

Boycotts and Backlash:
Canadian Opposition to Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)
Movements from South Africa to Israel

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the struggle in Canada over international boycott campaigns, providing a comparative analysis of Canadian solidarity movements which deploy economic practices of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (known collectively as “BDS”) to target the policies of foreign country, specifically focusing on campaigns against apartheid South Africa and contemporary Israel. In particular, this study looks closely at the organized backlash to these campaigns, including the role of domestic lobbies and state-led propaganda campaigns, in an attempt to explain why the boycott campaign against South Africa appeared to be so successful, while the campaign against Israel has struggled to become popular. This analysis relies on original archival research, as well as interviews with both supporters and opponents of these boycott movements. It also provides a new theorization of BDS in terms of its political economic character, exploring the limits and possibilities of these forms of activism, both in terms of material economic impact (as per Marx) and their role in ideological struggle (as per Gramsci and Hall). This study identifies a number of factors which distinguish the pro-South Africa and pro-Israel lobbies, which have affected the ability of each lobby to articulate to common sense and build popular and state support. While the pro-South Africa lobby ultimately failed to counter the anti-apartheid movement, Israel’s support within Canadian society has allowed its defenders to go further and deploy coercive measures against boycott supporters, narrowing the space for pro-Palestinian solidarity activism.

Acknowledgements

When a doctoral project consumes your entire life for the better part of a decade, it simply becomes quite impossible to identify, let alone acknowledge, every person who has made a contribution to your success. Nonetheless, I would like to recognize a few people whose support has been critical at one point or another during this process.

I want to thank my supervisor, Justin Paulson, who has been working with me since the start of my Master's program in 2011. Justin is an exceptionally supportive supervisor, generous with his time and feedback, and he has been a consistent advocate for my success. Justin's commitment to his students is a model for graduate supervision. I also want to thank my committee members Rebecca Schein and Nahla Abdo, whose thoughtful comments and guidance on this project have been essential to its success. I deeply appreciate the feedback and engagement from Abigail Bakan and Laura Macdonald, who generously served as examiners for my defence and critically evaluated my work. I would also like to thank Adrian Smith for assistance during early stages of the project.

I am immensely thankful for the friendship and mutual support of my incredible colleagues, especially Jenna Amirault, Eloy Rivas-Sanchez, Mikayla Sherry, and Sabrina Fernandes. I am indebted to many others who have assisted me, in ways large and small, including Blair Rutherford, Linda Freeman, Susan Bazilli, Bill Davis, Dennis Howlett, Gary Kenny, David Hornsby, Aaron Doyle, Alexis Shotwell, Janet Siltanen, Tonya Davidson, Chris Webb, Bill Skidmore, Kevin Skerrett, Kelti Cameron, Hind Awwad, Susan Spronk, Sean Jacobs, Jeremy Wildeman, Peyton Veitch, and Tyler Levitan (this not an exhaustive list). Thanks to E. Natalie Rothman, Andrew Zimmerman, and the two anonymous reviewers for *Radical History Review* for their feedback on elements of this work that were originally published in that venue. All the thanks in the world to the administrative staff of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, including Paula Whissell, Darlene Moss, Kim Mitchell, Kimberley Séguin, and Stephanie LeBlanc, as well as Donna Coghill, the administrator of the Institute of Political Economy. And of course, my academic experience would not have been the same without the critical advocacy of the Graduate Students' Association and CUPE 4600.

I had the opportunity to undertake significant archival work in the course of this project, and therefore owe much to the expertise of archivists and staff. In particular, I want to thank Mosanku Maamoe, Zintle Mzayiya, and Lunga Poni for their generous assistance during my time at the ANC Archives, which are housed at the National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre (NAHECS) at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. I also want to thank Lynn Lafontaine at Library and Archives Canada, Graham Stinnett at the University of Connecticut Library, and Julien Couture at the McGill University Archives. During this course of this project I also travelled to the Occupied Palestinian Territories with a delegation hosted by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAH), and this experience was invaluable and deeply formative in shaping my understanding and perspective.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of ongoing support and encouragement from family and friends, who are far too many to list individually: thank you for everything. Much of the inspiration for this work comes from activists and friends who are fighting for freedom and justice, even when it isn't popular to do so: the future is yours. And of course, my deepest gratitude and appreciation goes to Kendra McLaughlin, whose brilliance, endless love, and encouragement is what gave me the strength and ambition to finally finish this degree (and whose own doctoral work is truly remarkable).

This project was financially supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Ontario Graduate Scholarships Program, and the Ontario Student Assistance Program. In the future, education will be free.

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List of Participants Interviewed

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List of Acronyms

ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union
ADL – Anti-Defamation League
AIPAC – American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AMSCO – ANC-Mandela Support Coalition
ANC – African National Congress
ASSÉ – L’Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante
BDS – Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions
BCM – Black Consciousness Movement
BNC – BDS National Committee
BOSS – Bureau for State Security (South Africa)
CAAA – Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act
CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CCB – Civil Co-operation Bureau (South Africa)
CCBP – Confederation of Church and Business People
CCIC – Canadian Council for International Cooperation
CCSA – Canadians Concerned about Southern Africa
C-FAR – Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform
CFPN – Canadian Friends of Peace Now
CFS – Canadian Federation of Students
CFSAS – Canadian Friends of South Africans Society
CIC – Canada-Israel Committee
CIDMAA – Centre d’Information et de Documentation sur le Mozambique et Afrique Australe
CIIA – Canadian Institute of International Affairs
CIJA – Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (previously Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy, 2003-2011)
CJC – Canadian Jewish Congress
CLC – Canadian Labour Congress
CLC-ID – CLC’s International Department
CLR – Canadian League of Rights
CJN – Canadian Jewish News
COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPCCA – Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism
CSAS – Canadian-South African Society
CSIS – Canadian Security Intelligence Service
CST – Colonialism of a Special Type
CUFI – Christians United for Israel
CUPE – Canadian Union of Public Employees
CUPW – Canadian Union of Postal Workers
CUSO – Canadian University Service Overseas
DOI – Department of Information (South Africa)
ESCWA – Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FOSATU – Federation of South African Trade Unions
FSWC – Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre

GC4I – Global Coalition for Israel
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
GFCA – Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism
GRILA – Groupe de Recherche et d'Initiative pour la Libération de l'Afrique
IAW – Israeli Apartheid Week
IAWGSA – Inter-Agency Working Group on Southern Africa
ICCAF – Inter-Church Coalition on Africa
IDAFSA – International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa
IFCTU – International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFF – International Freedom Foundation
IFP – Inkatha Freedom Party
IHRA – International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IJV – Independent Jewish Voices Canada
IMF – International Monetary Fund
JVP – Jewish Voice for Peace
MC Canada – Mennonite Church Canada
MCC – Mennonite Central Committee
MFS – Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Israel)
MSA – Ministry of Strategic Affairs (Israel)
NCC – National Citizens' Coalition
NDP – New Democratic Party
NIFC – New Israel Fund of Canada
NUPGE – National Union of Public and General Employees
OAU – Organization of African Unity
OPSEU – Ontario Public Service Employees Union
OPT – Occupied Palestinian Territories
PAC – Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
PACBI – Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel
PFLP – Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO – Palestine Liberation Organization
QAAN – Quebec Anti-Apartheid Network
RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RPC – Regional Political Committee (ANC Canada Mission)
SABN – South African Business Network
SAC – Southern Africa Committee (McGill University)
SACC – South African Council of Churches
SACP – South African Communist Party
SACTU – South African Congress of Trade Unions
SAF – South Africa Foundation
SAIA – Students Against Israeli Apartheid
SARG – South Africa Reference Group
SJP – Students for Justice in Palestine
SPHR – Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights
SSC – SACTU Solidarity Committee
SWAPO – South West African People's Organisation

TCCR – Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility
TCLPAC – Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal’s African Colonies
TCLSAC – Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa
TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)
UAIFC – United Appeal Israel Federations Canada
UDF – United Democratic Front
UFW – United Farm Workers
UNGA - United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA – United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UOIT – University of Ontario Institute of Technology
WCC – World Council of Churches
WCSSA – Western Canadian Society for South Africa
WSSA – Winnipeg South Africa Association
WUSC – World University Service of Canada
ZAPU – Zimbabwe African People's Union

It is one of the most frightening cultural episodes of the century, this almost total silence about Zionism's doctrines for and treatment of the native Palestinians. Any self-respecting intellectual is willing today to say something about human rights abuses in Argentina, Chile, or South Africa, yet when irrefutable evidence of Israeli preventative detention, torture, population transfer, and deportation of Palestinian Arabs is presented, literally nothing is said.

Edward Said¹

For something to become popular entails a struggle.

Stuart Hall²

¹ Edward Said, "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims," in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (New York: Vintage Books, [1979] 2000), p. 167.

² Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Larry Grossberg and Others," in *Stuart Hall Essential Essays Volume 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley (Durham: Duke University Press, [1986] 2019), 234.

Introduction: South Africa and Israel

In the fall of 1986, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark distributed a letter to thousands of individuals, companies, and organizations, asking them to add their names to the Canadian Anti-Apartheid Register, a list of those who had "spoken out or acted against South Africa." Referencing the economic sanctions that the Government of Canada had recently introduced against South Africa, Clark pleaded, "to be as effective as possible, we need your help":

I want to know if you or your company are refusing to buy South African goods, if you are withdrawing your investments, if you are contributing to black education in South Africa through a voluntary organization, or if you are taking part in demonstrations against apartheid. Whatever your action — past or present — I want to know how you are protesting against this unjust and inhuman system.

"Canadians in every part of the country must raise their voices together to protest against a system that is offensive and abhorrent," the letter read.¹ In the end, 2,500 names were added to the register, which was delivered to the Secretary General of the United Nations. The following April, ahead of the 1987 South African elections, Clark sent a follow-up request to 30,000 Canadian households asking them to add their names to a second volume.²

Thirty years after Clark's letter, Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Dion stood in the House of Commons to respond to an opposition motion which took a hardline position against campaigns to boycott Israel. The motion asked the House to "reject the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement," and called upon the

¹ Letter from Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs [ca. Fall 1986], ANC Canada Mission, ANC Archives, University of Fort Hare, Alice, Eastern Cape (hereafter cited as ANC Archives).

² Andrew McIntosh, "Clark letters invite Canadians to denounce apartheid policy," *Globe and Mail*, April 25, 1987.

government to “condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad.”³ Dion reflected on the value of freedom of expression, and expressed regret that the Conservative Party was attempting to “divide Canadians” with the motion, which he said treated all boycott supporters in a crass and intimidating manner. Nonetheless, he announced that the Government would be supporting the motion, in spite of these reservations, claiming that “we do not believe [BDS] is conducive to achieving peace in the Middle East,” and that “rejecting the boycott of Israel is in keeping with Canadian tradition.”⁴ The motion passed by a vote of 229-51, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau voting in favour.⁵

These two stories illustrate a dramatic divide in how Canadian public officials — and the Canadian public more broadly — have responded to the grassroots boycott campaigns against South Africa and Israel.⁶ Clark encouraged Canadians to take a range of actions, including boycotts, to register their complaints against South Africa. While it is possible that Clark’s letter was part of an effort to deflect from the growing impression that Canada was backtracking from its commitments to go further with its sanctions program, the boycott movement nonetheless had such a strong social purchase that the government sought to publicly affiliate itself with it. In contrast, while Dion may have been sympathetic to a minority of boycott supporters whom he believed were acting in

³ *Opposition Motion — Israel*. 42nd Parliament, 1st Session. February 22, 2016.

⁴ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 18 February 2016 (Stephane Dion, Liberal).

⁵ Canadian Press, “Trudeau Backs Conservative Motion,” *Huffington Post*, February 22, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/02/22/trudeau-backs-motion-condemning-boycott-israel-movement-some-liberals-balk_n_9293904.html

⁶ It may be noteworthy that Clark’s letter came nearly three decades after the African National Congress (ANC) first called on the international community to boycott South Africa, whereas Dion’s speech was only one decade after the BDS call from Palestinian civil society.

good faith, he ultimately voted for a motion which placed his government in strict opposition to the boycott movement. Far from simply choosing to reject the boycott campaign and declare their support for Israel, almost eighty per cent of the Parliamentarians voted to outright condemn the movement and its supporters.

What is surprising about this difference in popularity between the two boycott campaigns is the fact that the public debates appear to have involved similar social and political dynamics, including relationships of solidarity, international propaganda wars, and domestic lobbying. First, the boycott campaigns had both been adopted by civil society institutions including churches, unions, and university student associations, in response to specific requests for solidarity from South Africans and Palestinians, respectively. Each called for a series of actions including boycotts, divestment, and sanctions, a package of economic and political tactics which today is referred to collectively as BDS.⁷ Second, in both cases the targeted governments responded by devoting significant financial and diplomatic resources to anti-boycott initiatives and engaging in intensive international propaganda campaigns to counter activists. These strategies incorporated both covert and repressive elements. Third, both boycott campaigns were met with resistance from domestic lobby groups and other elements within Canadian civil society. These counter-responses involved, to varying degrees, cooperation between the targeted governments and local organizations. And yet, despite these parallel movements, the outcome could not be more different. Whereas the South Africa lobby had reasonable influence within the Canadian corporate sector and sections

⁷ The acronym “BDS” is a recent invention, although the South African anti-apartheid movement commonly used the words “boycott,” “divestment” (or “disinvestment”) and “sanctions” in the same sentence to refer to a set of related tactics.

of the political elite, their anti-boycott initiatives were deeply unpopular and were unable to undermine the momentum of the anti-apartheid movement. In contrast, Israel's anti-boycott stance has been adopted widely by governments, achieving relative prominence throughout the institutions of civil society, and endorsed by individuals across the political spectrum; as a result, the boycott against Israel is routinely condemned and derided, often facing calls for censure within Canadian political and civil society institutions.

This dissertation explores these forms of opposition in an attempt to answer the question of why the boycott campaign against South Africa appeared to be so successful, while the BDS campaign against Israel has struggled to become popular. There is a lack of comparative research into the anti-boycott initiatives of South Africa and Israel, in Canada or elsewhere. This is odd given that analogies between South Africa and Israel are increasingly common, both in scholarly and activist work, as I will review below. To date, this literature has focused primarily on two main areas of comparison: first, whether Israel's system of oppression in relation to the Palestinians can be understood as "apartheid," both in reference to international law and by looking at the example of historic apartheid in South Africa; and second, whether the example of the South African anti-apartheid movement can serve as a model or guide for BDS activism and the Palestinian solidarity movement more broadly. And yet, although it is not uncommon for commentators to suggest similarities in how South Africa and Israel have responded to international boycott campaigns, to date there has been no study that explores this comparison directly. One aim of this thesis is therefore to contribute to these debates by providing a comparative analysis of the role and form of the organized opposition to

boycott campaigns by South Africa and Israel (and their domestic lobbies) in Canada.

Beyond the international comparison, this thesis also responds to more localized gaps in the literature. There are several exceptional overviews of the Canadian anti-apartheid movement, some of which do include helpful discussions of pro-South African forces,⁸ and there are a couple of recent books⁹ that focus on South Africa's international propaganda war, but there has been no study specifically on pro-South African advocacy in Canada. Similarly, there is a rich body of literature on the BDS movement globally,¹⁰ and a modest selection of writing on BDS in Canada¹¹ which often discuss aspects of the impact of pro-Israel advocacy on activists. Some literature also exists in regards to the history of pro-Israel lobbying in the United States¹² and Canada,¹³ and of course there is no shortage of reporting and commentary on Israel's international anti-boycott initiatives.

⁸ Renate Pratt, *In Good Faith: Canadian Churches Against Apartheid* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997); Joan Fairweather, "Canadian Solidarity With South Africa's Liberation Struggle," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol 3, Part 2, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: Unisa Press/University of South Africa, 2008); John Saul, *On Building a Social Movement: The North American Campaign for Southern African Liberation Revisited* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Press, 2017); and especially Linda Freeman, *The Ambiguous Champion: Canada and South Africa in the Trudeau and Mulroney Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁹ Ron Nixon, *Selling Apartheid: South Africa's Global Propaganda War* (New York: Pluto Press, 2016); Hennie Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money: A tale of profit* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2017).

¹⁰ Omar Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011); Ali Abunimah, *The Battle for Justice in Palestine* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014).

¹¹ Rafeef Ziadah, "Outside the Multicultural: Solidarity and the Silencing of Palestinian Narratives" (PhD diss., York University, 2013); Katherine Nastovski, "Workers Confront Apartheid: Comparing Canadian Labor Solidarity Campaigns against South African and Israeli Apartheid," *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* 17, no. 2 (2014); Abigail Bakan and Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "Israeli Apartheid, Canada, and Freedom of Expression," in *Apartheid in Palestine: Hard Laws and Harder Experiences*, ed. Ghada Ageel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2015).

¹² Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict Over Israel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016); John Mearsheimer & Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy* 8, no: 3 (2006).

¹³ David Taras and Morton Weinfeld, "Continuity and Criticism: North American Jews and Israel," in *The Jews in Canada*, ed. Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, 2nd ed. (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press Canada, [1993] 2010); David Howard Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

However, once again there is no study specifically on the dynamics of contemporary pro-Israel and anti-BDS lobbying in Canada. The case studies in this thesis therefore aim to expand the research in these areas.

In this dissertation I will argue that the most significant feature distinguishing the organized opposition to boycotts in the two cases is in the nature of the particular social forces and institutions that have constituted each lobby. Unlike the elitist, corporate, and far-right ideological character of the pro-South African lobby, which had limited moral suasion in Canadian society, the pro-Israel lobby in Canada is primarily constituted by communal Jewish organizations;¹⁴ this has provided the pro-Israel lobby with far greater moral authority and influence, and it has therefore had some success in contesting the terms of the boycott and re-framing it on the grounds of antisemitism or anti-Jewish discrimination. Since the latter lobby has had an advantage in terms of their ability to articulate to what Gramsci called “common sense,” it has been able to leverage this, not only to defend their own position but to actively undermine their opponents. In comparison to the South Africa lobby, the Israeli government and the domestic pro-Israel lobby have targeted individual boycott supporters to a far greater and more repressive extent, as they shift from consent to coercion to reassert hegemony across the institutions of Canadian civil society. Far from a means of desperation or necessity, it is exactly Israel’s maintenance of prestige and ideological support at the highest levels which has allowed it to employ coercive measures against individual critics and boycott supporters at home and abroad.

¹⁴ This distinguishes the pro-Israel lobby in Canada somewhat from the American pro-Israel lobby, see Chapter 8.

In the case studies below, I employ a mixed-methods approach of qualitative and historical analysis, incorporating both archival research and semi-structured interviews. First, I visited four archives: Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, McGill University Archives in Montreal, the Thomas J. Dodd Research Centre at the University of Connecticut, and the Liberation Archives at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa. Through these collections, I accessed the documents of the Canada Mission of the African National Congress, two sets of documents from former directors of the Canadian-South African Society, and a trove of pro-South African propaganda. This provided significant insight into the internal deliberations and public strategies of South African liberation movements, anti-apartheid activists, and pro-South African advocates. As far as I am aware, this is the first academic study to examine and write about these specific collections of documents.

Second, I conducted 22 interviews between January 2017 and August 2019. For both case studies I recruited interview participants who have been advocates for or against these boycott campaigns in Canada, and whose views are publicly known. To find participants I relied primarily on snowball sampling, in addition to reaching out directly to relevant individuals or organizations. For the South Africa case study I conducted 9 interviews: 7 with former anti-apartheid activists, and 2 with former supporters of South Africa. The latter category was difficult to recruit as many of the prominent figures are no longer available for interviews, and there is a lack of public information to assist in locating others. For the Israel case study I conducted 13 interviews: 10 with individuals who have supported BDS, 2 with pro-Israel activists, and 1 with an unaligned expert commentator. The Israel case study posed different challenges due to my previous

involvement in various actions and events related to Palestinian human rights and BDS activism, as this opened some doors while closing others. While this facilitated my ability to access pro-BDS activists, unfortunately most of my attempts to reach out to pro-Israel organizations or individuals were either ignored or rejected. Hillel Ontario, for example, declined to participate, noting that they were “concerned about your objectivity in this particular subject area and how that may affect your findings.”¹⁵ In a similar manner, B’nai Brith Canada informed me that “As a matter of principle, B’nai Brith Canada does not participate in studies, which in its estimation, may serve to endorse or promote the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, as we categorically reject its objectives.”¹⁶ The Embassy of Israel in Ottawa requested confirmation of my university enrolment, but never followed up. Repeated attempts to contact the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) by various means simply went unanswered.

Regrettably, simply on the basis of this differential in availability, for both case studies my interview data is weighted in favour of pro-boycott activists, which means that I was able to explore their perspectives and experiences in more detail than I can for their opponents. In order to compensate for this, I have relied on additional sources. For the South Africa case study, I have benefited significantly from the archival collections discussed above, as well as publications such as *South Africa International*. For the Israel case study I relied to a significant extent on grey literature — specifically, the websites, press releases, and reports of pro-Israel organizations. Other publications, such as the *Canadian Jewish News*, were invaluable. I did my best to engage with their arguments

¹⁵ Personal communication, August 15, 2018.

¹⁶ Personal communication, August 16, 2018.

fairly and generously, although I recognize that there may be limitations to my understanding. Moreover, I have much gratitude towards those who agreed to participate in an interview despite potential political differences.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. The current chapter, below, will introduce the comparison between South Africa and Israel, outlining the shared foreign policy orientation which has shaped their international anti-boycott campaigns, and addressing the question of the “apartheid” analogy. Following this, Part One examines the political economy of campaigns for boycott, divestment, and sanctions. Chapter 1 is an evaluation of the South African “success story,” or the narrative that international solidarity, and specifically the tactics of BDS, played a role in ending apartheid in that country. I follow this in Chapter 2 with a theoretical analysis of what BDS actually does, drawing from Marxist political economy and cultural theory to explore the possibilities and limitations of BDS, both in terms of its material economic impact and its role in ideological struggle.

Parts Two and Three consist of the case studies, of which the structure is not exactly symmetrical. The South Africa case study has the benefit of being an historical analysis, and tries to make sense of a period which spans several decades. In contrast, the Israel case study attempts to understand the present moment in time, although within its immediate historical context. However, both case studies include the following elements: an examination of the dynamics of the solidarity movement, including the relationships of solidarity and the reference points for shaping the boycott demands (Chapters 3 and 7); an overview of the international anti-boycott strategies of the targeted government, as well as the history, structure, and initiatives of the relevant lobby in Canada (Chapters 4,

8, and 10); the primary rhetorical strategies used by the lobby against the boycott movement, including attempts to frame the solidarity movement as singling out the country for unfair criticism, or even as racism (Chapters 5 and 9); and in general terms, the overall impact that the lobby has had on the solidarity movement (Chapters 6 and 10). Finally, Chapter 11 is a comparative analysis of the themes arising from the two case studies.

One final note is important here. The purpose of this research is not exactly about measuring or explaining levels of Canadian public support for South Africa and Israel, nor about exploring diplomacy between their governments. Rather, it looks at the specific dynamics of the backlash against boycotts, which may be a contributing factor in shaping public support for these countries but cannot explain it as a whole. It is assumed that this support may be related to any number of factors, and in no way can be reduced to a single interest, motivation, or lobby. In this sense, one important piece of context is Canada's settler-colonial character and history as a participant in British imperialism, which should be understood as a structuring condition that has shaped its relationships with both South Africa and Israel. Until 1960 there had been warm relations between Canada and South Africa, as former "white dominions in the British Empire and Commonwealth" and allies against communism.¹⁷ The two countries have shared histories of violence, oppression, and of imposing systems of segregation on Indigenous populations, and South African apartheid has been often compared to Canada's reserve system for First Nations.¹⁸ In a

¹⁷ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 14-15.

¹⁸ This point was often made to highlight the similar struggles between black South Africans under apartheid and Indigenous peoples in Canada (and at times, this comparison was even used in attempts to defend South Africa, as I will explore below). There is also a common claim that South African officials had visited Canada to observe the reserves and pass law systems, in order to learn from Canada about how

similar way, early Canadian support for Israel tended to follow the decisions made by Britain, and to a lesser extent the United States,¹⁹ and one of the factors that motivated Canadian officials to support partition was the belief that “the emergence of a pro-western state in the Middle East would serve western interests.”²⁰ Canada has benefitted from close economic relationships with both countries, and in the case of Israel has entered into partnerships related to intelligence, defence, and counter-terrorism.²¹ Canadian public support also takes place in the context of broader narratives; for example, those who continued to defend South Africa at the height of the Cold War often did so on the basis of anti-Communism. Meanwhile, support for Israel over the past several decades has been bolstered by narratives of a “clash of civilizations” and the “War on Terror,”²² and is marked by a dehumanizing Orientalism which reduces Arab Palestinians to an “Inferior native Other,”²³ and which vilifies all Palestinian resistance as

to develop and implement various aspects of apartheid. This narrative has been widely reproduced by sources as diverse as Linda Freeman and former South African Ambassador to Canada Glenn Babb. However, Horwitz prefers to distinguish between the systems, noting that Canadian policy was motivated by the desire to assimilate the Indigenous population, whereas South African policy was aimed at segregation. Simonne Horwitz, “‘Apartheid in a Parka’? Roots and longevity of the Canada-South Africa comparison,” *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 17, no. 4 (2016). Fairweather similarly concludes that “Canada’s First Nations have experienced discrimination, destitution, and cultural denial but they have not experienced apartheid.” Joan Fairweather, “Is This Apartheid? Aboriginal Reserves and Self-Government in Canada,” (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1993), 118. Moreover, Horwitz argues that the popular claim that South African apartheid was modelled on Canada’s reserve system is simply unfounded; “There is no evidence of individual colonial agents traveling between Canada and South Africa during the early part of the twentieth century nor is there evidence of any specific, direct communications between the two colonies.” Horwitz, “‘Apartheid in a Parka’?” 462.

¹⁹ David Jay Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel: A study in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), ix, 231-2, 237.

²⁰ Bercuson, *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, 235, 127.

²¹ *Global Affairs Canada*, “Canada-Israel Strategic Partnership,” January 22, 2014, https://www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/canada_israel_MOU-prot_ent_canada_israel.aspx?lang=eng

²² Yousef Munayyer, “Alternative Bipolarity: How Israel Found Itself on the Wrong Side of the Global Divide,” in *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine: Foundational and Contemporary Debates*, ed. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper and Mira Sucharov (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 226-8.

²³ Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims,” 127; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, [1978] 2003), 27.

“terrorism.”²⁴ Above all, since 1968, Israel has fit within a narrative of the “invincible victim,” as paradoxically both a “militarily supreme nation” serving as a vanguard against barbarism, and yet also “existentially vulnerable” and eternally threatened with annihilation.²⁵ Any anti-boycott advocacy and lobbying must be understood within this overall context.

South Africa and Israel: Comparisons and Contrasts

By comparing the international anti-boycott lobbying activities of South Africa and Israel, this dissertation therefore follows a long history of regarding the two countries as facing similar challenges on the international stage, a view which has been held by the countries’ friends and opponents alike. When the South Africa Foundation, an organization representing the private sector in that country, published the very first issue of its journal *South Africa International* in 1970, its lead article opened with a sympathetic comparison to Israel: “It is a long way from Pretoria to Jerusalem, yet Israel has been very close to South African thoughts, especially since the war of June, 1967. Comparisons between South Africa and Israel were inevitable.”²⁶ For white South Africans, Israel’s victory was inspirational in that it proved the ability of small countries to “act vigorously in [their] own interest,” and it even “gave an unexpected boost to the very doctrine of apartheid itself”:

Israel has no stomach for the inclusion of a large Arab population within its permanent political boundaries. To remain a predominantly Jewish State is regarded as an essential guarantee of security and survival. During Dr. Verwoerd’s

²⁴ Nahla Abdo, *Captive Revolution: Palestinian Women’s Anti-Colonial Struggle Within the Israeli Prison System* (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 56-7, 71-2.

²⁵ Amy Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2018), 99.

²⁶ Cornelis Willem De Kiewiet, “The World and Pretoria,” *South Africa International* 1, no. 1 (1970), 3.

funeral oration, while all South Africa listened, the speaker had prophetically said as much by likening the Republic of Israel, equally encircled, equally laborious, equally concerned with the blessings of peace, equally determined to persevere.²⁷

This was not a unique appraisal. Following the six-day war in 1967, when Israel extended its control over the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), South Africa and Israel began to see themselves as sharing a common experience as strategically important states that were being unfairly singled out by their critics. The reaction in South Africa to the six-day war, as expressed in publications of the ruling National Party and the South African Jewish community, was a widespread understanding that the two countries had shared destinies and a common “struggle for existence.”²⁸ In the war’s aftermath, this idea of shared interests led to growing bilateral relations between the countries, even as Israel’s Labor party was officially denouncing the apartheid regime; this period included the 1968 formation of the Knesset’s Israel-South Africa Friendship League, and secret cooperation between officials throughout the 1970s on security and a joint nuclear program. South African Prime Minister Vorster’s highly publicized trip to Israel in 1976 was followed by much warmer relations with Begin’s Likud government after 1977, whose ethno-nationalist ideology brought the countries deeper into a “shared worldview.”²⁹ Israel was also one of the only countries to establish extensive diplomatic and economic ties with newly “independent” Bantustans in the late 1970s and early 1980s, thereby playing “a significant role in sustaining one of the very cornerstones of apartheid.”³⁰

²⁷ De Kiewiet, “The World and Pretoria,” 3-4.

²⁸ Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel’s Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 46-7.

²⁹ Polakow-Suransky, *Unspoken Alliance*, 53-4, 89, 110.

³⁰ Arianna Lissoni, “Apartheid’s ‘Little Israel’: Bophuthatswana,” in *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, ed. Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 54.

As South Africa and Israel grew closer through the 1970s, this mirrored the growing relationship between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). During this time, a new paradigm emerged among African countries that “white rule in Southern Africa constituted a neo-imperial historical phenomenon of the same type as ... Zionism.”³¹ This idea enabled sub-Saharan African states to enlist the help of Arab states in their struggle against South Africa, “broadening the anti-Israel front far beyond the Middle East in exchange.”³² As Algerian President Houari Boumedienne told the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in 1973, “Africa cannot adopt one attitude towards colonialism in southern Africa and a completely different one towards Zionist colonization in Northern Africa [in the Sinai].”³³ Between 1972-73 the number of African states with relations to Israel was slashed from 31 to 5, as opposition to apartheid was refocused “through the prism of anti-Zionism.”³⁴ In 1975, postcolonial nations passed a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly which defined Zionism as a “form of racism and racial discrimination,” while recalling the “unholy alliance between South African racism and zionism (*sic*).”³⁵

This alliance of African and Arab states reinforced the (positive) comparisons between South Africa and Israel. As early as 1969, South African propagandist Eschel Rhodie complained that just as the only thing uniting Arab states was their “common hatred of Israel,” so too “Black Africa is united only in its hatred of the White man and its

³¹ Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and its Search for Survival* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 85.

³² Miller, *An African Volk*, 85.

³³ Quoted in Miller, *An African Volk*, 85.

³⁴ Miller, *An African Volk*, 86.

³⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 3379 (XXX): Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination*, November 10, 1975. The resolution was later rescinded in 1991, in part because Israel demanded it as a condition for participating in the Madrid Peace Process.

determination to rid the continent of the White man in South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese territories.”³⁶ Cooperation between Israel and South Africa until the end of the 1980s was therefore grounded in their shared self-perception of victimhood and their outsider status as “pariah states.”³⁷ An article published by *South Africa International* in 1985 made this explicit:

South Africa—white South Africa—is a state, like Israel, whose survival is threatened in the long term, which is the situation for no other country in the world. Any defeat would be final. This does not make apartheid any more acceptable. But this vulnerability inherent in history and geography explains the obsession of Pretoria, and Israel, with interior and exterior security.³⁸

Both countries believed that they were unique in the same way, in that they faced threats which were existential in nature, and this lent itself to a shared orientation towards the world. By the mid-1970s, South African defence minister P.W. Botha had formalized this self-perception into the new paradigm of “total onslaught.” According to this view, South Africa was understood to be “under assault from communist-backed insurgents as part of a Moscow-orchestrated ‘total onslaught’ against the Western world, within which Southern Africa, with its mineral resources and strategic position, constituted a coveted prize.”³⁹ Liberation movements, including the ANC, were “viewed as parts of a constant and singular threat aimed squarely at the polity’s viability and the self-determination of the Afrikaner.” As for the anti-apartheid movement, “Western state and nonstate actors

³⁶ Eschel Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1969), 56. Rhodie further criticized the hypocrisy that South African and Zionist views were being treated differently in the West; Israel’s case to be a “European-oriented state in the Arab hemisphere” was presented in the UK and US press in a better light than South Africa’s case to be a “European nation in Africa,” and while the West does not hesitate to publish the views of Zionists on the need to safeguard their identity and nationhood, “should these views be expressed by a White South African, particularly a member of the governing party, it is termed ‘obnoxious and racist.’” Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 57, 58.

³⁷ Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 452-3, 468-485.

³⁸ Gérard Chaliand, “French Impressions of South Africa II,” *South Africa International* 14, no. 1 (1985): 1.

³⁹ Miller, *An African Volk*, 101.

supporting the Third World's campaign against apartheid were seen as simply playing into the communists' hands."⁴⁰ Under this paradigm South Africa did not distinguish between the intentions of its opponents, and "any and all opposition to Pretoria was seen as communist-inspired and a function of the total onslaught."⁴¹ This framework inspired Botha's "total strategy," in which "all sectors of society would become involved in the defence of the white state."⁴²

Israel adopted a similar posture against perceived global and totalizing threats, but with an important difference in its timeline. Until the 1990s, isolationist pressures against South Africa came from both developing countries and from civil society within Western states, whereas during this period Israel has been able to count on relatively strong public support in North America and Europe. Although there have been periods in which pro-Israel forces have had to take a more aggressive approach to combat negative public perceptions of Israel, such as during the backlash to Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1983,⁴³ it is only since the early 2000s that Israel has faced a grassroots boycott movement within Western countries similar to the types of pressure that the anti-apartheid movement leveraged against South Africa. Therefore, while Israel's perception of existential threats is not new, it is only in the contemporary period that Israel has adopted an anti-boycott strategy targeting North American civil society in a manner similar to what was carried out by South Africa from the 1960s until the 1990s.

The contemporary ideological equivalent to "total onslaught" is Israel's concept of

⁴⁰ Miller, *An African Volk*, 101.

⁴¹ Miller, *An African Volk*, 102.

⁴² Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 27.

⁴³ Kaplan, *Our American Israel*, 153-165.

“delegitimization,” which has become ubiquitous in recent years as a talking point against BDS but is rarely clearly defined. Generally speaking, it is used to refer to international campaigns that tarnish Israel’s image and legitimacy, and which are perceived to be motivated by a denial of Israel’s “right to exist.” In a landmark report which popularized the term, Israel’s Reut Institute explains that “Israel has been subjected to increasingly harsh criticism around the world, resulting in an erosion of its international image, and exacting a tangible strategic price,” and that “criticism has stretched beyond legitimate discourse regarding Israeli policy to a fundamental challenge to the country’s right to exist.”⁴⁴ Notably, the report’s definition of key words combines delegitimization with anti-Zionism.⁴⁵ It further defines a “delegitimization network” which is primarily composed of “organizations and individuals in the West – mostly elements of the radical European left, Arab and Islamic groups, and so-called post or anti-Zionist Jews and Israelis,”⁴⁶ and defines this network as one part of a broader movement against Israel which includes Islamic terrorism and Arab nationalism.⁴⁷ In a similar manner, Cohen and Freilich define “delegitimization campaigns” as “organized efforts to sway public opinion and national policy, and are aimed at making it difficult for nations to pursue their interests.” These campaigns rely on public criticism, negative media coverage, boycotts, and the use of international law, with the end goal to “compel the nation to change policies or make it a pariah, thus undermining its ability to prosper or even survive.” Once again, these campaigns are framed as being supplementary to

⁴⁴ Reut Institute, “Building a Political Firewall: Against Israel’s Delegitimization,” Version A, March 2010, <http://reut-institute.org/en/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=3769>, 13.

⁴⁵ Reut Institute, “Building a Political Firewall,” 11.

⁴⁶ Reut Institute, “Building a Political Firewall,” 13.

⁴⁷ Reut Institute, “Building a Political Firewall,” 13.

traditional military threats.⁴⁸

These parallel paradigms have shaped the particular strategies of South Africa and Israel as they have responded to the threat of grassroots boycotts led by solidarity movements in Canada, as discussed in the dissertation below. In this worldview, boycotts and other forms of criticism are depicted as threats to the state's legitimacy, falling within a broader totalizing threat from forces including global Communism or Islamic terrorism, and furthering the goals of military opponents who want to destroy the state. This orientation has justified aggressive state-led strategies to counter and even suppress solidarity activism worldwide, and a willingness by both governments to use covert, unconventional, and controversial means.

The Question of Apartheid

It is important here to address a potential complication arising from the South Africa-Israel comparison, which may impact the reception and engagement with this study.

Today, most comparisons between the two countries focus on the concept of "apartheid," and debate the applicability of the term to Israel's relationship to the Palestinians. This is a subject of significant controversy. Ilan Pappé suggests that most Israeli academics have avoided the language of apartheid because "even a slight or indirect implication of Israel as an apartheid state has far-reaching implications for the international legitimacy of the Jewish state."⁴⁹ In academia, Israel and Palestine have often been treated to an "apparent exceptionalism" which regards the situation as "so unique as to render comparative

⁴⁸ Matthew Cohen and Charles Freilich, "The Delegitimization of Israel: Diplomatic Warfare, Sanctions, and Lawfare," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2015): 29.

