

1948 AND THE BOUNDING OF THOUGHT: ZIONIST DISCOURSE, THE NEW
HISTORIANS, AND AMERICAN JEWISH PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS, 1950-2020

by

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ABSTRACT

ZEBULON T. MEFFERD. 1948 and the Bounding of Thought: Zionist Discourse, The New Historians, and American Jewish Public Intellectuals, 1950-2020

(Under the Direction of DR. FRATANTUONO)

The following thesis analyzes American Jewish public intellectuals and their use of the Zionist narrative, the New Historian scholarship, or a mixture of the two in their writing. The political leanings of the public intellectuals, authors, scholars, and journalists, are analyzed through the period, and compared and correlated with public opinion polling and foreign policy legislation (primarily in the form of US aid to Israel). The thesis follows the development of the Zionist narrative in the first several decades as the dominant narrative in the discourse on Israel/Palestine, particularly after 1967. It then details the entrance of the watershed scholarship of the New Historians, and the subsequent challenge to the Zionist narrative and simultaneous validation of dissenting opinions. The thesis then analyzes American Jewish public intellectuals use of the Zionist or New Historian narratives in the twenty first century in which a central model for moderate authors appeared with the potential to shift the window of debate. The thesis argues that the Zionist narrative enjoyed a singular dominant position in the early decades, while the New Historian scholarship effectively challenged the Zionist narrative since the mid-1980s publication of the first two New Historian monographs. The Zionist narrative still remained, though less dominant, and while the New Historian scholarship challenged the Zionist narrative, the New Historian scholarship did not make any measurable change to public opinion or foreign policy, until the past decade. In the past decade, the New Historian narrative played a role in significant public opinion shifts in key demographics.

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Introduction

Since the events of 1948, the Nakba has progressed to denote the essence of what being a Palestinian entails. Even though the term refers to a singular historic event, the consequence of 1948 and the events that superseded that year have rendered the term elastic, as the Nakba is a lived past experience and a nagging reminder of a loss that still pervades the lives of generations of Palestinians. It is the beginning of a long line of catastrophes for the people of Palestine, and the ‘consequences of the Nakba, or the ongoing Israeli system of settler-colonial rule over historic Palestine, are therefore realities of the present and not merely the past’

–H.A.M. Nashef, *Palestinian Culture and the Nakba*

Palestinians have long asserted Israel was birthed on the back of Palestinian dispossession. This dispossession, among Palestinians, is called the Nakba, the “catastrophe.” The long-standing tensions in Palestine leading up to the partition of the land by the newly formed United Nations in the wake of World War II, boiled over into violence between communities. This violence transformed into ethnic cleansing on the part of the Yishuv military as the end of 1947 edged closer to the end of the British Mandate and the partition of Palestine. The violence by the Yishuv military and militias included massacres, mass expulsions, and land seizures. In the wake of this violence, many hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled, fled the violence, or were displaced. With the proclamation of the State of Israel and the defeat of Arab armed forces, a narrative emerged from within the young Israeli state that, without a widely disseminated counter-narrative, became dominant in the following decades. In this context, the Nakba continued through land seizures and further forced population movements.

The understanding that the Nakba is ongoing is a key element in rectifying the inaccuracies of the discourse, that the Israeli (Zionist) narrative projected as historical fact. Home demolitions and home seizures, in the West Bank and Sheik Jarrah respectively, attest to the ongoing nature of the catastrophe for Palestinians. The ongoing Nakba is likewise tied to questions of Palestinian return, also known as the right of return. The portrayal of Palestinians as terrorists in American and media and policymaking serves two opinion bases, international and American. This framing contributes to high levels of support for Israel and perceptions of Israel as a beleaguered state and a dehumanization of Arabs or Arab Palestinians. Ultimately, this contributes to Israel's ongoing acquisition of Palestinian land and ongoing oppression of Palestinians. A component of the enduring Nakba is the very narrative used to describe the events of 1948. This thesis explores the emergence, consolidation, and eventual contestation of this narrative within the work of American Jewish writers and public intellectuals.

In his monumental 1979 work *Orientalism*, Edward Said defined discourse in a way that is precisely relevant herein. Said described discourse as a narrative, a set of assumptions, beliefs, and talking points that even when countered by historical evidence, do not simply dissolve. Discourse has a, "redoubtable durability," weathering challenges relatively unscathed.¹ In other words discourse, according to Lorenzo Veracini, is "well inoculated against the facts."² In the United States, discourse around the 1948 Israel/Palestine conflict maintained a consistent narrative until the mid-1980s. From the earliest writings surveyed in the following chapters, Joseph B. Schechtman's *The Arab Refugee Problem* and Herbert Parzen's article "The Arab

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 6.

² Lorenzo Veracini, "Founding Violence and Settler Societies: Rewriting History in Israel and Australia." In *Israel and Settler Society*, 64-86. (London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2006), 68.

Refugees,” both published in 1952 through to Joan Peters *From Time Immemorial: the Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* published in 1984, to Alan Dershowitz’s *The Case for Israel* published in 2003, to Dennis Ross’s *Doomed to Succeed: the U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* published in 2015, the dominant conversation has been that of the classic Zionist narrative of the conflict. While there were numerous dissenting voices, those voices were greatly outnumbered and the tropes of Zionist discourse overrode and invalidated their dissent.

The official Zionist narrative is a, ‘consistent narrative.’ This narrative consists of a number of claims regarding the events of 1948, which witnessed the creation of the state of Israel on the one hand and the *Nakba* (catastrophe), or displacement of between 600000 and 800000 Palestinians, on the other. These claims are: 1) Zionists accepted as great compromise on their part, the UN Partition Resolution (Resolution 181); 2) Palestinian Arabs rejected the partition and heeded the call of the Grand Mufti al-Husseini, the infamously anti-Semitic Islamic leader, of Jerusalem for war; 3) The flight of several hundred thousand Palestinians in 1947-1948, the *Nakba* was in response to calls by Arab leadership, not Israeli force; 4) Arab unity against Israel existed since Israel’s rebirth in 1948; 5) The 1948 conflict was a David (Israel) versus Goliath (Arabs) conflict both in numbers and arms; and 6) Israel has been seeking peace but Arab intransigence remains the problem.³ As the analysis in this thesis will show, there are more claims that are correlated and associated with this listing, but these six claims constitute the core of the Zionist narrative.

Whereas Zionists and the state of Israel refer to the era as the “War of Independence,” for Palestinians, this period, late 1947 to early 1949, is the *Nakba*. The *Nakba* was and is the

³ Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 8-10.

expulsion of between 600000 to 800000 Palestinians from their homes and lands. Rather than concluding in 1949, H. A. M. Nashef stated that, “The Nakba ‘continues in the form of refugees, dispossession, exclusion from the homeland, occupation and military domination [and] continues as a point of origin rather than a beginning in as much as it continues to dominate what derives from it.’”⁴ This dichotomy of a ‘war of independence’ and a ‘catastrophe’ is the core of the discourse, whether explicitly acknowledged or not. This dichotomy plays out not only within Israel, but especially within American public opinion.

After World War I, the League of Nations established the Mandate for Palestine, administered by the British Empire. As the British Mandate in Palestine was set to end on May 15 1948, violence broke out between the Arab Palestinian and Yishuv communities, for a variety of reasons. During the late stages of 1947 and into early 1948 as the scheduled end of the mandate approached, Yishuv violence took on a decided aggressive and organized flavor. The organized terrorism, violence, and massacres perpetrated both before and immediately after the end of the mandate by the Haganah broadly, and in particular committed by Irgun, and its most militant wing Lehi, were well-known and discussed at the time. By the time the mandate ended and the State of Israel was proclaimed, the initial Nakba, the expulsions and seizure of land, was likewise over.

While the expulsions and land seizures of the initial Nakba had by and large already occurred, after the State of Israel was proclaimed these twin crimes continued. Several of the dissenting authors analyzed in this thesis discuss this continuing Nakba. Several dissenting authors mentioned Josef Weitz, head of the Transfer Committee, along with his views. The

⁴ H.A.M. Nashef, *Palestinian Culture and the Nakba: Bearing Witness* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1-2.

mention of Weitz and his views on transfer (expulsion) were only surpassed by the fact that the young Israeli state formed such a committee in the first place, representing a double indictment. The young Israeli state likewise passed a series of laws that continued, legitimized, and entrenched land and home seizures such as the Land Acquisition Law of 1953, which allowed the expropriation of land and homes that had been left unattended. Present day home seizures are vestiges of the precedent set by the initial seizures and the laws.

As this thesis explores, the Zionist narrative claims emerged and dominated the discourse in the decades immediately after the war. In the mid-1980s, a group of Israeli historians began to seriously challenge these core claims. The works of the New Historians, four Israeli scholars -- Simcha Flapan, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, and Avi Shlaim -- not only directly challenged the Zionist framing of the conflict, but did so using, at the time, newly opened Israeli documentation. Numerous other Israeli scholars followed suit. Nonetheless, thirty-plus years later the Zionist bent of the discourse remained dominant in spite of the New Historians' works creating space for dissent, counter interpretation, and public challenge. This space allowed for validation of dissent and a counter discourse that is highly critical of the Zionist narrative and is gaining authority.⁵ In this new space, post-1986 and the watershed scholarship on the 1948 conflict, the discourse now had a counternarrative, thus splitting the literature into increasingly binary camps. One side of the divide repeated some version of the standard Zionist narrative which included a host of, as Simcha Flapan pointedly titled his 1987 work, 'myths,' while the other camp cited evidence and academic scholarship from over fifty years of research in Israeli, British, American, and other archives.

⁵ Sara Roy, "Reflections on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in U.S. Public Discourse: Legitimizing Dissent," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 2 (2010): 23.

The American Jewish literary landscape saw an analogous binary. Even as early as the 1950s, American Jewish public intellectuals dissented from the Zionist narrative, or at least criticized and questioned it. While multiple scholars have analyzed the Israeli historiography in the context of the Zionist narrative as opposed to the New Historian scholarship, the same has not been done for the American Jewish literary landscape in a definitive way. A number of questions immediately arise when looking at the American Jewish public intellectual literary landscape in the context of the Israel/Palestine and the Zionist versus New Historian discourse. What are these authors writing on the topic? Are they using, citing, reinterpreting the Zionist or New Historian narrative? Are they synthesizing elements of both? How do their differences of written opinion bring them into conflict with one another? How are the American authors that challenge the power and authority of the discourse treated, received, and labeled through the time period? How has the American political landscape influenced their approaches? Is there a noticeable connection between an author's use of the official Zionist discourse, their political identification, and their stance on American foreign policy? In particular, have authors who defined themselves as centrist or moderate accepted the durable discourse, or have they adopted the evidence-based dissent of the New History? All of these questions matter, as the United States provides crucial support for Israel in the form of aid, military support, and shielding Israel via the UN security council.

Sources for this thesis range from well-known media figures such as Alan Dershowitz, Thomas Friedman, Noam Chomsky, as well as those that define themselves as moderate, such as Amos Oz and Peter Beinart. Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein represent the left political spectrum. As an anarcho-syndicalist and a communist, respectively, these two writers' political identifications are beyond the pale of American mainstream liberal/Democrat thought in the

United States. These two, along with similarly leftist authors argue from a position that essentially grew out of or was augmented by the scholarship of the New Historians. Dershowitz and figures like Michael Oren and Dennis Ross represent the pro-Israel Zionist argument in its most noticeable form. All three are conservative politically, and while Ross is a Democrat, his views lean right. This issue of political ambiguity or ‘grayzone’ is a feature of the American political spectrum. For this reason, a broader international political spectrum will be used. In other words, for the purposes of this thesis, left is represented by Anarchist, Communist, Socialist, and Democratic Socialist positions, while right is represented by conservative, libertarian, nationalist, and fascist positions. The moderate/centrist in this case would include many liberals, Democrats, and some moderate Republicans. The American political spectrum contains too many false equivocations, conflations, and a right shifted discourse in general, to be precise in identifying the actual political identification of a given author.

The implications of the discourse are clear from scholars’ engagement with the Zionist claim that there was no plan to remove the Palestinians. A preview of the back and forth of Zionist claims and New Historian scholarship emerges from the New Historian Benny Morris’s endorsement of the claim that there was ‘no plan.’⁶ Despite rejecting nearly all New Historian work, Dershowitz emphasizes Morris’ conclusion, but not the rest of his research. In contrast, Finkelstein famously countered Morris’s conclusion using Morris’s own evidence and quotations of Israeli leadership. Finkelstein quoted Josef Weitz to refute the ‘no plan’ claim. Finkelstein cited Weitz as writing, “It is possible that now is the time to implement our original plan: To transfer them to Transjordan,” shortly after the declaration of the State of Israel.⁷ Finkelstein

⁶ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 83-84.

⁷ Norman Finkelstein, “Myths, Old and New,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 1 (1991): 78.

further noted that the notion of a “plan” was evident even to Aharon Cohen, Arab Department director for Mapam, a main party in the Mandate and later in the young Israeli state. Cohen noted that, “a deliberate eviction of the Arabs is taking place...Others may rejoice, I, as a socialist am ashamed and afraid.”⁸ This back and forth debate remains a major feature of the American historiography on the 1948 conflict. Rather than a mere academic dispute, this discussion has ramifications for political claims-making among Palestinians, as a planned expulsion would be ethnic cleansing, war crime, and violation of international law.

Historians of the United States, American Jews, and Zionism have shown a general consolidation and acceptance of Zionism as a political stance across the course of the twentieth century and beyond. Zionism in the United States, among the American Jewish population, went through many evolutions and iterations. From Eastern European Jewish immigrants bringing their unique brand of Zionism to the American Jewish community in the late 1800s to the various flavors of Zionism just before the 1948 war, American Jews held a wide variety of positions on Zionism. Prior to the establishment of the Israeli state, American Jews’ multiple stances on Zionism and a Jewish state were diverse. Stuart E. Knee offered a succinct yet broad definition of the three main positions that American Jewry took on Zionism before 1948. In a 1977 article, Knee defined the positions as anti-Zionist, Zionist, and non-Zionist.⁹ Anti-Zionists, “opposed immigration,” to Palestine and, “a Jewish polity.” Zionists supported an officially sanctioned home and ethnic state.¹⁰ Non-Zionists were those that opposed the ‘home’ being a state, but

⁸ Norman Finkelstein, “Myths, Old and New,” 80.

⁹ Stuart E. Knee, “Jewish Non-Zionism in America and Palestine Commitment 1917-1941,” *Jewish Social Studies* 39, no. 3 (1977): 209-26.

¹⁰ Knee, “Jewish Non-Zionism in America and Palestine Commitment 1917-1941,” *Jewish Social Studies* 39, no. 3 (1977): 209-26.

supported immigration and/or the “revival there of religio-cultural Judaism.”¹¹ With the founding of Israel, the anti-Zionist position shrank into near nonexistence. The two other positions endorsed the fundamental reality of an Israeli state.

More recently, Caitlin Carenen offered a detailed description of the non-Zionist position and how a person might come to hold the position. The non-Zionist, “supported the idea of developing Palestine in concert with the local Arab population to serve as a cultural home, while rejecting the call for Jewish political sovereignty.”¹² She further posited that, “non-Zionism in the United States centered on its opposition to a nationalist ideology,” a position that is in opposition to Israeli Zionism.¹³ Noam Chomsky filled in the left-wing perspective of the pre-1948 American Jewish Zionism musing that, “part of the Zionist movement was strongly opposed to a Jewish state, favoring some kind of binationalist arrangement. On the left, the goal was Arab-Jewish working-class cooperation to build a socialist Palestine based on cooperatives and worker self-management.”¹⁴ Chomsky described the League of Arab-Jewish Cooperation, which was representative of this sort of binational collaboration.¹⁵ This league also typifies the broad variety within the non-Zionist camp.

¹¹ Knee, "Jewish Non-Zionism in America and Palestine Commitment 1917-1941." 209-26.

¹² Caitlin Carenen, “Complicating the Zionist Narrative in America: Jacob Schiff and the Struggle over Relief Aid in World War I,” *American Jewish History* 101, no. 4 (2017): 441-463.

¹³ Carenen, "Complicating the Zionist Narrative in America," 441-463.

¹⁴ Noam Chomsky, Joel Wainwright, and Oded Nir. “‘There Are Always Grounds for Seeking a World That Is More Free and More Just’: An Interview with Noam Chomsky on Israel, Palestine, and Zionism.” *Rethinking Marxism* 30, no. 3 (2018): 356–367.

¹⁵ Noam Chomsky, Joel Wainwright, and Oded Nir. “‘There Are Always Grounds for Seeking a World That Is More Free and More Just’: An Interview with Noam Chomsky on Israel, Palestine, and Zionism.” *Rethinking Marxism* 30, no. 3 (2018): 356–367.

In the decades after 1948, Zionism increasingly became a part of mainstream American Jewish identity. In a 2016 article in *American Jewish History*, Shaul Magid noted that, “by the 1970s, Zionism,” and here Magid is describing a Zionism somewhere between the Israeli (Nationalist and statist) and the Brandeian (non-nationalist and somewhat non-Zionist) variant, “had become the dominant identity of most American Jews, and surely most Orthodox Jews.”¹⁶ Dov Waxman noted three distinct evolutions in the American Jewish relationship with Israel, rather than discussing the degree of American Jews’ Zionism. Waxman describes the early period 1948-1967 as “disinterest,” supportive overall but not intensely, the middle period of 1967-1977 as “devotion,” with the 1967 victory, the Six Days War against Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, spurring pride and intense support, and the late period of 1977 to the present as “disillusionment,” with the rise of Menachem Begin and Likud, the Lebanon war, and the hardline approach of the 80s and 90s.¹⁷

Scholars tend to describe the historiography of the 1948 Israel/Palestine conflict in terms of Zionist narrative versus New Historian narrative, Zionist versus post-Zionists, or as in the present era, Zionist narratives versus anti-Zionist narratives. The latter comes fully loaded with charges of antisemitism for critics, an equivocation fallacy that became the conservative pro-Israel defense du jour, although not a new term or tactic. Looking at this historiography as one of memory and history or even more pointedly, as mythological memory and historical facts, becomes utilitarian, as there are not two competing historical narratives rather there is the archival history and a mythologized memory. Cultural historians and historians of memory

¹⁶ Shaul Magid, “Shlomo Carlebach and Meir Kahane: The Difference and Symmetry Between Romantic and Materialist Politics,” *American Jewish History* 100, no. 4 (2016): 461-484.

¹⁷ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 33-45.

engaging with this divergent historiography have emphasized its role within the founding mythology of the Israeli state. In a 1995 editor's note to a forum in the journal *History and Memory*, Gulie Ne'eman Arad pointed out, "that the study of history has come to serve future agendas."¹⁸ In the case of the "Israeli historians debate," serving future agendas relates to the grinding, violent, and oppressive occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip and to the ending of this occupation.¹⁹ Baruch Kimmerling noted, when discussing the role Judaism plays in Israel's political mission, historiography can be weaponized in service of managing the memory and present perceptions of a conflict.²⁰

Narrative, memory, history, and mythology are often confused in the course of the founding of a national state. The Zionist narrative of the 1948 conflict as discussed in Israeli historian Uri Ram's piece on Ben Zion Dinur, the Israeli politician, educator, and historian, became part of the state sanctioned education program from 1953 forward.²¹ When created and mythologized, memory is taught to a society as history. Historians may serve the future agenda of correcting inaccurate remembering, though doing so is a politically fraught process. New Historian Ilan Pappé, noted the context that gave rise to the New Historian research stretched back into the early 1970s with developments in the fields of history and sociology.²² He offered a succinct overview of the New Historians' dismantling of the official, "Israeli historiography,

¹⁸ Gulie Ne'eman Arad, "Editor's Note," *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 5.

¹⁹ Arad, "Editor's Note," 5.

²⁰ Baruch Kimmerling, "Academic History Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography," *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 41-65.

²¹ Uri Ram, "Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur," *History and Memory* 7, no.1 (1995): 107-109.

²² Ilan Pappé, "Critique and Agenda: The Post-Zionist Scholars in Israel," *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 73-76.

educational system and media.”²³ In a more general sense, for scholars, the revision of national narratives is often work that involves numerous scholars, building on one another. Alon Confino noted,

the danger of assuming that the representation of memory can speak for itself, without intermediaries. Studies that focus on the representation of memory, while ignoring social practice and transmission, implicitly make an assumption, as we shall see, that the representation is a transparent expression of a historical mentality, of social and political values. In reality, the crucial issue is not what is represented but how this representation has been interpreted and perceived.²⁴

Confino charges scholars with effectively incorporating and giving voice to the initial representation and its transmission, the interpretation of the representation, and the perception of the representation. With this in mind the writings of the American Jewish public intellectuals represent “the transmission,” and public opinion on Israel/Palestine represents the ‘interpreted and perceived’ message. It is for this reason that this thesis will include public opinion polling, in spite of the understood lack of authority of this type of data, to incorporate some notion of perception.

Debate on the Zionist or New Historian narratives flared up repeatedly through the years and shows no sign of abatement. These flare ups represent “a ‘historians’ debate,” in Israel that is indicative of a “definite manifestation of the waning of the Zionist historical narrative and the budding of a new historical consciousness in Israel.”²⁵ Those holding to the old position are

²³ Pappe, “Critique and Agenda: The Post-Zionist Scholars in Israel,” 76-79.

²⁴ Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1392.

²⁵ Uri Ram, “Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood: The Case of Ben Zion Dinur,” *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 118.

seemingly more concerned with collective memory and endorsing nationalist mythology, while those holding the new position, or one that springs from it, are far more interested in an honest appraisal of the founding narrative based on verifiable fact. The ramifications of this “historians’ debate” are far ranging. Given the significance of American support for Israel, if the New History is widely accepted by the American mainstream, Israel is more likely be forced to live up to international law, settle with Palestinians for land, and peace or include them in a bi-national state.

This thesis relies on several partially overlapping historiographies of the events of 1948 that can and should be brought to bear on one another. It examines public intellectuals placed along a political spectrum. It defines public intellectuals as authors who write for a public audience, are offering an intellectual interpretation, and are prominent or well-known members of the American Jewish community. The reasoning for adherence to American Jewish public intellectuals as a source base is flatly pragmatic. Limiting the primary source authors to American Jewish authors limits the analysis to one religious/ethnic community in one nation. The American Jewish authors included were and are the public voices for, in the case of the Israel/Palestine issue in particular, their community in literature, but it was also within this community, the American Jewish community, that this history received extensive debate. Political alignment is determined either by the author’s self-indicated alignment or, when not clearly articulated, by the author’s positions compared with others of like alignment. As mentioned above, a general international political spectrum offers the most utility in this analysis, avoiding the obvious confusions of the American spectrum. Analysis of the American Jewish literature from authors on the left and right of the political spectrum provides a clearer sense of the debate. By analyzing not only the left/right divergence but also the moderate/centrist

treatment of the 1948 conflict, the thesis shows how moderates function variously as supporters of the hegemonic discourse or agents and signals of change.

In order to consider how discourse has ‘real world’ consequences, throughout the thesis, I reference public opinion polling and American foreign aid to Israel. Public opinion polling will help to elucidate the overall mood or perception of the public, or as mentioned above, the ‘interpreted and perceived’ message of the ‘transmission.’ Foreign aid to Israel captures a tangible aspect of American foreign policy. The writings of American Jewish public intellectuals are not the sole or even primary causal mechanism of public opinion or foreign policy; however, these authors’ writings are part of the causal machine. With this in mind, the thesis references numerous political scientists’ and foreign policy scholars’ works, particularly in respect to the correlations between the two elements, public opinion, and foreign policy.

An overarching argument that this thesis forwards is that the Zionist narrative has enjoyed an outsized influence, even today, while the New Historian scholarship has made a considerable impact on the discourse since the mid-1980s. Though the New Historian scholarship did not significantly influence public opinion or foreign policy in the 1990s or early 2000s, it has contributed to a more recent shift, and criticism of the state of Israel has become more common among American Jews and non-Jews. Based upon this larger trend, this thesis makes a three-pronged argument. First, the Zionist narrative created and disseminated myths which affected public opinion and went nearly unchallenged from 1948 to the mid-1980s, effectively solidifying a decades long bias in American public opinion. As the Zionist narrative of 1948 became hegemonic, its essential claims were adopted as unexamined premises and unquestioned facts by many Americans. Second, the disagreement with the Zionist narrative has gone through several phases. Initially, dissenting authors had little scholarship and scant

evidence with which to work, and were consistently invalidated, attacked, and largely written off. The addition of the New Historian scholarship in the 1980s shifted the academic discourse but only minimally influenced public opinion, and held no effect on foreign policy. Nevertheless, dissenting authors mainstreamed the New Historian scholarship to a large degree, and in the past few decades, the Zionist narrative has consistently lost ground in the discourse to the New Historian scholarship. Third, while left-leaning dissenting authors' voices are multiplying, it is the centrist/moderate authors that hold the future of the discourse in their hands. Over time, moderate/centrist authors have shifted from initially parroting the Zionist discourse, to disseminating mixed messages. In the past decade, moderate authors have been presented with a model for a centrist approach characterized by intellectual honesty and engagement with the New Historian scholarship. This new approach suggests that moderates may significantly shift the discourse to the point that one day the Zionist narrative is largely disavowed by the American public.

The time frame for the first chapter runs from writings as early as 1950 that discuss the conflict and pre-1948 issues, to writings from the mid-1970s. The period is bookended by the establishment of Israel and the 1967 Six-Day War, which saw the establishment of Israeli control over the occupied territories and the displacement of perhaps half a million Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. The literary aftermath and effects of the 1967 war, in the United States, would lag by months to years. The chapter reveals the emergence and consolidation of the six major Zionist narrative claims and the existence of some dissent within American Jewish writing. This first chapter ends with the 1984 publication of Joan Peters' *From Time Immemorial*, which was initially received with much fanfare, but quickly received significant criticism.

The second chapter spans a period from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s. This period includes the emergence of the New Historian scholarship and such events as the First Intifada, the First Iraq War, 9/11, the beginning of the Second Iraq War, the beginning of the Second Intifada, and the beginning of the so-called War on Terror. During this period, the Zionist narrative presented its major claims as givens, and scholars explicitly or implicitly adopted, disseminated, and packaged claims as ‘facts,’ making them harder to dislodge from mainstream understanding. Dissenting American Jewish authors increasingly relied on and built from the scholarship of the New Historians. Meanwhile, moderate authors largely served to bound the acceptable discourse by framing the Zionist narrative as the central element of the discourse. This chapter ends with the 2003 publishing of another important Zionist narrative book.

Picking up the timeline from this 2003 starting point, the last chapter of this thesis brings the analysis of this work to the present, revealing the potential for a true shift within American public opinion. This chapter shows Zionist narrators extending the arsenal: Zionists add new ideas from the claims that they state as premise: from this position they deny the Nakba (and tell others they should too), deploy charges of anti-Semitism, and reject the right of return. Left-leaning dissenting authors mainstreamed and expanded the New Historians' use of evidence to understand the Nakba and to understand its ongoing ramifications. Finally, this final chapter shows a divide among moderate/centrist authors with some continuing the moderate legacy and others engaging with the New Historian scholarship, the latter ultimately culminating with a path forward presented by the last author analyzed.

This thesis shows the shifting landscape of the American discourse on Israel/Palestine. It shows the ‘redoubtable durability’ of the Zionist narrative attained despite 70 years of increasing challenge, criticism, discrediting, debunking, and debate. After decades of across the board high

public opinion support, these chapters show an important change is taking place for the future of this discourse in important and specific demographics. Finally, in these pages, a way forward, a way of dislodging the Zionist narrative is found. A model of intellectual honesty, academic integrity, and rigor shows that the author who is likely to have the widest readership has a responsibility and crucially, has power.

