

MEDIA, PARTY, AND VOTER MANIPULATION OF  
THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors College of  
Texas State University  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

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San Marcos, Texas  
May 2019

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## ABSTRACT

If there is ever to be a hope of achieving peace between Israeli and Palestinian people, the American political liberal left and conservative right alike must both actively choose to end their usage of Israel as a pawn to further their own political agendas. Furthermore, the American public and its voters must be educated on these ulterior motives for the sake of bridging the divide. Both the liberal left and conservative right are riddled with hypocrisies when it comes to their typical platforms versus behaviors towards Israel and the Jewish people. There is more investment in how Israel fits into America's policies with its complexities and implications than there is on leading peace talks between the Israeli and Palestinian people who live the nightmare every day – a fact proven true as the United States historically and continuously makes decisions that are obviously to its own benefit and simultaneous detriment of others. For now, the American news media is complicit in biased commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in such a way that elevates its preferred political affiliation's values, but there is a potential for change by practicing peace journalism and focusing less on the sensationalism of violence. In order to achieve a complete and more comprehensive image of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the strife for peace and to protect the American voters from manipulation, it is imperative that they be given the resources to recognize agenda-focused framing in the American political system and news media. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is framed and misrepresented in both liberal left and conservative right American news media with the intention of manipulating the average American to further their parties' contending underlying agendas, narratives, and fundamental beliefs.

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## **PUBLIC SUSCEPTIBILITY**

Let the Iran Nuclear deal serve as a starting case example to begin recognizing the relationship between partisanship on an individual and party level as it relates to American policy towards Israel. After surveying a group of Jewish-Americans on their attitudes towards the Iran Nuclear Deal, Becker (2016) concluded that political ideology plays a larger role than religious identity on this specific debate. The survey itself was initially intended to find some indication of a difference in support for the Iran Nuclear Deal between Jewish respondents and non-Jewish respondents. Becker finds that while “Democrats overwhelmingly supported the deal, ...Republicans were more likely to oppose the deal” (Becker, 2016, p.147). In this way, political ideology becomes the deciding factor on whether or not to support the deal – even more so than religion. A 2013 study by Pew Research Center found that 70% of Jewish respondents identified as Democrats or leaning towards the Democratic Party, whereas only 22% of Jewish respondents identified as Republicans (many of whom identify as Orthodox). This study suggests that the majority of Jewish Americans would support the Iran Nuclear Deal - a fact that would not be true if Jewish Americans felt an especially strong need to enact domestic policy in defense of Israel. The study also revealed that having a connection to Israel, either from previous travel or familial relationships, was not a significant factor in one’s attitudes towards the Iran Nuclear Deal (Becker, 2016, p. 151). This underscores the severity with which one’s political views influence judgment and highlights some issues regarding today’s debate around the Israeli Palestinian Conflict. Jewish Americans, who make up 1.8% of America’s population, arguably have stronger emotional and personal ties to Israel and, therefore, to current events in the Middle East. Still, they find

themselves persuaded by previously established political views more so than anything else. The other roughly 98% of the general American public, who has no immediate reason to concern itself with the intricacies of the conflict beyond curiosity or a will to do good, must be even more impressionable (Lipka, 2013).

### **FOLLOWING THE GAZA WAR:**

Mass publications of the clashes between Israelis and Palestinians during the 2008 and 2009 Gaza wars called global attention to the issue. The conservative and progressive American media is quick to highlight transgressions on either side in accordance to the outlet's political affiliation in an effort to appeal to their viewer base. Israeli military wrongdoings were prominently displayed to younger progressives on the left. This, as well as continued Israeli violence and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's behavior towards President Barack Obama, began a significant shift by the liberal left in support of Palestinians. By 2010, America's political parties were sharply divided on the issue. A survey conducted by Phyllis Bennis titled "The 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign: Changing Discourse on Palestine" found that "92% of Republicans [had] a favorable attitude toward Israel, compared to 42% of Democrats... 84% of Republicans [felt] favorable toward Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, compared to 20% of Democrats; ...and 72% of Democrats [said] the U.S. should get tough with Israel, compared to 14% of Republicans" (Bennis, 2016, p. 38). The gap between the liberal left and conservative right's platform on the Israel-Palestine question continued to grow into 2016. The rise of Bernie Sanders in the 2016 presidential campaign signified an intensification in the Democratic party as he advocated Pro-Israel statements be left out of the Democratic platform. Conservatives, on the other hand, vying for the 2016 GOP nomination all "ran

on some version of the claim that... the Democrats were throwing Israel under a bus” (Bennis, 2016, p. 39).

The 2010 coverage of the Gaza flotilla raid on major news networks demonstrates multiple instances of media bias in the coverage of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict. The two opposing narratives served to support and reinforce existing beliefs of viewers as dictated by one’s political affiliation. In the same year, Michael Neureiter studied attitudes regarding the conflict in various countries. He found that while German and British newspapers tend to have an anti-Israel bias, American news outlets are mixed. This suggests that the United States itself does not have a clear stance on Israel, but rather it has competing ideologies on the American political left and right push differing agendas. Though inconsistent, “American newspapers are considerably less critical of Israel than German and British ones” (Neureiter, 2017, p. 76). In order for the United States to continue to manipulate Israel as a means to an end, it must on average remain allied with Israel. Without the most basic allegiance with America, Israel would cease to exist by way of UN Resolutions or effortless military domination by surrounding Arab nations. The American political left mainstream media outlets, such as CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, the Washington Post and the New York Times, were all determined to have inherent anti-Israel bias. According to Neureiter, coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on these left-leaning outlets was often morphed to create an ‘underdog’ persona for the Palestinian people.

### **COMPETING NARRATIVES – THE LEFT**

The perspectives and goals of the political left and right shape the narratives that surround the Israeli Palestinian Conflict, ultimately impacting both international and

domestic policy. To the American political liberal left, Israeli Zionism bears semblance to colonialism and apartheid (Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, 2003, Chap. 4). At its most extreme, Finkelstein argues that Israeli Zionism even employs propagandizing tactics similar to the Nazis aimed at “rewriting history” (Finkelstein, 2003, *Image and Reality*, p. 96). The left resents America’s tumultuous past with colonization and segregation and does well to build its international policy heartily against nations actively engaging in such behavior.

The political left harshly criticizes attempts made by the United States to impart its self-perceived superior democratic and capitalist society on foreign nations. The United States embodies some of these characteristics as they constantly continue, as they always have, to attempt to Westernize and, supposedly, elevate the rest of the world to civilization. For members of the political left, the notion of American greatness and superiority does not resonate well, as demonstrated by the historic use and evolution of the term European. A Spanish column first used the term “European” in the year 754 to describe a type of person. In it, the author refers to the victors of the Battle of Tours as Europenses, Europeans. So, simply put, the very idea of a European was first used to contrast Christians and Muslims (Appiah, 2016). The full relationship between Christendom and Western Culture, the one that implicates itself most significantly in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, spans over a thousand years. It is difficult to name the West specifically as its core values – democracy, liberty, rationality, to name a few – are culminated from various corners and time periods of the world. However, the Cold War Era served as a definitive time for who and what a Westernized nation could be.

Moreover, it became clear that protecting and developing Westernized<sup>1</sup> nations is the ultimate goal for the United States and its fellow democratic, capitalist, Western allies.