⁴⁹ Ilan Pappé, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Apartheid," In *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London: Zed Books, 2015), 2.

analysis impossible,” and this “refusal of comparison” has prevented the analysis of apartheid from being applied.⁵⁰ Indeed, the pro-Israel academic literature has been highly dismissive of the labels of both colonialism and apartheid, referring to the latter as “defamation”⁵¹ and “little more than ‘name-calling.’”⁵²

The question of whether or not Israel is an apartheid state is immaterial to the argument advanced in my dissertation, which is instead focused on the similarities between the anti-boycott strategies of the two countries — although the use of the term is itself a dynamic of the BDS movement, and is therefore something that I explore. Nonetheless, the very fact that I am comparing Israel to apartheid South Africa raises the possibility that my research will be dismissed out of hand by some critics, and I suspect that it may have been a factor in the unwillingness of most pro-Israel organizations to participate in this study. It is therefore a factor conditioning this work, regardless of whether or not I employ the concept of apartheid myself. At the same time, in the course of my research I developed a much deeper understanding of the history of South Africa, as well as how apartheid has been conceptualized and defended by the country’s supporters. This has led me to realize that much of the opposition to the term is based on common misconceptions about the actual experience and goals of South African apartheid, which I am now convinced is far more applicable and relevant to understanding the Israeli context than I had initially expected. As an obstacle to

⁵⁰ Ilana Feldman, “Reframing Palestine: BDS against Fragmentation and Exceptionalism,” *Radical History Review* 134 (2019): 196-7.

⁵¹ Robbie Sabel, “The Campaign to Delegitimize Israel with the False Charge of Apartheid,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 3, no. 4 (2011): 21; see also Miriam F. Elman and Asaf Romirowsky, “Postscript: BDS,” *Israel Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019): 229-9.

⁵² Donald Ellis, “Apartheid,” *Israel Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019): 63.

understanding my research, and of the subject matter in general, the question of apartheid therefore cannot be avoided.

In his 1979 essay “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims,” Edward Said wrote of what he called the “bifurcation of the Zionist program,” or “Zionist apartheid:”⁵³

There are Zionism and Israel for Jews, and Zionism and Israel for non-Jews. Zionism has drawn a sharp line between Jew and non-Jew; Israel built a whole system for keeping them apart, including the much admired (but completely apartheid) kibbutzim, to which no Arab has ever belonged. In effect, the Arabs are ruled by a separate government premised on the impossibility of isonomic rule for both Jews and non-Jews.⁵⁴

Reflections like Said’s, which express an intuitive connection between South Africa’s apartheid regime and Israel’s system of oppression over Palestinians, go back decades. This has prompted efforts within scholarly and activist circles to analyze Israel as an apartheid state, such as in the work of Uri Davis,⁵⁵ and research interests along these lines have intensified more recently with the ascension of the BDS movement. Using the term in reference to Israel is not an attempt to simply “equate Israel with South Africa under apartheid,” as if they were exactly the same, but to apply the international legal definition of the crime of apartheid (as established in the 1973 Convention and the 2002 Rome Statute) to “Israel’s legal system of bestowing rights and privileges according to ethnic and religious identity.”⁵⁶ Specifically, the Rome Statute of the Criminal Court defines the crime of apartheid as:

“Inhumane acts of a character similar to [other crimes against humanity] committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and

⁵³ Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims,” 144.

⁵⁴ Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims,” 162.

⁵⁵ Uri Davis, *Israel: An Apartheid State* (London: Zed Books, 1987).

⁵⁶ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 17.

committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.”⁵⁷

In addition to debating the applicability of this legal definition to Israel, the literature often explores these questions by comparing Israel to the experience of apartheid in South Africa. Although the legal determination of apartheid does not require there to be similarities with South African history, the parallels are nonetheless strong enough that in South Africa the comparison is widely accepted and “generally uncontroversial,”⁵⁸ and South African civil society boasts a “robust ... support for the Palestinian peoples.”⁵⁹

Concurrent with these debates are efforts to evaluate Israel as a settler-colonial state, like South Africa, and to interpret the Zionist movement in relation to the “European colonial movement.”⁶⁰ Settler-colonialism is distinguished from “classic” colonialism, in that the settlers become indigenized and appropriate the right to self-determination, usually while excluding the indigenous population from sharing power.⁶¹

⁵⁷ UN General Assembly, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, July 17, 1998, Article 7, paragraph 2 (h).

⁵⁸ Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs, “Apartheid/Hafrada: South Africa, Israel, and the Politics of Historical Comparison,” in *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, ed. Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 4.

⁵⁹ Rajini Srikanth, “South African Solidarity with Palestinians: Motivations, Strategies, and Impact,” *New England Journal of Public Policy* 27, no. 1 (2015): 2.

⁶⁰ As’ad Ghanem and Tariq Khateeb, “Israel in One Century—From a Colonial Project to a Complex Reality,” in *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine: Foundational and Contemporary Debates*, ed. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper and Mira Sucharov (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 82. Edward Said: “For although it coincided with an era of the most virulent Western anti-Semitism, Zionism also coincided with the period of unparalleled European territorial acquisition in Africa and Asia, and it was as part of this general movement of acquisition and occupation that Zionism was launched initially by Theodor Herzl.” Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims,” 127.

⁶¹ Virginia Tilley, “Redefining the Conflict in Israel-Palestine: The Tricky Question of Sovereignty,” in *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London: Zed Books, 2015), 305-8. As Lorenzo Veracini argues, “a settler colonial project is ultimately successful only when it *extinguishes* itself—that is, when the settlers cease to be defined as such and become ‘natives,’ and their position becomes normalized.” He suggests that this process has failed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where there continues to be a clear separation between colonizer and colonized. Lorenzo Veracini, “The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Israel, and the Occupation,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 28-29.

This requires recognizing the Palestinians as the indigenous population,⁶² who are faced with what Patrick Wolfe has called the “settler logic of elimination.”⁶³ Wolfe argues that Israel is an intensified version of settler colonialism due to the way in which “Zionism rigorously refused, as it continues to refuse, any suggestion of Native assimilation,” and that its “racialisation strategy” is “one of outright exclusion.”⁶⁴ It is this logic of elimination which has driven both direct violence and institutional processes of erasure – most significantly the Nakba (catastrophe) after 1947 – which Pappé and Wolfe describe as “ethnic cleansing” and which Abdo identifies as “genocide.”⁶⁵ In this context, the debates over “apartheid” may be understood as attempts to define Israel’s strategy of racialisation, or the specific practices undertaken by Israel to maintain its colonial domination.⁶⁶

Even among those who adopt the terminology of apartheid, whether in a legal sense or by analogy to South Africa, there is significant debate over how to properly distinguish

⁶² This is against Zionist claims of the indigeneity of settlers who are “returning” to the land. As Veracini notes, settlers are (by definition) not indigenous, as indigeneity is premised on presence and place-based existence. Zionists cannot be indigenous to the land, but they “entertain a historical, that is, non-ontological relationship to it. It is a meaningful relationship, but it is not that of an indigenous collective.” Veracini adds that “pointing settler-colonialism out is not a negation of historical claims.” Lorenzo Veracini, “Israel-Palestine Through a Settler-colonial Studies Lens,” *Interventions* 21, no. 4 (2019): 575-6.

⁶³ Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (New York: Verso, 2016), 211. In a similar way, Abdo argues that “unlike capitalism, which is characterized by inclusion and exploitation (e.g. of immigrants, Blacks and people of colour), settler colonialism is a form of capitalism that is primarily genocidal. It targets the physical existence of indigenous people; its ideology is based on wiping out the very physicality or bodies of the indigenous, grabbing and controlling their land, and erasing their culture and history.” Nahla Abdo, “Feminism, indigenesness and settler colonialism: oral history, memory and the Nakba,” in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, ed. Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha (London: Zed Books, 2018), 46.

⁶⁴ Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 211, 244.

⁶⁵ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London, England: Oneworld, 2015); Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 268; Abdo, “Feminism, indigenesness and settler colonialism,” 52.

⁶⁶ Wolfe defines racialisation as “race in action, which is prior to and not limited to racial doctrine.” Racialising practices “seek to maintain population-specific modes of colonial domination through time,” and represent “a response to the crisis occasioned when colonizers are threatened with the requirement to share social space with the colonized.” Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 10, 14.

between the different locations of Israeli rule. In other words, there is no consensus on whether apartheid applies only to the conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, or if it extends to Palestinian citizens within Israel proper, Palestinian residents in occupied East Jerusalem, or even Palestinian refugees in the diaspora. Some commentators reserve the concept of apartheid to describe only the most severe and visibly appalling conditions of the OPT,⁶⁷ which are often compared to South Africa's Bantustans.⁶⁸ While there may be discrimination within Israel proper, this is understood to be comparable to the issues facing minority populations in other countries. In an influential variation of this approach, Oren Yiftachel describes Israel proper as an "ethnocracy," which refers to a regime which is not fully democratic nor authoritarian but which "facilitates the *expansion, ethnicization, and control* of a dominant ethnic nation ... over contested territory and polity."⁶⁹ In contrast, he offers that the system imposed upon the West Bank and Gaza can

⁶⁷ See Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 189, 215.

⁶⁸ Leila Farsakh, who uses the apartheid concept more broadly, refers to the "Bantustanisation" of the OPT, or the granting of a degree of political autonomy alongside the fragmentation of territory and the consolidation of Israeli control. "Apartheid, Israel, and Palestinian Statehood," in *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London: Zed Books, 2015). Edward Said made this comparison in response to the signing of the Oslo Accords, arguing that "What Palestinians have gotten in the latest agreement ... is a series of municipal responsibilities in Bantustans dominated from the outside by Israel. What Israel has gotten is official Palestinian consent to continued occupation." He further described how the system of roads connecting the settlements to each other would make it "possible for settlers, like whites in the old South Africa, to avoid or never even see the people of the Bantustans, and making it impossible for Palestinians to rule over any contiguous territory." Said, "The Middle East 'Peace Process': Misleading Images and Brutal Realities," in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (New York: Vintage Books, [1995] 2000), 383, 384.

⁶⁹ Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 11, emphasis in original. For Abdo, the concept of ethnocracy is "ideologically and politically problematic," for it constructs Jewishness as a "unified ethnicity," lumping together "Mizrahis, Ethiopians, Ashkenazis and other Jewish ethnicities into a whole and present[ing] it as opposed to Palestinian Arabs as a binary." Nahla Abdo, *Women in Israel: Race, Gender and Citizenship* (New York: Zed Books, 2011), 13. Moreover, in this way the marginalization of Mizrahi or Ethiopian Jews is treated as equivalent to the violence or discrimination faced by Palestinians, whereas Abdo argues that Palestinians must be understood as an indigenous people who are victims of a settler-colonial state, facing the forces of loss of land and genocide. Abdo, "Feminism, indigenosity and settler colonialism." Lenton similarly argues that using "ethnicity" in the Israeli context (whether in terms of ethnocracy or "ethnic cleansing") occludes the issue of race, and how "the Israeli racial state anchors the discrimination against Palestinian citizens, occupied and besieged subjects in a racialized legal framework." Ronit Lenton, "Race and

be characterized as “full apartheid,”⁷⁰ and warns that Israel itself faces threats of “creeping apartheid” due to a series of “incremental” decisions and policies which affect the status of West Bank settlements and non-Jews in Israel.⁷¹

For the most part, scholars and activists have taken up an expanded analysis of apartheid, asserting that it is “impossible to look at Israel in isolation from the Occupied Territories,” and that “Greater Israel” is the “effective boundary of control and meaningful unit of analysis.”⁷² An United Nations report authored by Richard Falk and Virginia Tilley in 2017 concluded that Israel is guilty of maintaining an apartheid regime “over the Palestinian people as a whole,” and that this system operates by “splintering the Palestinian people geographically and politically into different legal categories,” including the domain of refugees. As the authors noted, this fragmentation serves to “obscure this regime’s very existence.”⁷³ This appraisal is consistent with the work of Ben White, who argues that “Israel has maintained an apartheid regime over the territory it controls” including Israel proper since 1948 and the OPT since 1967,⁷⁴ and Rafeef

Surveillance in the settler colony,” *Palgrave Communications*, 3:17056 (2017): 2, 4. See above paragraph on settler-colonialism.

⁷⁰ Yiftachel, 304n15.

⁷¹ Yiftachel, 125-6. In a similar way, there are many examples in which the spectre of apartheid is invoked, but in a conditional and future-oriented manner; for example, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak has warned that Israel could become an apartheid state if it abandons the goal of a two-state solution and assumes indefinite control over the OPT. What is striking about this analysis is its temporal character—it is determined that Israel does not constitute apartheid so long as the occupation is believed to be temporary (over fifty years after the 1967 war), rather than being based on how the state actually operates in the here and now. Relatedly, Polakow-Suransky argues that the apartheid analogy does not yet apply to Israel “given that a minority is not yet governing over a majority.” Polakow-Suransky, *Unspoken Alliance*, 241. The use of the term apartheid is again temporal, but in relation to demographic conditions which, it should be noted, are not required as a condition under international law to constitute apartheid.

⁷² Ran Greenstein, “Israel-Palestine and the Apartheid Analogy: Critics, Apologists and Strategic Lessons,” in *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London: Zed Books, 2015), 335.

⁷³ Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid: Palestine and the Israel Occupation* (Beirut: United Nations, 2017), 37-8.

⁷⁴ Ben White, *Israeli Apartheid: A Beginner’s Guide*, 2nd ed (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 103.

Ziadah's claim that Israel's overall system of colonialism and apartheid "applies to the entirety of the Palestinian people."⁷⁵ Abdo illustrates the systematic and indivisible nature of oppression in Palestine:

Exclusion or racial separation lies at the heart of the Zionist colonial-settler project. It aims at establishing an exclusionary and exclusivist Jewish state in Palestine. Control over space (geography or territory), as well as over demography, lies as the centre of this citizenship regime.⁷⁶

This approach complicates the analogy with South Africa, as within Israel proper there is a relative absence of "petty apartheid,"⁷⁷ the blatant segregation of amenities and public space that was associated with apartheid South Africa in the public consciousness, and which is on full display in the occupied city of Hebron, for example. However, this just means that systemic discrimination in Israel is, rather, more "covert,"⁷⁸ as Palestinian citizens are granted attenuated political rights but excluded from "meaningful citizenship and political influence."⁷⁹ As of 2017, Israeli human rights group Adalah has catalogued "65 Israeli laws that discriminate directly or indirectly against Palestinian citizens in Israel and/or Palestinian residents of the [OPT] on the basis of their national belonging,"⁸⁰ and discrimination against non-Jewish citizens of Israel is enshrined in exclusionary laws that are fundamental to the very constitution of the Israeli state, including the Law of Return, the Nationality Law, and the Absentee Property Law.⁸¹ In

⁷⁵ Rafeef Ziadah, "Palestine Calling: Notes on the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement," in *Apartheid in Palestine: Hard Laws and Harder Experiences*, ed. Ghada Ageel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2015), 92.

⁷⁶ Abdo, *Women in Israel*, 40.

⁷⁷ White, *Israeli Apartheid*, 11.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Cook, "'Visible Equality' as Confidence Trick," in *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London: Zed Books, 2015), 124.

⁷⁹ Cook, "'Visible Equality' as Confidence Trick," 154.

⁸⁰ Adalah: The Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, "The Discriminatory Laws Database," September 25, 2017, <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771>.

⁸¹ Abdo, *Women in Israel*, 40.

2018, the Israeli Knesset passed the “nation-state law” which designated Israel as a state of the Jewish people alone who have the “exclusive right to national self-determination,” which was widely criticized as a form or element of “apartheid.”⁸² It also must not be forgotten that from 1948 until 1966, Palestinians within Israel proper were subject to martial law, similar to the system that has characterized Israel’s regime in the OPT since 1967.⁸³

Due to this complexity, Omar Barghouti argues that Israeli apartheid is more “sophisticated” than the South African form.⁸⁴ Former South African anti-apartheid leader Ronnie Kasrils argues that Israel can be understood as a form of Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), applying the analysis developed by the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1962 to make sense of apartheid in South Africa. According to the SACP, apartheid was a form of colonialism “in which the oppressing White nation occupied the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and lived side by side with them,” and therefore “Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself.”⁸⁵ Ran Greenstein agrees that this analysis is applicable to the case of Israel, which

⁸² *Al Jazeera*, “Israel passes controversial ‘Jewish nation-state’ law,” July 19, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2018/07/israel-passes-controversial-jewish-nation-state-law-180719050559316.html>; Edo Konrad, “Israel’s Nation-State Law: ‘Apartheid is a process,’” +972 Magazine, July 19, 2018, <https://972mag.com/israels-nation-state-law-apartheid-is-a-process/136775/>; *Ha’aretz* Editorial, “The Apartheid Prime Minister,” July 30, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/editorial/the-apartheid-prime-minister-1.6319599>.

⁸³ “The martial law regime subjected Palestinian citizens of Israel to severe physical and psychological violence for eighteen years. In 1966, the Israeli government lifted martial law, viewing the Palestinian population as sufficiently controlled by then. ... By this time also, Israel had established an ethno-religious hierarchy that could facilitate continued Palestinian dispossession and removal entirely within a civil law framework, and it could afford to abandon the military regime.” Noura Erakat, *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 59.

⁸⁴ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 167.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Ronnie Kasrils, “Birds of a Feather: Israel and Apartheid South Africa – Colonialism of a Special Type,” in *Israel and South Africa: The Many Faces of Apartheid*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London: Zed Books, 2015), 25-6.

he describes as an “apartheid of a special type”: one which combines “democratic norms, military rule, and exclusion or inclusion of extraterritorial populations.”⁸⁶ However, both Kasrils and Greenstein emphasize that unlike South Africa, Israel is not dependent on Palestinian labour; therefore, Palestinian workers “do not possess the crucial strategic leverage deployed by their South African counterparts,” and cannot replicate the role that labour played in the antiapartheid struggle,⁸⁷ and Israeli policies are designed not to maintain a labour force, but are geared towards “completely driving out the remaining inhabitants.”⁸⁸ Nonetheless, despite the complications and contradictions, it is not uncommon for observers, including South Africans, to argue that the situation faced by Palestinians, especially in the OPT, is “worse” than the South African experience of apartheid.⁸⁹

One important implication of the use of the term apartheid is that it evokes the memory of the anti-apartheid struggle against South Africa, and many scholars and activists have explicitly turned to the experience of the BDS campaigns of the South African anti-apartheid movement as a model for the Palestinian solidarity work.⁹⁰ The momentum of the BDS movement since 2005, and its role in slowly moving Israel towards becoming a pariah, has led Omar Barghouti to claim that “our South Africa

⁸⁶ Ran Greenstein, “Israel, the Apartheid Analogy, and the Labor Question,” in *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, ed. Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 30.

⁸⁷ Greenstein, “Israel, the Apartheid Analogy, and the Labor Question,” 37.

⁸⁸ Kasrils, “Birds of a Feather,” 36. As Davis puts it, the pattern of colonization associated with the Zionist movement was not based on the exploitation of the indigenous population, but was “colonization through the dispossession and *exclusion* of the native people.” Uri Davis, *Israel: An Apartheid State*, 15, emphasis added.

⁸⁹ Achille Mbembe, “Forward: On Palestine,” in *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, ed. Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), vii; Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 169-70.

⁹⁰ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*; Soske and Jacobs, “Apartheid/Hafrada,” 4; Abigail Bakan and Yasmeen Abu-Laban, “Palestinian Resistance and International Solidarity: The BDS Campaign,” *Race & Class* 51, no. 1 (2009).

moment has finally arrived!”⁹¹ Rajini Srikanth agrees, arguing that although this “moment” is symbolic, BDS points to a new space for expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people.⁹² Of course, even if there are similarities between Israel and South Africa, this itself does not necessarily suggest particular strategies for social change,⁹³ and Ran Greenstein warns about seeking to “replicate the achievements of the anti-apartheid struggle but with no equivalent mass movement that seeks to mobilize people on the basis of labor conditions and socioeconomic demands.”⁹⁴ On the other hand, John Saul argues that the lack of an internal mass movement in Palestine may make international pressure an “*even more appropriate* strategy of resistance than it was in South Africa.”⁹⁵

For those who are opposed to the South Africa analogy, their objections have generally been based on a series of common misunderstandings about South African history and its apartheid system, erroneously suggesting the inapplicability of the comparison. I will briefly address two of these here. First, there is an argument that apartheid is necessarily internal to a sovereign country. As Barakat and Dajani Daoudi explain, apartheid “refers to a unified political system in which one group uses the judicial system to segregate another people of different ethnic origin or race by law, tradition, and custom,”⁹⁶ and therefore it cannot describe the occupation of the West Bank

⁹¹ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 233.

⁹² Rajini Srikanth, “South African Solidarity with Palestinians: Motivations, Strategies, and Impact,” *New England Journal of Public Policy* 27, no. 1 (2015): 5.

⁹³ Greenstein, “Israel-Palestine and the Apartheid Analogy,” 327.

⁹⁴ Greenstein, “Israel, the Apartheid Analogy, and the Labor Question,” 40.

⁹⁵ Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, 218, emphasis in original.

⁹⁶ Zeina M. Barakat and Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi, “Israel and Palestine: Occupation Not Apartheid,” in *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine: Foundational and Contemporary Debates*, ed. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper and Mira Sucharov (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 190.

or East Jerusalem which are territories “not internationally recognized as belonging to” Israel.⁹⁷ To put it plainly, “Israel is not oppressing the Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as *minority citizens of the state*, but as an occupying force of territories acknowledged by the United Nations and international law as occupied.”⁹⁸ Second, there is a definition of apartheid which focuses almost entirely on the existence of segregation or “petty apartheid.” For example, Barakat and Dajani Daoudi focus on South Africa’s experience of “the segregation of public facilities and social events, as well as housing, schools, sports, and employment opportunities by race.”⁹⁹ Lists of examples of social phenomena which define South African apartheid tend to focus on these forms of overt, Jim Crow-esque instances of discrimination and segregation.¹⁰⁰ It is often asserted that because Israel proper is apparently lacking these practices, the concept of apartheid cannot apply.

These objections, however, are based on a flawed representation of South African apartheid, which is best understood not as a static and internal state of affairs, or as a defined system of segregationist practices, but more fundamentally as a *process* of separate development. Initially, “apartheid” after 1948 was a consolidation and extension of already existing patterns of discrimination and segregation, which featured racist limitations on mobility, land ownership, and voting rights. “As a policy, apartheid sought to reorganize and rationalize [existing] mechanisms of segregation on a national scale in

⁹⁷ Barakat and Dajani Daoudi, 188.

⁹⁸ Barakat and Dajani Daoudi, 191, emphasis added.

⁹⁹ Barakat and Dajani Daoudi, p. 190.

¹⁰⁰ See Robbie Sabel, “The Campaign to Delegitimize Israel with the False Charge of Apartheid,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 3, no. 4 (2011): 21-2; Donald Ellis, “Apartheid,” *Israel Studies* 24, no. 2 (2019).

defence of the ethnonationalist ideal of a white South Africa.”¹⁰¹ Through the creation of racial categories corresponding to group areas or tribal homelands, South Africa attempted to separate the country into clear and distinct racial societies, and therefore allow the white society to develop apart from the other racial groups. Notably, South Africa extended this system to occupied South West Africa (Namibia), which from 1915 until 1990 was under South African administration but outside its official sovereignty.

Over the next decades the apartheid strategy became more sophisticated, evolving into the idea of “separate development,” and advancing the goal of partitioning South Africa into “a series of Black nation-states and a large White-controlled rump entity.”¹⁰²

State partition became the declared aim of the government as the policy [of apartheid] unfolded. [...] Under this policy all Blacks in South Africa would become members of a Black nation, which would possess a separate territorially based state, and within which the nation’s political rights would be exercised. Thus at the end of the policy’s implementation there would be no Black South Africans and the Whites, as the largest group of citizens, would be able to numerically dominate the government of the rump state.¹⁰³

With the goal of apartheid stated in terms of partition, Pretoria tried to claim that it was not subjugating its own citizens; in fact, Blacks would be able to express their full political freedoms in their own states, and should therefore be satisfied giving up their claims to be citizens of white South Africa (along these lines, the Black Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970 stripped Black South Africans of their South African citizenship

¹⁰¹ Soske and Jacobs, “Apartheid/Hafrada,” 2.

¹⁰² A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), 5-6.

¹⁰³ Christopher, *Atlas of Apartheid*, 66. Glenn Babb, former South African Ambassador to Canada, regularly discussed apartheid in these terms. As he remarked on the Webster! television program: “What was apartheid if it wasn’t just partition of South Africa into twelve different republics? Twelve different republics which will have their own independence.” *Webster!*, BC Television, January 26, 1987, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGkAKC1sErg>.

as their corresponding ‘homelands’ achieved nominal independence). This was supported by the regime’s emphasis on constructing “traditional” tribal structures and the “conscious reconstruction of ethnic identity,”¹⁰⁴ which emphasized the fundamental differences between different tribal groups in order to justify their segregation. A number of Black leaders accepted this arrangement and took on a degree of autonomy and self-governance, but only four Bantustans were ever granted full “independence,” and they were never recognized by the international community.

Importantly, this trajectory towards partition (or “grand apartheid”) was coupled with efforts throughout the 1970s and 1980s to ease or even eliminate many elements of blatant segregation (petty apartheid) that had previously been adopted within “white” South African society. These reforms were intended to blunt international criticism — but they were also predicated on the idea that petty apartheid would not be necessary if grand apartheid was complete. This also explains the rationale behind South Africa’s new constitution in 1983, which created a tricameral parliament with separate chambers for Indian and Coloured populations. Blacks were excluded from this new arrangement precisely because their proper political structures were to be the tribal Bantustans, whereas the other population groups had to be partially incorporated into the state, as they had no “homelands” that they could be relegated to. When by the mid-1980s it was clear that the apartheid system could not survive much longer, efforts were put into finding a political solution that would involve some degree of power-sharing between racial groups, but without adopting the type of universal one-person-one-vote system which the African National Congress and others were demanding. Internationally, the

¹⁰⁴ Horwitz, “‘Apartheid in a Parka’?” 464-6.

consensus was that anything other than universal and equal suffrage within a single state would merely represent the continuation of apartheid in a different form.

Apartheid South Africa was never in a permanent state but was always in transition. Each of these stages represented a specific manifestation of “apartheid” as part of an ongoing process, which if successful would have culminated in the partition of the country into separate states for separate peoples. While blatant racial segregation was an important feature throughout this process, it varied significantly throughout these various stages, and elements of this were progressively scaled back throughout the 1970s-80s; thus, there is no reason to insist that these petty apartheid elements were any more definitive of South Africa’s system than its grand apartheid elements were. Finally, at no point was apartheid a strictly “internal” phenomenon — not only was this regime extended to Namibia,¹⁰⁵ but South Africa’s leadership believed that Blacks were fundamentally foreign to the South African state, and this was the underlying assumption motivating apartheid itself.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Tilley argues that South African control of Namibia proves in a straightforward manner that the “presumption that a state can be held culpable of apartheid only regarding the population within its formal sovereignty is simply incorrect.” She goes further to argue that “Israel is enjoying full sovereignty throughout the OPT in all but name,” and that the lack of formal sovereignty is exactly what allows Israel to maintain its control. Tilley, “Redefining the Conflict in Israel-Palestine,” 297-8.

¹⁰⁶ There is another significant difference here between the South African and Israeli experiences of apartheid. South African apartheid required building up distinct “tribal” cultures and recognizing the claim of different (artificial) racial groups to tribal homelands, as this was used to justify removing them from white spaces. Israeli apartheid is very different in that there is no recognition of a legitimate Palestinian claim to land, as evident in the ideology and actions of the ongoing settler movement. Any partition would be a compromise to safeguard Israel’s demographic majority, rather than a real recognition of Palestinian claims. In keeping with this, far from supporting the development of a Palestinian national or cultural identity that could justify their separation from Israeli Jews, Palestinians are regarded merely as “Arabs,” with no distinction from the surrounding countries. This assertion in fact facilitates the ongoing denial of the legitimacy of their presence in the region, which is bolstered by constant Israeli appeals to an historical or biblical Jewish presence in the West Bank as a means to counter Palestinian presence. This is why it is sometimes claimed that Palestinians “don’t exist” or are an “invented people,” which lends itself to calls from the far-right for their transfer to other “Arab” countries. Therefore in both cases the process of apartheid as separate development is built on racial logics, but working in opposite directions. Moreover, this also means that South African partition was more likely to be achieved, whereas the settler logic that

This history does not itself prove that Israel is an apartheid state, but it does suggest that the most common objections to such an analysis are flawed. When South African apartheid is presented without these misconceptions, the historical analogy with Israel appears much more apt. In the same way that South African apartheid was always in movement, it may be possible to conceptualize Israel as engaging in a similar (though distinct) colonial *process* of apartheid as separate development. This would allow for an interpretation of Israel's apartheid character in its totality; that is, across its various domains of control, and during very different moments of its history, such as prior to 1966, when Palestinians within Israel were subject to military law, and after 1967, both inside and across the Green Line. This is consistent with Abdo's demand to see Israel's settler-colonial character "as a continuum, and not as belonging to discrete historical periods."¹⁰⁷ Far from demonstrating the incompatibility of comparison between South Africa and Israel, the history of apartheid actually increases the relevance of such a comparison, and only makes further analysis of their actions more compelling.

denies any Palestinian claims also means that Israel is very unwilling to give up any piece of land. This may be because the idea of partition was voluntarily adopted by South Africa, whereas the partition framework was largely forced upon the Zionist movement, and Israel's leaders have generally worked to undermine it.

¹⁰⁷ Abdo, *Women in Israel*, 187.

Part One: The Political Economy of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions

Chapter 1: Evaluating the South African “Success Story”

International anti-apartheid activism is often given an enormous amount of credit for the ultimate demise of apartheid in South Africa. In Robert Massie’s otherwise cautious and meticulous account of the US anti-apartheid movement, he concludes that although it was certainly not the sole factor, the movement nonetheless sparked an “unlikely chain reaction” which “steadily accumulated into a force that altered history and brought forth justice.”¹ The example of South Africa is often cited as evidence that tactics of economic pressure including boycott, divestment, and sanctions constitute an effective strategic approach that can be replicated elsewhere, and the BDS campaign against Israel explicitly adopts the South African experience as its model. In this chapter, therefore, I examine the legacy of anti-apartheid activism, providing a broad overview of the international campaign for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against South Africa, while surveying the literature to explore the extent to which these tactics can be considered successful in defeating white minority rule by putting economic and political pressure on the apartheid regime. In fact, the international anti-apartheid movement can be understood to have been “successful” to the extent that it was able to compel the actions of governments and private industry to disengage from the South African economy, and to create the political conditions and public support for economic sanctions. Those sanctions, although weak and contradictory, did have an important impact on South Africa in as much as they aggravated existing economic trends in the

¹ Robert Kinloch Massie, *Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1997), 695.

context of an international recession and significant internal resistance to apartheid.²

Nonetheless, the most important BDS successes seem to have been following economic trends, not driving them, making it difficult to determine whether BDS was a necessary or important contributor in the fall of the apartheid regime.

Of course, the international anti-apartheid movement always understood itself to be secondary to the role of internal resistance within Southern Africa. This is a view expressly held by many who were activists within the solidarity movement.³ By the time that the international movement became mainstream, black Africans had been resisting white minority rule for decades through civil disobedience, labour stoppages, economic sabotage, and armed rebellion, and were frequently met with brutal repression by the South African government. As Francis Nesbitt writes:

At the heart of the [anti-apartheid] movement was the struggle of black Africans in southern Africa to end white supremacy. This internal movement was the catalyst for actions at the international level and the critical link that gave coherence to the movement as a whole.⁴

This idea of the internal movement as a “catalyst” for boycotts is consistent with the fact that the international movement always experienced its greatest periods of momentum immediately following highly reported acts of brutal repression against peaceful protests: in particular, after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the Soweto student strikes and riots of 1976, and the Vaal uprisings against the 1983 constitution.⁵ To the extent that external

² The relationship between the liberation movements and the international boycott campaign will be explored in detail in Chapter 3.

³ For example, Gwen Schulman (former student activist with Southern Africa Committee and the Groupe de Recherche et d'Initiative pour la Libération de l'Afrique), interviewed by the author, April 18, 2017; Moira Hutchinson (former staff and coordinator of the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility), interviewed by the author, April 10, 2017.

⁴ Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race For Sanctions: African Americans Against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), viii.

⁵ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 79, 398; Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 130.

forms of pressure were successful, it was because they built upon and supported the work of internal struggles within South Africa.

“People’s Sanctions”: Boycotts and Divestment

Over three decades, the anti-apartheid movement engaged in a variety of participatory actions and tactics to protest the South African regime; these were sometimes referred to by the African National Congress (ANC) as “People’s Sanctions.”⁶ One of the most important tactics, of course, was the boycott,⁷ which dates back to 1959 when the ANC “urged an international boycott to support its internal boycott of goods produced by Afrikaner nationalists.”⁸ In effect, this boycott call sought to replicate and support the internal boycotts of white-owned business, which had gained momentum within the 1952 “defiance campaign” against discriminatory laws, and which continued to be an important tactic up to and including the uprisings of the mid-1980s.⁹ The boycott call was adopted initially by the Jamaican government and trade union federations across Africa and Europe,¹⁰ and spread widely to include many members of the United Nations, churches,

⁶ “Report: Commission on Sanctions,” Consultative Meeting of ANC Chief Representatives, Mazimbu, Tanzania, August 12-13, 1987, box 34, folder 26, ANC Archives.

⁷ In the literature on the anti-apartheid movement the terms “boycott” and “economic sanctions” are sometimes used interchangeably, but there is good reason to be more precise about terminology. I will typically use the term boycotts to refer to individual or institutional choices to avoid targeted goods and services from South Africa, whereas sanctions refer to restrictions imposed or sponsored by governments (divestment will be defined in more detail below). In general terms, boycotts and divestment involve voluntary consumer, purchaser, or equity investment decisions, whereas sanctions involve coercion by governments. This is imperfect, since sanctions can be voluntary: promoted by governments, but not binding on the decisions of actors. On the other hand, if boycotts are organized by organizations capable of effective enforcement, like sports organizations, or by provinces or state governments with monopolies over the sale of certain products (i.e. alcohol), they can involve a remarkable degree of coercion.

⁸ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 36; see also Tom Lodge, “Sanctions and Black Political Organizations,” in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Mark Orkin (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1989), 34-5.

⁹ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 17-18; Paul Di Stefano and Mostafa Henaway, “Boycotting Apartheid from South Africa to Palestine,” *Peace Review* 26, no. 1 (2014): 20; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 51-2; 581; 645.

¹⁰ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 36.

unions, and US civil rights leaders including Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. who saw anti-apartheid struggles as deeply connected to struggles against segregation in the US.¹¹

Economic boycotts against South Africa generally worked by discouraging consumption choices of goods either produced in South Africa or by multinational companies with South African investments. These actions took many different forms; in 1985 the Canadian Federation of Students voted in favour of banning South African food from university campuses,¹² while Carleton University students ran campaigns to declare the university an “apartheid-free zone,” joining several other campuses in voting to remove South African produce from cafeteria shelves and Carling O’Keefe beer from campus pubs.¹³ In a similar way, municipalities adopted “selective contracting” measures to screen out goods and services from South African businesses.¹⁴ Occasionally, boycotts were even enforced by governments, as when provincial governments across Canada led boycott efforts by targeting South African wines: for a brief period in the 1970s, NDP governments in BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba banned or discouraged the sale of South African wines, and the ban was nearly universally adopted by Canadian provinces in 1985.¹⁵

Labour unions also adopted boycott tactics by engaging in workplace-based direct

¹¹ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 192-4; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 61-3.

¹² Sheila Barth, “South African food ban wins support,” *The Charlatan*, 1985.

¹³ Lynn Marchildon, “Students split on opposing apartheid,” *The Charlatan*, September 26, 1985; Lynn Marchildon, “Cusa boycotts South African goods,” *The Charlatan*, October 10, 1985; Lynn Marchildon, “CUSA sticks to boycott,” *The Charlatan*, November 21, 1985.

¹⁴ Meg Voorhes, “The US Divestment Movement,” in *How Sanctions Work: Lessons From South Africa*, ed. Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 139.

¹⁵ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 73, 138-9.

actions;¹⁶ in some cases, the SACTU Solidarity Committee (SSC) was able to cooperate with dockworkers in Vancouver to obtain manifests from South Africa ships, and then take that information to unions at companies and say “this is in your plant, get rid of it.”¹⁷ In March 1986, the SCC and four major unions called a week of action to promote sanctions against South Africa, which included a 24-hour period in which workers refused service: postal workers refused to service mail coming from South Africa; airline reservation agents refused to book flights to South Africa; communication workers refused to place telephone calls (“if someone wanted to call his parents in South Africa they wouldn’t allow it to happen”); and dockworkers would refuse to board “blacklisted” ships. Remarkably, the SSC’s Ken Luckhardt says that during this action “nobody got arrested, nobody lost their job, nobody even got disciplined. By that time, the employers realized which side they should be on.”¹⁸

Beyond economic boycotts, the anti-apartheid movement also pushed for other forms of pressure, including sports, cultural, and academic boycotts. Sports boycotts, which prevented South African sports teams from participating in international events, were sometimes enforced by governments and other times adopted by international sports organizations themselves. In terms of isolating South Africa, David Black argues that “the sport boycott was the most ‘effective’ [i.e. enforceable] of all sanctions against South

¹⁶ Nastovski, “Workers Confront Apartheid,” 215.

¹⁷ Ken Luckhardt (South African Congress of Trade Unions Solidarity Committee), interviewed by the author, Sept 18, 2017.

¹⁸ Luckhardt, interview; see also John Deverell, “Unions threaten to sever services to South Africa,” *Toronto Star*, March 11, 1986; Lorne Slotnick, “Unions’ call for anti-apartheid action has limited impact,” *Globe and Mail*, March 14, 1986. Although the 1985 week of action was the “pinnacle” of labour-based boycott actions, there were many other actions over the years, some of them quite discreet. “I tell you, there were more South African bottles of brandy that fell off the carts in the [Liquor Control Board of Ontario] system than you ever would imagine.” Luckhardt, interview.

Africa,” since the “hierarchical” governance of sports meant that organizations could easily enforce compliance.¹⁹ In contrast, academic and cultural boycotts—the latter included television, arts, film, music, etc—were applied on an individual basis and very selectively.²⁰ The tangible economic impact of each of these boycotts was limited, but they heightened the “psychological cost” of apartheid,²¹ and they had the advantage of targeting white and privileged South Africans, with little impact on black South Africans, and without harm to those applying the sanctions.²²

The most visible tactic adopted by the international anti-apartheid movement was to push for divestment, in which activists put pressure on institutional investors (like pension funds or university endowment funds) to divest (sell) their stocks from companies that had operations in South Africa. Divestment is distinguished from *disinvestment*, which is a very different activity, and will be explored further below; divestment involves a simple change of ownership among shareholders, whereas disinvestment represents a direct change (withdrawal) of investment by corporations themselves, by selling the majority control of their subsidiaries to new owners, or even dismantling their assets. Even though it is often assumed that these processes are related, this is not necessarily the case.²³

Arguments for divestment were first articulated in the early 1960s, with proponents claiming that a cumulative divestment from US companies could compel

¹⁹ David R. Black, “‘Not Cricket’: The Effects and Effectiveness of the Sport Boycott,” In *How Sanctions Work: Lessons From South Africa*, ed. Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 213.