Chapter One: Well Inoculated Against the Facts

In 1997, Ilan Pappé, one of the New Historians, offered an insight into the Israeli debate and historiography on the 1948 conflict that has a great deal of utility in the American Jewish context. Pappé wrote of, “a mixture of ideological paradigm, scholarly ethnocentricity, and empirical bookkeeping,” that, “did not begin to be challenged until the 1970s.”²⁶ He went on to write that, “From 1948 until 1967, the Palestinians mostly were ignored as an academic subject matter: here and there they were mentioned as refugees.”²⁷ In essence, Pappé said, Israeli historiography avoided the Palestinians as subjects, 1948 as an area of inquiry, and the Palestinian version of events.²⁸ The American Jewish literary context saw a similar type of narrative with only a small minority of dissenting authors for even longer.

American Zionists followed suit, ignoring Palestinians and the Palestinian narrative, and building an ideological and ethnocentric narrative. The Zionist narrative, typified by selective analysis, lack of evidence, and unsubstantiated claims nevertheless firmly rooted itself from 1948 to roughly the 1980’s. There is a conspicuous lack of empirical evidence and when Zionist narrators provide such evidence, it is categorically selective and suspiciously deficient in rigorous scrutiny. The American Jewish public intellectual landscape shared much of the ‘ideological paradigm,’ as Zionism, after the founding of Israel, was largely the default position, with some variance discussed below. ‘Scholarly ethnocentricity,’ or a bias in scholarship based upon an affinity with the ethnic background of the scholar, was likewise prevalent and often

²⁶ Ilan Pappé, “Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians: Part I: The Academic Debate,” *Journal of Palestine studies* 26, no. 2 (1997): 31.

²⁷ Pappé, “Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians,” 32.

²⁸ Pappé, “Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians,” 30-33.

quite staggering as even minor self-reflection or logical adherence would punch holes in the Zionist claims. Scholars also lent their weight to Zionist works that turned out to be little more than propaganda. As Pappé stated and as discussed below, while dissenting opinions were present from the outset of the period, the Zionist narrative in the American Jewish context stood as nearly unopposed, as **the** unquestioned facts that comprised the basis of the discourse.

In the literature that follows below, from American Jewish public intellectuals, there is a striking similarity to Pappé's insights. With the withering away of the anti-Zionist position and with, in spite of obvious differences, the similitude of non-Zionist and Zionist support for the young state, Zionist narrators had little in the way of pushback or resistance from within the Jewish community. With this lack of sizable opposition, Zionist narrators were able to, by trial and error, present their claims and arguments seeing which versions stayed with the communal memory most effectively. In other words, they were able to fill the minds of their own communities with Zionist rhetoric because Jewish communities, were still understandably, very supportive of the young state. The rhetoric within Zionist circles and the Jewish community, was slowly absorbed in the American population at large. In contrast, African American support for Zionism quickly dissipated, particularly after 1967, with Black radical recognition of anti-imperialist resistance.²⁹ Waxman cited Charles Liebman, an eminent scholar of Jewish identity, noting that as of the 1977 publication of Liebman's book *Pressure Without Sanctions*, Israel and concern for Israel had become a central element in American Jewish identity.³⁰ In this chapter, the progression is relatively chronological through the period from 1948 to the mid-1980s. At the

²⁹ Kristian Davis Bailey, "Black-Palestinian Solidarity in the Ferguson-Gaza Era," *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2015): 1017.

³⁰ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel*. (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 25.

same time, this chapter analyzes the Zionist and dissenting authors while showing the wide consensus of support for Zionism from left to right, particularly after 1967. Zionist narrators in the United States, like their Israeli counterparts, developed a one line or talking point style of argumentation, that far from being an argument simply state their conclusions as facts of the historical record, a sort of begging of the question. Conversely, in this environment Zionist narrators were able to experiment with various lines of argument and combinations of claims. Meanwhile, dissenting authors worked with what sources and scholarship they had and developed an evidence-based argument. They received little in the way of pushback as a result of Liebman's insight, in a sort of feedback loop, with dissenters shouted down or attacked for disloyalty.

Part I: 1948 in American Newspaper and a Legendary Author

While the time frame between the 1948 and the first authors surveyed herein was four years, the messaging was unapologetically pro-Zionist in spite of dissenting opinions. Numerous articles in the major American newspapers were published carrying all sorts of news on the emerging situations, both the birth of the state of Israel and the Nakba. There is no real analogue in this early period to the watershed scholarship of the New Historians that broke open the discourse in the late 1980s. The closest analogue came in the form of newspaper articles that included statements from the Arab states or from Palestinians themselves.

An example of these early articles, a *New York Times* article published on May 27, 1948 offered a thin, yet revealing version of the 1948 Nakba narrative, written by the Arab states. In response to the United Nations Security Council resolution passed on April 17th of the same

year, a ceasefire resolution, the Arab states issued a statement. Within the statement, the Arab states detailed the Zionist use of the resolution and the lack of agreement on both sides to forward the Haganah (Yishuv fighting forces) occupation of numerous large cities and towns.³¹ Further, the statement charged that the Haganah and other Zionist forces were in fact attacking Palestinian civilians.³² Added to these charges, the statement cited two major massacres of Palestinian civilians by Zionist groups, Deir Yassin and Nasiriddin.³³ The Arab states likewise charged terrorist groups within the Zionist fold for perpetrating attacks regularly throughout the period, without end.³⁴

This article, by including the statement of the Arab states and the Israeli response shows that historical record did not lack a narrative divergent from the now familiar Zionist narrative. In 1948, the embryonic version of the Palestinian perspective was available in a major publication, albeit ignored in the mainstream media thereafter. The Palestinian and Arab narrative, from its first iterations, made the same or strikingly similar charges and claims that the New Historian scholarship verified decades later. Among the reasons cited for the continued Arab presence and resolve: mass attacks on civilians, massacres, occupation of Arab majority cities and towns, and widespread terrorism. It was no secret, in other words, that the Palestinian version of events diverged dramatically from that of the Zionists. Added to this are the interesting results of a polling question posed to Americans in September of 1948, about who in the Israel/Palestine conflict was more in the right. While a full 29% answered that the Jews

³¹ "Text of the Arab Statement on U. N. Cease-Fire Move and Israel's Reply," *New York Times*, May 27, 1948.

³² "Text of the Arab Statement," *New York Times*, May 27, 1948.

³³ "Text of the Arab Statement," *New York Times*, May 27, 1948.

³⁴ "Text of the Arab Statement," *New York Times*, May 27, 1948.

(Yishuv) were, 17% answered that the Arabs (Palestinians) were more in the right.³⁵ While it seems obvious that a poll strictly of American Jews at the time would have been far more skewed toward the Yishuv, it is telling that at this early date the results were even close, still the responses were over ten points higher for the Jews.

The earliest work by an American Jewish public intellectual that is included herein is by Hannah Arendt. Arendt needs little in the way of introduction, but it suffices to say that she was both respected and infamous in the Jewish community. She is well known for her works on fascism, authoritarianism, and the Holocaust. Her *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was and is an influential and controversial work, as were her articles that became *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Lesser known are her discussions of the 1948 war and its aftermath. In an article published in 1950, "Peace or Armistice in the Near East?," she offered a nuanced view of the issue from this early period. Arendt wrote of the splintering of the Yishuv and Arab Palestinian relations, "This had nothing to do with neighborliness between Jewish and Arab villages which was the rule rather than the exception for a long time, which survived the disturbances of 1936-1939 and came to an end only under the impact of Jewish terrorism in 1947 and 1948."³⁶ That Arendt blamed Jewish terrorism for the end of 'neighborliness' is strikingly distinct from later portrayals of Palestinian culpability. Her comments, based upon an understanding of the relationship between the two communities, are best illustrated by her writing. Arendt observed that, "No neighborliness could alter the fact that the Jews regarded the Arabs as an interesting example of folk life at best, and as a backward people who did not matter

³⁵ *Fortune Magazine*, Roper Fortune # 69: Anti-Minority Sentiment in the U.S. Today, Question 21, The Roper Organization, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1948)

³⁶ Hannah Arendt, "Peace or Armistice in the Near East?" *The Review of Politics* 12, no. 1 (1950): 66.

at worst, and that the Arabs considered the whole Jewish venture a strange interlude out of a fairy tale at best, and, at worst, an illegal enterprise which one day would be fair game for looting and robbery.”³⁷ She spoke here of the “neighborliness” that was, as seen above, the rule rather than the exception.

Arendt wrote further about the various peace proposals, meetings, and offers. In this instance she pointed out that she was writing about these examples due to the common assertion that there were no Arabs willing to work with or cooperate with the Yishuv. She wrote of a 1913 meeting and a 1922 meeting in Cairo in which Arab leaders were clearly ready to work with and cooperate with Yishuv leaders.³⁸ She went on to write of negotiations mediated by Judah Magnes between Yishuv leaders and Egypt in which the Egyptians replied that they were willing to serve as a liaison between the Yishuv and the other Arab nations.³⁹ Arendt reminded her readers of Azzam Bey, who was secretary of the Arab League in 1945 when he stated, “the Arabs (were) prepared to make far-reaching concessions toward the gratification of the Jewish desire to see Palestine established as a spiritual and even a material home.”⁴⁰ She noted that Azzam Bey and those supporting his statement were a minority just as those in Judah Magnes’ camp on the Yishuv side, but her point is that there were viable and active participants for peace and cooperation that Israel ignored. Arendt made use of a letter by Judah Magnes to the editors of *Commentary* in October of 1948. Magnes pointed out,

³⁷ Hannah Arendt, “Peace or Armistice in the Near East?” *The Review of Politics* 12, no. 1 (1950): 67.

³⁸ Arendt, “Peace or Armistice in the Near East?” 71.

³⁹ Arendt, “Peace or Armistice in the Near East?” 71.

⁴⁰ Arendt, “Peace or Armistice in the Near East?” 71.

It seems to me that any attempt to meet so vast a human situation except from the humane, the moral point of view will lead us into a morass. ... If the Palestine Arabs left their homesteads 'voluntarily' under the impact of Arab propaganda and in a veritable panic, one may not forget that the most potent argument in this propaganda was the fear of a repetition of the Irgun-Stem atrocities at Deir Yassin, where the Jewish authorities were unable or unwilling to prevent the act or punish the guilty. It is unfortunate that the very men who could point to the tragedy of Jewish DP's as the chief argument for mass immigration into Palestine should now be ready, as far as the world knows, to help create an additional category of DP's in the Holy Land.⁴¹

This quotation is an important inclusion as the atrocity propaganda would remain an element of the Zionist narrative for years. Magnes' argument here is penetrating as it foregoes the accuracy of the claim of atrocity propaganda, and hammers at the fact that the atrocity happened and would naturally induce fears. Arendt had apparently heard the claim and her inclusion of this excerpt shows that there were those, even as early as 1948 and 1950, that were critical, skeptical, and suspicious of Zionist claims.

While Arendt was skeptical of Zionist claims, she also engaged in "both sides" rhetoric. Rather than taking a clear pro-Palestinian or pro-Israel stance, she repeatedly pointed out the violence and harmful rhetoric of both of the communities. In spite of taking the middle ground, Arendt's words show clearly that even as early as 1950, there were American Jewish public intellectuals that were quite skeptical of the claims made by Zionists and the young Israeli state. Arendt's inclusion of early peace negotiations and cooperative negotiations likewise show that it

⁴¹ Hannah Arendt, "Peace or Armistice in the Near East?" *The Review of Politics* 12, no. 1 (1950): 77.

was known that there were options for peaceful cooperative negotiation. All of this contradicts the Zionist narrative directly.

Part II: The Early Zionist Narrative and Early Dissent

One of the earliest books on the Israel/Palestine conflict provides an entry point into the first two decades of Israeli state existence. The Zionist narrative in its earliest form in American literature, when juxtaposed with early dissenting writings, was directly contradicted on several of its claims. Regardless of early debate, Zionist narrators often repeated the claims nearly verbatim with little in the way of evidentiary support. As the Zionist narrative hammered home the claims through repetition in literature, these basic claims became well known and taken as the accurate historical record.

In 1952 Joseph B. Schechtman wrote one of the first of full book-length treatments of the 1948 conflict and its consequences. Schechtman was a long-time Revisionist, a supporter of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and Jabotinsky's ideological commitment to the concept later to be called Greater Israel, a loosely biblical imagining of the land of Israel, today this would encompass Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and most of Jordan. The Revisionist position has always been a right wing and extremist endeavor. Schechtman wrote *The Arab Refugee Problem*, with this right-wing ideology in the background. The book was one of the first places that the "Arab call" claim of the Zionist narrative first appeared.⁴² The "Arab call" is the claim that Arab leadership called on Palestinians to flee their homes to make way for battle. With this in mind, a careful

⁴² Walid Khalidi, "Why Did the Palestinians Leave, Revisited," *Journal of Palestine studies* 34, no. 2 (2005): 43-44.

reading of *The Arab Refugee Problem* will yield the first insights into the narratives used in the Israel/Palestine 1948 conflict discourse.

The Arab Refugee Problem is an excellent rendering of the Zionist narrative. Seven pages in, Schechtman offered the orthodox line in his description of the Arab expulsion. He claimed, “virtually all of Haifa’s Arab population left the city. They did so because they were told to do so by their leaders.”⁴³ Schechtman, in the following pages, cited several other sources and writers, both Arab and non-Arab, that all apparently parrot the claim that the Palestinians fled, in collusion with their leadership in order to facilitate an Arab counter.⁴⁴ In conjunction with the “Arab call” claim, Schechtman used another common Zionist deflection of the Deir Yassin massacre. He claimed that this was an, “unfortunate, single incident of war,” that precipitated, “tales of imaginary massacres...spread to whip up fear and panic.”⁴⁵ He made the point that this supposed fear mongering helped to exacerbate the ongoing flight. This claim often goes hand in hand with the “Arab call” claim.

Schechtman offered another of the Zionist narrative lines, the “Arab intransigence” claim. This refers to the Zionist claim that Arab stubbornness and calcified views are the main and central obstacle to peace. He stated, “the Arab delegations exhibited an intransigent attitude, and with renewed vigor began echoing the very same demands they had been voicing for the past three years.”⁴⁶ Similarly to his above claims, Schechtman connected the intransigence to another part of the Zionist narrative. He wrote, in his estimation, of the Arabs' intention of using the

⁴³ Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), 7.

⁴⁴ Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem*, 9-11.

⁴⁵ Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem*, 11.

⁴⁶ Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem*, 115.

refugee issue as a, “trump card,” in their political games.⁴⁷ He ended this section with a call on Western powers to use economic warfare of sorts to discipline the Arab states into, “cooperation.”⁴⁸

While his writing is clearly the container for the Zionist narrative that was to become pervasive in the 1948 Israel/Palestine discourse, his political view or affiliations tell a deeper tale. As Schechtman was an associate and secretary to Ze’ev Jabotinsky, whose views on Palestine and Palestinians lean extreme to say the least, the first American Zionist author to offer the narrative is rightly labeled an extremist. While extreme Zionist activism is not at issue here, he maintained close ties to an ideological Zionism that moved further and further right of the issue. The idea of a Jewish state on both banks of the Jordan or Greater Israel as it is now known, comes out of Jabotinsky’s circle, and is a feature of current political rhetoric in Israel. The need to justify the 1948 violence and tragedies is an inherent feature of the Revisionist notions.

Years later, the basis of the Zionist narrative appeared relatively unchanged, although it was a little streamlined. The writings of Herbert Parzen, a Polish-born American Rabbi, reveal entrenched Zionist claims. Parzen’s 1969 article, “The Arab Refugees,” echoed Schechtman’s sentiments and Zionist narrative at large. Parzen wrote of how the Arab leadership, “incessantly exhorted the people to depart ‘temporarily,’ and to hasten their departure, atrocity rumors were circulated in which the Jews were pictured as rapists, murderers and plunderers. So the population fled in panic.”⁴⁹ Easily seen here is a short form combination of the “Arab call” and

⁴⁷ Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), 122.

⁴⁸ Schechtman, *The Arab Refugee Problem*, 122.

⁴⁹ Herbert Parzen, “The Arab Refugees: Their Origin and Projection into a Problem (1948-1952),” *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 4 (1969): 294.

the “atrocious propaganda” of Schechtman. Deeper into his discussions of Israel’s peace seeking, Parzen repeatedly used various versions of the “Arab intransigence” claim. One of these is in relation to the claim that the Arab states were using refugees as pawns of sorts, Parzen wrote, “Arab governments have shut their minds.”⁵⁰ Parzen’s claim is in the context of the Israeli motions, rejected by the Arabs, that Israel would accept a number of refugees and the Arab states should absorb the rest.

As if to punctuate his essay, Parzen ended with numerous Ben-Gurion quotes. Among them is a succinct statement of the “Arab call” claim. Parzen quoted Ben-Gurion as saying, “not a single Arab was expelled from the country...the aggressors were Arabs...On instructions from the Mufti...nearly all of them fled.”⁵¹ As if to justify Schechtman’s claim above, Parzen again quoted Ben-Gurion, writing, “Their rulers have learned to exploit the refugees as a political weapon against Israel.”⁵² In a short book that Parzen wrote in 1962, he offered a short version of these claims detailed above. Parzen used his chapter on the founding of the state of Israel to repeatedly push various “Arab intransigence” claims.⁵³ In addition, Parzen offered the “David versus Goliath” claim, writing, “Outnumbered, poorly armed, unaided,” the Yishuv defeated the superior force and won the day.⁵⁴ He likewise made the “Arab call” claim in the same short section writing, “The majority of Arabs fled the country, urged by their leaders to abandon

⁵⁰ Parzen, “The Arab Refugees: Their Origin and Projection into a Problem (1948-1952),” *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 4 (1969): 314.

⁵¹ Parzen, “The Arab Refugees,” 322-323.

⁵² Parzen, “The Arab Refugees,” 323.

⁵³ Parzen, “The Arab Refugees,” 113-121.

⁵⁴ Parzen, “The Arab Refugees,” 117.

temporarily their homes.”⁵⁵ Parzen’s writings from the 1960s show that little changed in the Zionist narrative other than streamlining and combining of claims.

Offering a dissenting take on the discourse, a different narrative, the scholar Don Peretz wrote an article entitled “The Palestine Refugee Problem,” in 1959. Peretz offered a contrasting, contradicting narrative of the refugee crisis and the fighting surrounding it. Peretz wrote, “It was during this era of civil struggle -- in the early months of 1948 -- before the attack of the neighboring Arab nations that the refugee problem erupted.”⁵⁶ This stands in stark contrast to the claims of the Zionist narrative. The refugee problem arose before the attacks, months before even. Peretz is, in this case, unique as an American Jewish author as he was present in Israel at the time of the events. Peretz continued, “There were many incidents in which not only Jewish terrorists but regular Jewish forces caused Arab villages to evacuate.”⁵⁷ Peretz’s statement here contrasts the common Zionist caveat to admitting the Deir Yassin massacre. Zionists often offer a conditional admission that it was the Stern Gang or like terrorist groups only, groups that had later been disbanded or hunted down. He related hearing, “Haganah loudspeaker trucks circulate through the Arab sectors...warning Arab inhabitants to find safety in flight.”⁵⁸ Peretz’s inclusion of this first-hand memory of the period, albeit anecdotal, is telling as it indicates a reversal of the Zionist narrative, not Arab leaders on the radios but Yishuv forces on the streets telling Palestinians to flee.

⁵⁵ Parzen, “The Arab Refugees: Their Origin and Projection into a Problem (1948-1952).” *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 4 (1969): 117.

⁵⁶ Don Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 4 (1959): 220.

⁵⁷ Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” 220.

⁵⁸ Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” 220.

In a particularly clear rebuke of the “Arab call” claim, Peretz wrote, “a perusal of the Hebrew press at the time shows that many Arab leaders, and most of the neighboring Arab nations, actually ordered the Palestinian Arab community *not* to leave their homes.”⁵⁹ Peretz moved on to other issues in his article, but one that he addressed that later authors touch on is that of appropriated Palestinian property. He stated, “of the nearly 400 Jewish settlements established in the first five years of the state, 350 were situated on abandoned Arab property.”⁶⁰ Peretz further explained that nearly half of the citrus produce in the early years was harvested from appropriated Arab groves and made up one of the main forms of export income.⁶¹ Similarly, Peretz pointed out that two-thirds of the arable land procured by the young Israel was formerly Palestinian land.⁶² While it may seem less grave of an issue to violence and war, the above land appropriations are violations of the Geneva Convention. Further these appropriations are near the heart of the refugee issue, as many families’ land was appropriated, there is nowhere for them to return to, without a return of land and property. Peretz’s work is representative of the early dissenting views that were not widespread in the discourse.

Part III: Post-1967 and Support Across the Spectrum

The 1967 war had the effect of solidifying Israel as a regional power. The 1960s and 1970s saw a heroic image of Israel amongst American Jewry. The “lightning victory,” of the

⁵⁹ Don Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” *Jewish Social Studies* 21, no. 4 (1959): 220.

⁶⁰ Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” 224-225.

⁶¹ Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” 225.

⁶² Peretz, “The Palestine Arab Refugee Problem,” 225.

1967 war in particular cemented this image in the minds of American Jews.⁶³ As Waxman notes, this conflict's aftermath brought about the 'devotion' period among American Jews. While there were still dissidents, the overwhelming sentiment was, after the 1967 war, one of unwavering support for Israel among American Jews. This period also saw the United States government and military relationship with the young "new" power shift from one of comfortable yet distant ally into a close proxy or junior partner.

American foreign aid to Israel, especially military aid, grew administration after administration.⁶⁴ It is no surprise that, in the United States, the 1967 war and the power dynamics immediately after this conflict yielded a wealth of works on Israel, Israel/Palestine, and Zionism. This period saw American Jewish authors who considered themselves 'leftist' supporting Israel and the Zionist narrative, collaborating with or echoing authors who considered themselves right/conservative. The following three authors are examples of precisely this period. One can describe these types of works as justified by and celebratory of the successes of Israel and as propaganda for Zionism. The Zionist narrative was transmitted by rote in this period, with the more lengthy claims becoming ever shorter or combined.

The edited volume *Israel, the Arabs, and the Middle East* was precisely the type of work featuring authors described above. Irving Howe, a well-known leftist and prominent member of the Democratic Socialists of America, edited the book. In a review, the book was cast as, "a reflection and expression," of what the reviewer termed a, "counter-offensive," to dissenting

⁶³ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* Princeton, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 26.

⁶⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service*, Dec 4, 2009. 21-23.

opinions.⁶⁵ A look at the articles included in the book, taken from the pages of *Dissent*, *Commentary*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and similar publications show the Zionist narrative repeated ad infinitum in the period after the 1967 war.

Marie Syrkin, Brandeis University Professor Emeritus of Humanities, typifies the broad coalition of Zionist authors in this period, coming from a Zionist Socialist background. In a chapter in the edited volume, *Israel, the Arabs, and the Middle East*, Syrkin penned a variation of the Zionist narrative in her “Who are the Palestinians?” Syrkin, a life-long Zionist and daughter of a famed Zionist theorist, offered a variety of Zionist talking points to justify the 1948 violence. In broad, short, and authoritative strokes, she stated the Israeli state was created, “without dispossessing a single Arab.”⁶⁶ In an article she wrote for *Commentary Magazine*, Syrkin posits, “There is a crucial distinction between fleeing *to* a land because of desperate need, and fleeing *from* the same land without need,” implying that the Jewish immigration was justified while the Arab flight was not.⁶⁷

In the same article, she compared the various explanations for the flight, writing, “the Arab leaders had ordered the exodus; the British had instigated it; the Mufti’s ‘atrocities-propaganda’ had backfired, the Irgun massacre at Deir Yassin had terrified the Arabs.”⁶⁸ Several issues are apparent with her formulation. Firstly, she forwarded the “Arab call” claim, adding the “atrocities-propaganda” seen with several other authors of this early period. Additionally, the issue

⁶⁵ Abdullah Schleifer, “Decline of Dissent?”, Review of *Israel, the Arabs, and the Middle East* by Irving Howe and Carl Gershman. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 1 (1972): 128–129.

⁶⁶ Marie Syrkin, “The Palestinian Refugees: Resettlement, Repatriation, or Restoration?” in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* ed. Irving Howe and Carl Gershman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 178-179.

⁶⁷ Syrkin, “The Arab Refugees: A Zionist View,” *Commentary*, January 1966.

⁶⁸ Syrkin, “The Arab Refugees: A Zionist View”

here is that Deir Yassin, as she admits, happened. Other massacres likewise were known of and circulating in the milieu of the conflict, but it is difficult to acknowledge the atrocity and in the same breath call it propaganda, insinuating that the fear stoked by publicizing the facts of the events was unfounded. Once more, combination of claims into short talking point assertions makes them easy to digest and more complicated and time consuming to take apart.

Returning to her chapter, Syrkin wrote, “the Arab states in pursuit of their political objectives have refused all constructive proposals.”⁶⁹ She repeated the “Arab intransigence” claim with the addendum that is often attached to it, the use of the Palestinian refugees as a political pawn. Syrkin continued her ruminations on the Zionist view of the 1948 conflict discussing the cause of the flight deciding that those who fled, “listened to the mufti.”⁷⁰ This can be read literally as the “Arab call.” In an interesting inclusion, near the conclusion of the chapter, Syrkin quoted the infamous Golda Meir statement that, “when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us,” only then will the conflict be resolved.⁷¹ This is a combination of the genocidal Arab trope and the “Arab intransigence” claim in a short talking point style.

Joseph Neyer was Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University. Writing in the same volume as Syrkin, Neyer joined Syrkin in Zionist narrative repetition. Neyer wrote, “No ‘original sin’ was committed in 1917, or 1922, that could justify an uncompromising and genocidal Arab intransigence and refusal to seek reasonable and humanist solutions.”⁷² This is obviously the

⁶⁹ Marie Syrkin, “The Palestinian Refugees: Resettlement, Repatriation, or Restoration?” in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* ed. Irving Howe and Carl Gershman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 157.

⁷⁰ Syrkin, “The Palestinian Refugees: Resettlement, Repatriation, or Restoration?” 159.

⁷¹ Syrkin, “The Palestinian Refugees,” 184.

⁷² Joseph Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’: A Few Historical Notes,” in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* ed. Irving Howe and Carl Gershman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 146.

“Arab intransigence” claim combined with the genocidal hatred trope, as Syrkin exhibited above. Zionists of this era, the early 1970s, were fond of this combination. Neyer later in his chapter offered an explanation of “Arab intransigence.” He pushed a pseudo-psychological interpretation of the colonial period and the dissolution of the Ottoman empire.⁷³ Neyer basically stated that the Arab mind views Israel as the devil and further, “One does not make real peace with the devil.”⁷⁴

In an ironic argument, Neyer reasoned, “The myth of Zionism’s original sin and the image of an inevitably expansionist Israel are...a systematic ideology (or mythology)...that justifies the intransigent enmity of the Arabs.”⁷⁵ This argument is ironic due to the fact that the 1967 expansions had just taken place, and the settlement of several areas in Israel/Palestine began during the time of the publishing of this edited volume. Neyer’s chapter contains a good example of another early Zionist argument. He attempted to make the point that the Arab population increase in the years leading up to the 1948 conflict led to Palestine being, “a land of Arab immigration.”⁷⁶ He then added the well-worn Zionist narrative that is often linked to the previous claim. Neyer wrote that the Jewish immigrants, “drained the swamplands and marshes, eliminated malaria, and irrigated the rocky soil that nobody had been able to live on for many years.”⁷⁷ To put it another way, Jewish immigration, investment, and infrastructure building invited Arab immigration. He claimed that Arab Palestinian displacement, by purchase, from

⁷³ Joseph Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’: A Few Historical Notes,” in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* ed. Irving Howe and Carl Gershman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 155-156.

