

University of California

Santa Barbara

Constraints on Diplomacy:

The Rise of Right-Wing Political Cultures in Israel

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

in Global and International Studies

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June 2016

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June 2016

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ABSTRACT

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By

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In recent years, extreme right parties have received considerable electoral support and mounting influence in Israeli politics. This thesis will examine the Oslo Accords of 1993 as the catalyst of the new-radical right in Israel, and the state's neoliberal economy that has shifted towards the manufacturing and export of advanced weapons and security expertise as the global factors that have shaped the rise of new right-wing political cultures in Israel. The study will then analyze the social factors that have appealed to the Israeli public to vote for parties that espouses radical-right views by exploring the influence of roughly one million Russian immigrants to Israel beginning in the 1990s, and the exploitation of existential fears experienced by most Jews. The study will specifically focus on two case studies: the 2014 war on Gaza, also known as Operation Protective Edge, and the reelection of Benjamin Netanyahu as the crystallization of a new-post peace extreme right-wing culture in Israel. The thesis will also illustrate how social movements in Israel, and within the larger Palestinian global solidarity movement, have attempted to resist and expose global and social origins of new militarism in Israel by engaging in nonviolent resistance, boycotting institutions that benefit from the illegal occupation, and demanding justice.

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Introduction

On March 17, 2015 Israeli citizens went to their respective poll sites to vote in the 2015 Israeli Legislative Elections. Approximately twenty-six political parties ran for the 120 parliamentary seats available in the Knesset—“these parties represent[ed] the broadest spectrum of Israeli society from far-left to far-right, Israeli-Arab to Jewish nationalists, secular to ultra-Orthodox and everything in between” (“Israeli Elections,” 2015). Against the backdrop of the failed peace talks as a result of Israel’s minimal engagement towards diplomatic efforts to end the ongoing conflict in the region—many were hoping that the upcoming elections would change the current trajectory Israel was on by ensuring that the radical-right within Israel did not receive the majority of the seats in the Knesset. In the context of contemporary Israel, ‘new’ right wing cultures/parties “espouse views motivated by nationalism, racism, anti-democracy, and xenophobia,” rather than focusing primarily on territorial issues which constitute the ‘old’ extreme right culture (Freeman, Kaner, & Kaplan, 2014). Thorough analysis in this introduction, and throughout the subsequent chapters, indicate that the rise of the right wing political culture in Israel has led to a masculinized state focused predominately on security, rather than attempting to resolve the country’s outstanding conflict surrounding its illegal occupation of Palestine through diplomatic means.

The elections were positioned against two main political factions within Israeli politics: the conservative right-wing Likud Party, and the center-left Zionist Union. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party ran on a platform that prioritized security and the intrinsic Jewish character of the state, while simultaneously focusing on economic prosperity for the Jewish people. The Zionist Union, however, concentrated more on social

and economic inequalities present in Israel—and were committed to strengthening ties with the US and the international community by focusing on various domestic and foreign policy issues ("Israeli Elections," 2015). A few weeks prior to the elections, it was projected that the two parties were extremely close in their race to hold the majority of the seats in the Knesset. The winning party would dictate the state's affairs for at least another four years—which prompted Netanyahu to go on a media campaign that promoted conservative, right-wing statements and ensured the Jewish population that he—and his party—would do whatever it takes to ensure Israel's Jewish character as a nation-state.

However, Netanyahu had his fair share of controversial moments during his campaign for reelection. For instance, he spoke before the U.S. Congress a month before the elections at the invitation of Republican Speaker of the House John Boehner without going through the Obama administration—which was a clear breach of etiquette, and disregard for the administration and their diplomatic work towards ensuring a nuclear deal with Iran. In the final days of campaigning, "Netanyahu [also] abandoned a commitment to negotiate a Palestinian state - the basis of more than two decades of Middle East peacemaking - and promised to go on building settlements on occupied land" (Baker & Heller, 2015). Such problematic statements were inconsistent with the work done by the Obama administration to facilitate peace in the region. This shows that the radical right in Israel has no interest in peace because it can continuously reap economic and political benefits in the occupied territories without negotiating. Netanyahu later called upon Jewish citizens to go to the polls and vote in order to counter the "droves" of Arab voters—a divisive and racist remark, especially from an official who represents a supposedly fair and equal 'democratic state' (Gerstedfeld, 2015). On Election Day on March 17th, "more than 4 million, or 71.8 percent,

of eligible voters cast ballots in the Israeli legislative elections [...] the national elections [that] year broke records with the highest voter turnout in the century” (“Netanyahu Party,” 2015). The elections culminated with the reelection of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party holding the majority of the seats in the Knesset.

The 2015 elections solidify the shift in the political history of Israel—the trajectory from kibbutz socialism to the extreme right. In the beginning of the twentieth century before the establishment of Israel, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe aimed to become one with their ancient homeland by merging two ideologies: Zionism and Socialism (“The Kibbutz,” n.d.). Zionism is the “national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel” (“Zionism,” n.d.). History has shown that before the establishment of Israel, Jews were largely dispersed around the world with no concrete state to call their own. In addition, centuries of religious persecution and discrimination around the globe made many Jews long for a place where they could practice their religion in peace. In order to begin the process of establishing a Jewish home in what was then historic Palestine, Theodore Herzl requested the delegates of the Zionist Congress to create a specific fund for the Jewish people in order to acquire acreage in their ancient homeland. In 1901, the Jewish National Fund was officially created—and within two years the organization was able to buy its first plot of land in Ottoman Empire controlled Palestine (“Jewish,” n.d.). The first Jewish settlers to live on the land decided to adopt socialism as their blueprint towards “working the land and creating a new kind of community, and a new kind of Jew—stronger, more giving, and more rooted in the land” (Schultz, 2009). The interweaving of Zionism and socialism resulted in a communal settlement known as the kibbutz in Hebrew, which is a “rural community; a

society dedicated to mutual aid and social justice; a socioeconomic system based on the principle of joint ownership of property, equality and cooperation of production, consumption and education” (“The Kibbutz,” n.d.).

The early Jewish Eastern European settlers wanted to realize the Marxist principle of distributive justice to ensure equality and establish a system where community members could create a life living off their sacred land.

In the early years, kibbutz members worked mostly in agriculture. Instead of earning individual incomes for their labor, all money and assets on the kibbutz were managed collectively. In keeping with the ideal of total economic equality, kibbutz members ate together in a communal dining hall, wore the same kibbutz clothing, and shared responsibility for child rearing, education, cultural programs, and other social services (Schultz, 2009).

By the time Israel was sovereignly recognized as a Jewish state, there were around 26,550 individuals living on kibbutzim and their number had grown to over 80 thriving communities throughout the state (“The Kibbutz,” n.d.). The communities represent a true, democratic society. For instance, “the general assembly of all its members formulates policy, elects officers, authorizes the kibbutz budget and approves new members. It serves not only as a decision-making body but also as a forum where members may express their opinions and views” (“The Kibbutz,” n.d.). Currently, there are about 270 kibbutzim varying in size with a total population of around 120,000 Jews, which constitute about 2.8 percent of Israel’s current population (“About Kibbutz,” n.d.). Which begs the question: how does a nation built on the fundamental values of socialism and equality become one in which participates in policies of racialized dispossession? This thesis will examine the vital shift in political

ideologies and identify the specific social and global factors that have occurred throughout Israel's history that have produced Israel's new radical right and militaristic culture.

The analysis begins with the Oslo Accords of 1993, which acted as a catalyst for the radical right in Israel to expand their original ideologies based on territorial matters in the region and emerge as a new political group espousing harsh views on xenophobia, security, nationalism, and the promotion of anti-democratic values in order to challenge directly whatever progress had been made during the peace process between Israel and Palestine that had been in play since the early 1990s. The global neoliberal economy also points to the relentless appetite for violence that has led to the emergence of a hyper-masculine, xenophobic state. "Under the aggressive politics and culture of neoliberalism, society is increasingly mobilized for the production of violence against the poor, immigrants, dissenters, and others marginalized because of their age, gender, race, ethnicity, and color" (Girouz, 2005, p.12). This will be examined by analyzing the shift from Israel's traditional based economy to one that focuses primarily on the production and specialization of the high-tech industry, which includes manufacturing a variety of lethal weapons and adopting various exclusionary security processes. "In fact, the only basis of national consensus in Israel is that there is a need to cope with the threat to its existence, and that this can be done only by means of the country's own armed might" (Yaniv, 1993, p.12).

The thesis will then focus on social factors in Israel that have had a substantial impact on the political expansion and influence of the radical-right. For instance, the influx of roughly one million Soviet Jews into Israel in the beginning of the 1990s contributed significantly to changing the political landscape of the country because of the Russians' distain for Communist ideology and Islamophobic past. Another social factor that is

important in the context of the radical right is the exploitation of the existential fears experienced by most Jews when warned about possible threats to their future. In the context of Israel, it is important to note that “Netanyahu has made the population’s fear of the threats looming over them into the linchpin of his discourse. Fear is construed along the border separating ‘us’ (the true people) from ‘them’ (the foreign enemy, the Arabs, and their domestic allies...)” (Filc, 2010, p.74). Netanyahu and other members of the radical-right engage in fear mongering in order to be seen as the strong, protective political party—the only one in fact, that can rid the country of the ‘parasites’ that have weakened the state of Israel (Filc, p.74).

However, before we begin our in-depth analysis on the fundamental factors that have led to the rise of the radical right in Israel, it is essential to highlight that Israel is not the only state in contemporary history that has experienced such a political trajectory. Many countries within Western Europe such as France, Belgium, Germany, and Denmark dealt with a rise in right-wing populist groups around the 1980s. In the liberal democracies across Western Europe after World War II, political stability was short lived (Betz, 1993, p. 413). “The resurgence of ideological and political turbulence in the late 1960s, rising social conflicts in the early 1970s, and the spread of mass protest by new social movements in the 1980s were symptoms of a profound transformation of Western European politics” (Betz, p. 413). Much like in contemporary Israel,

Radical right-wing populist parties [in Western Europe] are radical in their rejection of the established sociocultural and sociopolitical system and their advocacy of individual achievement, a free marketplace, and a drastic reduction of the role of the state. They are right-wing in their rejection of individual and social

equality, in their opposition to the social integration of marginalized groups, and in their appeal to xenophobia, if not overt racism. They are populist in their instrumentalization of sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense (Betz, p. 413).

