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משרדי המנושלה

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מנהל משרד
רה"ג

ליוז, א.מ.

מנהל משרד רה"ג

י. בן אהרון - חוסר נאמנות

תק ללא שם - וועדה לנאמנות

26.10.1988 - 15.3.1989

מסי תיק מקורי

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ארכיון המדינה

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ארכיון המדינה

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מספר הכתבה
כמר'

מאת: — ADG (AMERICAN ARAB ANTI DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE) שם
4201 CONNECTICUT NW SUITE 500 WASHINGTON DC 20008 USA
כתובת

אל: — שם "אלאתחאדי"
כתובת ת.ד. 104 חיפה
מחוז חיפה
תאריך 15.3.89

השפה אנגלית	הנדון: רי"מ/מיעוטי ישראל, עבודת מחקר על השינויים בדעת הקהל האמריקאי בענין הפלסטינאי
מס. הבחון 4	

המעטפה מכילה חוברת שהוצאה מטעם הארגון השולח, בשפה האנגלית, היא מכילה עבודת מחקר שנכתבה בידי פרופ' פואד מוגרבי מאוניברסיטת TENNESSEE (CHATTANOOGA) נושא העבודה: "דעת הקהל האמריקאית ושאלת פלסטין", המחקר מנתח את השינויים שחלו בקרב דעת הקהל האמריקאית, בענין המזרח התיכון והשאלה הפלסטינאית, מאז שנת 1978, ובמיוחד במהלך 14 חודשי האינתפאדה.

אל החוברת מצורף מכתב מאת פארט בוחאפא, האחראי על קשרי החוץ בארגון הני"ל, הוא מציין את חשיבותו של מחקר זה לאור האפשרויות החדשות לשלום במזרח התיכון ולאור הדיאלוג הנוכחי בין ארה"ב לבין אש"ף.

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21-03-1989
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צ"ק"י ש"פ

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בשם הצנזור הראשי:



**American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination
Committee**

March 8, 1989

4201 Connecticut Ave., NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 244-2990
Telex: 856419 (ADC WSHDC)
Telefax: (202) 244-3196

Dear Journalist:

Enclosed please find our most recent publication, American Public Opinion and the Question of Palestine, written by Professor Fouad Moughrabi of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Alex Odeh
(1944-1985)
James Abourezk, National Chairman
Abdeen Jabara, President
ADC National Advisory Committee
(Partial List)

This study analyzes the changes that have taken place in American public opinion concerning the Middle East and the Palestinian issue since 1978, placing particular emphasis on opinion shifts during the 14-month long Palestinian uprising.



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In light of the new possibilities for peace in the Middle East and the current American-PLO dialogue, we believe it is important to share these findings with you. They indicate a broad base of public support for a new direction in our country's Middle East policy.

I hope that you will find this study useful.

Sincerely,

F. Bouhafa
Faris Bouhafa
Director,
Media and Public Relations

**American Public
Opinion and the
Question of
Palestine**



An Analysis of Changes in American
Views Based on Polls Taken from 1978-1988



By Fouad Moughrabi

ISSN 1041-8911



4201 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20008 • (202)244-2990

James G. Abourezk
National Chairman

Abdeen M. Jabara
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Ann Talamas
Director of Publications

ADC Issues is published by the ADC Research Institute and informs ADC members on issues of special significance. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) is a non-sectarian, non-partisan service organization committed to defending the rights and promoting the heritage of Arab-Americans. The largest grassroots organization of Arab-Americans, ADC was founded by former U.S. Senator James Abourezk in response to stereotyping, defamation and discrimination directed against Americans of Arab descent.

ADC serves its nationwide membership through direct advocacy in cases of defamation, through legal action in cases of discrimination, and through counseling in matters of immigration. ADC publishes information on issues of concern to Arab-Americans and provides educational materials on Arab history and culture as well as the ethnic experience of Arabs in the United States. It also sponsors summer internships in Washington for Arab-American college students. ADC's Middle East Women's and Children's Fund addresses the humanitarian needs of victims of violence in the Middle East.

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American Public
Opinion and the
Question of
Palestine

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Preface

One of ADC's primary goals is to educate the American public about issues of concern to the Arab-American community, including the eradication of stereotypes about Arab-Americans and the Middle East. Of concern to the entire Arab-American community is the relationship between the United States and Israel, and its impact on the Palestinians and other Arab peoples. Since its founding in 1980, ADC has witnessed dramatic changes in American public opinion regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Increased awareness of the Palestine question came about in part as a result of media coverage of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Pollard spy incident, and Israel's role in the Iran-Contra scandal. Yet, the most important development in molding American public perceptions of the conflict has been the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Since the beginning of the uprising in December 1987, ADC has focused its efforts on providing support in the United States for the Palestinian people in an attempt to press for a peaceful solution to the ongoing tragedy. As an American organization, ADC and its members have called upon the United States government to take a more even-handed and constructive role in the region. This campaign has targeted the Administration, Congress and the American people, to protest human rights violations perpetrated by Israel in its attempt to suppress the uprising, in order to increase public support for the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and statehood.

