

THE AMERICAN FRONT OF THE GLOBALIZED ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT:
THE POLITICS OF HUMANITARIANISM, PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
FEMINISM IN THE 1970S

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グローバル化するアラブ・イスラエル紛争と1970年代アメリカ
——人道主義、平和、人権、フェミニズム

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ABSTRACT

The Arab-Israeli conflict has been globalized for several decades because it was placed at the crossroads of the East-West and North-South divisions and because Jewish and Arab/Palestinian diasporas actively involved in the conflict. This dissertation aims to examine the American front of the globalized Arab-Israeli conflict in the late 1960s and 1970s. It demonstrates that that the Arab-Israeli conflict and the domestic and international debates over it were of crucial importance in shaping American politics and society of the transformative decade. The controversy over the Arab-Israeli conflict coursed through different areas and themes that comprised central aspects of post-1968 America. It started with humanitarian discussions on Palestine refugees, but soon spread into the politics of peace that sought for a just solution to the hostilities between Israel and the Arab nations, then into the human rights debate centering on the legality of the Israeli occupation and its methods, and finally into domestic and international feminism. This dissertation broadens the analytical framework of these themes in 1970s' America to include the Arab-Israeli conflict, as encompassed by Cold War politics and post-colonial struggles.

International norms for securing peace and human rights in the Middle East served as the frameworks of reference for American progressives, or left-liberals, who wrestle with the Middle East problem and its consequences from the viewpoint of humanitarianism, peace, human rights, and women's equality. The United Nations and its various committees and the travels to and from the Middle East functioned as major conduits through which many American liberals and leftists experienced the Arab-Israeli conflict. For American conservatives, however, the United Nations was not a neutral but a dangerous place where the Communist block and the Global South were collectively collaborating against the West; for them, anti-Zionism in the United Nations was closely associated with extremism and violence stemming from the decolonizing world. Many liberals including "dawks" and feminists also sensed the "corruption" of the United Nations in the Arab-Israeli conflict, forging a strange relationship with American conservatives, a relationship that helped solidify the consensus over American and Israeli exceptionalism. This dissertation concluded that the transnational framework of reference to the conflict accelerated the fracturing of America in the age of identity politics and the ideological battle. At the same time, these transnational resources helped U.S. peace and human rights activists in establishing their perspective distinguishable from that of the nationalist

forces and the superpower's interests, a perspective through which that the tightening U.S.-Israeli relationship was contested.

Structured both thematically and chronologically, this dissertation is organized from six case studies, each of which delves into the formation of the American front of the debate over the Arab-Israeli conflict with a specific focus on the role of progressive Americans. Chapter 1 examines the interaction between the politics of humanitarianism and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It focuses on the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a peace and humanitarian organization led by American Quakers. After tracing American Quakers' activities in the Middle East since the mid-19th century and placing them in a wider historical context, this chapter then scrutinizes the AFSC's rescue work for Palestinian refugees in Gaza in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and then analyzes the shift of the AFSC's primary concern from refugee relief in the Middle East to peace advocacy in the United States, a shift occurring after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The chapter portrays the politics of humanitarianism in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict by delving into the organization's history and the ways in which the committee came to terms with the political and military milieu in the region and with Cold War tensions regarding refugee relief.

Chapter 2 explores the development of Middle East peace activism in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, strong nationalist sentiments came into surface in Jewish and Arab/Palestinian diaspora communities in various parts of the world. Each group mobilized their respective supporters, who expressed senses of solidarity with Israelis or Arabs and Palestinians. The global confrontation between Jewish and Arab/Palestinian nationalisms infiltrated American society. This infiltration inevitably produced heated debates on the conflict at a time of identity politics and ethnic revival in the United States. To carve out political space in this tense situation, many American peace organizations tried to find their own languages for interpreting the conflict, languages that differed from those of nationalists and cold war strategists. The American peace community relied on the framework of the United Nations and on transborder interactions with dissidents in the Middle East, while avoiding the language of solidarity based on racial, ethnic, class, and religious identities. This chapter concludes that, after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, American peace groups started pressuring the U.S. government to intervene in the regional strife and move forward negotiations for a comprehensive settlement; although such policy had had a chance to be pursued by U.S. officials between 1969 and 1971, most American

peace groups had been silent on the Middle East crisis during that critical moment.