⁷⁴ Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’” 155-156.

⁷⁵ Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’” 152.

⁷⁶ Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’,” 141-142.

⁷⁷ Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’” 142.

their land, “was negligible,” compared to Arab landlord foreclosures.⁷⁸ This previous claim is common and makes no difference on the larger argument; it is deflection and distraction.

Gil Carl Alroy was a professor of political science who wrote frequently on the Israel-Palestine issue. Joining Neyer and Syrkin writing in the edited work, *Israel, the Arabs, and the Middle East*, Alroy made the “David versus Goliath” claim that neither Syrkin and Neyer touched on. Alroy wrote, “Arab armies seemed to move aggressively forward, while the Israelis were on the defensive. The Israeli army was just then being formed; its arms were only beginning to arrive; Israel faced simultaneously the regular armies of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, the Anglo-Arab Legion of Transjordan, detachments from Saudi Arabia, and thousands of irregulars in Palestine itself; it had no navy, air force, or armor, and virtually no artillery.”⁷⁹ This article appeared in the edited work only five years after the 1967 conflict. One wonders why Alroy reminded readers of the supposed David of Israel in 1948 when Israel was the Goliath in 1967, it seems like a strange time to make such a claim. Nevertheless, Zionist narrators often revert back to this claim.

Commentary Magazine’s Contribution to the Discourse

Commentary Magazine has long been a conservative bastion in the American Jewish literary milieu. From the earliest articles cited here, *Commentary* featured the most conservative of American Jewish perspectives and authors. In the December 1951 issue, Judd Teller wrote an

⁷⁸ Joseph Neyer, “The Myth of Zionist ‘Original Sin’: A Few Historical Notes,” in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* ed. Irving Howe and Carl Gershman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 142.

⁷⁹ Gil Carl Alroy, “The Middle East Conflict and International Politics,” in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* ed. Irving Howe and Carl Gershman (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), 368.

article titled “Israel Faces its Arab Minority Problem: The Native Within the Gates.” Within the article, Teller wrote, “a basic deterrent is the obdurate attitude of the Arab states on the question of peace.”⁸⁰ This version of the “Arab intransigence” claim was published 3 years after the 1948 conflict, and runs in contradiction to Arendt’s piece cited above.

Robert Alter was an American professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Writing in *Commentary* magazine in 1968 he made similar claims as Teller. Alter wrote, “Perhaps the most central of these facts is the enormous lack of symmetry in the positions of the two antagonists. The Israeli position on the Arabs over the years has on occasion been stupid, blundering, unfeeling, but it has also showed aspects of common sense, even humanity, especially since June 1967, and, by and large, one can say that its guiding principle has been enlightened self-interest. The Arab position on Israel, by contrast, has been blind, fanatic, self-deceptive, self-destructive, harshly inflexible, and in many respects morally obscene.”⁸¹ Alter made a long form “Arab intransigence” claim, contrasting this with the supposed Israeli peace seeking. He continued adding the oft-included correlate to the intransigence claim stating, “Arab doctrine on Israel and the Jews, steadily inculcated for two decades, cannot be the basis for any politically workable policy but is only, to borrow Norman Cohn's telling phrase, a ‘warrant for genocide.’”⁸²

J.L. Talmon was Professor of Modern History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. While he is Israeli and not American, he is included as the article is in a well-known American

⁸⁰ Judd Teller, “Israel Faces its Arab Minority Problem: The Native Within the Gates,” *Commentary*, December 1951.

⁸¹ Robert Alter, “Rhetoric and the Arab Mind,” *Commentary*, October 1968.

⁸² Alter, “Rhetoric and the Arab Mind.”

Jewish publication. Talmon, like Alroy, offered a version of the “David versus Goliath” claim. He stated, “It was then called upon to go through the supreme test of fighting the invading armies of half a dozen states.”⁸³ Talmon moved on, joining Teller in the pages of *Commentary*, making the intransigence claim writing, “By adopting an attitude of absolute and total intransigence, they reduced the Yishuv's alternatives either to giving up Zionism or to carrying out its program to the full extent in the teeth of Arab opposition. Since no give and take was possible, since even such modest forms of Zionism as a measure of immigration and settlement encountered maximum resistance, there seemed no choice but to aim at maximum strength. God had hardened the heart of Pharaoh.”⁸⁴ Talmon’s inclusion of the Torah reference is an interesting one that is not to be missed by Jewish readers. Finishing with Talmon, he made a common correlate claim blaming Arabs for the whole issue writing, “Had the Arabs not resisted the setting up of Israel in armed combat, there would have been no Arab refugee problem and the territory of the Jewish state would have been much smaller, perhaps too small and with too many Arabs living in it to make it viable.”⁸⁵ Talmon insinuated that the Palestinian refugees are responsible for their own plight, a sentiment often heard from right wing Israelis.

Part IV: Post-1967 non-Zionism

The pages of *Commentary Magazine* did occasionally offer the dissenting viewpoint, although it is clear from the letters to the editor that these dissenting views were marginalized.

⁸³ J.L. Talmon, “Israel Among the Nations,” *Commentary*, June 1968.

⁸⁴ J.L. Talmon, “Israel Among the Nations.”

⁸⁵ J.L. Talmon, “Israel Among the Nations.”

The dissenting or non-Zionist authors found themselves attacked from all sides, and accused of betrayals. Arie Bober was the National Committee Member of the Israeli Socialist Organization for New York. He was a particularly controversial figure among *Commentary* readers as their letters to the editor attest. Nevertheless, the editors included a short writing from him clarifying his position on several items, one of which is relevant to this work. Bober writing of Zionism and 1948 stated, “The Zionist movement, I pointed out, was and is a colonizing movement that displaced and expelled the indigenous population of Palestine and that, with the State of Israel as its instrument, continues to do so today.”⁸⁶ In a similar manner, Shlomo Aveneri’s article “The Palestinians and Israel” was offered by the editors of the publication as a counterpoint. Aveneri was an Israeli political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He wrote, “The claim, made by Israel, that the plight of the refugees from the 1948-49 war has been cynically exploited by the Arab governments is, of course, true, though it obviously also serves as a convenient alibi for the Israelis to do nothing about the refugees themselves.”⁸⁷ Here Aveneri pointed out the absurdity of the Zionist claim of refugee exploitation by Arabs, when Israel does precisely that. Aveneri further pointed out the ideological nature of the argument or claim, that Palestinians never really existed as a people. He wrote, “On the other hand, those, like Golda Meir, who continue to ask ‘Who are the Palestinians?’ seem increasingly out of touch with reality; for it is Palestinian organizations that send their members to kill and maim Israelis, and it is against members of Palestinian organizations that Israeli patrols lie in nightly ambush in the Jordan Valley. Under such conditions anyone still questioning the existence of Arabs who consider

⁸⁶ Aerie Bober, “The Middle East and the Intellectuals,” *Commentary*, October 1970.

⁸⁷ Shlomo Aveneri, “The Palestinians and Israel,” *Commentary*, June 1970.

themselves Palestinian is talking ideology, not facts.”⁸⁸ Aveneri’s point brings into focus the claim made famous by Golda Meir, but parroted by many on the right in America and Israel, then picked up in an infamous academic fraud surveyed later herein.

Yet another dissenting narrative came from Noam Chomsky. Chomsky is Professor Emeritus at MIT, where he began teaching in 1955, and a life-long dissident and critic of domestic and international policies and actions. In his 1974 *Peace in the Middle East?* Chomsky detailed the expropriation of Palestinian land, writing, “Of the approximately 400 settlements established after 1948, some 350 on refugee property; about two-thirds of the cultivated land acquired by Israel had been Palestinian-owned.”⁸⁹ Further he wrote, “By 1958, about 250,000 acres of the land were expropriated from Palestinians who remained in Israel.”⁹⁰ He ended with the statement, “Thousands of Bedouins were expelled.”⁹¹ Chomsky’s statements are hard to square with the Zionist narratives of peace seeking; how does one intend peace and reconciliation when one is actively involved in theft of the property of the very peoples and impairing the return to their property and land, upon which the peace hangs.

Chomsky made note of the terrorist activities that helped precipitate the flight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. He wrote of Irgun and Stern group, “The role of the Jewish terrorist bands in the recent fighting can be seen from a listing of their activities.”⁹² Among these numerous bombings of civilian areas and targets, numerous shootings in various

⁸⁸ Shlomo Aveneri, “The Palestinians and Israel,” June 1970.

⁸⁹ Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?: Reflections on Justice and Nationhood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 14.

⁹⁰ Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?* 14.

⁹¹ Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?* 14.

⁹² Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?* 63-65.

locales, and numerous attacks on buses and pedestrians.⁹³ Chomsky closed his ruminations on the Jewish terrorists noting that their, “special attention to Haifa, a workers’ city where the Arabs had committed almost no attacks, indicates the intention to arouse Arab workers to anti-Jewish reprisals.”⁹⁴ These remarks are about the late December 1947 to early 1948 attacks, which led up to the violence immediately preceding the founding of Israel and the refugee crisis. This terrorism is most often omitted from the Zionist narrative or minimized completely.

Part V: Propaganda and Dissent in the 1980s

As the ‘devotion’ period Waxman posited was transforming into the ‘disillusionment’ period, both Zionist and dissenting authors continued to write, with the dissenting camp becoming increasingly rigorous in its research and the Zionist camp entrenching into its claims. While those who dissented looked for academic research and archival material, Zionist narrators leaned into the propaganda of the narrative. Zionist narrators continued to perfect the talking point delivery of their claims at the same time some Zionist narrators were producing large propagandistic works that received academic support.

Asking, in 1976, whether the respondents viewed the PLO as, “freedom loving or terrorists,” 86% answered for terrorists with 14% answering for freedom loving.⁹⁵ The same question posed with Israel in the question rather than the PLO yielded, unsurprisingly, the

⁹³ Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?: Reflections on Justice and Nationhood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 64.

⁹⁴ Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?* 65.

⁹⁵ *Time Magazine*, Time Soundings Poll # 8460: Politics/Middle East, Question 166, Yankelovich, Skelly & White, (Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 1976)

precise opposite result, 86% of respondents viewing Israel as freedom loving and 14% viewing Israel as terrorists.⁹⁶ The mild difference in 1948 had by the mid-1970s become a gulf. It is hard to point to the works of Zionist narrators alone and seriously claim causation, but there is some amount of effect. Between documented bias in mainstream news coverage, non-Jewish writers, Christian writers, and of course Jewish writers, the American public had no shortage of opinions and stories that make these polling responses expected.

Considering the different questions is relevant, however, in spite of the difference in the questions from 1948 and 1976, the general flavor of the sentiments portrayed are striking and rest on similar assumptions and perspectives that normally color the opinions individuals form. The 1948 poll asks a right/wrong, good/bad, or support/oppose type of question, the 1976 poll asks a similar dualistic question, who are the “good guys” and who are the “bad guys,” reflecting the changing terminology and rhetoric surrounding conflicts. This represents a moment where American Jewish community support for Israel was at its height, the American public at large also supported Israel or at least overwhelmingly saw Israel as the “good guys,” and the trend of ever increasing aid to Israel, with Israel receiving over 2 billion in 1976 in combined United States foreign aid, began to reach modern levels.⁹⁷ In spite of the combined forces of support, aid, and the beginning of decided internal censorship in the Jewish community, the 1980s came to see renewed dissent and new research. This period would also spawn an entrenched Zionist narrative.

⁹⁶ *Time Magazine*, Time Soundings Poll # 8460: Politics/Middle East, Question 166

⁹⁷ Jeremy M. Sharp, “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,” *Congressional Research Service*, Dec 4, 2009. 21-23.

Chomsky touched on the common consequence of dissent among American Jewish authors. He wrote, “Amos Oz introduces his essay by deploring the fact that, ‘anyone who stands up and speaks out in these days risks being stoned in the market place and being accused of Jewish self-hate or of betraying the nation or desecrating the memory of the fallen.’”⁹⁸ This is the early discussion of the “self-hating Jew” trope often hurled upon Jewish dissidents of Israel or Zionism.

In a similar vein, the lifelong dissident countered the oft-cited Zionist combined claim of intransigence and political use of the refugees. He stated, “Their problems, their demands, their rights and prospects have not been seriously discussed in the West and are cynically disregarded. In fact, the Palestinians are at best an annoyance and an embarrassment to every powerful group in the Middle East and to the great powers as well. I think it no exaggeration to say that all of the national states directly involved in the area are united in the hope, open or secret, that the Palestinians will somehow quietly disappear.”⁹⁹ This statement stands in stark contrast to the Zionist contentions on the same subject.

The above-mentioned dissent and research are perfectly represented in the following work. Steven Glazer, a PhD candidate at Georgetown University at the time, wrote a short article in 1980, several years before the New Historians’ works. It functions as a nice baseline of the facts of academic inquiry, as much of the source material that he cited is considerably older than the 1980s. Glazer’s work shreds any modicum of deniability that Zionist narrators may have regarding the facts of 1948. In regards to the “Arab call” claim, which, as seen above, was a

⁹⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?: Reflections on Justice and Nationhood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 54.

⁹⁹ Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East?* 97.

Zionist favorite, Glazer discussed the work of Erskine Childers. Glazer noted, “Childers studied radio broadcast transcripts from the relevant time period and found that not only were there no orders to evacuate, but in fact the populace was continually urged to remain. This is positive evidence which directly contradicts the Zionist position. Moreover, at the same time that Arab radio stations were appealing to the inhabitants not to leave, Zionist radio stations were urging the population to flee, by exaggerating the course of battle, and, in some cases, fabricating complete lies.”¹⁰⁰ With Glazer citing Childers, one wonders why anyone would still be using the “Arab call” claim. If one remembers that Glazer cited evidence published in 1961, the question becomes a retroactive one. Why were the Zionist narrators using the “Arab call” claim if, in 1961, that claim was thoroughly discredited and shown to be completely spurious.

Furthermore, Glazer discussed Schechtman’s book from above and in particular Childers’s analysis of the Arab sources in Schechtman’s work. Glazer wrote,

These quotes and statements all imply Arab complicity in, if not initiation of, the exodus. Childers went back to these sources, checking them for the full meaning, and found that they were taken out of context. In fact, on closer examination, these statements were meant to indicate the opposite of what the Zionists tried to imply. What had in effect happened was that by carefully selecting those words which fit their story, these Zionist historians had edited history.¹⁰¹

Again, so much for Arab sources and therefore, so much for the Zionist narrative of Schechtman.

¹⁰⁰ Steven Glazer, “The Palestinian Exodus in 1948.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9, no. 4 (1980): 101.

¹⁰¹ Glazer, “The Palestinian Exodus in 1948,” 102.

Returning to Childers, Glazer turned to the massacre propaganda claims, linked to the “Arab call” claim. Glazer stated, “Childers maintains that it was the Zionists who disseminated these stories, at the time when the Arab sources were urging calm. He cites carefully composed ‘horror recordings’ in which a voice calls out in Arabic for the population to escape because “the Jews are using poison gas and atomic weapons.”¹⁰² Finally, Glazer corroborated Childers findings with military historian Edgar O’Ballance noting,

Israeli vans with loudspeakers drove through the streets ordering all the inhabitants to evacuate immediately, and such as were reluctant to leave were forcibly ejected from their homes by the triumphant Israelis whose policy was now openly one of clearing out all the Arab civil population before them.... From the surrounding villages and hamlets, during the next two or three days, all the inhabitants were uprooted and set off on the road to Ramallah.... No longer was there any "reasonable persuasion". Bluntly, the Arab inhabitants were ejected and forced to flee into Arab territory.... Wherever the Israeli troops advanced into Arab country the Arab population was bulldozed out in front of them.¹⁰³

This evidence, offered by Childers and O’Ballance, corroborates the anecdotal but first-hand account statements of Peretz discussed above. All of these quotations and evidence Glazer marshalled directly confront the Zionist narrative as patently false, at least in relation to the “Arab call” claim, the Zionist attempts to marshal their own “sources” to prove the aforementioned claim, and the atrocity myth claims.

Glazer’s paper, published in 1980, thoroughly dismantled at least one of the main claims of the Zionist narrative and one of its correlates. While an answer to the question above may be

¹⁰² Steven Glazer, “The Palestinian Exodus in 1948,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9, no. 4 (1980): 105-106.

¹⁰³ Glazer, “The Palestinian Exodus in 1948,” 111-112.

beyond the scope of this work, it is worth noting again, why did Zionist narrators use these claims, the “Arab call” and atrocity myth claim, when as early as 1961, with the publication of Childers research, Zionist narrators could not claim they were unaware. It is true that it would be an unreasonable expectation that all or even many Zionist narrators would read Childers, but it is likewise equally unreasonable to assume that no Zionist narrators read Childers. This simple mental exercise illustrates that while all Zionist narrators could not likely have known, as time moved forward from the publication of Childers’ work more Zionists should have become aware of the discrepancy between their narrative and the research disproving it. It is a simple thing to look at the facts and change one's view or conversely look at the facts and verify one’s point of view. Glazer’s work brought this research back into the discourse, even if Zionist narrators missed or ignored Childers. The why of Zionist intentions and actions is, as stated earlier, beyond the scope of this work, but after Childers’ 1961 research and then Glazer’s 1980 work citing Childers, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Zionist narrators were not concerned with the facts of the historical record, rather they seem only concerned with their narrative and its defense.

The next major conflict event in the region was the Lebanon War of 1982. This conflict and its causes, genesis, and results are far beyond the scope of this work, but it is related directly with regard to the nature of the writing on Israel/Palestine after this conflict that damaged Israeli reputation worldwide and in the United States, both among Jews and non-Jews. The writing after this conflict is similar to that after 1967, unsurprising albeit critical rather than celebratory. It is nearly across the board, either highly critical of Israel and skeptical of the narratives in general, or as with the last work surveyed, damage control propaganda that seeks to repair the image of Israel and the Zionist narrative that justifies the status quo and Israeli policies.

While Glazer's writing represented a research driven dissent in the decade of the 1980s, the Zionist narrative during this decade simply re-entrenched itself with thinly repackaged claims. Joan Peters wrote *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*. The book, published in 1984, became a relatively instant best seller and was widely read and praised. Peters' book seemed to be the panacea to the problem Zionist narrators had, growing dissent and scholarship showing the Zionist narrative to be false. The book seized on the Golda Meir quote from above, "Who are the Palestinians?" The book was an attempt to provide an air of scholarship to the claim embedded within Meir's words, namely that this group never existed as a people and further that the Arab presence in Palestine was as recent of an arrival as that of the Jews. The book has continued to be a source of these two claims in spite of thorough discrediting of the claims made within and nearly all of the cited sources by several scholars.

So, what does Peters say about the 1948 conflict? Obviously, she was a Zionist narrator, but what did she write in this influential book? To start with, Peters made a great many Zionist claims in the book so only a small sampling will fit or be necessary. The first claim that would be noticed by the casual reader is only twelve pages in, Peters wrote, "At the time of the 1948 war, Arabs in Israel too were invited by their fellow Arabs--invited to 'leave' while the 'invading' Arab armies would purge the land of Jews."¹⁰⁴ As should be evident by now, this is the standard "Arab call" claim, thoroughly discredited by Childers and Glazer above. Just before this, Peters claimed, "When Israel's independence was declared in 1948, the Arab forces combined to crush it."¹⁰⁵ This claim can be read two ways, one as the "David versus Goliath" claim in a more

¹⁰⁴ Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 12-13.

¹⁰⁵ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 12.

nuanced form, and the other is historical revisionism, with the ongoing conflict in late 1947 and early 1948, before the declaration of the state of Israel, ignored and rumors of Yishuv ethnic cleansing of Palestinians erased as reasons for Arab involvement.

Further into her writing, Peters parroted a claim that is familiar by now. She stated, “Reports of Jewish retaliation were broadcast in ‘exaggerated’ accounts that ‘helped to create the atmosphere’ to ‘encourage flight’ of the Arabs.”¹⁰⁶ This is the often included addendum to the “Arab call” claim, that massacre propaganda aided and precipitated the Arab flight. Of course, as Glazer pointed out above, this is widely known to be untrue in relation to Arab leaders or forces, it is however, known to be true of Yishuv forces seeking to drive more Palestinians out. This is a clever but deceptive variation of the Tu Quoque fallacy, levying a charge against your opponent that either they have accused you of or that you have been guilty of. Peters ended the book with a series of, according to her and Zionists, myths followed by her asserted truths. Among these “myths” that she delineated, that Palestinians have any identification with the land in question, that this identity was centuries old, that the recently arrived Jews displaced Palestinian Arabs and stole their lands, and that Jewish terrorists and their acts of violence precipitated the Palestinian Arab flight.¹⁰⁷ While this is not the entire list, it suffices to show the nature of the arguments in the book. The truths that she juxtaposed against these “myths” are basically the opposite, that is that Palestinians have no identification with the land, they were not there for centuries, the

¹⁰⁶Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 354-355.

¹⁰⁷ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 392.

Jewish immigrants did not displace or steal, and Jewish terrorists did do violence, but was not a major factor in the flight.¹⁰⁸

Peters' book cannot be properly represented or classified only with the above included quotations and citations. The book's major theme is simply that the Palestinian Arab population before 1948 was a recent immigrant group; the corollary being that Palestinian refugees have no real claim. There are chapters that look at the population from the mid nineteenth century to 1918.¹⁰⁹ Several chapters later she looked at Arab in-migration in Western Palestine.¹¹⁰ A chapter on "illegal Arab immigration" gives the reader some sense of the driving point of Peters' work.¹¹¹ Peters wrapped up her writing with a chapter on "Muftism," a favorite what-aboutism of Zionist narrators and defenders.¹¹² It must be stressed that the book was and is a massive fraud. Norman Finkelstein, discussed in a later chapter, made a name and infamy for himself when, "he started checking the references—and it turned out that the whole thing was a hoax, it was completely faked."¹¹³ Nevertheless, the book's claims or variations of them are still repeated by Zionists from time to time.

The book received acclaim from the likes of Saul Bellows, Barbara Tuchman, Elie Weisel, and numerous right-leaning American Jewish intellectuals. To add an air of intellectual

¹⁰⁸ Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict over Palestine* 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 392-393.

¹⁰⁹ Peters, *From Time Immemorial* 196.

¹¹⁰ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 234.

¹¹¹ Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 269.

¹¹² Peters, *From Time Immemorial*, 360.

¹¹³ Noam Chomsky, "The Fate of an Honest Intellectual," Excerpted from *Understanding Power*, The New Press, 2002, 244-248.

rigor, Daniel Pipes reviewed the book for *Commentary*, giving the work the academic thumbs up as it were.¹¹⁴ Pipes is a historian, receiving his PhD from Harvard. Pipes wrote, “The conventional picture has it that Jewish immigrants bought up Arab properties, forcing the former owners into unemployment. Miss Peters argues exactly the contrary, that the Jews created new opportunities which attracted emigrants from distant places.”¹¹⁵ This idea that Pipes discussed, the Yishuv creating something from nothing in the desert goes back to before 1948, but Peters and then Pipes, gave it a pseudo-academic air of authenticity. He ended his review with, “Thus the ‘Palestinian problem’ lacks firm grounding. Many of those who now consider themselves Palestinian refugees were either immigrants themselves before 1948 or the children of immigrants. This historical fact reduces their claim to the land of Israel; it also reinforces the point that the real problem in the Middle East has little to do with Palestinian-Arab rights.”¹¹⁶ This is the tone of much of the positive reception of Peters’ book. The book, as Peters has since passed away, is still lauded in Zionist circles and reviled amongst most historians and pro-Palestinian groups. The book has been cited 314 times at last count.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

As shown above, numerous authors, despite having no body of scholarship as solid as that of the New Historians, were skeptical of the Zionist narrative and wrote in this manner. It is also clear that the prevailing messaging of a growing body of right leaning American Jewish

¹¹⁴ Daniel Pipes, "Refugees?" *Commentary (Pre-1986)*, 07, 1984, 60.

¹¹⁵ Daniel Pipes, "From Time Immemorial, by Joan Peters (Book Review)." *Commentary*, Jul 01, 1984, 60.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Pipes, "From Time Immemorial, by Joan Peters (Book Review)." *Commentary*, Jul 01, 1984, 60.

¹¹⁷ Google Scholar

intellectuals was either directly Zionist or flavored by Zionist talking points. Early left leaning intellectuals tended to support Israel, as support for Israel in the first two decades after 1948 was ubiquitous amongst most American Jews. As time, conflict, and policies went on more of the left became skeptical of the Zionist narrative and/or critical of Israeli actions and policies. Many who once considered themselves left shifted right for various reasons, but importantly retained their Zionist narratives. The New Historians' works began to come out in the latter years of the 1980s, just after Peters' book received acclaim.

One thing that is quite clear is that from the outset, Zionist narratives have been disseminated broadly. From Schechtman's book, where one apparently sees that first iteration of the "Arab call" claim, to Peters' book roughly thirty years passed, the Zionist narrative changed very little overall, with the main features listed in the introduction left intact. One can clearly see a shortened talking point form of the "Arab call" claim and combined claims evolving throughout the period as well. A good example of experimentation of arguments however, is the evolution of the "Arab immigration" claim from Neyer's short article in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* to the expansive version contained in Peters' *From Time Immemorial* that attempted to make the claim appear academic and well researched. While Neyer suggests and touches around the issue, Peters, twelve years later, digs into the argument in an encyclopedic work, albeit thoroughly spurious and discredited. Likewise, Schechtman's "Arab call" claim has over a chapter supporting it, his "Arab intransigence" claim has several chapters that are tied into this claim. Later authors detailed above, such as Neyer, Peters, and others used shorter, less expansive versions of these two claims, often in one or two sentences or combined with other claims. Zionist narrators were able to create talking points.

Zionist narrators had room to experiment with claims, rhetoric, propaganda, and arguments due to the relative monolithic support for Israel among American Jews well into the 1980s. Israel was assumed to be in the right and praise worthy, as the polling questions included above insinuate, as percentages in the Jewish community were likely higher. Meanwhile, those American Jewish authors, predominantly left leaning, who were critical or suspicious of Zionist claims, used growing scholarship, data, and literary surveys to build stronger, more precise, and more broadly relevant arguments and critiques of the Zionist claims and Israel more broadly. From Arendt to Peretz to Chomsky to Glazer, rigorous academic inquiry and logical argumentation were the focus, but building a body of evidence takes time and care. The Zionist narrators leaned into their claims more heavily over the decades, even as the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community, as Waxman noted, evolved from one of disinterest with support, to devotion, to one of disillusionment.

At the same time, public opinion by the late 1970s was decidedly pro-Israel, both in the American Jewish community and the American population at large. Foreign policy in the form of foreign aid to Israel, grew in each decade from 1948 to the mid-1980s, with the total combined aid reaching 2 billion by the late 1970s.¹¹⁸ While, as mentioned earlier, the Zionist narrative cannot be said to be the central causal mechanism for these two facts, this narrative and its proponents reflect a part of an interdependent web of the causal mechanisms. The Zionist narrative in this period, 1948 to the mid-1980s, had a decided effect on the public's opinion of the situation as shown above. The widespread support for Israel amongst the American population factored into the ease of legislation of billions in foreign aid to Israel. As William B.

¹¹⁸ Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Congressional Research Service*, Dec 4, 2009. 21-23.

Quandt noted, the Israel/Palestine opinions of the constituency of United States senators are nearly sure predictions of voting on issues of support for Israel.¹¹⁹ Additionally, United States power considerations played a major role in aid funding for Israel, as it suits US interests as a “great power.”¹²⁰ This issue will be taken up in the following pages and chapters. Nevertheless, it is apparent the Zionist narrative played an important role in informing and influencing American public opinion on Israel/Palestine. Additionally, “the PLO was cast as both a hardcore terrorist group and an agent of Soviet influence,” under the Reagan administration providing a further convenient narrative when combined with the Zionist narrative, manufacturing consent for US foreign policy to aid the state of Israel.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 15.