Through its work, ADC has witnessed a steady increase in American public awareness of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and a growth in American sentiment in support of Palestinian rights. ADC monitors media coverage of the Palestinian uprising, and has noted a profound shift in the media's presentation of the situation.

Gone are the sterile and dehumanized images which have plagued American coverage of the Palestinians for two decades. Instead, American television viewers were confronted nightly with footage of Palestinian men, women and children being brutally beaten, tear-gassed and shot.

Given the coverage and analysis of the uprising by the print and electronic media, it should come as no surprise that the American public has gained a new understanding about the realities of the occupation. In April of this year, two revealing public opinion polls were conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. These polls disclosed that a majority of Americans support independence for the Palestinian people and favor direct PLO participation in an international peace conference.

Dr. Moughrabi's analysis of public opinion is a timely study which reveals that over the last ten years, significant shifts have taken place in American public perceptions of the Palestinian people, the PLO and of America's role in the region. While the shift in opinion is significant, it has not resulted in favor for one group over another. Public criticism of Israel for its treatment of the Palestinians is not viewed as either anti-Israel or pro-Palestinian. Instead, it reflects the emergence of a public consensus that American interests and opinions are not necessarily identical to those of Israel. The American people have begun to view the situation in a more balanced manner, and hope that their government will pursue a more balanced policy.

In light of the Reagan Administration's recent decision establishing a dialogue with the PLO, it seems that the public may be making its concerns heard. Now that the United States and the PLO are meeting directly for the first time in 13 years, Americans, in all likelihood, will deepen their understanding of the Palestinian position. This can ultimately contribute to the just resolution of a conflict that has too long plagued the region and the world.

Introduction

The Palestinian uprising, known as the *intifada*, erupted in early December 1987. The street battles between Palestinian youths throwing rocks, and Israeli soldiers firing live ammunition, were amply covered by the world media. For several months, this story received front page coverage in leading newspapers and prominent attention in the electronic media. Concerned about the possible negative effects such coverage could have on American public perceptions, the Israeli government closed off areas of the West Bank and Gaza to reporters. Members of the press were harassed, and some, like Glenn Frankel of the *Washington Post* and Martin Fletcher of NBC News, had their credentials suspended by the Israeli authorities.

From the very beginning, the uprising was not based on a naive assumption that rock-throwing teenagers would be able to free the West Bank and Gaza from Israeli occupation. The primary calculation was to dramatize the condition of the Palestinians and to provoke world public opinion (especially American public opinion), to pressure the various governments (particularly Israel) to initiate a peace process that would lead to a settlement of the conflict. As Professor Edward Said of Columbia University so aptly put it, "The United States is only slightly less important as a site," than the main arena of struggle in Israel/Palestine.¹

The American public was indeed outraged — but sufficient pressure was not exerted in an appropriate and consistent manner to move the process toward an equitable settlement. Silent or even isolated outrage by itself is not enough. It must be mobilized by organized institutions into concrete political action in order to realize clearly identifiable goals. Nevertheless, there are noticeable and significant changes in the American public's perception of the nature of the conflict, the antagonists and possible solutions. Secretary of State George Shultz was moved enough to make several trips to the

region in 1988. Even though he returned empty-handed, his diplomatic efforts served to underscore the differences between the American government's position and that of the Israeli Prime Minister on the subject of a settlement. More important, however, is the fact that the issue of Palestinian self-determination and the right to statehood surfaced for the first time as a key question during the July Democratic National Convention in Atlanta. Although the issue was debated but not voted on during the discussion of the platform, polls by C-SPAN and NBC News disclosed that a majority of the delegates actually supported the plank. Jesse Jackson's advocacy of the right of the Palestinians to national self-determination helped bring the issue to prominence.

The peace initiative launched by the PLO at the Algiers meeting of the Palestine National Council eventually bore fruit when the American government finally decided to begin a substantive dialogue with the PLO. This political achievement is primarily attributed to the Palestinian *intifada* and the changes it has brought about in international public opinion, and more specifically, in the attitudes of the informed public in the United States.

What do these polls actually say? What changes in perception have occurred? What shifts have taken place in the perceptions of American Jews? Are these changes likely to be constant or ephemeral?

Chapter 1

Israel's Image in the U.S.

A Gallup survey published on February 14, 1988 captures the prevailing mood in the media as well as among the public. The headline on the Gallup press release stated "Israel's Image in U.S. Tarnished by Tactics Used Against Rioters." According to the poll, more than four Americans in ten, or 43 percent, considered Israeli tactics too harsh, and about a third of Americans, or 30 percent, viewed Israel less favorably as a result of its anti-riot efforts in the occupied territories. Among the general public, 57 percent of both college graduates and non-whites are more likely to view the Israeli response as too harsh.²

A *Chicago Tribune* survey conducted by Peter Hart and Associates in April of 1988 confirmed the erosion of pro-Israel sympathy among the public. In an April 26 article, Timothy McNulty, Washington Bureau Chief for the *Chicago Tribune*, summed up the results by saying, "In the current conflict with Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, Americans again are registering negative attitudes toward Israel that were first noted during the 1982 war in Lebanon, and again at the disclosures of Israel's involvement in the Iran-Contra affair." This survey revealed that 38 percent of those who had been following the events through the media (73 percent of the total sample) said their opinion of Israel had diminished in recent months. College-educated voters, who are usually more favorable to Israel, are now more likely than others to say their opinion of Israel has declined. Fifty-five percent of the college-educated express less favorable opinions of Israel.³

These surveys show quite clearly that while pro-Israel sympathy is still high among the American public, support for Israel is no longer uncritical. Those who express negative feelings toward Israel are not necessarily anti-Israel. They are critical of Israeli practices toward the Palestinians. This negative perspective is evident

among those who follow events in the Middle East, and it is more widespread among better-educated Americans.