The success of radical populist groups in Western Europe during this period can be attributed to two factors: “rising levels of immigration and political dissatisfaction” (Knigge, 1998, p. 272). In 1989, a study conducted on xenophobia and racism in Western European communities projected that about 11 to 14 percent of the populace was “troubled by the presence of people of other nationality, race, or religion. Among the citizens of the EC, Belgians, Germans, French, and Danes were particularly sensitive about immigrants. Overall, 5 percent of the population of the member states considered immigrants the most important problem facing their respective countries” (Betz, 1993, 415). For instance, between 1980 and 1991 the immigration of Asians, Africans, and other non-Europeans increased by over a hundred and ten percent. In 1991 alone, over 50 percent of foreign voters in Italy were from Asia and Africa, and 40 percent of refugees living in Switzerland came from the same geographical areas (Betz, p. 416). “As a result, Western European countries are confronted with a sizable number of non-Europeans, whose physical difference makes an impression far beyond their number. This can be contributed to the perception that Europe is being ‘invaded’ by alien traditions, cultures, and religions” (Betz, p. 416). The issue of immigration not only highlights exclusionary perspectives but also sheds light on “the mass publics’ economic fears: perceptions of incompatible group interests and a struggle over scarce material resources” (Knigge, p. 270).

France's French Front National (FN) was the most significant new populist right wing party in Western Europe, and served as a model for other radical right parties in neighboring countries in the 1980s (Knigge, p. 253). The first major electoral success of the Front National was in 1984 after running on a platform that favored restrictive policies towards immigrants and exclusionary nationalism. Their central argument was that "the vast majority of refugees only claim to be political refugees. In reality, they are driven by economic factors. This hurts Western European societies twice. Immigrants not only burden social services with new expenditures, but they also take away scarce jobs from the native unemployed" (Betz, p. 416). France, like other Western European countries, strongly objected any notion of multiculturalism and espoused views of xenophobia, and "national chauvinism" against immigrants from around the globe (Knigge, p. 255).

It is important to note the parallels between the conditions that have led to growing populist parties in both Israel and Western Europe. The 1980s in Western Europe was "marked by disenchantment with the major social and political institutions and profound distrust in their workings, the weakening and decomposition of electoral alignments, and increased political fragmentation and electoral volatility" (Betz, p. 413). A few years later in 1993, Israel's society would too become politically fragmented as well—between those who wanted their government to engage wholeheartedly in diplomatic talks with the Palestinians, and those who did not trust their beloved Israel to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin whom seemed too eager to put up the Jews' sacred land in exchange for peace. Similarly, Israeli society is currently dealing with an immigration problem. As of 2013, the "Jewish population numbers approximately 6.042 million residents (75.3% of the total population); the Arab population numbers approximately 1.658 million residents (20.7%); and the population of

“others,” referring to non-Arab Christians, members of other religions, and persons not classified by religion in the Ministry of the Interior, numbers 318,000 (4.0%) (Center Bureau, 2013). These demographics are particularly troubling—especially among the radical-right who believes that Israel is a Jewish state. Therefore, the almost twenty-four percent of individuals in Israel who are not Jewish “threaten Israel’s Jewish majority and the Zionist project itself” and must be uprooted (Blumenthal, 2015, p. 2). These non-Jews are also acquiring necessary resources in terms of subsidized housing, social security, and overall acreage of land that was intended to be dedicated specifically to the hardworking Jewish people—subsequently creating an us versus them mentality.

Neoliberalism has also played a substantial role in attracting support towards radical right groups, in both contemporary Israel and the Western European countries in the early 1980s and 1990s. “Within the discourse of neoliberalism, democracy becomes synonymous with free markets, while issues of equality, radical justice, and freedom are stripped of any substantive meaning and used to disparage those who suffer systemic deprivation and chronic punishment” (Girouz, p. 9). Free markets bring about social suffering for many individuals; cuts in social programs, a decrease in public spending, and comprehensive privatization across the public sector (Betz, p. 418). “Individual misfortune, like democracy itself, is now viewed as either excessive or in need of radical containment” (Girouz, p. 9). In many instances, empathy is replaced with the belief in the survival of the fittest, in which societies favor individual advancement, shutter at the misfortune of their countrymen, and loathe immigrants whom they believe are absorbing all of their natural resources. Unfortunately, in the case of Israel, this has taken a much more violent turn—especially when one views the current trajectory Israel is on towards the mistreatment of Palestinians in besieged Gaza.

In the past six years, Israel has conducted three separate military incursions against the Palestinian population living in besieged Gaza: Operation Cast Lead (2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), and the deadliest occurring in the summer of 2014, Operation Protective Edge ("Gaza Crisis," 2014). In 2009, "Israel launched a military assault on Gaza that left more than 1,400 dead over the course of three weeks [...] violence erupted again in November 2012 with a military escalation that saw more than 400 killed in Gaza—mostly civilians" (Blumenthal, 2015, p.6). This type of violence and unilateral control is not uncommon when discussing the relationship between Israel and the occupied territories—which is one of the reasons why Secretary of State John Kerry attempted to restart the peace process in the beginning of July 2013 after the protracted failure of diplomacy based on the Oslo Accords of 1993. Nine months into the peace process, however, the negotiations collapsed because Israel refused to continue on a diplomatic road to peace if Hamas—the official political party in Gaza since 2006—would partake in the discussion. Prime Minister Netanyahu claims "Hamas is a murderous terror organization that emphasizes in its charter that its goal is to destroy Israel," (A., and T., 2014). The Jewish state agreed to engage with the Palestinian Authority's Fatah, which has been the official government of the West Bank, but refused to acknowledge Hamas despite the unity government Fatah and Hamas agreed to form weeks earlier after seven years of political strife between the two largest political factions in the occupied territories (Elgindy, 2015). "Without Hamas' participation any diplomatic results of negotiations would likely have been of questionable value [...] Hamas has repeatedly indicated its willingness to reach a long-term normalizing agreement with Israel if and when Israel is ready to withdraw fully to the 1967 borders and respect Palestinian sovereign rights" (Falk, 2014).

Prior to Israel officially suspending the peace process, however, it was evident that the state had no intention of reconciling with their Palestinian neighbors. During the nine months of diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement to end the historic conflict, Israel authorized “13,851 new housing units in the settlements, added significant amounts of available land for further settlement expansion, and demolished 312 Palestinian homes. These acts were not only unlawful, but actually accelerated earlier settlement trends” (Falk, 2014). It became increasingly difficult from the Palestinian perspective to trust that the peace process would bring about sustainable change—especially since Israel continued to take provocative stances that jeopardized the negotiation. It quickly became apparent that Israel’s hawkish policies would not allow for effective dialogue with the Palestinians to take place.

With yet another ineffective attempt to put an end to the historic conflict, Netanyahu and his cabinet members shifted their attention towards the unity government recently formed by Hamas and Fatah in the occupied territories. “Netanyahu said the new government should be shunned because it leans on support from Hamas, a group labeled as terrorist by the West. Abbas ‘said yes to terrorism and no to peace,’ Netanyahu said after a meeting with his Security Cabinet” (The Associated, 2014). Although Israel has been vehemently against any kind of unity government with members of Hamas at the negotiating table, it is important to recognize that there cannot be any kind of viable reconciliation without the cooperation of the two largest, and most important political factions within the occupied territories. Regardless of the positive implications of the historic move towards finally establishing a strong, unified government for all Palestinians in the occupied territories— Israeli officials treated Fatah’s agreement with Hamas as a directed threat against the livelihood of the Jewish state and immediately began threatening to retaliate against the unity government.

Just a few weeks later, Israel had the opportunity to make good on their promise of retaliation after the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers, allegedly led by members of Hamas on June 12, 2014.

Israeli officials wasted no time scapegoating Hamas and the newly formed unity government for the disappearance of three Israeli teens in the West Bank (Masi, 2014). Within hours there were angry, violent Jewish mobs in Jerusalem screaming “ ‘Death to Arabs!’ and searching for Palestinians to assault [...] as active duty Israeli soldiers took to Facebook to demand revenge, posting photos of themselves with the weapons they said they were aching to use, political upstarts rushed to issue calls for the ‘annihilation’ of Hamas” (Blumenthal, p. 17). The Israeli government called for an immediate crackdown in the occupied territories in order to locate and rescue the three boys; yet in “reality, it was targeting the organization that Netanyahu had held collectively responsible for the crime— Hamas—rounding up hundreds of its members including scores of those released under the 2011 prisoner swap for the captive soldier Gilad Shalit” (Blumenthal, p.13). Unfortunately, a little over two weeks later Israeli authorities found the deceased bodies of the three Israeli teenagers. At this point, around June 30th, Hamas and the IDF were already exchanging fire on a small scale—Hamas engaging in fire as a response to the violent home invasions and unjust arrests of its members by Israeli officials (Masi). Hamas continued to deny its involvement with the death of the three teenagers; “several jihadist groups, including one linked to al Qaida, claimed responsibility for the three murders, but Netanyahu maintained that “Hamas is responsible and Hamas will pay’” (Masi). Within the next week, Israel launched “Operation Protective Edge” a war on Gaza that exemplified the practice of

disproportionate use of force and collective punishment by Israel on the besieged Arab population.

Operation Protective Edge was the longest and most lethal of the three systematic military attacks on Gaza. Operation Protective Edge lasted fifty-one days; fifty-one days of non-stop assault from a military power that made insufficient efforts to differentiate between military facilities and single-family unit homes, or between combaters and ordinary-civilians. What is most frightening however, is that such acts of violence are commonplace today in Israel and throughout the occupied territories. For example, in July 2014 the “Jewish Israeli public [...] told pollsters from the Israel Democracy Institute that they supported the war in Gaza at levels of 95 percent, with at least 45 percent complaining that the army had not used enough force (Blumenthal, p. 120). Operation Protective Edge, also known as the 51-Day War, resulted in the death of about 2,100 Palestinians—“more than 70 percent were confirmed civilians—and wounding well over 10,000; it pulverized Gaza’s infrastructure. Over 400 businesses and shops had been damaged in targeted Israeli strikes, and at least 120 were completely obliterated; 24 medical facilities were damaged” including Gaza’s only “geriatric rehabilitation facility” (Blumenthal, p.195).

