Israel is engaged in a type of asymmetric warfare in which a nation with a powerful military is fighting against comparatively small, poorly armed terrorist groups. Israel certainly is an ideological ally in terms of its shared commitment to eliminate Islamic terrorism, prevent the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups, and oppose rogue states which sponsor terrorism. In addition, Israel's highly developed intelligence gathering capacity remains a valuable asset which, on occasion, provides the U.S. with crucial information relevant to the War on Terror. However, even though al-Qaeda leaders mention the oppression of the Palestinian people as one motivation for the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, there is no formal connection between anti-Israeli terrorism orchestrated by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or Hezbollah and terrorism organized by al-Qaeda or other anti-American terrorist groups. Nor has Israel played a direct or publicly acknowledged role in combating anti-American terrorist groups since 9/11. In fact, Israel's involvement in a

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<sup>126</sup> Soft power means the ability for a country to "obtain outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda in world politics and attract others as it is to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons." From: Nye, Joseph. 2002. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*. Oxford University Press: New York.

regional conflict such as the Iraq war would automatically alienate Iran, Syria, and perhaps other Arab states. According to John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “the United States has a terrorism problem in good part because it is so closely allied with Israel... U.S. support for Israel is hardly the only source of anti-American terrorism, but it is an important one, and it makes winning the war on terror more difficult... Equally important, unconditional U.S. support for Israel makes it easier for extremists like bin Laden to rally popular support and attract recruits. Public opinion polls confirm that Arab populations are deeply hostile to American support for Israel...”<sup>127</sup> U.S. support for the 2006 Israeli invasion of Southern Lebanon is a recent example; Hezbollah suffered only minimal setbacks while the United States was again associated with Israeli aggression against Arab and Muslim interests.

“A final reason to question Israel’s strategic value is that it does not act like a loyal ally. Israeli officials frequently ignore U.S. requests and renege on promises made to top U.S. leaders (including past pledges to halt settlement construction and to refrain from ‘targeted assassinations’ of Palestinian leaders). Moreover, Israel has provided sensitive U.S. military technology to potential U.S. rivals like China, in what the U.S. State Department... called ‘a systematic and growing pattern of unauthorized transfers.’ According to the U.S. General Accounting Office, Israel also ‘conducts the most aggressive espionage operations against the U.S. of any ally... Israel is hardly the only country that spies on the United States, but its willingness to spy on its principal patron casts further doubt on its strategic value.’”<sup>128</sup>

In summary, the U.S.-Israeli special relationship has both served and undermined U.S. national interests over the last sixty years. Initial support for the

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<sup>127</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. & Walt, Stephen M. 2006. “The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy.” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 3. See pg. 33

<sup>128</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006. See pg. 34

creation of Israel was based in part on democratic common ground and electoral pressures facilitated by the Zionist lobby. During the Cold War, Israel's strategic value was mixed and perhaps exaggerated. Though Israel helped to defeat Soviet-sponsored Arab armies, Israel's expansionist policies and military engagements also invited more Soviet penetration and armaments into the region. Israel and its supporters have harmed some U.S. economic interests in the Middle East while reaping enormous benefits from U.S. financial and military assistance and bilateral commercial trade.<sup>129</sup> In the War on Terror, Israel is a strong ideological ally which shares similar strategic priorities but which is of little practical help beyond the capacity to supplement U.S. intelligence gathering efforts. In addition, Israel's insistence on continuing the occupation of Palestinian lands has produced an increasingly volatile and destabilizing political situation which has now deteriorated to a historic low point for Palestinian society. Many of the strategic benefits of the U.S.-Israeli alliance are offset by the fact that nearly unconditional U.S. support for Israel contributes to anti-American sentiment throughout the Arab and Muslim world and helps fuel anti-American terrorism. Israel remains an important U.S. ally strategically; however, treating Israel as America's most important ally in the campaign against terrorism or U.S. grand strategy for the Middle East exaggerates Israel's capacity to help while underestimating the liabilities of close association with unpopular Israeli policies. None of the prevailing strategic rationales

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<sup>129</sup> Note: The United States is Israel's largest trading partner. In 2005, two-way trade totaled some \$26.6 billion, up 12% from 2004. The U.S. trade deficit with Israel was \$7.1 billion in 2005, up 33% from 2004, due largely to rising Israeli exports to the U.S. U.S. exports to Israel rose 6.1% in 2005 to \$9.7 billion, making Israel the 19<sup>th</sup> largest export market for U.S. goods. See U.S. State Department, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Background Note on Israel. Online at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>.

discussed here plainly justify nearly unconditional U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military support for the state of Israel.

### **Moral Rationales for Robust U.S.-Israeli Relations**

Morally speaking, there are at least four common arguments in favor of strong U.S. support for Israel. First, many Americans feel a strong empathic connection with Jews and Israel because of the historic suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. Second, the spiritual and geographic significance of Palestine in Judeo-Christian history has convinced many that support for Israel is crucial to ensure the protection and security of the “holy land.” Third, Americans promote close relations with Israel because it is a fellow democracy and the only democratic country in the Middle East. And fourth, Israel is often viewed as a small, vulnerable country in need of protection because it faces the constant threat of Palestinian terrorism and is surrounded by hostile Arab countries. With this argument, Israel is also often portrayed as a morally superior victim acting in self-defense against aggressive Arab states or terrorist groups. As we will see, though each of these arguments is a reasonable justification for supporting the survival of Israel, its right to self-defense, and its alliance with the United States, no single argument or combination of arguments necessitates that the United States provide Israel with virtually unconditional diplomatic, economic, or military support.

Any discussion of the Jewish faith, Zionism, or U.S. support for Israel takes place in the shadow of two thousand years of anti-Semitism. “Christians massacred

thousands of Jews during the Crusades, expelled them en masse from Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and other places between 1290 and 1497, and confined them to ghettos in other parts of Europe. Jews were violently oppressed during the Spanish Inquisition, murderous pogroms took place in Eastern Europe and Russia on numerous occasions, and other forms of anti-Semitic bigotry were widespread until recently. This shameful record culminated in the Nazi Holocaust, which killed nearly six million Jews. Jews were also oppressed in parts of the Arab world, though much less severely.”<sup>130</sup> Cognizant of this past Jewish suffering and vulnerability, many well-intentioned policymakers during the 1940s believed that the Jewish people would only be safe in a Jewish homeland. Though empathy for past Jewish suffering may have been a strong motivation for early U.S. support of Zionism and the creation of Israel, it is crucial to note that such empathy did not generate unconditional U.S. support under the Truman or Eisenhower administrations and does not oblige the United States to provide such unconditional support today.