In late January 1988, Mark Penn and Douglas Schoen conducted a survey on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith. In an attempt to counter the perception of a decline, they concluded that "The American people still support Israel. In fact that support has eroded hardly at all." Reporting on the Penn and Schoen poll, the *Boston Globe* stated in its headline of February 4, "Poll: Israeli Crackdown Has Not Hurt U.S. Support." The article listed the following findings; 47 percent of those polled think Israel is America's strongest ally in the region, 49 percent say Iran is the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East, and 43 percent blamed the unrest on the PLO.⁴

The wording of the questionnaire is problematic. It appears to be designed to reassure pro-Israel supporters that Israel's standing is still high among the American public, rather than test for the impact of events. Questions asked whether or not Israel is a "reliable ally" or if "Israel's actions threaten the U.S.," in addition to who was responsible for the unrest and what were the reasons for the demonstrations. Most peculiarly, a rather vaguely worded question asked, "Is the responsibility for the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza that of Israel alone, or is it the responsibility of Israel and the Arab states in the Middle East?"

Another problem with the Penn and Schoen survey is the fact that it tested reactions early in the uprising. By mid-January, about thirty Palestinians had been killed by Israeli soldiers. But by mid-April, more than one hundred had lost their lives. Furthermore, there was some confusion during the early stages of the uprising as to whether or not the disturbances were instigated from the outside by the PLO. It soon became clear that this was primarily an internal uprising against inhumane conditions.

Nevertheless, a close look at the results of some of the more neutrally worded questions reveals that the Penn and Schoen study

actually yields results almost identical to those produced by other polling agencies. For example, 36 percent of respondents thought that Israel's response to the uprising was too harsh, and 33 percent thought that the Palestinians were demonstrating because they have "legitimate grievances." Furthermore, 49 percent of the respondents said the U.S. was right to vote for a United Nations resolution condemning Israel for its decision to deport nine Palestinians. The Penn and Schoen study also confirms previous findings which reveal that the majority of the American public favors a negotiated settlement which would include the PLO along with all other parties to the conflict.

The American Jewish Congress (AJC) conducted its own nationwide public opinion survey in April 1988, using the well-known Boston firm Martilla and Kiley, Inc. This telephone survey of registered voters had a sample of 1017 adults and was carried out between April 18-24. The AJC study was also designed to counter the perception that Israel's handling of the uprising has hurt its image in the U.S. The study concluded the following:

American support for Israel remains steadfast. By decisive margins, Americans are more sympathetic to Israel than either the Palestinians or the Arab states and forty-four percent of the public consider Israel a close ally of the U.S. If anything, the trend data indicates Israel's fundamental position with the American people has been strengthened during the past few years.⁵

However, the study adds, in an understated manner, that "there are several survey findings which indicate impatience with — and disapproval of — recent Israeli government activity."

The findings of this survey are indeed consistent with previous polls, namely, that general pro-Israel sympathy is still relatively high among Americans, but it is no longer as uncritical or as unconditional as it was in the past. Furthermore, the majority of the American public, in particular the college-educated and the more affluent, is willing to endorse the right of the Palestinians to a separate

independent state, with the participation of the PLO in peace negotiations, even though it generally sympathizes with Israel. In other words, support for Palestinian statehood is no longer perceived as being anti-Israel.

To check for long-term trends, the AJC study uses questionnaires from previous polls, including those done by the author in 1982 by *Decision/Making/Information*, and in 1985 by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan. By and large, the results of the AJC study confirm the author's findings in all previous polls.⁶ This is by far the strongest indication that important shifts in public perceptions, and most notably the perceptions of opinion leaders about key issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are based on long-term trends, and therefore constitute basic, rather than temporary, changes in American attitudes toward the conflict.