Before the 51-Day War, Gaza only had one power station that was responsible for providing electricity to the majority of its inhabitants. During the attack, IDF soldiers targeted that power station—which has currently resulted in the majority of the population to be without electricity for the majority of the day. As a Canadian doctor working in Gaza states, “people are drying in Gaza quite often, regularly, every single day because of the lack of electricity” (Gadzo, 2016). Without electricity, doctors can no longer perform simple, life saving tasks without the necessary electricity needed to power their equipment. Innocent

children are falling off steep ledges of apartment buildings to their death because they cannot see a few feet in front of them in pitch darkness—this is not a humane environment meant for anyone living in the twenty-first century (Gadzo, 2016). Yet, “perhaps the most disturbing figure was the more than 18,000 civilian homes the Israeli military leveled during the assault on Gaza, leaving at least 100,000 homeless or forced to cram into the already overcrowded homes of relatives” (Blumenthal, p. 198). During the 51-Day War the IDF employed “39,000 tank shells, 34,000 artillery shells, and 4.8 million bullets were supplied during the fighting. Senior military figures estimate that land forces alone used at least 60 percent of the 5,000 tons of ammunition given to them, but the IDF cannot yet evaluate it accurately” (Blumenthal, p. 136). The small physical size of Gaza, combined with the fact that it is one of the most densely populated areas on the planet begs the question of why the Israeli Defense Forces found it necessary to employ such excessive and unnecessary amounts of force and ammunition to subdue the Palestinian population. It also must be noted that it is almost unprecedented in modern warfare to lock civilian inhabitants in a war zone.

At the end of the military attack, “Israel lost 71 individuals, of whom 65 were members of the IDF, with 469 IDF members and 261 civilians wounded, while at least 75 percent of the Palestinian casualties were civilian, including 513 children” (Falcone, 2015). The relatively low number of casualties on the Israeli side and the intentional targeting of Palestinian civilian establishments by the IDF illustrates the disproportionate use of force employed by the Israelis on the Arab population; which is the embodiment of the prevailing security and militarized political culture in the Israeli state. Unfortunately, it has become normal within mainstream Israeli discourse to “favor a broad array of policies aimed at forced segregation, discriminatory laws and population transfer” (Blumenthal, p. 112). As

Israel continues to engage in violence and state sponsored terrorism that saturate the lives of ordinary Palestinians, it will become increasingly difficult to stop Israel on its path towards ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Arab population throughout historic Palestine.

However, the world has not turned its back on Palestinian suffering; the global solidarity movement that encompasses activists, politicians, students, and academic institutions from around the globe continue to address and combat Israel's xenophobic and aggressive policies. After 68 years of occupation, the Palestinians finally have an international movement that continues to grow and thrive everyday—with the Boycott Divestment Sanction (BDS) movement just being one recent example. It is essential to highlight that with every new illegal checkpoint, roadblock, or aggressive screening put in place in the occupied territories by Israeli Defense Forces, the more resilient the Palestinians become. Nonviolent demonstrations continue to take place almost daily as Arabs across the occupied territories and in Israel refuse to be silenced and mistreated. Palestinians, with the help of the international community, demand accountability and just treatment for everyone living in Israel and the occupied territories. No matter how difficult the uphill battle is for Palestinians to ensure their rights, it is essential to remember that it is not a matter of *if* the occupation and Israel's violent policies will end—it's a matter of *when*.

Chapter 1: The Restructuring of the Radical Right and the Rise of Israel's Security Economy

This chapter will trace the first significant step towards the rise of the new radical right in Israel, the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords, which was initially believed to offer the promise of effective diplomacy and a historic move on both parties to end their decades long conflict. "In the five years following the 1993 agreement, more than 600 people were killed by extremists who opposed the peace process. The extremists succeeded in disrupting the peace talks before lasting peace was achieved" (Abdelmoez, n.d.). Unfortunately, the Oslo Accords instead acted as a catalyst for the radical Right to restructure their stance focused primarily on territorial issues and emerge as a new political group espousing views of nationalism, xenophobia, security, and anti-democratic values. The rise of the radical right has resulted in the escalation of violence in the region, which can directly be linked towards Israel's security based economy. In order to begin to understand why violence takes precedence today over peace in Israel/Palestine, one must examine the Oslo Accords and how its implementation created conditions for the emergence of a new radical Right in Israel. Comparably, it is important to understand that the ongoing violence does not exist inside a vacuum; years of failed peace talks, wars, and an ongoing military occupation have resulted in a militaristic and securitized political culture in Israel that is currently epitomized by Israel's security economy.

For many Arabs and Jews alike, the date September 13, 1993 represented an opportunity for peaceful coexistence and the recognition of mutual political and civil rights in Israel/Palestine. The signing of the Accords by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn in Washington D.C., appeared to solidify both parties' commitments to lasting peace.

Although the Oslo Accords set the framework for reconciliation; however, it was not a peace treaty. The Accords established “interim governance arrangements and a framework to facilitate negotiations for a final treaty, which would be concluded by the end of 1998” (“Oslo,” 2013). The two parties came to agree on seventeen articles called the Declaration of Principles (DOP) that essentially stipulated that a transitional period of no more than five years was necessary before leading to permanent status negotiations to ensure that Palestinians were able to effectively control the areas of Gaza and West Bank’s Jericho, which were both formally in Israel’s control. After the five-year transitional period, it was agreed upon that both groups would reconvene at the negotiating table to tackle controversial issues plaguing both Arabs and Jews: the settlements, Jerusalem, borders that would make up an independent Palestinian state, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees of 1948 (Meital, 2006, p. 33).

The Declaration of Principles enabled Palestinians to partially control their own affairs after decades of Israeli rule. The document stated that within four months of the signing ceremony, all Israeli military troops in Gaza and Jericho would be withdrawn and a Palestinian Self-Government Authority would take its place to ensure social order and receive sovereign power (Meital, p. 34). Simultaneously, “elsewhere in the West Bank, Israel undertook to transfer power to authorized Palestinians in five spheres: education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism” (Shlaim, 2005, p.33). Part two of the Oslo Accords took place on September 28, 1995, which detailed the expansion of the Palestinian Authority (PA), created the Palestinian Council outlining its powers and responsibilities, and allowed for the free movement of Palestinians between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In addition, the agreement subdivided the West Bank region into three

zones: A, B, and C, to effectively relieve control of Israeli power and transfer control and responsibility for security to the PA, minimizing the presence of Israeli Defense Forces and security apparatuses in hundreds of villages within the West Bank (Meital, p. 43). “The Oslo Accords basically consist[ed] of three chief elements: recognition of the state of Israel by the PLO and vice versa, the institution of a ‘peace process’ in the transitional period, and a commitment to achieve a permanent status agreement where most entangled issues will be resolved” (Meital, p. 32). However, the most significant development during the Oslo process was the realization that in order for there to be lasting peace between the two groups, both would have to accept the idea that it would be “based on partitioning the disputed land into two states” (Meital, p. 2).

The Oslo Accords, which became internationally known as the “peace accords,” created discordant factions within all aspects of Israeli society. A substantial number of Israelis, including Knesset members, rejected the notion of a peace process based on “historical, religious, and national grounds” (Meital, p. 32). Consequently, weeks after a historic move towards reconciliation, Israel’s society was divided into two opposing camps. The Peace camp led by Prime Minister Rabin was dedicated to completing all the agreements set out during Oslo, whereas the National camp led by Benjamin Netanyahu was focused on derailing the peace process and protecting Israel’s national interests. Benjamin Netanyahu, then head of the Likud Party, claimed that the Oslo Accords jeopardized the young state of Israel by consenting to a Palestinian state and left the country defenseless against its violent neighbors. Many agreed and could not fathom how it was possible that the government was willing to make any kind of concessions with the leaders of the PLO—which just a few

months prior—had been identified as a terrorist organization known for endorsing armed resistance to liberate historic Palestine.

Responding to what they believed was a road to disaster, the traditional right held on to the belief that Israel could still exert control over Gaza and the West Bank as long as the agreements were not finalized. Therefore, they began organizing around the idea that Palestinians already had a state—in neighboring Jordan. The radical right argued that the conflict would be resolved if all Palestinians moved to Jordan where they already constituted the majority of the population. Many claimed that Jordan was Palestine and that all of Israel (that is, the Palestine Mandate administered by Britain) belonged solely to the Jews, thus any type of territorial concessions would be unnecessary (Meital, p. 99). The right quickly recognized that the Jordanians would not tolerate arguments that criticized its national heritage, culture or history. They argued that Jordanians and Palestinians were two separate entities, and that Palestinians had the right to stay in their national homeland that they have occupied for thousands of years, instead of creating an artificial state with no historical ties or affiliation. Palestinians and Jordanians alike also claimed that the Palestinian people, just like the Israelis, had an inherent right to self-determination. Although the idea of a Palestinian population transfer to Jordan failed miserably, the right continued to stay active in their fight to combat the rhetoric of “land for peace.” Specifically, they capitalized on the one of the biggest faults within the Oslo Accords: the ambiguity surrounding the settlements.

The right embarked upon their new mission of expanding existing illegal settlements in order to confiscate and occupy land, which after the transitional period of the Oslo Accords would make it increasingly more difficult to dismantle. “Settlements are illegal Jewish-only communities built by Israel for its citizens on territories it occupied in 1967”

(American, n.d.). In 1990 there were approximately 78,600 settlers in the occupied territories (Meital, p. 36). The first plan initiated to extend settlements after the Oslo Accords was called Operation Double. Through the coalition of politicians, activists and the ultra-Orthodox, the right began to create “satellite settlements next to existing ones” to increase the population of Jews in Palestinian areas (Pedahzur, 2012, 109). Within a matter of months, resources allocated to expanding settlements and ensuring the safety of settlers rose rapidly. In addition, the government of Israel sponsored construction within the settlements at an unprecedented rate on the grounds of “national increase and security needs” (Meital, p. 36). By September 2004, the settler population increased by over two hundred percent compared to figures prior to the Oslo Accords (Meital, p. 36). The confiscation of Palestinian land, water, and resources solely for the Jewish population has been deemed illegal; and in the eyes of Palestinians and the international community, it delegitimized the peace accords and Israel’s commitment to lasting peace.