In fact, the Zionist demand for a Jewish state in Palestine was in full contradiction with modern international norms. There is no right sanctioned by international law which condones the reclamation of a long lost territorial or religious homeland. If Zionism were to serve as a legal precedent, the Indians of North America could claim for themselves the United States and the aborigines could claim Australia. Furthermore, the international community failed to make good on the Balfour Declaration’s promise to protect the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities

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<sup>130</sup> Mearsheimer, John & Walt, Stephen. 2007. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux: New York. See pg. 12

in Palestine. The opportunity for Palestinians to pursue autonomous development and self-determination as promised by Woodrow Wilson, the League of Nations, and the U.N. Charter remains unrealized. Clearly, the historic suffering of the Jewish people is one of the greatest tragedies of modern history; however, such suffering did not provide a sufficient moral justification for perpetrating another historic and tragic injustice on the Palestinian people through territorial expulsion and decades of political disenfranchisement. Nor does such empathy for past anti-Semitic crimes grant Israel the license to do harm with impunity and without regard for international or human rights law. Even David Ben-Gurion, first Prime Minister of Israel, recognized that the creation of Israel was not justifiable in a secular and international context:

“If I was an Arab leader, I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: we have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it’s true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we have come here and stolen their country. Why should they accept that?”<sup>131</sup>

Ben-Gurion’s statement introduces the religious justification for Israel’s existence by referencing the biblical covenant between God and Abraham in the Torah.<sup>132</sup> Historically, the Jewish people trace their roots back to ancient Palestine. Many Christians and Jews in the United States advocate supporting Israel because it is a Jewish country and because the holy land of the biblical covenant, the place where

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<sup>131</sup> Goldman, Nahum. 1978. *The Jewish Paradox*. Grosset & Dunlap: New York. See pg. 99

<sup>132</sup> Genesis 13:14-17 “And the LORD said unto Abram after Lot was separated from him, “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee.” See *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

Jesus' miracles were performed, is best safeguarded if in Jewish rather than Arab hands. The political impact of evangelical Christianity is particularly significant: "Two in five Americans believe that Israel was given to the Jewish people by God, and one in three say that the creation of the state of Israel was a step towards the Second Coming [of Christ]."<sup>133</sup> Of course, Muslims claim Jerusalem as the third holiest city in Islam behind Mecca and Medina, so there are legitimate spiritual claims on both sides. Regardless of the religious arguments, however, the United States' commitment to the separation of church and state should prohibit U.S. foreign policy from being determined on the basis of religious concerns. Though the religious and ethnic identity of Israel certainly is one reason for the strong affinity between Israel and the United States, Israel's identity as a Jewish state rooted in an ancient and divine covenant is certainly not a broadly acceptable basis for nearly unconditional U.S. support.

Some argue that Israel's role as the only democratic nation in the Middle East warrants unwavering U.S. support. However, if democratic character was a sufficient argument for extending unconditional support, then the United States might be expected to treat all democratic countries in a similar manner. But, it is common knowledge that the United States has supported many dictatorships and overthrown or undermined democratically-elected governments<sup>134</sup> to serve American interests as envisaged by the prevailing Washington elite. Furthermore, Israel is often described as an ethnic democracy or "ethnocracy" because its national policies have deliberately privileged

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<sup>133</sup> *The Economist*, Aug. 5, 2006. "To Israel with love: Why America supports Israel?" Text available online.

<sup>134</sup> Two examples: The United States overthrew the democratically-elected administration of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq in 1953 and the democratically-elected President of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, in 1954.



Jewish citizens and treated citizens from other religious or ethnic groups as second-class.<sup>135</sup> Israel's commitment to remaining a Jewish and democratic state runs contradictory to American and European conceptions of democracy which separate religion from government and legally require equality before the law for all citizens regardless of ethnicity or religion. Because the United States does maintain its strongest alliances with democratic countries, there is reason to maintain a strong alliance with Israel as the only democratic country in the Middle East. However, Israel's democratic character does not provide a sufficient justification for nearly unconditional U.S. support.

In the first decade of the Jewish state, Israel was surrounded by a host of Arab countries which threatened it with destruction. At that time, it was reasonable to characterize Israel as weak and besieged, "a Jewish David surrounded by a hostile Arab Goliath..."<sup>136</sup> From this perspective, the imperative to support and protect Israel unconditionally might have been sufficiently justified to ensure the survival of that Jewish population. However, the United States did not offer such support to Israel at that time because strategic concerns in the post-colonial, post-WWII era outweighed moral considerations. In fact, during this most vulnerable stage of Israel's development, the Eisenhower administration's emphasis on cultivating economic ties with Arab states and preventing Soviet penetration of the Middle East region led to a restrained and deliberative relationship with Israel. The United States refused to provide Israel with

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<sup>135</sup> Yiftachel, Oren. 2006. *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia.

<sup>136</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007. See pg. 81

armaments and occasionally placed conditions on U.S. financial assistance to force Israel to comply with U.S. and/or international policy preferences.

Furthermore, the historical record reveals that Israel's vulnerability and weakness was short-lived. When Israel was invaded by five Arab nations following its declaration of independence, the Zionists won a lopsided victory because they enjoyed a clear advantage in numbers and quality of soldiers and weapons.<sup>137</sup> Following Israel's victory in 1949, the image of Jews as victims of the Holocaust was now awkwardly juxtaposed with the victimization of the Palestinians, 700,000 of which were displaced during the war. The deliberate expulsion of many Palestinians, which paved the way for a clear Jewish majority and territorial expansion, is now described by some historians as ethnic cleansing. Yet, Israel has continued to portray itself as insecure and perpetually threatened even while conducting offensive wars. Moshe Sharett, the second Prime Minister of Israel, fully acknowledged in his private journals that the myth of Israeli insecurity was repeatedly used to justify Israeli acts of aggression.<sup>138</sup> Sharett also reveals that Jewish leaders in Israel were planning to occupy the Gaza Strip and West Bank as early as 1955 when Israel conducted the aforementioned unprovoked raids on Gaza. Clearly, Israel's insecurity is real in the sense that Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas occasionally threaten Israel with destruction and Palestinian terrorism continues to threaten Israeli lives. But, with a nuclear deterrent and the strongest military in the

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<sup>137</sup> "One well-documented study concludes: 'In addition to being generally better equipped than, and numerically superior to, the Arab forces, the Jewish army was more mechanized and mobile. The result was that in the majority of individual engagements, Jewish soldiers simply outnumbered Arab soldiers. In most instances... it was superior Jewish numbers and firepower that carried the day.'" Rubenberg, 1986. See pg. 10

<sup>138</sup> Rokach, Livia. 1986. "Israel's Sacred Terrorism: A study based upon Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary and other documents." 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Association of Arab-American University Graduates; Belmont, MA. Text online at <http://www.chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/essays/rokach.html>.

Middle East, none of Israel's enemies has the capability to defeat Israel or truly threaten its existence.