Image of the Palestinians

A 1982 Gallup survey for the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations revealed, for the first time, the emergence of a pro-Palestinian sympathy factor among the American public. The Gallup findings noted that:

While the public sympathized with Israel over 'the Arabs' by 48 percent to 17 percent, they supported Israel over 'the Palestinians' by a lesser margin, 40 percent to 17 percent. Opinion leaders were even more sensitive to the difference in terminology. Their support for Israel over 'the Arabs,' 51 percent to 19 percent, dropped to 42 percent to 26 percent for Israel over the 'Palestinians.'⁷

Timothy McNulty confirmed this trend in his analysis of the *Chicago Tribune* survey of April 1988:

In surveys conducted in previous years, Americans were asked whether their sympathies were with Israel or with the Arab states in the Middle East. Opinion was overwhelmingly in favor of Israel . . . It is a measure of how much more difficult the current situation is for Israel, in terms of American public opinion, that the margin in Israel's favor is much narrower where people are asked to choose between the Israelis and the Palestinians.⁸

The *Los Angeles Times* conducted a poll from March 26 through April 7, 1988, which shows a significant increase in pro-Palestinian sympathy as opposed to pro-Arab sympathy. Pollsters divided the public sample according to Jewish and non-Jewish respondents. A question asking whether people supported "Israel over the Arabs" revealed 50 percent to 12 percent among the non-Jewish sample, and changed dramatically in the case of support for "Israel over the Palestinians" to 36 percent to 25 percent. Perhaps even more significant is the finding that among the Jewish sample, support for "Israel over the Arabs" was 83 percent to 4 percent, but

shifted to 56 percent to 17 percent in the case of "Israel over the Palestinians."⁹

Table 1 shows a steady decline in pro-Israeli sympathy and an increase in pro-Palestinian sympathy between 1978 and 1986, as evidenced by a series of Gallup polls.

Table 1 **SHIFT IN AMERICAN SYMPATHY**
(1978, 1981, 1982, 1986) Gallup (%)

Question: "Compared to a year ago, would you say you are more sympathetic or less sympathetic to the Israeli/Palestinian position?"

Israeli Position					
Poll Date	More	Less	Same	Don't Know	Total
Feb 1978	27	34	19	20	100
July 1981	29	37	18	16	100
Aug 1982	32	41	15	12	100
Sept 1986	24	51	10	15	100

Palestinian Position					
Poll Date	More	Less	Same	Don't Know	Total
Feb 1978	—	—	—	—	—
July 1981	22	36	21	21	100
Aug 1982	28	40	18	14	100
Sept 1986	39	27	15	19	100

(Source: Gallup)

The AJC study confirms the emergence of a long-term trend indicating an increase in pro-Palestinian sympathy. It states that "increased support for the Palestinians is particularly evident among those who are the most well-informed about the region." Sympathy for the Palestinians has increased by seven percent among the general public, by 11 percent among the well-informed, and by 15 percent among the college-educated. By contrast, sympathy for Is-

rael has declined by 21 percent among post-graduates, by 17 percent among the college-educated, by 14 percent among high-wage earners, and by 16 percent among the well-informed.

What is obvious here is that, given the results of more recent polls, the emergence of a pro-Palestinian factor is not simply a passing phenomenon. The realities of Palestinian homelessness, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the role of Israel in the Iran-Contra affair, and the impact of the continuing Palestinian uprising seem to have contributed to shaping a new set of perceptions regarding the key antagonists in the conflict.

Support for Palestinian Statehood and a Negotiated Settlement

The recent 1988 polls confirm already-existing support for Palestinian statehood and for a negotiated settlement which includes the PLO along with all other key actors in the conflict. Another Gallup survey conducted February 26 - March 7, 1988 asked a nationwide sample if they "favor or oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank." Of those who were aware of events in the region, 41 percent favored an independent state, while only 23 percent opposed the idea. In addition, 46 percent of college graduates supported Palestinian statehood as compared to only 28 percent of high school graduates polled.¹⁰

The 1982 Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs study already discovered a two-to-one majority in favor of an independent state for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza:

The proportion of the American public favoring the creation of a separate, independent Palestinian nation grew from 29 percent in October 1977 to 41 percent in July 1982. Indeed, the 1982 figures show an almost two-to-one margin (41% to 21%) in support of a Palestinian state.¹¹

Another October 1982 nationwide survey conducted by Decision/Making/Information of Washington, D.C., revealed that 65 percent of the sample agreed that "there will be no peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian people have self-determination and their new state on the West Bank and Gaza." Only 29 percent disagreed, asserting that such a state would be a threat to Israel's security. In the same study, 55 percent agreed that the Palestinians are entitled to have a state of their own based on the provisions of

the 1947 U.N. Partition Plan (Resolution 181), and 50 percent disagreed with President Reagan's decision to rule out an independent state for the Palestinians.¹² In 1985, the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan discovered in a nationwide survey, that 54 percent of the respondents agreed that a Palestinian state is needed for peace, while only 26 percent believed such a state would be a threat to the security of Israel.¹³

Questions which use the word "homeland" instead of a "separate, independent state" yield even larger percentages. The 1986 study of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations found that 68 percent of the respondents favored a "Palestinian homeland on the West Bank," while only 32 percent opposed it.¹⁴ Yankelovich Clancy Shulman conducted a survey for *Time* magazine on January 27-28, 1988. The findings, published in *Time* on February 8, revealed that 56 percent of the non-Jewish sample favored "a Palestinian homeland in the occupied territories," and only 17 percent opposed the idea. Interestingly, when respondents were asked if they favored "more autonomy for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza," the percentage favoring this option dropped to 35 percent, with 33 percent opposing it.¹⁵

The ability of the public to discriminate between "autonomy" and "homeland" should not be hastily dismissed. It is true that in response to questions about the future of the occupied territories by referring to statehood, autonomy, or a homeland, responses in the categories "don't know" or "not sure" tend to be relatively high, indicating uncertainty. However, among respondents who are informed and who express an opinion, the distinction between autonomy and homeland appears to be fairly consistent. The April *L.A. Times* survey confirmed the results of the Yankelovich survey in the February 8 issue of *Time*. The *L.A. Times* concluded that more respondents, 50 percent, favored "giving the Palestinians a homeland of their own in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," as opposed to the 33 percent who felt they should only be given "more autonomy." While 18 percent were op-

posed to the idea of a homeland for the Palestinians, a larger sampling, 26 percent, were opposed to the autonomy option.