The liberal left sees fundamental problems with the implications of America's fascination with Westernizing nations. Inherently, the historical European Christian West that America embraces is at odds with Islam. In a post 9/11 world, battling anti-Muslim rhetoric and stereotyping have been cornerstones in the American liberal left's policy. Whether it is fighting discrimination at airport security or urging the public not to demonize its fellow Muslim citizens following a terror attack, the liberal left focuses a fair amount of its efforts on pivoting inherent blame away from Islamic extremism (Kurth, 2002). Considering that Muslims are a minority religion in the United States, this seems to fall in line with the liberal left's typical pro-minority stance. However, on a global scale, according to a 2019 Pew Research study, Muslims account for nearly one-quarter of the world's population, totaling a near 2 billion people. It is one of the world's most populous religions, second only to Christianity (Diamant, 2019). Considering the fact that Palestinians are not, in fact, Americans, but rather Muslims living in the predominantly Islamist Middle East, it is curious that the liberal left sends its support overseas to a majority peoples combating a global and local minority, the Jews.

When it comes to facing the anti-Muslim rhetoric in the post 9/11 era, Democratic candidates may attempt to mobilize Muslim voters. Ocampo and Barreto's study, "The American Muslim voter: Community belonging and political participation", was conducted to answer the question of whether or not American Muslims are driven by community and group identity politics. If so, given the political climate in 2019, it would

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<sup>1</sup> The West as a culture is fundamentally understood by the progressive left and conservative right alike as Capitalist, white, and Christian in nature.

<sup>2</sup> Here, mistakenly is understood in the context of attempts to achieve peace. If the right were truly interested in coordinating a peace agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian governments, it would not

seem that Muslims would be more inclined to vote Democrat (liberal left) than Republican (conservative right). Islam as a religion has become somewhat of a partisan discussion, and, as the results indicate, this plays a significant role. Data collection by Ba-Yunus and Kone in 2006 and Barreto and Bozonelos in 2009 concluded that “Bush’s support of Israel[i] policies towards Palestinians and inaction regarding the escalating level of discrimination towards U.S. Muslims” played a significant factor in the gradual move of Muslims to the Democratic party – a notable fact considering Bush had a 72% approval rating among Muslims in 2000 (Ocampo, Dana, & Barreto, 2018, p. 89, 96). Increasingly hostile Republican candidates not only alienate Muslims from their voter base but ensure that their votes go to the Democrats. So long as the liberal left maintains its support for Palestine and continues to see Palestinians as victim to an oppressive regime synonymous with apartheid South Africa, the Muslim vote is a guarantee – one American liberal politicians will happily accept.

Aside from this point, further hypocrisies in the American political left’s treatment of the Jewish people and Israel may be uncovered in comparison to other minorities. Calls for slavery and colonial reparations are made consistently by the liberal left in various forms: affirmative action, monetary compensation, public apologies, and the renaming of buildings and streets. When the Jewish people make claims of anti-Semitism and contemporary discrimination, however, the response by the liberal left seems to fall flat as the Jewish minority continues to be culturally perceived as white and capitalist. Similar questions of how to critique Israel, an integral pillar of Jewish identity, are grappled with on an academic level as well. *The Holocaust Industry* by Norman Finkelstein is a manifestation of the belief that there is a larger Jewish establishment in

America that has, in the long run, benefitted from Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. A child of Holocaust survivors himself, Finkelstein argues that sympathies for Holocaust victims have been fabricated and pushed on society. Finkelstein's alleged benefits of the Holocaust vary from book sales to the creation of the Jewish state of Israel (Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry*, 2003). One has to wonder why success in the face of adversity, discrimination, and genocide leads some to believe the Jewish people are a minority not worth protecting.

A work by Lawrence Davison in 2012 is one of the most complete single-commentaries in favor of the liberal left's most referenced talking points. Although it possesses a glaringly anti-Israel stance (citing many typical liberal arguments focused on key words such as occupation, Apartheid, Zionist, and oppressor), this article by Davidson delves deeply into the motivations behind the conservative right's approach to Israel-Palestine whilst simultaneously, and unintentionally, exposing the American liberal left's hypocrisy on the conflict. Davidson first begins by taking an absolutist stance on the conservative right's motivations in supporting Israel. To him, pro-Israel and Jewish lobbies are solely responsible for America's positive relationship with Israel, "earn[ing]... both parties enormous amounts of cash" (Davidson, 2012, p. 52). Failing to see the inherently anti-Semitic nature of implying that Jewish people run the government through their checkbooks, Davidson does not weigh the fact that the Republican platform has more to gain than alleged campaign funds. There is a serious flaw in Davidson's argument in that regard. Thousands of years of anti-Semitic undertones are brought to the forefront by the allegedly socially enlightened liberal left when the Jewish people are associated with money and government bribery. These stereotypes have been rampant for

years and are impossible to escape without educating oneself. One would think that the liberal left, which regularly advocates on behalf of minorities, would have done just that for the Jewish people in the same way that it has learned studied the injustices imposed upon Native Americans, African-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Muslims. Activists in other minority struggles, the left seems to struggle when it comes to applying this same courtesy to the Jewish minority.

Furthermore, Davidson does poorly to represent his pro-Palestinian stance when discussing the government in the Gaza Strip. The United States' list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) includes the Islamist group Hamas, which was democratically elected in Palestine in 2006 (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Hamas, Davidson claims does not constitute the leadership of the Palestinian people. In that same sentence, he contradicts himself, going on to say, "what leadership position [Hamas] does hold is confined to the Gaza Strip" (Davidson, 2012, p. 51-52). This inability to recognize the hypocrisy, even in a single sentence, is indicative of a larger partisan problem whereby individuals are not holding themselves to a standard or objective for rational thinking.

Davidson (2012) further claims that there is an especially prominent trend of Republicans exploiting events through the lens of localism, manipulating their constituents on issues that are "not relevant to their everyday lives" (Davidson, 2012, p.48). 'Localism' is defined as "giving priority to where one is and what it takes to survive and prosper in that place" (Davidson, 2012, p. 48). Given that the general American public is mostly removed from direct implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is a sense of "know nothingness" about the topic (Davidson, 2012, p. 62). Knowing this, politicians "misrepresent a situation or say something inaccurate about it"

dependent on which frame best suits their agenda. The notion of Christian Zionism is discussed in this writing and its influence on the Republican party, to be discussed later on. The 2012 Republican primary was full of hopefuls who, Davidson argues, lacked the necessary in-depth knowledge on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, yet weighed in heavily in order to appease their constituents and garner votes. Mitt Romney, for example, described Israel as a Jewish state constitutes a “vital national interest” as it “share[s] common values of representative democracy, human rights, rule of law” (Davidson, 2012, p. 51). Romney makes even more absolutist claims with quotes such as “we will not have an inch of difference between ourselves and our ally, Israel” (Davidson, 2012, p. 52). With the American political right contained by its party’s framing of events, the White, European, Christian (i.e. Westernized, as discussed above) superior values seem to be missing from the Middle Eastern region. Unified by a single common enemy, this, in turn, solidifies base support for many American political right platforms such as Executive Order 13769 (more commonly referred to as the Muslim Ban), invasions in the Middle East, and what has been dubbed the War on Terror.