Also, the notion that Israel has always acted in a morally superior and defensive manner is also not accurate. The fact that Israel has initiated four wars against its neighbors, pursued expansionist policies in violation of international law, and regularly violated the Palestinians' human, civil, and political rights undermines any Israeli claims to a moral high ground. Though the Palestinians and Israel's neighbors share the blame for the perpetuation of conflict, there is no reason to extend unconditional U.S. support for Israel based on notions of Israeli insecurity, weakness, or morally superior conduct. None of the prevailing moral arguments favoring strong U.S.-Israeli relations can justify the nearly unconditional level of support currently extended by the United States. The fact that U.S. citizens identify with past Jewish suffering, with the historical significance of Palestine in Judeo-Christian history, with the democratic character of Israel, and with Israel's vulnerability to terrorist attacks does provide a sound basis for a continuing and strong U.S.-Israeli alliance. However, one must look further than either strategic or moral arguments to understand why the United States offers Israel such extensive and virtually unconditional support.

## **The Israel Lobby**

A wave of recent research describes the Israel lobby<sup>139</sup> as the most powerful and influential foreign policy lobby in the United States. In a 1997 survey of members of Congress conducted by Fortune magazine, the most prominent pro-Israel lobbying organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), was identified as the second most powerful special interest lobby in Washington, D.C. ahead of many other highly influential lobby groups and labor unions.<sup>140</sup> AIPAC and other pro-Israel lobby groups pressure Congress and the Executive branch to implement policies beneficial to Israel and strive to ensure that public discourse is favorable to Israel's interests. Most pro-Israel organizations are run by hardliners who support Israel's expansionist policies and occupation of Palestinian territory either for security or religious reasons. Typically, the Israel lobby pushes the U.S. government to support two fundamental policies. The first is massive and unconditional U.S. funding for Israel; Israel receives more financial assistance than any other country, currently \$3 billion annually with two-thirds in military grants. The Israel lobby also demands virtually unconditional U.S. diplomatic protection of Israel at the U.N. and in other forums regardless of Israel's conduct. John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, and a host of other scholars have concluded that the nearly unconditional economic, military, and diplomatic support offered to Israel by the United States is not proportional to Israel's

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<sup>139</sup> Note: To be clear, the Israel lobby is not synonymous with the Jewish-American community. Many Jewish Americans are not deeply attached to Israel and may support less U.S. bias in favor of Israel to achieve lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

<sup>140</sup> Birnbaum, Jeffrey. Dec. 1997. "Washington's Power 25: Which Pressure Groups are Best at Manipulating the Laws We Live By? A Groundbreaking Fortune Survey Reveals Who Belongs to Lobbying's Elite and Why They Wield So Much Clout." *Fortune Magazine*. Online at: [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/1997/12/08/234927/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1997/12/08/234927/index.htm)

strategic value or moral conduct but rather due in large part to the political power of the Israel lobby in U.S. domestic politics.

“The [pro-Israel] lobby is a loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively works to move U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction... it is not a single, unified movement with a central leadership, and it is certainly not a cabal or conspiracy that ‘controls’ U.S. foreign policy. It is simply a powerful interest group, made up of both Jews and gentiles, whose acknowledged purpose is to press Israel’s case within the United States and influence American foreign policy in ways that its members believe will benefit the Jewish state. The various groups that make up the lobby do not agree on every issue, although they share the desire to promote a special relationship between the United States and Israel... [T]he activities of the Israel lobby’s various elements are legitimate forms of democratic political participation, and they are for the most part consistent with America’s long tradition of interest group activity.”<sup>141</sup>

The Israel lobby works through three primary strategies: making campaign contributions, shaping federal appointments, and saturating the media with pro-Israel perspectives. “[T]he Israel lobby has emulated the techniques of national lobbies based on economic interests or social issues... [using] nationwide campaign donations... to influence members of Congress in areas where there are few Jewish voters...”<sup>142</sup> “Money is critical to U.S. elections... and AIPAC makes sure its friends get financial support... [and] those seen as hostile to Israel... can be sure that AIPAC will direct campaign contributions to their political opponents.”<sup>143</sup> When crucial national security appointments arise, AIPAC and other allied groups work to ensure such positions are

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<sup>141</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007. See pg. 5

<sup>142</sup> Lind, Michael. May 2002. “Distorting U.S. Foreign Policy: The Israel Lobby and American Power.” In: *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, pgs. 26-31.

<sup>143</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006. See pg. 43

filled by individuals friendly to Israel.<sup>144</sup> Consideration of an undesirable nominee for a major appointment to the Pentagon, State Department, National Security Council, or intelligence community would trigger an onslaught of lobbyists and constituents communicating their opposition either to the executive branch or key members of Congress. Though the extent of the lobby's direct influence on the mainstream media is difficult to measure, it is clear that former AIPAC staff members are well-placed in key foreign policy think tanks that help disseminate pro-Israeli policy proposals.<sup>145</sup> Experts from these think tanks can influence media through television interviews and a variety of written media including newspapers, the internet, or AIPAC's widely disseminated weekly, the Near East Report.<sup>146</sup> The lobby also works to silence criticism of Israel in news media or academic institutions by inundating these institutions with complaints or targeting specific individuals with accusations of anti-Semitism.

AIPAC, as the largest and most influential pro-Israel lobbying organization, has been accused or suspected of illegal activities to promote Israel's interests in the United States. In 1963, Senator William Fulbright initiated hearings which uncovered that AIPAC was created and originally funded by the Jewish Agency, a quasi-governmental

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<sup>144</sup> *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, "The Complete Unexpurgated AIPAC Tape." Online at: <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/1292/9212013.html>; Transcript of conversation with former AIPAC president, David Steiner, on Oct. 22, 1992. Steiner brags after negotiations with Secretary of State: "I met with Jim Baker and I cut a deal with him... You know they're looking for the Jewish votes... Besides the \$10 billion in loan guarantees which was a fabulous thing, \$3 billion in foreign, in military aid, and I got almost a billion dollars in other goodies that people don't even know about." Mr. Steiner then explains that, should Bill Clinton win the presidential election of 1992, AIPAC will have "access" to shape the appointments for Secretary of State and National Security Adviser.

<sup>145</sup> Note: Grant Smith observes that the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) and the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute are closely tied with AIPAC either through former staff and/or overlap of board members.

<sup>146</sup> Note: According to Grant Smith, the Near East Report is characterized by "an overwhelming commitment to Israel, rather than to academic rigor, international legal frameworks, or a comprehensive historical approach to the Middle East..." See Smith, 2007. Pgs. 113-114

private foundation with close ties to the creation and government of the state of Israel. This discovery raised the first questions of AIPAC's potential role as a foreign agent of Israel seeking to shape policy in the United States. "It was the late Sen. Fulbright who first called Congress 'Israeli-occupied territory.'"<sup>147</sup> Though AIPAC has never been found guilty of any criminal wrongdoing in a court of law, Grant Smith has documented numerous "instances of AIPAC planting foreign national propaganda in the U.S. news media, systematically scouring the US government for classified national intelligence and forwarding it to Israel, and swinging elections through smear, innuendo, and coordinated delivery of campaign donations..."<sup>148</sup> Smith has identified at least two cases of espionage closely tied to AIPAC. "AIPAC's most egregious act of documented economic espionage against the United States was negotiating the very first U.S.-Israel free trade deal [circa 1985] using a strategy document purloined from the International Trade Commission... an act for which AIPAC paid no penalty, beyond admitting that it possessed the stolen ITC document."<sup>149</sup> More recently, two senior members of AIPAC's staff were fired and subsequently indicted in 2005 for conspiring to collect and pass along classified national security information to Israel regarding U.S. foreign policy towards Iran.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Reese, Charley. May/June 2006. "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy." In: *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, pgs. 18-19.