¹²⁰ Yu Wang, “Interest or Influence? An Empirical Study of U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,” *Israel Affairs*. 27:4, 664-674.

¹²¹ Seth Anziska, “Neoconservatives Rising: Reagan and the Middle East.” In *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 163.

Chapter Two: Redoubtable Durability

“In the eyes of most Israelis, somebody who documents Jewish atrocities in the War of Independence or any other Israeli-Arab War, is necessarily an ‘anti-Zionist’ or worse, a ‘post-Zionist,’ an enemy of himself, of his people and of his own country.”¹²² This quote, written by Ilan Greilsammer in his 2012 study of the New Historians’ participation in Israeli politics, represents the reality for dissidents from the Zionist and official Israeli narrative. The period from the mid-1980s through to 2003 saw the watershed scholarship of the Israeli New Historians. These ‘new’ historians were the first to analyze the Israeli and IDF archives that had, much as the United States releases its archival documentation after a set period of time, declassified and released many thousands of documents that related to the pre-1948 period, the 1948 violence and declaration of the state of Israel, and the years following. The archival opening began in the late 1970s and continued well into the 2000s. Among these documents, the New Historians found evidence that shredded and destroyed all of the Zionist narrative claims they had each grown up with in Israel as a founding narrative. Regardless of the quote above, and its reality on the ground, these scholars changed the face of the debate and the discourse on the 1948 violence, Israeli statehood, and the Nakba for Palestinians.

This chapter looks at the New Historian period, their works as they appeared in the American Jewish public intellectual literary context, and the Zionist response. The New Historian scholarship gave dissidents in the American context new ammunition in the discourse on 1948. As a result, the following pages detail the changing rhetoric, arguments, and evidence used by dissenting authors, as these authors put the insights of the New History to use. This

¹²² Ilan Greilsammer, “The New Historians of Israel and their Political Involvement”, *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem* 23, (2012)

chapter argues that: 1) Dissenting authors' writing, argumentation, and evidence evolved into a more robust form of dissent; and their evolving arguments, based on the New Historian scholarship, had some effect on public opinion. 2) Zionist claims and arguments changed very little in this period, as if the New Historian research presented no challenge, though Zionists added a redeployed attack of the 'self-hating' Jew who spoke out against the state's official account. This attack had real world consequences. 3) Finally, it is within this period that the final left/right divide on the Israel/Palestine issue approached solidification. While never a universal divide, left leaning American authors in this period challenged Israel and the Zionist narrative, and right leaning authors staunchly supporting Israel adhered to the Zionist narrative. Centrist and moderate authors offered mixed messages.

A sampling of the New Historians work, brief as it needs to be, will be instructive as a contextual comparison to keep in mind while looking at the discourse in its American Jewish iteration. Simcha Flapan's 1987 book, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* is a first-rate sample. Flapan's book was divided into chapters that deal with the seven main myths of Zionism regarding the birth of the nation and by extension the Nakba. Flapan countered directly the Arab "order" theory, as he calls it, by declaring that, "The recent publication of thousands of documents in the state and Zionist archives, as well as Ben-Gurion's war diaries, shows that there is no evidence to support Israeli claims. In fact, the declassified material contradicts the "order" theory, for among these new sources are documents testifying to the considerable efforts of the AHC and the Arab states to constrain the flight."¹²³ Flapan next tackled the claim of peace seeking since 1948. Flapan found there to be sufficient evidence to destroy this myth and that the

¹²³ Simcha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 85.

sheer volume of proposals, contracts, and negotiations made by Arab leaders and others were too vast to analyze in a single chapter.¹²⁴ Flapan included a brief summary by Avi Shlaim, whose work will be examined below, on the subject of one particular episode. Flapan quoted Shlaim, who described one Arab leader's proposals writing, "...Zaim gave Israel every opportunity to bury the hatchet and lay the foundations for peaceful coexistence." Shlaim goes on to state that the failure and the accountability for the failure, "...must be sought not with Zaim but on the Israeli side."¹²⁵ Flapan's work was textbook "new" history, countering Zionist claims.

Avi Shlaim argued that the orthodox history is no more than the propaganda of a settler colonial conqueror. He insisted that the history of 1948 in general and the Nakba specifically must be closely scrutinized and revised in order to ascertain a clearer history. Shlaim's data driven troop counts of Israeli and Arab forces during the 1948 conflicts were empirically damning for the David versus Goliath Zionist claim. After laying the myth bare, Shlaim concluded that, "...at each stage of the war, the IDF significantly outnumbered the Arab forces ranged against it, and by the final stage of the war its superiority ratio was nearly two to one."¹²⁶ As Shlaim compellingly stated, Israel was no David, and the Arab forces were no unified Goliath.

Shlaim countered the peace seeking claim, by citing documentation from the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He stated that unsurprisingly to the informed, "these files burst at the seams with evidence of Arab peace feelers and Arab readiness to negotiate with Israel from September

¹²⁴ Simcha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 201.

¹²⁵ Flapan, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities*, 211.

¹²⁶ Avi Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 254.

1948 onward.”¹²⁷ When describing the aforementioned trove of evidence of Arab willingness, proposals, and offers, Shlaim continued stating that, “each of the neighboring Arab states was prepared to negotiate with Israel directly and prepared to bargain about both refugees and borders.”¹²⁸ Shlaim mentioned *The Road Not Taken: Early Arab-Israeli Negotiations* by Itamar Rabinovich, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States. Shlaim argued, “in every crucial respect Rabinovich's account undermines the claim of the Zionist narrators, that Israel encountered total Arab intransigence and confirms the revisionist argument that Israeli intransigence was the much more serious obstacle on the road to peace.”¹²⁹

Benny Morris was the most influential, the most widely known, and the most problematic of the “new” historians. His *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, published in 1987 is a monumental work that thoroughly lays a portion of the Zionist narrative in the sepulcher, the idea of the ‘Arab call.’ Morris stated that, “the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, **not by design** (author’s emphasis), Jewish or Arab. It was largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears of the protracted, bitter fighting that characterized the first Israeli-Arab war; in smaller part, it was the deliberate creation of Jewish and Arab military commanders and politicians.”¹³⁰ It is the ‘largely a by-product of Arab and Jewish fears,’ that cuts to the heart of the Zionist claims, the violence played the largest role in other words. Morris’ conclusion of displacement, “not by design,” was the problematic issue, thoroughly discredited and empirically

¹²⁷ Avi Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 300.

¹²⁸ Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” 300.

¹²⁹ Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” 301.

¹³⁰ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 286.

countered repeatedly. Nonetheless, his research was accurate and his work is widely cited as it shows how the violence of the war caused the flight of the Nakba.

Ilan Pappé, another of the New Historians, shows that the Israeli archives do indeed show a plan. He stated, “The Israeli documents...show clearly that, contrary to claims made by historians such as Benny Morris, Plan Dalet was handed down to the brigade commanders not as vague guidelines, but as clear-cut operative orders for action.”¹³¹ Pappé has been a tireless activist for Palestinian rights, and has written extensively on the ethnic cleansing and war crimes of 1948. To offer more breadth of critique, Pappé, when discussing the reasons for Palestinian “rejection” or hesitance regarding the partition observed that, “Resolution 181 was ‘a hasty act of granting half of Palestine to an ideological movement that declared openly already in the 1930s its wish to de-Arabize Palestine.’”¹³² Clearly, Palestinians’ “rejection” had grounds in real concerns. Flapan showed, in his discussion of the “acceptance of peace,” that the Yishuv leadership only accepted what was beneficial to their cause while rejecting, “unhesitatingly,” any of the provisions of the partition that benefited the Palestinian cause.¹³³ Further, Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin, the leader of the Irgun underground militia, are both shown to have only accepted the partition as a first step toward what is known as “greater Israel,” with Begin particularly musing that the partition would precipitate expansion, “after the shedding of much blood.”¹³⁴ The story of 1948 is much more layered and complex than the Zionist narrative

¹³¹ Ilan Pappé, “The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine studies* 36, no. 1 (2006): 17.

¹³² Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2006) 34-35.

¹³³ Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987), 30-33.

¹³⁴ Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*, 30-33.

presents. The New Historians scholarship directly countered all of the Zionist claims listed in the introduction of this thesis.

Turning to American public opinion in this period, public intellectual writing, news coverage, and specific conflicts contributed to Americans' wide-spread endorsement of the state of Israel. A Harris survey question repeated through 1970, 1980, and 1987 revealed close to 80 percent of the American population agreed that, "Israel is a small, courageous, democratic nation, which is trying to preserve its independence."¹³⁵ In a later Gallup poll, as the mid-1980s became the 1990s, public opinion polling on sympathies for Israel versus Palestine showed a steady increase as a percentage.¹³⁶ In the same data set from Gallup, in 1988/89, support or sympathy for Israel polled at 37 percent to 15 percent supporting or sympathizing with Palestine.¹³⁷ In 1991, with the Gulf War and Saddam Hussein's missile attacks against Israel, support/sympathy for Israel rose to 64 percent.¹³⁸ During the First Intifada (1987-1993), support/sympathy for Palestine dropped to as low as 7 percent.¹³⁹ Polling of American Jews likewise revealed widespread support for Israel over Palestinians. In a *Los Angeles Times* poll in 1988, 73 percent of American Jews answered in support of Israel as a government and 80 percent supported Israelis as a people, 26 percent supported Palestinians, and just 9 percent supported the PLO.¹⁴⁰ As suggested in chapter one, American Jewish public opinion support for Israel was

¹³⁵ Amnon Cavari and Guy Freedman, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel: From Consensus to Divide*. (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 19.

¹³⁶ Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx>

¹³⁷ Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx>

¹³⁸ Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx>

¹³⁹ Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx>

¹⁴⁰ Eytan Gilboa, "American Jews and Non-Jews: Comparative Opinions on the Palestinian Uprising." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring, 1990): 168.

considerably higher than the population at large. While the variety of polling organizations offered slight variation on the percentages of support/sympathies, it is clear that support/sympathy for Israel, as opposed to Palestine, remained high even when shifting during the early 1980s, into and through the mid-1980s, and into the early 1990s. This was the American public opinion milieu into which the New Historian scholarship entered.

Part I: First Iraq War and First Intifada

Two main events, the First Intifada and the Gulf War, were essential components in Americans' broad understanding of the Middle East and Israel-Palestine. These two events coincided with, as seen above, some of the highest levels of public opinion support for Israel among the American population. The First Intifada began in late 1987 and ended in September of 1993. Running concurrently with the middle of this conflict, the first Iraq War also began in August of 1990 and ended in February of 1991. As mentioned above, the missile attacks by Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, against Israel correlated with high rates of support/sympathy for Israel. The Iraq War was short but contributed to high American public opinion regarding Israel. The First Intifada had numerous causal streams. From settler violence, to labor exploitation and economic issues, to the far-right Likud party's policies, there was not a singular cause which helps to explain the widespread and long-lived uprisings. While the Intifada conflict was a series of uprisings and protests, both peaceful and violent, the Israeli response was striking, literally. It was during this conflict that Yitzhak Rabin gave the order for the IDF to break the bones of the youth, resulting in injury to the limbs of countless youths in the protests.¹⁴¹ This first Intifada

¹⁴¹ Khalid Farraj, "The First Intifada: Hope and the Loss of Hope," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, (2017) 47:1, 89.

also resulted in the use of house demolitions as a punishment being, “broadened and the threshold for punishment,” being, “lowered.”¹⁴² This all-too-common occurrence is familiar to the contemporary reader, but the IDF’s frequent use of the punishment rose during the first Intifada.

Rosenthal: A Zionist in the *Times*?

The Zionist narrative during this period of the Intifada is revealing. Regardless of the clear archival rebuke of Zionist claims by New Historian scholarship, the dissemination of the Zionist narrative continued. The perpetuation of those claims was essential to foster ongoing American support for Israel and lack of support for Palestinians during the period, a decided attempt to maintain focus on the Zionist narrative.

An early example of pro-Israel Zionist narrative emerged in the writing of A. M. Rosenthal, a *New York Times* executive editor and columnist for over a decade. Rosenthal peddled numerous fallacious arguments in his work including his repeated claim that Palestinians and Arabs rejected and continue to reject negotiations with Israel thus leading to the lack of peace and Palestinian refugee situation. Rosenthal perpetuates the dominant Zionist narrative on a number of fronts. In 1990, during the First Intifada and the Iraq War, he wrote, “The Palestinians and the Arab states rejected the plan and the very idea of an Israeli state, a continuing rejection that has made peace impossible.”¹⁴³ In Rosenthal’s mind, “there is only one

¹⁴² Efrat Silber, “Israel's Policy of House Demolitions During the First Intifada, 1987–1993,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:1 (2010).

¹⁴³ A. M. Rosenthal, “On My Mind; the Poisoned Stream: [Op-Ed],” *New York Times*, Oct 12, 1990.

connection between Israel and Kuwait: both were invaded by Arabs. And there's one difference. Kuwait's Government ran and lost. The Israelis stood, fought and won.”¹⁴⁴ In this short excerpt, Rosenthal used a common combination of claims by including the “destruction of Israel” claim along with the “intransigence” claim. Zionist use of this combined claim and their emphasis on “intransigence” is worth mentioning given that Likud, the current ruling party of Israel, states in its official platform, “The Government of Israel flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state west of the Jordan river.”¹⁴⁵ In Zionist’s repetitions of this claim, they turn allegations against them back on their accusers. An example of the Tu Quoque fallacy, described in chapter one, but repeated with even more significance in the wake of Likud political control, emerges in this combination claim. Likud has its roots in the Revisionist Zionism of Jabotinsky and in the Irgun, both far right, violent movements that sought to remove Palestinians from the land completely to form Greater Israel.

Writing in the *Orlando Sentinel* in July of 1991, Rosenthal again used a variation of the intransigence claim. He wrote, “For all those decades, every other Arab nation refused to make peace, refused to talk, refused to end the boycott and the hate campaign against Israel.”¹⁴⁶ Once more, Rosenthal made one of the Zionist claims, and in a manner common to pro-Israel Zionist narrators he made the claim in a flat matter-of-fact sort of way. The claim is made *a priori*, as an operating assumption or principle, and asserted without citation of evidence. He made the claims in the context of attempting to justify Israel’s behavior in light of the First Intifada and to blame

¹⁴⁴ A. M. Rosenthal, “On My Mind; the Poisoned Stream: [Op-Ed],” *New York Times*, Oct 12, 1990.

¹⁴⁵ "Likud - Platform". knesset.gov.il. Archived from the original on 30 September 2007. Accessed April 13, 2021.

¹⁴⁶ A. M. Rosenthal, *New York Times*. "Myth vs. Reality In Mideast - Israel Does Not Block Peace: [3 Star Edition]." *Orlando Sentinel*, Jul 05, 1991.

the Iraq War on the, “the myths, and lies that Americans hear and read day after day,” about the Middle East in general, and Israel/Palestine in particular.¹⁴⁷ In 1992 Rosenthal repeated both of these claims in a *New York Times* Op-Ed stating, “In 1948 Arab states rejected the U.N. partition that would have given Palestinians a homeland. They led war after war to exterminate Israel.”¹⁴⁸ Rosenthal seemed to have a proclivity for combining the two claims.

A year later, Rosenthal repeated a slightly modified version of the above cited claims. Writing in 1993, again in the *New York Times*, Rosenthal claimed that, “Jews were ready to share Palestine with Arabs from the beginning. The Arabs refused. Then it was the Arabs, not a bunch of pessimistic Jews, who attacked in 1948.”¹⁴⁹ One more example of Rosenthal’s combined claims of “intransigence” and “extermination,” should suffice for the purposes of this chapter. Rosenthal opened an article in 2001 in the *New York Daily News* with the claim that, “The basic question about the Arabs and Israelis today is exactly the same one that was overriding when Israel was created a half- century ago: Will the Arab leaders and their people allow permanent peace? Their answer, then and now, was the same: No, not ever. The only change in all these years since 1948 has been the Arab strategy to achieve the death of Israel.”¹⁵⁰

Rosenthal’s claims stand in direct contradiction to the archival record; these claims are not accurate and hide the facts, as Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, and Simha Flapan have shown. Avi Shlaim, cited above, spoke of Arab peace seeking, writing of the archival records that, “These

¹⁴⁷ A. M. Rosenthal, “On My Mind; Israel Says Yes,” *New York Times*. June 28, 1991.

¹⁴⁸ A. M. Rosenthal, “On My Mind; as You Sow: [Op-Ed].” *New York Times*, Dec 22, 1992.

¹⁴⁹ A. M. Rosenthal, “On My Mind; ‘Holocaust Syndrome’: [Op-Ed].” *New York Times*, Sep 17, 1993.

¹⁵⁰ A. M. Rosenthal, “A New Turn In Israel’s Old Fight: [Sports Final Edition].” *New York Daily News*, Mar 23, 2001.

files burst at the seams with evidence,” and that each Arab state wished to, “negotiate...about both refugees and borders.”¹⁵¹ All of the New Historians sharply rebuked Zionist claims such as Rosenthal’s, that mischaracterize, misrepresent, and manipulate the reality of the 1948 conflict to maintain the Zionist narrative and mission.

Rosenthal’s repeated use of the Zionist “rejection” and “intransigence” claims are indicative of the common perception of the American citizenry. Palestinian leaders’ rejection of the UN partition and all the previous partition plans for quite understandable reasons is not articulated. Given Rosenthal’s platform his claims of Palestinian intransigence function as a loudspeaker for the Zionist narrative. While his support for the two-state solution is not entirely clear from his writing, what is clear is that he provided no realistic path forward for Palestinians. Stop resisting, stop being stubborn, recognize Israel’s right to exist, accept your situation, these are the Zionist solutions for Palestinians, not addressing of any of the issues. A common Zionist failing.

Ruth Wisse provides another example of the Zionist narrative from early in the New Historians period. Wisse published her book *If I Am Not For Myself* in 1992. Wisse, professor emeritus at Harvard University, was a scholar of Yiddish and Jewish studies. Although Wisse hails from Canada, she worked, taught, and wrote extensively in the United States, thus this study treats her as an American intellectual. When asked in an interview the question, “were you always a ‘neo-conservative’?” she answered, “I began as a liberal, didn’t everyone? After witnessing Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the “JFK of Canada,” supporting communism in Poland, I

¹⁵¹ Avi Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 300.

switched my vote.”¹⁵² Wisse, likewise described by others as a neoconservative, rarely dealt with the “facts” of the Zionist narrative directly, choosing to mention them in a cryptic fashion as operating assumptions, premises granted in the debate before the start.¹⁵³ Her style of using the Zionist narrative as an unquestioned operating assumption is not unique among pro-Israel Zionists of the period. Letting Wisse’s own words do the talking, she wrote in *If I Am Not For Myself*, “The Arabs, having themselves first rendered the Palestinians homeless by refusing to accept partition in 1948 and having kept them homeless by refusing to resettle in their vast lands those who needed a home...while of the million Jewish refugees from Arab lands, Israel today shows hardly a living trace.”¹⁵⁴ Here is the all too familiar claim from the Zionist narrative. The Arabs (and Palestinians) rejected the partition of Palestine, therefore it is their own fault. Additionally, Wisse emphasized the flight of Jewish refugees from Arab lands in the aftermath of the 1948 conflict. It is true that Jews fled Arab states, but Wisse ignored the involvement of Jewish Agency for Israel in encouraging the “flight” of Mizrahi Jews and immigration (aliyah) to Israel.¹⁵⁵ Wisse’s claim likewise ignored an, “ideological and historical significance,” that was, “entirely different.”¹⁵⁶ As historian Yehoshua Porath noted, the Palestinians were made to move against their will, while Mizrahi Jews had numerous and various reasons for leaving their former

¹⁵² Rabbi Levi Welton, “The Road From Yiddish To Politics,” JewishPress.com

¹⁵³ Benjamin Schreier. "New York Intellectual/Neocon/Jewish; Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Ignore Ruth Wisse." *Studies in American Jewish Literature (1981-)* 31, no. 1 (2012): 97-108.

¹⁵⁴ Ruth R. Wisse, *If I Am Not for Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 13.

¹⁵⁵ Yehoshua Porath, “Mrs. Peters’s Palestine,” *New York Review of Books*, 1986.

¹⁵⁶ Yehoshua Porath, “Mrs. Peters’s Palestine.”

countries, “expelled or not,” but they all settled in Israel by choice and in, “fulfillment of a national dream.”¹⁵⁷

Moving forward in the book, Wisse again repeated the “Arab intransigence” claim. She wrote, “Arab governments did not allow the partition of Palestine in the first place, nor the resettlement of Arab refugees thereafter.”¹⁵⁸ This claim is a favorite of the Zionist authors from the New History period, as it is true that the Arabs rejected the partition, but the reasons why are of massive importance and do not justify Israeli expulsion actions. Walid Khalidi, the eminent Arab historian, succinctly expressed the Palestinian boycott of the United Nations proceedings noting that, “The native people of Palestine, like the native people of every other country in the Arab world, Asia, Africa, America, and Europe, refused to divide their land with a settler community.”¹⁵⁹ This statement is an important answer to the Zionist claim of Arab rejection of partition. While it does not clearly ‘disprove’ the Zionist claim, Khalidi’s words reframe the claim as disingenuous. This bears repeating, as removal of context is a Zionist narrative specialty.

Thomas Friedman: A Moderate in the *Times*?

Thomas Friedman is a long-time columnist and journalist with the *New York Times*, as well as a bestselling author. While many consider him to be a neocon, he espouses a “radical centrism,” in relation to American domestic politics, and has written articles pushing that

¹⁵⁷ Yehoshua Porath, “Mrs. Peters’s Palestine,” *New York Review of Books*, 1986.

¹⁵⁸ Ruth R. Wisse, *If I Am Not for Myself-: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 119.

¹⁵⁹ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2007), 33-34.

position.¹⁶⁰ In his 1989 book, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, about his experiences reporting on the Lebanon War, Friedman described the 1948 conflict in familiar terms. *From Beirut to Jerusalem* was published after the Lebanon invasion and during the First Intifada. He wrote, “the Zionists, then led by David Ben-Gurion, accepted this partition plan...The Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab states rejected the partition proposal. They felt that Palestine was all theirs, that the Jews were a foreign implant...and that they had the strength to drive them out.”¹⁶¹ This formulation should be familiar by now, as a framing of Israeli acceptance and Arab rejection, the “rejection” or “intransigence” claim. Friedman’s choice to use the word “feeling” to describe the realities of Palestinian’s “feeling” that Palestine was theirs, which it was, and that the Yishuv community was a foreign implant, which by and large it was, as only 43000 Jews lived in Palestine as of 1890, while at the time over five times more Palestinians lived in the territory.¹⁶²

Friedman’s final “drive them out” statement is, as noted earlier, lacking context to explain why the Palestinians might feel that way. When discussing the differences and similarities between Ben-Gurion and Menachem Begin, Friedman wrote, “When Ben-Gurion first accepted the notion of partition, as far back as 1937, he did it with the greatest of regret.”¹⁶³ This is the second part of the “Israeli acceptance” claim, that it was with great regret. Addressing the question of what regret refers to, Friedman in the same paragraph noted that control of the whole of Palestine under a Jewish state was always the goal of Zionism.¹⁶⁴ Friedman quoted

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Freidman, “A Tea Party Without Nuts,” *The New York Times*. March 20, 2010

¹⁶¹ Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), 14-15.

¹⁶² Sergio Della Pergola, “Demography in Israel/Palestine: Trends, Prospects, Policy Implications,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 103 (2003): 5.

¹⁶³ Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 259.

¹⁶⁴ Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 259.

Ben-Gurion to further illustrate this goal, writing, “We are being offered a chance for a Jewish state and a democratic state, but only in part of the land of Israel...We will settle now for half a loaf, and dream about the rest later.”¹⁶⁵ Friedman put it bluntly saying, “between 1948 and 1967 Zionism lived, and even flourished, with two and a half of its goals satisfied.”¹⁶⁶ The Zionist goal of controlling the entire land of Palestine was no secret to Palestinian Arabs as early as the 1930s, so their rejection of a partition of their own land with a settler community espousing these goals seems rather reasonable. For Friedman to write all of this without connecting the dots only helped to maintain the Zionist narrative. To connect the dots would undermine the Zionist narrative.

Friedman wrote of a, “sense of alienation” that was “particularly sharp among those Palestinians who lost their homes in 1948 and have been living as refugees in camps in Gaza and the West Bank.”¹⁶⁷ He went on to describe a Palestinian man who, “On his way to work...often passes what was, before 1948, his father's home in the village of Hamama, near Jaffa. Today the land is owned by Jews.”¹⁶⁸ While Friedman touched on the facts of 1948 as presented by the New Historians, he would need to change “lost their homes” to “were forced from their homes” to be historically accurate. In the second case, the Land Acquisition Law is the secondary causal mechanism in Palestinian dispossession. It would be a pertinent connection to make for one’s

¹⁶⁵ Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), 253.

¹⁶⁶ Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 253.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Friedman, “My Neighbor, My Enemy,” *The New York Times*. July 5, 1987.

¹⁶⁸ Friedman, “My Neighbor, My Enemy.”

readers, if historical reality or journalistic integrity was one's aim, or if one were not blinded by adherence to a specific ideology.

Friedman's use of Israel's founding myths extended to his repetition of a version of the "Arab invasion" claim. He wrote, "on May 14, 1948, the Zionists declared their own state, and the next day the Palestinians, aided by the armies of Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, launched a war to prevent Jewish independence and to secure control of all of western Palestine."¹⁶⁹ The context is nowhere to be found, while on its face the claim is partially true, what Friedman wrote is not what the evidence shows. As pointed out earlier, the Arab forces were not unified or organized, the Palestinian resistance had begun long before May, and Arab forces had a variety of reasons for participating ranging from the rumored ethnic cleansing to territorial control to forcing diplomatic settlement.

Friedman was, to be fair, critical of many Israeli policies and does not hesitate to say so. He was often critical of Israeli leadership and their decision making. For example, in 2014, he noted,

Israeli ministers and American Jewish leaders blasted Kerry for what they said was his trying to use the B.D.S. movement — 'boycotts, divestment and sanctions' — as a club to pressure Israel into making more concessions. I strongly disagree. Kerry and President Obama are trying to build Israelis a secure off-ramp from the highway they're hurtling down in the West Bank that only ends in some really bad places for Israel and the Jewish people.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989), 15.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas L. Friedman, "Israel's Big Question," *New York Times*. Feb. 11, 2014.

When Friedman does engage with the New Historian influenced narrative, he rarely does so without connecting it to Zionist claims from the Zionist narrative. For example, the above discussion of, “those Palestinians who lost their homes in 1948,” being a mild engagement with the New Historian narrative. Another example is the Ben Gurion “loaf” quote above, in which Friedman mentioned the intention without the connecting context.

Friedman described his position as something in akin to centrists. In a *New York Times* column he wrote, “This group...often called...’centrists’ or ‘moderates.’ I’m in this group, but I prefer not to call myself a ‘centrist,’” Friedman critiqued the mushy views of those called centrist, only to finish the piece with a plethora of his own mushy views.¹⁷¹ Friedman represents very clearly the problematic writing of moderate or centrist authors in the face of hegemonic discourse. Mixed messaging rarely challenges the status quo effectively. As laid out in the seminal work on political economy of the mass media, *Manufacturing Consent*, the apparent liberal bias of the media serves to, as Noam Chomsky stated in a lecture given in the early 1990s, the moderate or liberal voice in the media served to, “bound thinkable thought...to instill the unchallengeable assumptions...which reflect this rather narrow elite consensus...it says thus far and no further, I’m as far as you can go.”¹⁷² Friedman’s mixed messaging on Israel/Palestine and particularly regarding 1948, served to bound debate and reinforce the Zionist written consensus.