### **COMPETING NARRATIVES – THE RIGHT**

A nation colonized by Europeans, America has increasingly exerted itself into the Middle East in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. While such activities may be attributable to cornerstones in American policy like post 9/11 response and oil grabs, there should also be considerations made for the cultural and sociological implications of this activity. Twentieth and twenty-first century militaristic campaign (The Gulf War, Afghan War, Iraq War, War in North-West Pakistan, etc.) have been led by the White Euro-Christian America with goal of altering the lifestyle and values of the Arab Muslim other

(Bacevich, (2016) (Trump's Jerusalem Move, 2018, Volume 24, Comment 4). Identified as the noticeable other by Western nations, the Middle Eastern Arab Muslim is considered to be such a separate facet of humanity that the two societies are entirely at odds with one another.

America's policy on Israel is, of course, affected by this as well. The long-term impact that preconceptions of the other fueled by a Western superiority complex can have on a society, especially as it pertains to America's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, cannot be understated. Western imperialism is directly involved in the turmoil as Westernized America's support makes Israel appear to as white settler colonialists and Palestinians as an identifiable other. *Against the Wall* by Michael Sorkin provides commentary on the perception of Israel as a pseudo-Western nation. Referring to "communities of settlers on the West Bank" as "hilltop-smug", Sorkin exposes the leftist argument that a minority group of Jews, who belong to a Middle Eastern nation, can somehow be "like the gated settlements of Southern California, also buttressed against the intrusion of an implacable Other" (Sorkin, p. xix). While this cannot be true by way of mere definition and simple geographical reference, the left makes this rather emotional appeal that the right mistakenly<sup>2</sup> embraces. The perception by American political parties of Israelis as a white Western country plays a vital role in the platforms built by the political left and right. With the American political right wanting to see this historically idealized version of Westernization spread through the Middle Eastern region, the American political left stands in defiance.

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<sup>2</sup> Here, mistakenly is understood in the context of attempts to achieve peace. If the right were truly interested in coordinating a peace agreement between the Israeli and Palestinian governments, it would not embrace notions of the "Other" or contribute to the glorification of elitism.

With Israel existing in the Middle East, it is difficult to grapple with the concept of Jewish Israelis as part of the Euro-Christian West. A book called *Postwar Europe and the Eurovision Song Contest* by Dean Vuletic may serve as a reference to understand how this perspective of Israel is demonstrated on a global stage. While this seems disconnected given that Israel is not a European nation, it may serve as a shock to learn that Israel is actually part of the annual Eurovision Song Contest. In fact, in 2018 the tiny nation took home first place. As the only Middle Eastern nation in the competition, Israel's presence differentiates it from what the West traditionally considers Eastern. However, each of the Middle Eastern countries permitted to participate in Eurovision, as members of the European Broadcasting Union, refuse to participate. For some, this decision is in direct protest to Israel's presence in the competition. Vuletic and many others suggest that Middle Eastern countries mostly...did not enter the [Eurovision Song Contest] in protest against...Israel, while European nations welcome Israel as a symbolic "remind[er to] Western Europeans of the Holocaust" (Vuletic, 2018, p. 19). Considering the Eurovision Song Contest's cultural symbolism in Europe, Israel has managed to fit itself alongside powerful Western nations, making themselves familiar and relatable. This divide adds to the sociological aspect of 'us versus them' that the West, and American political right, employ. With all other Middle Eastern countries isolated from the fanaticized, publicized event that is Eurovision, their relationship with the West continues to suffer as Israel is able to brand itself as the capitalist, stable, non-Muslim Democracy in the East. Perhaps the perception of Israelis as a white oppressor by the progressive left comes as a result of the Holocaust affecting predominantly European Jews. One might

more convincingly argue, though, that since Israel's creation, the intimate relationship between America and Israel is more deeply rooted in combating terrorism.

September 11, 2001 reshaped the United States of America when George W. Bush announced the start of the vague War on Terror. With no immediate end in sight, this alleged mission is the result of extremist Islamist terrorism, the same terrorism that plagues Israelis every day. When Americans are given images of rockets from Gaza flying into Israel's metropolitan cities, it resonates. Israeli society, though obviously different, bears semblance to a similar American lifestyle. Americans can relate to Israelis in terms of consumerism, English speaking abilities, and Biblical ties to history. This makes the Israeli people innately more relatable and easier to empathize with for conservative Americans. After all, the American political right would argue, Israel and America are a united front in the War on Terror (Salleh & Mohamed, 2012).

It is necessary to unpack Davidson's mentioning of Christian Zionism in this discussion. Accounting for the fact that Protestant, Catholic, and Evangelical Christians tend favor conservative candidates, Israel receives a significant amount of support from these sects. There are many facets as to why that is, including guilt which stems from the treatment of Europe's Jews and The Shoah. However, these reasons are merely covers for a much more malicious agenda. An article by Walter Mead in 2008 claims that this "gentile support for Israel is one of the most potent political forces in U.S. foreign policy" (Mead, 2008, p. 29). The fact that Israel truly obtained and maintains American support by serving as a means to an end dates as far back as John Adams' presidency when he is quoted saying that if Jews could get Israel back it "would soon wear away some of the asperities and peculiarities of their character and possibly in time become

liberal Unitarian Christians” (Mead, 2008, p. 31). In 1880, pogroms swept through much of the Russian Empire and adjacent nations. Subsequently, Jewish Russian immigrants came to the US in larger quantities. Israel then became, at the very least, an option for a place to send these Jews, echoing to anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As discussed earlier, the argument of the Israel Lobby is used frequently by the American liberal left in the debate over the representation of the Israeli-Palestinian predicament. However, it is imperative to note that at this time the Jewish people of America were incredibly disenfranchised at this time, and no such lobbying group existed. As this paper will continue to discuss, a bevy of reasons far beyond the power of money can extend. For example, American Christians are also made aware that “the conditions facing Christians in a number of Muslim-majority countries are not good” (Mead, 2008, p. 45). Focus on the persecution of Christians has been long discussed amongst the same churches and leaders who focused on helping Jewish people in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. These churches and leaders fear the rise of communism as they saw it harm Christians in countries like China, Korea, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire – playing even further into ideas of Western culture.

Moreover, many Muslim nations have banned conversion. For Evangelical Christians who generally believe that those who die without accepting Christ cannot achieve salvation and that spreading the Christian faith is one of their central moral duties, such a law is immoral and incomprehensible. Studies have shown that there is a direct and notable relationship between biblical literacy and policy towards Israel (Gries, 2015, p. 62). United States policy toward the Middle East will, as it always has, continue

to be influenced by the American majority, not the workings of any minority, like the Jewish or Palestinian people (Mead, 2008). This is why it is imperative that the masses who are being educated in small, biased, framed snippets from media outlets are not the complete story and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not absolute. The Christian Zionist movement aims not to support the Jewish people in their quest for peace, and it is obviously at odds with Islam. This then begs the question, what is the Christian Zionist motivation? The answer is one that is intrinsically anti-Semitic: create a completely Jewish state that can be converted, thus eliminating the Jewish people and Christianizing Israel, bringing back Jesus Christ.