<sup>148</sup> Smith, Grant F. 2007. *Foreign Agents: The American Israel Public Affairs Committee from the 1963 Fulbright Hearings to the 2005 Espionage Scandal*. Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, Inc.: Washington, D.C. See pg. 15

<sup>149</sup> Smith, 2007. See pg. 68

<sup>150</sup> Note: Colonel Lawrence Anthony Franklin, who worked as an Iran policy analyst for Douglas Feith in the Department of Defense, was also indicted and later pled guilty to passing a classified Presidential Directive and other sensitive documents concerning U.S. Iran policy to AIPAC. AIPAC officials then passed the information to Israel and select members of elite media in an attempt to influence U.S. foreign policy. See Smith, 2007 (Chapter 5)

The overall impact of such a well-organized and well-financed lobbying sector has been the internalization of a pro-Israel bias in both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government. The Israel lobby's capacity to finance electoral campaigns and deliver key voting constituencies hangs over members of Congress and the executive branch whose job security depends upon reelection. To oppose the lobby or openly criticize Israel is commonly considered a sure path to political suicide. It is no surprise that the current presidential candidates as well as nearly half of Congress have already made their rounds to the 2008 AIPAC conference to profess their faithful support for the state of Israel. In this political environment, neither a sitting President, Congressional incumbent, nor a political newcomer can afford to ignore or incur the wrath of the pro-Israel lobby and its many supporters. Major news media have also internalized a pro-Israel bias. "The kind of informed, centrist criticism of Israel which can be found in Britain and the rest of Europe, a criticism that recognizes Israel's right to exist and defend itself while deploring its brutal occupation of Palestinian territory and discrimination against Arab Israelis, is far less visible in the U.S."<sup>151</sup> Little or no attention is paid to Israel's history of offensive war or disproportionate use of force. In fact, the bias in the mainstream media is so apparent that Israel is widely portrayed as acting in self-defense against hostile Palestinian Arab terrorists seeking Israel's destruction. Anything but the mildest criticism of Israel is taboo in the mainstream media while negative portrayals of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims are frequently tolerated. As noted, the media and political culture is such that critics of Israeli policy are respected far more in Israel itself than in the United States. In short, though it is not

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.



possible to definitively determine the extent of the Israel lobby's impact on the United States government and media, the lobby is certainly a highly significant contributing factor to the bi-partisan consensus and mainstream media's support for nearly unconditional U.S. support of Israel.

Many supporters of Israel reject the thesis that the Israel lobby distorts U.S. foreign policy in Israel's favor regardless of U.S. national interests. Abraham Foxman, chairman of the Anti-Defamation League, rightly observes that allegations of this sort are frequently supported by isolated historical examples which provide insufficient factual evidence to support such a sweeping conclusion.<sup>152</sup> For instance, Mearsheimer and Walt not only identify the political power of the Israel lobby as the most significant reason for the United States' nearly unconditional support of Israel, they also suggest that pressure from the lobby was a significant contributing factor in the decision to invade Iraq and in recent U.S. antagonism towards Syria and Iran. Though these assertions could be accurate in whole or part, they certainly have not been proven conclusively. For this reason, Foxman accuses Mearsheimer and Walt of poorly researched scholarship, unsubstantiated conclusions, and anti-Israel bias. Regardless of the outcome of this ongoing and heated debate between critics and advocates about the extent of the Israel lobby's impact on U.S. foreign policy, the political power and influence of the lobby is widely acknowledged. In contrast to the more controversial conclusions of Measheimer and Walt, Michael Lind has arrived at a more moderate and measured finding regarding the lobby's influence: "It is difficult to prove direct cause-

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<sup>152</sup> Foxman, Abraham. 2007. *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*. Palgrave MacMillan: New York.

and-effect connections between the power of a lobby and America's foreign policy positions. But, in the Middle East, it is hard to explain America's failure to pressure Israel into a final land-for-peace settlement—particularly since the Oslo deal in 1993—without factoring in the Israel lobby.”<sup>153</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The United States has been offering increasingly unconditional support for the state of Israel despite serious questions regarding Israel's strategic value and moral conduct. Though the U.S.-Israel alliance may have been a net gain for the United States during the Cold War, Israel's strategic contribution to U.S. national security is less certain in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. There is considerable evidence that nearly unconditional U.S. support for Israel increases anti-American sentiment in the Arab and Muslim worlds and may facilitate recruitment for anti-American terrorist groups. Furthermore, aside from military intelligence and technological exchange, Israel provides little practical help in the global War on Terror. In fact, because antagonism towards Israel and its occupation of Palestinian land is so prevalent in the Middle East, U.S. diplomatic and economic endeavors in the region are sometimes harmed by such close association with Israel. Though a U.S.-Israeli alliance is certainly consistent with the national interests of the United States, there is no sufficient strategic justification for nearly unconditional U.S. support of Israel. Such support is truly unprecedented in the history of U.S. foreign relations.

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<sup>153</sup> Lind, 2002.

Though strong moral attachments to Israel based upon past Jewish suffering, religious conviction, democratic solidarity, or concern for Israel's security are widespread, no such moral attachments warrant nearly unconditional U.S. support. Such moral commitments do encourage a close relationship between Israel and the United States even though Israel is far from a moral exemplar in the international community. Israel is often the subject of heightened scrutiny for its occupation of Palestinian land, its human rights record, and use of military force. No amount of past suffering can justify impunity for actions which harm innocent civilians (Palestinian, Israeli, Lebanese, or otherwise). Human rights organizations like B'Tselem, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have concluded numerous studies documenting Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights. Similarly, Israel cannot expect to defy international law without consequence with regard to the status of Jerusalem, the building of settlements in the occupied territories, or the annexation of territory. There are dozens of UN Security Council resolutions condemning Israeli violations of international law. "There is no question that Israel is justified in responding with force to violent acts by groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, but its willingness to use its superior military power to inflict... suffering on innocent civilians casts doubt on its repeated claims to a special moral status. Israel may not have acted worse than many other countries, but it has not acted any better."<sup>154</sup> Perhaps it is unfair for Israel to receive so much condemnation given that other nations with worse conduct receive far less criticism and media scrutiny.<sup>155</sup> However, because Israel is a highly prosperous and

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<sup>154</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007. See pg. 103

<sup>155</sup> Note: Many supporters of Israel believe the frequent and impassioned criticism of Israeli policies in international institutions may reflect a new, more subtle form of anti-Semitism which is considered

democratic country, the international community does hold Israel to a higher moral and legal standard than autocratic regimes or underdeveloped countries around the world.