Although the settlements continued to expand, the loss of Israeli autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza was enough to convince segments of the Israeli population of the disastrous path the state was heading towards. The shift between the traditional right and the new radical right in Israel were solidified through two gruesome acts: the Hebron massacre, and the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. On February 25, 1994 Dr. Baruch Goldstein, a devout Orthodox Jew and father of four, went into the West Bank town of Hebron and fired over two hundred live bullets onto an unsuspecting group of five hundred Muslims kneeling in prayer at their local mosque. In a matter of minutes, over twenty-nine people were killed and over a hundred were wounded. This was one of the most horrid episodes of violence in Israel’s young history (Sprinzak, 1991). Prime Minister Rabin was

quick to denounce the violence and claimed it was the sole act of a madman, not of a devout, God-fearing Jew. However, many Israelis praised the actions of Goldstein and claimed that his actions were a direct intervention from God to put an end to the government's commitment to the peace process. Goldstein ultimately worried about the "existence of the Jewish people and [felt] that only an extraordinary act would stop what he considered a most serious deterioration in the nation's condition and the lack of response to the increasing and worsening acts of terror" (Sprinzak, p. 241). The act of terror inflicted on the Palestinians by the messianic doctor served as a stark warning; the ultra-Orthodox and the radical right were not ready for any type of compromise with the enemy and would resort to unprecedented acts of violence if anymore power or territories were transferred to the Palestinian Authority. The use of violence threatened the democratic foundation of the state of Israel because its citizens were no longer willing to engage in a civil manner when presented with internal issues which they disagreed on. In addition, by targeting and discriminating against Palestinians in the occupied territories and Arab Israelis in the state, Israel's democracy was becoming to look more like an ethno-democracy, its rights and privileges reserved only for the Jewish population.

Ultimately, Dr. Goldstein failed at his mission of directly derailing the peace process; however, his actions did increase tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Shortly after the massacre, "Palestinians and Israeli soldiers clashed all over the West Bank and Gaza, leaving nine Palestinians dead and nearly two hundred wounded" (Sprinzak, p. 1). On the Israeli side, Muslim terrorist attacks significantly increased with violence aimed towards civilians and infrastructures. The escalation of violence and the uncertainty that plagued the lives of Israelis after the Hebron massacre were not blamed on the heinous act committed by Dr.

Goldstein, but rather on the two architects of the Oslo Accords—PM Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres—for inevitably ‘strengthening’ Palestinian armed groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas. The radical right blamed Rabin and Peres for “ordering Israeli soldiers out of Gaza and Jericho, allowing the formation of a large, armed Palestinian police, and [for] relaxing the anti-Palestinian struggle of the nation’s security forces,” which covered their hands in Jewish blood as much as it did Hamas’ (Sprinzak, p. 254).

To ultimately cease the implementation of the PA Plan outlined in the Accords, Yigal Amir set out to finish Dr. Goldstein’s plan of derailment once and for all. On November 4, 1995 as Yitzak Rabin was leaving a peace rally in support of the Oslo Accords, twenty five year old Yigal Amir, an Israeli ultranationalist, shot the Prime Minister at point blank range as he was getting inside his vehicle. Within a matter of hours the Prime Minister of Israel was pronounced dead, making it “the first political murder of the Jewish nation’s senior leader in nearly two thousand years” (Sprinzak, p. 245). The murder of Rabin did not take place in a vacuum; it was the accumulation of an “unparalleled campaign of political delegitimation against the ruling Labor government and character assassination of Rabin and Peres” (Sprinzak, p. 4). For many Israelis, the assassination of the Prime Minister crystallized the failure of the peace process. As a result, within a matter of months Israel witnessed one of its most concentrated “delegitimation campaigns” in history (Sprinzak, p. 252). The religious camp—which composed a large percentage of the radical right—produced pamphlets, held prayers, protests, and sermons to remind the public of the deteriorating safety of Israeli citizens due to the government’s senseless acts in accordance with the Palestinians (Sprinzak, p. 252).

In 1996 after months of diligent work, the radical right finally secured a victory within the government to impede the peace process: the unexpected win of Benjamin Netanyahu over Peres as Israel's next Prime Minister. The Israeli population voted for change; they were no longer interested in engaging in dialogue surrounding peace with their neighbors. "For the first time, the helm of the state was placed in the hands of a man who considered Oslo to be a serious historic blunder and its implementation inimical to Israel's vital national interests" (Meital, p. 46). It was no secret that Netanyahu was against the Oslo Accords and blamed the peace process for the increased instability and violence that shook the state. However, many were left wondering how a politician with such views could possibly "conclude the transitional stage as well as negotiate and settle permanent-status issues" stipulated by the DOP. The answer was simple—he wouldn't (Meital, p. 46).

Netanyahu's three years in office were a continuous campaign to destroy any and all advancements towards peace outlined in the Oslo blueprint. He constantly used xenophobic language—insisting that Palestinians could not be trusted, and that Arafat was nothing but a "liar" and a "terrorist" with no real motives to achieve peace with the Israelis (Meital, p. 46). Moreover, the government under Netanyahu dismissed schedules of implementation outlined by the DOP, adopted 'unilateral decisions,' and took full advantage of the absence of an invested third party to look over and settle disputes between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (Meital, p. 46).

In hindsight, the Oslo Accords were a historic failure—there was no mention of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and the fact that the US was an intermediary despite its special relationship with Israel was increasingly problematic. It did nothing to better the lives of ordinary Palestinians living under occupation, and increased

violence and instability in the region. Worse of all, the “peace process” acted as a catalyst for the radical right to re-evaluate their initial stance on essential issues and emerge as a “multifaceted political movement that [has become] the dominant force in Israeli politics” (Pedahzur, p. 4). The radical right quickly acknowledged that peace with its neighbors were no longer a necessity for the wellbeing of their country, and began using the occupation and constant security threats to their political and economic advantage.

Israel’s Security-Based Economy

The current securitized political culture in Israel stems from the radical right’s intricate relationship with the country’s high-tech security economy. Productivity in the high-tech industry has shot up 66 percent [since 1975] (Sales, 2016). Israel’s high-tech security economy is based on the perpetuation of violence and war; therefore, any notions of peace greatly damage Israel’s national interests as the country has built its empire on the premise of continuous conflict. Through the examination of Israel’s economy in the past decade and the seemingly endless confiscation of Palestinian land, one can begin to understand the intricate framework that constitutes Israel’s militarized culture.

In the 1990s, Israel’s economy was “the most tech-dependent economy in the world,” specifically focusing on information and communication technologies and mainly exporting “traditional goods and high technology” (Klein, 2007). However, the country’s reliance on technology proved to be problematic when in the year 2000 the Dot-Com bubble began to burst. By June 2001, Israel was hit hard by the Dot-Com bubble; “the country went into immediate free fall and [...] analysts were predicting that roughly three hundred high-tech Israeli firms would go bankrupt, with tens of thousands of layoffs” (Klein, 2007, p. 550). The government quickly intervened by enforcing drastic cuts to social services and increasing

military spending by about 10.7 percent (Klein, p. 550). By early 2002, military expenditures calculated as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 8.4 percent in 2001 to 9.6 percent (Stockholm International, 2015). The government also began advocating for the tech industry to expand its expertise beyond communication and information services to one that focused solely on surveillance and security (Klein, p. 550). The switch over from a traditional goods and services economy to one that focuses solely on high-tech security expertise permeates a hyper-masculine, militaristic culture within Israel that thrives on conflict in order to illustrate to the global community that Israel knows how to protect itself against violent aggressors after decades of internal and external threats.

After the Dot-Com burst, Israel established itself as the world capital for homeland security products and policing tactics. This self-proclaimed expertise led to immense prosperity for the country, especially following the events of 9/11. The radical right in Israel used the terrorist attacks on the twin towers as an opportunity to empathize with, and strengthen the bond between the United States and Israel. They did so by claiming they both had a common enemy: Muslims, which expanded and internationalized the discourse of fear. By working together and establishing intricate networks that dealt with safeguarding both countries' national security, Israel was able to grow and capitalize off its defense and security industries. For example, the "Israeli Export Institute estimates that Israel has 350 corporations dedicated to selling homeland security products, and 30 new ones entered the market in 2007" (Klein, p. 542). According to Israel's Export and International Cooperation Institute, the country's fields of expertise include, but are not limited to, "border protection and surveillance; virtual and physical perimeter protection systems for land-based and maritime sites; inspection systems for vehicle and cargo scanning at border crossings

airports, and seaports; countermeasures against potential terror attacks; IED/remote control bomb jammers [...] and riot control solutions” (Cohen, n.d.).

All of these security tactics essentially allow for Israel to engage in war with its neighbors—and use them as guinea pigs for their new ‘innovative security measures’—while simultaneously building an empire worth billions. For instance, in 2012 Israel’s high tech security industries set record exports of \$7.5 billion dollars, most stemming from the Asia-Pacific region (Abunimah, 2014, p.10). According to the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, “Israel [is] the 10th largest arms exporter for the period of 2009-2013, accounting for 2% of world deliveries” (Stockholm International, 2015). Between 2004 and 2011, arms deliveries from Israel were estimated to be worth around \$10.6 billion—with just \$1.8 billion coming from 2011 alone (“Israel among,” 2012). “Israel is also one of the world's largest arms buyers, mostly from the US. Israel signed \$9.5 billion in arms transfer agreements in 2004-11, including \$5.9 billion in 2008-11), making it the world's ninth largest arms buyer” (“Israel among,”). The homeland security boom has created a drive for violence; essentially, the Palestinian refugee camps and the occupied territories have turned into laboratories for Israeli officials to test out new weaponry and forms of security (Abunimah, 2014, p. 11).

Yet, the security sector goes beyond arms exports and imports; it also creates immense profit for private health care companies who tend to wounded soldiers, for construction companies who employ xenophobic language to build more checkpoints, walls, and borders, and for the oil and gas companies within Israel (Klein, 2007, p. 537). Israel’s high-tech industries may not sound like much, especially when compared to other countries on a global scale, yet it is important to remember that Israel is a small, relatively young country no larger than the size of New Jersey. With a population of just over eight million

people, Israel has become the metropolis for defense and security industries with its economy heavily dependent on such militaristic advances (Central Intelligence, n.d.).

Unfortunately, the international community has been complicit in the cultivation of Israel's militaristic culture; specifically with its number one ally, the United States.