Richard Spencer, a self-proclaimed white supremacist, is an avidly outspoken member of the alt-right. Detrimentially contributing to the Israeli-Palestinian discussion, Spencer encompasses what it means to embrace the manipulation of Zionism to argue that white Christians are continuously losing their status and privilege as a majority group in the United States. Zionism, at its core, is the simplistic notion that an oppressed Jewish people require a safe place if they ever hope to survive in a world that time and time again has proven to be unwilling to defend the minority group (Kiewe, 2003). Though this idea is generally misunderstood by the far left through a colonialist lens, the alt-right intentionally perverts this idea for its own gain. It is ironic that Spencer would attempt to argue that his version of White Zionism, which he hopes to bring to the United States, is inspired by or in any way comparable to Israeli Zionism. In addition to the fact that a white 'minority' versus a Jewish minority, who make up 1.8% of America's population, are separated by leaps and bounds, Spencer also finds himself amongst white supremacists (Lipka, 2013). This can be put succinctly; an individual who aligns

themselves with white supremacists, Nazis, and the alt-right cannot be genuine allies of Israel, Zionism, or the Jewish people. For a real solution, the conflict must be focused on for what it is, not the opportunities for individual or the United States to further their own interests.

Moving from the hypocrisies of the alt-right who feign support for Israel, this paper shifts back to the anti-Muslim animosities these same parties perpetuate. The decision by President Trump's administration to move the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018 is a prime case study that will be particularly helpful when discussing the American political right's tactics to garner votes based on Israeli policy. In fact, several modern presidents have attempted this pandering ploy, including Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Barack Obama, all of whom are on record recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital and, therefore, the logical homestead for the United States Embassy. Regardless of party, all modern presidents have held this stance, though Trump is the first to put words to action.

President Trump has built a strong domestic following and voter base in the post 9/11 era by taking an abrasive position against radical Islamic terrorism. The call for another Intifada by the Hamas-led Palestinian government in response to the United States' embassy move gave Trump and his administration the boost they needed to justify certain domestic policies, such as Executive Order 13769, otherwise known as the Muslim Ban. Trump's embassy move was not, then, done with the best interests of the Israeli and Jewish people at heart, but rather as a means to an end – that end being the continued 'othering' and skepticism of Arabs and Muslims in America. Furthermore, this piece notes Trump was able to "shore up his Evangelical Christian base" (Trump's

Jerusalem Move, 2018, Volume 24, Comment 4). Since his 2016 campaign, Donald Trump has proven that there is much to gain by inciting and shedding light on Islamist acts of violence. A leader's power often comes from the ability to build a common enemy; in the instance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one cannot overlook that the intentional creation of a common enemy has life or death consequences for people living in the region.

The emotional connection between Israel and the United States goes beyond basic similarities in cultural values. Eytan Gilboa writes, "many Americans fe[el] that both the US and Israel are victims of Arab terrorism and are fighting the same war against similar enemies" (Gilboa, 2018, p. 3). Upon being asked "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?" survey participants in a Gallup poll were almost four times more supportive of Israelis than Palestinians, with rates fluctuating in congruency with Islamist violence, like the so-called "Arab Spring"<sup>3</sup> (Saad, 2018). With each allegedly pro-Israel move that the American political right makes, Muslim violence along the Gaza strip and surrounding nations like Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Israel's other countless enemies, increases, much to their joy. It was only immediately in the wake of 9/11 – the largest terrorist attack on United States soil in modern history – that Gilboa hypothesizes bipartisan support for Israel came to fruition. The trauma of 9/11 patriotically unified both sides of the aisle. In this light, it is easy to understand how the liberal left, who largely condemn US invasions in the Middle East, battling Islamophobia and holding some of the strongest critiques of Western colonialism, draws parallels between abuses by the US government and Israeli

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<sup>3</sup> The "Arab Spring" refers specifically to a 2011 series of violent uprisings in several largely Muslim countries, resulting in the overthrow of some governments.

military towards Arab Muslims. Since 9/11, though, it seems that young voters have been experiencing negative trends in their support for Israel. Part of this may be attributable to the fact that “they are exposed on college campuses to intense anti-Israeli, Palestinian and Muslim propaganda, and incitement to hatred” (Gilboa, 2018, p. 5). These more liberal environments can act as an echo chamber for already liberal students, reinforcing their beliefs, or introducing those who are undecided to the discussion with an inherent bias.

With the American political right employing Westernization, Christian Zionism, and anti-Muslim sentiments, the War on Terror and remains justified. The public and government support allows the American political right to keep troops in oil-rich nations even as it exploits them. There are many sides to this too, of course. Given America’s reliance on foreign oil, true support of Israel<sup>4</sup> more often than not takes a backseat. By the same token that support by American political parties should be understood as peace and safety driven with no ulterior motives, a truly pro-Israel group must possess the same straightforward goals. Utilizing this logic, the American political right’s conflict of interest is further exposed. Historically, “pro-Israeli groups and the oil industry have often opposed each other on United States policies toward [the Middle Eastern] region”, specifically regarding notions that United States involvement will exacerbate the Western-caused<sup>5</sup> Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kurth, 2002). Not only is the right platform contradictory to itself, but Israel clearly has been deemed the significant of the two as oil continues to dictate an abundance of critical political decisions in the Middle East.

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<sup>4</sup> Mentions of “true” support of either Israel or Palestine are to be understood in the sense that a true ally would advocate for peaceful resolutions above all other potentials, especially those that possess no humanitarian value beyond economics.

<sup>5</sup> The Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be recognized as a Western fascist, imperialist byproduct in which both Jews and Palestinians have suffered: for the Jewish people, the European Holocaust, for the Palestinians, an expulsion at the hands of white Europeans to make reparations.

The United States is balanced between keeping the Arab nations it depends on for oil satisfied and being able to maintain a Westernized Democratic ally in the Middle East. In doing so, America can secure the greatest strategic vantage points and counter intelligence. Looking again at Neureiter's work, "in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, it is especially oil corporations that influence the media discourse because of their connections with oil-rich Arab countries" (Neureiter, 2017, p. 71). Though both the left and right must abide by these basic practices to a degree, the American political right is far more motivated in the quest for oil than its liberal counterpart. Neureiter explains how "corporations like ExxonMobile have repeatedly catered to their Arab business partners by releasing appeals for greater cooperation with the Arab nations and lobbying their governments to downgrade relations with Israel" (Neureiter, 2017, p. 71). Though oil is essential for the functioning American society at this point in time, it must nevertheless be recognized that America's support for Israel, or rather its alliance against its enemies, is limited insofar as the benefits of the relationship outweigh the potential risk. Never mind the need for a democratic ally in the Middle East to push Western values, the American government, specifically on the conservative right, demands access to oil by any means necessary.

### **ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN LIVES AS AN END TO MEANS**

The American government chooses to be involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict solely as a means to an end. There is no genuine concern or larger goal to help the Israeli or Palestinian people who live the nightmare every day. Risks are taken with no consideration for the fact that the Israeli nation, which came to be in 1948, is the smallest in its region and surrounded by international Arab Muslim militaristic powers on

all sides. Rather than dissecting the conflict, isolating points of contention, and pausing the furthering of its own interests, the American government harms its voters. People are left relatively in the dark on the specifics of the issue and instead align their opinions based solely on party affiliation.