²⁰ Nomazengele A. Mangaliso, “Cultural Boycotts and Political Change,” in *How Sanctions Work: Lessons From South Africa*, ed. Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 238-9.

²¹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 69.

²² Mangaliso, “Cultural Boycotts and Political Change,” 241.

²³ See Chapter 2 for further analysis of divestment.

those companies to shut down their South African operations (hence, disinvestment), and that pressures from the lack of foreign capital could eventually force the South African government to end apartheid.²⁴ One major player in Canada was the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR), which was formed in 1975 to represent a coalition of churches in their roles as major institutional investors, and would coordinate the work of church investment committees. In general, the position of church investors was to engage with companies as much as possible; TCCR would therefore bring shareholder proposals to companies and banks to encourage them to cease their investments in South Africa. However, the “eventual goal” of TCCR was to get the churches to completely divest from those companies, and this became more popular once churches felt that companies were unresponsive and that there was no other option.²⁵

The divestment movement gained momentum in the late 1970s, especially on university campuses, and by 1985 had grown to include actions by churches, municipalities, and state and provincial governments.²⁶ McGill University was the first Canadian university to divest in November 1985, followed shortly by York and Dalhousie,²⁷ and in 1986 the United Church decided to fully divest from companies with ties to South Africa.²⁸ Although divestment activism slowed somewhat after the implementation of sanctions, “by 1993, 40 of the top 50 [US] colleges and universities (ranked by size of endowment) had some sort of divestment policy, as did the

²⁴ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 218-9.

²⁵ Hutchinson, interview; Pratt, *In Good Faith*.

²⁶ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 428-9, 548-73, 578; Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 137-9.

²⁷ “Divestment: Lessons from McGill,” *Southern Africa Report* 1, no. 3 (1985); Paul Keen, “Dalhousie Divests,” *Southern Africa Report* 1, no. 4 (1986); Gene Desfor, “Divestment at York University: the Student - Trade Union Alliance,” *Southern Africa Report* 1, no. 4 (1986).

²⁸ Kirkwood, interview.

governments and pension funds of more than 100 states, counties, cities, and US territories.”²⁹ Although no estimates exist as to the total sum of assets affected by the divestment movement, it must have been substantial: when the Californian Senate voted in 1986 to force public pension funds to divest in the manner of \$65b, it affected “a sum equal to roughly two-thirds of South Africa’s entire national economic output.”³⁰

And yet, despite the significant scale of divestment actions by the late 1980s, the direct economic impact of divestment on the affected companies themselves appears to have been negligible. Kaempfer, Lehman, and Lowenberg could not find “any strong statistical evidence that firms operating in South Africa have suffered declines in their share prices as a result of divestment,”³¹ and Teoh, Welch, and Wazzan concluded that publicized divestment activity had “no discernible effect on the valuation of banks and corporations with South African operations or on the South African financial markets.”³² If the point of divestment was to actually hurt the financial position of corporations, it would appear to have been a failed strategy.

However, the divestment movement seems to have been able to influence and moderate corporate behaviour, even if the action of divestment itself had no direct economic impact.³³ Most of all, divestment was important as public symbol. Meg Voorhes argues that, overall, divestment was “most noteworthy for its ability to signal

²⁹ Voorhes, “The US Divestment Movement,” 129, 137.

³⁰ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 621.

³¹ William H. Kaempfer, James A. Lehman, and Anton D. Lowenberg, “Divestment, Investment Sanctions, and Disinvestment: An Evaluation of Anti-Apartheid Policy Instruments,” *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (1987): 464.

³² Siew Hong Teoh, Ivo Welch, and C. Paul Wazzan, “The Effect of Socially Activist Investment Policies on the Financial Markets: Evidence from the South African Boycott,” *The Journal of Business* 72, no. 1 (1999): 79-83, emphasis in the original.

³³ Voorhes, “The US Divestment Movement,” 130.

international rejection of apartheid and to warn of the likelihood of more stringent economic measures on the horizon.”³⁴ Divestment actions may not have affected stock prices, but since they corresponded with highly visible protests and unwanted public criticism, corporations nonetheless took notice.³⁵ Thus, according to Voorhes, the success of the divestment movement “can be traced to its public nature”; ironically, the divestment movement would have been less effective if institutions had immediately complied with activists’ demands and quietly divested.³⁶ In other words, in terms of impact, the act of divestment is less important than the corresponding press release.

The symbolic power of divestment has inspired optimistic appraisals of the tactic, with some scholars and activists suggesting that divestment had played an important role in the deteriorating confidence of US businesses in the South African economy. For example, Mary Gosiger argues that the divestment movement had “considerable success” in slowing down new investment, by “discouraging United States companies from providing vast amounts of capital to the apartheid system.”³⁷ Anti-apartheid activism, including divestment campaigns, did appear to have played a role in encouraging the capital flight of foreign firms from South Africa in the mid-1980s. Importantly, however, Gosiger qualifies the above claim by attributing this outcome to divestment when “combined with increased economic instability.”³⁸ I will argue below that the complexity of South Africa’s overall economic situation should caution one from giving central

³⁴ Voorhes, 138.

³⁵ Voorhes, 138.

³⁶ Voorhes, 142.

³⁷ Mary C. Gosiger, “Strategies for Divestment from United States Companies and Financial Institutions Doing Business with or in South Africa,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1986): 538.

³⁸ Gosiger, “Strategies for Divestment,” 537.

importance to divestment over other economic factors in encouraging capital flight. It is significant to note that the more successful, late-1980s wave of divestment activity occurred largely *after* companies had already begun to leave South Africa; thus Voorhes argues that “the dramatic exodus of corporations from South Africa” was actually a “factor making total divestment more acceptable to institutional investors”³⁹—not the other way around. Pressures from the divestment movement may have contributed to corporate decisions to slow or cease investment, but it was not likely a leading factor.

If the divestment movement cannot be given full credit for the withdrawal of foreign capital from South Africa, there are other ways that the movement was able to have an indirect impact. Even when proposals for divestment were ultimately unsuccessful, the persistence of activists and shareholders in putting forward shareholder resolutions began to have an impact on corporate activity; by 1986, corporate CEOs were complaining to the US State Department that divestment proposals were effective in wasting their time, energy, and resources.⁴⁰ TCCR’s Moira Hutchinson remembers how “companies absolutely hate[d] [activists] coming into the centre of their universe,” and would “really go to some lengths” to try to prevent them from filing proposals or asking questions.⁴¹ Linda Freeman goes as far as to argue that this “hassle factor” of divestment activism was “central in muting corporate activity in South Africa in the 1970s and early 1980s, and, in some cases, even causing their withdrawal.”⁴² More frequently, corporations adopted voluntary codes of conduct in order to justify their presence in

³⁹ Voorhes, “The US Divestment Movement,” 137.

⁴⁰ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 613.

⁴¹ Hutchinson, interview.

⁴² Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 70.

South Africa. Although the popularity of such codes are suggestive of the ability of activists to force changes in corporate behaviour, these were widely perceived by critics as having a minimal impact and serving only to “deflect criticism.”⁴³ Moreover, even in cases where corporations appear to bend to activists’ demands, determining causation is nearly impossible: “Unless they announce their reasons for their decision, it is difficult to discern whether company managers choose not to reinvest on the basis of activist pressures or because of the investment climate in South Africa.”⁴⁴

If the goal of “People’s Sanctions” had been to generate economic pressure upon the South African regime, their contributions appear quite modest. However, the effects of these campaigns in terms of political consciousness should not be underestimated. According to Aziz Fall, the boycott campaign was successful in terms its political implications, by “sensitizing people, making them aware that anything they buy, the behaviour they have, their lifestyle, could change — and change dramatically — the whole world.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Jim Kirkwood argues that financial discussions about divestment within the churches “changed many people’s attitudes to money, and what the church can say about money.”⁴⁶ Boycotts in particular seemed to generate very deep and personal connections to the struggle in South Africa: Adrian Harewood recalls going into a fruit store as a six-year-old and trying to buy an orange, and being told by his father, “Adrian, put that back, we don’t buy fruit from South Africa.” As he remembers, “I

⁴³ Freeman, 93; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 409; Janice Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement: Local Activism in Global Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1985), 77-78; Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000), 534.

⁴⁴ Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement*, 79.

⁴⁵ Aziz Fall (founding member of the Group for Research and Initiative for the Liberation of Africa), interviewed by the author, April 28, 2017.

⁴⁶ Jim Kirkwood (former Africa Secretary of the United Church and co-founder of the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa), interviewed by the author, April 7, 2017.

always thought that what my dad was telling me — despite the fact that I was just a kid, and despite the fact that we lived thousands of miles away from South Africa — [was] that we had a responsibility to act in solidarity with those people who were trying to bring liberation to that country.”⁴⁷

Moreover, anti-apartheid activism is widely understood to have been important primarily as a political force. One of the main themes in Massie’s historical account is that political action against apartheid was only possible when it was backed by popular support from organized constituencies. The anti-apartheid movement slowly built this support by engaging in “decades of painstaking mass education,”⁴⁸ so that by the mid-1980s it had generated “a consensus among diverse organizations and constituencies that policy toward South Africa needed profound change,”⁴⁹ thereby creating the necessary political conditions for governments to implement stronger and more comprehensive sanctions in the late 1980s.⁵⁰ Subnational governments (i.e. states, provinces, municipalities) played a major role in this political process through their boycott and divestment actions, “shaping the approach taken by federal governments”⁵¹ by providing “visible, legitimate, and responsible voices” in support of sanctions.⁵²

Sanctions

South Africa had been targeted by governments with various forms of sanctions for

⁴⁷ Adrian Harewood (former student activist with Black Students’ Network and Southern Africa Committee, McGill University), interviewed by the author, April 10, 2017.

⁴⁸ Kevin Danaher, “The US Struggle Over Sanctions Against South Africa,” in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Mark Orkin (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1989), 135.

⁴⁹ Donald R. Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid: U.S. Activism, 1960-1987* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 123.

⁵⁰ Voorhes, “The US Divestment Movement,” 146; Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid*, 150-1.

⁵¹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 5.

⁵² Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement*, 246, 240.

decades, with the earliest case being Indian comprehensive trade sanctions in 1946.⁵³ There were many repeated attempts to force the United Nations to adopt sanctions against South Africa starting in the early 1960s, often led by newly decolonized countries.⁵⁴ The UN General Assembly passed a voluntary, non-binding motion in favour of sanctions in 1962, and the next year the Security Council adopted a “voluntary arms embargo” that was eventually made mandatory in 1977.⁵⁵ Like many countries, Canada imposed a number of “soft” sanctions throughout 1970s, including select sanctions on sports and arms sales,⁵⁶ and in 1977 introduced a series of reforms to “end all official promotion of trade with South Africa.”⁵⁷ Most measures taken against the regime during this time were either voluntary or highly selective, preventing any significant impact. However, even this slow movement towards stronger intervention stalled in the early 1980s as the administrations of Reagan and Thatcher rejected sanctions in favour of “constructive engagement,” or the belief that continued economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa would lead to reform, while preventing the destabilization of the region.⁵⁸

Only in the mid-1980s did major states finally drop their opposition to general sanctions and begin to enact comprehensive sanction legislation. As Ken Luckhardt argues, the decades-old call for sanctions only picked up momentum internationally once “people were forced to acknowledge the fact that apartheid was on its final legs, and [that] one of the ways to further cripple it would be to have international action that

⁵³ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 194.

⁵⁴ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 522-3.

⁵⁵ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 9; Love, *The U.S. Anti-Apartheid Movement*, 3.

⁵⁶ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 68-9.

⁵⁷ Freeman, 75.

⁵⁸ Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 113-5; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 535; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 487-9, 492.

would cut off ties with South Africa.”⁵⁹ There are several major factors that seem to have contributed to this drastic change in policy. First, South Africa was in the midst of a severe economic and debt crisis (see below), and its negotiations with creditors had put significant pressure on the South African government to implement political reforms. Second, South Africa was experiencing generalized mass resistance to apartheid—partly in response to the introduction of a new constitution in 1983—in which protests had “moved beyond the issues at hand into a full-blown challenge to the apartheid system,”⁶⁰ and were subsequently met with severe repression and violence by the South African government. This in turn galvanized the international anti-apartheid movement, which put increased pressure on legislators to act.⁶¹ Third, the South African government dashed the hopes of international observers who thought that political reforms were forthcoming: in August 1985 President Botha defied expectations by ruling out major reforms in his infamous “Rubicon” Speech,⁶² and in May 1986 South Africa rejected UK-initiated negotiations with the ANC and conducted cross-border raids of ANC bases.⁶³ These two incidents in particular seem to have changed the minds of both high- and low-level government officials in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere in the Commonwealth, who were now convinced that more drastic measures were necessary to force the hand of the South African government.⁶⁴

At a London mini-summit of the Commonwealth in May 1986, six countries (but

⁵⁹ Luckhardt, interview.

⁶⁰ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 130.

⁶¹ Freeman, 129-30; Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions*, 122-7; Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid*, 123.

⁶² Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 586.

⁶³ Massie, 606.

⁶⁴ Massie, 586-8; Freeman, 1997, pp. 6, 129-30.

not the UK) agreed to a set of mandatory trade sanctions against South Africa, which were implemented by Canada in October 1986.⁶⁵ In September 1986, the United States Congress approved the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA), which banned new US investment in South Africa, ended loans to the South African government, banned the export of computers and fuel, blocked the importation of nonstrategic minerals and agricultural products, and ended direct air travel between the two countries, among other measures.⁶⁶ Although Reagan tried to veto the legislation, bipartisan support in Congress overruled the veto and the CAAA was passed by the Senate in October of that year.⁶⁷ These initial sanctions were tightened in various ways over the next few years; perhaps most significantly, the United States passed the “Rangel amendment” in 1987, which “withdrew tax credits for taxes paid by American corporations to the South African government. This effectively raised the rate of taxation from 58% to 72%.”⁶⁸

This turn by governments towards sanctions “evolved piecemeal, in the absence of domestic or international consensus, and without being anchored to an overall policy approach to apartheid,”⁶⁹ greatly undermining the effectiveness of the economic measures that were introduced. This is in spite of the fact that the ANC had been calling for comprehensive and mandatory sanctions for decades, and by the 1980s the ANC and its demands had been almost universally embraced by civil society in North America.⁷⁰ Far

⁶⁵ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 161-2.

⁶⁶ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 536.

⁶⁷ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 618-9.

⁶⁸ Robert E. Edgar, “Sanctioning Apartheid,” in *Sanctioning Apartheid*, ed. Robert E. Edgar (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990), 8.

⁶⁹ Stephen P. Davis, “Economic Pressure on South Africa: Does It Work?” in *Effective Sanctions on South Africa: The Cutting Edge of Economic Intervention*, ed. George W. Shepherd (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 70.

⁷⁰ This is explored in Chapter 3.

from being either comprehensive or mandatory, US and Canadian sanctions were limited, designed to be rather weak, and often faced barriers to implementation within the state. The goals of the CAAA, unlike US sanctions against other countries, were “significantly more limited in their scope and application”;⁷¹ for example, import restrictions were selected to “skirt significant pressure points in the South African economy,”⁷² and the restrictions on “new” investment were intended to restrict growth, not to force US companies to withdraw.⁷³ Canadian sanctions were less comprehensive than the CAAA, and key sanctions (such as financial sanctions) were left voluntary.⁷⁴ Essentially, “sanctions were designed to inconvenience as few people as possible and to hurt absolutely no one.”⁷⁵ The Reagan administration, which opposed the sanctions, did what it could to create “glaring loopholes” while failing to adhere to the faithful implementation of the CAAA.⁷⁶ Similarly, the implementation of Canadian sanctions was often stalled or undermined by elements within the government which had been opposed to sanctions: “in many cases, officials within the state observed sanctions very selectively or found narrow technical reasons to justify non-compliance.”⁷⁷ As the ANC’s representative in Canada reported in 1987, the government’s rhetoric has been “substantial” but the implementation of meaningful action was “seriously lacking.”⁷⁸ By the late 1980s the anti-apartheid movement widely believed that Mulroney had betrayed

⁷¹ Gay McDougall, “Implementation of the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986,” in *Sanctioning Apartheid*, ed. Robert E. Edgar (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 1990), 21.

⁷² McDougall, “Implementation of the Anti-Apartheid Act,” 21.

⁷³ McDougall, 27.

⁷⁴ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 194.

⁷⁵ Freeman, 262.

⁷⁶ McDougall, “Implementation of the Anti-Apartheid Act,” 23.

⁷⁷ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 258.

⁷⁸ African National Congress (ANC) Canada Mission, “Report to the Meeting of Chief Representatives,” Mazimbu, Tanzania, August 11–13, 1987, box 29, folder 81, ANC Archives.

his stated pledge to impose total sanctions upon South Africa and was in fact engaging in an “orchestrated strategic retreat” from their 1985-86 sanctions policy.⁷⁹

Trade embargoes are reflective of the way that sanctions were designed to have minimal disruptive impact on business with South Africa. Restrictions on both imports and exports were “highly selective”⁸⁰ and subject to narrow interpretations which excluded important products, especially when it came to mineral imports.⁸¹ Imports of strategic minerals were excluded, and the ban only covered products from parastatal organizations, despite the fact that nobody could exactly define which companies should be considered parastatals, which made the ban extremely weak.⁸² Although restrictions on gold imports had a certain symbolic importance, they only applied to coins, not other forms, and in any case: “Even the ban on gold coin imports was not significant, since Krugerrand sales in the United States had been dropping steadily prior to the imposition of the ban since their peak in 1984.”⁸³ The effect of sanctions on trade was thus minimal: by the time that the CAAA was implemented, US exports to South Africa were “already in a significant decline,”⁸⁴ and instead of reducing the overall volume of trade, sanctions merely redirected the small amount of affected trade elsewhere, such as Japan.⁸⁵

Sanctions on trade did, however, increase the financial burden of apartheid.

Although South Africa was able to navigate loopholes and maintain its volume of trade, it

⁷⁹ Pratt, *In Good Faith*, 273; Inter-Agency Working Group on Southern Africa (IAWGSA), letter introducing “Proposal for a National Consultation,” June 30, 1989, box 17, folder 324, ANC Archives.

⁸⁰ McDougall, “Implementation of the Anti-Apartheid Act,” 37.

⁸¹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 265.

⁸² McDougall, “Implementation of the Anti-Apartheid Act,” 30-33.

⁸³ McDougall, 21.

⁸⁴ McDougall, 21.

⁸⁵ Duncan Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Mark Orkin (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1989), 227; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 538.

had to do so by selling its products at a “sanctions discount.”⁸⁶ Trade sanctions therefore imposed an “apartheid premium” on South Africa; that is, “the cost of finding new markets, and of having to cut prices to break into them.”⁸⁷ Sanctions on oil exports to South Africa were important in this regard, as they imposed the most significant “apartheid premium.”⁸⁸ First, this is because South Africa had to circumvent the voluntary oil embargoes by finding new sellers, including Iran, which massively increased the price of oil.⁸⁹ Second, South Africa had to compensate for high oil prices by creating strategic oil reserves, engaging in conservation measures, producing synthetic fuel from coal, and placing a levy on fuel consumption—in short, through an economy-wide “reorganization of energy consumption.”⁹⁰ All of these measures put considerable strain on the South African economy, proving that “even leaky oil sanctions made the maintenance of apartheid more expensive.”⁹¹

The CAAA also imposed sanctions on new investment by US businesses in South Africa, as well as banning US individuals from purchasing new shares in South African firms, while stopping short of mandating disinvestment of existing assets.⁹² It is unclear if this had much influence upon the wave of disinvestment by firms in the mid-1980s, since foreign corporations had already begun to sell or shut down their South African

⁸⁶ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 625.

⁸⁷ Mark Orkin, “Introduction: The Case For Sanctions Against Apartheid,” in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Mark Orkin (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1989), 29.

⁸⁸ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 625-6.

⁸⁹ Neta C. Crawford, “Oil Sanctions Against Apartheid,” in *How Sanctions Work: Lessons From South Africa*, ed. Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 110-111.

⁹⁰ Jaap Woldendorp, “The Oil Embargo Against South Africa: Effects and Loopholes,” in *Sanctioning Apartheid*, ed. Robert E. Edgar (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 1990), 166.

⁹¹ Crawford, “Oil Sanctions Against Apartheid,” 122; Woldendorp, “The Oil Embargo Against South Africa,” 166.

⁹² McDougall, “Implementation of the Anti-Apartheid Act,” 23-4.

subsidiaries prior to the implementation of sanctions. As the President of the South Africa Foundation argued in 1985, the deteriorating business climate in the country had “played into the hands of the disinvestment campaigners:”

It is an inescapable reality that businessmen and investors might be prepared to resist disinvestment pressures while enjoying a high-yielding stake in South Africa but they become less willing to put up with the harassment and opprobrium attached to doing business here when the return on their investments is declining and its future looks unsure.⁹³

Nonetheless, the threat of governments adopting increasingly punitive policies, and the Rangel Amendment in particular, was certainly an additional incentive for US businesses to withdraw.⁹⁴ Between 1984 and 1989, a total of 184 US firms disinvested from South Africa, and 114 of those disinvestments took place between 1986 and 1988.⁹⁵ For the South African private sector this trend was alarming, as such actions posed “synthetic barriers that threaten our trading activities.”⁹⁶

Disinvestment did not necessarily have much of a negative impact on the South African economy, however. Of the 114 US firms to disinvest between 1986 and 1988, only 10% actually shut down their operations.⁹⁷ Rather than a withdrawal of real investment, a great majority of subsidiaries were merely sold below value to South African owners, sometimes through management buyouts.⁹⁸ This amounted to a transfer of ownership of existing businesses, while US corporations were able to merely “change

⁹³ Edward Pavitt, “President’s Address,” *South Africa International* 15, no. 4 (1985): 193.

⁹⁴ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 537; Keith Ovenden and Tony Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance: A Program for Change* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 151.

⁹⁵ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 537.

⁹⁶ Edward Pavitt, “President’s Address.” *South Africa International*, 14, no. 4 (1984): 500.

⁹⁷ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 626-7.

⁹⁸ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 152-4; Haider Ali Khan, *The Political Economy of Sanctions Against Apartheid* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1989), 66.

the form of their involvement”⁹⁹: they frequently maintained non-equity links, such as franchising or licensing agreements, which allowed them to continue to “supply their full product line to the South African economy,”¹⁰⁰ and therefore “preserve a presence [for themselves] and provide for a stream of investment income” from South Africa.¹⁰¹ In other words, US corporations had found a way to “[remove] themselves from anti-apartheid pressures while still profiting from apartheid.”¹⁰²

Disinvestment therefore had significant unintended consequences. Ironically, the largest beneficiaries of disinvestment were white South African capitalists. South African conglomerates were able to “expand their power-base ... by picking up prime assets in key sectors at very low prices,”¹⁰³ bringing them “windfall gains,”¹⁰⁴ and leading to a further concentration of ownership.¹⁰⁵ For black South African workers, the outcome was often quite negative. In the process of transferring ownership, the corporation and the new local owners would sometimes sign secret agreements which excluded black employees;¹⁰⁶ once in control, the new owners would then slash employee benefits, and would abandon any previous commitments to abide by codes of conduct.¹⁰⁷

The overall evaluation of disinvestment on the South African economy is therefore mixed. Because it represented a mere change in ownership, disinvestment did

⁹⁹ Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” 229.

¹⁰⁰ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 631.

¹⁰¹ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 157; Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” 231.

¹⁰² Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” 229.

¹⁰³ Innes, 234.

¹⁰⁴ Xavier Carim, Audie Klotz, and Olivier Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” in *How Sanctions Work: Lessons From South Africa*, ed. Neta C. Crawford and Audie Klotz (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 163.

¹⁰⁵ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 632; Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” 234.

¹⁰⁶ Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” 233.

¹⁰⁷ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 632.

not do any “short-term economic damage” to South Africa;¹⁰⁸ its economic effect was “at best, tenuous.”¹⁰⁹ Even worse, because of the benefits to white South African companies, disinvestment seemed to have failed its short-term objectives of harming apartheid.¹¹⁰ However, many scholars argued that disinvestment had the potential for long-term effects if it slowed or ceased rates of new investment.¹¹¹ At a macro level, Stephen Davis argued that disinvestment “starves South Africa of capital and technology,”¹¹² and even if that claim is exaggerated, it certainly contributed to a climate of uncertainty, undermined business confidence, and discouraged current and future foreign investment.¹¹³ Moreover, it “altered” savings and investment flows, by “diverting domestic funds from new investment opportunities” to absorb the disinvesting firms.¹¹⁴ These long-term and indirect effects of disinvestment suggest that sanctions discouraging investment may have played an important role, even if they simply aggravated already existing trends caused by the economic recession and financial crisis.

Financial Sanctions and the 1985 Crisis

It is widely understood that financial sanctions had been “chiefly important” as the most effective form of economic pressure against South Africa.¹¹⁵ A ban on “all new government loans to the government of South Africa” was adopted by Commonwealth countries in 1985, including Canada, and the US imposed a similar ban in 1986 as part of

¹⁰⁸ Khan, *The Political Economy of Sanctions Against Apartheid*, 67.

¹⁰⁹ Kaempfer, Lehman, and Lowenberg, “Divestment, Investment Sanctions, and Disinvestment,” 470.

¹¹⁰ Innes, “Multinational Companies and Disinvestment,” 238.

¹¹¹ Innes, 238; Orkin, “Introduction,” 28; Khan, *The Political Economy of Sanctions Against Apartheid*, 69.

¹¹² Davis, “Economic Pressure on South Africa,” 74.

¹¹³ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 158-60.

¹¹⁴ Ovenden and Cole, 159.

¹¹⁵ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 538; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 623-4, 635-6; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 170.

the CAAA.¹¹⁶ In 1986, Canada also implemented voluntary financial sanctions banning lending to South African banks and other entities;¹¹⁷ as Freeman notes, Canada simply asked banks “not to extend new loans” to South Africa but did not monitor nor enforce the ban.¹¹⁸

It is important to note that by the time financial sanctions were finally introduced, many US and Canadian banks had already ceased lending to South Africa anyway,¹¹⁹ and British banks needed “little encouragement” as they were already “very unenthusiastic” about lending to South Africa.¹²⁰ Therefore, when scholars talk about the important role of financial sanctions, they are primarily referring not to government-sponsored sanctions, but to the voluntary actions of banks who had already begun to change their attitude towards South Africa since the late 1970s. As I will show below, the financial industry was both responding to and exacerbating the economic conditions that led to the debt crisis of 1985, the aftermath of which was decisive in creating economic pressure on apartheid.

The South African economy had been weakening long before sanctions had even been seriously considered.¹²¹ From 1975 to 1977, “South Africa experienced its worst economic recession since the 1930s,”¹²² which coincided with political factors including the 1976 Soweto massacre, the murder of Steve Biko in 1977, and South Africa’s military strikes on Angola. For these reasons, international financial institutions sought to limit

¹¹⁶ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 129, 128.

¹¹⁷ Ovenden and Cole, 129.

¹¹⁸ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 268-9.

¹¹⁹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 269; Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 128.

¹²⁰ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 129.

¹²¹ Alan Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” in *Sanctions Against Apartheid*, ed. Mark Orkin (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1989), 279.

¹²² Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid*, 82.

their exposure to possible political risks by shifting almost exclusively to short-term loans.¹²³ Medium and long-term loans to South Africa “dried up almost immediately,” leaving South African banks to over-borrow more risky short-term interbank funds.¹²⁴ South Africa’s debt skyrocketed, increasing by 50% between 1980 and 1984.¹²⁵

As the increasing burden of short-term debt put the South African economy in a precarious position, by the mid-1980s a number of factors had made the situation much worse. In 1983, the South African government attempted to liberalize its capital controls in a bid to encourage investment, but as this coincided with an international recession, it actually facilitated an escalation of disinvestment and capital flight.¹²⁶ This outflow of capital had the effect of increasing inflation, as well as leading the decline in the exchange rate, making imports more expensive.¹²⁷ Perhaps most importantly, the recession spurred a fall in the value of gold, itself driving a major devaluation of the rand, thus massively inflating the value of South Africa’s debt.¹²⁸ These economic problems corresponded with a simultaneous political crisis, as political opposition to the 1983 Constitution grew into widespread general resistance to apartheid rule.

These factors constituted the necessary conditions contributing to the 1985 debt crisis. In July of 1985, financial circumstances led South Africa to declare a state of

¹²³ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 77; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 161; Culverson, *Contesting Apartheid*, 82.

¹²⁴ Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 161; Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 272-3.

¹²⁵ This is in US dollars. Calculating in terms of rand is much worse, due to devaluation: the debt roughly doubled between 1980-82, and again between 1982-84. Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 76.

¹²⁶ Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 271; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 162.

¹²⁷ Richard Knight, “Sanctions, Disinvestment, and US Corporations in South Africa,” in *Sanctioning Apartheid*, ed. Robert E. Edgar (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, 1990), 72.

¹²⁸ Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 273.

emergency, which itself triggered a stock market crash, a “plunging exchange rate,” and capital flight.¹²⁹ On July 31, Chase Manhattan responded by announcing that it would not roll over existing loans nor issue new ones to South Africa, a move that was followed by many other financial institutions.¹³⁰ It was in this period of heightened tension that President Botha gave his infamous “Rubicon” speech, in which he dashed hopes of any political reform. This aggravated the lack of confidence that investors had in the South African economy: the value of the rand plummeted immediately following the speech, with capital flooding “out of the country at an uncontrollable rate.”¹³¹ The response of the South African government was to suspend trading for five days, implement a partial moratorium on the repayment of loans, and reintroduce exchange controls to make capital flight more expensive.¹³²

The 1985 debt crisis turned out to be an important historical conjuncture, in which the response by the international community was shaped by its widespread opposition to apartheid. South Africa found that relying on private international bank loans had become a “fundamental source of vulnerability: the short-term nature of expanding debt set the stage for increased political leverage.”¹³³ And for once, it appeared that banks were prepared to use this leverage to call for political reform: banks were suddenly less likely to assist South Africa without assurances of reform,¹³⁴ and they “were not prepared” for

¹²⁹ Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 164; Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 273.

¹³⁰ Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 274; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 592.

¹³¹ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 592; Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 274.

¹³² Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 592-4; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 166.

¹³³ Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 166.

¹³⁴ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 595.

negotiations-as-usual over debt repayment.¹³⁵ To make matters worse, South Africa was not able to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF); in 1983, the US Congress had voted to require that the US Director of the IMF “vote against requests for use of fund resources by countries practicing apartheid,” effectively banning assistance to South Africa.¹³⁶

By not providing assistance to South Africa, the international community’s response to the debt crisis further burdened the South African economy. With severe debt, an eroded position in international capital markets, and without support from the IMF, South Africa had to pay much higher interest rates, or an “expensive risk premium,” on the loans that were still available.¹³⁷ Further, following negotiations with creditors, South Africa was obligated to make regular debt repayments. However, to meet these obligations, South Africa had to maintain balance of payment surpluses, which was only possible by placing severe restrictions on imports. This meant that South Africa had to accept artificially low rates of economic growth, making the crisis even worse.¹³⁸

This is the context into which most government-sponsored financial sanctions were introduced in 1986 and afterwards, not creating but contributing to a situation in which South Africa was already unable to access international credit.¹³⁹ It would therefore be tempting to interpret the crisis as primarily driven by economic factors.

¹³⁵ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 88-9.

¹³⁶ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 102; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 162.

¹³⁷ Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 276; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 163; Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 635.

¹³⁸ Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 46-51; Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 276; Davis, “Economic Pressure on South Africa,” 74; Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 170.

¹³⁹ An exception would be the 1983 vote by Congress to ban IMF support to South Africa, which can be considered a government-sponsored sanction which played an important role in creating this situation.

However, that would ignore the role of the anti-apartheid movement (both domestic and international) in shaping the voluntary responses of banks: 1) by building the perception of South Africa as too risky for long-term credit, leading to the increase of short-term debt which generated the debt crisis; and 2) by building generalized opposition to apartheid, which was the basis for the refusal of banks to extend assistance to South Africa.

In this way, the anti-apartheid movement had turned what was essentially an economic crisis into a “political event;”¹⁴⁰ by limiting South Africa’s options to deal with the crisis, it meant that “the economic sphere could only be rescued if the political framework could be restructured.”¹⁴¹ Comparing South Africa’s gross external debt as a percentage of GDP to that of other states, Ovenden and Cole argue that South Africa’s external debt position was “relatively healthy” and “in strictly economic terms, ought not to have been a problem ... What changed everything was not the economics of international finance but the politics of apartheid.”¹⁴² Therefore, Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu can reasonably argue that the political pressure of the anti-apartheid movement had “contributed substantially to [South Africa’s] economic and political crisis.”¹⁴³ Faced with this dire economic situation, South African leadership had no choice but to enter into a process of political transformation towards the dismantling of apartheid. Some activists believe that without sanctions and boycotts, “South Africa could probably have lived

¹⁴⁰ Hirsch, “Sanctions, Loans and the South African Economy,” 270.

¹⁴¹ Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 60.

¹⁴² Ovenden and Cole, *Apartheid and International Finance*, 80-1.

¹⁴³ Carim, Klotz, and Lebleu, “The Political Economy of Financial Sanctions,” 170.

quite a bit longer with an apartheid system.”¹⁴⁴

However, there is another important feature of this period emphasized by John Saul and Hein Marais: in the wake of the economic crisis and the imposition of US sanctions, the international business community began to realize that its interests would be better served in a post-apartheid South Africa, and turned to the revolutionary African National Congress as possible partners. At the same time, the ANC was itself courting foreign businesses to “prepare US capital to reinvest in South Africa,”¹⁴⁵ which brought the ANC towards a rightward policy shift in the early 1990s, or what Marais calls their “capitulation to neoliberal orthodoxy.”¹⁴⁶ In this sense, as the position of capital was shifting and no longer considered the ANC to be a threat, the “anti-apartheid movement was pushing against an opening door.”¹⁴⁷

Did Sanctions End Apartheid?

The “People’s Sanctions” promoted by the anti-apartheid movement, and boycotts and divestment in particular, proved to be important tactics in terms of building popular support for government-sponsored economic sanctions against South Africa, as well as shaping the response of the international financial and political community to the 1985 debt crisis. Nonetheless, the actual impact that government sanctions had on apartheid is “debatable.”¹⁴⁸ Many scholars take an optimistic view of sanctions, arguing that they contributed to South Africa’s economic deterioration, even if their economic impact

¹⁴⁴ Luckhardt. interview.

¹⁴⁵ Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, 187.

¹⁴⁶ Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit*, 78.

¹⁴⁷ John Saul (Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa), interviewed by the author, October 23, 2017.

¹⁴⁸ Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 538.

shouldn't be exaggerated.¹⁴⁹ As Massie argues, in sum the "combined effect" of various forms of sanctions "severely damaged the South African economy."¹⁵⁰ Others who question the effectiveness of sanctions, however, suggest that their impact cannot really be evaluated apart from other political and macroeconomic processes which may have been more decisive.¹⁵¹ More cynical is Glenn Babb, the former South African Ambassador to Canada, who believes that apartheid ended solely because of internal reforms, and that "the way in which [boycott supporters] pat themselves on their shoulder and say 'we were the ones who did this [ended apartheid]'" are deluding themselves. Deluding themselves entirely."¹⁵²

However, proponents of sanctions never held onto the simplistic idea that sanctions on their own could bring down the South African economy, but tended to have a realistic appraisal of the potential of sanctions to weaken Pretoria's ability to negotiate broader resistance. The ANC's own commission on sanctions outlined how sanctions "cannot on their own bring down the apartheid system," but that as part of a broader strategy they can "starve off the regime's external means to defend and sustain the system of apartheid."¹⁵³ Dan O'Meara, research director of CIDMAA, presented on the effectiveness of sanctions to a Canadian conference in 1987, stressing that sanctions on their own "will not end apartheid." As he explained:

¹⁴⁹ Edgar, "Sanctioning Apartheid," 8; Roger Riddell, "The Impact of New Sanctions Against South Africa," in *Sanctioning Apartheid* ed. Robert E. Edgar (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990), 116.

¹⁵⁰ Massie, *Loosing the Bonds*, 635.

¹⁵¹ Kathleen C. Schwartzman, "Can International Boycotts Transform Political Systems? The Cases of Cuba and South Africa," *Latin American Politics and Society* 43, no. 2 (2001): 116-120; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa*, 539; Teoh, Welch, and Wazzan, "The Effect of Socially Activist Investment Policies," 49.

¹⁵² Glenn Babb (South African Ambassador to Canada 1985-87), interviewed by the author, April 26, 2017.

¹⁵³ "Report: Commission on Sanctions," Consultative Meeting of ANC Chief Representatives, Mazimbu, Tanzania, August 12-13, 1987, box 34, folder 26, ANC Archives.

The real aim of sanctions is not moral pressure, not to “punish” the regime, and certainly not—as argued by its detractors—to cause economic chaos and unemployment. Sanctions would rather be a positive intervention in the process of change, one which seeks to shift the balance of forces in South Africa by weakening the apartheid regime. . . . The most important objective of sanctions [is thus to] reduce the capacity of the regime to maintain its violent and racist rule domestically, and its ability to destabilize its neighbours in the region.¹⁵⁴

“Taken together,” O’Meara argued, the effects of sanctions “would seriously aggravate the already severe economic crisis confronting South Africa. This in turn will severely hamper the capacity of the regime to finance its oppressive apparatus.”¹⁵⁵ The evidence outlined above suggests that this was indeed the role that sanctions were able to play. However, far from holding a deterministic view about sanctions, as early as 1974 the ANC’s Secretary General Alfred Nzo warned members to “guard against any fallacious notions” that economic problems in South Africa “will automatically lead to a breakdown in the Apartheid system. On the contrary, we have to pay more attention to the increased brutality and repression which continue to be practiced in the settler-colonial regime in South Africa.”¹⁵⁶ Sanctions on their own could never guarantee that an economic crisis would usher in liberation, rather than further oppression; a much broader movement was required to shape the political future of the country.