¹⁷¹ Thomas L. Friedman, “The Answers to Our Problems Aren’t as Simple as Left or Right,” *New York Times*. July 23, 2019

¹⁷² Noam Chomsky, “The Propaganda Model and the Mainstream Media: Debate and the Liberal Bias,” YouTube video, 0:00-2:10, Posted by “The Film Archives,” May 31, 2012.

Pushback and Critique: Benny Morris is not Safe

Pivoting to the left, authors in this period offered a noticeable increase in pushback against the Zionist narrative. Norman Finkelstein, a PhD from Princeton, made a dual splash entering the Zionist-dominated discourse on 1948, first by forensic citation checking Joan Peters' book and secondly by challenging Benny Morris, the most staunchly Zionist of the New Historians. Finkelstein identified himself as a classic communist. His works, which we will return to in the next chapter, often spark strong reactions in American Zionists.

Finkelstein took issue with the conclusion that Morris arrived at after a solid archival based research work. Finkelstein wrote, "The book's central thesis is that neither of the standard accounts of the Palestinians' exodus can withstand close scholarly scrutiny: the Zionists did not expel them with premeditation, as the Arabs allege, and the invading Arab states did not urge them to leave, as the Zionists allege. The truth, as Morris sees it, rather lies 'in the vast middle ground' between these two extremes."¹⁷³ Morris' conclusion seemed to be the replacement of the Zionist myth with a new more palatable myth. When discussing 1948, Finkelstein quoted a note from Morris, writing,

The word 'expelled' was often used rather loosely by Israelis in 1948. It was quite often assumed by non-witnesses that a given community had been expelled when in fact it had left before Israeli forces arrived. The desire to see the Arabs leave often triggered the assumption that commanders who it was presumed shared this desire had had to act overtly and directly to obtain this result, when this had not been the case. *But if denial of the right to return was a form of 'expulsion,' then a great many villagers who had waited near their villages for the battle to die down before trying to return home can be considered 'expellees.'*¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Norman G. Finkelstein, "Myths, Old and New," *Journal of Palestine studies* 21, no. 1 (1991): 67.

¹⁷⁴ Finkelstein, "Myths, Old and New."

This inclusion in Morris' work, as Finkelstein posits, undermined Morris' conclusion and supports other New Historians and later academics and intellectuals claims that expulsion occurred widely.

Finkelstein returned to Morris' own research, pointing to evidence of a plan or at least an intention, in late 1947. Finkelstein wrote,

The ultimate aim of all the Zionists was 'the acquisition of all of Palestine, all Transjordan and possibly some tracts in Southern Lebanon and Southern Syria.' The Zionist "politicians," after taking control of the country, would at first treat the Arabs "nicely." But then, once feeling "strong enough," they would begin 'squeezing the Arab population off their lands ... [and] if necessary out of the State.'...The Arab leaders . . . thought that there existed a still more extreme Jewish plan, of the Revisionists, calling for more immediate expansion.¹⁷⁵

Finkelstein noted that as inept as the Palestinian Arab leadership is often portrayed, this quoted evidence from a British report, suggests they were aware that there were plans in construction or the intentions to do so as early as 1947. Indeed, there was such a plan, formulated by Yishuv leadership, Plan Dalet. In his discussion of Plan Dalet or Plan D, Finkelstein pointed out,

In accordance with Plan D, the Haganah and dissident Zionist groups launched a series of military offensives, the fully anticipated result of which was the Arabs' flight from Palestine. The attacks themselves were 'the most important single factor in the exodus of April-June from both the cities and from the villages...This is demonstrated clearly by the fact that each exodus occurred during and in the immediate wake of each military assault. No town was abandoned by the bulk of its population before Jewish attack.'¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Norman G. Finkelstein, "Myths, Old and New," *Journal of Palestine studies* 21, no. 1 (1991): 66-89.

¹⁷⁶ Finkelstein, "Myths, Old and New," 71.

Again, Finkelstein used Morris' evidence to counter the Zionist narrative and the new "myth" of Morris' creation.

Finkelstein's use of Morris' own work and evidence laid bare one of the most cherished of Zionist claims, the "Arab call" claim, and simultaneously evaporated Morris' conclusion. He wrote, "The soldier eyewitness concluded that 'cultured officers...had turned into base murderers and this not in the heat of battle...but out of a system of expulsion and destruction. The less Arabs remained the better. This principle is the political motor for the expulsions and the atrocities.'"¹⁷⁷ In this excerpt, a soldier, eyewitness to atrocities in the 1948 conflict, is commenting on his experience and the apparent intentions of his superiors. That this can be read and understood as, "no plan," makes the reader seem either a bit intellectually dishonest or profoundly propagandized. The latter seems the likely option given the lopsided discourse in the United States among American Jewish public intellectuals up to the 1990s, when this article was published. Finkelstein, while unique for his decidedly biting and polemical style, represented left leaning intellectuals and authors that not only engaged with the New Historian narrative but went beyond it.

Continuing on the left, with an author analyzed in chapter one, Noam Chomsky was and is one of the longest standing dissident voices on Israel/Palestine. He, aside from being one of the most cited living scholars, has been a lifelong anarcho-syndicalist and activist. He was and is, among the many other things that one might say about him, an outspoken critic of Israel and has for decades argued that the Israeli government should abide by international law. In a 1993

¹⁷⁷ Norman G. Finkelstein, "Myths, Old and New," *Journal of Palestine studies* 21, no. 1 (1991): 82.

article written for *Z Magazine*, an independent activist-oriented monthly, only a few years after the publication of the New Historians' works, Chomsky wrote,

In a January 1, 1948 diary entry, David Ben-Gurion wrote: "What is necessary is cruel and strong reactions. We need precision in time, place and casualties. If we know the family — [we must] strike mercilessly, women and children included. Otherwise the reaction is inefficient. At the place of action there is no need to distinguish between guilty and innocent. Where there was no attack — we should not strike."¹⁷⁸

Here Chomsky directly confronted and contradicted the Zionist narrative, showing that the Yishuv leadership, from the onset of the 1948 conflict, sought to instill fear in the population by way of violence. An important corollary to Chomsky's statement is the fact that Ben-Gurion's statement, if carried out, constituted a war crime. Writing again in *Z Magazine*, this time in 1996, Chomsky wrote of Lebanon, "In 1948...it was a dumping ground for Palestinians who fled or were expelled by the Israeli army. Their right to return or of reparation is written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dec. 10, 1948), spelled out more explicitly in UN Resolution 194 passed unanimously the next day, and reiterated annually."¹⁷⁹ In this case, Chomsky confronted the "flight" or "Arab call" claim by simply acknowledging the fact that expulsions happened and flight ensued. The final sentence of the quote is an essential aspect of the New History, Palestinians have the right, morally, ethically, and legally to return. The two excerpts combine nicely to make his point by noting that, violence and cruelty along with expulsion precipitated the flight. Added to this, Ben-Gurion's statement countered the Zionist claim of "no plan" for said expulsions.

¹⁷⁸ Noam Chomsky, "Limited War in Lebanon," *Z Magazine*, 1993. chomsky.info/articles/

¹⁷⁹ Noam Chomsky, "Israel, Lebanon, and the Peace Process," *Z Magazine*, 1996. chomsky.info/articles/

An important corollary to the New History is the connecting of rhetoric from the Zionist narrative back to the documentary record of 1948. In the book, *Pirates and Emperors*, a compilation of articles written from 1986 to 2001, Chomsky makes the connection.¹⁸⁰ He pointed out in a 1986 article,

The record of Israeli terrorism goes back to the origins of the state— indeed, long before— including the massacre of 250 civilians and brutal expulsion of 70,000 others from Lydda and Ramie in July 1948; the massacre of hundreds of others at the undefended village of Doueimah near Hebron in October 1948 in another of the numerous “land-clearing operations” conducted while the international propaganda apparatus was proclaiming, as it still does, that the Arabs were fleeing at the call of their leaders...the expulsion of thousands of Bedouins from the demilitarized zones shortly after the 1948 war.¹⁸¹

Once again, Chomsky challenged the “Arab call” claim while simultaneously pointing out the terrorist activities of the Yishuv, a major contradiction in the Zionist narrative. Pushing a little harder on this subject of terrorism and leadership, a favorite complaint of Zionists, Chomsky mentioned Israeli high leadership in the early 1980s. He wrote,

Israel’s Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were both notorious terrorist commanders while the highest position in the Jewish Agency was held by a man who had murdered several dozen civilians he was holding under guard in a mosque in a Lebanese town during yet another land-clearing operation in 1948, to be quickly amnestied, all trace of the crime removed from the record, and granted a lawyer’s license on the grounds that “no stigma” could be attached to his act.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ This publication is *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New: International Terrorism in the Real World*, a collection of articles written by Chomsky on several international issues related to terrorism.

¹⁸¹ Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New: International Terrorism in the Real World* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 101.

¹⁸² Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors*, 101-102.

To round out *Pirates and Emperors*, Chomsky pointed out the shortsighted and obtuse Zionist view of Palestinian understanding of the conflict and its solutions. He observed that Zionists suggest,

Palestinians...refuse to understand that their problem can be overcome by 'resettlement and some repatriation.' If the remnants of the village of Doueimah, where perhaps hundreds were slaughtered by the Israeli Army in a land-clearing operation in 1948, or residents of the Soweto-like Gaza Strip object to resettlement and 'repatriation,' that proves that they are inspired by anti-Semitism.¹⁸³

This last excerpt from the book, written in 1986, also shows how those on the left point out the growing use of the anti-Semitism smear and the way it is weaponized, as Finkelstein and others have written on.

The Smear: Self-Hating Jews and Anti-Semitic Jews

Throughout this period, the mid-1980s to 2003, the issue of the weaponization of anti-Semitism and its use against dissenting authors, authors who press the New Historian narrative, and academics saw regular use. As the New Historian narrative saw wider use, the Zionist use of this tactic appeared to increase, particularly against those authors that pressed hard on the issue or directly challenged prominent Zionist narrators. The use of the anti-Semitism as an attack saw

¹⁸³ Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors, Old and New: International Terrorism in the Real World* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 40.

use against Jews and non-Jews, with the “self-hating Jew” seeing use again as an attack against Jewish authors.

Wisse, discussed above, levied this charge against Noam Chomsky. She stated, “no intellectual of another ethnic group...argues, as does Noam Chomsky, for the dissolution of the homeland of his people.”¹⁸⁴ Wisse essentially used the “self-hating Jew,” “anti-Semitic Jew,” or “an enemy of himself, of his people, and of his own country,” from the opening quotation, as an attack against the lifelong political dissident, allegations that are repeatedly used throughout Zionist discourse. The treatment of Jewish authors in this way by Jewish Zionist authors shows the intractability of the Zionist narrative within the discourse. This says nothing of the fact that Chomsky is a long-time advocate for the two-state solution, never calling for anything like “dissolution” of Israel.

Norman Finkelstein likewise experienced the “anti-Semitic Jew” smear, for his pointed critiques of 1948, the state of Israel, and the misuse of Holocaust memory. He has been smeared so frequently that the breadth of these smears lies beyond the scope of this chapter or work, but a couple of examples will suffice. Writing in the *Canadian Jewish News* prior to a Finkelstein lecture at University of Toronto, a student at the university wrote, “He uses his Jewish identity to validate an anti-Semitic message that accuses Jews of exploiting the Holocaust to gain political and financial favor.”¹⁸⁵ More directly the author noted that, “Finkelstein uses his parents’ experience in the Holocaust as a cover to then call others who survived one of the world’s most gruesome genocides ‘greedy.’ He vilifies Israel as a satanic state and compares Israelis to Nazis,

¹⁸⁴ Ruth R. Wisse, *If I Am Not for Myself-: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 34.

¹⁸⁵ Jared Ecker, “Norman Finkelstein’s Hateful Rhetoric,” *The Canadian Jewish News*. March 5, 2019. Accessed February 21, 2022.

while at the same time praising terrorist groups that openly advocate for the violent destruction of the Jewish state.”¹⁸⁶ In a similar vein, a student at Princeton who wrote in response to a Finkelstein visit called the scholar, “a noxious and malignant purveyor of prejudice.”¹⁸⁷ The student continued noting that, “for Finkelstein, the line between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism isn’t just blurry. It’s nonexistent.”¹⁸⁸ Needless to say, Finkelstein, misrepresented in both cases and smeared with the “anti-Semitic Jew” attack, faced far more meaningful attacks.

Alan Dershowitz, analyzed below, campaigned against Finkelstein’s tenure at DePaul University. He, “sent a blast of e-mail messages to faculty and administrators there accusing Finkelstein of shoddy scholarship, lying and anti-Semitism.”¹⁸⁹ While Finkelstein was eventually denied tenure, because of Dershowitz’s lobbying, the feud between the two remained for years afterward. The Dershowitz versus Finkelstein clash represents the very real repercussions of dissenting and critiquing too accurately or loudly Israel or the Zionist narrative of 1948. Finkelstein was not the only scholar to experience the anti-Semitism smear, but for the purposes of this thesis his experience is instructive as to the consequences that Chomsky noted writing,

I warned him, if you follow this, you’re going to get in trouble—because you’re going to expose the American intellectual community as a gang of frauds, and they are not going to like it, and they’re going to destroy you. So I said: if you want to do it, go ahead, but be aware of what you’re getting into. It’s an important issue, it makes a big difference whether you eliminate the moral basis for driving out a population—it’s preparing the

¹⁸⁶ Jared Ecker, “Norman Finkelstein’s Hateful Rhetoric,” *The Canadian Jewish News*. March 5, 2019. Accessed February 21, 2022.

¹⁸⁷ Adam Hoffman, “Against Norman Finkelstein’s Anti-Semitism And His Normalizers,” *The Princeton Tory*. October 20, 2019, Accessed February 21, 2022

¹⁸⁸ Hoffman, “Against Norman Finkelstein’s Anti-Semitism And His Normalizers.”

¹⁸⁹ Patricia Cohen, “Dershowitz vs. Finkelstein: When a Scholarly Clash Turns Vitriolic,” *New York Times*. April 17, 2007.

basis for some real horrors—so a lot of people’s lives could be at stake. But your life is at stake too, I told him, because if you pursue this, your career is going to be ruined.¹⁹⁰

Clearly, Chomsky’s insights proved prescient; Finkelstein’s academic career took a major hit.

Again clearly, for the dissenting American Jewish author, there is skin in the game when it comes to Israel, 1948, Holocaust, and academic integrity.

Part II: Post First Intifada

The period after the first Intifada saw peace talks, agreements, hope, fear, disappointment, and disillusionment. As the first Intifada was coming to a close, in late 1992 and early 1993, American public opinion polling showed a precipitous drop in sympathies/support for Israel. Polling showed that by late 1992 support/sympathy for Israel was as low as 50 percent and by the end of the first Intifada their support/sympathy dropped as low as 43 percent.¹⁹¹ By 1997, support dropped to 38 percent. Despite the drop in public support, US foreign aid to Israel in 1996 was at 3.14 billion with over half of that sum earmarked for military grants.¹⁹² A fickle public opinion landscape apparently affects the legislative interests of the United States government very little. While public opinion dropped, looking at a well-known moderate author followed by an academic author in this time frame, reveals the vast differences between even the

¹⁹⁰ Noam Chomsky, “The Fate of an Honest Intellectual,” Excerpted from *Understanding Power*, (New York: The New Press, 2002), 244-248.

¹⁹¹ Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx>

¹⁹² Jeremy M. Sharp, “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,” *Congressional Research Service*. December 4, 2009, 23.

moderate author. Moderate authors often play a key role in the framing of discourse, a key role in either reinforcing the status quo narrative or, conversely, challenging the status quo narrative.

How does a famous moderate frame the narratives and the discourse? Amos Oz was an Israeli novelist who published articles in mainstream American publications. While he was Israeli, he was a long-time staple in the American literary landscape, and well known for his commentary on Israel/Palestine issues. He described himself as a moderate, and although he was discussing the Israeli political spectrum, his political views would put him to the right of all of the leftist authors included in this chapter. Oz was a long-time peace activist and advocate. He wrote many articles and essays arguing for peace, compromise, and a reframing of the conflict. In his collection of essays *Israel, Palestine, and Peace*, Oz wrote,

The monstrous situation in the Territories is merely the rotten fruit of a 70-year-old war. The occupation itself was not the cause of the war but its consequence. And the solution is not integration, but separation through self-determination: two states for two peoples.

Up to a few months ago the Palestinian national movement rejected such a solution. Now the Palestinians say they are prepared to accept it, and it is Israel that refuses. One must not forget that since 1977 no Israeli government has offered peace in exchange for territory in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and since 1949 no Israeli government has offered peace between Israel and Palestine.¹⁹³

This excerpt demonstrates the mixed bag that was Amos Oz. Oz intimated his support for the two-state solution, but immediately after offered up the “rejection” claim, albeit in a watered-down form. He then went on to apparently counter the same claim, by pointing out that it is Israel that refuses peace. In the same article, Oz wrote, “is what Israel was permitted to do in

¹⁹³ Amos Oz, *Israel, Palestine, and Peace: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 85.

1948 -- when the question was whether the Arabs would succeed in slaughtering the lot of us -- also permitted now, when the question is whether when all is said and done we shall have four rooms or only two and a half?"¹⁹⁴ Once again Oz is problematic. The argument at the end of the statement is sound. Will Israel simply mow over the Palestinians in order to have the whole house? The premise that Oz starts from is, however, deeply flawed and is almost verbatim from the Zionist narrative, that the Arabs launched a war of extermination, which as seen earlier is far from the case.

In keeping with his mixed messages and moderate status, Oz's writing was welcomed in progressive publications. In an article in *Tikkun*, a leading Jewish progressive publication, Oz wrote,

I regard the clash between Israel and Palestine in 1948 as a tragedy because it was a clash between right and right. Both Palestinians and Israelis bear responsibility. It was a clash between two deeply injured, hysterical, terror-ridden nations. Neither side can be terribly proud of what they did in 1948. We have to see how we can heal these wounds by dealing with the Palestinian refugees--those refugees ought to be taken out of the refugee camps now, even before we know the exact boundaries of a future Palestine. Israel and Palestine may live forever with different narratives of what really happened in 1948.¹⁹⁵

He was right that both sides bear a responsibility, but one side, Israel particularly. At the same time, he is also correct that the refugees should be returned to their home regions. Shortly before this excerpt, Oz noted that the Israeli state cannot be a Jewish state, it must be a state where Arab Israelis have full and equal rights.¹⁹⁶ Returning to *Israel, Palestine, and Peace*, Oz wrote,

¹⁹⁴ Amos Oz, *Israel, Palestine, and Peace* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 91.

¹⁹⁵ Amos Oz, "A Monologue: Behind the Sound and Fury," *Tikkun*, Mar, 1998, 57-59.

¹⁹⁶ Oz, "A Monologue: Behind the Sound and Fury," 57-59.

On 17 September 1948, Count Folke Bernadotte was murdered in Jerusalem by members of an unknown, armed Jewish group, which called itself the 'National Front.'...David Ben-Gurion did not hesitate for a moment: within two days the Provisional Government of Israel published regulations calling for heavy punishment, not only for active terrorists, but for all members of terrorist organizations. The Lehi and the National Front were outlawed...Ben-Gurion diverted large numbers of troops to the task of crushing Jewish terror.¹⁹⁷

Again, Oz was not incorrect but the all-important context was missing. Yes, the young Israeli state did force an end to its terrorist groups, although not all were fought or tried. As previously mentioned, many of the leaders and troops of these groups were integrated into the young IDF. Further, Oz whitewashed the whole 1948 terrorism issue by failing to mention that Lehi played a pivotal and decisive role in the expulsions, both as actors and as propaganda. Only when these groups had outlived their usefulness did the young Israeli state dispense with them.

Oz presented a hybrid of sorts, a moderate author that combined elements of both the Zionist narrative, and of the New History. While he does not include the New Historian narrative, he was willing to admit far more than Zionist narrators. Nonetheless, his repeated use of claims from the Zionist narrative kept it relevant and entrenched in the discourse. Oz represented an example of the tacit compliance and complicity of centrist or moderate authors in upholding the Zionist narrative, even when the author did engage with the New History.

In the pages of *Tikkun*, the New Historian narrative found a clear voice representing the shift in the discourse. Jerome Slater, professor Emeritus of political science at University of Buffalo, made the situation quite clear. In 1995, he offered a critique of the Zionist narrative that he stated still stood firm in the minds of Israelis and American Jews, calling it, "no longer

¹⁹⁷ Amos Oz, *Israel, Palestine, and Peace: Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 121.

intellectually respectable.”¹⁹⁸ In other words, he wrote to speak to American Jews directly, hoping the archival history would open their minds. Slater wrote to point out that, “contrary to the prevailing view, it is Israel rather than the Palestinians that bears the primary responsibility, not only for the latest breakdown but for the entire course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 1948.”¹⁹⁹ He wrote, “a new wave of Israeli historical scholarship, emerging in the last decade or so, has revealed that the conventional history is wrong or seriously exaggerated in its account of the 1948-56 period...the Israelis have been far less ready for genuine compromise on the central issues of the conflict - the status of the Palestinians and the final borders of the Israeli state - than the dominant mythology implies.”²⁰⁰ Slater stated in no uncertain terms that in spite of this scholarship, the majority of Israelis and American Jews still hold to the Zionist narrative as accurate and true, nearly ten years after the publication of the first of the New Historians’ work.²⁰¹

Slater’s short summary of the archival revision of events showed the shift in discourse that the New Historian scholarship created. He observed that,

The new Israeli historiography has decisively refuted this standard narrative. In its essentials, the revised history holds that the Arab-Israeli conflict is rooted in the Zionist insistence that a Jewish state must be created in Palestine, the original biblical homeland of the Jews, despite the fact that for 1,300 years the area had been largely inhabited by Arabs, the overwhelming majority of whom rejected the establishment of a Jewish state there. After the Balfour Declaration and the creation of the British Mandate over

¹⁹⁸ Jerome Slater, “Lost Opportunities for Peace: Reassessing the Arab-Israeli conflict,” *Tikkun*, May-June 1995.

¹⁹⁹ Jerome Slater, “What Went Wrong? The Collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process,” *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2, 2001.

²⁰⁰ Slater, “Lost Opportunities for Peace.”

²⁰¹ Slater, “Lost Opportunities for Peace.”

Palestine, stepped-up Jewish immigration met with violent Arab resistance and terrorism - which in turn engendered Jewish counter-violence and terrorism.

As the violence grew, the British and, in 1947, the United Nations proposed various compromise partition plans. While it was true that the Arabs insisted on the full realization of their political rights and therefore rejected these plans, Zionist acceptance of compromise was much more ambivalent and partial than the conventional account holds. Primarily as a tactical move rather than as a genuine compromise, Ben-Gurion and other Jewish leaders reluctantly agreed to the U.N. partition plan. In fact, they agreed only to the part of the plan that created a Jewish state, ignoring other major components of the overall compromise, particularly the creation of a Palestinian state and the internationalization of Jerusalem.²⁰²

Slater, a long time academic, did the simple thing. He looked at the scholarship and the evidence that it presented and then shifted his own understanding accordingly. The above excerpt directly counters, as Slater stated, one of the central elements of the Zionist narrative, one that can be heard in discussions of the Israel/Palestine issue to this day.

On a final note, Slater discussed a quote from Ben-Gurion that is a correlate of the above excerpt. The quotation is from a letter from Ben-Gurion to his son in 1937, showing clearly the intentions of the Zionist Yishuv, a decade prior to the events of 1947-1948. Slater noted that Ben-Gurion mused that,

A partial Jewish state is not the end, but only the beginning. The establishment of such a Jewish State will serve as a means in our historical efforts to redeem the country in its entirety We shall organize a modern defense force ... and then I am certain that we will not be prevented from settling in other parts of the country, either by mutual agreement with our Arab neighbors or by some other means We will expel the Arabs and take their places ... with the force at our disposal.²⁰³

²⁰² Jerome Slater, "Lost Opportunities for Peace: Reassessing the Arab-Israeli conflict," *Tikkun*, May-June 1995.

²⁰³ Slater, "Lost Opportunities for Peace."

This quotation serves two purposes, both of which are fatal blows to Zionist claims. First, Ben-Gurion makes clear that Yishuv acceptance of the partition was, as Slater noted, opportunistic, partial, and an entry point for the real design of Greater Israel. Second, it points to the intention to expel the Arab Palestinians from Palestine by force. In addition, Slater pointed out, in 2001, that, “Ben-Gurion told a Zionist meeting: ‘I favor partition of the country because when we become a strong power after the establishment of the state, we will abolish partition and spread throughout all of Palestine.’ And ‘Palestine,’ as understood by the Zionists, included the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights, southern Lebanon, and much of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. After 1947, Ben-Gurion acted on this philosophy, both in the expulsion of the Palestinians and in Israeli expansionism, for in subsequent years the Israelis took advantage of wars to seize all of those areas.”²⁰⁴ These territorial inclusions are what ‘Greater Israel’ refers to, and this quotation, in conjunction with the previous quotation, show that from the start, before 1948, the Yishuv were planning to expel and the acceptance of partition was only tactical. The clarity with which the New Historian narrative was articulated by Slater shows that the discourse indeed had shifted, even if only a little. It also contrasts starkly with the writings of Oz, Friedman, Wisse, and Rosenthal.

Part III: The Second Intifada

The Second Intifada, taking place from September of 2000 to early 2005, was the next big conflict in this period, with the perceived failure of the Oslo Accords and Camp David

²⁰⁴ Jerome Slater, “What Went Wrong? The Collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process,” *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 2, 2001.

widely cited as causes of the frustrations. The Second Intifada stemmed from the fact that, “the peace process had not met Palestinian expectations” and “set the stage.”²⁰⁵ While there were other causal components, this perception among Palestinians, coupled violently with more conventional causes such as leadership issues and military prepping, among others. Needless to say, the resulting violence and protest changed the perspective of many in the United States.

Among those whose perspectives shifted in this period, some authors made a point to write powerful critiques of Zionism, Israel, and the history and legacy of 1948. A humanitarian and international law-based argument, based on the New Historian narrative, provided breadth to the New Historian influenced narrative. Tony Judt was an English-American historian who became known as an outspoken critic of Israel and its relationship with the United States. He was a lifelong leftist, ending his life as a social democrat. Judt mentioned in a piece in *The Record* that though, “the failings of the Palestinian leadership have been abysmal and the crimes of Palestinian terrorists extremely bloody, the fact is that Israel has the military and political initiative.”²⁰⁶ The thinking here is flatly realist, while the Palestinians have not been blameless in any measure. Israel has, since 1948, been the aggressor and occupier. The “occupier” title comes with legal and humanitarian responsibilities and expectations under international law, the same laws that gave Israel birth.

Judt mentioned Ben-Gurion’s forcible assimilation of the Irgun stating that, “The last Israeli politician to shoot Jews in pursuit of state policy was David Ben-Gurion, who forcibly disarmed Begin’s illegal Irgun militia in 1948 and integrated it into the new Israel Defense

²⁰⁵ Jeremy Pressman, “The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 2006, 23 (2).

²⁰⁶ Tony Judt, “Mideast Perspectives; The Road To Nowhere: [All Editions: Sunday],” *The Record*, May 05, 2002.

Forces.”²⁰⁷ Irgun and Lehi, also known as the Stern gang, were Yishuv Zionist extremist militias, known to have carried out massacres, murders, rapes, and terrorism in general. This is important as it shows a known Zionist penchant for extremist violence. Judt wrote of Israeli Jewish settlers, often fiercely Zionist, whose removal from Palestinian territory was at the hands of the Yishuv military. It is likewise noteworthy, as these two militias, integrated into the young IDF, brought their racist, terrorist, and extremist foundations with them.