In 2015, Peter Gries conducted an investigative study aimed at identifying liberal and conservative biases towards Israel. In doing so, Gries brought the prominence of Middle Eastern ideology walking along party lines to the forefront. Gries found that, on a degree scale, “conservatives felt 22° warmer toward Israel than self-identified liberals. However, liberals felt...28°...warmer than conservatives did toward...Palestinians” (Gries, 2015, p. 131). Typically, liberals support minorities and victims of humanitarian crises, and therefore side with Palestinians and their claims of oppression. This is part of a larger effort by the left to lead the world as a defender of human rights. Conservatives, on the other hand, are more interested in the bigger picture, such as building Democratic nations in the region as well as maintaining fearmongering anti-Arab sentiments that feed the right’s calls for increased national security. As discussed, many suggest that continued American investment in Israel is a product of wealthy Jews and Israel lobbies, like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Gries contests this oversimplified proposal and instead motions towards what the United States has to gain. Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel’s former foreign minister from 2000 to 2001 “maintained that America’s Israel policy was grounded in ‘shared interest’s and considerations of realpolitik” (Gries, 2015, p. 52). Additionally, “historian Michael Oren, who would later become the Israeli ambassador to the United States, argued that, ‘Arab oil’, not Israelis or humanitarianism, was America’s persistent focus in the Middle East” (Gries, 2015, p.

52). It is imperative to evaluate these beliefs for the sake of disproving them as they are widely held and inherently anti-Semitic in nature. The fact of the matter is, to the dismay of those who make these claims, though, that American interests are vast and embedded deep within political affiliation. Although some of these interests are physical and specific, others are much more abstract and lay vest in the dogma of American righteousness. To oppose the ideological platforms of one's party is borderline heresy and will undoubtedly draw harsh criticisms from others within their group. As a result, people are not only less inclined to formulate opinions free of political presupposition, but they are also likely to resist oppositional arguments simply out of self-defense for the politics which have become such an intrinsic part of their being.

Durante and Zhuravskaya analyze the relationship between Israel's risky military actions and the dates of significant events on American television. These events include, but are not limited to, presidential inaugurations, elections, State of the Union addresses, and the FIFA World Cup. The results were conclusive in that the Israeli military has a pattern of launching questionable militaristic attacks during times where U.S. media coverage is more likely to be focused on other relevant domestic events. In this way, it is abundantly clear that policy makers in Israel "behave strategically in timing unpopular actions to coincide with other newsworthy events that distract the public's attention...to minimize negative publicity" (Zhuravskaya, 2018, p. 1086). Based on this, it would seem Israel is aware of the fact that America's allegiance is around so long as they prove to be more beneficial than not. Similarly, Israelis understand that the liberal media finds sympathy in Palestinian images of suffering, regardless of the reason. On April 5, 2002, George W. Bush "performed a historic U-turn on the Middle East crisis...by dropping his

unqualified support for Israel’s military action, declaring: ‘The storms of violence cannot go on. Enough is enough’” (Zhuravskaya, 2018, p. 1088). It is clear, then, that Americans, even on the conservative right, do not unequivocally support Israel. However, Republican candidates will discuss support of Israel when it comes time to appeal to constituents. The 2015 campaign period was looked at in this study as well. It discovered that of the six national party conventions held, all but one mentioned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Interestingly, though, these comments on the conflict are noticeably out of place and unrelated to other parts of the speech; “therefore, we keep them in the list of exogenous newsworthy events” by forcing the discussion and continuing its relevance to our society. Such mentions would not be made if the parties did not see an opportunity to gain something from it, like votes.

### **MEDIA, THE FOURTH ESTATE**

With the news media contributing significantly to impressions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there must be an approach in which its impact can be positive, moving the conflict in the direction of peace talks. Jacob Lynch, one of the first to coin the idea of “peace journalism”, argues that by focusing on possible solutions in reporting there is not a perspective unbecoming to professional journalism being pushed, but rather journalistic integrity is elevated by providing the necessary context beyond daily polarizing events (Lynch, 2018). Placing an emphasis on the fairness, fact-checking, and ethical consequences of journalism, Lynch makes it clear that specific terminology in writing can and will carry connotations for its readers. Although the hypothetical mission is noble, Lynch and this source contradict themselves in such a way that notably contributes to this paper’s broader point. When Lynch discusses the various technicalities

surrounding the terms he is using, essentially building a defense for provenly divisive rhetoric, he only makes reference to terms carrying an innately pro-liberal left bias. These terms, such as occupation and the legitimization of the Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement, are a small fraction of the story, though. Lynch, who claims to be making the appeal for a complete picture, seems only to do so in favor of Palestinians. To one affect, Lynch is making a powerful call to journalists not to shy away from the tumultuous nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In reality, though, Lynch's hyping of selectively liberal left terms do notably more damage to providing context. When discussing occupation, border walls, and BDS, Lynch outlines the how and why behind the existence of each, to the limited extent that as those explanations do not go in-depth enough to find blame to place on Palestinians.

In other words, Lynch falls short of shedding equal light on Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on given issues – a commonplace issue in the journalistic media world. Peace journalism in its truest form is not being achieved as Israeli action is not being presented within its broader context<sup>6</sup>. Lynch writes that in 2015 Annabel McGoldrick, a fellow advocate for peace journalism, had “persuasively likened the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians to an abusive domestic partnership, in which Israel is the abuser, and the Palestinians are the abused”, making his bias abrasively obvious (Lynch, 2018, p. 2). Peace journalism is meant to focus less on gathering the network-appeasing snippets of violence and instead isolating a conflict and identifying its various facets. It would appear that, though excellent in theory, Lynch, like the American public and news media, are victims of their own perspectives shutting out complete stories. While borders

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<sup>6</sup> “Broader context” in this paper refers to the multiple truths that exist, not limited to the endless finger-pointing associated with past and ongoing violence but also progress or harm being brought to the region at the hands of larger nation-states... i.e. Western nations

are mentioned and Israel is compared to a domestic abuser in the name of “peace journalism” by its very founders, Palestinian transgressions leading to such governmental actions go untouched. This study is one that seemed especially ironic and therefore served as the rawest form of subconscious bias infiltrating reason – especially in a conflict of such emotional and historical magnitude. It is imperative that the conflict be understood with as much objectivity, factuality, and totality as possible in order to answer the question of ‘why’ when reporting.

The centrality of journalism and media, as explained above, is incalculable when discussing the road to peace in the Middle East. Representation of the conflict is key as the general public relies on reporters to deliver the most pertinent news directly to them. Ozohu’s article centers on the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on part of several worldly news organizations, including CNN. Their findings support the proposition that the American news media has a unique interest in its representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on agenda-setting. Even to the left-leaning CNN, there is an emphasis placed on the violence and on-going war that presents implications of Westernized superiority. Ozohu’s found that “followers of CNN will usually get significantly less information about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict compared to followers of the BBC and Aljazeera Arabic” (Ozohu, 2014, p. 90). Despite the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains relevant to American political discussion and politicians mention the conflict party platforms, it receives less coverage, thereby limiting content. This limitation results in an incomplete picture which is further diluted through framing “latent [with] American bias...[and] an American agenda.” This highlights the liberal contradictions on behalf of CNN, a news organization whose “liberal democratic

background and heightened journalistic autonomy should mean a more critical and independent coverage that supports peace.” Ozohu’s findings indicate that this trend is inconsistent when applied to coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. Ozohu conclusively agrees that “the media produce[s] destructive coverage (Wolfsfeld et al., 2008) that misleads public understanding of the conflict (Philo and Berry, 2004).” There is an obligation to those who suffer at the hands of media framers to outline the true context of the conflict free of international interests.