The AJC (April 1988) study also reveals that "neither issue leaders nor the general public distinguishes between the terms 'homeland' or 'state'. On balance, responses to questions which were identically worded, except for alternating these phrases, produced statistically insignificant differences."

This poll discovered that while the general public is almost evenly split, 43 percent versus 42 percent, on the question of favoring an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank, well-informed respondents support this option by a two-to-one margin, 56 percent versus 30 percent. Post-graduates believe that the Palestinians are right in wanting to establish a homeland/state by margins of 51 percent to 21 percent, the college-educated favor this option by 52 percent to 22 percent, and high-income people by 49 percent to 21 percent. Furthermore, the well-informed are more likely than the general public to believe that a Palestinian homeland/state is a pre-condition for peace, by margins of 55 percent to 39 percent. Almost identical results were obtained by the author in the 1982 Decision/Making/Information study as well as the 1985 Survey Research Center study.

Sixty-three percent of respondents in the *L.A. Times* survey favored an international Middle East peace conference which would include all parties to the conflict. Forty-seven percent favored it strongly, and 16 percent favored it somewhat. Similarly, 52 percent agreed that "in order to bring peace to the Middle East, we (the U.S.) should be willing to talk to all parties involved in the conflict, including the PLO." Response to this question is important given the fact that its exact wording is used to justify the official Israeli and American government positions which state that "Some people say that the United States ought not to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization (the PLO) because they are terrorists and they refuse to recognize the right of Israel." Clearly 34 percent of the respondents do not think the U.S. should negotiate with the

PLO, presumably because the organization is linked, in their minds, to negative characteristics. A June 3, 1987, *Los Angeles Times* survey asked respondents the exact same question about PLO participation in negotiations. Even at that time, 50 percent agreed that the U.S. should talk to the PLO.

The 1988 Gallup survey asked respondents the following question: "As you may know, the United States does not currently deal directly with the PLO. Do you favor or oppose direct talks between the U.S. and the PLO as a way to help resolve the conflict over Gaza and the West Bank?" Fifty-three percent favored direct talks, while 26 percent were opposed. An even higher number, 58 percent, was in favor of direct talks between Israel and the PLO. In this case also, as the level of awareness and education increases, much higher percentages tend to favor direct talks between the U.S. and the PLO, 60 percent among college graduates, and between Israel and the PLO, 72 percent among college graduates.

The *Chicago Tribune* survey by Peter Hart simply asked respondents if they favored "direct negotiations between the United States and the PLO," without linking these negotiations to overall peace. The question referred to "suggestions people have made for dealing with the current situation in Israel." Thirty-nine percent favored direct U.S.-PLO negotiations, and 40 percent were opposed. This is an even split. As many as 63 percent favor direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO. This is roughly the same percentage of the sample who think that the PLO should "publicly recognize Israel as a condition for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians."

The 1988 *L.A. Times* survey asked respondents whether they thought that "Israel should give up the occupied territories in order to preserve its Jewish integrity," or whether the "Arabs should be 'transferred' out of the occupied territories," or whether the "Israelis should try to come to some sort of accommodation with the Arabs in the occupied territories." The overwhelming majority, 56 percent, favored some sort of accommodation with the Arabs, while small percentages chose the other options.

U.S. Aid to Israel

Israel receives more than \$3 billion per year in economic and military assistance from the United States. This vast subsidy, which amounts to an annual average of nearly \$1,000 per Israeli man, woman, and child, is given in the form of grant assistance.

Traditionally, Americans have approved giving Israel economic and military aid in spite of their generally negative predisposition toward giving aid to other countries. Furthermore, Americans have been reluctant to cut off all aid to Israel as a means of pressuring it to compromise, preferring instead, such options as reducing aid, or suspending it temporarily. American public opinion is now more inclined to favor cutting aid to Israel as a result of its handling of the Palestinian uprising. Cartoons have appeared in major newspapers across the United States linking the Israeli crackdown to "U.S. taxpayers' money at work." In other words, the call for reducing or cutting all aid to Israel is no longer taboo in American public discourse.