Advertised as the country on the “front lines of global war on terrorism,” Israel has also hosted top US national law enforcement associates from the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau Investigation, and the National Sheriffs Association, since 2002 (“World’s Largest,” 2008). A neoconservative think tank located in Washington D.C., the Jewish Institute of National Security Affairs (JINSA), states that “it has brought more than one hundred federal, state, and local law enforcement officials to Israel as part of its Law Enforcement Exchange Program and has trained eleven thousand more law enforcement officers across the United States” (Abunimah, p.16). The topics and training provided include issues of foreign policy and national security, specifically ensuring the safety of the nation’s borders, control of a possible terrorist scene, responding to a suicide bomber, etc., (“Top Law,” 2013). The purpose of such training is essentially to illustrate to American law enforcement officials how to respond “effectively” to security threats, which is highly problematic considering the Israeli Defense Forces are one of the most masculine, violent, and oppressing military forces in the world. Law enforcement officials, in turn, come back to the United States believing it is acceptable to engage in unjust treatment of civilians and create an atmosphere of violent militarism to uphold the nation’s security against anyone they deem a threat. For instance, various branches within the U.S. defense forces have examined the use and precision of drones operated by Israeli officials—specifically for the use of surveillance and targeted killings of Palestinians—in order to “draw lessons for its

own wars” (Ophir, Givoni, Hanafi, 2009, p. 547). Israeli officials are able to persuade Americans to take on a harsher stance on issues regarding security because their illegal and unjust violence against Palestinians have worked to ensure the safety of Israelis and further eliminates any threat to the country’s national security. Success and amounting influence in the country’s high-tech industries do not “require Israel to have friendly relationships with its Arab neighbors or to end its occupation of its territories” (Klein, p. 549).

The illegal settlements occupied by Israelis on Palestinian land have contributed significantly to the building up of the economy of Israel, while simultaneously paralyzing any chance Palestine has of becoming a self-sufficient, independent state. Israel has continued to expand its settlements despite international criticism for decades for one fundamental economic reason: to establish and retain control over Palestine’s main resources, such as agricultural land and water. The appropriation of Palestinian land has robbed the indigenous population of its richest agricultural soil, which Palestinians have relied on for centuries in order to farm and graze livestock (Foundation, 1998). This in turn allowed for the establishment of more settlements with endless opportunities of employment for Jews on the most fertile parts of the land. Israel has also seized control of valuable water—for example the mountain aquifer—that runs under the West Bank. Israeli citizens do not have to think twice about running water, whereas Palestinians constantly suffer from water shortages that deter their farming abilities and their health. For example, Israel employs the mountain aquifer for over extractions in agriculture, “as well as settlers' pools and verdant lawns. In 2009, the Mountain Aquifer supplied forty percent of Israel's agricultural needs and fifty percent of its population's drinking water” (Silver, 2014). Israel has also continuously “prevented the Palestinian community from increasing its water use to barely 20 percent

beyond the amount used in 1967” while simultaneously consuming the majority of the water running through the West Bank and Gaza. The monopoly of Palestinian land and water has resulted in the continuous determent of peace negotiations between Palestinian and Jews as the radical right within Israel advocates for the necessity of settlements in order to sustain an increasing Jewish community and uphold its economic interests (Silver, 2014).

An examination of the siege on Gaza further illustrates how Israel uses conflict to its economic advantage. In June 2007 the Israeli government went against international humanitarian law and forcefully restricted the movement of over one and a half million people in Gaza. Israel unlawfully engaged in collective punishment on the citizens of Gaza and maintains complete control of the occupied territory’s land, air, and sea. The siege has effectively turned the area into a densely populated open aired prison that relies on the assistance of international organizations for its most basic needs. As one can imagine, the blockade has completely devastated Gaza’s advancement in economic development and has led thousands to become unemployed and reliant on foreign aid. The ban on the transfer of goods into Gaza made the area increasingly dependent on Israel. However, what most individuals do not grasp is that Israel effectively blocked Gaza out from the rest of the world in order to benefit its own companies. “Even the food supplies bought by UN agencies for the majority of Palestinians in Gaza who rely on humanitarian assistance are purchased predominately from Israeli companies and are paid for it with international aid money [...] this puts the captive Palestinians among Israel’s top ten export destinations, ahead of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, India, Japan, and China” (Abunimah, 2014, p. 110). Israel continuously uses the excuse of security to implement punitive policies against Palestinians, yet upon closer analysis, one can conclude that the real reason behind Israel’s

right-wing political culture is to ensure Palestine's dependence on the state for its own economic benefit.

Chapter 2: Russian Migrants into Israel and the Manipulation of Existential Fear

Roughly one million ex-Soviets of Jewish descent migrated to Israel in the beginning of the 1990s due to political and economic instability in their homeland. These newcomers brought along with them various ideologies and beliefs that helped the radical-right in Israel regain parliamentary control in the Knesset—ensuring a victory in the 1996 elections by selecting Benjamin Netanyahu as the new Prime Minister. Through the examination of democratic trends in conjunction with the current and ongoing state of existential fear experienced by Israelis, one can consider the social factors that have bolstered the racist and anti-democratic values that constitute the ideology of the radical right.

The influx of Russian Jews into Israel in the beginning of the 1990s illustrates how the migration of one group into a country consisting of a relatively small population can shift its political landscape. Boris Yeltsin was the first President of the Russian Federation in 1991. After the abolition of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin announced that he would transform Russia's economy into one based on neoliberal free-market policies. Subsequently, the Russian parliament agreed to give the President one year of absolute freedom to impose as many reforms as needed in order to transform the economy into one that replicated the Chicago School of economics free-market ideologies (Klein, 2007, p. 277). Within a matter of weeks “Yeltsin announced the lifting of price controls, predicting that ‘the liberalization of prices will put everything in its right place’ [...] the shock therapy program also included free trade policies and the first phase of rapid-fire privatization of the country's approximately 225,000 state-owned companies” (Klein, 2007, p. 282). Yeltsin promised his constituents that these reforms would remake Russia into an economic titan; that in due time, people would realize how beneficial these reforms would be to the average Russian.

Unfortunately, that day never came, and instead “the Communist state was simply replaced with a corporatist one: the beneficiaries of the boom were confined to a small club of Russians, many of them former Communist Party apparatchiks, and a handful of Western mutual fund managers who made dizzying returns investing in newly privatized Russian companies” (Klein, 2007, p. 291).

After one year of Yeltsin’s economic reforms, “millions of middle-class Russians had lost their life savings when money lost its value, and abrupt cuts to subsidies meant millions of workers had not been paid in months. The average Russian consumed 40 percent less in 1992 than in 1991, and a third of the population fell below the poverty line” (Klein, 2007, p. 283). Russia’s new neoliberal economy had devastating consequences for the average citizen, and by 1996 about twenty-five percent of Russians were described as living under desperate conditions (Klein, 2007, p. 300). Unfortunately, neoliberalism also led to increasing tides of anti-Semitism in Russia. Jews were blamed for “all the tragedies of Russia, from Communist rule to economic problems and food shortages” (Siegel, 1998, p.16). Economic instability and the openly hostile climate towards Jews ultimately culminated in roughly one million Jews immigrating to Israel during the 1990s (Klein, 2007, p. 545).

Jews who came from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s now constitute an estimated eighteen percent of Israel’s population (Klein, 2007, p. 545). A population transfer of this magnitude inevitably altered Israel’s state of politics. The largest wave of immigrants from Russia, about 600,000, took place in 1993—just as Israel was embarking on the peace process with Palestinian leaders. During this period, Russians who came to Israel under the Law of Return were welcomed by government officials with open arms and friendly reminders that they “had not immigrated but rather returned to their ancient homeland”

(Pedahzur, 2012, p.14). Since Israel's independence, the country has been committed to ensuring that Jewish immigrants from around the world have the ability to become Israeli citizens in their ancient homeland. Thus, it is not unusual for the relatively small country to receive a large influx of Jewish settlers from any part of the world. However, the case of Russian migrants are strikingly different from any previous immigration wave experienced in Israel—especially in terms of their education and Zionist-ideology. “Although only 26 percent of the Israeli population in 1992 had 13 or more years of formal education, 61 percent of the recently arrived Soviet Jews had achieved that level of education. Within that group, more than 42 percent had scientific and academic professional educations, a figure four times the Israeli average” (Reich, Dropkin, Wurmser, 1993, p. 465). This highly educated group undoubtedly altered various spheres of Israeli life—especially in terms of enhancing Israel's military and technology industries. The Russian immigrants also contributed heavily in “educational, cultural and health care systems, and [were essential in] the opening of new internal and external markets” (Khanin, 2011, p.55).

The majority of Jewish settlers immigrate to Israel because of their religion and/or their commitment to Zionism. However, Russian Jews entering Israel during the 1990s did so not based on religious fervor or Zionist-ideology, but to ensure their survival. Therefore, their arrival into Israel was not a “Jewish” or “Zionist” “immigration in the traditional or usual sense of those terms” (Reich, et.al., 466). Due to the political and economic instability in the Soviet Union at the time, the majority of Jews who fled the former Soviet Union saw Israel as their only viable option for escape. Thus, the Russian Jews of this period have continued to hold “intense and positive ties with their former homeland, in part because one-third of them are Russians married to Jews or mixed ethnics and have family members remaining in

the Former Soviet Union” (Remennick, 2015, p. 44). Many Russian immigrants continued to look back at their former homeland with admiration and longing, which is significant because unlike other groups who migrated to Israel, the new Russian migrants were not prepared to give up their culture or political ideology ingrained in them from the former Soviet Union.

Inevitably, it quickly became evident that the new Russian immigrants would shift away from the customary center-left politics that constituted the Labor party, and embrace the ideology of the radical-right. They were escaping the “forceful Soviet political indoctrination they had experienced in the USSR. Many of these expatriates despised parties and ideologies that reminded them of the Communist party. In Israel, this resulted in animosity toward the Labor and Meretz parties” (Pedahzur, 2012, p. 124). Precisely because the Russians were welcomed by Israel’s institutions and came to believe Israel was their righteous homeland, they immediately began to develop a strong sense of distrust and animosity towards the perpetual other: the Arabs. “The immigrants’ dislike of the Arabs derived primarily from a dislike of the Central Asiatic nationals in the Soviet Union—read as Muslims—whom they saw as similar to Arabs” (Dropkin, et al., 1993, p. 468). Russian immigrants regarded Arabs as the main obstacle towards achieving the “state’s ethno-Jewish character,” which fueled xenophobia within Israel and led them to condemn the peace process led by the Labor party (Pedahzur, p.124).

More specifically, the Russians could not fathom the fact that Peres was willing to put Israel’s holiest sites on the negotiating table in order to achieve peace with the Palestinians (Horing, 2013). Although many of the newcomers lacked a proper historical context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they “came from a massive country and were raised on a patriotic political culture that glorified conquests as well as the wide-open spaces of the motherland,”

which explains why they were so against surrendering part of their homeland to a group they considered their enemy (Pedahzur, p. 124). The arrival of the Russians into also Israel bolstered Zionist goals by increasing the proportion of Jews to Arabs while simultaneously reducing the state's reliance on Palestinian labor (Klein, 2007, p. 546). The Russians provided the Israeli economy with a new source of cheap labor; therefore, Israel could seal off the occupied territories and disrupt the movement of Arabs into Israel. By doing so, Israel was able to preserve the Jewish character of the state and ensure that the occupied territories would become heavily dependent on the state for all its necessities, while simultaneously keeping a distance from the perpetuated "other".