If nearly unconditional support for Israel is not clearly warranted based on the prevailing strategic or moral rationales, then it is reasonable to conclude that such strong, unwavering support is most likely a product of the Israel lobby's impact on U.S. domestic politics. Of course, there is no definitive method of ascertaining the power of the lobby or the degree of its impact on U.S. foreign policy. However, the political and academic consensus clearly supports the conclusion that the Israel lobby exerts a high degree of influence on the U.S. Congress, executive branch, and mainstream media. Through campaign financing, influence on federal appointments, aggressive media activities, the ability to stimulate voter turnout, and traditional Washington lobbying at the White House and on Capitol Hill, the Israel lobby is able to secure its two principal priorities of unconditional U.S. financial assistance and diplomatic protection for the state of Israel. The realization that special interest politics may drive the virtually unconditional diplomatic, economic, and military support for Israel more than any other factor raises serious questions about the foreign policy making process in the United States. This raises a final and most fundamental question: If special interest and electoral pressures are taken out of the equation, what would be the best future course for U.S.-Israeli relations given the current strategic priorities for the United States in the Middle East?

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most prevalent in Europe and Arab or Muslim countries. Critics claim that such accusations are an attempt to silence legitimate dissent. Lappin, Shalom. 2003. "Israel and the New Anti-Semitism." In: *Dissent*, Vol. 50, No. 2, pgs. 18-24

## CHAPTER V

### The Future of U.S.-Israeli Relations: Charting a New Course

According to Cheryl Rubenberg, “the basis for foreign policy should be the ‘national interest,’ which is derived from core values particular to each state, including the ‘good’ of the nation, of the territorial state, of the particular way of life of the society, and of the society’s elite.”<sup>156</sup> According to Mearsheimer and Walt, contemporary U.S. strategic interests in the Middle East are threefold. First, the United States must maintain the flow of oil and natural gas exports from the Persian Gulf region to ensure energy security and economic productivity. “This objective does not require the United States to control the region itself; [the U.S.] merely needs to ensure that no other country is in a position to keep Middle East oil from reaching the world market.”<sup>157</sup> Second, the United States aims to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the region. The presence of WMDs would limit the United States’ ability to project its power in the region to deal with direct threats to American interests. Also, more WMDs would increase the likelihood of accidental or unauthorized use including acquisition of such weapons by terrorist groups. Third, the United States seeks to reduce anti-American terrorism originating in the Middle East.

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<sup>156</sup> Rubenberg, 1986. See pg 10

<sup>157</sup> Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007. See pgs. 337-338

As noted, the special relationship between the United States and Israel does not improve U.S. access to Persian Gulf fossil fuels. In fact, the 1973 oil embargo is clear evidence that U.S. support for Israel has adversely affected oil production and prices in the past. Israel possesses more WMDs than any other state in the Middle East and its possession of nuclear weapons is a strong motivating force for Iran and other states to pursue a nuclear capability. And, the United States' strong alliance with Israel and indirect support for its military occupation of Palestinian land perpetuates anti-American sentiment and may help fuel anti-American terrorism. Since 9/11, President Bush has pursued an agenda of regional transformation which has included the invasion of Iraq, support for Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and hostile threats towards Iran for its pursuit of nuclear energy. This neoconservative strategy has resulted in greater regional instability, a decline in the United States' reputation or soft power, and a rise in anti-American terrorism.<sup>158</sup> Given these circumstances, many scholars are advocating an overall shift in U.S. foreign policy towards both Israel and the entire Middle East region.

Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) have proposed a return to the more sensible strategy of offshore balancing employed successfully by the United States during the Cold War. U.S. military intervention in the Middle East would take place only when states in the region are unable to stabilize the balance of power or resolve direct threats to vital U.S. interests. Serious disruptions in the flow of oil or natural gas like the 1990

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<sup>158</sup> According to the U.S National Intelligence Estimate, April 2006: "Four underlying factors are fueling the spread of the jihadist movement: (1) Entrenched grievances, such as corruption, injustice, and fear of Western domination, leading to anger, humiliation, and a sense of powerlessness; (2) the Iraq jihad; (3) the slow pace of real and sustained economic, social, and political reforms in many Muslim majority nations; and (4) pervasive anti-U.S. sentiment among most Muslims—all of which jihadists exploit." See online at: [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf)

Iraqi invasion of Kuwait might warrant U.S. intervention. Otherwise, the United States would maintain a “robust intervention capability, along the lines of the original Rapid Deployment Force, whose units were stationed over the horizon or in the United States.” Such offshore balancing would decrease the likelihood of costly U.S. military involvement in the region, reduce anti-American sentiment generated by the presence of U.S. ground troops on Arab soil, and give states like Iran and Syria less reason to worry about an American attack and thus less reason to develop WMD capability. This strategy would include the timely withdrawal of troops from Iraq as well as a shift away from Israel’s preferred policy of threatening confrontation with Iran and Syria. In short, offshore balancing would reverse the interventionist approach of current U.S. foreign policy while ensuring fossil fuel access, reducing anti-American sentiment, and decreasing pressures likely to promote the proliferation of WMDs.

In addition, the United States must change its relationship with Israel. There is no strategic or moral rationale that justifies nearly unconditional U.S. diplomatic, economic, or military support. Instead, Israel should be treated like a normal state. The United States should continue its extensive bilateral trade as well as cultural, educational, and technological exchanges with Israel. The United States should continue its security cooperation with Israel, especially the sharing of military intelligence. However, the United States should be willing to apply significant pressure on Israel to end its conflict with the Palestinians. Similar pressure should be applied on the Palestinians as well as neighboring Arab states such as Syria and Lebanon. And, because Israel’s economy ranks in the top 25% worldwide and its military is the strongest in the Middle East region, there is no need or obligation for the United States

to continue supplying Israel with roughly \$3 billion in military grants and financial aid each year.<sup>159</sup> The United States should continue arms trade with Israel consistent with U.S. law, but this exorbitant aid should be drastically reduced over time and redirected to developing nations to bolster America's international reputation and soft power. Of course, should Israel's security or survival ever be seriously threatened, the United States must be ready and willing to intervene or otherwise provide Israel with emergency assistance.

The basic U.S. formula for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been well-established as a two-state solution since the Clinton parameters presented in December 2000. Key provisions include the full recognition of Israeli sovereignty within defensible borders, an end to Palestinian terrorism, and the creation a new Palestinian democracy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Alternative solutions appear far less viable. For instance, the possibility of a single bi-national state shared by Israelis and Palestinians remains extremely unpopular among Israelis. Though some fundamentalist Jews envision the rebuilding of Eretz Israel through the total ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, this option is morally repugnant and guaranteed to worsen Israel's security situation. A continuation of the current military occupation is also likely to continue undermining Israel's security. The two-state solution, however, is consistent with UNSC resolutions 242 and 338 as well as the current "roadmap for peace" designed by the Quartet on the Middle East.