Judt, in an article in the *New York Review* in 2003 noted the similarity of Israel to other early twentieth century ethno-states. He remarked that,

the founders of the Jewish state had been influenced by the same concepts and categories as their fin-de-siècle contemporaries back in Warsaw, or Odessa, or Bucharest; not surprisingly, Israel’s ethno-religious self-definition, and its discrimination against internal ‘foreigners,’ has always had more in common with, say, the practices of post-Habsburg Romania than either party might care to acknowledge.²⁰⁸

This lines up congruently with the New History claims that the Yishuv and then the newly created state of Israel set out to “ethnically cleanse” the land of Arabs. While he rarely directly addressed New Historian inspired scholarship, Judt was firmly ensconced in operating principles of archival fact that were laid out in the New History. Judt created a storm over his *New York Review* article arguing for a one-state solution, and received treatment and venom similar to that which Chomsky received. Judt’s “Israel: The Alternative,” can be seen as the beginning of a major shift in American Jewish thought on the subject.

²⁰⁷ Tony Judt, “Israel: The Alternative,” *New York Review*, Oct 23, 2003

²⁰⁸ Tony Judt, “Israel: The Alternative.”

Returning to the right, and to the Zionist narrative in the 21 century, Michael B. Oren wrote *The Six Days War*, published in 2002. Oren is an American-born Israeli author, historian, former ambassador to the United States, and former member of the Knesset. He is center-right on the Israeli political spectrum, but would be right-wing on the American. His collected writings analyzed herein, were written, as Dershowitz's book analyzed below, during the Second Intifada. Oren's *Six Days of War*, opens with a chapter intended to give "context" for the 1967 war. His treatment of the 1948 conflict is brief but revealing. Oren stated that,

Palestinian resistance proved too effective, and in April of 1948, the Jews went on the offensive. The operation succeeded in reopening the roads and saving the settlements, but it also expedited the large-scale flight of Palestinian civilians that had begun in November. Spurred by reports of massacres such as that which occurred at the village of Deir Yassin near Jerusalem, between 650,000 and 750,000 Palestinians either fled or were driven into neighboring countries.²⁰⁹

In this brief formulation Oren offers the standard short form Zionist narrative. While Oren's statement is far from outright falsehood, each point belies an omission, even as Oren admitted more than the classic Zionist narrative. Yes, the Deir Yassin atrocity happened, and the massacre certainly exacerbated the ongoing flight of Palestinians. He carefully avoided the other causes of the flight and importantly no engagement with Deir Yassin, a notorious atrocity which research has shown was not an anomaly. Oren's statement was, as it appears, a matter-of-fact representation of a narrative. The underlying assumption that is implicit in this formulation is that the Yishuv forces were fighting a "good" fight, and the flight of Palestinians was a rather unfortunate event.

²⁰⁹ Michael B. Oren, *The Six Days War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 4.

In an April 2002 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Oren argued for the United States to let Israel do its work, so to speak. He insisted that the United States' past attempts to, "to rein in Israel militarily have encouraged Arab aggression," and pertinent to this study, Oren stated that, "Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been the target of Arab terror."²¹⁰ The former statement is debatable, while the latter is problematic. One could correctly point out the terrorist attacks on Israel for many years, but 1948 could not be one of those as both militia and military forces were engaged in battle with both sides potentially carrying out massacres. This sort of blatant mischaracterization, when added to the above quotation from *Six Days of War*, is an example of the Zionist narrative used in a below the surface deployment. In addition, Oren's words about 'Arab terror' would strike the American public hard, as the attacks of September 11, 2001 were still fresh. The final thoughts from Oren's *Six Days of War* passage above describes brutal sieges and Ben-Gurion's dogged leadership in what can quite easily be seen as one of the Zionist claims, a sort of David versus Goliath situation and an assertion of the righteousness of the Yishuv cause.²¹¹ To Oren's credit he admitted what the New History showed repeatedly, that the Arab forces lacked leadership and a unified goal.²¹²

Oren's use of the Zionist narrative is indicative of both American views on Israel, and as Israeli state's national self-perception. Oren's insinuation that the Palestinians were the aggressors and the Yishuv forces acted out of self-defense was historically, and is today, a common misconception in American and Israeli society. On the ground, events in late 1947, 1948, and early 1949 Palestine did not unfold via a simple binary of aggressor versus victim in

²¹⁰ Michael B. Oren. "Don't Hold Israel Back," *Wall Street Journal*, Apr 9, 2002, Eastern edition.

²¹¹ Michael B. Oren, *The Six Days War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 5.

²¹² Oren, *The Six Days War*, 5.

either direction. The Palestinian “terrorism” card was a predictable play on Oren’s part, and the move is standard operating procedure for Zionist or pro-Israel interlocutors. Any person living in the United States for even a few years understands that the “terrorist” Arab trope is widely used, assumed, and believed in the American intellectual landscape and is a form of propaganda.

Terrorism is a term of power, with those who hold the power defining what is, who is, and what is not terrorism. All terrorism is unacceptable and intolerable, but rarely does the term Israeli or Yishuv “terrorism” get thrown about despite the documented historical record of it. In a standard use of propaganda, attention is directed to the “other” guy’s crime and away from one’s own, in spite of the fact that one’s own crimes are in one’s capacity to stop.

At the close of this period, a familiar name in conservative circles authored a stunningly entrenched Zionist work. Even with the watershed scholarship of the New Historians, the dissent of a growing body of intellectuals, and a growing body of scholarship based off of the New Historians, this book offered a nearly unadulterated return to Zionist narrative as if facts did not matter. Alan Dershowitz’s *The Case for Israel* was a bestselling defense of the standard Zionist position and narrative. *The Case for Israel* was published in 2003. Dershowitz was and is a well-known academic, lawyer, and conservative. The book was published during the Second Intifada. Dershowitz, when discussing the “sharing” of the land wrote, “The goal of the Arab leadership was not only to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of Palestine but to transfer the Jews of Palestine out of their historic home and to make all of Palestine empty of Jews. Jewish leaders, on the other hand, were willing to make painful compromises as long as they could have a Jewish homeland in those areas of Palestine in which they were a majority.”²¹³ This

²¹³ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2003) 39-40.

is almost word for word one of the Zionist claims given in the introduction to the chapter. Dershowitz goes on pages later, discussing the acceptance of the Peel partition plan (1937 British variant of partition), “The Jews reluctantly accepted the Peel partition plan, while the Arabs categorically rejected it, demanding that all of Palestine be placed under Arab control.”²¹⁴ When discussing the UN partition plan, Dershowitz stated, “acceptance by Israel first in 1937 and then in 1948, coupled with the categorical and violent rejection by the Arab states, the Palestinians, and virtually every Muslim leader -- first in 1937 and again in 1948 -- is a central component in making the case for Israel.”²¹⁵ Neither of the last two quotes need much commentary as they are once again near verbatim from the listing in the introduction.

Building on his argument, Dershowitz offered a variant of the Zionist “rejection” claim that is popular in spite of its fallacious nature. He wrote, “Had the Arabs accepted the UN partition, there would have been a large, contiguous Palestinian state alongside a Jewish state. The two-state solution that is now the international consensus would have been achieved without bloodshed. Surely anyone who now accepts the two state solution must place the blame for it not being implemented in 1947 (or even earlier in 1937) on the Arab and Palestinian leaders who rejected a Palestinian state when it was offered to them.”²¹⁶ Later in his discussion of the 1948 conflict itself, he stated, “Israel defended itself against a genocidal war of extermination,” and further stated, “The Israeli War of Independence was started by the Arabs, whose express aim was genocidal.”²¹⁷ One last example from *The Case for Israel* is in Dershowitz’s chapter on the

²¹⁴ Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 51.

²¹⁵ Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 65.

²¹⁶ Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 69.

²¹⁷ Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, 74-76.

creation of the refugee problem. He stated, “The problem was created by a war initiated by the Arabs.” He noted in a more descriptive fashion that the, “war waged against Israel in 1947 and 1948 by the Palestinians and the Arab armies not only took land from the Palestinians but also created the first refugee problem.”²¹⁸ In an interesting turn, this claim variant doubles as cover for the conflict and the expulsions of populations to become refugees.

Dershowitz’s book was widely read and the arguments he included run the gamut as around half of the text contains arguments about the modern period of the conflict. Dershowitz cited as source material quotes and citations from Peters’ *From Time Immemorial*, which was shown to be nearly entirely fraudulent. *The Case for Israel* has been cited 286 times as of this writing.²¹⁹ Several other Zionist authors have cited the work, most disturbingly John Hagee, founder of Christians United for Israel, a right-wing ultra-conservative evangelical Zionist group. Samuel Goldman, noting the strong Christian Zionist movement with a centuries-long history, remarked on the crucial role of the Jewish people in the eschatological cataclysm that is the crux of American Christian support for the state of Israel.²²⁰ Finkelstein and others have thoroughly countered nearly every aspect of Dershowitz’s arguments, but the Zionist narrative persists as the dominant strain in the discourse.

²¹⁸ Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 79.

²¹⁹ Google Scholar

²²⁰ Samuel Goldman, “Introduction,” In *God's Country: Christian Zionism in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 7.

Conclusion

The Zionist narrative clearly did not, as Said suggested in the introduction to this thesis, simply dissolve due to the New Historians' scholarship. For all intents and purposes, the Zionist narrative, in this time period, appeared to continue on as if the facts of the historical record had not been elucidated. Much as in the first chapter, the Zionist narrative in this period remained relatively unchanged, as evidenced by Dershowitz, Oren, Wisse, and Rosenthal. While seeing slight adjustments to some of the foundational claims, as evidenced by Friedman's half-truth half claim variant discussed above, much of the Zionist narrative saw use as a premise granted, a begging the question of sorts, with the claim smuggled into arguments as a premise. An example of this was discussed in analyzing Rosenthal's writing. Zionist authors and Zionists in general, levied the "self-hating Jew," and the "anti-Semitic Jew" attack, and in the case of Dershowitz and Finkelstein, with consequences. Again, as with the period analyzed in the first chapter, Zionist narrators continued with the combination of claims.

In contrast, those who dissented from the Zionist dominated discourse in this period had, thanks to the landmark New Historian scholarship, not just a new set of tools, but broad and definitive ones to counter the Zionist claims and narrative. As Sara Roy noted, as a result of the collective work of numerous scholars, including the New Historians, the criticism of Israel and American policies regarding Israel is gaining increasing legitimacy in the public and academic spheres.²²¹ This legitimacy is clearly seen in the article by Slater in *Tikkun*, as well as Judt's, Finkelstein's, and Chomsky's pieces, which offer more precise criticism, more scholarship cited, and critiques that are tied more directly to international law and human rights. As shown in the

²²¹ Sara Roy, "Reflections on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in U.S. Public Discourse: Legitimizing Dissent," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 2 (2010): 25.

introduction to this chapter, public opinion in support of Israel at the start of this period was quite high. At the close of this period, public opinion polling between 2001 and 2003 showed support/sympathy for Israel fell from its high of 64 percent, ranging from as low as 45 percent up to 58 percent support.²²² While this represented only a moderate change in polling percentages, being nearly 20 percentage points at the greatest and 5 to 6 percentage points at the smallest, the change shows a decided shift in public opinion since the end of the previous period, 1948 to the mid-1980s, analyzed in chapter one and discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

According to Dov Waxman, American Jews sustained their emotional attachment to Israel while notably becoming critical of the Israeli government, its policies, and its treatment of Palestinians.²²³ Waxman conceded that, “Israel is no longer the great unifier of American Jewry that it was after 1967,” and while Waxman’s observations were written in 2017, the shift began in the 1990s, as this chapter has demonstrated.²²⁴ Commenting on foreign policy, Lawrence Davidson concluded, “U.S. foreign policy on Israel-Palestine has, with few exceptions, been a response to domestic political pressure,” and this is a 1948 legacy.²²⁵ Using Davidson’s observation as a segue, foreign aid to Israel at the end of this period, 2003, was over 4 billion, with 3.7 billion being military aid.²²⁶ The US government gave this aid to Israel despite Israel scoring very high on the Political Terror Scale, with scores of 4.5, 5, and 4.5 in the years

²²² Gallup, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/146408/americans-maintain-broad-support-israel.aspx>

²²³ Dov Waxman. "Young American Jews and Israel: Beyond Birthright and BDS," *Israel Studies* 22, no. 3 (2017): 178.

²²⁴ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) 212.

²²⁵ Lawrence Davidson, “Truman the Politician and the Establishment of Israel,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 4 (2010):41.

²²⁶ Murad Ali, “Aid and Human Rights: The Case of US Aid to Israel.” *Policy perspectives (Islamabad)* 15, no. 3 (2018): 39.

2001, 2002, and 2003 respectively.²²⁷ These scores are high and violate the United States' own guidelines.²²⁸ A score of 4.5 to 5 on this scale represents significant repression, human and civil rights are widely and regularly violated, arrests, disappearances, and torture are widespread and commonplace.

With regard to the Zionist narrative, the American left/right political divide, likewise showed a decided shift. While the period from 1948 to the mid-1980s, discussed in chapter one saw broad support that crossed political lines, with many leftist authors supporting Israel and disseminating the Zionist narrative, the period of this chapter showed left leaning authors staunchly critical of Israel and the 1948 narrative, leaning heavily on the New Historian scholarship, with right leaning and centrist/moderate authors leaning heavily on the Zionist narrative and ad hominem attacks or in the case of the latter, the centrist/moderate author, mixed messages.

An important takeaway from this chapter is that the New Historian scholarship obviously made an impact on not only the discourse, but on public opinion as well. Nevertheless, the effect of the New Historian narrative on foreign policy, primarily in the form of foreign aid to Israel, was negligible. The Zionist narrative clearly, in spite of the gut shot of the New Historians, remained strong with multiple well known American Jewish authors taking up the cause. This

²²⁷ Level 4 Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and torture are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects primarily those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.

Level 5 The terrors of Level 4 have been extended to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.

Gibney, Mark, Linda Cornett, Reed Wood, Peter Haschke, Daniel Arnon, Attilio Pisanò, Gray Barrett, and Baekkwon Park. 2021. The Political Terror Scale 1976-2020. Date Retrieved, from the Political Terror Scale website: <http://www.politicalterror.org/>.

²²⁸ Murad Ali, "Aid and Human Rights: The Case of US Aid to Israel," *Policy perspectives (Islamabad)* 15, no. 3 (2018): 35.

changing and shifting discourse, the shifting public opinion, and the seemingly unchanged foreign policy are taken up in the next chapter as the second Intifada continued, the second Iraq War, and Afghanistan raged on.

Chapter 3: The Way Forward

The Nakba, or “catastrophe” in Arabic, need not refer only to the more than 700,000 Palestinians who were expelled or fled in terror during Israel’s founding. It can also evoke the many expulsions that have occurred since: the about 300,000 Palestinians whom Israel displaced when it conquered the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967; the roughly 250,000 Palestinians who could not return to the West Bank and Gaza after Israel revoked their residency rights between 1967 and 1994; the hundreds of Palestinians whose homes Israel demolished in 2020 alone. The East Jerusalem evictions are so combustible because they continue a pattern of expulsion that is as old as Israel itself.²²⁹

These words, written in mid-2021 by the author, political commentator, and journalism professor Peter Beinart, capture the ongoing importance of the writing of American Jewish authors. In arguing that the issue of the Nakba continues to this day, Beinart’s words cut deep into the discourse of 1948, through to each of the decades and expulsions that he mentions. Beinart’s words appeared in a *New York Times* opinion piece, which told the story of a former Israeli soldier’s apology to a Palestinian man whose family home the soldier unknowingly lived in for a short time. Beinart wrote that, “There is a Hebrew word for the behavior of that former soldier: ‘teshuvah.’ It is generally translated as ‘repentance.’ Ironically enough, however, its literal definition is ‘return.’”²³⁰ How an author of American Jewish descent writes about the relationship between the Nakba and ongoing expulsions matters. It may not be **the** cause of public opinion and foreign policy, as noted in previous chapters, but it has an effect and is one of the causal ingredients. Rarely do any Zionist narrators ever mention any of the subsequent

²²⁹ Peter Beinart, “Palestinian Refugees Deserve to Return Home. Jews Should Understand,” *New York Times*. May 12, 2021

²³⁰ Beinart, “Palestinian Refugees Deserve to Return Home. Jews Should Understand.”

expulsions as doing so exposes the precarious Zionist position. Acknowledging these expulsions connects the context and events of 1948 directly to the context and events of today.

This chapter explores a period lasting from 2003, during the Second Intifada, to the present. In the early 2000s, roughly 50 percent of Americans supported/sympathized with the state of Israel.²³¹ This is lower than the high of 64 percent of 1991, and as the period moved forward this support rose and fell, but never more than 10 percentage points up and never more than 2-3 percentage points down from the mid-50s.²³² The stability of American public support for Israel suggests that the groundbreaking scholarship of the New Historians had little effect on public opinion. Returning to this issue near the end of this chapter will be instructive as to what support/sympathy looks like in the present, as public opinion in one specific and important demographic shifts through this period.

The period of 2003 to the present reveals a continuation of the left/right divide described in chapter two. Right/conservative authors continued to lean on the Zionist narrative, albeit with adjustments to repair a damaged narrative. Left/dissenting authors continued to disseminate New Historian scholarship and parallel scholarship, but made little headway influencing public opinion and foreign policy. Dissenting authors continued refining their arguments and use of scholarship, data, and archival records. Despite these elements of continuity, the twenty-first century has witnessed the beginning of potentially tremendous change. Since 2003, there has been a noticeable shift in the literary discourse away from the Zionist to an upsurge of dissenting voices echoing the New Historian narrative. These left dissenting authors developed a powerful

²³¹ Lydia Saad, "Americans Maintain Broad Support for Israel, U.S. Adults Nearly Four Times as Likely to Side with Israelis as with Palestinians," *Gallup, Inc.* February 28, 2011.

²³² Saad, "Americans Maintain Broad Support for Israel."

counter-narrative to the Zionist narrative, one that clearly communicates how the archival history is at odds with the Zionist narrative. Further, a central change took place in this period: a model appeared for the moderate/centrist author that uses neither the Zionist narrative or the mixed messages of other moderate/centrist authors. The writing of the author quoted in the opening of this chapter, Peter Beinart, represents a crucial change in the discourse, one that may influence other moderate authors to pay more dedicated attention to archival history. As Chomsky noted, the moderate author serves a function in mass media, to bound ‘acceptable’ discourse.²³³ Beinart’s adoption of archival history has the potential to expand or shift the bounds of ‘acceptable’ discourse. This thesis captures a major moment, a potential change in tide, in the history of this discourse.

Right and Left During the Second Intifada

While the Second Intifada continued during the beginning of the period analyzed, so did two other major conflicts, the Second Iraq War (2003-2011) and the Afghanistan War (2001-2021). American attitudes toward Islam, Muslims, Arabs, and therefore Palestinians were affected by these major conflicts. Scholars recognize that, “a partisan divide in attitudes toward Israel emerged after 9/11,” with Republican support rising and Democrat support waning.²³⁴ The 1948 discourse continued to feature the Zionist narrative heavily, Zionist narrators continued to use the Zionist narrative claims as a form of begging the question, combined with other claims or

²³³ Noam Chomsky, “The Propaganda Model and the Mainstream Media: Debate and the Liberal Bias,” YouTube video, 0:00-2:10, Posted by “The Film Archives,” May 31, 2012.

²³⁴ Dov Waxman and Jeremy Pressman, “The Rocky Future of the US-Israeli Special Relationship,” *The Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2021): 75–93.

issues. Meanwhile, dissenting authors used and continued to move beyond New Historian based scholarship. A comparison of right/Zionist and left/dissenting authors will elucidate this.

One way to look at whether the Zionist narrative or New Historian scholarship influenced foreign policy is to analyze an author that was a participant in diplomacy and foreign policy under three different administrations. Dennis Ross was the Distinguished Professor of Diplomacy at Georgetown University. He served as the director of policy planning in George W. Bush's State Department, later served in Bill Clinton's administration as the Middle East peace envoy, and served as special assistant to Barack Obama. Ross is a Democrat, but as is often the case in an American political context, holds many conservative positions. He is a well-known pro-Israel Jewish intellectual and given his positions, played a key role in both public opinion and US foreign policy. Ross has written several books on the topic of Israel/Palestine often with a focus on the United States and Israeli relationship. Two of Ross's two books, *The Missing Peace* and *Doomed to Succeed* contain brief but revealing insights into his views on the 1948 conflict. In *The Missing Peace*, published in 2004, Ross outlines and details the "peace process" from the inside from roughly 1988 to the late 1990s, in the last days of the Clinton administration. Ross used various versions of the Zionist claim of Arab "rejection" and "intransigence" in his first chapter.²³⁵ Ross followed this by claiming Israel suffered, "invasion from all of its Arab neighbors...upon the declaration of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948."²³⁶ Here is the invasion claim, stripped of the important contextual background of previous fighting and rumored ethnic cleansing. Ross also characterized the immediate aftermath of the 1948 war,

²³⁵ Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 19.

²³⁶ Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 20.

as a time when, “Peace was not in the offing.”²³⁷ This statement is a form of the “intransigence” claim, one that is thoroughly disproven by the scholarship of Flapan and Shlaim.

In his discussion of the Palestinian narrative, Ross stated, “Their deep and abiding sense of injustice instilled in the Arabs of Palestine a belief in entitlement.”²³⁸ He went on to enmesh this statement with the “intransigence” claim, writing that along with entitlement, “rivalry ruled out compromise.”²³⁹ Ross included the Zionist claim of refugee flight in his discussion of the Palestinian version of the 1948 conflict. He acknowledged that the Palestinian narrative unequivocally stated, “that the refugees were forced,” to flee their homes and lands, “by the Israelis.”²⁴⁰ A few sentences down, Ross admits, “there is no denying that in many places the Israelis did force Arabs to leave and...the Israelis shed no tears over the Arab departure.”²⁴¹ This makes it all the more curious how Ross can in the very next sentence state, “Regardless of why 750,000 Arabs fled, it was a disaster.”²⁴² While this statement may seem innocuous, the “regardless of why” portion muddies the honest statement in the previous sentence, leaving the Zionist claim of an Arab call to flee open. The “fled” portion is particularly curious as Ross just stated the Palestinians were forced. As a final example from this book, Ross again made the “rejection” and “intransigence” claim in his last chapter. He stated, “that when one side was

²³⁷ Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 20.

²³⁸ Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 35.

²³⁹ Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 35.

²⁴⁰ Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 36.

²⁴¹ Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 36.

²⁴² Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 36.

ready to make the hard decisions the other was not,” implying there was a, “historical pattern.”²⁴³ His next sentences further his claim, as he wrote, “In the 1930s and 1940s, the Jews of Palestine were ready to find a compromise,” while Arab Palestinians, “rejecting the very idea of a Jewish state, were not.”²⁴⁴ While this retroactive rejection and intransigence claim is one of Ross’s favorites, it is worth noting that, as pointed out above, the rejection of partition had a context.

Ross, in his 2015 book *Doomed to Succeed*, wrote a version of the intransigence and rejection Zionist claim that, while not entirely unique, represented the retroactive adjustments that Zionist narrators made to repair the narrative and maintain the discourse. Ross wrote, when speaking of the British peace efforts that,

Still, it is not the reason their efforts to broker a solution between the Arab and Jewish leaders failed. There was simply no give in the Arab position. From the time of the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936-1939, the Arab position had been a maximalist one. They rejected the Peel Commission Report; they rejected the Anglo-American Committee recommendations; they rejected the Morrison-Grady Plan. They would accept only an independent Arab state, with an end to immigration and land sales to Jews. They left no room for a solution...leading Jewish figures in Palestine...found no responsiveness from the other side.²⁴⁵

While Ross’s statement is accurate on its face, the Arabs and Palestinian leadership did indeed reject the mentioned suggestions, as previously shown there is a number of genuine concerns that informed the Arab Palestinian community’s rejection, concerns that became reality in 1948. The

²⁴³ Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 760.

²⁴⁴ Ross, *The Missing Peace*, 760.

²⁴⁵ Dennis Ross, *Doomed to Succeed: the U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015) 13.

interesting and adjusted version of the Zionist rejection and intransigence claim is that Ross has moved the time table into the past. In bypassing the United Nations partition plan rejection, which is the standard Zionist claim, Ross attempts to smuggle the claim into the past and thereby portray the Arab Palestinian as an intrinsically intransigent society. Importantly, Ross carefully edits the reasons for rejection out of his writing. Ross repeats the careful edit a few pages later. He stated, “Israel was invaded by Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in May 1948, following the declaration of statehood.”²⁴⁶ Again, while the “invasion” did take place, he carefully avoids the reasons for the Arab forces deployment which were the violence and rumors of ethnic cleansing.

This careful avoidance of the context of the Zionist claims, which strips the context and presents the claims as sound bites or literary quips is central to the perspective of many Americans. The “rejection” and “intransigence” claims are pervasive in American popular culture, although that is shifting. The invasion talking point is likewise pervasive. The lack of context for the three claims is likewise pervasive. Ross offers these claims as a number of the Zionist authors of this period do, as operating principles, granted premises, and unquestioned assumptions. He ostensibly supports the two-state solution as a diplomat, but like many Zionist authors, he rarely offers any realistic roadmap.

Turning to the counter-narrative mentioned in the introduction to this chapter effectively shows the chasm between the two narratives. Returning to an author from chapter two offers a stark juxtaposition. As seen in chapter two, though Norman Finkelstein was highly critical of Benny Morris’s conclusions, he repeatedly used the New Historian’s research and evidence to

²⁴⁶ Dennis Ross, *Doomed to Succeed: the U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 15.

show the Zionist narrative to be inaccurate. In *Beyond Chutzpah: The Misuse of the Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History*, Finkelstein offered a few brief but incredibly central insights. A popular claim among Zionist authors is that the flight of the Palestinians was not planned but was instead incidental to the fighting. In a rebuke of a noted Zionist propagandist, Morris mentioned, the notion of “transfer” as, “one of the main currents in Zionist ideology from the movements inception.”²⁴⁷ Finkelstein again quoted Morris on the subject of planned removal. Morris wrote, “for many Zionists, beginning with Herzl, the only realistic solution lay in transfer,” and with Morris observed that after the 1936 violence, known as the Great Revolt or the Great Palestinian Revolt, that peace meant separation, “achievable only by way of transfer and expulsion.”²⁴⁸ When countering the common Zionist claim of “no plan”, Finkelstein included an observation by Morris that up to June 1948,

Jewish attack directly and indirectly triggered most of the Arab exodus...from July onwards, there was a growing readiness in the IDF units to expel...David Ben-Gurion clearly wanted as few Arabs as possible to remain in the Jewish state. He hoped to see them flee. He said as much to his colleagues and aides...While there was no ‘expulsion policy’ the July and October offensives were characterized by far more expulsions and, indeed, brutality towards Arab civilians.²⁴⁹

Morris is further quoted by Finkelstein, “In general, in most cases the final and decisive precipitant to flight was Haganah, IZL, LHI, [Irgun, Lehi or Stern gang] or IDF attack, or the

²⁴⁷ Norman Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: The Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 259.

²⁴⁸ Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah*, 259.

²⁴⁹ Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah*, 265. (Morris quoted by Finkelstein)

inhabitants' fear of such attack."²⁵⁰ When viewed in the associated contexts, it is clear that while there may have been no written policy of expulsion explicitly laid out and enunciated, a long standing plan by Zionist leadership was clearly present and written about.

Finkelstein's work in general, and the examples above in particular, added to the collective voice of dissent with forensic research. Even a small sampling of Finkelstein's research gives an American reader a completely different perspective on the conflict in general and Israel's role and actions in particular. Many American students, scholars, and laypersons have read only small portions of Finkelstein and begun to research some of the Zionist claims themselves. The more Americans that have the experience of being introduced to the counter narrative that Finkelstein represents, the more Americans have altered perspectives on the Israel/Palestine conflict. Conversely, Finkelstein's work often sparked debates and new waves of Zionist narrative writing in an attempt to cleanse the discourse of the historical facts.