Overall, the crippling economic crisis faced by South Africa was largely driven by factors external to anti-apartheid tactics of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions, and yet it is clear that BDS actions supported, extended, and aggravated the underlying trends,

¹⁵⁴ Dan O’Meara, “Sanctions as an Effective Instrument for Change in South Africa,” background discussion paper for Taking Sides conference, 1987, box 28, folder 69, ANC Archives.

¹⁵⁵ Dan O’Meara, “Sanctions as an Effective Instrument for Change in South Africa,” background discussion paper for Taking Sides conference, 1987, box 28, folder 69, ANC Archives.

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Alfred Nzo (ANC Secretary General) to ANC Toronto Committee, June 28, 1974, box 54, folder 7, ANC Archives.

making it more difficult for South Africa to manage the crisis and its effects. Over several decades of organizing, the anti-apartheid movement generated an historical conjuncture in which governments and civil society actors were able—and willing—to take advantage of the weak position that South Africa had found itself in to push for major reforms. In this way, anti-apartheid organizing certainly contributed to the end of apartheid, but would have been far less effective in the absence of other significant factors outside of its influence. Without the anti-apartheid movement, South Africa might have survived the economic crisis; without the economic crisis, the anti-apartheid movement might have had no leverage against South Africa. The unique historical conjuncture in which apartheid was ultimately defeated thus raises important questions for those who would wish to replicate the “success story” of South Africa elsewhere.

Chapter 2: What Does BDS Actually Do?

In the previous chapter, I suggested that the economic impact of campaigns for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) may be less significant than their role as a political force. However, this simple conclusion is not sufficient for explaining these campaigns as social and political-economic phenomena. In order to understand the specific qualities and possibilities of BDS, and thus the opposition that it generates, this chapter will engage with the tradition of Marxist political economy and cultural theory. First, I will discuss the specific economic practices that constitute BDS and evaluate the extent to which they can leverage capital's vulnerabilities in the circulation sphere to advance political goals. Second, I will explore the political dimension of BDS in terms of ideological struggle over "common sense," and how both supporters and opponents of these campaigns are required to articulate their position to broader ideological configurations. Throughout this chapter I will draw upon additional examples of campaigns that use similar economic tactics, beyond the case studies which are the focus of this thesis. This analysis will help to define the limits of what BDS is likely to accomplish, and the nature of its opposition.

Disrupting the Circulation of Capital

Debates over campaigns for boycotts, divestment, and/or sanctions are often framed in terms of their ability to put economic pressure on their targets, and therefore compel political change. The precise nature and power of this expected economic impact, however, is not always clear. Even when campaigns themselves choose to highlight the mostly symbolic power of their tactics, supporters may continue to hold unrealistic

expectations in regards to their economic power, and it is certainly possible to find examples of supporters expressing the notion that BDS is “hitting Israel where it hurts – its economy,”¹ or that fossil fuel divestment has “actually begun to cost the industry real money.”² Opposition to these campaigns may also be framed in terms of tangible economic harm.³ Causing quantifiable economic damage may not be the main motivation behind most BDS activism, but the assumption usually remains that this is at least a theoretically possible outcome.

The economic dimension of BDS therefore deserves further analysis. Even if BDS campaigns are primarily understood in terms of their political significance, they simultaneously constitute economic practices in their own right, and therefore they can and should be studied in terms of their political-economic character. Instead of dismissing boycotts and divestment as merely “symbolic” or materially “ineffective,” Volume II of Marx’s *Capital* can help us understand these market-based practices on their own terms. Admittedly, this is not a common starting place for political analysis; most political readings of *Capital* are grounded in Volume I, which focuses on the structural position of workers in relation to capital within the sphere of production, and thereby provides inspiration for strategies to destabilize production through strikes and work stoppages. In contrast, Volume II has been almost entirely ignored in terms of its political content,

¹ “BDS: Hitting Israel Where it Hurts - Its Economy,” reproduction of article from *Adbusters Magazine*, November 9, 2009. <https://bdsmovement.net/news/bds-hitting-israel-where-it-hurts-its-economy>.

² Bill McKibben, “Hit Fossil Fuels Where It Hurts — The Bottom Line,” *Rolling Stone*, May 21, 2018. <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/hit-fossil-fuels-where-it-hurts-the-bottom-line-627746/>.

³ This is sometimes contradictory, as when Gilad Erdan, Israel’s Minister of Strategic Affairs, refers to BDS as an economic “failure” and yet simultaneously warns that the campaign threatens to “wipe [Israel] off the map.” Quoted in Judy Maltz, “BDS Poses No Threat, Says Israeli Minister in Charge of Fighting It,” *Haaretz*. November 6, 2018. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-minister-leading-fight-against-bds-calls-movement-a-failure-1.6631505>.

which in any case appears on the surface to be absent from the text. However, Marx's discussion of the circuits and circulation of capital is rich with insight into the precarity of capital, revealing a number of potential weak points within the process of capital accumulation, and therefore pointing to the potential for campaigns to interrupt the realization of value (disrupting the operations of specific businesses) from outside of the sphere of production.

In Volume II, Marx outlines the three stages of the circuit of capital: first, the capitalist transforms money into commodities, such as labour power and raw inputs (M-C); second, there is the productive consumption of the elements into new commodities (P); third, the capitalist transforms the new commodities into money (C'-M'). Hence the complete circuit of capital is: M-C...P...C'-M'.⁴ In this way, all exchanges in the marketplace—whether to purchase inputs for production, hire workers, or to sell finished products to consumers—are not external to the production of commodities, but are integral aspects of the same process of capital (even when the sale of commodities is undertaken by a merchant independent from the producer). The circuit of capital is therefore a "unified process of circulation and production,"⁵ requiring unity between its three stages as value moves through them:

The circuit of capital proceeds normally only as long as its various phases pass into each other without delay. If capital comes to a standstill in the first phase, *M-C*, money capital forms into a hoard; if this happens in the production phase, the means of production cease to function, and labour-power remains unoccupied; if in the last phase, *C'-M'*, unsaleable stocks of commodities obstruct the flow of circulation.⁶

⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume II*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books and New Left Review, [1885] 1978).

⁵ Marx, *Capital Volume II*, 139.

⁶ Marx, 133.

In order for the capitalist to realize the surplus value contained in their commodities, and to receive a return on their investment in order to continue reproduction on an expanded scale, these circuits need to function on a continuous basis—and yet the interplay between the different stages mean that the circuit of capital is in a "constant process of interruption."⁷ The number of exchanges that are necessary in order for a commodity to be produced and then profitably sold reveals that an individual capital is in a very precarious situation: its reproduction is dependent on a multitude of contingent and unpredictable exchange relationships with other capitals, which are themselves dependent on successful market exchanges—or, as Marx puts it, "the metamorphoses of an individual capital are intertwined with those of other individual capitals."⁸

In the sphere of production, capital may be in a position of relative strength in relation to workers, but in the marketplace an individual capital is in a position of vulnerability. Marx illustrates that the market is a web of chaotic, contingent, and interdependent relationships between capitalists, and these relationships require successful exchanges between sellers of labour-power and consumers of commodities. In this context, "every delay in [the succession of the various parts] brings coexistence into disarray."⁹ As capitalists buy and sell each other's products for use as inputs in their own production, the ability of one business to function relies on the continued success of others. Invoices and paycheques must be delivered on time, bills must be paid, and this requires that commodities find a buyer promptly. While Marx does not dwell on it, the

⁷ Marx, 182.

⁸ Marx, 178.

⁹ Marx, 183; see also David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital, Volume Two* (London: Verso, 2013), 62.

reality of international trade and production chains across borders only heightens this precarity. Moreover, the continuity of the accumulation process can be disrupted if value relations change in a related industry (for example, if inputs necessary for production increase in price)—this is an anarchic situation where the success of one business depends on a multitude of relationships and forces outside of its control, and has nothing to do with whether the use-values they produce have social value. As it turns out, individual capitalists are actually quite vulnerable to this unpredictable market pressure, which is why it is important for them to increase the exploitation of labour-power and boost profitability, which gives them more breathing room. Of course, in a competitive market, the destruction of any particular capital does not make any difference in the big picture, although it matters a great deal to the individual capitalist.

If Adam Smith's invisible hand showed that the autonomous actions of individual capitalists can become a social force which appears natural and unified, what Marx illustrates in Volume II is that this uniformity represented by the market is actually unpredictable, full of risk, and with consequential implications for those individual capitalists. Here it is worth undertaking a brief overview of some of the challenges that the market poses to the realization of capital, and which reveal opportunities for circuits of capital to be disrupted. First, there is the issue of circulation time. Simply put, the amount of time that commodities spend in circulation must be shortened as much as possible in order to keep capital functioning, otherwise it wastes time in a latent state. The closer that circulation time comes to zero, the more that capital functions on an uninterrupted basis, increasing productivity. This also increases the number of times that

capital can turn over, increasing the rate of profit.¹⁰ Yet, there are a "mass of circumstances" that can affect circulation time:¹¹ the specific goods required for production may be unavailable, distantly located, or there may be dislocations in supply. "Just as C-M and M-C are separated in time, so they may also be separated in space, the selling and the buying markets being in different places."¹² Additionally, the use-values of commodities pose a challenge, since some goods risk spoiling before they are sold, thus losing both their use-value and exchange value. The more perishable a commodity, the greater the absolute limits to circulation time.¹³ Finally, if a commodity has a longer circulation time, there is a risk that prices will change before a good reaches the market.¹⁴ Therefore, it is critical to preserve movement and prevent any standstill or hoarding.

Second, it is obvious that the ability to realize surplus value is affected by demand, or the ability to sell one's commodities. However, in order for a circuit of capital to continue in the short-term, a commodity only needs to be transformed into money. For example, a capitalist may sell commodities to a merchant, who then hoards them in a warehouse and never ultimately sells them to a consumer. Nonetheless, because the capitalist has already received money for those goods, production can continue without delay.¹⁵ This poses a series of problems at the inter-capitalist level. Eventually, this may catch up to the capitalists if new goods are released onto the market, while (unknown to them) their original goods have not yet been consumed; capitalists must then compete

¹⁰ Marx, 203, 234-5.

¹¹ Marx, 205.

¹² Marx, 205.

¹³ Marx, 205-6.

¹⁴ Marx, 330.

¹⁵ Marx, 155.

with each other and either sell their commodities below their price or go bankrupt. This is realized not as a crisis of actual demand, but of demand for payment.¹⁶ David Harvey notes that this discrepancy between consumer demand and demand within inter-capitalist trading creates the possibility of contingent, if not generalized, crises.¹⁷ Finally, other possible disruptions to capital include: overhead costs of circulation (in particular, transportation and costs of storage);¹⁸ the moral depreciation of fixed capital before it is “physical exhausted” due to the introduction of new production processes,¹⁹ and; disturbances to (and lengthening of) the working period—that is, the time it takes to complete a finished product.²⁰

For the purposes of understanding capital in its "pure state," Marx abstracts out a number of elements that are nonetheless relevant for evaluating capital's vulnerabilities within circulation. For example, Marx decides that for the purposes of general analysis "we assume direct sale without the intervention of the merchant, since this intervention conceals various moments of the movement."²¹ Marx mostly ignores the role of merchants and intermediaries, taking for granted their historical development to prominence in fulfilling this role for capital. If these actors are included in our political analysis, however, it only increases the number of actors and inter-dependent relationships that are involved in making sure that various capitals are being realized. In a similar way, Marx excludes credit money from his analysis,²² although the course of his

¹⁶ Marx, 156-7.

¹⁷ Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital Volume II*, 59.

¹⁸ Marx, *Capital Volume II*, 207-229.

¹⁹ Marx, 264.

²⁰ Marx, 308.

²¹ Marx, 191.

²² Marx, 192.

argument essentially proves that credit is necessary in order to maintain the continuity of production and circulation (for money is required at all stages, and the process of production cannot wait for commodities to first be sold). In Volume III of *Capital*, Marx picks up these threads to explain how credit plays a role of addressing capital's vulnerabilities in the circulation sphere, in part by reducing the costs of circulation, providing access to money for payment, and accelerating the circulation process.²³ Credit therefore effectively eliminates many of the vulnerabilities for capital in the sphere of circulation, but at the same time, the dependency of capital upon credit means that the possibility that one's access to credit is lost or interrupted constitutes another potentially devastating weakness. State intervention often plays a role similar to that of credit, either through protectionist measures or export insurance, although this form of support is far less universally available to capitalists.

This is the economic terrain of the marketplace in which it may be possible to intervene. Harvey argues that the precarity of capital within circulation "potentially empowers workers" by amplifying their strikes and work interruptions, and he hints that contradictions and crises could arise outside of the class struggle between capital and labour, emerging from the circulation process itself.²⁴ In other words, this precarity may empower people not only as workers, but also as consumers, as investors in pension funds, or as members of civil society organizations. The question remains whether tactics of boycotts, divestment, or sanctions are capable of taking advantage of these weaknesses and effectively intervening in the circuits of capital. Below, I provide a brief sketch of the

²³ See Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume III*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books and New Left Review, [1894] 1981), 566-567.

²⁴ Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital Volume III*, 69.

material possibilities for each component of BDS.

Economic Boycotts

Economic boycotts target consumption and try to prevent a company from finding a buyer for its commodities. The aim is to prevent the realization of surplus value contained within those commodities, affecting the return on capital and making it more difficult for a firm to reinvest. The boycotts under consideration in the case studies below, however, are those that ultimately target foreign governments, and only boycott companies as a means towards that goal. The point of this kind of boycott is to stigmatize economic relationships with those countries by pressuring companies not to do business with them, and punishing those that do. To an extent, cultural and sports boycotts can also be considered economic boycotts in themselves, even if their purpose is explicitly symbolic. This is because the rejection of specific cultural and sports activities, wherever tickets are sold or venues are booked, involves specific economic practices by specific individuals. There may be no easily quantifiable effect of such action, yet in concrete terms it means that certain individuals are paid, while others are not.

As discussed in the previous chapter, boycotts against South Africa took on several forms; for example, some campaigns aimed to directly influence consumer choice, while others tried to convince merchants not to sell South African goods. The former method (influencing consumers themselves) is unlikely to have a significant material impact, as they are simply unlikely to attract enough participants to prevent goods from being sold. An interesting exception to this might be the case of the Montgomery Bus Boycott from 1955-6, in which black residents protested segregated busing by staging a 381-day boycott of Montgomery City Lines, the municipal bus

company. In this case, the bus company was targeted as a proxy for racist laws outside of the company's control, and the boycott only ended after the US Supreme Court ruled that segregated busing was unconstitutional. The boycott turned out to be "disastrous" for the bus company, and its financial situation never fully recovered.²⁵ While this demonstrates that consumer boycotts can indeed have an important economic impact, this particular boycott targeted a company in which the demand for its services was profoundly and unavoidably *local*, and its lessons are unlikely to be replicated in a case in which the consumer base is diffuse.

The latter boycott method (targeting merchants and retailers) poses a greater threat to specific companies since most of them rely on merchants as intermediaries in order to sell their commodities and complete the circuit of capital. The California grape boycott from 1965-70, which was led by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers and is considered to be "the most successful consumer boycott in United States history,"²⁶ was effective precisely because it leveraged the companies' vulnerabilities in this area. In this case the sales of table grapes were highly concentrated through supermarket chains in several major North American cities, which meant that it was relatively easy for campaigners to picket those retailers and convince them to stop selling the grapes, and they convinced "all the major chains in New York City" to remove them from their shelves.²⁷ This had a major impact on grape sales in North America, and it was supplemented by efforts of dockworkers across Europe who refused to unload shipments

²⁵ Felicia McGhee, "The Montgomery bus boycott and the fall of the Montgomery City Lines," *Alabama Review* 68, no. 3 (2015): 252.

²⁶ Matt Garcia, "A moveable feast: The UFW grape boycott and farm worker justice," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 83, no. 83 (2013): 146.

²⁷ Craig N. Smith, "California grapes: A vintage boycott," *Business and Society Review*, 78 (1991): 21.

of grapes, leaving them to rot on a German dock.²⁸ Of course, the ability of contemporary campaigns to replicate this experience would depend on the boycotted goods having a similarly concentrated market, and would need to meet similarly weak resistance from retailers who agree to cease selling the goods. This campaign also illustrates the power of cooperation between consumers and labour, who worked together to disrupt capital at different points in the circulation process.

Another way that companies are particularly vulnerable in the area of retail is when the sale of their goods is regulated by governments, as consumption can be easily regulated or discouraged. Provincial jurisdiction over alcohol is a good example of where the sale of goods is not only vulnerable to government policy (as in the case of South African wine), but sales may also be concentrated to a limited number of retail locations, and therefore easily targeted by activists (similar to the case of the California grape boycott). Proposals to regulate certain goods, such as the European Union's labelling of goods from West Bank settlements, may facilitate more discernment in consumer choices, and raise the profile of boycott campaigns.

It is important to note, however, that the economic impact of even successful boycotts is likely to be minor and localized, and they cannot pose a generalized or systematic challenge to states or their economies as a whole. Nonetheless, even at a small scale where economic harm is isolated, boycotts are capable of causing real damage to specific capitalists, and even putting specific companies out of business. In 2014, observers credited BDS for the closure of a shop in Brighton, UK, a flagship retail affiliate of Sodastream which had been subjected to two years of protests by local BDS

²⁸ Garcia, "A moveable feast," 152.

campaigners.²⁹ In this case, the primary vulnerability of this company came from the fact that it was both local and entirely tied to Sodastream, a major corporation subject to intense boycott pressure.

That said, boycotts do not necessarily need to directly impact capital circulation in order to be materially effective, they just need to pose a real or imagined threat to the continued circulation of capital. In other words, the psychology of boycotts may have a real economic impact; it may be that boycotts constitute a risk that companies would rather minimize, or perhaps a nuisance or hassle factor as management devotes resources towards responding to critics. If the market is competitive, then a threat to a company's reputation can be an important motivating factor. In the cases of successful boycotts, companies have often disengaged while denying that boycotts were a factor in their decision (for example, Sodastream), in which case it is plausible that these companies simply made the decision that dealing with boycotts was not worth the hassle when alternatives were available.

This points to a strength of boycotting companies as a proxy for foreign governments: in many cases it is easy for the targeted company to comply with the campaign's demands, as they can often simply move production to another country or region, or find a different supplier, without any significant modification to their capital circulation process. Along these lines, the Israeli anti-settlement group Gush Shalom claims that pressure from the BDS movement (among other factors) has compelled at

²⁹ "BDS protests force SodaStream affiliate shutdown," *Times of Israel*, July 4, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/bds-protests-force-sodastream-affiliate-shutdown/>; Greg Hadfield, "EcoStream store closes after anti-settlement protests," *Brighton & Hove Independent*, July 1, 2014, <https://www.brightonandhoveindependent.co.uk/news/ecostream-store-closes-after-anti-settlement-protests-1-7720689>.

least a dozen companies to close down their operations in settlements and move outside of the West Bank, including Sodastream, Ahava, and Teva Pharmaceuticals.³⁰ The possibility of an “easy win” makes it more likely that pressure from boycotts will actually lead to a change in economic behaviour. On the other hand, smaller companies which are not capable of moving their operations may lack the ability to easily respond to boycott demands and could face significant economic vulnerability. This may apply, for example, to wineries based in West Bank settlements, although even here there are examples of businesses which have responded to BDS by moving across the Green Line.³¹ Companies may find other creative ways to mitigate against possible scrutiny; for example, Gush Shalom has identified almost twenty settlement-based businesses and factories which provide inaccurate or incomplete public information in order to “conceal or obscure their [actual] location” in the settlements.³²

Despite all of this, there is no necessary link between a successful boycott action and a change in the actions or policy of a foreign government, which may or may not pay it any attention. However, if boycotts are successful in inconveniencing businesses or even forcing changes in their behaviour, then this can become a local political issue.

Typically, governments maintain close relationships with domestic capital, and are also

³⁰ Avi Asher-Schapiro, “Companies are Leaving the West Bank as International Boycott Campaign Gains Ground,” *Vice News*, March 28, 2016, https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/7xadyx/companies-are-leaving-the-west-bank-as-international-boycott-campaign-gains-ground; Gush Shalom, “Factories/Businesses that have left the settlements,” no date, accessed August 8, 2019, https://settlement-products.fandom.com/wiki/Factories/Businesses_that_have_left_the_settlements.

³¹ In 2008 Barkan Wineries left the West Bank and moved inside the Green Line, reportedly due to boycott pressures. A statement from the company noted that “the location of the company's winery at the Barkan area caused a negative image and made difficult the exporting of the Barkan brands,” and that “the company is acting to change this image.” Quoted in “Israeli winery leaves premises in illegal West Bank settlement,” *Ma'an News Agency*, August 31, 2008, <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=204774>.

³² Gush Shalom, “Settlement Products Wikia,” no date, accessed August 8, 2019, https://settlement-products.fandom.com/wiki/Settlement_Products_Wikia.

interested in attracting and maintaining investment from international capital. If capitalists blame the actions of the government for their own economic difficulties, or express a grave concern with the investment climate and threaten to leave, this may potentially create political pressure for reform. In the end, however, there are no guarantees that successfully disrupting business activity will lead to any political change.

Divestment

Divestment (distinct from *disinvestment*, see previous chapter) is when shareholders decide to send a message by selling their shares in a specific company or industry, which in itself has no impact on the functioning of the company as long as there are ready buyers for those shares.³³ It may nonetheless be possible for divestment to interfere with the capital circulation process of specific businesses; the theory held by many activists is that if enough shareholders sell their shares at the same time, leveraging the concentrated power of major institutional investors like pension funds and endowment funds, this critical mass would cause a company's share price to fall. If successful, a collapse of the share price could affect the ability of a corporation to access credit from lending institutions, or make credit more expensive. This would prevent the company from mitigating against any disruption that arises in the course of capital circulation. A collapse in share price could also compel the remaining shareholders to demand changes to improve performance, possibly leading to a change in management, corporate

³³ Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 596-7; Harry J. Glasbeek, *Wealth By Stealth: Corporate Crime, Corporate Law, and the Perversion of Democracy* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 204; Jim Stanford, *Paper Boom: Why Real Prosperity Requires a New Approach to Canada's Economy* (Ottawa, Ont: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1999), 346; Susanne Soederberg, *Corporate Power and Ownership in Contemporary Capitalism: The Politics of Resistance and Domination* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 141; Doug Henwood, *Wall Street: How It Works And For Whom* (New York: Verso, 1997), 3.

restructuring, or even a hostile takeover.³⁴ In theory, the threat of divestment could motivate corporate management to respond to activists' demands in an attempt to protect themselves from a potentially vengeful board of directors.

However, the case for divestment disrupting the circulation of capital is weak. The best case scenario is that divestment drives down the firm's share price, undermining its credibility with creditors, and making it more difficult for that company to ensure that production continues on an uninterrupted basis. The very nature of corporate governance structures makes this scenario unlikely: 1) the sheer scale of the task is prohibitive, for in order to actually affect share prices one would require the collaboration of many institutional investors who are often bound by a strict interpretation of fiduciary duties and other barriers to divestment; 2) an artificial downturn, if perceived to be temporary and political (as opposed to structural or related to underlying profitability), would certainly be seen by other investors as an opportunity, leading them to quickly absorb those shares at bargain prices.³⁵ Therefore, even a critical mass of divestment actions is unlikely to have a long-term impact on share price, let alone credit ratings, and it seems unlikely that it could have any serious effect on capital circulation. Indeed, the previous chapter found that while there may have been a tangible "hassle factor" involved in South African divestment activism which motivated companies to respond to criticism, the divestment actions themselves had little to no noticeable impact on stock prices.

³⁴ See Robert A. G., Monks and Nell Minow, *Corporate Governance*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 97.

³⁵ Stanford, *Paper Boom*, 348.

Sanctions

Sanctions are measures imposed by governments that target economic relationships with a foreign country, banning domestic capital from engaging in certain forms of trade and economic activity.³⁶ Unlike boycotts or divestment, sanctions have the potential to significantly disrupt circulation by making certain circuits of capital illegal, and forcing capitalists to find new arrangements and relationships in order to preserve the continuity of their business. For example, sanctions could include measures that prevent a country and its private sector from accessing transportation, credit, and inputs for production, or they could close down markets for its commodities. Other forms of sanctions could be more indirect, aiming to cut off the sanctioning country's domestic capital from accessing certain benefits and incentives to do business with the targeted country; for example, Canadian sanctions against South Africa included halting public assistance for Canadian exports to South Africa, and banning the official promotion of trade or travel to South Africa.

The example of sanctions against South Africa is illustrative (see Chapter 1), for they made an important economic impact despite being largely weak, selective, and poorly enforced. Although sanctions did not reduce the overall volume of trade with South Africa, they did shift its direction, forcing the re-orientation of trade from Western

³⁶ Sanctions should be seen as distinct from regulatory actions that seek to create systemic change in specific industries; for example, a carbon tax, or a ban on asbestos. This is another way to affect circulation, but the difference is that such regulation would affect all competitors more or less equally, and so the industry could potentially adapt without harm from competitive pressures. Except in the cases where the point of regulation is to drive out certain products or industries (i.e. asbestos), this will probably only restructure circuits of capital rather than disrupt circulation in a way that harms individual capitals. In contrast, sanctions discriminate against specific capitals based on the location of economic activity, and not the activity itself, with the intention that competitive market pressures will pose such a threat to ongoing circulation that it will facilitate political reform.

to Eastern markets. Sanctions made the import of certain goods far more expensive (including key inputs of circulating capital, like oil), and made it very difficult for the private sector to attain credit. Governments created disincentives for their domestic capital to continue to operate in South Africa, leading to capital flight and disinvestment (often, however, transferring ownership to white South African capitalists). The embargoes on oil and arms in particular led to radical economic restructuring, spurring import substitution industrialization for the production of military equipment, and the introduction of new energy levies, conservation measures, and synthetic fuel production. Therefore, although the circulation of capital was largely maintained, it was only by shifting existing arrangements at a significant cost, which in itself made it more difficult to manage other threats to capital, including the debt crisis. These latter difficulties were further heightened due to the devastating effects of financial sanctions, revealing the vulnerabilities brought on by a dependency upon credit. If sanctions against South Africa had been designed to actually undermine the economy, they could have done much more damage to the circulation of South African capital.³⁷

Shaping “Common Sense”

BDS therefore constitutes a mix of economic practices with the potential to disrupt capital circulation, although these tactics are not equal in their effectiveness. Sanctions can play a destabilizing role, forcing major re-arrangements in the circuits of capital, while boycotts and divestment promise far less of a direct impact; although they may

³⁷ There is a danger here, however. The United States has, for example, imposed far more debilitating sanctions on countries including Cuba, Venezuela, and Iraq, and Israel imposes a devastating blockade on Gaza which is driving a severe humanitarian crisis. This should serve as a warning that just as not all sanctions are equal in their effectiveness, neither are they identical in terms of their morality, and “effective” sanctions can be used to inflict suffering on civilian populations as collective punishment.

have the capacity to disrupt circulation in minor ways, they serve primarily as the economic terrain on which activists fight broader political and cultural battles.

The political dimension of BDS campaigns can be further analyzed through the lens of ideological struggle as offered by Marxist theorists Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall. This approach allows us to think about where and how ideas are contested, the role of institutions in civil society as sites of struggle, and how alliances of social forces and classes can be challenged and fractured. Most importantly for this study, it provides a way of understanding how specific ideas can be articulated (attached, connected) to other ideological elements, and therefore become influential in society.

The “terrain” on which ideological struggle takes place is what Gramsci called “common sense;”³⁸ that is, the everyday conceptions of the world which are “absorbed uncritically” from various sources and therefore are inevitably “disintegrated, incoherent, inconsecutive, in keeping with the social and cultural position of the multitudes.”³⁹ Common sense is “historical,” not natural or universal, pieced together from “pre-existing traces” and “very contradictory ideological formations,” and it constitutes “the realm of practical thinking” for most people,⁴⁰ the “ground which new conceptions of the world must take into account, contest and transform.”⁴¹ While ideological elements may be shaped by experiences of economic relationships under capitalism, and in particular by one’s class position in society, these are not fixed or straightforward in any way; there are

³⁸ Stuart Hall, “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 20.

³⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and other writings*, trans. Louis Marks (New York: International Publishers, [1957] 2007), 90.

⁴⁰ Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 42.

⁴¹ Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1986): 20.

no “class-fixed ideas,” only “tendential alignments.”⁴² The problem of ideology, therefore, “concerns the ways in which ideas of different kinds grip the minds of masses, and thereby become a ‘material force.’”⁴³

This is significant precisely because ideology is central to the functioning of power in modern societies, which is understood in terms of hegemony, or “the process by which a historical bloc of social forces is constructed and the ascendancy of that bloc secured.”⁴⁴ In order to achieve a position of hegemony, one ruling group has to assert that its own interests “can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups,” and enter into an “unstable equilibrium” with other social forces in which the “interests of the ruling group predominate.”⁴⁵ Building an historical bloc out of various social forces therefore requires compromise and consent, and is unlikely to rely upon coercion, as force is to be used against enemies and not “against a part of oneself which one wants to assimilate rapidly, for which ‘good will’ and enthusiasm are necessary.”⁴⁶ In order for hegemony to be realized more broadly within society, an historical bloc also requires popular consent, which depends on the “capacity of dominant classes to persuade subordinate ones to accept, adopt and ‘interiorize’ the values and norms which dominant classes themselves have adopted and believe to be right and proper.”⁴⁷ Along these lines, Edward Said describes hegemony as the “cultural leadership” which determines why

⁴² Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 40-1. This is an important emphasis as it suggests that although ideas are ultimately products of material conditions (per a historical materialist approach), there is no automatic relationship between them. “The determinancy of the economic for the ideological can, therefore, be only in terms of the former setting the limits for defining the terrain of operations, establishing the ‘raw materials’ of thought.” Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 42.

⁴³ Hall, 29.

⁴⁴ Hall, 42.

⁴⁵ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 169-170.

⁴⁶ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 160-1.

⁴⁷ Ralph Miliband, “Counter-Hegemonic Struggles,” *Socialist Register* (1990): 346.

“certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others.”⁴⁸ Hall explains how an historic bloc is distinguished from the simple idea of a “ruling class,” as it is forged out of various classes and class fractions:

What “leads” in a period of hegemony is no longer described as a “ruling class” in the traditional language, but a historic bloc. ... The “leading elements” in a historic bloc may be only one fraction of the dominant economic class—e.g., finance rather than industrial capital; national rather than international capital. Associated with it, within the “bloc,” will be strata of the subaltern and dominated classes, who have been won over by specific concessions and compromises and who form part of the social constellation but in a subordinate role. The “winning over” of these sections is the result of the forging of “expansive, universalizing alliances” which cement the historic bloc under a particular leadership.⁴⁹

Bringing together these diverse forces into a single bloc requires forging a degree of “ideological unity,”⁵⁰ which is never given or assumed. Hall shows that even at the level of a single economic class there can be no guarantee of “unity” between members, but that this has to be built:

It is understood that classes, while sharing certain common conditions of existence, are also cross-cut by conflicting interests, historically segmented and fragmented in this actual course of historical formation. Thus the ‘unity’ of classes is necessarily complex and has to be *produced*—constructed, created—as a result of specific economic, political and ideological practices.⁵¹

The theory of ideology developed by Gramsci and Hall therefore allows us to “analyze how a particular set of ideas comes to dominate the social thinking of a historical bloc,” and how it “helps to unite such a bloc from the inside, and maintain [the bloc’s] dominance and leadership over society as a whole.”⁵² At the same time, it also offers clues for how to resist hegemony and contest the power of the ruling bloc, as it

⁴⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

⁴⁹ Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance,” 15.

⁵⁰ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince* 63.

⁵¹ Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance,” 14.

⁵² Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 29.

suggests the “processes by which new forms of consciousness, new conceptions of the world, arise, which move the masses of the people into historical action against the prevailing system.”⁵³ For example, Gramsci discussed how Marxism as a “new philosophy” became “potent in modern culture”⁵⁴ by combining with other ideological elements and “ally[ing] itself with alien tendencies,”⁵⁵ thereby creating “varying combination[s] of the old and the new,” in each instance “a momentary equilibrium of cultural relationships.”⁵⁶ This is possible precisely because hegemony is never complete, and there is no simple “dominant ideology” that subsumes all others or that pervades everything, but rather ideology continues to be a “differentiated terrain” over which struggle takes place.⁵⁷ As Ralph Miliband argues, in capitalist societies there will always be a “discrepancy between hegemonic message and lived reality,” and this discrepancy (the feeling that everything is not as promised) provides the ground for “counter-hegemonic endeavours.”⁵⁸ Moreover, because ruling historical blocs are based on unstable alliances of social forces and classes through compromise, they are ripe for a “breach in the equilibrium of forces,” or crises of hegemony in which these configurations fall apart,⁵⁹ providing an opening for new arrangements.

New ideas do not emerge and rise to prominence spontaneously, but only through “political and ideological work,”⁶⁰ as Gramsci put it, “the relationship between the

⁵³ Hall, 29.

⁵⁴ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 82.

⁵⁵ Gramsci, 85.

⁵⁶ Gramsci, 89.

⁵⁷ Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance,” 22.

⁵⁸ Miliband, “Counter-Hegemonic Struggles,” 347.

⁵⁹ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 172, 174.

⁶⁰ Stuart Hall, “The Great Moving Right Show,” *Marxism Today* (January 1979): 15; Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance,” 21.

‘higher’ philosophy and common sense is secured by ‘politics.’”⁶¹ Gramsci focused on the political party as the primary actor waging ideological struggle, but this role can also be extended to social movements and popular campaigns, among other actors. In order to describe the specific ways in which ideas are contested and negotiated, Hall introduces the important concept of “articulation,” which is used in the mechanical sense as linkage: “An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time.”⁶² Since these non-necessary linkages between ideas are not fixed, they can be transformed or disrupted.⁶³ In this way, it is possible to explain ideological change “not in terms of substitution or imposition [of one ideology for another] but rather in terms of the *articulation and the disarticulation of ideas*.”⁶⁴

Necessarily then, the task of ideological transformation requires that political actors engage with (and articulate to) existing elements within common sense. “Nothing can become popular which does not negotiate the experiences, the codes of the popular masses.”⁶⁵ Ideological struggle therefore “works on the ground of already constituted social practices and lived ideologies. It wins space there by constantly drawing on these elements which have secured over time a traditional resonance and left their traces in popular inventories.”⁶⁶ In a similar manner, ideas cannot become “materially effective” unless they are articulated to “a particular constellation of social forces” and to the

⁶¹ Gramsci, *The Modern Prince*, 65.

⁶² Stuart Hall, “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall by Larry Grossberg and Others,” in *Stuart Hall Essential Essays Volume 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies* ed. David Morley (Durham: Duke University Press, [1986] 2019), 235, 234.

⁶³ Hall, 236.

⁶⁴ Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance,” p. 23, emphasis added.

⁶⁵ Hall, “On Postmodernism and Articulation,” 234.

⁶⁶ Hall, “The Great Moving Right Show,” 20.

“struggles between different forces at stake.”⁶⁷ Further, ideas are not contested in a free-floating space, but throughout civil society. Gramsci used military metaphors to describe ideological struggle for hegemony as a “war of position.”⁶⁸ Unlike a “war of manoeuvre,” which has one front and one moment of struggle, ending in decisive victory, a war of position “has to be conducted in a protracted way, across many different and varying fronts of struggle,” and these fronts are constituted by “the whole structure of society, including the structures and institutions of civil society.”⁶⁹ It was in this sense that Gramsci compared the “superstructures of civil society” to the “trench-systems of modern warfare.”⁷⁰ In a discussion of political struggle in India, Gramsci specifically singled out “boycotts” as a “form of war of position.”⁷¹

BDS and Common Sense

Neither Gramsci nor Hall developed their ideas into a systematic, comprehensive theory, and their writings are largely suggestive, relying extensively on metaphor. Nonetheless, their work offers a very useful and intuitive (if ‘weak’) analytical framework for thinking about the role of boycotts and other economic strategies in ideological struggle.

BDS campaigns, if “articulated” to existing practices, ideologies, and values, may be able to effectively engage with “common sense,” and therefore take on a “counter-hegemonic” character. These campaigns appear to be particularly well-suited for “ideological work” for two reasons. First, they have a practical ideological element in

⁶⁷ Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 41.

⁶⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, [1971] 2010), 229; Hall, “The Problem of Ideology,” 41.

⁶⁹ Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance,” 17.

⁷⁰ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 235.

⁷¹ Gramsci, 229-30.

that they connect daily economic practices to broader ideological elements (for example, the refusal to buy South African fruit was articulated to the idea of the liberation of South Africa). Boycotts can be profoundly formative experiences, shaping lifelong political commitments, as best demonstrated by Harewood's personal story (see Chapter 1), and this is supported by anecdotal data. Moreover, boycotts are capable of being articulated broadly in support of a number of causes and are not limited to a narrow ideological purpose. Brantley shows how the boycott of Coors beer expanded in the 1970s, becoming more than an "instrumental" tool to supplement strikes and workplace action, but widening into a symbolic and "expressive" activity (undertaken by wider coalitions) that also represented struggles for gay liberation and anti-racist solidarity.⁷² However, boycotts are more likely to be successful to the extent that they involve everyday consumer products (and where alternatives are available), allowing them to be easily integrated into the lifestyles of casual boycott supporters without significant effort or sacrifice.

Second, BDS campaigns can be fought through the "trenches" of civil society, as they offer both concrete and symbolic actions which can be taken by a variety of institutional bodies. How exactly this conflict takes shape, however, depends on the specific nature of the campaign, as well as the social forces involved on either side of the debate. The more prominent BDS-type campaigns have typically been "left-wing," either in terms of their goals or due to the social forces leading them.⁷³ Such campaigns are

⁷² Allyson Powers Brantley, "'We're Givin' Up Our Beer for Sweeter Wine': Boycotting Coors Beer, Coalition-building, and the Politics of Non-consumption, 1957-87" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2016), 107-111.