In May 1996, around 400,000 new citizens were eligible to vote for the first time in Israel. Many of these newcomers were from the former Soviet Bloc and solidified a shift to the right by electing right-wing candidate Netanyahu over Peres as Prime Minister (Pedahzur, 2012, p.125). "In the mid-1990s, out of 170,000 Likud members there were 27,000 Russian-speakers (including 20,000 immigrants who arrived after 1990), more than in any other Israeli political organization" (Khanin, 2011, p. 60). Many from the former Soviet Bloc voted for Netanyahu because they believed the peace process jeopardized Israel's national interest; more specifically, many of them living in the illegal occupied territories at the time did not want to see Peres dismantling their land and home in order to create peace with the Palestinians. For Russian Jews, the fear of losing everything again was much stronger than their desire for peace among the Arabs.

The Anatomy of Fear

The feelings of intractability and fear are crucial to understanding how the radical right manipulates fear in Israeli society in order for Jews to not only rely heavily on their

nation's security establishment, but glorify it. Zionism acted as the blueprints for the state of Israel, fear acted as its pillars. As uncertainty and anxiety of an impending conflict continue to plague ordinary Israelis, the radical right have successfully used these feelings of tension to convince the majority of their constituents that another Holocaust is around the corner, that their Muslim neighbors wish for their ultimate demise, and that Palestinians are all barbaric terrorists unworthy of their sympathy. The objective of this passionate rhetoric is to create a toxic environment that ultimately fuels xenophobia in Israel in order to preserve the Jewish character of the state and divert any questions of accountability regarding Israel's illegal occupation or its unwarranted militaristic stances.

Regardless of Israel's military capacity and the amount of nuclear weapons the state possesses, Israelis live in constant existential fear. One can begin to understand this unique condition by examining the origins of the state. When Israel was founded in 1948, all those who immigrated to the newly found Jewish state were victims of "anti-Semitism, discrimination, persecutions, and pogroms, which were widespread in their countries of origin for many centuries" (Pedahzur, 2012, p. 12). But in the Land of Israel, for the first time Jews were free—and they would ensure their survival by fighting for their land and never being subject to such dehumanizing conditions again (Shavit, 2015). This ideology and the history of anti-Semitism worldwide left distinctive scars on the young Jewish nation, which ultimately created a state that continuously battles with hopelessness and collective anxiety from its traumatic past (Pedahzur, p. 12).

Ari Shavit, a human rights activist and columnist for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, describes the condition of existential fear experienced by many Israelis on a day-to-day basis in his book, *My Promised Land*. Shavit explains that in Israel, for one to express fear is

taboo; yet, no matter how vibrant or fulfilling Israeli life is, there is always a sense that life can one day “freeze like Pompeii’s” (2015, p. 75). Although these dreadful feelings have accompanied Shavit since he was a teenager, in one particular passage he takes the reader back to Tel Aviv in 1991 during the first Gulf War to illustrate this sense of hopelessness that is intrinsic to Israeli society. Shavit recalls the suffocating sense of panic and distress during the war as many Israelis were afraid another Iraqi missile would target them or their loved ones as they were sleeping comfortably in their beds, walking to the grocery store, or driving to work. There were also rumors of a possible chemical weapons attack, which led thousands of Israelis to carry gas mask kits with them everywhere they went—suggesting that they knew another attack was imminent (Shavit, p. 63). Shavit recalls that “occasionally, when a warning sounded that a warhead was on its way, [they] shut themselves in sealed rooms with the masks on [their] faces. Although it turned out that the threat was not real, there was something horrific about this surreal ritual. [He] listened closely to the sounds of sirens and looked with dismay at the terrified eyes of [his] loved ones locked in German-made gas masks” (Shavit, p. 63). This particular passage illustrates Shavit’s feelings of helplessness during a time of war; yet, what the author tries to convey is that the same feelings of vulnerability never disappear, even when there are no sirens wailing off in the distance signaling immediate danger. Fear is present everywhere in Israeli society, and Israelis have become accustomed to it. Fear has become a political weapon with very real material results, such as Goldstein’s massacre. However, certain groups within Israel—such as the radical right—manipulate these feelings of distress, which have inevitably created a country with an incredibly high survival instinct, believed to be surrounded by enemies whose ultimate goal is to eradicate its existence.

When a country believes and represents itself as being under perpetual existential danger from the moment of its conception, much can be permitted to it. The right's strongest and most compelling tactic is manipulating fear, which is why Israel has been able to become a nuclear nation while simultaneously urging the international community to cease the ability of other countries in the Middle East from going nuclear. This fear has been magnified under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, most recently with respect to Iran. The Israeli government has been very vocal regarding its disapproval of the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal agreed upon by the Iranians and world powers (P5 + 1). The Likud-led government is particularly upset that the international community is willing to work with Iran to curb its nuclear program—as illustrated by Benjamin Netanyahu who recently went to Washington uninvited by the White House to express how much he disagrees with the nuclear agreement. Netanyahu stated that the agreement would, “be a farewell to arms control. And [that] the Middle East would soon be crisscrossed by nuclear tripwires. A region where small skirmishes can trigger big wars would turn into a nuclear tinderbox” (Baker, 2015). The Prime Minister views a diplomatic solution with Iran as an effective means for Iran to continue its nuclear program, which he states is particularly concerning because it “threatens the survival of [his] country.” The Likud-led government engaged in such inflammatory rhetoric towards Iran's leaders and the nuclear deal in order to accentuate and exaggerate the threats that would be present for Israel if Iran were to have gone nuclear.

Yet, Israel's very own nuclear capacities began to emerge shortly after the 1967 Six-Day war. After Israel's shift victory “according to international publications, [Israel] built an arsenal of dozens and dozens of nuclear warheads: A-bombs and H-bombs, low yield and high yield, nuclear artillery shells and nuclear mines” (Shavit, 2015). Israel turned itself it's a

“self-sufficient nuclear nation” and no longer had to rely on the British, Americans, or the French to protect its citizens against its hostile Arab neighbors (Shavit, 2015). The radical-right in Israel believes it is solely their right to possess nuclear weapons because they are lodged between countries that harbor radical Islamists who wish to annihilate the only Jewish nation in the world. Allowing any country in the region to acquire or build nuclear weapons would be considered detrimental to the existence of the Jewish people in Israel.

The need for nuclear weapons and this heightened sense of security stem from a false notion of reality. Israel, if it ever was, is no longer a vulnerable stretch of land; Israelis have not faced imminent destruction in any of the wars it has engaged in since 1948. “This was not the case in 1967, nor even in the closely fought war of 1973, and certainly not in the 1956 Suez War, the 1969-70 War of Attribution, and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon” (Khalidi, 2014, p. 78). Quite the contrary to the radical right’s discourse on Israel’s continuous existential threat—Israel has managed to strike terror on its underdeveloped and disorganized neighbors for years due to its own advanced military and hegemony it holds in the Middle East (Khalidi, p. 75).

Fear mongering has become an essential feature of mainstream Israeli discourse in order to install xenophobia into society and preserve the white, Ashkenazi-dominated Jewish character of the state. Calls for ethnic cleansing and a “broad array of policies aimed at forcible segregation, discriminatory laws, and population transfer” towards Palestinians and refugees from various countries are not uncommon beliefs espoused by the radical-right (Blementhal, 2015, p. 112). Netanyahu has recently claimed that immigrants from Africa threaten the nation’s democratic values and its Jewish foundation (Abunimah, 2014, p. 35). “Even more striking, at the height of the fear mongering against immigrants, Interior

Minister Eli Yishai had declared, ‘Muslims that arrive here do not even believe that this country belongs to us, to the white man.’ Ethiopians could perhaps, begrudgingly, be recognized as Jews, but they could never pass as white” (Abunimah, 2014, p. 35). Arab-Jews are included in the population of people treated as second-class. They occupy a strange in-between space between “white” Ashkenazi Jews and the “enemy Arab.” By instilling fear of the “other,” the radical right has been able to establish a society where no one questions why there is an innate hierarchy in regards to who is granted basic human rights. According to the radical-right, anyone who does not fit the requirement of a white, Jewish individual does not deserve to live in a country that is reserved exclusively for Jews; anyone else will be treated as a second-class citizen in a state that defines itself as democratic.

There are far-reaching consequences of a society living in constant anxiety and fear. For instance, because Israelis live in constant existential fear they have adopted an elastic, all encompassing definition of security that “takes precedence over virtually everything else, including international law and the human rights of others” (Khalidi, p. x). Thus, it should come as no surprise that Israeli soldiers and “settlers attack Palestinians with complete impunity, whether for fun or to take their land” because the international discourse has always been one that highlights the existential angst of Israelis, never those of Palestinians (Abunimah, p. 12). Members of the radical right continue to engage in fear mongering in order to indoctrinate the public with a sense of mistrust and paranoia against individuals who are not of Jewish descent; thus, making Israelis more dependent and sympathetic towards the Right’s ideology of security and anti-democratic values.

Conclusion: Combatting Israel's Radical Right

Various systems of oppression are no longer only synonymous with an unjust tyrant or confined to the global South. Today, repressive regimes throughout the world have revolutionized their tactics and adopted dialogue that make it difficult for one to distinguish a nation built on true democratic values, versus one who's government freely and willingly engages in institutionalized systems of oppression. Living in an increasingly interdependent and globalized world today, it is incredibly difficult, even impossible, for one to turn a blind eye to injustices occurring around the globe. As one of the longest standing military occupation of the twenty-first century, Israel continuously engages in practices that enable the government to acquire illegal land through the practices of ethnic cleansing, home demolitions, and the use of extreme force on the indigenous population. Many individuals of conscience around the world continue to be perplexed as to how Israel continues to implement apartheid laws and regulations against the Palestinian population without significant repercussions from the international community. "The Obama administration, moreover, has arguably been more active than any of its predecessors in using its international clout to shield Israel from any consequences for its actions" (Abunimah, 2014, p. 46). More specifically, it leaves many baffled to know that Israel continues to wage unjust war and violence against the Palestinians—specifically surrounding the most recent military incursion in 2014, which culminated in the death of over 2,200 Palestinians "70 percent [of whom] were confirmed civilians" (Blumenthal, 2015, p. 195). Scholars and activists dedicated to combatting Israel's militarism in the post-peace process era must come to understand the various factors that have led to the rise of the new radical right, which essentially embrace and cultivate militaristic political cultures in Israel today; only by

exposing these factors and taking active steps to combat them can one truly engage in fruitful dialogue that will ultimately end the occupation and provide basic human rights for the Palestinians.