The contradistinction between the two authors, Ross the Zionist and Finkelstein the academic, shows the great divide between the two positions, Zionist and New Historian. The two authors' books were published roughly a year apart making the comparison a tidy representation of the divergent narratives. Furthermore, while Ross participated in American diplomacy, the failure of which helped fuel the Second Intifada, at the highest levels, Finkelstein actively advanced the study of 1948, through the New Historian scholarship yet moving beyond it, and actively advanced the dissemination of the archival record in public discourse.

²⁵⁰ Norman Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: The Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 265.

Right/Zionist Authors Post Second Intifada

The Second Intifada ended in 2005, but the Iraq and Afghanistan wars continued. The Iraq war began to wind down at the end of the decade. In 2009, the US officially began a drawdown of troops, and it ended the war officially in 2011, although US troops remained for another decade. Polling data shows that American support/sympathy for Israelis in 2009 hovered in the low to high 50s as a percentage, which was not a considerable change up or down from the previous decade.²⁵¹ Support/sympathy for Palestinians meanwhile was in the high teens.²⁵² As with popular opinion, so with foreign policy if one follows Quandt's insight. In 2009, US combined military and economic foreign aid was roughly 2.5 billion dollars.²⁵³ It has since risen. The Gaza War, or, as it is known in the Islamic world, the Gaza Massacre took place from December of 2008 to early January of 2009. While the causes of the war are disputed, the results were not. The conflict resulted in nearly 1400 Palestinian deaths and 13 Israeli deaths.²⁵⁴ This lopsided casualty list is the norm for the long recurring conflict. In this context, authors on the political left and right continued to disseminate dissenting and Zionist narratives respectively.

Staunch supporters of the 'right to exist' mantra and strict Zionist views still had prominent voices emanating from powerful organizations. Returning to the anti-Semitic attack, a

²⁵¹ Lydia Saad, "Americans Maintain Broad Support for Israel, U.S. Adults Nearly Four Times as Likely to Side with Israelis as with Palestinians," *Gallup, Inc.* February 28, 2011.

²⁵² Saad, "Americans Maintain Broad Support for Israel."

²⁵³ Ali, Murad. "Aid and Human Rights: The Case of US Aid to Israel," *Policy perspectives (Islamabad)* 15, no. 3 (2018), 39.

²⁵⁴ B'tselem, "Fatalities during Operation Cast Lead," B'tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. Accessed March 17, 2022.

brief mention of Morton Klein’s writings are necessary. He is the president of Zionist Organization of America since 1993 and was named one of the top Jewish leaders in the United States.²⁵⁵ Klein wrote in an article in the *Baltimore Jewish Times* in 2013, “Before 1948, one could reasonably and accurately speak of a two-state solution, because that is what was being proposed - a state for Jews and a 23rd state for Arabs. Today, only a Palestinian state is being proposed, and those advocating it should therefore call it the ‘Palestinian state solution.’”²⁵⁶ Klein implies Israel living up to its international obligations would destroy it. Klein further claimed, “The U.N. offered to divide the land in 1947 into Jewish and Arab states. The Arab powers said no and invaded Israel in an attempt to destroy the fledgling Jewish state.”²⁵⁷ As with Dershowitz, Klein combined the “rejection” claim with the invasion and extermination claim.

An addition to the Zionist arsenal is to critique any acknowledgement of Palestinian suffering as a means to dismantle the Israeli state. Klein used this tactic to criticize the testimony of an academic activist and a vocal supporter of Palestinian rights, Marc Lamont Hill. Klein wrote, “also at the U.N., Hill called Israel’s rebirth in 1948 the “Nakba – the tragic and great catastrophe” – language that rationalizes Hill’s calls for Israel’s extinction. Hill also demanded a so-called Palestinian “right of return” – an Arab ploy to eliminate the Jewish state by allowing millions of Arabs to move there.”²⁵⁸ Lamont Hill found himself, similarly to Finkelstein, suffering real world consequences for his use of the words, “free Palestine from the river to the

²⁵⁵ Staff, “The Forward 50; Lead Players on a Global Stage,” *HighBeam*, originally *Forward*. November 12, 2004.

²⁵⁶ Morton Klein and Daniel Mandel, “Two-State Solution,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Apr 12, 2013, 35.

²⁵⁷ Klein and Mandel, “Two-State Solution.” 35.

²⁵⁸ Morton A. Klein, and the Inquirer For. “Marc Lamont Hill’s History Suggests His Recent Comments were Intentional | Opinion,” *TCA Regional News*, Dec 06, 2018.

sea,” given in a UN speech.²⁵⁹ Critics argued this phrase called for the end of Israel. Lamont Hill was fired from his CNN contributor position shortly thereafter for “anti-Semitic” words. For Israel’s staunchest supporters, calling the conflict the “Nakba” is an attack to Zionist narrators, or even referring to the right of return, which is enshrined in international law, is part of a plot to destroy Israel. Klein is an extreme version of the American Zionist among the Jewish community, but is indicative of the reactionary mood of Zionist narrators.

As the second decade of the twenty-first century opened, Zionist narrators leaned heavily on old favorite claims, particularly those that serve to deflect from the archival record. The deflection claims seem set to become the Zionist argument, alongside the ‘rejection’ claim that Klein made above. Together with these two, an argument that represents nothing more than a rhetorical war of attrition. Joshua Muravchik, a well-known neoconservative author and professor, wrote his book *Making David Into Goliath: How the World Turned Against Israel*. Muravchik opened his introduction with a version of a Zionist favorite what-aboutism. He wrote of the Mufti of Jerusalem, a well-known anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer, and his designs for and inciting violence against the Yishuv community.²⁶⁰ This deflection is common amongst Zionist narrators, for while the Mufti was a hideous bigot, his bigotry has little to do with the expulsion of Palestinians or the causes of the 1948 violence.

Another deflection that is common amongst Zionist narrators in this period is to point to Palestinian terrorist attacks. In this case, Muravchik discussed terrorism from the pre-1948

²⁵⁹ Isaac Stanley-Becker, “CNN Fired Him for Speech Some Deemed anti-Semitic. But His University Says the Constitution Protects Him,” *The Washington Post*. December 12, 2018.

²⁶⁰ Joshua Muravchik, *Making David Into Goliath: How the World Turned Against Israel* (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2014), 23.

period. He wrote, “So Fatah and the more radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and its various offshoots (all of these groups operating under the umbrella of the PLO) focused instead on small-scale infiltrations into Israel to kill random citizens and destroy property. In the various Arab uprisings of the 1920s and 1930s, invariably described as “glorious” in Arab discourse, women, children, and the elderly were targeted as freely as men capable of bearing arms.”²⁶¹ Again while this may be true, Muravchik fails to mention the Yishuv terrorism in the lead up to, during, and after the 1948 founding of Israel. This is yet another example of the Tu Quoque fallacy, mentioned in chapter one.

A longtime and regular contributor to *Commentary Magazine*, Muravchik offered an interesting piece of deflection. He wrote, “the victims of the Holocaust were slaughtered, while the victims of the *Nakba* lost their homes and land.”²⁶² Two issues are that while millions did not die in the *Nakba*, many and indeed whole villages were massacred; and comparing genocides or ethnic cleansing events by the numbers seems in poor taste. Both were terrible events in their own rights. Regardless of these issues, Muravchik has a point, many more Jews died in the Holocaust, but this is deflection and distraction again as it has zero bearing on the issue of Yishuv actions and violations of international law since 1948. Muravchik’s focus on terrorism, his avoidance of any hint that Palestinians have a right of return, or that Palestinians are refugees of ethnic cleansing at all, represents a trend in much of what can be labeled as modern American Zionist rhetoric.

²⁶¹ Joshua Muravchik, *Making David Into Goliath: How the World Turned Against Israel* (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2014), 35.

²⁶² Joshua Muravchik, “The Holocaust and the *Nakba*,” *Commentary*. February 12, 2007.

Muravchik did make at least one literary contribution to the Zionist narrative. He framed the refugee issue in rhetoric akin to that used by those who oppose reparations for slavery in the United States. He stated, “This points to the question: by what token are these 5 million refugees? Statistically, it is unlikely that more than 5 percent of them, perhaps less, were alive in 1948.”²⁶³ Furthermore, Muravchik did not ask his readers to read between the lines, he stated it outright, why did he push this issue? He pointed out that, “the sole reason why these five million – or 95 percent of them – are treated as ‘refugees’ is to keep alive the Palestinian ‘right of return’ which means the end of Israel.”²⁶⁴ This represents a modernized version of the Zionist claims that Arabs are using the refugees as pawns, that was discussed in chapter one. This is also a precise example of the Zionist narrative use of attrition and time to weaken the strength of Palestinian resolve and the international calls for justice. Muravchik is good representation of the increasingly irrational, fallacious, and reactionary arguments of the Zionist narrative.

Left-Leaning Authors Post Second Intifada

Leftist authors made use of humanitarian and international law-based arguments and added breadth to the New Historian-influenced narrative. Tony Judt remained an outspoken critic of Israel and its relationship with the United States. Judt mainstreamed the humanitarian and international law-based argument through his writing. His writings did not often go into the 1948

²⁶³ Joshua Muravchik, *Making David Into Goliath: How the World Turned Against Israel* (New York and London: Encounter Books, 2014), 58.

²⁶⁴ Muravchik, *Making David Into Goliath*, 58.

conflict explicitly but did operate on principles laid down by the New History. A prime example of this is from an article in the *New York Times* in 2009. Judt points out that,

There are about 120 official Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank. In addition, there are “unofficial” settlements whose number is estimated variously from 80 to 100. Under international law, there is no difference between these two categories; both are contraventions of Article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which explicitly prohibits the annexation of land consequent to the use of force, a principle re-stated in Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter.²⁶⁵

The notion that Israel is in violation of the Geneva Convention and the United Nations Charter is grounded in both its statehood and occupation. This implies that these articles of international law apply to all land occupied by the Yishuv forces then the Israeli Defense Forces in 1948, in 1967, and into the present. In a sense, this sort of thinking seeks to hold Israeli leadership’s feet to the very fire that they use as justification for the initial war of 1948. When viewed in conjunction with his writing from chapter two, Judt was a good example of the breadth of dissenting authors.

Ilan Pappé and Frank Barat’s collaborative project, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel’s War Against the Palestinians*, includes an interview with Noam Chomsky in the introduction. Chomsky observed that Israel demands that Palestinians, “recognize Israel,” or in its settler colonial form, “Israel’s ‘right to exist.’”²⁶⁶ This settler colonial stipulation asks

²⁶⁵ Tony Judt, "Fictions on the Ground: [Op-Ed]." *New York Times*, Jun 22, 2009, Late Edition (East Coast).

²⁶⁶ Ilan Pappé, Noam Chomsky, and Frank Barat, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel’s War Against the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013), 17-18.

Palestinians to accept and legitimize their own expulsion and to “renounce violence...accept past agreements, in particular, the Road Map of the Quartet.”²⁶⁷ He goes on to muse,

No such conditions are imposed on those who wear the jackboots. (1) Israel does not recognize Palestine, in fact, is devoting extensive efforts to ensure that there will be no viable Palestine ever, always with decisive U.S. support; (2) Israel does not renounce violence, and it is ridiculous even to raise the question with regard to the United States; (3) Israel firmly rejects past agreements, in particular, the Road Map, with U.S. support.²⁶⁸

In this set of quotations, Chomsky laid out succinctly the binary contradiction between Zionist narrative and reality. Although he was not speaking directly to 1948, the issues that he discussed stem from the 1948 conflict and its aftermath. In a 2014 book, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians*, Chomsky quoted David Ben-Gurion after the revolt of 1936-1939, who wrote/said “politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves...The country is theirs, because they inhabit it, whereas we want to come here and settle down, and in their view, we want to take away from them their country, while we are still outside.”²⁶⁹ Reiterating his take on

Yishuv terrorism and the flight claims, Chomsky wrote,

By May, its armies had taken over parts of the territory assigned to the Palestinian state. The Irgun-LEHI Deir Yassin massacre in April had already taken place, one major factor in causing the flight of much of the Arab population. This fact was reported with much enthusiasm in official statements of Irgun and LEHI, specifically, by the terrorist commander Menachem Begin, who took pride in the

²⁶⁷ Ilan Pappé, Noam Chomsky, and Frank Barat, *Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013), 17-18.

²⁶⁸ Ilan Pappé, Noam Chomsky, and Frank Barat, *Gaza in Crisis*, 17-18.

²⁶⁹ Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 98.

operation in which some 250 defenseless people were slaughtered, including more than 100 women and children, with 4 killed among the attacking forces.²⁷⁰

The combination of the two issues, the flight claim and its terrorism context is of supreme importance in understanding the reality of the 1948 conflict and its aftermath. Zeroing in on the flight claim, particularly the “Arab call,” Chomsky wrote, “for many years, it was claimed that the Palestinians fled in 1948 on the orders of Arab leaders. The basis for this claim was undermined by Erskine Childers in 1961, though one hears it still. In fact, it seems that the Arab leadership tried to prevent the flight, which was encouraged by Israeli terror and psychological warfare, sometimes direct expulsion.”²⁷¹ Rounding out Chomsky’s countering of claims, he included the observation that, “It has been argued further that the entry of the Arab states into the war was in part motivated by opposition to the ambitions of King Abdullah and that ‘...Egyptian intentions were not to invade Palestine, but to find a diplomatic solution to the conflict.’”²⁷² One of the drives of Chomsky’s work, in relation to Israel/Palestine, is the connection of the 1948 legacy to modern claims, rhetoric, and policies. An example being the “right to exist” demand, for if Palestinians grant this, they effectively permanently dispossess themselves of significant portions of their own land from the 1947 United Nations partition map.

Chomsky, as mentioned above and in previous chapters, remained one of only a few prominent long-standing voices of critique and dissent on the Israel/Palestine conflict. He was and is a rather pragmatic thinker in regards to solutions, supporting a binational one state solution that seemed unlikely, while advocating for a two-state solution with the important

²⁷⁰ Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 103.

²⁷¹ Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*, 105.

²⁷² Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*, 106.

caveat that the two states be on completely equal footing. His books, articles, interviews, lectures, and debates on the topic are a goldmine of source material for anyone interested in learning about the conflict from sources outside of the Zionist narrative. He, accordingly was villainized time and again by Zionists at home and abroad, being labeled an anti-Semitic Jew, and the self-hating Jew.

Max Blumenthal is indicative of a younger Jewish community that is actively questioning, researching, and reimagining the dialogue, narrative, and hopefully the discourse on 1948. Blumenthal is an investigative journalist, having written for *Al Jazeera* English, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, as well as founding the Greyzone Project. Blumenthal currently is the editor of the Greyzone Project. He has been a rather fearless critic of Israeli policy and United States policy regarding the conflict. His book *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* stirred up a backlash from the conservative Zionist right, as well as from noted centrists. He writes from a leftist perspective. In *Goliath*, Blumenthal repeatedly addressed the 1948 conflict. When discussing the assault on Jaffa he wrote, “Zionist militias attacked Jaffa in full force, with up to 5,000 troops invading the city in waves, raining artillery shells down on the civilian population. By the end of the siege, many of the over 50,000 Arab Jaffans forced from their homes had been literally driven into the sea--forced to flee by boat.”²⁷³ Blumenthal thus provides an example of the Zionist claims of Arab hate and anti-Semitism being a bit of projection. Some Arab leaders did in fact use the “drive them into the sea” rhetoric during and after the 1948 conflict, but Yishuv militias actually did so to Palestinians. Blumenthal goes on to detail the story of Nazareth’s Arabs who only avoided the expulsions due to a demand from a

²⁷³ Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (New York: Nation Books, 2014), 44.

Canadian volunteer in the Haganah that he receive a written command, rather than verbal, to expel the Arab citizenry of the town that he had just signed an agreement with.²⁷⁴ The request for a “formally recorded order,” appeared to be more than the Yishuv leadership were willing to provide.²⁷⁵

Blumenthal detailed the head of the Transfer Committee, an unofficial committee within the Yishuv to oversee the expulsion of Palestinians, Yosef Weitz’s identification of villages to destroy. Weitz declared, “If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us...the only solution is a Land of Israel... without Arabs...There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them...Not one village must be left.”²⁷⁶ Weitz, “personally guided the expulsions with a deliberate, calculated hand, dispatching his staff to identify Palestinian villages to destroy...called cleaning up.”²⁷⁷ Blumenthal further noted the longstanding hostility toward teaching children, Arab or Israeli, anything about the Nakba or the Palestinian perspective of the 1948 conflict. In 2009, he noted that Likud party member and soon to be prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu went to great lengths to confiscate all copies of a textbook that included two sentences on the tragedy. The text read, “Some of the Arab residents were forced to leave their homes and some were expelled, and they became refugees in the neighboring Arab communities in the State of Israel, because their villages were

²⁷⁴ Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (New York: Nation Books, 2014), 132.

²⁷⁵ Blumenthal, *Goliath*, 132.

²⁷⁶ Blumenthal, *Goliath*, 185.

²⁷⁷ Blumenthal, *Goliath*, 185.

destroyed during and after the war.”²⁷⁸ Even this light mention of the tragedy, the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, was a bridge too far.

Another example of the New History influenced research in Blumenthal’s writing is a brief discussion of Moshe Dayan, the eyepatch wearing, iconic hero of the IDF, and his role in removal and expulsions. Blumenthal wrote, “For two years, the Israeli government kept the indigenous residents -- ‘infiltrators’ they now called them -- confined in a small ghetto surrounded by barbed wire, until Army Southern Commander Moshe Dayan, in 1950, following consultation with the government’s ‘Committee for the Transferring of Arabs,’ had his forces load the unwanted Palestinians into trucks and dump them in the Gaza Strip, where they would be permanently confined.”²⁷⁹ This inclusion is post 1948 and shows a continued policy based on a planned course of action. Another post-1948 event, the Land Acquisition Law, passed in 1953 likewise broadens the context. Along with a similar law passed at the time,

the State of Israel was authorized to expropriate the property of anyone who fled their home or land at any time between the dates of November 29, 1947 and September 1, 1948. Given that these were the dates between which the UN ratified the plan to partition Israel and Palestine and when the hostilities ended, the laws clearly singled out Palestinians without explicitly mentioning them. Between 1948 and 1953, 95 percent of new Jewish communities were established on ‘absentee’ land.²⁸⁰

Blumenthal does not directly counter any specific Zionist claim here but the broad context of the dispossession, expulsion, and expropriation of Arab Palestinian property and land is rarely mentioned in the Zionist narrative, and is likewise rarely mentioned in the discourse at large.

²⁷⁸ Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (New York: Nation Books, 2014), 54-55.

²⁷⁹ Blumenthal, *Goliath*, 128.

²⁸⁰ Blumenthal, *Goliath*, 45.

A further example of critical, New Historian based narrative from 2014 is an article published in *Tikkun* magazine. As *Tikkun* is a ‘progressive’ publication, on an international political spectrum the magazine would be slightly left of center, articles such as the following represent a mainstreaming of the New Historian scholarship. The authors, Gil Hochberg and Mark Levine, are both academics. They wrote in response to an “open letter” full of Zionist claims, penned by Jon Voight. The pair wrote,

Zionist immigrants tried desperately to penetrate the Palestinian Arab economy, but could not compete with the local population. Out of their desperation the concepts of the “conquest of labor” and then “conquest of land” developed, and by 1909, the year both Tel Aviv and the first kibbutz, Degania, were born, Zionism had become a “militant national movement” on the ground in Palestine ...one whose main strategy for achieving its goals was to acquire as much territory as possible in the country free of Palestinians so it could be settled by Jews without fear of competition.²⁸¹

This statement is a direct contradiction to a Zionist claim that was discussed in chapter one, that Yishuv immigration and hard work made an economy that drew Arabs as immigrants to Palestine. Hochberg and Levine point out the Palestinian economy was a rapidly developing one, and this played into Zionist calculations for their settling in the region, a total reversal of the narrative from the claims of Zionist narrators.²⁸²

The pair offered another sharp critique of the Zionist claims and narrative writing,

The Zionist leadership “accepted” the terms of the 1947 Partition Plan, they had little intention of actually fulfilling them. From the fall of 1947 already a civil war had begun in which leaders of the Zionist movement began clearing out as much of the territory it controlled as possible of Palestinian inhabitants. By May 15, 1948, the date of Israel's official establishment, tens of thousands of Palestinians had *already* been forced from their homes, their villages destroyed. After independence, the pace of expulsions—an act

²⁸¹ Mark Levine and Gil Hochberg, “A Letter to Jon Voight about Gaza and the History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Tikkun*. August 15, 2014.

²⁸² Levine and Hochberg, “A Letter to Jon Voight about Gaza and the History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

that was and remains completely contrary to international law, then and now—increased, and ultimately led to the forced exile of over 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and the complete destruction of hundreds of villages. Even if one argues that Palestinians willingly left their homes during the conflict, under international law of the time and today they had an absolute right to return to their homes safely and securely once hostilities were at an end.²⁸³

This excerpt represents one of the most succinct and sharp rebukes of the Zionist narrative. As Hochberg and Levine point out, the expulsions began long before the Mandate for Palestine ended and the new state of Israel was proclaimed. Regardless of one's argument on the cause of flight, Palestinians have the right to return to their homes and property, period full stop. The issue that the pair raise of "their homes," implies property, the appropriation of which is another issue raised by dissenting critical authors in chapters one and two. Multiple authors touched on the right of return, based on the same international law that established Israel, through multiple decades.

In closing their discussion of 1948 and 1967, Hochberg and Levine stated the evidence drawn from the archival records first surveyed by the New Historians. The two wrote, "The Zionist movement was not an innocent victim of Arab fanaticism and antipathy to Jews. It was an active participant and initiator of an intercommunal conflict which resulted in the expulsion of a million Palestinians in 1948 and then 1967, which has produced a brutal and illegal occupation that continues and even intensifies to this day."²⁸⁴ The key term in this short quotation is, "initiator," as the Haganah directly, and the Yishuv broadly initiated the conflict and the expulsions. The Zionist narrative claimed precisely the opposite for decades. The writing of

²⁸³ Mark Levine and Gil Hochberg, "A Letter to Jon Voight about Gaza and the History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Tikkun*. August 15, 2014.

²⁸⁴ Levine and Hochberg, "A Letter to Jon Voight about Gaza and the History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

these two authors show the willingness of dissenting authors to challenge the Zionist narrative, even if it originates from an elderly non-Jewish uninformed movie star. This article, published in a slightly left moderate/progressive magazine, shows a shifting and mainstreaming of the New Historian scholarship.

Moderate/Centrist Authors: Progress or Stagnation?

In this thesis, in the previous chapters, moderate/centrist authors have lived up to their political billing, expressing Friedman's 'mushy views.'²⁸⁵ These authors often mentioned New Historian based narratives, only to return to the Zionist narrative. Though the following centrist/moderate/liberal authors used some of this mixed messaging or straightforward Zionist narratives, there are important changes clearly taking place within the moderate camp of American Jewish authors. This becomes quite pronounced with the last author.

One thing that becomes clear with many moderate/centrist authors after the publishing of the New Historian scholarship, is that they often have a particular Zionist claim or argument that they just cannot seem to extricate out of their minds. So, while these authors do engage with the scholarship, it is frequently followed or prefaced with a Zionist claim, a true mixed message. Eric Alterman is an historian, author, and Distinguished Professor of English and Journalism at CUNY. He is a self-described moderate, particularly when it comes to Israel, citing his being attacked by the right for lack of Zionist zeal and pro-Israel defense while at the same time

²⁸⁵ Thomas L. Friedman, "The Answers to Our Problems Aren't as Simple as Left or Right," *New York Times*. July 23, 2019

denounced by the left for being too Zionist and pro-Israel.²⁸⁶ Alterman does appear to inhabit a political space between left and right on Israel. In an article in *The Forward*, Alterman stated “Palestinians...were forced from their homes by Israeli soldiers, or instructed to leave by their own leaders in anticipation of a quick return.”²⁸⁷ One is immediately greeted by a mixed message. He connects the New Historian findings that Yishuv soldiers “forced” Palestinians from their homes with the old, and thoroughly discredited, Zionist claim of an “Arab call” for temporary flight. Later in the same article, Alterman offered a revealing insight into the projection that is the “Arab intransigence” claim. When mentioning the “Palestine Papers,” a series of *Al Jazeera* leaked documents on the Israel-Palestine peace process, he points out that the documents reveal, “a remarkable willingness of the Palestinian leadership to compromise on fundamental questions.”²⁸⁸ The “compromise” that Alterman points to is, as former Israeli diplomat Shlomo Avineri noted, the Palestinians, “must accept a ‘token’ right of return rather than the real thing.”²⁸⁹ Implicit in the “Palestine Papers” is the reality of Israeli intransigence, with Israeli diplomacy focused quite narrowly and contingent on a rejection of the right of return. Alterman’s inclusion is a standard Zionist position that allows for no right of return. The right of return, which is an essential element of 1948, is apparently only acceptable as a “token” compromise for peace.

In a piece in *The Daily Beast*, Alterman furthers this rejection of the right of return. He responded to Omar Barghouti, the founder of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement.

²⁸⁶ Eric Alterman, “The Impossible Dream: Honest Debate About Israel,” *Huffington Post*. July 27, 2006.

²⁸⁷ Eric Alterman, “When the One-State Solution Begins Looking Like the Only Solution,” *The Forward* (New York, NY), July 15, 2011.

²⁸⁸ Alterman, “When the One-State Solution Begins Looking Like the Only Solution.”

²⁸⁹ Alterman, “When the One-State Solution Begins Looking Like the Only Solution.”

Barghouti argued, in an opinion forum in *The Nation*, “at minimum, ending Israel’s 1967 occupation and colonization, ending Israel’s system of racial discrimination and respecting the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their lands from which they were ethnically cleansed during the 1948 Nakba,” would be necessary for Palestinian equality.²⁹⁰ Alterman responded to Barghouti’s point writing, “If so, there is really nothing to talk about. Six or seven million Palestinians cannot be reintegrated into Israeli society.”²⁹¹ Coupled with his use of the “Arab call” claim, Alterman’s rejection of the right of return is not surprising. In an article in *The Forward*, Alterman once again showed the other side of his moderate perspective. Writing against the conflation of anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism and critique of Israeli policy, he stated, “isn’t it easier to accuse one’s critics of being motivated by anti-Semitism than to admit that a great deal of criticism of Israel — which, after all, is occupying the land of another people, expropriating it illegally (according to its own laws) for the use of its settlers, treating non-Jews as second-class citizens and curtailing the right of free speech of all its citizens — might have some tiny bit of justification?”²⁹² While this statement is not explicitly about 1948, the issues he raises all extend from the 1948 conflict and its aftermath. Alterman’s criticism of Israel is seemingly at odds with his earlier use of the Zionist claims, he clearly is an intellectually complicated fellow.

Alterman is, like Oz, a prime example of the complicated and contradictory content of many moderate authors. He offers pointed critiques of Israeli policy and action in the present, and he engages with the New History when writing about the 1948 period. Nevertheless, he

²⁹⁰ Eric Alterman, “Brooklyn College and The BDS Debate,” *The Daily Beast* February 7, 2013.

²⁹¹ Eric Alterman, “Brooklyn College and The BDS Debate.”

²⁹² Eric Alterman, “Critical of Israel, Not Anti-Semitic,” *The Forward*, (New York, NY), August 5, 2011

mixes this with long discredited Zionist claims that are lynchpins of the Zionist narrative that dominates the discourse on Israel/Palestine.