### **MEDIA FRAMING**

It is common knowledge that various international conflicts are displayed differently across media outlets. In the United States, these attempts are especially prevalent on two specific media networks – CNN and Fox News, the first being liberal left leaning and the latter leaning to the conservative right. CNN and Fox news were tested for Israeli and/or Palestinian bias based on their framing of the 2011 prisoner exchange involving Gilad Shalit and 1,027 Palestinian prisoners. CNN and Fox respectively represent opposite spectrums of political ideology, each having been accused of presenting partisan information – Fox as a right-leaning outlet, leaning towards Israel and CNN as a left-leaning news source (Karniel, Lavie-Dinur, & Azran, 2017, p. 110). The study found that Fox news focused on using the word ‘soldier’ and highlighting Shalit’s weakness and inferred poor treatment. Fox News also had more instances of humanizing Shalit by discussing him in relatable terms – a son, young man, and hopeful. In fact, “Fox referred to Shalit in a personal manner more than any other international network” – even more than Israeli outlets (Karniel, Lavie-Dinur, & Azran, 2017, p. 115). Fox News also stressed Hamas as the radical Islamist terrorist organization dominating

the Gaza Strip. CNN, meanwhile, “refrained from calling Hamas a ‘terrorist organization’ and focused more on the Palestinian side than any other network” (Karniel, Lavie-Dinur, & Azran, 2017, p. 119). An interesting point is the fact that Fox News refused to call Shalit a ‘captive’. Doing so would, in effect, destroy the United States’ (especially the conservatives’) platform of refusing to negotiate with terrorists.

Similarly, a study conducted by Matt Viser in 2003 attempted to uncover the New York Times true portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite being held at such prestige, Viser was able to identify several key factors that played into *The New York Times*’ coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the periods December 1987-December 1988 (the First Intifada), September 10, 2000-September 10, 2001 (the Second Intifada), and September 11, 2001-December 11, 2001 (post 9/11 world). While proximity typically plays a factor in viewer interest and media focus, Israel finds itself in the unique position of being geographically distant but culturally close. Americans are able to identify more closely with Israelis as a Westernized white entity as opposed to their Arab Palestinian counterparts who embody a threatening reminder of the attacks on 9/11. Viser compared the latter two periods of the *New York Times* to an Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, which began publishing in English in 1997. The articles were examined on the basis of sources, end quotes, story topics, topic locations, and fatalities. Since its creation, the *New York Times* has supported Israel – in alignment with American values. Increasingly, the margins of sources between Palestinian versus Israeli have increased to favor the Israeli perspective. In doing so, these networks hope to echo the importance of American involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Israeli citizens may be viewed as victims of the same brand of terrorism that carried out the devastation

on 9/11. Viser's study agrees that this coverage is in "general agreement on a foreign policy issue" concerning the United States, "reflect[ing its] position" (Viser, 2003, p. 119). The American government's interest in Israel goes beyond basic policy. It also serves as a daily justification for American militaristic campaigns in the region, domestic attitudes towards Muslims, and maintaining a Westernized ally in the Middle East – all of which have underlying agendas of their own.

Kareem Damanhoury and Faisal Saleh identify this as news outlets creating their own "social construction of reality" (Damanhoury, Saleh, 2017, p. 86). In doing so, these outlets are able to communicate and properly emphasize the points in a story that they believe deserve the most attention or best summarize the reported-on event. A clearer definition of "framing" is also provided in this article: "selecting certain aspects [of a story] and making them 'more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem... [or] recommendation' (Entman 1993: 52)" (Damanhoury, Saleh, 2017, p. 88). Specifically, this article looks at the depiction of the 2014 Gaza War by CNN. Acknowledging the vast amount of news outlets available in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it becomes clear that media representation truly matters. Damanhoury and Saleh explain, reporting in the United States having an impact on foreign policy has debatably been seen before (i.e. U.S. intervention in Iraq and Somalia). The 'CNN Effect' is a term understood by political scientists and government officials alike, making reference to the general impact that news media has on the voting public (Damanhoury, Saleh, 2017, p. 86). Damanhoury and Saleh also outline the belief that the 'CNN Effect' can implicate itself in the agenda-setting process. In America, this could have a very clear

and direct impact on issues such as Middle Eastern involvement, domestic attitudes towards Muslims and Jews, and affect legislation such as Boycott Divest Sanction (BDS).

The power of media outlets to sway the public is incredibly dangerous. Focusing more on the news media side of Israeli-Palestinian reporting from an American outlet, authors Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just provide a definition for their newly developed theoretical perspective known as “framing”. This approach to dissecting media bias is especially helpful as it pertains to clashes between Israelis and Palestinians – a conflict that is all-too-often detrimentally simplified. Put succinctly, “framing” describes the process whereby journalists “simplify, prioritize, and structure the narrative flow of events” (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p. 10). this “framing” model points to the idea that there is a conscious decision made to “prioritize some facts, images, or developments over others”, consequentially leading to a “[promotion of] one particular interpretation of events” (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p. 11). Norris and Kern relate even more closely as they delve into Israeli-Palestinian media coverage as a case-study. Often a hub of chaos and conflict, Israeli current events guarantee a daily story worthy of international attention.

The authors agree wholly that “Israel and the West Bank [show] how events may be manipulated to limit, or attract press attention, in order to achieve a narrative iconic victory” (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p. 292). This directly lines up with the argument that America routinely capitalizes on the misfortunes suffered by Israelis and Palestinians alike to impact domestic policy and societal beliefs. Although this article does not go so far as to explain America’s potential motivations in framing, the case of Muhammad Al Dura and the retaliatory lynching of two reservist Israeli Defense Force soldiers are

studied. It was discovered that broadcasting networks such as CNN, CBS, NBC, and ABC, on October 12, 2000 following the murders, only wrote of the soldiers' murderers in the context of Israel's retaliatory helicopter bombing on the Palestinian police station where the horrendous killings had taken place. In sum, "the lynching had passed without leaving much impact on American news monitoring events" (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p. 66). This is in stark contrast with the coverage of the murdered Palestinian boy, Muhammad Al Dura. The article goes on to articulate how Palestinians are often viewed as the "weaker" and "victims" of an overwhelming, "militaristic" and "dominant" Israel. These points also fall directly in-line with the idea that the American liberal left contributes its efforts to advocating for the persecuted Palestinian whereas the conservative right bolsters national security.

By recognizing these patterns and the root of "us versus them" preconceptions as it pertains to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, journalism can begin to examine itself and the role it plays as a constructor of social realities. There are several questions posed upon studying United States involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There are other parties beyond Israelis and Palestinians who contribute to the ever-growing complexities of the matter that need to be held accountable. Beyond day-to-day reporting, there remains little in the way of concrete pathways towards what a society with a coexisting Israeli and Palestinian population might look like. The journalistic frame-of-mind must shift to begin creating space for a branch of Israeli-Palestinian reporting focused on the peace talk<sup>7</sup>. Beyond partisanship and polarization, there are a plethora of very technical questions that will need immediate answering should both the Israeli and

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<sup>7</sup> Peace talks should not be a hypothetical - they should be demanded as a basic human right. With the same fervor exercised when decrying human rights violations on both the Israeli and Palestinian front, journalists must reprimand larger players for worsening divides and allowing the daily humanitarian crisis to continue.