The Yankelovich survey in *Time* magazine revealed that 45 percent of the public thinks that the U.S. should "cut aid to Israel because of its actions against the Palestinians." Only 32 percent oppose it. In its 1988 poll, Gallup discovered that a plurality of Americans, 41 percent, think that U.S. aid to Israel should be decreased (19 percent) or stopped altogether (22 percent), as a consequence of that country's handling of Palestinian unrest. One quarter, or 24 percent, said the level of aid should remain the same, and 7 percent favored increasing it. The April *L.A. Times* survey asked respondents if they thought the U.S. government "should step up its military aid to Israel, or keep it at about the same level, or do you think the government should cut down military aid to Israel?" Eight percent of the non-Jewish sample said that aid should be stepped up, 47 percent thought it should stay the same, and 34 percent thought it should be cut down. A few weeks later, the *Chicago*

Tribune survey showed that 44 percent of the public favored reduction of U.S. aid to Israel as a way to pressure the latter into addressing the problems of the Palestinians. Thirty-seven percent opposed such a move.

Opinion of Press Coverage

The Israeli government and its supporters in the U.S. have singled out the American press for criticism of its coverage of Israel's handling of the Palestinian uprising. Accusations of biased coverage have been leveled at most newspapers and television networks. Several questions in various public opinion polls deal with press coverage. Yankelovich asked respondents: "Has the U.S. press been biased in reporting Israel's response to the unrest?" Only 26 percent of the non-Jewish sample agreed and 47 percent said no.

The 1988 *L.A. Times* survey asked the following question: "Do you think the American press has been fair in its coverage of the Palestinian resistance, or do you think it has distorted what has been happening? (if distorted) Do you think the American press has made the Palestinians look better than they are, or has it made them look worse than they are?" Forty percent of the non-Jewish sample thought press coverage was fair, 11 percent thought the press made the Palestinians look better and 13 percent thought the Palestinians were made to look worse. The rest were not sure. Nearly 33 percent of the respondents think that Israel has a poor image in the U.S. Most of them blame Israel's poor image on its "unacceptable actions" and do not see it just as "a public relations failure." Thus, 47 percent believe the Israeli government's image is poor because it has taken "unacceptable actions," and 36 percent blame it on "a public relations failure."

Interestingly, only 5 percent of the respondents think Israel has a "very good public image in the minds of most Americans," while 10 percent think it has a "very poor image." The rest are split between 33 percent who think it has a fairly good public image, and 23 percent who think it has a fairly poor public image. The television viewing public was obviously upset when it saw Israeli soldiers using violence against Palestinian demonstrators. According to the *L.A. Times* survey, those who said they had seen

television pictures showing Israeli soldiers using force against Palestinians were asked the following: "Were you very upset when you saw the pictures, or somewhat upset, or not very upset, or were you hardly upset at all by the pictures?" Of the non-Jewish sample, 20 percent said they were very upset, while 29 percent said they were somewhat upset. Only 9 percent said they were not very upset, and 8 percent were hardly upset. According to the survey, a majority of respondents, 59 percent, disagreed with New York City Mayor Ed Koch's suggestion that, "Israeli authorities have the right to ban the press from areas where Palestinian disturbances might take place."

Public outrage is so strong that a significant majority, 65 percent of the non-Jewish sample, felt that "there is an element of racism involved in the attitude of Israelis towards Arabs." Only 16 percent disagree. Furthermore, nearly 38 percent don't believe that criticism of Israeli treatment of Palestinians is anti-Israel. Only 30 percent agree, and the same number, 30 percent, are not sure. Nevertheless, only 25 percent of the respondents feel that it is fair to "compare the way Israel treats Palestinians to the way the white government treats blacks in South Africa." A 55 percent majority do not think the comparison is fair.

Opinions of American Jews

According to Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a professor at Columbia University, "American Jews are losing some of their illusions about Israel and are being forced to think about the real Israel. However, they remain predictably committed to its security."¹⁶ Hertzberg's conclusions are based on a review of the results of the 1988 *L.A. Times* poll which included a substantial Jewish and non-Jewish sample. What follows is an exhaustive analysis of the responses of the Jewish sample using, as a frame of reference, a 1986 poll conducted by Steven M. Cohen on behalf of the American Jewish Committee.¹⁷

The majority of American Jews favor "strong U.S. support for the government of Israel" (*L.A. Times*, 1988) and "proclaim a deep sentimental attachment to the country and a concern for its survival" (Cohen, 1987). However, Cohen discovered that a surprising number of American Jews show a good deal of ignorance about Israeli politics and society. For instance, only 34 percent knew that Menachem Begin and Shimon Peres do not belong to the same political party, and not even a third knew that only Orthodox rabbis could perform Jewish marriages in Israel. Another surprising discovery in Cohen's study is that only 27 percent of the respondents consider themselves "Zionist," the majority of whom (53 percent) define the term as a belief in "the centrality of Israel to the Jewish people."

Cohen found that younger Jews express less attachment to Israel than older respondents. The *L.A. Times* survey confirms this finding. Twenty-seven percent of younger Jews said they felt equally or more sympathetic to the Palestinians, as compared to 17 percent of older Jews. In addition, a quarter of younger Jews have a worse opinion of Israel as a result of recent events in the occupied territories. One-fifth of older Jews disagree with the Israeli government's rationale for the disturbances, preferring to describe

them as "acts of civil disobedience" rather than "war" against the government of Israel.