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<sup>159</sup> "The massive aid to Israel is in effect a huge entitlement that enriches the relatively prosperous Israelis at the cost of the American taxpayer. Money being fungible, that aid also pays for the very settlements that America opposes and that impede the peace process." See: Brzezinski, Zbigniew. July/August 2006. "The War over Israel's Influence: A Dangerous Exemption." In: *Foreign Policy Magazine*: Washington, D.C. pgs. 63-64



Under the two-state (land-for-peace) proposal, Israel must withdraw from almost all of the territories occupied in 1967.<sup>160</sup> In return, the Palestinian Authority will vow to stamp out anti-Israeli terrorism originating in the currently occupied territories. Israel will need to recognize the right of return for Palestinians expelled since 1948; however, since Israel's national security, democratic system, and Jewish character would be undermined by a major influx of Palestinians to Israel proper, the Palestinians will most likely need to forfeit the right of return in perpetuity in exchange for sufficient compensation. The Quartet could ease the burden on Israel by helping to finance such compensation. Final status negotiations, which need to include Palestinian leaders from Hamas, Fatah, and possibly other factions, would have to resolve the remaining disputes regarding official borders, the dismantling of Israeli settlements, access to water resources, security arrangements, and sovereignty over Jerusalem. The resolution of this conflict will not be easy, but U.S. pressure and international diplomatic support should be sufficient to arrive at a just solution for both sides.

Ending the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land will help dissolve anti-Israeli sentiment and terrorism while creating a new context in which Israel may begin to normalize relations with the Arab world. Peace between Israel and the Palestinians will promote stability and reduce extremism through the Middle East region. Ending this conflict should be a major national security priority for the United States. Because the Israeli government and its citizens waver in their support for a two-state solution, members of the Quartet must be steadfast in their support for Palestinian self-determination and must address Israel's legitimate security concerns as

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<sup>160</sup> Note: Most proposals allow Israel to retain certain well-developed settlement blocs.

comprehensively as possible. Members of the Quartet must also be prepared to deal with extremists on both sides who will reject any compromise agreement. In addition, the United States and the European Union should provide extensive diplomatic and financial support to the fledgling Palestinian state to ensure its survival, institutional development, and economic progress. And, if Israel remains unwilling to grant the Palestinians a viable state or attempts to impose an unjust unilateral solution, then the United States should curtail its economic and military support. The occupation of Palestinian land, settlement expansion, and other harmful policies<sup>161</sup> are contrary to U.S. values and indirect support for such policies reflects badly upon the United States.

Lastly, the power of the Israel lobby must be kept in check if U.S. support for Israel is to become conditional on Israeli compliance with U.S. policy demands and progress towards peace. There are several ways to limit the power of this special interest lobby in Washington, D.C. According to Stephen Steinlight, “[u]nless and until the triumph of campaign finance reform is complete... the great material wealth of the Jewish community will continue to give it significant advantages... That power is exerted through the political system from the local to national levels through soft money, and especially the provision of out-of-state funds to candidates sympathetic to Israel.”<sup>162</sup> The lobby will always be able to recruit voters, advocate for certain policies, and influence public opinion through the media, but public financing of all elections would certainly weaken the influence of the lobby over elected officials. Also, new peace-

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<sup>161</sup> Note: Other harmful policies include the detention of Palestinians without due process of law, the control of Palestinian freedom of movement through numerous checkpoints and curfews, the demolition of Palestinian homes without sufficient justification, and the targeted assassination of Palestinian leaders which often involves collateral damage and civilian casualties.

<sup>162</sup> Lind, 2002.

centered pro-Israel organizations like J Street may enhance the lobby's diversity of opinion and increase support for ending the occupation of Palestinian land through a two-state solution.<sup>163</sup> In addition, the academic community and media could work harder to provide Americans with a comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its Palestinian dimension as well as Israeli and the Arab perspectives on the path to peace. Shifting the terms of debate will require stiff opposition to those who aim to silence legitimate criticism and dialogue. As for the Christian Zionist movement, perhaps its zeal for the creation of an Eretz Israel can be attenuated by asking believers whether the permanent disenfranchisement or ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians is truly consistent with Christ's message of love for your fellow man. Surely the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would not prohibit the fulfillment of Christian or Jewish prophecies. Clearly, there are a number of ways to lessen the Israel lobby's influence; however, because public financing of elections is not imminent, peace-centered pro-Israel groups are far less influential, Christian Zionists are resolute in promoting unconditional support for Israel, and the media and academics remain under considerable pressure to disseminate Israel's preferred narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian story, change is likely to be slow and the current pattern of nearly unconditional support for Israel is likely to continue for some years to come.

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<sup>163</sup> J Street is the political arm of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement which supports a two-state solution. "We support a new direction for American policy in the Middle East and a broad public and policy debate about the U.S. role in the region... We believe ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the best interests of Israel, the United States, the Palestinians, and the region as a whole." See homepage: <http://www.jstreet.org/>.

## **CONCLUSION**

Chapter one describes how the Zionist movement and later the tragedy of the Holocaust motivated early U.S. support for the creation of Israel as a Jewish homeland. Though experts unambiguously reported Arab opposition and potential for major conflict, the U.S. Congress still endorsed the Balfour Declaration. In an attempt to prevent conflict and respect both Jewish and Arab rights to self-determination, the U.S. supported the UN Partition Plan for Palestine. However, Arab rejections of Israeli sovereignty, division among Arab leaders, the expulsion or exodus of many Palestinians, and outright military defeat of Arab armies combined to prevent the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel in 1948.

Chapter two demonstrated the increasingly unconditional nature of U.S. economic, diplomatic, and military support for Israel through successive presidential administrations. Only President Eisenhower was willing to use economic leverage to force Israeli compliance with U.S. and international policy preferences. President Kennedy was responsible for promoting bi-partisan ideological support of Israel and for initiating major arms sales. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, the Johnson administration did support UNSC Res. 242 which called for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories. However, no pressure was applied by the United States or the international community to force such a withdrawal. Meanwhile, the

United States began a trend of vast increases in financial assistance and arms transfers to Israel. This increased support indirectly enabled Israel to continue its occupation of Palestinian land and conduct controversial military engagements in Lebanon, Iraq, and elsewhere. Though President Carter worked hard to facilitate the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, even the noteworthy Oslo Accords implemented during the Clinton administration failed to resolve the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Though the current George W. Bush administration supports Palestinian self-determination through a two-state solution and recently attempted to restart peace negotiations, there has been little progress towards a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Chapter three reveals that Western Europe was also instrumental in the creation of Israel. Prior to the 1967 Six-Day War, Western European nations supplied Israel with the bulk of its military hardware as well as considerable financial assistance. However, with the onset of Israel's military occupation of Palestinian land and the subsequent 1973 oil embargo, European nations began the Euro-Arab dialogue to develop sensitivity to Arab political demands and protect their energy interests. The resulting Venice Declaration, which was consistent with UNSC Res. 242, helped move the diplomatic consensus in the United States towards recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination. Since the Oslo Accords, Western Europe has sought to promote a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by subsidizing the institutional development and reform of the Palestinian Authority and by working with the United States, Russia, and the United Nations as a member of the Quartet on the Middle East. Though European media and governments are far more likely to censure Israel for

excessive use of force, violations of Palestinian human rights, or disregard for international law, these actions are primarily declarative in nature. Most European nations maintain healthy trade relationships with Israel and EU diplomatic activity with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains complementary to U.S. diplomacy.