⁷³ Of course, boycotts are not exclusively left-wing, and there are many examples of right-wing campaigns. However, these campaigns are unlikely to be motivated by social injustice (or solidarity), and the very idea

therefore more likely to be successful in achieving a hegemonic character within institutions that have a working class or progressive activist base, or otherwise have a history of undertaking similar activities — that is, if the campaign can be easily articulated to already-existing values or practices. For example, if a BDS campaign is articulated to ideas about ending racial discrimination or economic exploitation, it will not be a surprise to see it win over supporters within labour unions or churches, especially if those institutions already have partnerships or campaigns on those issues. However, even in these spaces winning popularity is not guaranteed, as efforts to do so may be contradicted by other ideological elements that have a presence in those institutions, and in this case there may be intra-institutional conflict over whether or not to support the campaign (in part by deciding which position is the most consistent with the institution's mission). This internal process has its own practical ideological element as people debate specific resolutions or policies within the same organizations in which they are already involved, and this can re-shape the ideological terrain; when churches and universities deliberated the merits of divesting from South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, it transformed the way that they related to their investments (see previous chapter). On the other hand, if the opposing positions are spearheaded by social forces tied to different institutions (for example, if labour unions are promoting BDS, while business associations are opposed), then the conflict between these institutions will likely

of interfering with the operations of a business (or politicizing investment decisions) tends to conflict with conservative ideology. Instead, right-wing boycotts tend to target companies that have aligned themselves with a left-wing cause or sentiment (for example, the boycott of Nike over its sponsorship of Colin Kaepernick). There may also be right-wing counter-boycotts, as when supporters of Israel called for a boycott of AirBnB after the company announced a decision (later rescinded) to delist home rentals in West Bank settlements.

reflect the existing power disparities between them. However, even in this case there is no simple predictable outcome; certain institutions may hold relative power in terms of resources and access to government officials, and yet hold a low level of respect or moral authority within society, and therefore have less of a material force in their ability to shape public opinion. In other words, it matters which specific institutions have adopted the campaign, and which ones are leading the opposition.

Eventually, this process of ideological struggle may also have an effect on one's opponents; as these ideas exercise growing hegemony throughout society, campaigns may be able to disrupt or disarticulate the opponent's ideological formation, causing those oppositional ideas to make less "sense" and lose their internal coherence and popularity. It may even be possible for such campaigns to break up specific class alliances, and therefore erode the ruling historical bloc (more on this below). At the same time, the non-fixed nature of ideological configurations means that the articulations supporting BDS are not permanent either, and there is always the possibility that oppositional pressure could break these ideological elements apart, and replace them. This is especially true when campaigns are articulated to concepts which are ambiguous or complicated, such as those boycotts which articulate to ideas about racism; in the 1970s Coors beer tried to counter boycott pressure by launching an outreach program to bring in Hispanic distributors, in an attempt to undermine narratives about systemic discrimination;⁷⁴ apartheid South Africa recruited a small number of black and coloured South Africans, as well as African Americans, as spokespersons in order to undermine

⁷⁴ Brantley, "'We're Givin' Up Our Beer for Sweeter Wine,'" 184-5.

narratives about white supremacy;⁷⁵ and pro-Israel groups have attempted to reclaim progressive ideas of “intersectionality” and solidarity with minority communities in the United States in order to undermine claims of Israeli racism, and to break apart alliances between the BDS movement and groups like Black Lives Matter.⁷⁶ While these specific initiatives have not been particularly successful, the confusion and ambiguity within public debates about racism — especially given the tendency to confuse issues of representation with those of systemic racism — means that it is at least possible to disrupt the dominant narratives, obscuring the issues at hand. As I will show in the Israel case study, there is an ongoing struggle between the different camps over the meaning of “discrimination” in relation to the BDS movement, with both supporters and opponents attempting to claim that their position is the one which is in fact anti-discriminatory. The ability to articulate their position to this concept, and to maintain this articulation, is likely to be an important factor in which a set of ideas becomes popular.

One problem for ideological struggle is that it is easier to articulate to existing popular ideas within “common sense” than it is to replace them with more developed concepts. Divestment campaigns in particular are faced with the problem of working on an ideological terrain in which the most popular or common ideas about institutional investment are flawed or limited. As briefly noted above, most transactions on the stock

⁷⁵ Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*.

⁷⁶ See Chapter 10. Similarly, pro-Israel groups have been fostering relationships with Indigenous leaders in Canada, including through trips to Israel and support for the promotion of Indigenous languages, in order to suggest that the struggle for Indigenous control over territory is equivalent to Israeli settler colonialism. After a trip to Israel with StandWithUs in 2016, Alberta-based Métis activist Ryan Bellerose rejected the idea that “Jews are colonizers from Europe” and defended the “right of Jewish people to have control and access over their ancestral lands” – specifically referring to settlements in the OPT. Quoted in Lisa Klug, “Indigenous activist advocates for Israelis’ ‘Native’ rights,” *Times of Israel*, May 9, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/indigenous-activist-advocates-for-israelis-native-rights/>.

market have nothing to do with actual investment, but simply involve rearranging ownership claims in which people “invest” in shares with no impact on the companies themselves. Nonetheless, most “popular” understandings of investment focus on personal financial investment,⁷⁷ and there is a common misperception that buying stocks is *actually investing* and that this has a material impact on the company. Extending Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism, these ideas about “investment” in securities can similarly be understood as a type of fetishism,⁷⁸ which, as Harvey has emphasized, does not refer to a simple illusion or falsehood—rather, fetishism refers to a real and objective experience that nonetheless conceals underlying relations.⁷⁹ For the person who buys a share in a company on the secondary market, that transaction really represents an investment of their own money, which is now tied to the success or failure of that company (through its share price). The personal *experience* of investment is real, but objectively the transaction does not represent “investment” (in the sense of investors providing capital for production) in any meaningful way.

This investment fetishism easily transfers over to divestment activism: to a significant extent, the ‘common sense’ of divestment is that it is capable of actually taking money out of a specific company, and can potentially even starve the company of capital.⁸⁰ Rowe, Dempsey, and Gibbs admit that “early messaging” from the fossil fuel

⁷⁷ See Stanford, *Paper Boom*, 9-10.

⁷⁸ Describing a similar process, Marx noted that capital “obtains its pure fetish form” in interest-bearing capital. Interest obscures the role of capital in the production of surplus value, because the return of interest to the money capitalist appears as nothing more than a “legal transaction” between the lender and borrower, and “everything that happens in between [i.e. the production and realization of surplus value] is obliterated.” In this view, interest appears as the “price” of capital, independent from production; for Marx, this is a “completely irrational expression,” as price is reduced to a purely abstract form, devoid of content. Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 517, 471, 475.

⁷⁹ Harvey, *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*, 177.

⁸⁰ This argument is rarely put forward in official campaign messaging, but anecdotally it is not uncommon

divestment movement dubiously implied that “fossil fuel divestment could hurt company returns in the short term,”⁸¹ and even though this has since been replaced with more accurate messaging, traces of this argument are likely to be found within any divestment campaign. The idea that one’s actions are capable of defunding a company is a compelling message, and it makes some intuitive sense, and thus there may be some incentive for divestment campaigns to articulate to this common sense notion. While there is nothing necessarily harmful about affirming or promoting these ideas, they are nonetheless inaccurate, and they exaggerate the potential economic impact of divestment. The far more difficult task is to work against investment fetishism rather than feeding into it, and attempting to replace those inaccurate notions with more sophisticated ideas.

Finally, there is a further problem in the potential for contradictions arising between economic practices and ideological goals, as these two dimensions of BDS may not align. That is, the tactics which promise the most successful outcome in terms of economic impact may not be the same as those which are the most ideologically effective, and vice versa. There may even be cases in which the most successful economic actions actually undermine a campaign’s ideological goals, and undermine the ability to exercise hegemony. This is because economic struggle is undertaken in practice not by abstract capitalists and workers but by actual people in specific cultural and political contexts, bearing various identities and other cultural markers; therefore, economic actions may be attributed with meanings which were not intended by

to hear from divestment supporters. In fact, it is more common for divestment to be framed in this way by opponents.

⁸¹ James K. Rowe, Jessica Dempsey, and Peter Gibbs, “The Power of Fossil Fuel Divestment (And Its Secret),” in *A World to Win: Contemporary Social Movements and Counter-Hegemony*, ed. William Carroll and Kanchan Sarker (Winnipeg, MB: ARP Books, 2016), 239.

campaigners, and this could result in adverse political consequences. If the specific businesses targeted by a boycott happen to be owned by capitalists who share a specific ethnic or religious identity, for example, opponents may be able to successfully frame the boycott as targeting them on that basis, regardless of the actual motives of the campaign. A successful BDS campaign requires paying attention to the context of the world in which their tactics are employed, moving beyond a narrow economic interpretation.

BDS and Economic Self-Interest

The economic character of BDS means that it generates its own political opposition. As economic practices intervening in capital circulation, BDS has concrete implications for specific businesses, regardless of the extent to which it poses an actual threat. As such, these campaigns will necessarily face opposition from specific capitalists, or from bodies representing the interests of the capitalist class, who inevitably will organize to defend their self-interests. For example, a significant part of the backlash to Canadian sanctions against South Africa took the form of private sector lobbying, both by individual firms and by industry associations such as the Canadian Exporters' Association.⁸² In a similar way, contemporary sanctions against Russia are opposed by groups including the Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada.⁸³ This opposition to BDS (or any of its component parts) may take the form of public appeals to narrow economic interests, but the power of this argument is limited. After all, not everyone will sympathize with corporate interests, especially if the pro-BDS argument is articulated to broader ideological ideas, such as

⁸² Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 77, 171-3.

⁸³ Andy Blatchford, "Exporters decry Ottawa's uneven sanctions on Russia," *National Post*, January 12, 2018.

countering racist oppression. This suggests that the economic opposition to BDS is more likely to be successful if it is able to articulate to other compelling ideological elements within “common sense,” and in so doing build public legitimacy for the idea that these specific capitals and economic relationships, which directly impact only a tiny minority of people, should be protected from economic pressure. The ability of social forces to articulate specific economic activities to ideological narratives (for example, the Cold War or the War on Terror) will increase their chances of bringing the public on board, especially if these ideological elements are widely held by the public and across the institutions of civil society. As per Stuart Hall, these ideological configurations are not given or fixed, but must be actively constructed.

To clarify, this is not to say that the opposition to BDS necessarily comes *first* out of economic self-interest, although that element will always be present. It is entirely possible that the primary opponents to BDS will be social forces that have no direct economic connection to the issue at hand, but who oppose BDS entirely on other ideological grounds. Nonetheless, that link between specific economic practices and social forces is not given, but is based on an ideological configuration which can be contested and disarticulated.

This points to another potentially counter-hegemonic feature of BDS campaigns. If an historical bloc is composed of alliances between classes and class fractions, then the act of targeting specific economic activities and businesses may serve to stigmatize the capitalists associated with them. If successful, BDS may divide fractions of the capitalist class from each other, by making their connections to specific projects and initiatives socially toxic, and casting those who violate these norms out of their alliances. In fact,

this is a less explored feature of divestment campaigns, which at their core are about severing the affiliations that exist between capitalists: when a campaign successfully pushes an institution to divest, that institution is making a commitment that as a shareholder it will not affiliate with specific capitals based on the location of its economic activities or the nature of its commodities. This is what the campaign for “fossil fuel divestment” aims for: convincing institutions to divest from fossil fuel companies, severing ties with banks that finance fossil fuel projects, and cancelling all sponsorships and partnerships with those same companies.⁸⁴ In essence, this campaign is about isolating those fractions of the capitalist class which are involved in the energy industry, as well as all other actors which continue to associate themselves with that industry. While the primary effect of this isolation is social, it is plausible that stigmatizing relationships between capitalists could have a broader impact, if it somehow convinces businesses to actually disengage from functioning in certain areas or industries (disinvestment), or especially if it convinces banks to cease lending to certain segments of capital (as international creditors ceased lending to South Africa in the mid-1980s). If BDS campaigns are successful, they may have the effect of making businesses feel uncomfortable about partnering with those being targeted, or think twice before inviting certain individuals to their boards. An incremental shifting of values and increasing of social pressure may eventually fragment and disarticulate these class alliances, eroding their hegemony, and creating new political openings.

⁸⁴ See “Not A Penny More For Fossil Fuels,” Go Fossil Free, no date, accessed August 8, 2019, <https://gofossilfree.org/not-a-penny-more/>.

Part Two: South Africa Case Study

Chapter 3: The ANC, SACTU, and the Canadian Movement against South African Apartheid

A critical aspect of the movement against South African apartheid is that it was driven by direct and indirect relationships with South African partners and liberation movements.¹ These relationships were understood by solidarity activists as providing real strength and authenticity to their actions, as well as providing a source of inspiration. For Moira Hutchinson of the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility (TCCR), it was “really important” that the Taskforce and the churches “were staying in very close touch with their partners in South Africa,” in order to receive “signals” from them about “what’s most effective and what’s needed” to best support the resistance movement within the country.² Similarly, Gwen Schulman reflects on what it meant for her to be “working in solidarity with liberation movements and taking the lead from them” as an activist in Montreal:

That impulse towards solidarity was so much easier because we really were taking our lead from the people on the inside. And you know as a solidarity activist I didn’t really think I had much choice, if they were saying that’s what would be the most effective way to contribute to their struggle, well then that’s what we were going to do.³

For this reason, the struggle in Canada to impose boycotts and sanctions on South Africa revolved, in a significant way, around the legitimacy of South African partners and liberation movements — and in particular the African National Congress (ANC) — and

¹ Substantial sections within Chapters 3 and 4 were originally published as “Boycotts and Revolution: Debating the Legitimacy of the African National Congress in the Canadian Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1969–94” in *Radical History Review*, 134, 96-115. (c) 2019, MARHO: The Radical Historians Organization, Inc.. All rights reserved. Republished by permission of the copyright holder, and the present publisher, Duke University Press. www.dukeupress.edu.

² Hutchinson, interview.

³ Schulman, interview.

their role within the anti-apartheid movement. In the context of a decentralized oppositional movement, the ANC in Canada played an influential unifying and leadership role, through its chief representative based in Toronto and its units across the country. By the late 1970s and early 1980s the ANC had built strong relationships with the leaders of civil society organizations, including churches, labour, and students, cementing its role as a key actor in the debates regarding South Africa. Often this support was achieved in spite of tensions and hesitations that individuals had regarding the ANC, including its use of armed struggle. At the same time, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) — which was linked to the ANC as members of the Congress Alliance — faced stronger competition and was relatively less successful in terms of securing a dominant position within the labour movement. In its role as a core reference point for the solidarity movement, the ANC thus provided the moral legitimacy for boycotts and sanctions, and actively worked to shape and discipline the messaging and demands of the solidarity movement.

The ANC as Reference Point for the Anti-Apartheid Movement

The African National Congress operated in exile after it was banned by Pretoria in 1960, with a headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia, and “missions” located in countries around the world. In Canada, exiled ANC members formed a “Toronto committee” in 1969, which was joined in 1978 by an official “Canadian Mission” with a full-time Chief Representative, Yusuf Saloojee. ANC units were also founded in cities including Vancouver, Regina, and Winnipeg, and together these bodies formed a Regional Political Committee which determined the strategic priorities of the Chief Representative and the ANC’s activities in Canada. One year after the Mission was formed, it was thought to be

one of the ANC's "largest" in terms of membership,⁴ although the numbers were small—by 1987 the total ANC membership in Canada was about 60 people, and mostly based in Toronto.⁵

The Canadian Mission tasked its individual units with the primary priorities of raising funds for the ANC and mobilizing support for the ANC's struggle in South Africa, as well as its building recognition for the ANC as "the main force for liberation and the authentic representative of the people of South Africa."⁶ Due to the small size and capacity of the ANC units, some of which only had two or three active members at a given time, their main outreach and initiatives were generally undertaken "under the auspices" of local solidarity organizations, on whom they were dependent for their activities and funding.⁷ Solidarity organizations were understood by ANC units as "the arteries through which we channel our programme of action,"⁸ with ANC members playing the role of "animateurs," giving "guidance and direction" to solidarity movements.⁹ ANC members were strongly discouraged from taking on leadership positions in these organizations so that the ANC could retain some distance, but this was not always followed.¹⁰

⁴ Regional Political Committee, ANC Canada Mission (RPC), "Minutes: Chairman's Report," March 3–4, 1979, box 51, folder 2, ANC Archives.

⁵ African National Congress (ANC) Canada Mission, "Report to the Meeting of Chief Representatives," Mazimbu, Tanzania, August 11–13, 1987, box 29, folder 81, ANC Archives.

⁶ ANC Toronto Committee, letter to ANC Winnipeg, July 19, 1977, box 53, folder 6, ANC Canada Archives.

⁷ ANC Vancouver Unit, Annual Report, 1978, box 55, folder 3, ANC Archives.

⁸ RPC, "Report on Solidarity Work in Canada," extended meeting of the RPC, February 15–16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

⁹ ANC Winnipeg Unit, "Secretary's Report," Annual General Meeting, July 13, 1978, box 53, folder 14, ANC Archives.

¹⁰ ANC Winnipeg Unit, "Secretary's Report," Annual General Meeting, July 13, 1978, box 53, folder 14, ANC Archives; RPC, "Minutes of Extended Meeting of the RPC," February 15–16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

The ANC engaged in intensive work throughout the 1970s to build contacts with NGOs, churches, and unions, in order to access both funding and recognition, as did other regional liberation movements affiliated with the ANC, including the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).¹¹ An important moment was the cross-country tour of John Gaeshewe (South African Congress of Trade Unions) and Yusuf Dadoo (ANC) in 1975, which placed the ANC "squarely on the political scene."¹² By the time that the Canadian Mission office opened in 1978, the ANC had "almost become an embassy," with a greatly improved reputation among Canadian civil society and political parties, in particular the New Democratic Party.¹³ The decade culminated in a national conference in 1979 organized by Canadians Concerned about Southern Africa (CCSA), a solidarity organization closely connected to the ANC, with wide-ranging participation from Canadian civil society and which featured guests from the ANC, ZAPU, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The primary demands coming out of the conference were the call for "total economic isolation" of South Africa, and for government support and official recognition to the ANC, ZAPU, and SWAPO.¹⁴

The efforts of the ANC to secure relationships with Canadian civil society organizations were assisted by the fact that many of these organizations had ongoing activities in Southern Africa, and thus already had some contact or familiarity with the

¹¹ Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, p. 99.

¹² ANC Toronto Committee Report, "African National Congress—'A Leading Force,'" ANC Toronto Committee AGM, November 21, 1976, box 54, folder 8, ANC Archives.

¹³ Regional Political Committee, ANC Canada Mission (RPC), "Address by Chief Representative Yusuf Saloojee," Full RPC Meeting, March 3–4, 1979, box 51, folder 2, ANC Archives.

¹⁴ Canadians Concerned about Southern Africa (CCSA), "Summary of Plenary Sessions, Canada-Wide Conference on Southern Africa," November 17, 1979, box 37, folder 43, ANC Archives.

ANC and affiliated liberation movements. This was particularly the case with major development and humanitarian NGOs. Oxfam Canada had established a formal policy of supporting liberation movements as early as 1975,¹⁵ and by the early 1980s was supporting ANC and SWAPO “both politically and materially.”¹⁶ The Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) established direct links with the ANC through its experience of providing on-the-ground humanitarian work in the region,¹⁷ and administered ANC-linked projects through a “liberation support office” in Lusaka; former staff David Beer remembers having a “hell of a time” trying to secure matching funding for these projects from the Canadian government.¹⁸ In 1979, after Prime Minister Joe Clark’s new government ceased authorizing financial assistance for ANC-linked projects – citing the ANC’s commitment to using violence to overthrow a government with which Canada maintains diplomatic relations – a coalition including Oxfam, CUSO, and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) lobbied the government to recognize the ANC as the “sole legitimate voice of the South African people.”¹⁹ By the end of the 1980s, these NGOs were participating in regular meetings and information sharing with the ANC.²⁰

Churches had similar organic ties to Southern Africa which facilitated their embrace

¹⁵ Joanne Naiman and Roger Rolfe, “Southern African Solidarity Work in Canada,” unpublished paper, n.d., ANC Archives.

¹⁶ Oxfam Canada, “Minutes, Project Advisory Committee Meeting,” May 27, 1983, box 33, folder 22, ANC Archives.

¹⁷ Fairweather, “Canadian Solidarity,” 875-6.

¹⁸ David Beer, interview by Michael Bueckert, March 1, 2018, Canadian Anti-Apartheid Oral Histories Project, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada, carleton.ca/africanstudies/conferences/oral-history-interviews-solidarity-and-shifting-patterns-of-hegemony-in-southern-africa/.

¹⁹ Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), “Aide memoire of meeting between Oxfam, CUSO, and External Affairs,” December 19, 1980, box 3, folder 32, ANC Archives.

²⁰ RPC, “Report on Solidarity Work in Canada, Extended Meeting of the RPC,” February 15–16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

of the ANC and other liberation movements. The World Council of Churches (WCC) established relationships with the ANC as early as the 1950s, reinforcing the status and legitimacy of the ANC among church leadership at an international level,²¹ and in 1981 the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism directly funded liberation movements by awarding a \$65,000 grant to the ANC, \$125,000 to SWAPO, and additional monies to the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and SACTU.²² These relationships, in addition to direct appeals from the South African Council of Churches (SACC), brought churches into solidarity with liberation movements, providing churches with inspiration as well as a source for accurate information about Canadian investments in South Africa.²³ Jim Kirkwood — the Africa Secretary of the United Church after 1976, and co-founder of the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa (ICCAF) in 1982 — played the role of a liaison between churches and liberation movements; Kirkwood had become somewhat familiar with the ANC while working for the United Church in Zambia, and drew upon this personal experience to promote the liberation movements within churches. Kirkwood worked quite closely with the ANC and remembers making frequent road trips from Toronto to Ottawa with Joe Saloojee in his station wagon while planning a conference in the early 1980s.²⁴ These close relationships allowed Saloojee to report in 1986 that churches were the “main base of [ANC] support in Canada,” boasting: “From skepticism, cautiousness and even at times antagonism, we have moved this institution to whole-hearted and sincere commitment to our struggle,” noting that the United Church’s support in

²¹ Scott Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the African National Congress since 1960*, vol. 2 (New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), 189.

²² “Church council to give \$125,000 to guerrillas,” *Globe and Mail*, September 22, 1981.

²³ Fairweather, “Canadian Solidarity,” 862-5, 870.

²⁴ Kirkwood, interview.

particular was “outstanding.”²⁵

There were a number of competing South African liberation groups whose presence threatened the ANC’s exclusivity, including the PAC and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)—black African nationalist organizations which eschewed the ANC’s non-racial approach. Civil society organizations like the United Church did provide some funding to these organizations,²⁶ but they were not particularly active in Canada, and never posed a real threat to the ANC’s dominance. The ANC also had to compete with Chief Buthelezi, who was opposed to boycotts and sanctions, and whose role as leader of the KwaZulu homeland legitimized the apartheid system. Unlike PAC and BCM, Buthelezi was completely shunned by the anti-apartheid movement, and his Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) did not have a presence in Canada. Nonetheless, he was often promoted by right-wing media and supporters of South Africa as an alternative to the liberation movements, and as the true, authentic, and elected voice of black South Africans (see next chapter).

In order to enforce its status of exclusive legitimacy within the anti-apartheid movement, the ANC adopted an aggressive “no-platforming” policy towards the PAC and BCM, and refused to share a platform at any event in which members of those organizations were also invited.²⁷ The ANC believed that PAC/BCM did not have real popular support within South Africa and that these forums therefore gave them a

²⁵ RPC, “Report on Solidarity Work in Canada,” extended meeting of the RPC, February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

²⁶ Kirkwood, interview.

²⁷ RPC, “Brief minutes of meeting of ANC members present at Solidarity Conference in Ottawa May 1982,” box 51, folder 5, ANC Archives; RPC, “Minutes of RPC meeting,” April 6, 1987, box 51, folder 10, ANC Archives.

visibility that was undeserved, and they complained of the “disruptive” behaviour of their members in organizing meetings;²⁸ the ANC even believed that the PAC’s “resurgence” was “due to imperialism meant to blunt the vanguard role of the ANC.”²⁹ The ANC therefore declined a number of invitations to speak when PAC/BCM were present, including a Toronto Board of Education anti-apartheid conference in 1987,³⁰ and the ANC lobbied support groups to veto the participation of PAC/BCM in the planning of the Vancouver Parallel Conference in 1987, threatening to withdraw if those organizations were invited.³¹

Granting exclusive status to the ANC became even more controversial as other democratic forces in South Africa were rising in prominence, including the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) after 1979, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) after 1985, and the United Democratic Front (UDF) after 1983. Individual NGOs, as well as coalitions like the Inter-Agency Working Group on Southern Africa (IAWGSA), struggled to determine exactly how to relate to the ANC while also developing relationships with these forces. Nonetheless, by 1989 the majority of civil society organizations still considered “the ANC and SWAPO to be major, if not primary, partners.”³² Similarly, at a high-level public consultative forum in 1990 attended by NGOs, churches, and solidarity groups, attendees reaffirmed their overwhelming support

²⁸ ANC Canada Mission, “Mobilization Re: Political and Material support for the ANC,” RPC report to External Coordinating Committee in Lusaka, 1988, box 54, folder 23, ANC Archives.

²⁹ RPC, “Minutes of Extended RPC Meeting,” May 30-1, 1987, box 51, folder 10, ANC Archives.

³⁰ RPC, “Minutes of Extraordinary RPC Meeting,” February 17, 1987, box 51, folder 10, ANC Archives.

³¹ ANC Canada Mission, “Mobilization Re: Political and Material support for the ANC,” RPC report to External Coordinating Committee in Lusaka, 1988, box 54, folder 23, ANC Archives; ANC Vancouver Unit, “Minutes of ANC Vancouver Unit,” August 23, 1987, box 55, folder 12, ANC Archives.

³² Inter-Agency Working Group on Southern Africa (IAWGSA), “Proposal for a National Consultation of Local, Regional, and National Anti-Apartheid Groups in Canada,” fourth draft, June 30, 1989, box 17, folder 324, ANC Archives.

for the “centrality” of the ANC, while a few in attendance expressed the need to additionally support other popular movements.³³

This near-universal support for the ANC within Canadian civil society was somehow maintained even as many individuals and organizations held it with some suspicion, often expressing reservations about Saloojee’s leadership, its close affiliations with the South African Communist Party (SACP), or its use of violence (more on this below). One instructive example is the case of the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC), a radical solidarity organization led primarily by academics, which had significant influence within the anti-apartheid movement in Canada. TCLSAC considered itself as part of the “new” or “independent left,” and felt that the anti-apartheid movement in the UK was “too slavishly subservient” to the ANC.³⁴ John Saul, a leading member of TCLSAC, recalls having a “working relationship to some degree” with the ANC, but that they continued to be openly critical, particularly regarding the ANC’s hardline support for the Soviet Union.³⁵ Another TCLSAC volunteer, Stephen Gelb, remembers that they did not regularly coordinate activities with the ANC in Toronto because they “didn’t want to take orders” from them. As the ANC’s stature in Canada grew, TCLSAC felt compelled to issue an official statement, and in 1981 they outlined their position of “critical support:” they recognized the importance of the ANC while refusing to unconditionally endorse it, a distancing move that “extremely

³³ “The I Love Lucy Show: The ‘Taking Strides’ Consultative Forum, May, 1990,” *Southern Africa Report* 6, no. 1 (1990): 15-20.

³⁴ Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, p. 106; Stephen Gelb interview by Michael Bueckert, February 28, 2018, Canadian Anti-Apartheid Oral Histories Project, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/conferences/oral-history-interviews-solidarity-and-shifting-patterns-of-hegemony-in-southern-africa/>

³⁵ Saul, interview.

disappointed” the ANC.³⁶ In return, the ANC was itself quite skeptical of TCLSAC’s “ultra-left tendencies” and sought to bolster more ANC-friendly organizations like the CCSA.³⁷

However, this risks overstating the tensions between TCLSAC and the ANC. TCLSAC’s “critical support” statement left room for disagreement with the ANC, but it also asserted that the ANC was “the only liberation movement which has the support of the majority of the people in South Africa,” and therefore “the only organization which can lead the people of South Africa to achieve national liberation and the defeat of imperialism.”³⁸ In February 1987, TCLSAC published an entire issue of its influential newsletter, the *Southern Africa Report*, which focused on the “centrality of the ANC,” whose cause must be embraced “more actively and positively than ever.”³⁹ “The ANC, in short,” as the editorial board wrote, “is at the centre of the struggle to overthrow apartheid, not alone certainly, but very much the principal actor, the main reference point, within the South African resistance movement broadly defined.”⁴⁰

SACTU and the Labour Movement

In the Canadian labour movement, an additional reference point for solidarity was the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which was aligned with the ANC as a founding member of the Congress Alliance. For much of the 1980s, the interests of SACTU were represented in Canada by the SACTU Solidarity Committee (SSC).

³⁶ Stephen Gelb interview, Canadian Anti-Apartheid Oral Histories Project.

³⁷ RPC, “RPC Update on the Report on the Sactu Solidarity Committee,” May 27, 1981, box 53, folder 12, ANC Archives.

³⁸ Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC), “Statement of Support for the African National Congress,” 1981, box 3, folder 36, ANC Archives.

³⁹ “Taking Sides,” *Southern Africa Report* 2, no. 4 (1987): 2, 3.

⁴⁰ “Why the ANC?” *Southern Africa Report* 2, no. 4 (1987): 7.

However, unlike the broad legitimacy granted to the ANC by the anti-apartheid movement, the dominance of SACTU was far more contested and controversial, contributing to significant rifts within the labour movement.

The SSC was founded by Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall, who had previously worked with SACTU in their exile offices in the UK, Tanzania and Zambia, while writing an official history of the organization. In 1980, Luckhardt says they were “sent back to Canada with a mandate [from SACTU] to create a committee that would work in the labour movement here,” primarily by educating workers about apartheid, and fundraising for the underground movement through the SACTU Strike Fund.⁴¹ In 1985 they were joined by Ken Traynor who conducted extensive research on Canadian corporate ties to South Africa. From the start, the SSC received significant financial support from unions including OPSEU, Postal Workers, and the Auto Workers,⁴² and at one point the SSC had 300 individual labour organizations contributing, most of them on a regular basis, to the Strike Fund.⁴³ The SSC was subject to oversight from the SACTU London office for most of the 1980s,⁴⁴ and in August 1986 Peter Mahlangu moved to Canada to become SACTU Coordinator, reorganizing the SSC but keeping its staff.⁴⁵

However, the presence of the SSC generated significant tension within the labour

⁴¹ Luckhardt, interview.

⁴² Fairweather, “Canadian Solidarity,” 878-9.

⁴³ Luckhardt, interview.

⁴⁴ Fairweather, “Canadian Solidarity,” 879.

⁴⁵ “Meet Peter Mahlangu: SACTU Coordinator for Canada,” *SACTU Solidarity*, 1986, box 3, folder 39, ANC Archives. Immediately once Mahlangu arrived, relations deteriorated between him and the SSC staff, who eventually broke from the organization in November 1987. This was a very public and destructive separation, and as Mahlangu reported in 1989, “Many unions have responded negatively to the changes by withdrawing their support.” While some unions including OPSEU and CUPE did retain their funding to the SSC, Mahlangu lamented that the “process of trying to rebuild support has been a long and demanding one. It has meant arm-twisting, persuasion, belly-crawling and many unspeakable methods to try and remain on board.” Peter Mahlangu, “SACTU Canadian Office Report - 1988,” January 1989, box 37, folder 31, ANC Archives. Mahlangu would go on to become ANC Chief Representative in 1989.

movement. The biggest opponent of SACTU and the SSC was the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), which was affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (IFCTU), which had strong anti-Communist ideological leanings and was therefore highly suspicious of the SACP's connections to both the ANC and SACTU. Moreover, the directors of the CLC's International Department (CLC-ID), particularly Paul Puritt and John Harker, were widely described by critics as "cold warriors."⁴⁶ The CLC was still active in South Africa, but it had decided to go around the SSC and SACTU and instead form direct links with the "new" and "emergent" trade union alliances, such as the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU),⁴⁷ which the SSC largely viewed as "weak" and "apolitical"⁴⁸; in this conflict, many individual unions nevertheless decided to side with the SSC based on their suspicion of the CLC's anti-Communism.⁴⁹ TCLSAC's John Saul believes that the emerging trade unions (and not the ANC and SACTU) were indeed the "main players in the liberation of South Africa," and that the CLC was right to support them over the SSC, even if they did so for the wrong reasons (their anti-Communism); on the other hand, those who took the side of the SSC were "wrong for the right reasons," and TCLSAC "took shit from both sides."⁵⁰

Making things worse, the SSC had cause to believe that the CLC was actively undermining their work,⁵¹ and was discouraging donations by telling unions that SACTU

⁴⁶ Luckhardt, interview; Saul, interview.

⁴⁷ Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, 114-5; Fairweather, "Canadian Solidarity," 878.

⁴⁸ Luckhardt, interview.

⁴⁹ Saul, interview. Or, as SACTU representative Mahlangu bitterly remarked in 1988, "SACTU was used as a platform for opposing the CLC international affairs department," and therefore "was a rallying point for all those on the so-called left of the union movement." Peter Mahlangu, "SACTU Canadian Office Report - 1988," January 1989, box 37, folder 31, ANC Archives.

⁵⁰ Saul, interview.

⁵¹ Luckhardt, interview.

“plays no role in the South African trade union movement” and that “Strike Fund contributions from Canadian unions do not reach South Africa.”⁵² As one SACTU representative remarked in 1988, “the CLC will always take advantage of any slightest opportunity to destroy SACTU.”⁵³ This itself contributed to some tension between the SSC and the ANC; in May 1986, the SSC wrote a letter to SACTU headquarters in Zambia complaining that the ANC’s Saloojee was not sufficiently defending the SSC from the “constant attacks” by the CLC, but instead had “chosen to establish a close working relationship with the very people—Harker and Puritt—who mount the attack.” This was infuriating to the SSC, particularly in light of evidence proving that the CLC “demonstrate[d] a contempt for both the ANC and SACTU.”⁵⁴ For its part, the ANC had regarded the SSC with some suspicion since its arrival in 1980, believing that they were acting as if they were SACTU itself rather than as a solidarity organization.⁵⁵ Moreover, the ANC reportedly had good relations with the CLC, which had served as a channel between the ANC office and the “higher organs of the Canadian government,” and whose directors had assured them that they fully supported the ANC and SACTU but that they were “unwilling to have anything to do with the SSC.”⁵⁶ Regardless of their differences, both the ANC and the SSC were aware that the CLC was exploiting the divisions between them.⁵⁷

⁵² SACTU Solidarity Committee, “Report to SACTU General Secretary from the SACTU Solidarity Committee (Canada),” May 1, 1986, box 3, folder 39, ANC Archives.

⁵³ Peter Mahlangu, “SACTU Canadian Office Report - 1988,” January 1989, box 37, folder 31, ANC Archives.

⁵⁴ SACTU Solidarity Committee, “Report to SACTU General Secretary from the SACTU Solidarity Committee (Canada),” May 1, 1986, box 3, folder 39, ANC Archives.

⁵⁵ RPC, “Minutes of Extraordinary RPC Meeting,” October 28, 1980, box 51, folder 3, ANC Archives.

⁵⁶ RPC, “Report on Solidarity Work in Canada,” extended meeting of the RPC, February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

⁵⁷ RPC, “Minutes of RPC Meeting,” April 15, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives; Luckhardt, interview.

This complicated and controversial history should not detract from the overall success of SACTU (and other organizations) in achieving a significant degree of solidarity from the trade union movement in Canada. It is worth noting that even though the CLC declined to fund the SACTU Strike Fund, SACTU's messaging on boycotts and sanctions — "Total Sanctions Now!!"⁵⁸ — was entirely aligned with that of the ANC, which the CLC had endorsed. Moreover, despite the fact that SACTU could never achieve a status comparable to that of the ANC, it is nonetheless important that the labour movement as a whole (regardless of whether they decided to fund SACTU or competing South African unions) was committed to building meaningful partnerships with South African organizations. These conflicts over representation therefore did not effectively alter the type or nature of solidarity within the labour movement.

Disciplining the Anti-Apartheid Movement

In spite of its sometimes tense and contradictory relationships with anti-apartheid organizations, the ANC had nonetheless established itself at the core of the anti-apartheid movement, and as the legitimate voice of South Africans. One event indicative of this popular support was the ceremony in 1989 in which former SACTU coordinator Peter Mahlangu replaced Joe Salojee as the ANC chief representative in Canada. Instead of presenting his credentials to the Canadian government, which still refused to recognize the ANC as official representatives of the South African people, Mahlangu presented them to the "People of Canada" at a packed public event in Toronto, where he was flanked by Lutheran Archbishop Ted Scott, representatives from the Union of Ontario

⁵⁸ "Creeping Sanctions Don't Work," *SACTU Solidarity*, 1986, box 3, folder 39, ANC Archives.

Indians, and former Ambassador to the UN Stephen Lewis.⁵⁹

The ANC's status was significant in the context of a decentralized solidarity movement; in contrast to the centralization of the British anti-apartheid movement, Canadian solidarity efforts were "a movement united, in its diversity, primarily by a common cause rather than ... by some overarching nationally-focused organization or movement."⁶⁰ Although there was frequent communication between organizations, as well as some coordination of activity through coalition bodies, particularly those involving NGOs,⁶¹ multiple attempts to create a national anti-apartheid organization were unsuccessful. In this context, although the ANC did not have a central position (in the sense of having a formalized, structural relationship) to directly dictate the solidarity movement, its status granted it significant influence to shape the movement's priorities.

First, the ANC endeavoured to make sure that the solidarity movement understood that boycott and sanctions efforts were integrally linked to the broader struggle for liberation, which necessarily involved armed struggle. This position was formalized in the ANC's strategy "Four Pillars of the Revolution" after 1978, in which international isolation was conceptualized as one pillar alongside armed struggle, popular mobilization, and the development of underground structures inside South Africa. ANC Chief Representatives meeting in 1987 re-affirmed that "whilst sanctions viz. investment, trade, cultural, sports and diplomatic isolation cannot on their own bring down the apartheid system, these measures [are a strategy to] starve off the regime's external

⁵⁹ "The People of Canada Welcome New ANC Representative," *Southern Africa Report* 5, no. 1 (July 1989): 18.