Palestine side agree to come back to the table. Marda Dunsky, author of *Pens and Swords*, names a few examples:

“How can the United States claim the role of honest broker in the conflict when it overwhelmingly favors Israel with diplomatic support and economic and military aid? What effect have this support and aid had on the trajectory of the conflict, and how do they currently advance or impede U.S. interests in the region as a whole?

Of what importance to the peace process are the historical circumstances under which the Palestinian refugee issue originated and the body of international law and consensus on refugee rights? Does a balance exist between recognizing the right of return in principle and the actual return of a significant number of Palestinian refugees to what is now Israel? What role has U.S. aid to Israel played in indirectly subsidizing its colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967 - and the deep imprint of occupation that has remained in Gaza even after Israel withdrew its settlers and military in 2005? Will real politik be the determining factor in the fate of the West Bank settlements, or will international law also play a role?”

(Dunsky, 2008).

Like a policy mirror, peace journalism grants journalists the ability to remain critical and objective while bringing attention to the ongoing troubles in the region and the dire consequences of continued inaction.

On the sociological level and more abstractly, reporting on efforts aimed at unifying divides could not only boost morale but also serve to reframe and altogether eliminate many of the “us versus them” tactics that have been used by outside parties to vilify groups and falsely justify missteps. This peace journalism approach would be able to focus more on long-term improvements of a system, thus showing what methods do and do not work, but they would diverge strongly from the typical day-by-day domestic reporting done covering Israeli-Palestinian happenings. Such attention is otherwise usually only granted in instances of violence and warfare (Dunsky, 2008). Hand In Hand Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel has six total locations spread across Jerusalem, Galilee, Wadi Ara, Jaffa, Haifa, and Tira-Kfar Saba. At these locations, Israeli and Palestinian children learn side-by-side, paying attention to the tiniest opportunities to connect, such as written name tags with each student’s name written in three languages - Arabic, Hebrew, and English. The messages at these schools are simple, there is no difference in the humanity of Palestinian citizens and Israeli citizens, and to that same note, no human should have their opportunities limited (Hand In Hand, 2010). By putting journalistic efforts into covering such anomalies of peace, they would ideally become less so by way of eliminating the social perception of a barrier between Israelis and Palestinians, bringing them each into one another’s lives as a casual presence, and preventing the casual cyclical nature of Westernized notions of identifiable others as the enemy from continuing for another generation.

### **EVALUATION / ANALYSIS**

The fact of the matter may simply be that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will always remain cut and dry to the American public. Thousands of miles away, Israel and

Palestine feel irrelevant to the daily lives of Americans. For that reason, Americans may never fully commit to comprehending the millennia long historical intricacies that affect ethnic, religious, and cultural relationships to this day (Appiah, 2016). Walking away from an absolute truth in any arena is daunting and unappealing for most. As applicable to the Israeli-Palestinian scenario, the average American is implored to challenge themselves on their fundamentals and identities. At the same time, the general public remains at the complete mercy of media outlets who often fall short of presenting a complete image (Bennis, 2016). Requiring both an individual and structural change, it may simply be unrealistic to consider peace journalism a viable tool in the search for peace. There are very few studies that have been done on peace journalism in general, it has merely been discussed and applied on a small scale (Lynch, 2018) (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2014). Such insight would be incredibly useful as it, as this paper suggests, could provide a more optimistic scope as opposed to the us versus them framing that has taken over American policy.

Notions of the West are difficult, if not impossible to pinpoint. In fact, there may not be an answer an answer at all. To some, a unique Western culture cannot exist as it is, in fact, a stolen compilation of other, richer, preexisting societies made possible through years of violent conquest (Appiah, 2016). In this way, there may never be a clear answer on what the West is beyond how it has been presented through the Democratic left and Republican right framing. For the first, an imperialist degrading force, for the latter, an unfaltering beacon of innovation (Appiah, 2016) (Viser, 2003). Nevertheless, in the context of this paper's argument, a concrete definition of Western culture can be understood. In 2019, for the first time, Palestine will be permitted to enter a competitor

into the Eurovision song contest, which is set to be hosted from Tel Aviv following Israeli singer Netta's victory the year prior. Many are already calling for a Palestinian boycott, but the potential for a Palestinian to appear in a capitalist-praising, Western-idealized, pop culture sensation - in the "us" arena, so to say - and establish their belonging as an equal could have tremendous influence on subconscious impressions of what it means to be "them" (Abunimah, 2018). Western identity, at the time of its conception in the year 754, applied to the Euro-Christian fight against Arab Muslims (Appiah, 2016). By this understanding, however unintentional, America built a nation on the European Western foundation of war, Christendom, and nativism.

On the relationship between Christianity and Israel, it must be acknowledged that there are certainly both individuals and organized groups that hold no ill-intent towards the Jewish people. The Telos Group, for example, dedicates itself to debunking the stereotypical conservative Christian Zionism. Stating that "Christian faith communities persistently advocate for one-sided postures towards the conflict", the Telos Group acknowledges the Evangelical agenda to baptize Israel's Jews and simultaneously disavows it (Telos Group, 2017). Rather, the group's self-described role in the conflict is as peacemakers who present the legitimate claims on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. Citing *The Third Side*, a book by William Ury's, The Telos Group identifies themselves as learners, healers, partners, connectors, witnesses, and advocates rather than the typical, workers of God, servants to Christ (Telos Group, 2017) (Ury, 2000). This selfless dedication to reconciliation is not only an important defense for Christian supporters of Israel but also serves as an example that genuine, unadulterated interest in brokering peace is possible.

Similarly, while this paper argues that peace journalism is an employable resource in shifting public perspective from wartime and towards resolution, the argument can be made that it would be immoral for a journalist to report with an intentional agenda (Lynch, 2018). This begs the question, is current journalism, which is failing to report accurately on the conflict, immoral? Unsurprisingly, the answer unclear. In one regard, this paper has discussed in detail how the news media plays a significant role in carrying their preferred political affiliation's agenda. Opposingly, Jacob Lynch, whose argumentative paper is discussed above, would point to global warming as an example of why journalistic integrity does, in fact, rely on a deduction of facts. Lynch writes, "The phrase, 'Israel's military occupation of Palestinian territory'...is right...journalism [as] Israeli settlements 'are seen as illegal under international law'...Israel is the occupying power" (Lynch, 2018). A technicality, Lynch sees this as a critical contribution to discourse and commitment to objectivity. When any story can offend or spark controversy, it is imperative that a journalist not censor themselves for fear of retribution. On the contrary, Lynch ought to consider that an over commitment to reporting technicalities rather the nuanced intricacies – including equally extensive coverage of positive Israeli-Palestinian relations – is, in fact more immoral as it exacerbates and elongates a decades long bloody battle. Furthermore, said journalists should be aware that, they have access to a wider array of information than the average American. Limited to the curated news media networks select, the American voting public remains at the mercy of their journalistic benevolence.