While Alterman’s mixed messaging presents itself quite obviously, other centrist authors’ mixed messages were a little more tightly woven. David Brooks is a *New York Times* journalist that despite being labeled as the, “in-house conservative,” views himself as a moderate.²⁹³ Brooks stated, “I believe in incremental change but constant change. To be a Burkean, in America these days, is to be a moderate, which is what I think I’ve become. It’s not to be a populist right-winger, or a Reaganite-Thatcherite type.”²⁹⁴ In an article in the *New York Times* in 2018, Brooks stated, “My narrative starts with the idea that the creation of the state of Israel was a historic achievement involving a historic wrong — the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians.”²⁹⁵ While the first statement is partially accurate, the second is a statement of fact that, like Oz in chapter two, simply acknowledges reality. In the same article, speaking of the Palestinians, Brooks stated, “they elected Hamas, an organization that lists the extermination of the state of Israel as an existential goal.”²⁹⁶ The problem here is two-fold, first Brooks applies the present to the past in the Zionist “war of extermination” claim. Secondly this mischaracterizes the situation by avoiding context. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Likud openly states its opposition to a Palestinian state and further engages in violent and political actions to keep said state nonexistent. A word of clarity, Hamas was a particularly extreme organization, so Brooks’ statement was not completely false, but the all-important context was missing, both that of

²⁹³ Jason Cowley, “A Hesitant Radical in the Age of Trump: David Brooks and the Search for Moderation.” *New Statesman* 146, no. 5390 (2017): 16.

²⁹⁴ Cowley, “A Hesitant Radical in the Age of Trump.”

²⁹⁵ David Brooks, “The Gaza Violence: How Extremism Corrupts,” *New York Times*. May 17, 2018.

²⁹⁶ Brooks, “The Gaza Violence.”

Likud's racist intransigence and Hamas's evolution. On Hamas's evolution, Sara Roy noted, "a more piecemeal, moderate, and systemic approach toward change," within the organization, one that did not, "emphasize political violence and sub-state terrorism," focusing on, "community well-being and civic restoration."²⁹⁷

In a *New York Times* article in 2019, Brooks described the conflict as one of competing narratives. He pointed out, "In many intractable conflicts, like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, each side wants the other to adopt its narrative and admit it was wrong the whole time. This will never happen. Get over it. Find a new narrative."²⁹⁸ The problem here is that, while the Palestinian narrative is not precisely congruent with the evidence based New Historian research, it is most assuredly closer to that evidence than the Zionist narrative is. Brooks is essentially saying that the Zionist narrative must be scrapped along with the Palestinian narrative. Stated more bluntly, he suggests that Israel cannot be expected to accept the historical facts of scholarly research. In another article, again in the *New York Times*, Brooks stated, "You can kiss goodbye to the fascinating chess match known as the Middle East peace process. That chess match was dependent on a series of smart and reasonable Arab players with whom Israel could negotiate...But they are not running the show now."²⁹⁹ By now it should be evident when any version of the "intransigence" claim rears its head, but Brooks claims it in a new way suggesting that for a time there were reasonable leaders willing to negotiate, but now peace is prevented by Arab intransigence. David Brooks is a good representation of the negative aspects of the

²⁹⁷ Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza Engaging the Islamist Social Sector* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 14-15.

²⁹⁸ David Brooks, "Kindness is a Skill: Practical Tips for Fighting a Culture of Savagery," *New York Times*. Jan 28, 2019.

²⁹⁹ David Brooks, "As Israel Goes for Withdrawal, Its Enemies Go Berserk," *New York Times*. July 16, 2006.

moderate. Moderates deploy, willfully or perhaps unconsciously long debunked Zionist talking points, albeit in creative or transformed ways. In making use of Zionist claims alongside the New Historians' insights, moderates inhabit a middle ground on a divisive issue. However, in repeating Zionist claims, moderates reveal how aspects of Israel's discourse remain hegemonic. Moderates often determine the bounds of discourse, rendering evidence-based approaches that are critical of the Israeli narrative or supportive of Palestinians' right to return as more 'political' than the regurgitation of state myths. To be fair to other moderates, Brooks could be classified as right leaning.

While Alterman and Brooks peddled the mixed messaging that this thesis shows moderate authors tended to deploy, another moderate author, writing in a progressive magazine, refrained from the mixed message. Instead this author limited their critique to 1967 and then was rebuked and pushed to go further, connecting the critique to 1948 and more fully disseminating the New Historian scholarship. Returning to the progressive *Tikkun* magazine, Professor Shaul Magid noted some facts of the historical record that contradict the Zionist narrative. He wrote, "Israel came into existence on the backs of the Palestinian people. In doing so, many crimes were committed and the ethos of that time has not disappeared."³⁰⁰ By 2015, the publishing of Magid's article was not surprising or out of the ordinary as his article is a response to another author who felt Magid had not gone far enough in criticizing Israel, both in 1948 and 1967. The author in question here was Wendy Elisheva Somerson, a PhD in English and a leftist American Jewish author, her article also contains relevant New History based narrative. She wrote, "The Nakba refers to the destruction of most Palestinian towns that existed in what became the state of

³⁰⁰ Shaul Magid, "Nakba, Occupation, and the Search for Original Sin: A Response to Wendy Somerson," *Tikkun*. January 23, 2015.

Israel, and the expulsion of most of their Palestinian residents between 1947 and 1949. During this time, 530 Palestinian localities were destroyed and 800,000 residents were expelled or fled in terror and were not allowed to return. Palestinians were dispossessed from their homes, lands, and livelihoods as a result of Israeli ethnic cleansing operations.”³⁰¹ Somerson’s words represent one of the most succinct descriptions of the Nakba and founding of Israel in this period. She got more specific in noting Plan Dalet writing,

In March, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, agreed to the strategy of *Plan Dalet*, which declared the intention to ethnically cleanse as much of Palestine as possible in order to control the most amount of land with the least amount of Palestinians. To accomplish this task, Jewish military forces, essentially terrorist organizations, were told to carry out this campaign in the following manner: “either by destroying villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in their debris)” or by “encirclement of the villages, conducting a search inside them. In case of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.”³⁰²

Again, Somerson’s words are historically accurate and damning to the Zionist narrative, and most importantly, make the right of return an obvious given. Beyond this, both Magid and Somerson represent New Historian based narratives being not only more common but point to these types of narrative, in the Israel/Palestine discourse, slowly gaining ground on the Zionist narrative. Furthermore, the dialogue between the two authors showed the change in the discourse that was taking place. For Magid, just to write of the injustice in a broad way was not enough, drawing the ire and rebuke of a fellow American Jewish author.

³⁰¹ Wendy Elisheva Somerson, “The Twin Ghosts of Slavery and the Nakba: The Roots that Connect Ferguson and Palestine,” *Tikkun*. January 23, 2015.

³⁰² Somerson, “The Twin Ghosts of Slavery and the Nakba.”

It is, however, possible that the moderate adopts and influences new bounds of discourse as public opinion in the United States continues to shift. Far from the mixed messages of Friedman, Oz, Alterman, and others, Peter Beinart is a moderate author that actively engages with the new history, sheds Zionist narrative baggage, and confronts the issue in as good of faith as possible. Beinart is an author, columnist, political commentator, and professor of journalism at CUNY. He is also a practicing Orthodox Jew. In his book *The Crisis of Zionism*, Beinart wrote of the 1948 conflict,

In May 1948, in ‘The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel,’ the state’s founders promised ‘complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race, or sex.’ Yet in the war that preceded and followed those majestic words, Zionist forces committed abuses so terrible that David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, declared himself ‘shocked by the deeds that have reached my ears.’³⁰³

This is essentially a New History inspired statement, discussing the evidence of the conflict, as it is. Shortly after in the same paragraph he observed, “During the war, roughly 700,000 Arabs left Palestine, and irrespective of whether most left their homes voluntarily or were forced out, Israel refused to let them return.”³⁰⁴ Again Beinart offered a New Historian narrative, without embellishment, mixed messaging, or lack of context. One could see his ‘voluntarily’ statement as the ‘Arab call’ claim. In this context Beinart recognized that those who left ‘voluntarily’ did so to avoid the violence and rumored atrocities, fearing for their lives, and further tied this issue to the right of return. Imagine for a moment that one is held up at gunpoint and one’s wallet is

³⁰³ Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2012) 13.

³⁰⁴ Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, 13-14.

demanded, if one gives the wallet, is it voluntary? This is coercion, not voluntary. If the gunman refuses to give back the money or the wallet when confronted, it only compounds the crime.

When commenting on the current Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu's ideological origins with Revisionist Zionism, Beinart detailed the Revisionist position and its leader Vladimir Jabotinsky. He wrote, "Revisionists...fervently opposed any restraints on the Jewish pursuit of statehood, and insisted that such a state encompass both sides of the Jordan River...not only...Israel...the West Bank, but also the East Bank...modern day Jordan."³⁰⁵ He continues stating, "extreme Revisionists like the Stern Gang," sought to pursue their state through force, or in other words, transfer.³⁰⁶ Beinart described a pre-1948 situation, one that shortly became a reality in 1948 when, "members of the Stern Gang and the larger Revisionist militia, the Irgun, massacred more than one hundred Arabs, many women and children, in the village of Deir Yassin."³⁰⁷ Beinart went on to remark on the genesis of modern Israeli politics, in a passage about Benjamin Netanyahu's father writing, "Jabotinsky called...editor of a Revisionist newspaper...Benzion Netanyahu" to be an ambassador, "Netanyahu complied," and served through Jabotinsky's death for decades in the United States and Israel remaining, "remarkably constant and...faithful," to the cause.³⁰⁸ Beinart observed that Netanyahu, "proved remarkably successful in transmitting," the ideological position, "to his middle son, Benjamin."³⁰⁹ Here Beinart did what other moderate authors could not or would not do. He unflinchingly connected

³⁰⁵ Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2012), 104.

³⁰⁶ Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, 104.

³⁰⁷ Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, 104.

³⁰⁸ Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, 105.

³⁰⁹ Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, 105.

the pre-1948 ideologies and platforms through to the modern period. The Revisionist goal of creating “Greater Israel,” with all of the land under Jewish control, and few Arabs remaining, is strikingly congruent with the Likud Party platform and policies.

Another example of Beinart’s willingness to clearly expose the dark side of 1948 is his clear articulation of Zionist leaders’ racist views right up to, during, and after the conflict. He noted that Jabotinsky said the Arabs, “are five hundred years behind us.” Jabotinsky’s most stringent and extreme followers, for example Avraham Stern, founder of Stern Gang/Lehi, “regularly referred to Arabs as a slave race, inherently inferior to Jews.”³¹⁰ Beinart connects this racism from the past into the modern period in an article in *Jacobin*. He opined,

I also think that one of the great tragedies of Israel has been that for a complicated set of reasons Mizrahi Jews, who are Arabs themselves, who could have been a bridge between Ashkenazi Jews and Palestinians, did not play that role. Because of the intense anti-Arab ethos in Israel, especially early on in the fifties, Mizrahi Jews had to divest themselves politically of their own Arabness, even though culturally they may have retained big elements of it, and they’ve become often more anti-Arab than the Ashkenazim. And that has allowed for this kind of narrative to emerge: That Jews can’t live peacefully with Arabs and look, the Arab Jews themselves say so.³¹¹

Returning to *The Crisis of Zionism*, Beinart quoted a Benzion Netanyahu essay from 1943 which called Arabs, “a semi-barbaric people, which lacks any democratic traditions and is fired by religious fanaticism and hatred for the stranger.”³¹² Beinart again quotes Netanyahu senior when asked by an interviewer, “Is there any hope of peace?” Netanyahu answered, “Out of agreement?

³¹⁰ Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2012), 103.

³¹¹ Peter Beinart, “Peter Beinart on the End of the Two State Solution for Israel and Palestine.” Interview by Hadas Thier. *Jacobin*. <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/07/two-state-solution-peter-beinart-israel-palestine>

³¹² Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, 107-108.

No, the other side might stay in peace if it understands that doing anything [else] will cause it enormous pain.”³¹³ One may ask where in the 1948 narratives does this fall? Perceived Arab hatred and desire to exterminate the young Jewish community and then state, was one of the cornerstones of the Zionist narrative, a part of the narrative that Beinart mentioned above. This excerpt, in conjunction with the Jabotinsky and Stern quotes, offers context for why the Arab Palestinians rejected the partition plan. Furthermore, Beinart showed himself more than willing to stick to the historical evidence and record.

Beinart’s criticism of Israel, Israeli policy, the American Jewish community, as well as United States foreign policy is out of the norm amongst moderate/centrist authors. For his courage and honesty, Beinart earned the label of ‘traitor.’ Daniel Gordis, American born Israeli rabbi and writer, criticized Beinart in 2020. According to an article in the *Israeli Daily News*, Gordis asked of Beinart, “‘Are you in the same camp as Ilhan Omar and in the same camp as Rashida Tlaib?’”³¹⁴ If so, Gordis argued, “‘we should treat you the way we treat them – which is to say, hopefully not with disrespect – we call you an ‘enemy’ of our people.’”³¹⁵ Thus Beinart, most assuredly a moderate liberal politically, an Orthodox Jew, an academic, a public intellectual author, once a favorite within the American Jewish community, apparently went too far by simply acknowledging history. Beinart, like many others before him, is cast as a self-hating Jew, and an “enemy” of the Jewish people. While he does not mention New Historians by name, Beinart clearly adheres to the New History, a history based upon the archival record, the written

³¹³ Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2012), 108.

³¹⁴ Arutz Sheva Staff, “Daniel Gordis: Peter Beinart is a 'Traitor' to the Jewish People,” *Israel National News*. July 15, 2020.

³¹⁵ Arutz Sheva Staff, “Daniel Gordis: Peter Beinart is a 'Traitor' to the Jewish People.”

record of the Israeli founders, and the collective scholarship on the subject. Beinart seems a staunch supporter of the New History narrative.

Beinart represents what a moderate author's contribution to the discourse can be. Rather than offering a confusing admixture of Zionist narratives, New Historian garnish, and a little political jargon, Beinart's contribution shows that moderate authors, that are often read by conservatives, liberal, and left alike, can become beacons of truth, history, and the potential for a more just future. This last author, a moderate, is a model for other moderate or centrist authors, Jewish or non-Jewish, to be able to take a stance on the Israel/Palestine 1948 subject that is based on history and archival fact. Moderate/centrist authors, who effectively bound discourse, have the power to shift the bounds, the window of acceptable discourse. By strictly and honestly adhering to the archival record on this issue moderate/centrist authors the power to rid the discourse of the thoroughly discredited Zionist narrative.

Conclusion

A brief word on foreign policy, in the form of US foreign aid to Israel. While the New Historian narrative had little effect on foreign policy in the period of the second chapter, the same appears to be true at the end of the period of analysis in this chapter. According to Congressional Research Service reports, American foreign aid to Israel in 2018 and 2019 hovered right at or above 3.8 billion dollars yearly, the majority in military aid.³¹⁶ This represents

³¹⁶ EveryCRSReport.com, "US Foreign Aid to Israel," University of North Texas Libraries Government Documents Department. Updated August 7, 2019.

no significant change from previous years, and given the support for Israel in public opinion broadly, not a surprise. As with previous periods in the previous chapters, the Zionist narrative seems to be near to the heart of US legislators and the New Historian scholarship seems to have had little effect on these same legislators, save a couple of Senators and Representatives whose names would be familiar.

The collective result of the long-term dominance of the Zionist narrative of 1948 within the American discourse is that public opinion is slow to shift. Collected public opinion polling shows that since 2000, support for Israel in the general population has increased from roughly 62 percent of respondents supporting in 2000, up to 74 percent of respondents supporting Israel in 2020.³¹⁷ This uptick in support is in direct conflict with the increasing public, academic, and political critique of Israel, Israeli policy, and United States policy regarding Israel/Palestine. As Sara Roy noted, the collective work of a wide variety of scholars legitimized criticism of Israeli and American policies, both in public and academia.³¹⁸ The high percentage of support for Israel is dramatically increased when looking at Republicans, of whom up to 91 percent support Israel, holding “very favorable,” or, “mostly favorable,” stances toward Israel.³¹⁹ This lopsided support for Israel should come as no surprise after reading the work of the right leaning authors above.

As noted above, there are a couple of important public opinion caveats. One important caveat is that as of 2016,

³¹⁷ Eytan Gilboa, “What Do Americans Think of Israel? Long-Term Trends and Socio-Demographic Shifts.” *Currents* Issue 3. Spring 2021. Figure 1.

³¹⁸ Sara Roy, “Reflections on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in U.S. Public Discourse: Legitimizing Dissent,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39, no. 2 (2010): 25.

³¹⁹ Gilboa, “What Do Americans Think of Israel? Table 5.

There is a growing generation gap in Mideast sympathies. A decade ago, Millennials and older generations held similar views on the Israel-Palestinian dispute. But today, Millennials are less likely than older Americans to sympathize more with Israel, and more likely to sympathize more with the Palestinians. Millennials are the only generational cohort in which fewer than half (43%) sympathize more with Israel. And about a quarter of Millennials (27%) sympathize more with the Palestinians, the highest share of any generation.³²⁰

This was and is true of all American Millennials and leads to the second caveat. Jewish and Evangelical Millennials have long been bastions of historic, ethnic, and cultural support of Israel. Amongst Evangelical Millennials, (those aged 18-29 at the time of the study) have become less supportive of Israel and more critical of its government.³²¹ This stands in stark contrast to their ideological elders whose support for Israel is famously high and politically strong. Amongst the American Jewish community, the issue is far more complex. Young American Jews maintain attitudes on Israel that are, “more nuanced,” compared to their elders.³²² American Jewish Millennials do not appear to be significantly less attached to Israel, but do hold significantly more critical attitudes toward Israeli government, policies, and actions regarding Palestinians specifically. As Waxman noted, “Israel is no longer the great unifier of American Jewry that it was after 1967. Israel is now actually becoming a divisive, rather than a unifying force in American Jewish life.”³²³

³²⁰ Samantha Smith and Carroll Doherty, “5 Facts About How Americans View the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” Pew Research Center. 2016.

³²¹ Motti Inbari, Kirill M. Bumin, and M. Gordon Byrd, “Why Do Evangelicals Support Israel?” *Politics and Religion* 14, no. 1 (2020), 22.

³²² Dov Waxman, “Young American Jews and Israel: Beyond Birthright and BDS,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 3 (2017): 178.

³²³ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) 212.

As mentioned previously, the writings of American Jewish public intellectuals cannot be said to be more than one of several causal factors in American public opinion on Israel/Palestine. As Waxman posited in explaining why young American Jews remain attached to Israel but at the same time more critical of Israel, young American Jews are often more liberal than elders, social justice and universalism are more central to their Jewish identities, their experiences with anti-Semitism (and its extreme, the Holocaust) have been less impactful, and finally, they share a decidedly divergent set of, “generational memories,” of Israel than their elders.³²⁴ Noteworthy is the absence of any mention of scholarship or public intellectuals as a cause for the changes in opinions amongst young American Jews in Waxman’s account. Nonetheless, the impact of New Scholarship has perhaps allowed for this greater nuance among American Jews. Beinart cited Tom Segev, not one of the original four but still considered a New Historian, as having, “fearlessly excavated the darker corners of the Zionist past.”³²⁵ As Beinart was at one time a two-state supporting liberal Zionist, the reading of New Historian scholarship clearly had an impact and played into his evolution on the issue. It is likely that, just as Zionist narrators’ writings informed opinions early in the discourse, young American Jews and non-Jews alike have encountered and been influenced by New Historian narratives as those narratives have become more mainstream.

One of the main takeaways of this chapter is that, while overall public opinion in support of Israel remains quite high in spite of the wide dissemination of New Historian inspired narratives, young Americans, including young American Jews have historically low levels of

³²⁴ Dov Waxman, “Young American Jews and Israel: Beyond Birthright and BDS,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 3 (2017): 178-179.

³²⁵ Peter Beinart, “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment,” *The New York Review*. June 10, 2010.

support/sympathy for Israel. This is likely due to the reasons laid out above by Waxman, but also due to widespread dissemination of the New Historian scholarship. Even though the New Historian scholarship as a narrative has not had as deep of an effect on public opinion as could be assumed in the main, it has helped to engender a millennial generation, both non-Jew and Jew alike that hold more balanced views, with decidedly less support for Israel and decidedly more support for Palestine than any previous generations. Another major takeaway is the model that Peter Beinart represents; his writing represents the direction the discourse is going and must go. He was a two state Zionist, saw the suffering of Palestinians, heard their stories, read the scholarship, and changed his mind to fit reality. This is the power that the moderate/centrist/liberal American Jewish author has, the power to shift the balance of discourse in a meaningful way.

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature written by American Jewish public intellectuals on Israel/Palestine during the period from 1948 to 2019, a number of clear takeaways present themselves. The most obvious of these takeaways is a direct result of simply paying attention to history in the form of academic and intellectual literature. The Zionist narrative has not simply dissolved or disappeared from the discourse by being exposed to the metaphorical ‘light of day’ represented by the New Historians’ scholarship. Contrary to the notion that facts matter, within the context of the 1948 Israel/Palestine debate, the facts of the archival record mattered very little in the discourse at large for decades until very recently, and only within a very particular demographic have the facts stuck, as it were. The sheer saturation of the literary landscape in the first several decades after 1948 with the Zionist narrative, as discussed in chapter one, effectively solidified the pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian biases of the American public that is still persistent.

As discussed at the conclusion of chapter three, this demographic change matters. Millennials in general hold historically low support/sympathy for Israel and historically high support/sympathy for Palestinians. This public opinion shift is important as this demographic is the future, the bulk of American society for the next twenty to thirty years. With this in mind, there are multiple factors that influence this change, as Waxman posited, but it is a near certainty that the writings of American Jewish public intellectuals played a role in this shift. The specific low Israel/high Palestinian support/sympathy amongst American Millennial Evangelicals likewise represents a historic change and one that is likely to have an impact on foreign policy in the coming years, as Evangelical voters have been and are the largest and most supportive demographic when it comes to Israel. This shift in young Evangelical support has the potential to

shift the public opinion numbers in the near future in such a way as to potentially ‘force the hand,’ when it comes to legislators.

This situation is related directly to the foreign policy connection, in the form of US foreign aid to Israel. As stated in chapter one, the Zionist narrative played a role in not only forming the decades long Israel bias among the US public, but likewise played a role in greasing the legislative wheels regarding foreign aid. As shown in chapter two and three, the New Historian scholarship did not appear to have any effect on US foreign aid to Israel. The above discussed millennial opinion numbers have the potential to change this paradigm in foreign policy, in spite of the so-called ‘power considerations’ of the US as a ‘great power,’ mentioned in chapter one.

Another of the conclusions that result from this thesis is that the moderate/centrist author is the key player in the discourse. The moderate/centrist author often has the benefit of being read by a wider audience than either the left or right leaning author, perhaps not a larger overall readership than specific left or right counterparts, but more of the polarized camps. Beinart’s example represents how the moderate/centrist author can impact the discourse. Beinart is widely read, loved and hated, but his integrity when it comes to the facts of the historical record on 1948 Israel/Palestine allows more of the reading public to be introduced to the facts versus the Zionist narrative. This aspect of the moderate/centrist author’s potential has the most possibility to change the overall composure of the discourse. While the right and left authors reach the public, they do not reach the bulk of the opposite side of the spectrum, while a moderate/centrist author reaches some of both. If these authors do as Beinart has, moderate/centrist authors can broaden the range of the population that is exposed to the facts of the archival records, thereby shifting the discourse to a situation where the so-called Overton window no longer has the Zionist

narrative within its bounds. This would be momentous for history, for justice, but particularly for the Palestinians who still live under the weight of Israeli occupation.

This thesis was an initial exploration into the history of the competing narratives, American Jewish public intellectuals' use of these narratives, and their influence on the public. An interview/polling-based data collection from the public that asks the particular question of literary influences, authors or publications, would be instructive as to the level of influence that those writings might have on American thought. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the authors surveyed represent only a small selection of the American Jewish literary landscape on the subject of 1948 Israel/Palestine. A broader net could be cast in a dissertation or monograph. Additionally, a return to this subject in ten years' time would likewise prove instructive, as several of the above mentioned takeaways and conclusions would have time to play out and be noticeable, from a historical and political perspective.

In closing, this issue is of massive importance. As Beinart expertly pointed out, the expulsion or Nakba is ongoing. It did not end, it only transformed and evolved. The views of the American public and government officials play directly into the Israeli intransigent position, in the form of tacit support, US foreign aid, and US support in the UN. If the Zionist narrative is replaced by a New Historian or archival based narrative, support for Israel can be reasonably assumed to slowly dwindle, the billions of dollars and unilateral government support of Israeli policy would likewise be expected to be harder to countenance for the American public. This dwindling of support seems a likely result when combined with the insights that Waxman offered at the close of chapter three.

A brief quotation from the late Michael Brooks, a talk show host, writer, and political commentator known for his active participation in discourse and debate on the Israel/Palestine

issue, feels appropriate. He stated, “my Jewish values teach me to oppose apartheid.”³²⁶ When presented with a statement by an audience member calling the issue, “a complex issue,” Brooks responded in a simple fashion. He stated,

So, so it's not a complex issue.

That's the big thing, it's super simple.

There's one group that has enormous power

it's the most powerful country in the Middle East

it's backed by the United States

it acts on another population of people with total impunity

it is never held accountable for anything.

So, there's no symmetry in the relationship, period.³²⁷

He then proposed a simple thought experiment to illustrate both the simplicity of the situation and the hypocrisy of defending it. He continued,

If we know that, if somehow a population of Jewish refugees ended up in the West Bank and Gaza and an Arabic government in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv had an open-air prison in Jewish Gaza. Which they bombed with white phosphorus, they killed civilians indiscriminately and they had no provisions for medicine. They had an embargo that blocked food, that the electricity wasn't running, that there was an over 48 percent unemployment rate, life expectancy and malnutrition statistics were horrifying. One of the major policy makers in this hypothetical Arabic Palestinian state said, 'We need to put those Jews on a diet.' In the West Bank there was another Jewish area where there was a little bit more autonomy, but there was regular Arabic settlements where they pulled up the Jewish farmers' foods, they (hypothetical Arab settlers) terrorized them

³²⁶ YouTube, “Michael Brooks@LaFayette (Full Event),” accessed March 25, 2022.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCWtjzKGQ90>

³²⁷ YouTube, “Michael Brooks@LaFayette (Full Event),” accessed March 25, 2022.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCWtjzKGQ90>

with rocks, the security forces broke children's bones, and they couldn't drive their own roads. We'd all have no problem understanding what that was.³²⁸

The issue is simple and calling it what it is, is simple. Two of the most respected international human rights institutions have recently and officially labeled Israel an apartheid state. Amnesty International stated, "The totality of the regime of laws, policies and practices described in this report demonstrates that Israel has established and maintained an institutionalized regime of oppression and domination of the Palestinian population for the benefit of Jewish Israelis – a system of apartheid – wherever it has exercised control over Palestinians' lives since 1948."³²⁹

Human Rights Watch worded the charge this way, "Israeli authorities methodically privilege Jewish Israelis and discriminate against Palestinians."³³⁰ HRW concluded, "these deprivations are so severe that they amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution."

Dissenting authors in the American Jewish literary milieu have stated this in some form from 1950 to today, from Arendt to Beinart. This above cited report is the direction the discourse is heading and must continue to shift. Often in historical writing, the subjects of the research and writing are no longer with us. In this case, it is not too late to change the course of history. Both in regard to literature but more importantly with regard to reality on the ground for Palestinians, it is time for the Nakba to end.

³²⁸ YouTube, "Michael Brooks@LaFayette (Full Event)."

³²⁹ Amnesty International, "Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity," London, February 1, 2022. 266.

³³⁰ Human Rights Watch, "A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution," New York, April 27, 2021, 2.

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