Orthodox Jews expressed the highest level of attachment to Israel. As Table 2 indicates, nearly three-fifths of Orthodox Jews scored on the highest level of attachment, as did almost half of the Conservatives, while only a fifth of the Reform, and a fourth of the nondenominational or non-affiliated Jews expressed high attachment to Israel.

Table 2 JEWISH ATTACHMENT TO ISRAEL
BY DENOMINATION (1986 in %)

Attachment	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Non-Aff.	Total
High	62	43	20	26	34
Moderate	35	41	40	33	38
Low	4	16	40	41	28
	100	100	100	100	100

(Source: Cohen, 1987)

In sharp contrast to the 47 percent of non-Jews who feel that Israel's unacceptable actions are responsible for its poor image in the U.S., the majority of American Jews, 52 percent, blame Israel's poor image on "public relations" problems.¹⁸ However, a significant number of Jews, 28 percent, blames Israel's image problem on its unacceptable actions, and 14 percent think it can be ascribed to both Israeli actions and poor public relations. Reporter Robert Scheer concluded his analysis of the *L.A. Times* survey by saying: "The fact that 42 percent of Jews and more than half of non-Jews at least in part blame unacceptable Israeli actions for the erosion of support for Israel in the United States, might have serious implications for future U.S.-Israeli relations."¹⁹

Historically, landmark events have helped shape the perceptions of Americans about Israel and its conflict with the Palestinians. For some, it was the founding of the state of Israel in 1948,

while for others it was the June 1967 war. For others still, it was a series of more contemporary events.

The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon was amply covered by the media. This was followed by coverage of the Pollard spy case, the Iran-Contra revelations, and the Palestinian uprising. Four out of ten non-Jews said they formed their first impression of Israel following these more recent events. Fifteen percent said their impression was formed "within the last several months," 9 percent after the Iran-Contra affair, 4 percent following the Pollard spy case, 9 percent as a result of the June 1967 war, and 31 percent said they "always knew" their attitude toward Israel. On the other hand, 59 percent of Jews said they "always knew," 22 percent date their first impression to June 1967, 7 percent to the Lebanon war, and 5 percent to "several months ago."²⁰

The rise of a pro-Palestinian sympathy factor found among non-Jews is reflected to a lesser extent among the Jewish sample. Table 3 shows that non-affiliated Jews are more likely to sympathize with the Palestinians, 17 percent, rather than with the Arabs, four percent.

Table 3 ISRAELI vs. PALESTINIAN/ARAB SYMPATHIES
(1988 in %)

Sympathy	Orthodox	Conserv.	Reform	Non-Aff.	Non-Jews
Israel vs. Palestinians	83:3	74:8	69:11	56:17	36:25
Israel vs. Arabs	87:1	87:2	91:1	83:4	50:1

(Source: *L.A. Times* Survey, April 1988)

Where do American Jews stand on the key issues that divide Palestinians and Israelis? What areas of consensus are there and what are the possible areas of difference?

A majority of American Jews favor "some sort of accommodation with the Arabs in the occupied territories." Orthodox Jews are almost evenly split between those who favor accommodation, about 40 percent, and those who favor "transfer," a term which reflects Rabbi Meir Kahane's platform which calls for evicting the Palestinians from their homes. The majority also favor Secretary of State George Shultz's plan for an international peace conference, although most of them do not accept the idea of Israel giving up the occupied territories in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel. Most American Jews prefer a formula whereby the Palestinians receive "more autonomy" in the occupied territories. On the crucial question of a "homeland of their own," however, only non-affiliated Jews tend to favor it, about 40 percent. All the others reject this option to varying levels, the Orthodox most intensely, 66 percent, followed by the Conservatives at 48 percent, and Reform Jews at 44 percent. Only a third of the total Jewish sample favors a "homeland" for the Palestinians.

Table 4 shows the evolution of opinion among American Jews on the question of territorial compromise with the Arabs. The most recent figures, from Cohen's 1986 survey (published in 1987), show an almost clear split among American Jews. One third is willing to endorse territorial compromise in return for peace. Another third disagrees, and another third is not sure. In response to the question, "I firmly believe that God promised the entire land of Israel — including Judea and Samaria — to the Jewish people," an almost identical split occurs among American Jews, with 33 percent agreeing, 33 percent disagreeing and 34 percent not sure.²¹ However, a majority, 48 percent to 21 percent, agrees that "Palestinians have a right to a homeland on the West Bank and Gaza, so long as it does not threaten Israel."²²

The *L.A. Times* survey shows that the majority of American Jews do not think the U.S. should negotiate with the PLO. This is consistent with Cohen's figures. By contrast, nearly 52 percent of non-Jews are willing to have the U.S. negotiate with the PLO.

Table 4 TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE (%)

Question: "Israel should offer the Arabs territorial compromise in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) in return for credible guarantees of peace?"

Pol Date	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
1986	29	36	35
1985	30	44	26
1984	43	37	20
1983	40	36	25
1982	31	52	17
1981	41	41	18

(Source: Cohen, 1987)

Furthermore, the *L.A. Times* survey indicates that the majority of American Jews think the press has made the Palestinians look better than they actually are. By a wide margin, American Jews say they are upset by television pictures which show Israeli soldiers using physical force against Palestinians. Most of them, however, do not endorse New York City Mayor Ed Koch's call for banning the press from areas of Palestinian disturbances.