The peace process, established through the implementation of the Oslo Accords in 1993, acted as a catalyst for the radical right in Israel to expand their original ideologies based primarily on territorial matters in the region and emerge as a new political group espousing views of xenophobia, security, nationalism, and anti-democratic values in order to directly combat the progresses made during the peace process. Although the Oslo Accords did not get to the root of the conflict, specifically surrounding Palestinian grievances, it did stipulate the transfer of power to the Palestinians to particularly control their own affairs after decades of Israeli rule, allowed for the expansion of the Palestinian Authority, and enabled Palestinians to freely move between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. To cease the transfer of power and territorial control to the Palestinians, the new radical right sought to take advantage of the ambiguities present in the reconciliation framework and began a nationwide campaign of political delegitimation of the Peace camp led by Rabin. The campaign to derail the peace process began when many within Israel began claiming that their leaders should have never engaged in dialogue with an organization they themselves deemed a terrorist group with an objective of eradicating the existence of the Jewish state—the PLO.

By inviting the PLO to the negotiating table to discuss ways in which both sides could achieve peace was, in the eyes of the radical right, an act that solidified the permanent danger of Israeli citizens and the abandonment of the state's national interests. In order to recalibrate the power dynamics made anew by the peace process, the radical right began expanding illegal settlements in order to confiscate and occupy Palestinian land. The

occupation of illegal land by settlers rose by over two hundred percent years after the Oslo Accords, and resulted in the appropriation of Palestinian water and essential resources solely for the use of the local Jewish population. Predictably, because the Israeli government continued to provide resources and security to these illegal establishments while simultaneously seeking “peace,” the reconciliation period seemed to be increasingly problematic in the eyes of Palestinians and the international community. However, what essentially brought the peace process to an end was the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israel’s Prime Minister in 1996; for the first time the fate of the peace process was in the hands of a man who whole heartedly believed that seeking peace with the Palestinians should not be a primary concern of the state. The election of Netanyahu illustrated the impact of the new radical right and its influence as a dominant force in modern Israeli politics. “The Oslo agreement and its aftermath have increased Palestinian poverty and unemployment; ... [and for] the Palestinians living under the ‘limited autonomy’ supposedly controlled by the PA, life has gotten worse, freedom less, and prospects diminished (Said, 2000 p.3).

Instead of focusing on establishing peace with their neighbors and embodying true democratic values, the radical right within Israel began using the illegal occupation and constant security threats against its citizens to their economic advantage. In 2001, Israel’s economy was hit particularly hard when the Dot-com bubble burst; in order to save the economy, Israel moved away from a traditional goods and services economy to one that focused solely on high-tech security. This high-tech security sector focuses primarily on surveillance, border protection, arms exports and imports, and homeland security products. The security industry has created an appetite for violence—Israel’s high-tech security expertise permeates a hyper-masculine, militaristic culture within Israel that thrives on

conflict in order to illustrate to the global community that the state knows how to protect itself against violent aggressors after decades of internal and external threats. The radical right uses every opportunity to broadcast to the international community that because they have dealt with the “Muslim” problem since the state’s creation, they know how to eliminate the threat. Peace, therefore, is counterproductive to the multi-billion dollar empire Israel has created for itself.

Social factors within Israel have also had a substantial impact on the political expansion and influence of the radical-right. For instance, the influx of roughly one million Soviet Jews into Israel in the beginning of the 1990s changed the political landscape of the country. In 1996, roughly 400,000 Russians were eligible to vote in the Israeli elections—solidifying Benjamin Netanyahu’s win over Shimon Peres as Israel’s new Prime Minister. Many of the newcomers voted for Netanyahu because they believed the peace process jeopardized Israel’s national interest. More specifically, they could not fathom how the Labor party was so open to putting Israel’s holiest sites on the negotiating table and were fearful that if Peres won, he would dismantle the occupied territories (where most of the Russian migrants resided), in order to establish lasting peace with the Palestinians. The ex-Soviet migrants were not particularly interested in making peace with their Palestinian neighbors because of their strong distrust towards Muslims, which stemmed from the Islamophobic climate of Communist rule in Russia. In addition, they viewed Palestinians as the main obstacle towards achieving a truly ethno-Jewish state. The arrival of Russians into Israel bolstered Zionist goals and helped the radical right gain parliamentary seats in the Knesset—paving the way for a government whose main priority would be establishing security through divisive policies versus establishing peace.

The radical right's most convincing tactic is the manipulation of fear present in Israeli society, which in turn, allows for Jews to rely heavily on their nation's security establishment as the only means to guarantee their survival. Israelis live in constant existential fear; this stems from the origin of a young nation born from the distinctive scars of the Holocaust. The history of anti-Semitism created a state that continuously battles with hopelessness and collective anxiety from its traumatic past (Pedahzur, 2012, p.12). The radical-right uses these feelings of uncertainty to their own personal advantages; they attempt to convince the Jewish population that another Holocaust is imminent because Israel is the only Jewish nation in the world and is surrounded by immoral neighbors who wish for its demise. Members of the radical right continue to engage in fear mongering in order to indoctrinate the public with a sense of mistrust and paranoia against individuals who are not of Jewish decent; thus, making Israelis more sympathetic towards the Right's ideology of security and anti-democratic values that ultimately hinder the nation from engaging in dialogue regarding Israel's illegal occupation or its unwarranted militaristic stances.

Resistance Within Palestine and the Larger Global Solidarity Movement

Israel's exclusionary policies have expanded beyond a bureaucratic system of separation based on racial distinctions—it currently includes an intricate web of checkpoints, barriers, walls, bulldozers, and the increased presence of security forces that directly impact the lives of Palestinians on the ground everyday. The recent attacks on Gaza and the ongoing violence towards Palestinians are the culmination of a process “called ‘politicide,’ or the calculated destruction of part or an entire community of people in order to deny them self determination” (Blumenthal, 2015, p. 111). After 68 years of occupation, Israel continues to engage in various tactics to break the Palestinian spirit; to render them immobile as they are

stuck in the misery of their own lives under a colonial regime with no end in sight. However, Palestinians refuse to give up; refuse to give up their land, their privileges, and their culture and succumb to a colonialist entity. They are the world's most resilient people—fighting every day for their right to basic political and human rights. As Edward Said stated so eloquently after the failed peace accords, “It always falls to the victims, not the oppressor, to show new paths for resistance, and the signs are that Palestinian civil society is beginning to take initiative. This is an excellent omen in a time of despondency and instinctual retrogression” (2000, p. xvii).

Many mainstream news outlets have tended to focus solely on Palestinian armed resistance groups in order to paint the indigenous group as uncompromising, violent terrorists who are unwilling to work with Israelis to put an end to the decades long conflict. There is almost never a discussion on how ordinary Palestinians are resisting the occupation every day in a nonviolent manner. Forms of nonviolent resistance to Zionism have its roots well before the Balfour Declaration in 1917. In the beginning of the twentieth century, many Arabs were concerned of the rising number of Zionists in the region and began raising awareness of the dangers Europeans posed to Palestinian self-determination (Munayyer, 2011). “Diplomatic efforts to lobby the mandatory government ensued while concurrently peasants occasionally clashed with the European newcomers, but violence was largely localized and communal and took place amid larger, more peaceful, and political efforts to resist Zionist aims” (Munayyer, 2011).

Against the backdrop of the Balfour Declaration and the influx of Zionists into Palestine, Arabs began holding numerous demonstrations and protests to combat Zionism. Unfortunately, the nonviolent demonstrations did not garner much support; the British were

quick to squash the protests with brute force in order to ensure that the Jewish people had a homeland—mainly to guarantee that Jews did not end up migrating to places such as the United Kingdom or the United States (Munayyer). Palestinian guerrilla movements only began to spring up as a result of the brutal response to nonviolent demonstrations. For example, it was the deadly attack of an 81-year old Arab man that inspired a “young imam living in Haifa named Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam [to organize] the first militant operation against the British mandatory government. His death in battle with British soldiers sparked the Arab rebellion that began in 1936 and lasted until 1939” (Munayyer).

Today, nonviolent demonstrations continue to take place in the occupied territories and Israel almost daily. “From the aid flotillas and convoys, along with [the] repeated demonstrations against buffer zones in Gaza, to protests against the separation wall [...]; to demonstrations against home eviction and demolition in Jerusalem neighborhoods [...]; to regular marches in refugee camps inside and outside of Palestine” (Munayyer). Whether it’s protesting the oppressive policies that leave people dispossessed or marching the streets to condemn another innocent life taken by the IDF; Palestinians do not give up on themselves or their nation. Millions continue to act in defiance every day by simply refusing to leave their homeland. As Asef Bayat illustrates, these small acts of defiance called the “ ‘quiet encroachments of the ordinary,’ encapsulates the discreet and prolonged ways in which the poor [or dispossessed] struggle to survive and to better their lives by quietly impinging on the propertied and powerful, and on society at large” (2010, p.15). This is a true example of bravery, especially for those living in occupied Jerusalem, where many are being driven from the city on a daily basis (Munayyer). “For those who have never lived in a system of violence like the Israeli occupation, it is hard to understand how simply not going anywhere

constitutes resistance, but when the objective of your oppressor is to get you to leave your land, staying put is part of the daily struggle” (Munayyer).

Although the strength and endurance of the Palestinian people is undeniable—they cannot combat the Israeli colonial machine without the support of an international movement that calls for the political and human rights of all Palestinian people. “The past has to be uncovered if it has been hidden; responsibility for wrongdoing has to be assigned and volunteered, denied or affirmed; proposals for atonement, reparation, or restitution have to be brought forward, analyzed, debated if in the past silence has prevailed” (Said, 2000, p. 12). Silence is no longer an option for many activists around the world who are committed to combatting Israel’s repressive policies and apartheid state alongside Palestinians. The Palestinian global solidarity movement—which constitutes a network of organizations and movements around the world with the aim of providing basic human rights for all Palestinians—took off around 2003 and has since attracted hundreds of supporters a day and led to tremendous gains towards promoting Palestinian independence and highlighting the plight of Arabs living under Israeli rule.