⁶⁰ Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, 106.

⁶¹ Fairweather, "Canadian Solidarity," 860.

means to defend and sustain the system of apartheid.”⁶² An 1980s ANC factsheet titled “Sanctions Will Help Defeat Apartheid” prominently featured a quote from ANC

President Oliver Tambo which is worth quoting at length:

Sanctions are not to be seen as a way of reforming apartheid, nor merely as a gesture of disapproval. Sanctions are a weapon that the international community can and must use against the racist regime—a weapon that can weaken Pretoria’s capacity to maintain its aggressive posture. Sanctions are a way of cutting off support for racist South Africa and denying the regime the means through which it can sustain and perpetuate itself. Sanctions will not and cannot be expected in themselves to bring down the apartheid system. *They are not an alternative to struggle by the South African and Namibian people, but an important complement to it.* The effect of sanctions, properly implemented, will be to limit the scope, scale and duration of the war that is now raging in Southern Africa.⁶³

In sum, if you recognized that the ANC was the true representative of South Africans, and you accepted its call for boycotts, then you had no choice but to also support its use of violence.

Remarkably, the great majority of Canadian civil society organizations were willing to follow this line, and supported the ANC without shying away from or downplaying its engagement in armed struggle. At times, however, expressing support for the ANC’s use of violence put the leadership of civil society organizations at odds with their membership—and this division was particularly present within the churches, even if the opposition never constituted more than a minority. Gary Kenny, former staff of the Inter-Church Coalition on Africa, noted that this was a “natural division,” as church leadership was more likely to have higher levels of education, a greater ability to travel to the region, and maintain connections with partners in South Africa, all of which made

⁶² “Report: Commission on Sanctions,” 1987.

⁶³ ANC, “Sanctions Will Help Defeat Apartheid,” n.d., box 1, folder 1, ANC Archives, emphasis added.

them more likely to support the ANC and its methods.⁶⁴ Jim Kirkwood recalls that in order to build support for the ANC and its armed struggle, church leadership drew upon their connections in the region, including the South African Council of Churches (SACC), who made appeals to support the ANC and vouched for the Christian or moral character of its leadership.⁶⁵ Church leaders were never able to completely assuage the concerns of their members, however, and at the Parallel Commonwealth Conference in Vancouver, October 1987, church delegates “reported that their constituencies either opposed direct support for the ANC or were at best very reluctant to countenance armed resistance.” Nonetheless, participants at that conference reiterated their support for the ANC and specifically affirmed its right to use violence, but also acknowledged that the “solidarity movement must take the lead in educating Canadians around this question.”⁶⁶ One notable exception to this rule was the Mennonite Central Committee, who cited their self-declared “radical stance” against violence to deny financial support for ANC projects, while still expressing sympathy for the ANC’s cause.⁶⁷ Similarly, Luckhardt recalls that although Amnesty International would support some SSC initiatives, they did not want to support any individual engaged in armed struggle as part of their campaigns, and refrained from endorsing Nelson Mandela; these were “not unfriendly relationships,” but ones that “always involved debate.”⁶⁸

Apart from these few examples, however, the armed struggle carried out by the

⁶⁴ Gary Kenny, “Partners in Prophecy: Canadian Churches in Solidarity,” *Southern Africa Report* 5, no. 1 (1980): 12.

⁶⁵ Kirkwood, interview.

⁶⁶ “Consolidating Solidarity: The Parallel Commonwealth Conference,” *Southern Africa Report* 3, no. 2 (1987): 16.

⁶⁷ Letter from John Wieler (Mennonite Central Committee) to ANC, January 10, 1980, box 4, folder 41, ANC Archives.

⁶⁸ Luckhardt, interview.

ANC (and by similar liberation movements in neighbouring countries) received nearly universal support among the leadership and membership of Canadian civil society organizations. Judith Marshall, who co-founded the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal's African Colonies (TCLPAC, which later renamed itself TCLSAC and focused more on South Africa after Mozambique and Angola achieved independence), remarks on how unusual that situation appears in today's context, where it is now unusual to support violence: "There we were, a totally open committee, supporting an armed struggle for liberation in Mozambique. The letterhead of the committee had a woman with a baby in her arms and a gun over her shoulder."⁶⁹ Former Oxfam staff Jim MacKinnon similarly reflects on how the world has changed since 9/11, with liberation movements now framed entirely as "terrorists": "The world, the way it is now, is that organizations, if they were funding what the government classified a terrorist organization, their charity status would be taken away, they'd be shut down. ... There's no way Canadian NGOs could do [today] what we did [30 years ago]."⁷⁰

Second, in the context of diverse boycott actions against South Africa, the ANC made it clear that it would accept nothing less than total economic sanctions, and insisted that the anti-apartheid movement adopt this maximalist position. Renate Pratt of the Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility has argued that this emphasis on total economic sanctions worked as a "unifying feature" of anti-apartheid work, as civil

⁶⁹ Judith Marshall, interview by Michael Bueckert, March 2, 2018, Canadian Anti-Apartheid Oral Histories Project, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/conferences/oral-history-interviews-solidarity-and-shifting-patterns-of-hegemony-in-southern-africa/>

⁷⁰ Jim MacKinnon, interview by Michael Bueckert, February 28, 2018, Canadian Anti-Apartheid Oral Histories Project, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/conferences/oral-history-interviews-solidarity-and-shifting-patterns-of-hegemony-in-southern-africa/>

society looked to the ANC for direction on how to contribute to the struggle.⁷¹ In some cases, the ANC intervened directly to make sure that this unity was enforced. In one instance in 1978, TCLSAC had informed the ANC about its campaign targeting banks with investments in South Africa, which had used creative tactics including replacing bank withdrawal slips with fake versions that featured the text “banking on apartheid.”⁷² Saloojee responded by affirming that while the ANC endorsed the bank campaign “as a whole,” he insisted that the movement must not lose sight of the broader demands: “campaigns, deinvestment in South Africa [sic], preventing financial loans by banks and institutions, boycott[s] of South African Goods and liquor are essential [and] should be intensified BUT the main focus MUST be on TOTAL ECONOMIC SANCTIONS.”⁷³

This message discipline was much more intense for ANC members themselves, who were under strict guidelines when in public, regardless of whether they were officially representing the ANC or just speaking in a personal capacity. As it was emphasized at an RPC meeting in 1986, “ANC members must suppress their own points of view and propagate only the Movement’s policies.”⁷⁴ One unnecessarily complicated incident took place in 1987, when ANC member Dan O’Meara presented a discussion paper at a conference in his capacity as research director of CIDMAA. In that paper O’Meara outlined his arguments regarding the effectiveness of sanctions, but was misheard by another member who thought he was defending selective, rather than comprehensive sanctions. This became a subject for discussion at the next few meetings

⁷¹ Pratt, *In Good Faith*, p. 339.

⁷² Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, p. 111.

⁷³ Letter from Yusuf Saloojee to the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa, May 31, 1978, box 3, folder 36, ANC Archives.

⁷⁴ RPC, “Minutes of Extended RPC Meeting,” February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

of the RPC; concerned that his remarks were at odds with the official ANC position, the RPC wrote a stern letter to O'Meara asking for clarification and threatening possible disciplinary action. O'Meara responded "mystified" that his views had been misinterpreted.⁷⁵

The discipline of the ANC in Canada was particularly important in the early 1990s as Pretoria entered negotiations with the ANC, and there was increasing pressure upon the Canadian government to relax sanctions; South African Ambassador De Klerk offered a common refrain that so long as sanctions remained, whites in South Africa felt that they were being punished rather than being rewarded for sacrificing their privileges.⁷⁶ The ANC, however, continued to insist upon a hard line on sanctions—although they were not calling for increased sanctions as before, their position was that existing sanctions should be maintained until reform was irreversible.⁷⁷ This was an important intervention in a context in which civil society was divided about how to respond to rapidly shifting circumstances, and there is ample evidence that the ANC's position was often the determining factor in resolving these debates. A report by the South Africa Reference Group (SARG) concluded that "the message from South African partners is clear: pressure must not be diminished,"⁷⁸ and one month after the Quebec

⁷⁵ Dan O'Meara, "Sanctions as an Effective Instrument for Change in South Africa," background discussion paper for Taking Sides conference, 1987, box 28, folder 69, ANC Archives; RPC, "Minutes of RPC meeting," April 6, 1987, box 51, folder 10, ANC Archives; Letter from the RPC to Dan O'Meara, May 11, 1987, box 50, folder 9, ANC Archives; Letter from Dan O'Meara to the RPC [ca. 1987], box 50, folder 9, ANC Archives.

⁷⁶ J. H. De Klerk, "De Klerk's Corner," *Indaba: South African News Complement*, March 1991, box 444, folder 10, Laurie S. Wiseberg and Harry Scoble Human Rights Internet Collection, University of Connecticut Libraries Archives and Special Collections, Storrs, CT (hereafter cited as Wiseberg and Scoble Collection).

⁷⁷ ANC Toronto Unit, "Minutes of Toronto Unit meeting," July 9, 1990, box 54, folder 26, ANC Archives.

⁷⁸ South Africa Reference Group (SARG), "New Challenges for Support to the Democratic Opposition in South Africa: A Summary Report on Consultations with Partners," July 1990, box 4, folder 52, ANC Archives.

Anti-Apartheid Network hosted a speech by Walter and Albertina Sisulu about the importance of maintaining sanctions, the network wrote to Mulroney reiterating this position.⁷⁹ Participants in one coalition meeting argued that sanctions should be relaxed so that the ANC would be seen as in charge of the de-escalation process rather than De Klerk, but this was defeated after the ANC spoke against it.⁸⁰ Similarly, at a joint meeting of representatives from the European and North American anti-apartheid movements there was intense debate on this issue, with delegates arguing for a “realistic” approach to sanctions, but in the end the winning argument was that “the starting point of strategizing [should be] the ANC conference decisions.”⁸¹

Overall, the ANC was able to create for itself a privileged position within the anti-apartheid movement, as perhaps the central reference point for those who would adopt boycotts against South Africa. In this way, the ANC was able to both empower and discipline the anti-apartheid movement—both demonstrating the support of the South African people for the movement’s demands, while also holding the movement accountable to them.

⁷⁹ Quebec Anti-Apartheid Network (QAAN), “Report on the Network’s General Meeting,” September 23, 1991, box 20, folder 381, ANC Archives; Quebec Anti-Apartheid Network, “Letter from Aziz Fall and Dan O’Meara to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney,” October 28, 1991, box 20, folder 381, ANC Archives.

⁸⁰ ANC-Mandela Support Coalition (AMSCO), “Minutes of AMSCO meeting,” January 14, 1991, box 34, folder 35, ANC Archives.

⁸¹ ANC, “Report of the Meeting with the European and North American Anti-Apartheid Movements,” Brussels, January 11–13, 1991, box 41, folder 113, ANC Archives.

Chapter 4: The South Africa Lobby in Canada

This chapter provides an overview of the South African government's international propaganda war against the boycott campaign, and a history of the rise and fall of the pro-South Africa lobby in Canada. The latter had taken a number of different forms over the years, consisting of elitist backroom networking, aggressive Cold War red-baiting, far-right grassroots organizing, and even a network of front groups operated by the South African Embassy. Overall, support for South Africa in Canada was never truly popular or widespread, but was always elitist and fringe, based on either corporate interests or narrow ideology.

South Africa's Covert Propaganda War

Immediately upon its election in 1948, South Africa's National Party government was conscious of the necessity to combat negative perceptions regarding its "apartheid" project, and embraced a more pro-active international presence. As early as 1951, South Africa established an Information Bureau office in Washington DC, which defended apartheid by distributing government publications and writing letters to newspaper editors.¹ Following the ANC's call for an international boycott in 1959, and in the wake of the horror expressed by the international community reacting to the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, South Africa broadened its information program into an international propaganda war, which it maintained for the next three decades.

In the 1960s, this campaign was carried out by the Department of Information (DOI, established in 1961), which produced and distributed radio and television

¹ Patrick Henry Martin, "American Views on South Africa, 1948-1972" (PhD diss, Louisiana State University, 1974), 175-8.

programmes, multiple magazines (including South African Panorama and Business Report), and in 1966 set up a radio transmitter called “Voice of South Africa” which transmitted broadcasts to countries including Canada.² The DOI also employed journalists in France and Germany who supplied favourable content to news agencies.³

As Patrick Martin summarized the general content of DOI publications:

In general, nearly all tried to project the image of a stable country facing immense problems which the government has attempted to alleviate through an enlightened policy of the separate development of the races. They frequently sought to persuade the reader of South Africa’s strategic importance to the West as an anti-Communist ally, and emphasized that South Africa was an area of prosperous industrial development.⁴

During this early period, a South African diplomat named Les De Villiers was sent to Ottawa to work as the Embassy’s Information Attaché, where he stayed from 1962-67. This was not long after Prime Minister Diefenbaker had led South Africa’s expulsion from the Commonwealth in 1961, and when De Villiers first arrived he was surprised to discover that South Africa was reviled by “a fair portion of Canada’s thinking people.”⁵ In this hostile environment De Villiers was instructed by the Ambassador to “keep a low profile and stay out of trouble,” but he resented this advice, and instead he went out on speaking tours across the country as a “self-taught propagandist” for South Africa.⁶ As he later recalled, De Villiers was convinced in those days that “our foreign policy directives in general ... were too passive and forgiving.”⁷ As it happens, only a few years after

² Ruth First, Jonathan Steele, and Christabel Gurney, *The South African Connection: Western Investment in Apartheid* (London: Smith, 1972), 230-1; Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 66-7.

³ James Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media, 1972-1979: A Struggle For Representation* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 58.

⁴ Martin, “American Views on South Africa,” 182.

⁵ Les De Villiers, *Secret Information*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1980, 26.

⁶ De Villiers, 28, 31.

⁷ De Villiers, 34.

leaving Ottawa, De Villiers would have an opportunity to radically reorient South African diplomacy when he was recruited as a key player in what he called “South Africa’s covert propaganda offensive.”⁸

De Villier’s contempt for South Africa’s inept diplomatic efforts was shared by another diplomat named Eschel Rhoodie, whose 1969 book *The Paper Curtain* made a case for the need to widely publicize South Africa’s successes; Rhoodie argued that the reality of South Africa had been artificially hidden from most people around the world by a “Paper Curtain” which had been “drawn across every positive aspect of life and developments in Southern Africa — developments which, if allowed to become widely known, would improve our image and discredit our enemies.”⁹ Speaking to journalists years later, Rhoodie compared the DOI’s role in the 1960s to nothing more than a “super post office” which churned out “crap” materials and outdated concepts, and that in order to prevent South Africa’s total isolation he believed they would need to “deviate radically from this and go after the opinion formers and decision takers in the Western world—by any means necessary.”¹⁰

Rhodie was able to manifest his vision in the early 1970s when he became the Secretary of Information; together with Information Minister Connie Mulder, and joined by Les De Villiers as his deputy, he developed a plan to “spearhead a propaganda war.”¹¹ The overall strategy devised by Rhodie was to move away from a reliance on official mouthpieces, which had limited credibility, but to “create new avenues, instruments,

⁸ De Villiers, 9.

⁹ Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 11.

¹⁰ Mervyn Rees and Chris Day, *Muldergate: The Story of the Info Scandal* (Johannesburg: Macmillan South Africa, 1980), 170.

¹¹ Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*, 114.

organizations and people who could speak on behalf of South Africa without being openly tied to us.”¹² Rhodie later recalled his original pitch to Prime Minister Vorster to approve what he himself called a “propaganda war”:

I specifically said to [Vorster]: I want you to approve, not an information asset, but a propaganda war in which no rules and regulations count. If it is necessary for me to bribe someone, then I would bribe him or her. If it was necessary for me to purchase, for example, a sable mink coat for an editor’s wife then I should be in a position to do so.¹³

Starting in 1973, Mulder and Rhodie implemented this plan via a system in which propaganda initiatives would be secretly financed by defence funds that were redirected through FW Botha’s “Special Defence Account,” which itself was removed from public or parliamentary scrutiny.¹⁴ This secret slush fund was used to finance a “worldwide spending spree,” as South Africa began covertly “buying magazines, newspapers, publishing houses, and film studies in an effort to counter widespread anti-apartheid press coverage with a rosy image of the country.”¹⁵ Notably, South Africa was secretly behind the creation of pro-government English-language newspaper the *Citizen*, and attempted to buy a number of foreign newspapers including the *Washington Star*.¹⁶ Around the world, South Africa hired countless lobbying firms, infiltrated anti-apartheid groups, and created an unknown number of front organizations — including the Club of Ten, the Committee for Fairness in Sport, the Foreign Affairs Association, and the Southern African Freedom

¹² Eschel Rhodie, quoted in Rees and Day, *Muldergate*, 171.

¹³ Eschel Rhodie, quoted in Rees and Day, 172.

¹⁴ Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media*, 59. Stephen Ellis explains the financing process as such: “funds for the Department of Information were passed by the Minister of Defence to the Bureau for State Security, which in turn passed them to Volkskas or the Reserve Bank, bypassing the usual accounting systems. In effect, these monies could be allocated unaccountably by the Minister of Defence, generally acting in conjunction with the Minister of Finance.” Stephen Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile 1960-1990* (London: Hurst & Company, 2012), 145.

¹⁵ Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*, 115.

¹⁶ Rees and Day, *Muldergate*, 46-54.

Foundation — which conducted a variety of activities including hosting conferences, producing books, and placing expensive pro-apartheid advertisements in newspapers, including the *Montreal Star*.¹⁷

These covert initiatives involved bribery and money laundering, and millions of rands ultimately went missing; when the scheme was exposed by journalists in 1977-78 it led to a massive public scandal known as the “Information Scandal” or “Muldergate,” which forced Vorster to resign as Prime Minister.¹⁸ De Villiers summarizes how Vorster defended the slush fund scheme to South Africa’s parliament in 1978: he argued that secrecy had been absolutely necessary as “South Africa was the target for a total onslaught,” and that “South Africa’s enemies had become more sophisticated, subtle and thorough in their use of unconventional methods against it. Therefore it was necessary for South Africa to fight back with unconventional and secret means.”¹⁹

The Information Scandal may have brought down a Prime Minister, but it did not bring an end to South Africa’s covert international operations, nor to the Special Defence Account, which was merely subject to additional (yet limited) auditing procedures. Secret state funding continued, and even increased, as South Africa developed a “secret global money-laundering network” to circumvent embargoes on weapons and oil.²⁰ Propaganda continued to be a major focus of covert activity, according to the select secret projects that were later reviewed by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

Most projects appear to be related to the establishment of front organisations or actions aimed at counteracting the activities of the African National Congress

¹⁷ De Villiers, *Secret Information*, 52-5; Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 51-62; Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media*, 57-8, 65; Rees and Day, *Muldergate*, 34.

¹⁸ Rees and Day, *Muldergate*, 169-75; Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance*, 117.

¹⁹ De Villiers, *Secret Information*, 177.

²⁰ Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 67.

(ANC) and its allies, primarily in the sphere of information, communication, disinformation, propaganda and counter-propaganda. Other projects were aimed at circumventing sanctions.²¹

Perhaps the most notorious of South Africa's front organizations during this period was the International Freedom Foundation (IFF), which was founded in 1986, and was based in Washington DC with offices in London, Brussels, Bonn, and Johannesburg. Its policy focus and connections to high profile conservatives may have given the appearance that the IFF was "a typical Washington DC policy think tank," but more than half of its funding came from South Africa's secret military account, under the codename "Operation Pacman."²² In the end, many of the influential personalities who were recruited to the IFF's advisory board may have had no idea that it was a front organization or that it received money from South Africa.²³ While its public activities consisted primarily of distributing anti-ANC propaganda, the IFF also operated as an "elaborate intelligence-gathering operation designed to collect information on apartheid enemies."²⁴ The IFF does not appear to have had a large imprint on the Canadian context, although it wasn't entirely absent; for example, the *Globe and Mail* has cited its spokespeople as experts on "ANC violence,"²⁵ and in 1988 a Conservative staffer in the Saskatchewan government contributed an article to its publication the *International Freedom Review*.²⁶

²¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, volume 2 (1998): 525.

²² Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 304; Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 178-181; TRC, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 526.

²³ Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 182.

²⁴ Nixon, 182.

²⁵ See David Niddrie, "ANC increases attacks on civilian targets." *Globe and Mail*, September 24, 1988.

²⁶ See Gerald Caplan, "Disinformation is all around us," *Toronto Star*, May 14, 1989.

The Rise of the South Africa Lobby in Canada

The South African propaganda war did touch lightly upon the Canadian context, but it wasn't until the late 1970s and early 1980s — after the Information Scandal — that supporters of South Africa began to formally organize in opposition to the anti-apartheid movement in Canada. This was a context of heightened international condemnation of South Africa, coming in the wake of the Soweto uprising in 1976 and the murder of Steve Biko in 1977, which in turn fuelled growing public support for liberation movements (see previous chapter). At this point, pro-South African activity was largely carried out by political and economic elites, and primarily took the form of networking. In this, it was consistent with Donald Woods' assessment in 1985 that “relatively little of the South African propaganda lobby is conducted publicly. Most of it is purveyed through discreet lunches, dinners and seminars on investment.”²⁷

The most important of these organizations was the Canadian-South African Society (CSAS), which was founded in 1979 and had board of directors meetings in both Montreal and Toronto.²⁸ The society was run by James McAvity, the former president of the Canadian Exporters' Association and full-time president of the society. If the pro-South Africa views of the society were mostly on the fringes of Canadian political discourse, its members were “drawn from the very core of public and corporate life,”²⁹ and its influence came from its impressive elite networks. The composition of its

²⁷ Donald Woods, *Apartheid: the Propaganda and the Reality* (London: International Affairs Division Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985), 5.

²⁸ To be inclusive of its directors in both Toronto and Montreal, each board of directors meeting would essentially take place twice: first in Montreal, and a few days later in Toronto (or vice versa). The agenda and speakers were the same. McAvity had to recap what had been said by directors at the previous meeting in order to facilitate discussion, and tried to build consensus between both groups of directors.

²⁹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, p. 184.

leadership betrayed its elitist, rather than grassroots character;³⁰ the society had more than 20 directors across the country, many of them corporate executives of major corporations with business interests in South Africa, among other academics and political elites. Most notable was the participation of Maurice Sauvé, a director of Barclays Bank of Canada and former Liberal cabinet minister who was recruited to the board by McAvity in 1980 and became Vice-Chair from 1983 until mid-1985, when he resigned after his role was exposed by the Montreal Gazette. The outing of Sauvé's role in the CSAS created a minor political scandal due to the fact that he was married to Jeanne Sauvé, who at the time was serving as Governor-General.³¹ Jeanne had also been the Speaker of the House in Parliament a few years earlier when Maurice was already on the CSAS board, and the society worked with Jeanne to look into forming a parliamentary delegation to South Africa (although this ultimately never took place).³² Sauvé also used his family's connections to senior members of the presiding government to try to influence a change in policy towards South Africa, but there are no indications that this had any effect. Sauvé himself lamented to the CSAS board in 1982 that "no one is likely to swing Liberal Party policy on South Africa as long as Mr. Trudeau is in power."³³

If the CSAS represented the elite interests of Canadian capital, it was also structurally integrated into networks of South African capital through its association with

³⁰ As CSAS director John Shingler himself admitted, "the CSAS is not, and I suppose was never intended to be, a grassroots movement." Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John David Shingler Fonds, McGill University Archives, Montreal (hereafter cited as John Shingler Fonds).

³¹ Pratt, *In Good Faith*, pp. 221-2.

³² Canadian-South African Society (CSAS), memorandum from JM to board of directors re: "Candidates for SAF-Sponsored Visits to South Africa," November 9, 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (hereafter cited as Fonds Maurice Sauvé).

³³ CSAS, "Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, Montreal," June 14, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

the South Africa Foundation (SAF). The SAF represented the private sector in South Africa, with a membership that included most of the large businesses—including subsidiaries of foreign companies—operating in the country.³⁴ The SAF worked out of offices in London, Bonn, and Washington D.C. to defend South Africa against calls for sanctions and to promote increased investment. The foundation declared itself to be fully independent from the South African government, and brought together “into a single movement both the forces [of South African capital] which support and those which oppose the government,” who through the foundation would put aside their differences to “defend the country collectively abroad.”³⁵ Since it would often criticize specific apartheid policies, the SAF was able to build a degree of respectability that the government did not have,³⁶ and for this reason it was considered to be “one of the most effective propaganda organizations in the Western world.”³⁷ Despite its critics’ widespread assertions that the SAF received funding from Pretoria and was a “front group for the government,” to date no evidence has been uncovered to substantiate these claims.³⁸ Nonetheless, Rhodie himself described the SAF as doing “on a private basis what the Department of Information is doing on an official basis,”³⁹ and this complementary relationship led James Sanders to conclude that South Africa had been fortunate to have “two propaganda agencies (the Department of Information and the

³⁴ First, Steele, and Gurney, *The South African Connection*, 227.

³⁵ Colin Legume and Margaret Legume, *South Africa: Crisis for the West* (London: Pall Mall Press Ltd, 1964), 114.

³⁶ Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 64.

³⁷ First, Steele, and Gurney, *The South African Connection*, 222.

³⁸ Nixon, *Selling Apartheid*, 64. Former South African Ambassador Glenn Babb also insists that the SAF was “absolutely not” a front for the government (interview).

³⁹ Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 188.

SAF) speaking on its behalf.”⁴⁰

The association of the CSAS with the SAF generated significant suspicion. “At the moment,” CSAS director John Shingler noted in 1982, “the CSAS is seen as a creature of the South Africa Foundation which in turn is regarded by the ill-informed - and represented by the malevolent - as a handmaiden of the government. Such a label vitiates our effectiveness.”⁴¹ When McAvity reached out to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to announce the formation of the CSAS, the CLC released a statement to its members that “this Society, although not directly attached to the South African government, is funded by the major businesses of South Africa and expresses views which are acceptable to the South African government. The Congress will have nothing to do with this Society.”⁴² Similarly, NDP member of parliament Terry Sargeant declined an invitation to a 1982 CSAS dinner citing “the apparent symbiotic [sic] relationship” between the CSAS, the SAF, and the South African government, and argued that participating in the dinner “will only serve to lend credence to the [government’s] racist policies.”⁴³ McAvity responded to this “false allegation” by asserting that the SAF was independent and even a “catalyst for reform in South Africa and is in no way a defender of apartheid policy.”⁴⁴ Somewhat ironically, having received copies of this exchange along with CSAS board meeting documents, SAF official Michael Christie responded to McAvity protesting this language: “whereas we know that in many ways we do act as a

⁴⁰ Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media*, 72.

⁴¹ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁴² Canadian Labour Congress, “Labour’s Views on International Affairs: Canada and South Africa,” International Affairs Department factsheet, March 3, 1980, box 11, folder 186, ANC Archives.

⁴³ Letter from Terry Sargeant M.P. to James McAvity, May 5, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁴⁴ Letter from James McAvity to Terry Sargeant, May 13, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

‘catalyst for reform’ we prefer not to state that formally as it imparts a too strongly activist flavour to our operations.’⁴⁵

Media reports in 1985 revealed that the CSAS received most of its funding from the SAF, but archival records demonstrate that the relationship between the organizations was far more intimate. Initial brochures drafted by the CSAS acknowledged that it was established with the “cooperation” and “seed money” of the SAF with the intention of becoming financially independent.⁴⁶ This seed money, in the form of a “Foundation Grant,” grew from \$30,000 out of \$33,000 total revenues in 1980 to \$36,000 out of \$41,000 total revenues in 1983, with the remainder coming from membership fees.⁴⁷ The SAF also had an editorial role, vetting the society’s publications, brochures, and lobby documents so that its messaging was aligned with the foundation,⁴⁸ as well as vetting the candidates to be invited on SAF fact-finding tours of South Africa.⁴⁹ John Chettle, the North American director of the SAF based in Washington D.C., frequently attended CSAS Board of Directors meetings and addressed most, if not all, of their Annual General Meetings; the society also arranged cross-country tours and interviews for him with media and newspaper editorial staff.⁵⁰ When the society moved its Toronto office in

⁴⁵ South Africa Foundation, memorandum from M.R. Christie (Johannesburg) to J. McAvity, May 28, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁴⁶ CSAS, “Draft brochure of the CSAS” [ca. 1980], box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁴⁷ CSAS, “Statement of Operations for the Year Ended September 30, 1980,” box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé; CSAS, “Statement of Operations for the Year Ended September 30, 1983,” box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁴⁸ CSAS, memorandum from JM to board of directors re: draft brochure, November 9, 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁴⁹ CSAS, memorandum from JM to board of directors re: “Candidates for SAF-Sponsored Visits to South Africa,” November 9, 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁵⁰ CSAS, “Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, Montreal October 27 and Toronto October 28,” November 3, 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé; CSAS, “Report on the Proceedings of the First Annual General Meeting of the Canadian-South African Society,” 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

1984, the one-year lease for the new building required approval from Chettle on behalf of the foundation.⁵¹ It is clear that the CSAS was not independent, either financially or editorially, but instead was integrated into the SAF network, and therefore should be understood as a branch of the SAF.

The archives of CSAS founding director John Shingler provide some further insight into this relationship. Shingler was an associate professor in the department of Political Science at McGill University, who had formerly served as the President of the National Union of South African Students before leaving South Africa in 1961, and had always considered himself a liberal opponent of apartheid.⁵² Shingler had initially reached out to the South Africa Foundation in Johannesburg in 1970, asking to be put in touch with any SAF personnel working in North America; he was then introduced to John Chettle in 1971, with whom he maintained close contact ever since.⁵³ In a lengthy memo to Chettle in 1982, Shingler mentions that the initial steps of building CSAS took place in 1977⁵⁴ — in the same year that Andre Visser of the SAF was reaching out to Shingler for suggestions on how they could support his work in Canada⁵⁵ — and he provides a detailed, critical assessment of the CSAS, with specific ideas for how the SAF could “expand the CSAS” including recommendations regarding the society’s structure,

⁵¹ CSAS, “Memorandum from JM to Board of Directors,” April 18, 1984, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁵² Kate Shingler, “Conversations with my father: fleeing apartheid to finding a new home in Canada,” *Global News*, June 16, 2017, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3527393/conversations-with-my-father-fleeing-apartheid-to-finding-a-new-home-in-canada/>.

⁵³ Letter from John Shingler to the South Africa Foundation, November 13, 1970, box 3, John Shingler Fonds; Letter from John Chettle to John Shingler, February 10, 1971, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁵⁴ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁵⁵ Letter from J. Andre Visser to John Shingler, July 14, 1977, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

administration, and activities.⁵⁶ Chettle praised Shingler's "splendid study" and paid him an honorarium for this work.⁵⁷ These are strong indications that the SAF itself played a role in the creation of the CSAS, and that it felt ultimately responsible for the form and actions of the society.

Finally, it is important to note the friendly relationship between the CSAS and officials of the South African government. As I will explain below, one former CSAS chair suggested to me that the South African government may have been funnelling money to the CSAS through a mysterious front called the Protea Foundation. However, putting aside the notion of front groups, it is true that the CSAS was in frequent cooperation with the South African Embassy in Ottawa, and its directors were on personal terms with Embassy staff. For example, in 1982 the Board of Directors held a luncheon in honour of an outgoing South African Consul "who has been of very substantial help to the Society,"⁵⁸ and director Denis Black wrote to Sauvé at the residence of the Governor General to inform him when Ambassador Hendrick Geldenhuys left his post in 1985, expressing that "this is a pity because they are charming people and their Ottawa stint has and will be a much shorter one than usual."⁵⁹ Shingler was also in contact with the Embassy, providing his own analysis about a magazine article to the Embassy's Information Attaché in 1983,⁶⁰ and although he candidly

⁵⁶ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁵⁷ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁵⁸ CSAS, "Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, Montreal," June 14, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁵⁹ Letter from Denis Black to Maurice Sauvé, March 1, 1985: Folder 45, box 178, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶⁰ Letter from Willem A. de Villiers, Second Secretary (Information), to John Shingler, April 12, 1983, box 3, John Shingler Fonds; Letter from John Shingler to Willem A. de Villiers, April 30, 1983, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

expressed to Chettle that the hardline approach taken by some Embassy and consular staff was counterproductive to their efforts, acting as “virtually ANC secret weapons,”⁶¹ he was very close to the Jaquet family who led the South African consulate in Montreal, and wrote a letter of recommendation to help their child get into a Kindergarten program.⁶² To the extent that the CSAS truly believed that they were acting as catalysts of reform against the apartheid system, they had apparently convinced themselves that South Africa’s own government representatives could be allies in that struggle.

Reform, not Revolution

From the start, the CSAS attempted to distance itself from apartheid while simultaneously countering the pressures of the anti-apartheid movement, arguing that sanctions would destabilize a delicate process of reform that was already underway. An early CSAS brochure (ca. 1981) insisted that achieving “racial harmony” would require “stability,” whereas “foreign economic and political ostracism can only serve the interests of those who seek confrontation and conflict in South Africa.”⁶³ McAvity stressed this point in a 1982 letter to Allan MacEachan, then Secretary of State for External Affairs, saying that foreign pressure would only harm the reformist efforts of moderate white South Africans, and that it was in Canada’s best interests to “minimize the risk of revolution in South Africa.”⁶⁴

Explaining the CSAS line on South Africa to potential members, however, proved

⁶¹ Letter from John Shingler to John Chettle, September 2, 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁶² Letter from John Shingler to Principal of The Maret School, Washington D.C, February 23, 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁶³ CSAS brochure [ca. 1981], box 177, folder 19, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶⁴ Initial draft of a letter from James McAvity to Hon. Allan MacEachan [ca. December 1982], box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

to be a challenge for the organization. During a board discussion in 1981, McAvity suggested that their “sales pitch” might be “reconsidered” to include more direct criticism of the government, after hearing feedback that some people were “reticent” about joining what they believed to be “some form of radical pro-Nationalist government organization.”⁶⁵ This was reiterated by members the following year, who felt that their brochure was unsuccessful because it was “silent on the subject of apartheid.”⁶⁶ In an attempt to avoid being seen as an apologist for the government, later brochure drafts were more specific on this point, rejecting “the principle of race discrimination embedded in law,” while also specifically opposing “boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment” and “discourag[ing] Canadian support for interventionist movements.”⁶⁷

However, some directors believed that this recruitment problem was more fundamental than McAvity would admit. “We have to recognize that association with South Africa is a grave liability in many Canadian circles,” Shingler wrote to Chettle in 1982, noting that the “adverse publicity associated with [CSAS] membership” was making it difficult to recruit members and directors.⁶⁸ Corporate executives with connections to South Africa, despite being the natural constituency for the organization, on the whole had decided not to become members “precisely because they think public association would do them more harm than good,”⁶⁹ and Alcan CEO David Culver was

⁶⁵ CSAS, minutes of board of directors meeting, Montreal, June 29, 1981, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶⁶ CSAS, memorandum from JM to board of directors, September 24, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶⁷ CSAS, “The Canadian-South African Society,” draft brochure [ca. December 1982], box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶⁸ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁶⁹ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

said to have declined a directorship citing “the inevitable damage to his and his company’s reputation from such an association.”⁷⁰ To get around this problem, Shingler recommended that the membership aspect of the organization should either be eliminated or remain “nominal,” and that the South Africa Foundation should hire full-time staff to carry out the society’s activities. Moreover, he suggested that the CSAS should not operate as a direct lobby, but reach out indirectly through contacts in the business sector, and rely more on the influence of key figures who are sympathetic to South Africa but who do not want to be publicly associated with the organization.⁷¹

These membership problems reveal the uncomfortable situation in which friends of South Africa found themselves: they could not make their case too strongly, lest they be interpreted (unfairly, in their view) as defenders of apartheid. Even after the South African government itself formally renounced apartheid, promising reforms and a new power-sharing arrangement, opposition to sanctions was widely interpreted as defending the status quo. This was for good reason—for even when Pretoria had officially rejected policies of segregation or “petty apartheid,” its diplomats and supporters continued to steadfastly oppose “simple majoritarian” or “one-man-one-vote” democratic rule well into the 1990s. Simply put, their definition of apartheid was quite narrow, and their vision for a “democratic” South Africa was not consistent with Canadians’ own concept of democracy (I will expand on this in the next chapter).

The key framing device adopted by the CSAS, therefore, was to insist that

⁷⁰ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁷¹ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

everybody was in agreement about the ills of apartheid, and to counterpose their reformist position with that of their opponents, arguing that change could only come through “gradual evolution rather than by revolution.”⁷² Or, as Shingler put it, the task of the CSAS was to counter the “isolationist lobby” by building a “constructive engagement lobby.”⁷³ Writing to NDP MP Terry Sargeant in 1982, McAvity offered: “It seems apparent that you and I are in agreement in respect to the racist policies of the South African Government, and that our views differ only as to which of the two alternative remedies is in the best interests of Canada and of the peoples of South Africa.”⁷⁴ However, there was still some disagreement within the organization about how much they should highlight specific reforms, and Shingler believed that McAvity’s arguments were too closely aligned to the position of the National Party’s liberal wing, at times making the CSAS look like “apologists” for the South African government.⁷⁵ As he wrote candidly to Chettle:

I think we have to accept certain limits on what is possible in the Canadian context. We have overemphasized the coming reforms, and these rather vague guarantees about future good times are starting to haunt us. I do not think we should stress Botha or those around him — at least in Canada. Rather, we should constantly point to the complexities, difficulties, pluralism etc of South Africa, acknowledge its weaknesses, and then go on to the attack on the other side. Is the “solution” violence — whether Marxist or not? Is it isolation? Sanctions? We should be arguing that these are the “simple solutions” more likely to lead to greater polarization in the long run.⁷⁶

Shingler’s confession articulated the need for a strategic shift from defence to offence,

⁷² Letter from James McAvity to Terry Sargeant, May 13, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁷³ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁷⁴ Letter from James McAvity to Terry Sargeant, May 13, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁷⁵ Letter from John Shingler to John Chettle, September 2, 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁷⁶ Letter from John Shingler to John Chettle, September 2, 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

and although this was already a common tactic, over the next decade the South African lobby would increasingly rely upon it. Unable to express their vision for evolutionary change in a way that was convincing to most people, who had very little tolerance for apartheid apologia, an important element of CSAS strategy therefore became to delegitimize the ANC, SWAPO, and other liberation movements who were calling for immediate change and universal suffrage.