Written in 2019, in only a few months, there will be far more examples and case studies regarding the American political left and political right's pawning of Israel and

the Jewish people. The 2020 United States presidential election runoffs will include extensive debates with intense rhetoric and rising platforms as candidates attempt to separate themselves from the gaggle of other hopefuls. As of April 2019, Ballotpedia lists 17 Democrats (18 including the Independent Bernie Sanders) and two Republicans seeking the Presidency (Ballotpedia, 2019). Already, new faces, like former Representative Beto O'Rourke from El Paso, have been asked about their outlook in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Speaking to a crowd in Iowa on April 8, 2019, O'Rourke identified current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a "racist... who wants to defy any prospect for... [and] who has sided with a far-right racist party in order to maintain his hold on power" (O'Rourke, 2019). That same day, President Donald Trump announced that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is part of the Iranian military, will officially be designated "as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act" (The White House, 2019). This move not only gives far-right leader and Trump ally Prime Minister Netanyahu a necessary boost before election day, it also impacts the future of the Iran Nuclear Deal. On a domestic level, this villainization of an Arab government's military has tremendous implications for the right's case against Islam and the left's case against bigotry. Needless to say, in mere months, this paper will have far more case examples to expand upon in order to bolster claims that perceptions of the West along party lines directly impact both the media reporting and, subsequently, individual understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## DISCUSSION / CONCLUSION

Perhaps pessimistic in tone, this study is intended not to act as a source of dismay but rather to inspire individuals to conduct their own research. A culmination of many truths, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires, at the very least, a willingness to think empathetically. Moreover, this conflict deserves to be recognized for the humanitarian crisis that it is. As much as Americans would like to believe that their politicians and policies are infallible, this simply is not the case. Regardless of whether one finds themselves on the side of the Israelis, Palestinians, or altogether ambivalent, both American voters and the civilians involved deserve to be freed from their hostage state. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is framed and abused by politicians on both the left and the right to achieve larger agendas both domestically and internationally (Neureiter, 2017, p. 71). On one hand, a peace deal garnered by an American president would be monumental, certainly qualifying them for a Nobel Peace Prize. To another, more maniacal point, unrest in the Middle East is ideal for presenting competing narratives that can mold the perceptions of groups, like Arab Muslims or Jews.

Furthermore, the political left and the right's differing cognizance of the West and whether or not it deserves glorification creates a fundamental disagreement. The West as an identity is shunned by the left and embraced by the right. This core difference affects the identity of Americans as it has been a keystone justification for alleged American superiority in economics and militaristic action. Increasing disillusionment with this notion is the main contributor to much of the political left's anti-Israel rhetoric (Appiah, 2016) (Finkelstein, 2003, *Image and Reality*, Chap. 4). The right, meanwhile, has been a consistent source of animosity towards Muslims since the attacks on September 11, 2001

2000 (Ocampo, Dana, & Barreto, 2018, p. 89, 96). For every Israeli or Palestinian death, there is an enemy to point to, a potential for justifiable militaristic intervention, and a furthering of domestic agenda on the American political left and right.

One might expect that politicians always hide an ulterior motive up their sleeves, but the media can be held equally responsible in many regards. CNN and Fox, two news outlets that are notoriously skewed to the left and right in that order for their reporting of worldly happenings, are unsurprisingly complacent in agitating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Karniel, Lavie-Dinur, & Azran, 2017, p. 110). The stress placed on violence combined with vilifying, negatively connotated words affect the subconscious of American voters as they attempt to educate themselves on a conflict thousands of miles away. News outlets make the decision for their viewers as to which content is worthy of coverage and investigation, creating their own “social construction of reality” (Damanhoury, Saleh, 2017, p. 86). This tremendous power possessed by the media has direct impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and influences in agenda-setting and public opinion (Damanhoury, Saleh, 2017, p. 86). A conscious effort by the media to refocus its coverage on peace attempts and instances of coexistence has more than enough potential to change the overall tone and approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This idea, known as peace journalism, hardly exists today, but that is not to say that it neither cannot nor should not. Should news media outlets and journalists truly commit themselves to the objective journalism they so confidently pride themselves on, they could inspire the general public to critically assess the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, understand its multifaceted nature, and employ empathy in order to reach a compromise

that is authentically mutually beneficial for the people directly affected by the day-to-day terrors of war.

It is difficult, as a member of the Jewish community myself, to witness the pawning of my own people. The lack of concern for those at the center of the conflict is glaringly obvious as American politicians make major international policy decisions regardless of the implications. In fact, I would argue that in many instances, especially during the Trump presidency, the incitement of Palestinian violence is welcomed. Hoping to demonize a group of people who have been disenfranchised by Western nations, American politicians on the right do not mourn the souls lost but instead search for their next headline and justification for anti-Muslim bigotry. With 70% of Jews identifying as Democrats in a 2013 Pew study, it will be curious to the influence increasing polarization will have on the Jewish vote (Becker, 2016, p. 151). Terms like Zionism, which were born out of the same essence as many minority empowerment movements, are essentially banned by the left. The world's shame in a post-Holocaust era drove Zionism, a commendable call for Jewish-pride, too far into a realm resembling the West. That is, Zionism was too easily adopted by the West and enforced by militaristic means (Rosenbaum, 2019). Newly elected far-left members of Congress, such as Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, have been strong critics of Zionism and Israel, unabashedly using anti-Semitic tropes to deliver their point. Her claims that Jewish people have dual allegiance to a foreign nation (Israel) will undoubtedly continue to frustrate and isolate Jewish voters who logically would never cast a vote towards all too familiar rhetoric of Jewish conspiracy (Omar, 2019). Representative Omar is the epitome of a left engulfed by the "us versus them" battle – one that strives for equality in the face of

disenfranchisement but ignores the historical threat on the Jewish existence. Whilst combating the hateful rhetoric against some minorities, Representative Omar finds herself unable to criticize with legitimacy as she engages in the same bigotry as her adversaries.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been and remains disconcertingly vulnerable from a political standing. The United States specifically has recognized the opportunity to appear regretful of mistakes in World War II and the Holocaust whilst simultaneously playing its platform. The Iran Nuclear Agreement, Muslim Ban, and of Middle Eastern invasions are merely a few examples of the multifaceted issue and implications of Israeli-American relations. The American conservative right, despite rampant accusations of anti-Semitism and supporting the right of Nazis to spread their ideas, attempts to profile itself as the pro-Israel party. The left, on the other hand, is increasingly colder towards Israel. The American political left has fallen victim to perceptions of Jews as Westernized European capitalists who do not deserve the same advocating as other minority groups, like African Americans, Native Americans, or, domestically, Muslims. Both political parties refuse the effort to separate their personal gains from the conflict, knowing that the complexity of the issue can further one's own agenda and gain votes. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is somewhat irrelevant to most Americans. Therefore, there is less interest and general education on the topic. The American political media, specifically ones that are skewed towards one ideology, like CNN and Fox, align their news reporting with their designated perspective. The American people are manipulated in all facets of political life. Politicians and news outlets know that they can utilize Israeli and Palestinian suffering to garner votes and gain viewers. News outlets have the problem of

focusing on the war aspect of their stories – glorifying violence, knowing that death sells. While proposals like peace journalism have been made, it is simpler in theory than practice for a report to suppress one’s own bias entirely. Generally, these voters make the naïve mistake of basing their votes off what little they have been exposed at the hands of their content providers who have pre-determined the set framing of any given event. In order to help preserve the sanctity of a well-informed American vote, members of American society must adopt a more cynical attitude when educating themselves about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In doing so, American voters will no longer be subject to fear-mongering, nor will they tolerate the abusive neglect of the Israeli and Palestinian people at the hands of the United States government.

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