Chapter four examined the prevailing strategic and moral rationales for the nearly unconditional U.S. support of Israel. Without a doubt, many Americans share a strong moral commitment to the state of Israel because of past Jewish suffering, the significance of the biblical holy land, Israel's vulnerability to terrorist attack, and its democratic character. However, moral arguments in favor of strong U.S. support are offset by Israel's morally objectionable conduct towards the Palestinians. Israel's history of preemptive war, its occupation of Palestinian land, and the frequent violations of Palestinian human rights weaken the argument that Israel deserves nearly unconditional support because it adheres to a uniquely high standard of moral conduct. Strategically speaking, the United States and Israel are natural allies because of long-standing security cooperation, strong trade relationships, and shared priorities in the War on Terror. Again, however, strategic arguments in favor of U.S. support for Israel are weakened by the drawbacks associated with nearly unconditional diplomatic, economic, and military support. There is no question that the rise in anti-American sentiment and terrorism over the last two decades is linked to the U.S.-Israeli special relationship. The United States' diplomatic protection of Israel, massive annual financial assistance, and huge military grants are perceived by most Arabs and Muslims as indirect support for Israel's military operations and disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people. Because neither moral nor strategic arguments plainly justify the current

pattern of nearly unconditional U.S. support for Israel, many scholars have concluded that the power and influence of the Israel lobby is responsible for the current levels of support. The lobby exerts influence through a variety of mechanisms.<sup>164</sup> This interest group activity, with its associated domestic political and electoral pressures, is one of the most significant driving forces for the nearly unconditional level of U.S. support for Israel.

Chapter five introduces the basic outlines of a new way forward for U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel and the wider Middle East region. This new way forward consists of three parts: 1) a return to the Cold War strategy of offshore balancing; 2) a diplomatic shift to conditional U.S. support of Israel; and 3) containment of the Israel lobby. With a strategy of offshore balancing, U.S. military intervention in the Middle East would be reserved only for immediate and direct threats to American interests which cannot be resolved by regional allies. This strategy relies on these allies to maintain the balance of power and the flow of Persian Gulf oil and natural gas. The removal of U.S. troops from Iraq along with the adoption of a more multilateral approach would help reduce anti-American terrorism originating in the region and hopefully soften Iran's nuclear ambitions. The shift in U.S.-Israeli relations involves treating Israel as a normal state by making financial, diplomatic, and military assistance contingent on Israeli cooperation with U.S. objectives. If necessary, the United States should use diplomatic and economic leverage to ensure that Israel and the Palestinians complete final status negotiations by adopting a two-state solution acceptable to both parties.

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<sup>164</sup> Note: To review, the Israel lobby pushes for massive U.S. financial aid and diplomatic protection for Israel by financing pro-Israel candidates, demanding input on key national security appointments, legislation, and executive branch decisions, and by saturating the media with pro-Israel perspectives while silencing critics.

Major reductions in financial aid to Israel are advisable over time as well as closer scrutiny of Israeli uses and transfers of U.S. armaments. Of course, the United States should be willing to come to the defense of Israel or a new Palestinian state should either nation's security ever be seriously threatened. Lastly, the power and influence of the Israel lobby can be limited through public financing of elections, competing peace-oriented pro-Israel interest groups, a public commitment to better educate Americans about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and efforts to challenge the Christian Zionist ideology which condones Israeli expansionism. This new way forward is a comprehensive shift in U.S. foreign policy for the Middle East region, a shift that would require serious and sustained commitment for many years to come.

### **Closing Remarks**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has persisted for so long that most observers struggle to envision a path to peace. Extremist Jews and Christians feel Israel is entitled to all the land between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea while extremist Arabs and Muslims continue to reject the legitimacy of Israel and believe the same territory is the rightful home for an Islamic Palestinian state. The expropriation of Palestinian land for Israeli settlement expansion continues every day as well as terrorist plots against Israel and antagonism from Syria and Iran. However, moderates and a majority of the international community support the two-state solution as the most viable path to peace. Such a solution will help dissolve age-old resentments and deliver more peace, prosperity, liberty, and security to Israelis and Palestinians. The United States



possesses the economic and diplomatic leverage to push for a just and lasting resolution to the conflict and would certainly boost its soft power by facilitating the path to peace. The United States has both a moral and strategic obligation to use its power and influence to ensure such an outcome.

There is no adequate or reasonable justification for an open-ended continuation of nearly unconditional economic, diplomatic, and military support for Israel. Strategic and moral arguments do justify a continuing and strong alliance between Israel and the United States. But, as the only major power which consistently protects Israel at the United Nations and supplies it with vast economic and military aid, the United States has indirectly supported the perpetuation of conflict. Western European nations have already taken the lead in supporting Israel's right to exist within defensible borders while deploring its occupation of Palestinian land, violation of Palestinian human rights, and denial of Palestinian self-determination. Now, the U.S. foreign policy of virtually unconditional support for Israel must come to an end. A more balanced foreign policy approach is required, one which respects equally the political and human rights of Israelis and Palestinians and makes U.S. support contingent on Israeli compliance with U.S. policy preferences. The United States should do everything in its power not only to expedite the Israeli-Palestinian peace process but also to cultivate more peaceful and prosperous relations with all Arab and Muslim countries throughout the Middle East.

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## APPENDIX

### UNSC Draft Resolutions Vetoed by the United States to Protect Israel

*Prior to the Nixon administration, the United States never employed its veto power in the U.N. Security Council. The UNSC veto was first used by the United States on March 17, 1970 to censure Southern Rhodesia. The second U.S. veto shielded Israel from censure for attacks on Southern Lebanon and Syria. Since then, the United States has cast its veto 41 times to shield Israel from critical Security Council draft resolutions.*

1. Sept. 10, 1972 (S/10784) —Condemned Israel's attacks against Southern Lebanon and Syria; vote: 13 to 1, with 1 abstention (Panama).
2. July 26, 1973 (S/10974) —Affirmed the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, statehood, and equal protections; vote: 13 to 1, with China absent.
3. Dec. 8, 1975 (S/11898) —Condemned Israel's air strikes and attacks in Southern Lebanon and its killing of innocent civilians; vote: 13 to 1, with 1 abstention (Costa Rica).
4. Jan. 26, 1976 (S/11940) —Called for self-determination of Palestinian people; vote: 9 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Italy, Sweden, Great Britain).
5. March 25, 1976 (S/12022) —Deplored Israel's altering of the status of Jerusalem which is recognized as an international city by most world nations and the United Nations; vote: 14 to 1.
6. June 29, 1976 (S/12119) —Affirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; vote: 10 to 1, with 4 abstentions (France, Italy, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sweden).
7. April 30, 1980 (S/13911) —Endorsed self-determination for the Palestinian people; vote: 10 to 1, with 4 abstentions (France, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).
8. Jan. 20, 1982 (S/14832/Rev.1) —Demanded Israel's withdrawal from the Golan

Heights; vote: 9 to 1, with 4 abstentions (France, Ireland, Japan, Panama, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ).