The American Jewish community is not monolithic. Opinions cover the full range of ideologies, from the extreme right to the liberal left. About 15 percent are "convinced, undeviating hard-liners."²³ Another component of the right wing are the neo-conservatives, described by Hertzberg as a right-wing intelligentsia "which makes considerable noise...but it has no substantial number of foot soldiers." The majority, or 56 percent, consider themselves Democrats and 17 percent view themselves as political moderates. In other words, a clear majority of American Jews reject the Likud hardline position and identify more with the Labor Party in Israel. The *L.A. Times* survey asked respondents a rather interesting question: "As a Jew, which of the following qualities do you consider most important to your Jewish identity: a commitment to social equality, or religious observance, or support for Israel, or what?"

Fifty percent said that social equality is most important, 17 percent pointed to religion, and another 17 percent said that support for Israel is very important. Perhaps this commitment to social equality explains why nearly 42 percent of Jewish respondents feel that there is "an element of racism involved in the attitudes of Israelis toward Arabs."

The fact that a majority of American Jews value social equality considerably more than support for Israel is significant for several reasons. In the first place, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has entered a new stage. Since Egypt is at peace with Israel, and since most Arab countries are willing to arrive at some accommodation, Israel's position is secure. The old theme that Israel's basic survival is at stake now sounds unbelievable. Not only is Israel secure from Arab threats, it has become an awesome military power. More importantly, however, most Israelis feel that survival is no longer an urgent issue. The debate that has been going on in Israel focuses not so much on the question of security but on the nature of the state. The question is whether Israel will be a democratic state at peace with its neighbors, or a state with a Jewish majority and an large oppressed Arab minority, which will be in a state of perpetual siege. This means that the manner in which the Palestinian question is resolved will determine the nature of the state of Israel, its relations with the region and the prospects for peace or continued warfare.

The Palestinian uprising has forced an acceleration and a sharpening of the ongoing debate among American Jews about their relation to the state of Israel and their views of a possible settlement of the Palestinian conflict. American Jews are now in a state of confusion. They support Israel and its right to security but they are uncertain which Israel to support. It is difficult for American Jews, the majority of whom have contributed to the struggle for civil rights and social equality in the United States, to be seen as supporting a state which oppresses another nation in a manner similar to the racist white regime in South Africa.

Conclusion

Israel's handling of Palestinian unrest during the past year, at first amply covered by the media, has produced a shift in the perceptions and attitudes of the American public toward Israel and the Palestinians. While pro-Israeli sympathy is still relatively high among Americans, there is a significant increase in pro-Palestinian sympathy. This appears to be a fairly established trend in American public opinion, having first emerged during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

In conjunction with the emergence of a pro-Palestinian sympathy factor comes a realization that the Palestinians, who have suffered homelessness and exile, are also entitled to a homeland or a state of their own. Responses to questions using the words "homeland" or "state" do not show any significant statistical differences. Furthermore, support for the right of the Palestinians to statehood is no longer seen by the majority of the public as necessarily anti-Israel. Americans may sympathize with Israel, and may consider it a close ally, but they also do not hesitate to criticize its handling of the Palestinian uprising. Significant numbers are also now calling for a reduction in U.S. aid to Israel.

The most crucial changes, however, have occurred among American Jews who have become as polarized on the key issues as the Israeli Jewish public. The majority of American Jews show a strong commitment to Israel and, at the same time, favor some sort of accommodation with the Palestinians. Nearly one-third of American Jews favor a "homeland" for the Palestinians, another third oppose it and the rest are not sure.

Increasingly, American Jews do not hesitate to criticize Israel publicly and to condemn some of its practices in the occupied territories. This key segment of the American population is definitely not monolithic on the issues involving Israel and the Palestinians.

The Palestinian uprising follows a series of events that began with Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and that slowly and consistently produced a significant shift in American perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Perhaps the most important shift has occurred in the perceptions of opinion leaders in American society, namely, the college graduates, the well-informed and the more affluent. The American Jewish Congress study is correct in stating that "Many foreign policy issues and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in particular, are ones which are more likely to be intensely debated within these kinds of well-informed leadership circles than among the public at large ... it is not contradictory for these individuals to strongly support Israel and also support a Palestinian state or 'land for peace' agreement."²⁴

Notes

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About the Author

Dr. Fouad Moughrabi was born in Jerusalem in 1942. After attending the Freres School in Jerusalem, he received his B.A. and M.A. from Duke University. He continued his post-graduate education in France, where he received his Ph.D. from the Universite de Grenoble.

From 1979 to 1987, Dr. Moughrabi served as the editor of the *Arab Studies Quarterly*, published by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG). He also served as president of AAUG. In 1987, Dr. Moughrabi and Dr. Elias Zureik co-authored "Public Opinion and the Palestine Opinion." Currently a professor of political science at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, Dr. Moughrabi resides on Signal Mountain with his wife and two children.

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