Advocating for the international boycott of Israeli goods and services has been the most successful effort sustained by the Palestinian global solidarity movement to date. “It was only in 2004 that the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) was launched, and a year later that 170 Palestinian civil society groups issued what has come to be known as the BDS call” (Abunimah, 2014, p. 125). The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was inspired by the international campaign against Apartheid South Africa in the 1970s, which urged companies to cease all relations with the country and boycott their goods and services until the state agreed to abide by basic human

rights and provide the majority Black population with the same rights and privileges offered to Whites. The BDS movement ultimately shed light on the plight of millions of Blacks living in South Africa under Apartheid and resulted in millions of dollars being divested from the state; creating mounting pressure to change the political landscape of the country to resemble true a Democracy. The BDS movement in South Africa was one of the main reasons Apartheid ended in 1994 and led to Nelson Mandela being the country's first democratically elected Black President. Today, the BDS movement is appealing to members of global civil society to launch a comprehensive campaign to boycott, divest, and sanction Israeli goods and services until the country “respects the human rights and the right of self-determination of Palestinians by ending its occupation and colonization of all the territories occupied in 1967, ending systematic discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel, and respecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees, including the right of return” (Abunimah, 2014, p. 125). Although conscious of the stark differences between apartheid South Africa and the current colonial regime present in Israel and the occupied territories—activists engaged with the BDS movement against Israel hope to put an end to oppressive policies much like they did in South Africa in the 1990s.

The BDS movement is growing at an unprecedented rate—making it increasingly difficult for Israeli officials to ignore. Just this past year for example, seven out of nine University of California institutions passed resolutions within their respective student governments to divest from corporations that profit from Israel's illegal occupation. “A group of 63 members of the European Parliament from across the five largest political blocs in the parliament called on EU foreign policy chief to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement” (“BDS,” 2015). The EU-Israel Association Agreement encourages the

interaction between European states and Israel in order to allow for the strengthening of “economic cooperation and cooperation on social matters” (Delegation, n.d.). The call to suspend the Agreement also comes from over 300 organizations, including top trade unions and non-governmental organizations within the European Union in order to cease business with Israel. Since 2015, over 1,000 artists have pledged to join the cultural boycott of Israel—including legendary R&B singer and songwriter, Lauryn Hill. Associations around the world such as the American Anthropological Association and the US National Women’s Studies Association also helped to end the plight of Palestinians by adopting BDS (“BDS,” 2015). These are only just a few of the advancements made by the grassroots movement. One of the most recently significant gains comes from the Brazilian government, which after months of civil society efforts, decided to pull out their contracts with the Israeli security company International Security and Defense Systems (ISDS). “The Israeli company announced in October 2014 that it had been awarded [a] \$2.2 billion dollar deal to coordinate security at the [2016 Rio Olympics] games” (“BDS,” 2015). The retraction of the deal is significant because it combats Israel’s most lucrative industry: security. If more states and international institutions divest from Israel’s security regime, then they will have more economic incentive to start enacting policies that are closer in line to justice and true Democracy—or their entire economy will collapse.

The Palestinians finally have an international movement thriving with thousands of activists who want to put an end to the radical-right’s xenophobic and oppressive policies. Hundreds of universities worldwide participate in events designated to inform the public on what life is like living under an Israeli occupation. For instance, “more than 150 cities participate in Israeli Apartheid week [which consists of] panels, film screenings, and creative

actions” all to educate the public about the indigenous Palestinian population and gain more supporters for the BDS movement. Religious establishments are not exempt from participating and taking a stand against injustice. In June 2015, the United Church of Christ voted to divest and boycott from companies that violate international human rights laws in the occupied territories as well (“BDS,” 2015). All of these seemingly small pushbacks against the colonial state have contributed to a 46% decrease in Federal Direct Investment (FDI) in 2014 compared to the previous year in Israel, and the World Bank believes that a decrease of 24% in “Palestinian imports from Israel during the first quarter of 2015 [is] a strong sign that the boycott of Israeli goods by Palestinians is starting to hit the Israeli economy” (“BDS,” 2015). There is no doubt that Israel’s economy will begin to suffer once the BDS movement gains more traction; an Israeli report predicted that BDS could cost “Israel’s economy \$1.4 billion dollars a year” if left unchallenged (“BDS,” 2015).

Israel and its Western allies have employed numerous tactics to combat, in some cases completely cease, the effects of the international Palestinian solidarity movement—especially in regards to BDS. Netanyahu has recently claimed that the BDS movement is the new Iran—arguing that the ultimate goal of the BDS movement constitutes an existential threat to the livelihood of Israelis and their right to a Jewish state. This should come as no surprise to scholars and activists who have been engaged in the fight for Palestinian rights; Netanyahu, and the larger radical-right regime in Israel, have always heightened their feelings of panic surrounding an existential threat in order to justify, or distract, the international community from discussing the situation on the ground in regards to the occupation of the Palestinians (Abunimah, “Why BDS,” 2015) ”Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have continuously stated that they believe Israel is being held to unfair standards,

and that the rhetoric BDS employs calling for peace and equal rights for Palestinians is essentially rooted in Nazi ideology and contempt for the Jewish people. Needless to say, Israel is mobilizing extraordinary resources to counter the effects of BDS, for example, “Netanyahu decided to implement a 2014 resolution to establish a special task force to fight the anti-Israeli sanctions. The task force, standing at some 100 million Israeli shekels (roughly \$25.5 million) and covering 10 new job positions, was approved in June as part of the budget of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs headed by Minister Gilad Erdan” (Peskin, 2015). Jews around the world have also organized their efforts to ensure that Israel does not become isolated like apartheid South Africa did by the BDS movement. In 2010 the Jewish Foundations of North America and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs launched the “Israel Action Network (IAN).” With an initial budget of six million dollars provided by Jewish donors, the task of the Network is to combat anti-Israel forces linked to the BDS movement (Abunimah, 2014, p. 128). “The Network will seek to capitalize on the reach of North America’s 157 federations, 125 local Jewish community relations councils and nearly 400 communities under the federation system” (Abunimah, 2014, p. 128).

The backlash surrounding the BDS movement goes beyond the work of Jews and the Israeli state itself. France—one of Israel’s close allies—has recently impeded the fundamental rights of its citizens to engage in free speech and their right to assemblage. A Palestinian solidarity group was asked by French authorities to dismantle their small demonstration in support of the BDS movement in the beginning of 2016. This comes as the “French Prime Minister announced that his government plans to intensify its restrictions on free speech targeting the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement” (Abunimah, "Defying Court," 2016). The French government argues that the BDS movement is

intrinsically tied to hate-speech aimed against Jews and provokes discrimination. Thousands of French activists, scholars, artists, and conscious citizens have mobilized to repeal such a law that infringes on their rights to seek justice for Palestinians, and people's right to inform the public about Israel's illegal occupation (Abunimah, "Resistance to Israel," 2016).

The United States—Israel's closest ally—has developed a new, broad encompassing definition of what constitutes as anti-Semitism that inhibits individuals from criticizing Israel or Zionism by equating it with hatred of Jews. According to the State Department, "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, applying double standards to Israel, using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism to characterize Israel or Israelis, [...] holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel" represents modern day anti-Semitism (United States, 2008). This new description of anti-Semitism is incredibly problematic because to disagree with Zionist ideology "or to criticize Israeli policies and practices as a state [is] not at all anti-Semitic, but to exhibit hostility, hatred, and discrimination against Jews as a people or as individuals [is] indeed anti-Semitism. Recall that Hitler did not persecute Jews for being Zionists, but for being Jews, for partaking of a race or ethnicity" (Falk, "Edward," 2015). In other words, critiquing Zionist ideology or Israel as a state should not be equated with espousing hatred towards Jews as a people; instead, this creates an atmosphere of intimidation for scholars, activists, and conscious individuals dedicated to exposing Israel's colonial state practices against the indigenous population. "It is a doubly unfortunate and dangerous tactic as it tends to weaken and confuse opposition to real anti-Semitism by this misleading linkage of a contentious political argument with a condemnation of racism" (Falk, "Edward," 2015).

This new definition of anti-Semitism is currently in the process of getting adopted into official University policy. The Board of Regents of the University of California are considering implementing the State Department's definition of anti-Semitism, which would hinder the ability of students throughout the state to engage in protests and activities that call for a cease to Israel's unilateral use of force and its absolute control over Palestinians. The UC President—Janet Napolitano—has called protests against Israel's unlawful occupation of the West Bank racist and anti-Semitic in nature, which many students and faculty believe limits freedom of speech and the ability to educate the public on Zionism's colonialist nature (Falk, "Edward," 2015). If implemented, this would be an unprecedented attack on academic freedom and discourage students from standing up against any kind of modern-day oppression. It would ultimately stifle their voices and inhibit thousands of individuals from engaging in dialogue that could one day lead to the end of Israel's occupation.

Regardless of the numerous strides taken towards establishing an independent, viable Palestinian state and the policies enacted within Israel and internationally to counter that possibility, a sustainable change will only take place once Palestinians and Israelis work together to counter Israel's xenophobic policies towards the indigenous population. Without the voice of conscious seeking Israelis and a movement that counters the propaganda coming from the radical-right, there is very little possibility for viable change. It is essential to highlight the brave few who have refused to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces in order to resist their involvement in the Israeli occupation. Many Jews within Israel have engaged in various avenues to combat Israeli oppression and provide unbiased critic of the effects of occupation on the ground. For instance, there are many organizations in the occupied territories and within Israel that enable Palestinians and Israelis to work together as allies to

promote basic human and political rights throughout the region including, but not limited to, B'tselem, Gush Shalom, Not in My Name, Rabbis for Human Rights, etc. ("Israeli Human," n.d.). Smaller Israeli human rights organizations, such as Checkpoint Watch (CPW), directly protest the occupation on the ground. CPW "is an all-women organization, currently including about four hundred activists, who stand in small groups at more than forty checkpoints" throughout the occupied territories and make sure to document and monitor all the activities conducted by the IDF soldiers as an attempt to ensure that Palestinians passing through are not treated in an inhumane fashion (Kotef, 2015, p.38). These small acts of resistance partaken by both Israelis and Palestinians can create a new path towards justice and peace. Any obstacle can be overcome if these two groups work together to counter the prominent dialogue of the radical-right within Israel and the international community. Individuals must continue to engage in the fight for Palestinian rights in order to illustrate to future generations that oppression of any people—regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, history, etc.—is inherently wrong and must be brought to justice.

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