9. April 2, 1982 (S/14943) —Condemned Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and its refusal to abide by the Geneva Convention protocols; vote: 14 to 1 (Zaire).
10. April 20, 1982 (S/14985) —Condemned an Israeli soldier who shot 11 Muslim worshippers on the Temple Mount of the Haram al-Sharif near the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem; vote: 14 to 1.
11. June 8, 1982 (S/15185) —Urged sanctions against Israel if it did not withdraw from its invasion of Lebanon; vote: 14 to 1. Drafted by Spain.
12. June 26, 1982 (S/15255/Rev.2) —Urged sanctions against Israel if it did not withdraw from its invasion of Beirut, Lebanon; vote: 14 to 1. Drafted by France.
13. Aug. 6, 1982 (S/15347/Rev.1 ) —Urged cut-off of economic aid to Israel if it refused to withdraw from its occupation of Lebanon; vote: 11 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Zaire ).
14. Aug. 2, 1983 (S/15895) —Condemned continued Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, denouncing them as an obstacle to peace; vote: 13 to 1, with 1 abstention (Zaire).
15. Sept. 6, 1984 (S/16732) —Deplored Israel's brutal massacre of Arabs in Lebanon and urged its withdrawal; vote: 14 to 1.
16. March 12, 1985 (S/17000) —Condemned Israeli brutality in Southern Lebanon and denounced Israel's "Iron Fist" policy of repression; vote: 11 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Australia, Denmark, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).
17. Sept. 13, 1985 (S/17459) —Denounced Israel's violation of human rights in the occupied territories; vote: 10 to 1, with 4 abstentions (Australia, Denmark, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ).
18. Jan. 17, 1986 (S/17730/Rev.2) —Deplored Israel's violence in Southern Lebanon; vote: 11 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Australia, Denmark, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ).
19. Jan. 30, 1986 (S/17769/Rev.1) —Deplored Israel's activities in occupied Arab East Jerusalem which threatened the sanctity of Muslim holy sites; vote: 13 to 1, with 1 abstention (Thailand).
20. Feb. 6, 1986 (S/17796/Rev. 1) —Condemned Israel's hijacking of a Libyan

passenger airplane on Feb. 4; vote: 10 to 1, with 1 abstention (Australia, Denmark, France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

21. Jan. 18, 1988 (S/19434)—Deplored Israeli attacks against Lebanon and its measures and practices against the civilian population of Lebanon; vote: 13 to 1, with Britain abstaining.
22. Feb. 1, 1988 (S/19466) —Called on Israel to abandon its policies against the Palestinian uprising that violate the rights of occupied Palestinians, abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and formalize a leading role for the United Nations in future peace negotiations; vote: 14 to 1.
23. April 15, 1988 (S/19780) —Urged Israel to accept the return of deported Palestinians, condemned Israel's shooting of civilians, called on Israel to uphold the Fourth Geneva Convention and called for a peace settlement under U.N. auspices; vote: 14 to 1.
24. May 10, 1988 (S/19868) —Condemned Israel's May 2 incursion into Lebanon; vote: 14 to 1.
25. Dec. 14, 1988 (S/20322) —Deplored Israel's Dec. 9 commando raids on Lebanon; vote: 14 to 1.
26. Feb. 17, 1989 (S/20463) —Deplored Israel's repression of the Palestinian uprising and called on Israel to respect the human rights of Palestinians; vote: 14 to 1.
27. June 9, 1989 (S/20677) —Deplored Israel's violation of the human rights of the Palestinians; vote: 14 to 1.
28. Nov. 7, 1989 (S/20945/Rev.1) —Demanded Israel return property confiscated from Palestinians during a tax protest and allow a fact-finding mission to observe Israel's crackdown on the Palestinian uprising; vote: 14 to 1.
29. May 31, 1990 (S/21326) —Called for a fact-finding mission on abuses against Palestinians in Israeli-occupied lands; vote: 14 to 1.
30. May 17, 1995 (S/1995/394) —Declared invalid Israel's expropriation of land in East Jerusalem as a violation of Security Council resolutions and the Fourth Geneva convention; vote: 14 to 1.
31. March 7, 1997 (S/1997/199) —Called on Israel to refrain from settlement activity and all other actions in the occupied territories; vote: 14 to 1. Drafted by France, Portugal, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
32. March 21, 1997 (S/1997/241) —Demanded Israel cease construction of the settlement Har Homa in East Jerusalem and cease all other settlement activity in

the occupied territories; vote: 13 to 1, with one abstention (Costa Rica).

33. March 26, 2001 (S/2001/270) —Called for the deployment of a U.N. observer force in the West Bank and Gaza; vote: 9 to 1, with 4 abstentions (Britain, France, Ireland and Norway).
34. Dec. 14, 2001 (S/2001/1199) —Condemned all acts of terror, the use of excessive force, and the destruction of properties. Encouraged establishing a monitoring apparatus; vote: 12-1, with 2 abstentions (Britain and Norway).
35. Dec. 19, 2002 (S/2002/1385) —Expressed deep concern over Israel's killing of U.N. employees and Israel's destruction of the U.N. World Food Program warehouse in Beit Lahiya. Demanded that Israel refrain from the excessive and disproportionate use of force in the occupied territories; vote: 12 to 1, with 2 abstentions (Bulgaria and Cameroon).
36. Sept. 16, 2003 (S/2003/891) —Reaffirmed the illegality of deportation of any Palestinian and expressed concern about the possible deportation of Yasser Arafat; vote: 11 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Britain, Germany and Bulgaria).
37. Oct. 14, 2003 (S/2003/980) —Raised concerns about Israel's building of a security fence through the occupied West Bank; vote 10 to 1, with 4 abstentions (Britain, Germany, Bulgaria and Cameroon).
38. March 25, 2004 (S/2004/240) —Condemned Israel for killing Palestinian spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in a missile attack in Gaza; vote: 11 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Britain, Germany, Romania).
39. Oct. 5, 2004 (S/2004/783) —Condemned Israel's military incursion in Gaza which caused many civilian deaths and extensive damage to property; vote: 11 to 1, with 3 abstentions (Britain, Germany, Romania).
40. July 13, 2006 (S/2006/508) —Demand for the unconditional release of an Israeli soldier captured earlier as well as Israel's immediate withdrawal from Gaza and the release of dozens of Palestinian officials; vote: 10 to 1, with 4 abstentions (Britain, Peru, Denmark, and Slovakia).
41. Nov. 11, 2006 (S/2006/878) —Condemnation of Israeli military operations in Gaza and Palestinian rocket fire into Israel. Called for immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and a cessation of violence from both parties in the conflict; vote: 10 to 1, with 4 abstentions (Britain, Denmark, Japan and Slovakia).