This hostile position towards the liberation movements was featured in all of the CSAS's activities, and especially their media strategy. Over the years, McAvity and other CSAS directors published many 'letters to the editor' in various newspapers, which usually focused on challenging positive representations of the ANC or SWAPO, highlighting their violent objectives or ties to Communism. They did not always disclose their association with the CSAS in these letters. Frequently, directors would write directly to senior newspaper editors to try to influence a more critical editorial line on the ANC.⁷⁷ McAvity would regularly send the CSAS membership clippings of these letters, as well as other articles and opinion pieces that he found positive, the vast majority of them consisting of a critical perspective on the ANC and SWAPO.

An early emphasis of the CSAS was to oppose the growing support for the anti-apartheid movement among the leadership of the churches, including overt support for the ANC and commitment to divestment and sanctions. In fact, one of the first letters to the editor that McAvity published as CSAS president was to criticize an Anglican church officer who had participated in an anti-apartheid protest, therefore siding with the

⁷⁷ Letter from James McAvity to Keith Kincaid (Canadian Press), October 23, 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé; John Shingler, "Letter to the Editor of the Globe and Mail," June 1, 1983, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

“activists who are seeking to overthrow the white regime with no regard for the consequences.”⁷⁸ Responding to this growing threat, the CSAS worked closely with another organization, the Confederation of Church and Business People (CCBP), which was similarly formed in the late 1970s to oppose church activists and counter the influence of TCCR. Led by Reverend Charles Plaskett, United Church minister at the upscale Timothy Eaton Memorial Church in Toronto, the CCBP was essentially a network of businesspeople and elites with prominence within their church congregations, and therefore it had the most influence in high-brow churches or where businesspeople were the leading laity.⁷⁹ Their membership significantly overlapped with the CSAS—at one point in 1981, McAvity was the “acting chairman” of the CCBP while also serving as CSAS president.⁸⁰ However, for the most part CCBP materials did not focus on South Africa directly, but rather opposed the “highly partisan,” “doctrinaire,” and “divisive” actions of church leaders in support of solidarity groups, and presented themselves as a politically neutral body devoted to “reconciliation,” not “confrontation.”⁸¹ The timid character of the organization frustrated the CSAS, and in 1983 McAvity complained that under Plaskett “the role of the CCBP has changed to ‘building bridges’ rather than ‘rocking boats,’ and it seems that our Society can no longer count on the cooperation rendered by its previous Manager, Grant Lennie.”⁸² Although the CSAS considered

⁷⁸ James McAvity, “A Division in Africa the Churches Must Solve,” *Globe and Mail*, June 25, 1980, box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁷⁹ Kirkwood, interview.

⁸⁰ Confederation of Church and Business People (CCBP), “Notice of Meeting,” December 30, 1981, box 141, folder 5, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁸¹ CCBP, “There Are Two Sides to Every Issue, Before You Choose One, Be Sure to Consider Both” [ca. 1980], box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé; CCBP, “CCBP Newsletter,” Fall 1981, box 141, folder 5, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁸² CSAS, memorandum from J.M. McAvity to CSAS Board of Directors re: “Progress Report,” June 20, 1983, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé. However, the two organizations did cooperate during

reaching out to influential church leaders a priority, directors quickly became frustrated with their inability to make inroads, and at a 1981 board meeting they agreed that while it was important to keep informing church membership about the dangers of the ANC, “any organized campaign would be a waste of time and effort.”⁸³

A major flashpoint in the CSAS’s war against the credibility of the liberation movements was the Canadian Conference in Solidarity with the Liberation Struggles of the Peoples of Southern Africa, or the “Solidarity Conference,” which was held in Ottawa in 1982. Organized by a broad coalition group chaired by Jim Kirkwood of the United Church, the explicit intent of the conference was to raise the profile of the ANC and SWAPO among the different Canadian sectors. From the perspective of the ANC members in attendance, the conference was successful in bringing together diverse anti-apartheid forces, building legitimacy of the ANC’s demands for total isolation of South Africa, and in “promoting ANC and SWAPO as the genuine leaders of the struggles.”⁸⁴

The participation of churches in this event alarmed the CSAS. Despite suggestions from directors that it might not be worth their time to respond, McAvity wanted to aggravate the divisions within the church—namely, to alienate the lay membership from their pro-ANC church leaders.⁸⁵ The CSAS directors agreed that they would approach individual members of sponsoring churches to inform them about the

Buthlezi’s trip to Toronto in 1985, with McAvity praising Plaskett’s “invaluable cooperation.” CSAS, memorandum from Jim McAvity to John Chettle re: “The Buthelezi Project,” March 1, 1985, box 1, John Shingler Fonds.

⁸³ CSAS, “Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, Montreal,” June 29, 1981, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁸⁴ RPC, “Minutes of RPC meeting,” May 31, 1982, box 51, folder 5, ANC Archives; Canadian Conference in Solidarity with the Liberation Struggles of the Peoples of Southern Africa, “Minutes of Debrief Meeting in Montreal,” May 29, 1982, box 33, folder 19, ANC Archives.

⁸⁵ CSAS, “Minutes of Board of Directors meeting, Montreal,” June 14, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

“true nature and aims of the various Soviet-backed organizations which have the moral and financial support of various churches.”⁸⁶ The Reverend Canon Hughes, a CSAS director, wrote a personal letter which was sent to “several hundred prominent laymen” that would “[raise] the question of church involvement and the justification for providing moral and financial support for such organizations as the ANC and SWAPO.”⁸⁷ Dr. Kenneth Hilborn, a professor at the University of Western Ontario, wrote a piece titled “How Canadians Support Soviet Imperialism” which was shopped around to various magazines for publication.⁸⁸ Finally, Shingler attended the conference as an observer and prepared a 50-page report describing “how the international Communist organizations dupe religious and human rights institutions in obtaining their support for anti-South Africa campaigns.”⁸⁹ Shingler’s piece, which was widely mailed to society members, church leaders, and press contacts, warned that the conference’s primary purpose was to bolster the credibility of the “Marxist-Leninist” ANC as “the sole legitimate vehicle for the aspirations of South African exiles and émigrés.”⁹⁰

University divestment campaigns were another focus for the CSAS, whose board included several university professors. As early as 1980, the CSAS envisioned itself playing a role of “provid[ing] relevant information to universities facing student demands

⁸⁶ CSAS, “Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, Toronto,” June 2, 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁸⁷ CSAS, “Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, Montreal,” June 14, 1982, box 140, folder 1; CSAS, “Memorandum from JM to all members of CSAS,” July 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁸⁸ Kenneth Hilborn, “How Canadians Support Soviet Imperialism,” unpublished manuscript [ca. September 1982], box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁸⁹ CSAS, “President’s Report to the Third Annual General Meeting” [ca. October 1982], box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁹⁰ Shingler, “Report to the Directors of the CSAS re: Solidarity Conference,” 1982, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

for economic pressures against South Africa.”⁹¹ Much of their activity targeted McGill University in Montreal; not only did the CSAS provide the McGill board of governors with anti-divestment materials, they also attempted to set up McGill’s board chair Hallward with a SAF-paid trip to South Africa, given his “important role in combatting anti-South Africa activism at McGill.”⁹² These initiatives were spearheaded by Shingler, who was an associate professor at McGill, and who had established himself as a private consultant offering advice to companies and banks on how to counter pressures from the anti-apartheid movement⁹³. Shingler was a prominent figure on campus against South African divestment campaigns, and admittedly “a virtually solitary voice” on the issue.⁹⁴ He outlined his anti-divestment position in SAF’s journal *South Africa International*, warning that divestment is “likely to act as a brake on the process of social evolution,”⁹⁵ and that it would aid those terrorist organizations who seek to violently overthrow South Africa’s government: “It is clear that, if one seeks to bring about a revolution in South Africa, divestment and its advocacy makes eminent good sense.”⁹⁶ In a candid note, Shingler revealed his contempt for activists more directly: “I have met some of the divestment supporters - students, union reps, etc., and it is, frankly, appalling to think of decisions of this weight being made by people of their calibre.”⁹⁷

⁹¹ CSAS, “Draft brochure of the CSAS” [ca. 1980], box 177, folder 18, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁹² CSAS, “Minutes of a Meeting of Directors Held in Montreal,” April 22, 1983, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁹³ Shingler announced to the CSAS board in 1983 that he had “established himself as a consultant and will be seeking business from Canadian companies and banks, specializing in advice re: South African developments and anti-South Africa movements in Canada. After 20 years of lecturing, he is hopeful that this will become a full-time occupation.” CSAS, “Minutes of a Meeting of Directors Held in Montreal,” April 22, 1983, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁹⁴ Letter from John Shingler to John Chettle, March 13, 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

⁹⁵ John Shingler, “Canadian Universities and South Africa,” *South Africa International* 14, no. 4 (1984): 534.

⁹⁶ Shingler, 537.

⁹⁷ Letter from John Shingler to John Chettle, March 13, 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds.

Even after departing the CSAS in 1985, Shingler continued to play an influential role in campus debates. Adrian Harewood, who was in Shingler's class in the late 1980s, remembers being viscerally offended by his anti-divestment arguments, and that "as students we saw him as being a bit of an apologist for the regime."⁹⁸ Gwen Schulman similarly remembers that Shingler "carried quite a bit of sway [on campus], so I would say a lot of [our] time was spent battling what he was saying in his classroom to hundreds of POLI SCI students."⁹⁹ The influence of individual CSAS directors thus continued long after the organization itself had become largely irrelevant.

One of the last major events organized by the CSAS, before it imploded later that year, was a tour for Chief Buthelezi to Toronto and Ottawa in February of 1985; according to McAvity, Buthelezi was angry that Desmond Tutu's recent trip to Canada had received so much positive publicity, and the CSAS was eager for Buthelezi to "present his case against violent change and economic sanctions of all kinds."¹⁰⁰ In his speech to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs in Toronto, Buthelezi rejected armed struggle, gave his support for the "free enterprise system," and argued that "total disinvestment and the total isolation of South Africa in every sphere of life is a call by those who see the destruction of the existing society through revolutionary means as their first responsibility."¹⁰¹ Aware of the fact that any association with the CSAS could harm Buthelezi's credibility in South Africa, McAvity relied on other organizations to publicly

⁹⁸ Harewood, interview.

⁹⁹ Schulman, interview.

¹⁰⁰ CSAS, memorandum from Jim McAvity to John Chettle re: "The Buthelezi Project," March 1, 1985, box 1, John Shingler Fonds.

¹⁰¹ "Address to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, by Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, Chief Minister of KwaZulu, President of Inkatha and Chairman of the South African Black Alliance, Westin Hotel, Toronto Canada, Tuesday, February 26, 1985," photocopy of speech, box 1, John Shingler Fonds.

host the events, and hired PR firms to establish contacts with newspaper editorial boards, government officials, and the Canadian Labour Congress,¹⁰² thus “minimizing the role of the Society” and ensuring that “there could be no suspicion of SA government involvement.”¹⁰³

Decline of the CSAS, Mysterious Funding

The CSAS experienced a significant process of upheaval in July 1985 when, only weeks after the Canadian government announced a round of economic sanctions against South Africa, a *Montreal Gazette* exposé created an embarrassing scandal for directors who did not want to be publicly affiliated with the society. This was aggravated when McAvity made intemperate remarks to the press, calling Mulroney a “pipsqueak” and saying that power sharing in South Africa would not be possible “until they can get that black mob under control.”¹⁰⁴ This sparked an exodus of prominent Montreal-based directors, including Maurice Sauvé, John Shingler, Anglican Canon Malcolm Hughes, and Quebec Superior Court Justice Kenneth Mackay. Shingler complained that McAvity’s remarks “smack of racism,” and that because of this behaviour the CSAS “may, however inaccurately and unfairly, be portrayed as an agency of the National Party government of South Africa and a supporter of apartheid.”¹⁰⁵ The CSAS never recovered from this

¹⁰² In the itinerary of Buthelezi’s visit sent to the South Africa Foundation and the CSAS Board of Directors in March 1985, there is a note about a meeting with the CLC’s John Harker in a hotel suite, although this is missing from the abridged itinerary sent to all members of the CSAS. This could either suggest that the meeting was kept a secret, or that it never went ahead and was simply removed from the final version. CSAS, “Visit of his Excellency, Dr. M.G. Buthelezi,” itinerary for February 22-28, 1985, box 1, John Shingler Fonds; CSAS, memorandum from Jim McAvity to all CSAS members re: “The Buthelezi Visit,” March 1985, box 1, John Shingler Fonds.

¹⁰³ CSAS, memorandum from Jim McAvity to John Chettle re: “The Buthelezi Project,” March 1, 1985, box 1, John Shingler Fonds.

¹⁰⁴ “Jeanne Sauve’s husband advocate for South Africa,” *Globe and Mail*, July 26, 1985; Pratt, *In Good Faith*, 222.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Karen Seidman, “McGill teacher quits South Africa group,” *The Gazette (Montreal)*, August

incident, and from then on it maintained a much lower profile. Glenn Babb, who became South African Ambassador to Canada in August 1985, remarks that both the CSAS and SAF had “left the scene” by the time he arrived, suggesting that the reason for their departure was that once the Canadian government endorsed sanctions “everybody took fright and they left the association.”¹⁰⁶

The CSAS did, however, continue to exist into the 1990s, if at a much lower capacity and with diminished prestige. Following the upheaval in 1985, CSAS director Charles St. Thomas approached Laurence Bernstein, a young South African who had been living in Toronto since the mid-1970s, inviting him to get involved with the board, and later to take over as chairman. Bernstein had been attending CSAS meetings since the early 1980s, when St. Thomas (who had been a family friend in South Africa) had recruited him, pitching the CSAS as a group of mostly business people “who were interested in maintaining ties with South Africa.” This had appealed to Bernstein, who was not convinced that boycotts were effective in addressing the situation in South Africa, and who felt that the society’s approach of creating relationships and “listening to everybody” was the right one. Bernstein believes he was asked to join in the board because “nobody else was interested,” as the group had lost its political clout and was no longer a venue for glad-handing with high ranking members of society.¹⁰⁷

During Bernstein’s chairmanship, the activities of the CSAS were more modest. If meetings used to be held at the prestigious Ontario Club, the venues “gradually went

21, 1985.

¹⁰⁶ Babb, interview.

¹⁰⁷ Laurence Bernstein (Chair of the Canadian-South African Society after 1985), interviewed by the author, August 13, 2019.

down scale.” However, the South African consul in Toronto continued to have a close relationship with the society, attending all meetings, and occasionally providing their receptions with South African wine (which, thanks to the boycott, was no longer available at the liquor stores). Bernstein also took a new approach to the society’s programming; if previous events had been “vanilla” and “not-political,” they started to invite people with different views, including academics who supported the boycott, and in February 1991 they hosted a representative of the ANC.¹⁰⁸

Bernstein recalled that very quickly he started to get suspicious about aspects of the society’s funding. He tells me that he was “certain” that the relationship between the CSAS and the SAF had broken off before he joined the board, possibly related to the departure of prominent directors. However, when he became chairman, he was surprised to find that the group had accumulated a sum of about ten or twelve thousand dollars, and he was told by other members that this had come from a South African source called the Protea (or Protean) Foundation.¹⁰⁹ Mysteriously, nobody seemed to know anything about this foundation, or what the money was intended for, but there was a suggestion that it was somehow connected to the South African government. As he tells me, “there was something about [the Protea Foundation] that was surreptitious and bad. I think we

¹⁰⁸ Bernstein, interview; Letter from Peter Mahlangu (ANC Chief Representative) to the Canadian-South African Society, January 18, 1991, box 20, folder 399, ANC Archives.

¹⁰⁹ This is based on Bernstein’s recollection thirty years later, and so the name may not be accurate. Notably, the Protea is South Africa’s national flower, and it was very common for South African organizations and businesses to name themselves after it. Along these lines, “Protea” is also the name of a powerful and well-connected Belgian pro-South Africa lobby group which was founded by Flemish industrialist André Vlérick in 1977, and which itself was part of a European umbrella group which received illicit funds from the apartheid government (Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 162-6). While it is at least possible that the CSAS received grants from this organization, it is not consistent with Bernier’s own description of the funding source, and it seems somewhat unlikely that a Canadian lobby would have received funding from its Belgian equivalent (which itself was being funded in part by South Africa).

assumed that it was a propaganda arm of the South African government, and that their job would be to go around and give these grants.”¹¹⁰

Bernstein believes that this “tainted” money may have had something to do with how the CSAS was later treated. In the early 1990s, a South African-born Toronto lawyer named Stephen Pincus founded the South African Business Network (SABN), a new group strictly dedicated to promoting business with South Africa. One day around this time, Bernstein says that the South African consul “suddenly disengaged” without explanation, simply informing the CSAS that “he was no longer going to be involved with us,” and that from now on he would only associate with the SABN. Bernstein wrote a letter to the consul asking them what to do with the money from the Protea Foundation, and was told “keep the money.” He then went to Pincus, offering to merge the two organizations and give them the money, to which he received a “very terse letter” saying that SABN “were not interested in anything to do with our organization, and certainly didn’t want the money.” Bernstein reflects on how it was “very strange the way it suddenly turned,” and how their offer of money was regarded with horror, as if “we had Ebola or something.”¹¹¹

This would suggest, as Bernstein himself believes, that there was a closer relationship between the CSAS and the South African government than has otherwise been understood, and that the government was funnelling money to them through this secretive foundation in the early 1980s. If so, this money was not captured in the

¹¹⁰ Bernstein, interview.

¹¹¹ Bernstein, interview. I have not been able to independently verify the existence of a Protea Foundation, nor whether the CSAS was receiving other forms of government funding. In an e-mail, Glenn Babb tells me that he has never heard of the Protea Foundation, and that “certainly, the embassy didn’t spread cash around when I was in charge.” E-mail communication, September 2, 2019.

society's documents as revenue, or included as agenda items, at least during the years for which documents are available. Nonetheless, given the high number of board members, it is plausible that this controversial source of money had been kept off book and out of board meetings, known only to the chairman (and possibly a few others). While I cannot verify if it this is true, given what we know about the South African government's use of front organizations and other covert means at this time, it is not at all implausible that the most prominent organization promoting South African interests in Canada would have received some money as part of this international strategy.

On the Offensive

In the mid-1980s, the pro-South Africa lobby in Canada was transformed in the midst of a confluence of events that affected the balance of power in the favour of anti-apartheid forces. The new Progressive Conservative government led by Brian Mulroney surprised everyone by taking a firmer approach towards South Africa,¹¹² adopting several rounds of sanctions between 1985 and 1986. At the same time, an economic crisis within South Africa was contributing to significant capital flight and disinvestment by Canadian firms, which in turn provided momentum for divestment campaigns on university campuses. In

¹¹² It remains a matter of speculation why Mulroney decided to take an aggressive approach towards South Africa, breaking with his conservative allies Reagan and Thatcher, and against the pro-South Africa sentiments within the conservative movement and even within his own caucus. It would have come as a surprise to John Shingler of the CSAS, who in 1982 wrote that a conservative government likely would not reverse the "basic policies" already implemented against South Africa, but that: "What we can expect, and should aim for under a Conservative government, is a blunting of the edge of the attack, a public recognition of the complexity of the problem, and, possibly, critical support for the reforms [by the South African government] which are so often ignored by the outside world." Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle, August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds. Other sources at the time believed that Mulroney's eventual position on South Africa was an entirely personal matter. As the ANC's Canada Mission reported in 1987, "Reliable sources indicate that Mulroney (since his student days) has a personal emotion about apartheid," and he may have wanted a breakthrough in foreign policy to combat his "dismal" popularity. ANC Canada Mission, "Report to the Meeting of Chief Representatives," Mazimbu, Tanzania, August 11-13, 1987, box 29, folder 81, ANC Archives.

this context, for reasons which are unclear, the established lobby groups all but faded into irrelevance; the CCBP simply disappeared,¹¹³ and although the CSAS continued to operate and promote business with South Africa into the 1990s, it was no longer an influential player, and no longer had real purpose.¹¹⁴ As the old elite organizations were replaced by new actors, including a more aggressive Embassy and a diffusion of far-right organizations, the strategy of the lobby shifted from backroom persuasion to a more openly aggressive defence of South African reforms and demonization of the ANC.

The Babb Offensive

The South African Embassy played a much more prominent role during this period. Arriving in August 1985, incoming Ambassador Glenn Babb immediately made a name for himself by undertaking a highly visible “personal strategy” of “blanket exposure to everybody”:

When I was sent to Canada, [I was given] no instructions about who to meet, at all. [They told me:] Go on and see what you can do to keep the legitimacy of South Africa going. And I undertook a personal strategy of my own, to see everybody I could, on the far-left and the far-right, and in Parliament and academe, in the media, and I went everywhere to speak, I covered the whole country to show that we need a different system of analysis [about South Africa’s problems].¹¹⁵

Babb engaged in a flurry of media interviews and debates across the country, arranging speaking events to university and community groups where he promoted the South African government’s reforms, and warned that efforts to isolate South Africa would

¹¹³ Kirkwood recalls that the CCBP “kind of faded away,” possibility due to the increasing popularity of sanctions (interview). Similarly, Hutchinson suggests the organization “just floundered after while” as public opinion changed in support of sanctions (interview).

¹¹⁴ Bernstein, interview.

¹¹⁵ Babb, interview.

result in a “blood bath.”¹¹⁶ The Embassy also hired a public relations consultant, Scott Atkinson in Toronto, who was on a retainer for the Embassy, and who introduced Babb to influential investors and media elites in the city. However, despite this heightened activity, Babb claims that Embassy spending was “very small,” and that “as far as public relations were concerned you could write the amount on the nail of your thumb.”¹¹⁷

Babb’s approach was provocative, and speaking engagements often turned into incidents which attracted significant media attention. Most notoriously, in March 1987 Babb was invited by Chief Louis Stevenson to visit Peguis Indian Reserve outside of Winnipeg, Manitoba, in order to highlight Canadian injustices against First Nations. The Embassy saw this as an opportunity to showcase Canadian hypocrisy, and therefore “discredit and embarrass the Canadian government” while framing the Bantustan system under apartheid as analogous to the demands for Indigenous self-governance.¹¹⁸ As Babb reflects years later:

It’s still a matter of pain for most Canadians to find that the circumstances of the Peguis Indian band were in many ways a lot worse than the black population of South Africa. Now the idea was not to draw [a direct] comparison, but just to show that this was a universal problem in the world, not just in South Africa.¹¹⁹

This was an intensely controversial event, and the Assembly of First Nations felt that it was necessary to pass a resolution to make it known that they “cannot support the visit of the Ambassador of South Africa.”¹²⁰ The ANC reached out to Stevenson to ask him to

¹¹⁶ *Ottawa Citizen*, “South Africa: Its Ambassador to Canada Tells His Government’s Side,” newspaper clipping, September 14, 1985, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹¹⁷ Babb, interview.

¹¹⁸ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 178.

¹¹⁹ Babb, interview.

¹²⁰ Geoffrey York, “Babb to meet Peguis band today, Manitoba asks Tutu to visit reserve,” *Globe and Mail*, March 10, 1987.

withdraw the invitation to Babb,¹²¹ and the ANC's Saloojee even debated Stevenson on CBC television about the visit.¹²² Ultimately the visit went ahead, and made international news; Babb was flanked by "six television camera crews and about 40 journalists," and it became a major story in South Africa.¹²³ In return, the Embassy offered the leadership of several First Nations reserves all-expenses paid trips to South Africa, although only a few accepted.¹²⁴ This embarrassing spectacle compelled the ANC to increase contact and dialogue with other Indigenous leaders, and make solidarity with them a priority.¹²⁵ In 1988, Chief Bellegarde of the Prairie Treaty Nations Alliance wrote to Saloojee: "We, too, share the experience of not being fully recognized in our lands. I concur with you that some of our people are being used by the racist South African Government."¹²⁶

Babb's term lasted less than two years, and yet his aggressive public strategy brought him a notoriety in anti-apartheid circles; activists, NGOs, and the ANC alike were completely taken aback by this so-called "Babb offensive," and devoted much time to internal discussions on how to properly respond. Despite some speculation that it was part of a broader diplomatic strategy by South Africa, Saloojee was informed by ANC headquarters in Lusaka that "Canada is the only country subjected to such an intense campaign at present."¹²⁷ The most common response to Babb from anti-apartheid

¹²¹ ANC Canada Mission, "Report to the Meeting of Chief Representatives," Mazimbu, Tanzania, August 11–13, 1987, box 29, folder 81, ANC Archives.

¹²² "South African ambassador to visit Peguis Indian Reserve," *CBC MIDDAY*, hosted by Valerie Pringle, March 9, 1987, <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/apartheid-in-canada-babb-to-visit-peguis-indian-reserve>.

¹²³ Doug Smith, "An awkward visit," *Maclean's*, March 23, 1987; Phillip Van Niekerk, "Canada accused of hypocrisy by state radio in South Africa," *Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1987.

¹²⁴ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 178-9.

¹²⁵ ANC Canada Mission, "Mobilization Re: Political and Material support for the ANC," RPC report to External Coordinating Committee in Lusaka, 1988, box 54, folder 23, ANC Archives.

¹²⁶ Letter from Chief Vernon L. Bellegarde (Prairie Treaty Nations Alliance) to Yusuf Saloojee, May 5, 1988, box 3, folder 35, ANC Archives.

¹²⁷ RPC, "Minutes of RPC meeting," April 2, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

activists was to organize protests outside of his events, and in some cases disrupt them entirely; this led to high-profile debates in national newspapers over whether agents of apartheid had the right to “free speech” and should be given a platform.¹²⁸ The ANC’s Canada Mission itself developed an explicit policy of no-platforming Babb; the ANC would ask the organization hosting Babb to rescind their invitation, refuse to debate or share a platform with him (and encourage their supporters to do the same), and if the event went ahead they would organize “massive demonstrations” and attempt to disrupt the event.¹²⁹ This policy was endorsed “completely” by ANC headquarters.¹³⁰ Other efforts to isolate the Embassy included picketing outside of their buildings, campaigns to establish “apartheid-free zones” in Montreal and Toronto,¹³¹ and protests against the presence of the consulate on McGill campus.¹³² Babb remembers that the “worst part” of his experience in Canada was “people not wishing to speak with me,” before adding: “But I’m glad to say that in the end, we were right, and Canada’s got a long way to go before it’s able to [resolve the problems regarding] its Native population.”¹³³

The Embassy’s Front Network

Following Babb’s departure in mid-1987, and the arrival of his replacement Johannes De Klerk, the South African Embassy intensified their campaign against the anti-apartheid movement; although they no longer had the notoriety of a provocative spokesperson,

¹²⁸ See Michael Bueckert, “No Platform for Apartheid,” *Africa is a Country*, April 3, 2018, <https://africasacountry.com/2018/04/no-platform-for-apartheid>.

¹²⁹ RPC, “Minutes of Extended Regional Political Committee meeting,” Toronto, February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

¹³⁰ RPC, “Minutes of RPC meeting,” April 2, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

¹³¹ Fall, interview; RPC, “Chairman’s Address,” extended meeting of the RPC, February 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

¹³² Schulman, interview.

¹³³ Babb, interview.

their efforts became far more aggressive and underhanded. One IAWGSA document pointed out the contrast between the “belligerent, flamboyant and confrontational style of Glenn Babb” and the “low-key but tenacious, behind-the-scenes style of Johannes De Klerk.”¹³⁴

The Embassy continued to put out government publications, supplementing bland communiqués with flashy brochures and magazines from the South African departments of Information and Foreign Affairs, as well as a polished newsletter *South African Newspoint* featuring articles by Tony Marais, an economist who joined the Embassy as an Attaché in 1987. In these articles Marais warned about the harmful effects that economic sanctions could have on the entire region of Southern Africa,¹³⁵ and presented studies concluding that “the overwhelming body of evidence at this stage suggests that blacks oppose sanctions.”¹³⁶ Similar to the arguments made by the CSAS, the Embassy pitched its opposition to sanctions as an anti-apartheid position: “Let it be said at the outset that the central concern is not about the continued existence of apartheid; rather, it relates to how it might best be eliminated while peace, prosperity, and socio-economic stability are maintained.”¹³⁷ Marais also sent letters to high school principals, Rotary Clubs, universities, and other organizations across Canada, offering to visit and provide his analysis of South Africa, or to discuss “sanctions, disinvestment, divestment, and the

¹³⁴ Inter-Agency Working Group on Southern Africa (IAWGSA), “Proposal for a National Consultation of Local, Regional, and National Anti-Apartheid Groups in Canada,” fourth draft, June 30, 1989, box 17, folder 324, ANC Archives.

¹³⁵ Tony Marais, “Sanctions: South And Southern Africa,” *South African Newspoint*, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹³⁶ Tony Marais, “Sanctions — The Key Issues,” *South African Newspoint*, 1988, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹³⁷ Tony Marais, “Sanctions: South And Southern Africa,” *South African Newspoint*, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

like.”¹³⁸

During this period, the Embassy was also frequently accused of dirty tricks to get its message out. In 1988, an Embassy official placed an advertisement in the *Calgary Herald* under the name Freedom in Sport, a “non-existent committee,” while using a pseudonym.¹³⁹ Anti-apartheid activists also speculated that the Embassy might have secretly been behind various pro-South Africa propaganda pieces, such as an anti-ANC documentary by conservative journalist Peter Worthington, although he denied this.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, on at least two occasions between 1987 and 1988, the Embassy was suspected of distributing fraudulent replicas of anti-apartheid materials to solidarity organizations across Canada: a pamphlet by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) was doctored to suggest that the SACC “condones acts of violence” and that AIDS was “rampant” among the opponents of apartheid,¹⁴¹ and a distorted copy of the YMCA’s “Call to Action” modified quotes from Desmond Tutu so that he appeared to condemn ANC terrorism, rather than apartheid.¹⁴² No direct link to the Embassy was ever established.

What particularly concerned the anti-apartheid movement, however, was the Embassy’s relationship with Don Carter, secretary of the Calgary-based Western Canadian Society for South Africa (WCSSA), and whose cable television program “Don

¹³⁸ Letter from M.A. [Tony] Marais (Attaché, South African Embassy) to Sister Ann Manuel (Principal, Loretto College School, Toronto), April 3, 1989, box 8, folder 126, ANC Archives.

¹³⁹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 182-3.

¹⁴⁰ “ANC says video by Canadian journalist resembles S. African govt. propaganda,” *Ottawa Citizen*, clipping, October 3, 1989, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection; more on this below.

¹⁴¹ Inter-Church Coalition on Africa, “Urgent Action! If You See This Pamphlet... BEWARE!”, February 18, 1988, box 444, folder 1, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁴² World Alliance of YMCAs and World YMCA, “Press release re: Call to Action in solidarity with Southern Africa,” May 25, 1988, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

Carter's Southern Africa Report" featured pro-South African content. Carter had been assisting the Embassy in arranging frequent speaking engagements in Calgary, and had led delegations to South Africa at the expense of the South African Tourism Board.¹⁴³ He was also closely connected to other organizations, including the Vancouver-based Canadian Friends of South Africans Society (CFSAS), whose co-chair William Campbell was the editor of *International Conservative Insight* magazine.¹⁴⁴

These activities raised many suspicions. In 1988, the *McGill Daily* reported on a student essay competition run by the WCSSA which offered a prize of one return air ticket to South Africa plus \$500, and which was advertised in student newspapers across Alberta; the report suggested that the WCSSA was connected to the South African Tourism Board, but Carter denied having formal links to the government.¹⁴⁵ However, the anti-apartheid movement believed that Carter's relationship to the South African government went deeper than he would admit, and the ANC in fact believed that Carter was working for the South African Embassy by "secretly establishing pro-apartheid groups throughout Canada" in an attempt to "duplicate" the methods of the anti-apartheid networks.¹⁴⁶ These claims were supported by further reporting in the *Southern Africa Chronicle* which accused the Embassy of "managing a network of ultra-right wing

¹⁴³ Memorandum from George Manz (South Saskatchewan Committee for World Development) to Keith Rimstead (IDAFSA), re: pro-South Africa groups, November 3, 1987, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection; "South Africa Keeps Up the Pressure in Canada," *What's the word! Southern Africa Network Bulletin* [produced by CIDMAA and TCLSAC] 2, no. 8 (June 1988), box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁴⁴ "Special Edition: South Africa: Hope Amidst Controversy," *International Conservative Insight* [published by Canadian Conservative Centre] 3, no. 2 (1988), box 333, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁴⁵ Donne Flanagan, "Essay contest ignores apartheid," *McGill Daily*, October 19, 1988; WCSSA, "Essay Competition" [ca. 1988], photocopy of advertisement, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁴⁶ RPC, "Minutes of RPC meeting," February 15, 1988, box 51, folder 11, ANC Archives; ANC Toronto Unit, "Minutes of ANC Toronto Unit," February 21, 1988, box 54, folder 23, ANC Archives.

Canadian collaborators” as part of a seemingly grassroots pro-apartheid campaign.¹⁴⁷

These suspicions were confirmed in November 1989, when the CBC’s investigative journalism program *The Fifth Estate* exposed Carter’s involvement in “a network [of South Africa supporters] financed and run by the South African Embassy.” In a stunning report, the CBC revealed that Don Carter was a paid consultant for the Embassy, and that he had worked with Embassy officials to establish a series of front groups across Canada, disguised as a grassroots movement. On behalf of the Embassy, Carter had recruited supporters to form “Friends of South Africa” organizations in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Calgary, Vancouver, and Vancouver Island. The CBC’s expose relied on the testimony of Geoff Shaw and Ihor Wichacz, two graduate students at the University of Manitoba who had been recruited by Carter, and who had had a previous relationship with the South African Embassy; one student had received statistics and information from the Embassy that he could bring up in class discussions about South Africa, and he in turn provided them with the names of students and professors who might be sympathetic. After some time as participants in Carter’s network, the students became increasingly uncomfortable with what he was asking of them, and they reached out to CSIS — who convinced them to become double agents. When their cover was blown, they took their story to the CBC.¹⁴⁸

The CBC report described the operations of the “Friends of South Africa” network in some detail. Carter had convinced Shaw and Wichacz to form a group that could

¹⁴⁷ George Manz, “South Africa: Right-wing network spreads propaganda in Canada,” *Southern Africa Chronicle* 2, no. 4 (March 6, 1989), box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁴⁸ CBC Television, *The Fifth Estate*, “The Persuaders,” November 14 1989, MIKAN no. 84780, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

counter “misperceptions” about South Africa in the media, and provided them with the name the Winnipeg South Africa Association (WSSA). To manage the WSSA, as with other members of the network, Carter installed a fax machine in Shaw’s house, and would send them “almost daily requests,” which usually involved detailed instructions about submitting opinion pieces or letters to the editor, or writing letters to politicians. All expenses were forwarded to Carter, and paid by the Embassy, at up to \$300 a month. Carter maintained centralized control over the network, forbidding the groups from communicating with each other or reaching out directly to the Embassy; one day after the WSSA sent a letter to the Ambassador, they received a “hot fax” from Carter saying “what the hell do you guys think you are doing,” and that they were “going to blow the network.”¹⁴⁹

In the fall of 1989, the Embassy let go Carter from his retainer, and took direct control over the network. Third Secretary Erney Breytenbach told the WSSA that they would now be directly responsible to him, and that Shaw and Wichacz would each receive a small stipend of \$100 every month for their work, with the possibility of a raise of up to \$400 per month. In an even more incendiary move, Breytenbach encouraged the WSSA to “infiltrate anti-apartheid organizations,” which the students characterized as an “intelligence gathering operation,” or “essentially [a] spy operation.” The students did this by approaching groups including the United Church, anti-apartheid coalitions, and politicians within the Manitoba government, gathering as much information as possible to hand over to the Embassy, all while acting as informants for CSIS.¹⁵⁰ When the CBC

¹⁴⁹ The Fifth Estate, “The Persuaders.”

¹⁵⁰ The Fifth Estate, “The Persuaders.”

finally reported their story about the Embassy recruiting spies to infiltrate the anti-apartheid movement, the public was outraged; labour unions including the Canadian Association of Industrial Mechanical and Allied Workers, and the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada, wrote to Joe Clark demanding that he close down the Embassy and expel its diplomats, and to grant diplomatic recognition to the ANC Mission. One letter noted with concern that “many of our [union] members are active participants” in the types of organizations which had been infiltrated.¹⁵¹

This spying scandal led to increased calls for Mulroney and Clark to take action against the South African Embassy, as many activists had been urging for years. In 1987, a representative of the ANC Manitoba Unit had complained:

The South African Embassy in Ottawa is a beehive of activity, churning out millions of dollars worth of lies and half truths in glossy publications. How can Canada tolerate such immoral activity by agents of apartheid? The anti-apartheid forces can not hope to compete at this level without support and funding from the government.¹⁵²

This sentiment was shared by many others in the anti-apartheid movement, who believed that allowing the Embassy to operate freely was undermining Canada’s own foreign policy objectives. As one delegate from Alberta asked at a meeting of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAFSA) in 1988: “Why does the Canadian government allow the S.A. government to circulate propaganda which undercuts the policy of the Canadian government?”¹⁵³ Even though there was a consensus among anti-

¹⁵¹ Letter from Jess Succamore (National Secretary Treasurer, Canadian Association of Industrial Mechanical and Allied Workers) to Joe Clark re: “South African Embassy Infiltration of Canadian Anti-Apartheid Groups,” November 17, 1989, box 8, folder 122, ANC Archives; Letter from Robert Henderson (President, Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada) to Joe Clark, November 20, 1989, box 8, folder 122, ANC Archives.

¹⁵² Photocopy of remarks by Ahmod Randeree (ANC Manitoba Unit) for “75th Anniversary of the ANC” event [January 8, 1987], Winnipeg, box 53, folder 20, ANC Archives.