Chapter 3 analyzes so-called “dawks,” lawmakers with dovish views on Southeast Asia but hawkish views on the Middle East. While Chapter 2 traces the rise of Middle East peace activism at the grassroots level, Chapter 3 investigates the impact that this grassroots initiative had on national politics. In the first half of the 1970s, 1960s’ activists from various movements were able to find allies in Congress. Sustained by suburban, issue-oriented, and college educated supporters, and new cultural forces such as women’s and gay rights movements, the “New Politics” wing of the Democratic Party tried to overturn Cold War liberals’ dominance of the party and stop the war in Vietnam. On one hand, many “New Politics” Democrats pressured the U.S. government to cut off funding for military operations in Southeast Asia and to reduce aid to U.S. allies in the Third World. On the other hand, they were often enthusiastic supporters of Israel and tried to solidify Israel’s military might with U.S. aid. Chapter 3 explores how the seemingly contradictory efforts of liberal lawmakers could coincide and compares their view on the Arab-Israeli conflict with that of the neoconservative wing of the Democratic Party.

Fourth and fifth chapters investigate the place of the Arab-Israeli conflict in U.S. and international human rights politics in the decade of the human rights

“revolution.” Substantial human rights’ violations in Gaza and the West Bank, territories occupied by Israel, were reported to the United Nations and other international agencies soon after the occupation started in 1967. The U.N. Commission on Human Rights, international NGOs such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International, individual journalists, and various newspapers and magazines began to accumulate information on the allegations of consistent practices of torture, arbitrary arrest, destruction of property, and other violations of human rights. This information soon reached the United States. The fourth chapter examines the ways in which the American human rights movement responded to the accusations of Israel’s human rights violations. It focuses on Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), one of the most famous human rights groups in the United States, and, to a lesser extent, on the International League for Rights of Man. The chapter demonstrates that the accusations of rights violation in the occupied territories reflected grave concerns of human rights activists in the United States but failed to lie at the heart of their agenda, remaining peripheral in the first half of the 1970s.

The domestic and international norms of human rights, however, increasingly became an important component in the American debate on the

Israel/Palestine question in the second half of the 1970s. Chapter 5 demonstrates that human rights provided a schema through which those concerned with the Middle East crisis for various reasons and from various perspectives were able to come together to cultivate a common cause of action, making a space for protest within a limited political opportunity. After portraying the place of the Middle East in Jimmy Carter's human right diplomacy, the chapter points out that the administration's responsiveness to the Palestinian plight encouraged a loosely connected group of those concerned about the Middle East crisis to act together. A mix of peace groups, church organizations, Arab American activists, legal leftists, and other individuals started considering the Israel/Palestine question from the perspective of human rights and tried to include it in the long list of human rights problems, taking advantage of the "boom" of human rights as a foreign policy issue.

Chapter 6 examines a complicated relationship between the feminist movement and the Arab-Israeli conflict by focusing on Bella Abzug, a prominent American feminist, and her dedication to Zionism and feminism at home and abroad. The chapter explores Abzug's struggle at the International Women's Years (IWY) conference in Mexico and subsequent conferences held during the U.N. Decade of Women. Originally designed to promote women's unity all over the

world, the U.N.-sponsored women's conferences served as a site of Cold War confrontation. Bitter exchanges over what constituted "women's issues" characterized the official IWY conference. Dismissing the antagonism as a male conspiracy to undermine female solidarity, Abzug struggled to break down barriers between the First, Second, and Third worlds by identifying a "Forth world" of women. The Middle East question, however, cast a shadow over her effort. When Abzug faced criticism of Zionism from Arab and other Third World women, she committed herself to the battle over Zionism by following, or deliberately using, the official U.S. line that tried to disconnect women's issues from "politics." The chapter concludes that in order to support Zionism, Abzug, a steadfast Cold War critic, capitalized on the U.S. Cold War tactics of eliminating the Communist influence from the feminist movement.