¹⁵³ “Minutes of 8th Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Committee of the International Defence and

apartheid actors about the “urgent need” to counter the “nefarious role” played by the Embassy, not everyone agreed that Canada should break its diplomatic relations, as this would mean shutting down the Canadian Embassy in South Africa as well.¹⁵⁴

Nonetheless, public sentiment was rapidly souring against the Embassy’s activities in Canada, and according to an IDAFSA survey of the federal parties, by 1988 both the Liberals and the NDP supported either downgrading or severing diplomatic links with South Africa, and indicated that they were willing to close the South African Embassy if necessary.¹⁵⁵

Right-wing backlash and far-right alliances

While the South African Embassy in Ottawa had succeeded in building a network of front organizations across the country, its outreach and initiatives were largely dependent upon the support of far-right fringe groups, which were the only actors willing to collaborate with them. As David Galbraith noted, the Embassy’s base of potential support was strictly limited:

The constituencies which can be mobilized in overt support for racist regimes are relatively marginal to the mainstream of Canadian political life, moving not much closer to the political centre than the hard right of the Tories.¹⁵⁶

This was a relationship of necessity, not preference. Glenn Babb recalls that he wanted to challenge the notion that South Africa was an “extreme right country,” and so as

Aid Fund for Southern Africa,” Centre for Christian Studies, Toronto, June 4, 1988, box 34, folder 27, ANC Archives.

¹⁵⁴ Inter-Agency Working Group on Southern Africa (IAWGSA), “Proposal for a National Consultation of Local, Regional, and National Anti-Apartheid Groups in Canada,” fourth draft, June 30, 1989, box 17, folder 324, ANC Archives.

¹⁵⁵ International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (Canada), “Federal Political Party Survey,” Bulletin no. 1 (October 1988), box 451, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁵⁶ David Galbraith, “Targeting Canada: Apartheid’s Friends on the Offensive,” *Southern Africa Report* 3, no. 5 (May 1988): 13.

Ambassador “I did my utmost to avoid the type of extreme right in Canada.”¹⁵⁷

However, this narrative is contradicted by Babb’s own relationship to Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform (C-FAR), a far-right organization led by white supremacist Paul Fromm, which was opposed to foreign aid and non-white immigration, made frequent attacks on Canadian development organizations,¹⁵⁸ and whose office manager used to edit the newsletter of Neo-Nazi group the Western Guard.¹⁵⁹ As reported in *Briarpatch*, Babb spoke at a C-FAR meeting in Toronto in 1985, where Fromm told Babb that he was “among friends,” and when Babb left Canada in 1987 C-FAR organized for him a “Salute to Glenn Babb” dinner.¹⁶⁰ Other friends of South Africa included Eileen Pressler of the B.C. Free Speech League, who had accompanied both Don Carter and John Templehoff of the Canadian Friends of South Africa Society on one of her two delegations to South Africa,¹⁶¹ and who has been described as “one of the leading forces in rural British Columbia’s nascent hate movement” for distributing antisemitic literature and hosting talks by holocaust deniers.¹⁶² Most significantly, the Embassy’s primary Canadian agent, Don Carter — who had been recruited during Babb’s tenure — had many far-right connections, and had even interviewed holocaust-denier David Irving on his television show, praising him.¹⁶³ If Babb is taken at his word, and he was indeed doing his “utmost

¹⁵⁷ Babb, interview.

¹⁵⁸ Stanley R. Barrett, *Is God a Racist? The Right Wing in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 198-202.

¹⁵⁹ Gerald Caplan, “Helping to wage propaganda war for South Africa,” *Toronto Star*, clipping, May 18, 1988, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁶⁰ George Martin Manz, “C-FAR, so near,” *Briarpatch*, March 1989, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁶¹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 179.

¹⁶² Warren Kinsella, *Web of Hate: Inside Canada’s Far Right Network* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2001), 71.

¹⁶³ CBC Television, *The Fifth Estate*, “The Persuaders,” November 14 1989, MIKAN no. 84780, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

to avoid” these types of relationships with far-right figures, then his record points to how unavoidable this was in a context in which South Africa was treated as a total pariah.

To be sure, many of South Africa’s most active supporters were on the far-right fringe, who did not bother to disguise their racism and openly sympathized with the white population. Far-right supporters of South Africa flooded the microphone at a government-sponsored forum on South African censorship in 1988, including a member of the National Party who defended apartheid on the grounds of maintaining “cultural independence,” while arguing that “race mixing” should be illegal and that Canada should ban non-white immigration.¹⁶⁴ Other figures during this time included Ron Gostick of the Canadian League of Rights (CLR), which opposed foreign aid and accused the World Council of Churches of being the “ecclesiastical arm of the international Communist Conspiracy.”¹⁶⁵ Gostick and Pat Walsh, also of the CLR, founded the Friends of Rhodesia Association, and Walsh claims that “the two of them had driven the first oil tanker from South Africa to Rhodesia after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence.”¹⁶⁶ In June 1985, the CLR distributed a pro-apartheid comic by Disney cartoonist Vic Lockman as a supplement with their publications *On Target* and *Canadian Intelligence Service*. Titled “Who’s Behind the South African Crisis?”, the comic was blatantly racist, arguing that “Tribal African Blacks are quite different from American

¹⁶⁴ Transcript, "Public Forum on South African Censorship and Propaganda" (session 1, tape 1, page 30), Department of External Affairs, Ottawa City Hall, August 2, 1988, box 452, folder 4, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection. Members of the audience apologized to the panellists for the prevalence of far-right views expressed during the forum, to which South African journalist Donald Woods replied, “I think that you are very lucky actually. All you have to do is listen to them. In South Africa we are governed by them. So you are very fortunate” (transcript, session 3, tape 1, page 101).

¹⁶⁵ Cited in Barrett, *Is God a Racist?*, 207.

¹⁶⁶ Barrett, 210-211.

Blacks!” in order to justify their denial of voting rights.¹⁶⁷

Support for South Africa, however, was not confined to white nationalists and holocaust deniers, but extended deeper into the conservative movement. In fact, during the right-wing backlash to Mulroney’s Progressive Conservative government and the period of political realignment that birthed the Reform Party, South Africa had become a key symbol of conservative betrayal. Mulroney was “well ahead of his party on this issue and, in some respects, almost alone,”¹⁶⁸ and he had alienated many within his party, and even within his caucus. A small group of conservative MPs were vocal in their opposition, going so far as openly defying Mulroney’s voluntary ban on accepting paid trips to South Africa, but there was also a “substantial body of opinion” within the mainstream of his caucus which believed that his position on South Africa was simply wrong.¹⁶⁹ To right-wing critics, Joe Clark as Minister of External Affairs came to represent “everything that was wrong with the Conservative governments of the past twenty years,”¹⁷⁰ even as he himself was unenthusiastic and “mired in doubts” about their sanctions policy.¹⁷¹ The right-wing reaction to Mulroney and Clark could be seen in an advertisement that C-FAR placed in both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Ottawa Citizen* in November 1985:

Brian Mulroney’s one-sided “get-South Africa” threats and sanctions are a betrayal of the conservative promise. Last year, Canadians voted for a conservative foreign policy. Instead, they got Stephen Lewis and the NDP’s African policy.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Vic Lockman, “Who’s Behind the South African Crisis?” cartoon, June 10, 1985, box 452, folder 5, and Scoble Collection.

¹⁶⁸ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 173.

¹⁶⁹ Freeman, 174-5.

¹⁷⁰ Murray Dobbin, *Preston Manning and the Reform Party* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1991), 81.

¹⁷¹ Freeman, *Ambiguous Champion*, 175.

¹⁷² "Mulroney's South African Sanctions Cost Canadian Jobs!" Advertisement sponsored by Citizens for

Similarly, Don Carter's Western Canadian Society of South Africa wrote to its members to picket an upcoming Commonwealth conference in 1987:

Are we going to stand by and do nothing while Mulroney and his favoured African Marxist dictatorships endeavour to bring South Africa to its knees? Heaven help us if we do. To do nothing will be to condone and encourage Clark and Mulroney in their moral posturing and ill-conceived conspiracy to destroy our way of life. For the survival of all democracies we must support South Africa in their struggle against communist conquest.¹⁷³

As an indication of the staying power of this resentment, some years later conservative columnist David Frum made an appeal to right-leaning voters to support the Progressive Conservative party over the Reform Party, while sympathizing with the idea that Mulroney had let down his base because he had "worried far too much about placating liberal opinion-mongers in Toronto, on issues ranging from homosexual rights to sanctions against South Africa."¹⁷⁴

It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the key individuals involved in the creation of the Reform Party in 1987 were vocal supporters of South Africa and opponents of sanctions, to the extent that, by one account, "there is good reason to believe that groups sympathetic to South Africa have seen the [Reform] party as an ally."¹⁷⁵ Trevor Harrison also argues that the widespread support for South Africa among Reform Party members was likely based on their strong identification with "Anglo" culture, and the idea that Canada and South Africa shared a "common heritage" as white

Foreign Aid Reform, published in the *Globe and Mail*, November 13, 1985, and the *Ottawa Citizen*, November 28, 1985, box 453, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁷³ Letter from Western Canadian Society of South Africa to "Friends of South Africa," September 16, 1987, box 28, folder 64, ANC Archives.

¹⁷⁴ David Frum, "Tories remain best choice for conservative-minded," *The Financial Post*, November 13, 1993.

¹⁷⁵ Dobbin, *Preston Manning and the Reform Party*, 102.

settler colonies.¹⁷⁶ These figures included Ted Byfield, who published the pro-South African *Alberta Report*, and Reform Party spokesperson and Senator Stan Waters, who argued that “South Africa should think twice before allowing majority rule because most black-ruled African countries live under tyranny.”¹⁷⁷ When *International Conservative Insight* magazine published a special issue on South Africa in 1988, it featured articles by Ted Byfeld, Reform Party member Doug Collins, and Peter Brimelow, a major intellectual influence of the Reform Party who is known today as a prominent white nationalist.¹⁷⁸ Many of these figures were also involved in other active right-wing organizations, which as a rule tended to side with South Africa against sanctions; for example, Waters was on the advisory committee of the National Citizens’ Coalition (NCC), which also opposed non-white immigration,¹⁷⁹ and Byfield, Brimelow and Stephen Harper were involved in the early stages of the Northern Foundation, which was established in 1989 “originally as a pro-South Africa group” and which grew into an umbrella organization for various conservative causes.¹⁸⁰

Finally, the right-wing press and other elements in the right-wing ecosphere continued to boost Buthelezi and the homelands system as an alternative to the ANC’s revolutionary violence. Buthelezi returned to Canada in 1986, one year after his visit on behalf of the CSAS, this time courtesy of the conservative think tank the Fraser Institute. As summarized by Peter Worthington, rightwing journalist and former editor of the

¹⁷⁶ Trevor Harrison, *Of Passionate Intensity: Right-Wing Populism and the Reform Party of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 170-1.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Dobbin, *Preston Manning and the Reform Party*, 93.

¹⁷⁸ “Special Edition: South Africa: Hope Amidst Controversy,” *International Conservative Insight* [published by Canadian Conservative Centre] 3, no. 2 (1988), box 333, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁷⁹ Dobbin, *Preston Manning and the Reform Party*, 94, 95.

¹⁸⁰ Dobbin, pp. 100-1; Harrison, *Of Passionate Intensity*, 121.

Toronto Sun, Buthelezi's address to the Canadian Club asked Canadians to "look ahead to what sort of South Africa will exist after apartheid is eradicated":

Will it be a one-party Marxist revolutionary state, which the African National Congress wants (Canada supports the ANC); or will it be a multiparty, free-enterprise democracy, which Buthelezi, South African moderates and most blacks favour?¹⁸¹

Worthington often wrote favourably of Buthelezi, calling him "the most influential black in South Africa" and "admired by practically everyone except radicals and those who envy his power and potential,"¹⁸² and he wrote a positive profile of Bophuthatswana and the homeland system in his right-wing *Influence* magazine, under the title "Bop—Country With Oomph."¹⁸³ In 1990, Buthelezi was invited back to Toronto by newspaper publisher Conrad Black, where he told the business audience that sanctions were hurting the poorest in South Africa; meanwhile, protestors threw chicken blood on the doors outside the Toronto Club,¹⁸⁴ and Oxfam Canada criticized Black for supporting Buthelezi and his "campaign of terror" inside South Africa.¹⁸⁵ Previously in 1979 as chair of Massey-Ferguson, Black had rejected the calls from TCCR to cease the provision of equipment to South Africa, writing that "it would not be a collective improvement, even if any activity of ours were of the slightest influence, to replace the oppressions of the current regime with the barbarism that would eagerly replace them."¹⁸⁶

In defence of South Africa, therefore, were a number of elements — the Embassy,

¹⁸¹ Peter Worthington, "Chief's warning worth heeding," *The Financial Post*, December 15, 1986.

¹⁸² Peter Worthington, "Canada's obtuse about South Africa" [ca. 1986] clipping from unknown magazine, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁸³ Peter Worthington, "Bop—Country With Oomph," *Influence* (February-March, 1987), box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁸⁴ Linda Hossie, "Canada biased against Inkatha, Buthelezi charges Black denounced for dinner invitation," *Globe and Mail*, November 13, 1990.

¹⁸⁵ John Graham, "Buthelezi's campaign of terror," *Globe and Mail*, November 17, 1990.

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Pratt, *In Good Faith*, 45-6.

fringe far-right groups, and rightwing media — which had considerable overlap and whose efforts complemented each other. This is evident in how various right-wing actors attempted to undermine the ability of Mulroney and Clark to develop increased contacts with ANC leaders. On August 28, 1987, the same day that ANC President Oliver Tambo visited Mulroney in Ottawa, the South African Embassy published a full page ad in the *Globe and Mail* titled “Oliver Tambo - Obstacle to Peace?” featuring ANC quotes on violence, their “Communist connections,” and a description of “necklacing.”¹⁸⁷ Mulroney confronted Tambo with the ad during their meeting, which surprised Tambo—who claimed that other countries did not take the South African line on the ANC as seriously, and yet a “fixation on Communism” had “dominated” his visit.¹⁸⁸ Only weeks later, all Members of Parliament received a copy of a TV documentary produced by Peter Worthington, titled “The ANC Method: Violence.” The documentary was accompanied by a booklet with articles detailing the alleged Soviet and terrorist connections to various ANC leaders, among other provocative content such as an article titled "Nelson Mandela Is No Martin Luther King." The copies were distributed to MPs by C-FAR at their own expense, and were available from the Embassy at request.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ “Oliver Tambo—Obstacle to Peace?” advertisement, *Globe and Mail*, August 28, 1987, box 437, folder 13, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁸⁸ Pratt, *In Good Faith*, pp. 279-80.

¹⁸⁹ Gerald Caplan, “Helping to wage propaganda war for South Africa,” *Toronto Star*, May 18, 1988.

Chapter 5: The “Anti-South Africa Industry” and Accusations of Unfair Criticism

The previous chapter focused on the form and primary activities of the South African lobby in Canada, and highlighted how, for the most part, the country’s advocates were not willing to defend apartheid itself, but primarily responded by attacking its opponents.¹

This chapter will focus more closely on the rhetorical strategies of the lobby, which in general had adopted an accusatory, defensive position which framed its critics as essentially unfair. As South African diplomat and propagandist Eschel Rhoodie complained in 1969, the alleged confusion surrounding the facts of the situation facing South Africa had led to:

“[An] often unbelievable hostility against anything South African, or the application of an outrageous double standard in evaluating South African policies, a one-sided inflammatory dialogue, or a fanatical obsession with South African affairs to the exclusion of all other injustices and problems in the world.”²

Facing significant criticism on the international stage, and interpreting that criticism as one element of the “total onslaught” which posed an existential threat to the country itself, South Africa leaned heavily on this defensive framing of the fundamental unfairness of the anti-apartheid movement. In particular, friends of South Africa issued complaints about the negative and one-sided tone of the debate, the application of double standards, being singled out for criticism, and the delegitimization of South Africa itself.

Demonization

South Africa’s supporters frequently complained that the country was subject to an

¹ Minor elements of chapters 5, 9, and the Conclusion were originally published as a blog post “When is it antisemitic to criticize Israel?” on the website *Africa is a Country*, March 26, 2019, <https://africasacountry.com/2019/03/when-is-it-antisemitic-to-criticize-israel>. Republished according to Creative Commons License.

² Rhoodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 83.

entirely negative and one-sided point of view, at odds with reality and poisoning the possibility of constructive debate. Ambassador Glenn Babb often criticized the “exaggerated rhetoric” used against South Africa,³ arguing that the country was being “vilified” in a public debate full of “dismal ignorance.”⁴ Babb was unhappy that any good intentions by South Africans would be met with cynicism and “continuous sniping,” and that people never gave the government any credit for its reforms, but instead had a “tendency to look at South Africa through glasses which will always make it look as though it was ill-intentioned towards the people it was governing.”⁵ At the end of his term, Babb wrote a feature article for Worthington’s *Influence* magazine in which he complained about what he called the “anti-South Africa industry” in Ottawa, namely the “incestuous” relationship between the Canadian government, the ANC, and “anti-South Africa” groups. “In view of the gratuitous insults heaped upon South Africa by Canadian politicians and in view of the strident defamation aimed at it,” Babb wrote, “the South African government has been both restrained and polite.”⁶ His successor, Ambassador J.H. De Klerk, fretted publicly that the policy of the Canadian government was “self-righteous,” “myopic and misguided,” and “based on information gleaned from an alarmingly biased press.”⁷

Bias was a common accusation from South Africa’s supporters. When the CBC

³ Glenn Babb, "Blind Spots I have Observed in Canada," *Influence Magazine*, February-March 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁴ Michele Wheeler, “South African Ambassador outlines history of apartheid,” *Kemptville Weekly Advance*, newspaper clipping, March 5, 1986, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵ *Globe and Mail*, “Freedom in South Africa: Envoy, banned editor differ,” newspaper clipping, April 23, 1986, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁶ Glenn Babb, "Blind Spots I have Observed in Canada," *Influence Magazine*, February-March 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁷ J.H. De Klerk, “Speaking Notes for address to Rotary [Hamilton, Ontario],” South African Embassy press release, March 25, 1988, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

posed critical questions to Buthelezi during an interview, Jim McAvity apologized to him and characterized the incident as an “unhappy demonstration of how ‘left-lib’ our media people in Canada are today.”⁸ Lockman’s pro-apartheid cartoon “Who’s Behind the South African Crisis?” similarly suggested that the common portrayal of apartheid as an “especially vile” form of discrimination was due to the failure of the “biased liberal media” to “present the full and honest facts.”⁹ South Africans have “responded negatively” to the attention they have received, wrote John Shingler, for they “see it as distorted and one-sided, and an over-simplification out of touch with the nitty-gritty of daily life. And they are right.”¹⁰ In contrast, the pro-South Africa groups like the Vancouver-based Canadian Friends of South Africa Society claimed to offer opportunities for “cross-pollinating ideas and opinions about South Africa,” and to “provide a balanced perspective” on the country.¹¹

“Anti-South Africa bias” was intended to suggest that the realities of conflict and racial discrimination in South Africa were being blown entirely out of proportion. For example, John Chettle addressed the 1983 Annual General Meeting of the CSAS with a speech intending to correct “inaccuracies and misapprehensions” about the situation in South Africa, which he described as “entirely normal”:

Which is to say that it is full of anxiety, irritation, recrimination and doubt. This is not a passing phase in South Africa. It is something like a permanent condition. South Africans, having a wonderful climate, magnificent scenery, beautiful women and fine wines have only one other thing to bicker about, and that is politics, and they do it with an enthusiasm which other peoples reserve for

⁸ Letter from James McAvity to M.G. Buthelezi, March 1, 1985, box 1, John Shingler Fonds.

⁹ Vic Lockman, “Who’s Behind the South African Crisis?” cartoon, June 10, 1985, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection. According to marginalia, this comic was mailed as a supplementary section with “On Target” and “CIS,” publications of the Canadian League of Rights.

¹⁰ Shingler, “Canadian Universities and South Africa,” 532.

¹¹ “About the Canadian Friends of South Africans Society” [ca. 1987], distributed by SCOTT - Atkinson Only International to Ottawa International JAYCEES, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

weather, women and wines.¹²

The country's supporters argued that these one-sided and anti-South African attitudes were preventing reasonable conversation from taking place. As J.H. De Klerk lamented, the debate over South Africa was characterized by "wildly emotional responses" rather than "rational analysis."¹³

Even worse, South Africans complained that the anti-apartheid movement turned the campus into an unwelcoming environment. When Bernstein studied at Cornell University starting in 1969, the campus was a site of intense African-American and anti-apartheid activism, and he claims that he was personally targeted due to his identity: "I was maligned for being South African, it was a really difficult thing to be." Bernstein remembers that he had a "Black professor who really hated me terribly," and that at one point an activist group had ominously announced a march to his dormitory, which he interpreted as a threat (ultimately nothing happened).¹⁴ Chettle similarly warned that university campuses had been taken over by a "McCarthyism of the left," which did not allow for positive views on South Africa to be expressed, and he complained about the "academic intolerance" in the African Studies Association which had been taken over by "semi-militants."¹⁵ Shingler argued that campus debates had become "unbalanced," "one-dimensional," and "wholly negative," and that in this way South Africa itself had become "tainted" as a country, making it impossible to take a "moderate" position, or to oppose

¹² John Chettle, "Speech to Annual General Meetings of the Canadian-South African Society, Montreal and Toronto," October 17 and 20, 1983, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

¹³ Michele Wheeler, "South African Ambassador outlines history of apartheid," *Kemptville Weekly Advance*, newspaper clipping, March 5, 1986, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

¹⁴ Bernstein, interview.

¹⁵ John H. Chettle, "Foreign Reports: Washington," *South Africa International* 2, no. 3 (1972): 184.

economic measures against South Africa:

The result is that the vocabulary of the debate can be abusive and shrill. Those who adopt a moderate tone, or who try to see different aspects of this many-sided picture, or who travel to South Africa, become “fascists,” “racists” and “agents of BOSS.”¹⁶

In this environment, any groups defending or connected to South Africa were deemed illegitimate; Shingler complained that independent groups like the South Africa Foundation were often “accused of receiving funds from the South African government, and denounced as an ‘overseas agent of apartheid.’”¹⁷ In essence, the country itself had been demonized, making any association toxic. Similarly, the Director General of the South Africa Foundation wrote of his frustrations that “anything that smacks of government funding is immediately tainted and attacked as propaganda of an ‘illegitimate’ or ‘racist’ government.”¹⁸

Double standards

Eschel Rhodie railed against the “outrageous” and “crude double standard” applied against South Africa, claiming that activists had adopted a “hypocritical and self-righteous attitude towards South Africa in which the merits of South Africa’s policies are completely lost.”¹⁹ For Rhodie, the negative attention his country received was almost without precedent: “Not since World War II (perhaps never in peace time) has any country been subjected to such a barrage of vehemently hostile criticism and so many attempts to force a change in its domestic policy, as in the case of South Africa.”²⁰ This

¹⁶ Shingler, “Canadian Universities and South Africa,” 536.

¹⁷ Shingler, 536.

¹⁸ J. De L. Sorour, “Director General’s Report,” *South Africa International* 17, no. 4 (1987): 182.

¹⁹ Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 90, 113.

²⁰ Rhodie, 82.

same case was made years later in the opening editorial of a glossy 1987 pro-apartheid magazine called “South Africa: Nation on Trial” (a special edition of the US-based Family Protection Scorecard): “South Africa bashing has become a national sport ... South Africa is judged by double, triple, and even quadruple standards. Many of these are highly subjective, intellectually inconsistent, biased, racist, and downright arrogant.”²¹

Accusations of double standards were common, as South Africa’s defenders argued that criticism against the country was being applied selectively, while anti-apartheid activists ignored other human rights abusers. This sentiment was expressed by Babb in a backgrounder released by the Embassy, where he noted the “selectivity” with which “the world singles South Africa out as a special case.”²² For Shingler, this selectivity was an injustice and even a form of discrimination against white South Africans:

I think that to single out South Africa on the grounds either of the violation of civil liberties or of institutionalized racial discrimination is a kind of inverted racism, on the basis of which South African whites are required to expiate a collective guilt for the accumulated wrongs committed during the past five centuries of western hegemony.²³

South Africa’s supporters believed that the amount of attention the country was receiving was irrational, and the “ravings of a radical minority.”²⁴ As Babb wrote, the Canadian government had an “obsession” with South Africa,²⁵ and Michael Christie, the general manager of the South Africa Foundation, wondered “Why does a friendly country, with a

²¹ Editorial note by David W. Balsiger in *South Africa: Nation on Trial*, Family Protection Scoreboard South Africa Special Edition, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

²² Glenn Babb, “Press Communique issued by the South African Ambassador,” September 13, 1985, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

²³ Shingler, “Canadian Universities and South Africa,” 530.

²⁴ Vic Lockman, “Who’s Behind the South African Crisis?” cartoon, June 10, 1985, box 452, folder 5, and Scoble Collection.

²⁵ Glenn Babb, “Blind Spots I have Observed in Canada,” *Influence Magazine*, February-March 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

history not dissimilar, come to preoccupy so intensely a great power like the United States?"²⁶ Worst of all was the alleged hypocrisy of the United Nations, which was believed to be unfairly targeting South Africa and Israel alike:

To add to the confusion there is the position in the United Nations. There a ruthless majority has broken the charter to enforce its own will, and has threatened Israel with precisely the same illegal sanctions that have been visited on South Africa. To make matters worse they have used precisely the same rhetoric, and made precisely the same charges against Israel that they have previously made against South Africa. It has been enough to raise a thought, horrifying to some, that there may be as little justification in the charges against South Africa as in those against Israel.²⁷

Babb argues that boycotts against South Africa received so much publicity because the country was an "easy target," while there was no attention paid to other countries' human rights abuses:

You could feel comfortable with yourself, pat yourself on your shoulder and say "Yes, we are taking a moral stand about South Africa," but then you'd begin to wonder, where was the moral stand about China? And where was the moral stand about the caste system in India? Where was the moral stand about the invasion of Hungary? The moral stand about Stalinism? None of that ever came into the public, it was suppressed and kept under wraps, it was too delicate a measure. But [about] South Africa you could say what you liked.²⁸

Babb reflects that it was "painful to be accused of things which in the end, had nothing by comparison to the other immoral public iterations in the rest of the world."²⁹

The complaint against "double standards" was expressed in many other forms.³⁰

²⁶ Michael Christie, "Immorality of Disinvestment," in *South Africa: National on Trial*, Family Protection Scoreboard South Africa Special Edition, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

²⁷ John H. Chettle, "Foreign Reports: Washington," *South Africa International* 6, no. 2 (1975): 103.

²⁸ Babb, interview.

²⁹ Babb, interview.

³⁰ While allegations of hypocrisy largely took an anti-communist or anti-Soviet Union ideological line, South Africa's defenders occasionally drew upon other examples. During a public forum on South African censorship in 1988, an event which was sponsored by the Canadian government and held at Ottawa City Hall, one audience member raised a question about why Canada and the United Nations would focus on South Africa while Israel was currently in the midst of a crackdown on Palestinian protestors (i.e. the First Intifada): "What is this maniacal preoccupation with South Africa at the moment? I mean, 200 Palestinians

Lockman's comic criticized "Liberal do-gooders," asking "Why don't they picket communist tyrants?";³¹ right-wing columnist Doug Collins asked if anti-apartheid activists have ever "organized a defence fund for the millions of Soviet citizens clapped into GULAG without trial?";³² and the *Hamilton Spectator* questioned the Canadian government's "double standard for Africa" of opposing apartheid while supporting African dictators.³³ Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform (C-FAR) was furious when Prime Minister Mulroney announced trade restrictions on South Africa but not against "Marxist Nicaragua, genocidal Ethiopia," or the "unspeakable Soviet Union," and called the policy a "Tory betrayal."³⁴ C-FAR adapted its article into a newspaper advertisement titled "Mulroney's South African Sanctions Cost Jobs!" lambasting Mulroney's "one-sided 'get-South Africa' threats" and "hypocritical" sanctions, and asking why Canada didn't boycott Tanzania or the USSR.³⁵

Delegitimization

Friends of South Africa believed that the anti-apartheid movement was aiming much further than a change in the country's racist policies — if successful, their demands

are being shot to death in the streets on the West Bank you know. I hope [you] will use the same kind of energy to bring inequities in Israel to the general public." Transcript, "Public Forum on South African Censorship and Propaganda" (session 2, tape 1, page 40), Department of External Affairs, Ottawa City Hall, August 2, 1988, box 452, folder 4, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

³¹ Vic Lockman, "Who's Behind the South African Crisis?" cartoon, June 10, 1985, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

³² Doug Collins, "Fund Folk Folly," *West Side Week*, December, 7 1986, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

³³ *Hamilton Spectator*, "Double standard for Africa," newspaper editorial, clipping, August 17, 1981, box 177, folder 19, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

³⁴ Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform, "Mulroney's Trade Restriction on South Africa: The Tory Betrayal," *C-FAR Newsletter*, Number 138, August 1, 1985, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

³⁵ "Mulroney's South African Sanctions Cost Canadian Jobs!" Advertisement sponsored by Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform, published in the *Globe and Mail*, November 13, 1985, and the *Ottawa Citizen*, November 28, 1985, box 453, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

would lead to violent overthrow or total destruction. “There is a war going on,” warned conservative journalist Peter Worthington, “not against apartheid, but against South Africa itself.”³⁶ Shingler expressed this same sentiment when he claimed that the criticism made against South Africa was “no longer of apartheid *as a policy*, but of South Africa *as a society*.”³⁷

In this way, supporters felt they had to defend the legitimacy of the state, and of white South African society, which they believed to be facing an existential threat. As Gérard Chaliand argued in *South Africa International*, “South Africa—white South Africa—is a state, like Israel, whose survival is threatened in the long term, which is the situation for no other country in the world. Any defeat would be final.”³⁸ In some cases, this translated into an explicit defence of white South Africa’s self-determination. The basic premise of apartheid, as Rhodie wrote for an international audience, was the “distinctiveness of each nation which inhabits the country” and that their national aspirations (including that of white South Africans) “can be satisfied only in separate political freedoms.”³⁹ Canadian businessman Conrad Black, responding to TCCR in 1979, affirmed the rights of the white nation in particular:

Like all other peoples, [white South Africans] have a *perfect right to self-preservation*, and like all other respectable nationalities, they should be commended for having the collective pride and motivation to defend themselves. I have not the slightest doubt that, were your recommendations to be followed by the international community and the white population of South Africa left without any modern means of self-defence, they, who almost alone have populated and developed that remarkable country, would be eliminated as an ethnic entity by the

³⁶ Peter Worthington, "Forward," *The ANC Method: Violence. The Liberation Struggle in South Africa* [booklet accompanying documentary], September 1987, box 28, folder 64, ANC Archives.

³⁷ Memorandum from John Shingler to John Chettle (South Africa Foundation), August 1982, box 3, John Shingler Fonds, emphasis in original.

³⁸ Chaliand, “French Impressions of South Africa II,” 1.

³⁹ Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 18.

gruesome combination of subjection, massacre and expulsion.⁴⁰

Rudolf Hilf suggested that the lack of sympathy abroad for such a position was hypocritical — for him, the only important difference between South Africa and other settler colonies like the United States and Canada was that white South Africans had “failed to create a majority group of European stock which could claim for itself the right of self-determination,” and therefore it simply did not have sufficient numbers to “exercise control without its legitimacy being questioned.”⁴¹ Rhodie even accused the “anti-South African crusade” of being motivated by “anti-white racism” and “Black imperialism,” which he blamed on the African states and Communists.⁴²

However, few would openly support the notion that apartheid South Africa had a positive right to exist, as such, and the idea of white self-determination was rarely advanced for an international audience in explicit terms. Instead, the more subtle underlying claim of most pro-South African propaganda was that white South Africans had a negative right to maintain things the way they were, or at least to adopt reforms on their own terms, if simply to prevent their own demise. In this way, the pro-South African lobby was adept at mobilizing an implicit idea of white self-determination as threatened by African and Marxist barbarism.

As international pressure grew upon South Africa to extend equal democratic rights to all, its defenders insisted that a one-person-one-vote system was impossible. In the softer version of this argument, the rejection of universal suffrage was framed within the

⁴⁰ Quoted in Pratt, *In Good Faith*, 45-6, emphasis added.

⁴¹ Rudolph Hilf, “Consensus Politics - an Answer to South Africa?” *South Africa International* 18, no. 1 (1987): 6.

⁴² Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 83, 85, 87, 100.

problem of ethnic diversity in South Africa. First, South Africa would be depicted as a “mosaic of peoples,”⁴³ a society composed of separate tribal groups with “intense ethnic rivalries” between them, with the implication that these communities could never get along under the same political system but required “separate living space.”⁴⁴ Further, in an attempt to subvert the narrative about South Africa’s white minority ruling over a black majority, South Africa’s advocates would break down the population into various African tribes (but seldom distinguishing between European communities), so that they could argue that “there is no real majority in South Africa” — for example, the white population would be depicted as the second largest demographic, smaller than the Zulus, but larger than the Xhosa.⁴⁵ Second, in an ironic twist, South Africa’s defenders would warn that in a one-person-one-vote system the black majority (no longer differentiated) would impose its will against the powerless white minority. Along these lines, pro-South Africa groups like the CSAS feared that “(as in other African states) majority rule would result in civil strife and the expansion of Communist influence,”⁴⁶ and the SAF’s Harry Oppenheimer warned against trying to “impose a simplistic system based on majority rule and one-man-one-vote as the only reasonable solution.”⁴⁷

South Africa’s supporters would also try to prove this point by arguing that South

⁴³ Letter from Ambassador Glenn Babb to “decision-makers,” September 16, 1985, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁴⁴ Carole Allen, “South African’s Multi-Cultural Make-Up,” in *South Africa: National on Trial*, Family Protection Scoreboard South Africa Special Edition, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁴⁵ “South Africa: What Everyone Should Know” [ca. 1986], booklet edited by K.W. Praekelt (Counsellor, South African Embassy in Ottawa), box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection; Jan. S. Marais, *The New South Africa: A Unique Opportunity!* (Maskew Miller Limited: Cape Town, South Africa, August/September 1982), box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁴⁶ Letter from James McAvity (CSAS) to Donald Montgomery (Canadian Labour Congress), February 1, 1980, box 11, folder 186, ANC Archives.

⁴⁷ Harry F. Oppenheimer, “Prospects for Change in Southern Africa,” *South Africa International* 8, no. 3 (1978): 124-5.

Africa's democracy was a unique feature on the African continent, pointing to neighbouring countries to suggest that they were incompatible with Western democratic standards.⁴⁸ Along these lines, Ambassador J.H. De Klerk warned against "a simple one person one vote system" in South Africa, due to the "cataclysmic failure" of such constitutions elsewhere in Africa,⁴⁹ and the *Family Protection Scoreboard's* South Africa issue similarly claimed that "it's impossible to name one African country where this has worked."⁵⁰ A former SAF president, Jan S. Marais, argued that calls for "majority rule" amounted to judging South Africa by "Western standards while her conditions are largely determined by factors found throughout Africa: the poorest and most backward of all the continents":

Black South Africans wryly ask which African country they should emulate as a model of majority rule government. Surely not Tanzania, whose ruler, Julius Nyerere, heads one of the world's 25 poorest nations, with no sign of democratic rule in sight? And what about Machel's Mozambique (not enough food, little development, no vote); or Cuban-occupied Angola; or starving Chad; or inflation-ravaged Nigeria, where the cost of living is double that of South Africa?⁵¹

The racist underlying logic behind these claims, of course, was that black Africans were incapable of sharing a democratic system with white South Africans. Thus, Ambassador De Klerk argued that "Western democracy" was "not a perfect system in dealing with people of different cultures ... who don't have the history of the democratic

⁴⁸ Schulman remembers frequently encountering the "racist argument" that "South Africa was the only democracy in Africa" (interview).

⁴⁹ J.H. De Klerk, "Speech by Ambassador JH De Klerk, McPhail Memorial Baptist Church Dinner, National Press Club," communiqué of the Embassy of South Africa in Ottawa, September 14, 1990, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵⁰ David W. Balsiger, "News Media Distortions Exposed," in *South Africa: National on Trial*, Family Protection Scoreboard South Africa Special Edition, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵¹ Jan S. Marais, *The New South Africa: A Unique Opportunity*, August/September 1982, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

process or participating in it,”⁵² and Rhodie warned about the “disastrous consequences of granting independence to immature populations deeply divided by tribal enmity, customs and religion.”⁵³ *Toronto Sun* columnist McKenzie Porter put this argument even more directly when he argued — in an article that McAvity mailed to all CSAS members — that the real problem was “the inability of native blacks to govern well a modern state.”⁵⁴

Often these warnings would be quite graphic and apocalyptic. Lockman’s comic argued that democracy failed elsewhere in Africa because “Western liberals” had “forced ‘democratic elections’ on people ill equipped for self rule!” and warned that democracy in South Africa would lead to dictatorship and famine.⁵⁵ Babb warned the *Ottawa Citizen* that “we can’t afford a bloodbath,”⁵⁶ and Worthington accused anti-apartheid activists of wanting “bloodshed and an overthrow of the system at any price.”⁵⁷ In a full page article for the *Globe and Mail* titled “The good side of white South Africa,” Kenneth Walker wrote that one person, one vote “is a recipe for slaughter in South Africa,” and that “if a bloodbath does occur, ill-informed churchmen, do-gooders, hypocrites who judge the Third World by a Western moral code, naive politicians and an irresponsible media will all have helped pull the trigger.”⁵⁸ Once again, it was Porter who offered the most openly

⁵² Quoted in Greg Weston, “New South African envoy unlikely to put shine on apartheid,” *Ottawa Citizen*, newspaper clipping, May 20, 1987, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵³ Rhodie, *The Paper Curtain*, 32.

⁵⁴ McKenzie Porter, clipping of untitled column, *Toronto Sun*, January 23, 1984, box 140, folder 1, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁵⁵ Vic Lockman, “Who’s Behind the South African Crisis?” cartoon, June 10, 1985, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵⁶ *Ottawa Citizen*, “South Africa: Its ambassador to Canada tells his government’s side,” newspaper clipping, September 14, 1985, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵⁷ *Ottawa Citizen*, “ANC says video by Canadian journalist resembles S. African govt. propaganda,” newspaper clipping, October 3, 1989, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁵⁸ Kenneth Walker, “The good side of white South Africa,” newspaper clipping, *Globe and Mail*, December 2, 1986, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

racist version of this argument, as published by the *Calgary Sun* in 1981:

Left-lib denunciations of South African policy spring from the illusion that all men are equal. If the whites of South Africa enfranchised the primitive black majority, social chaos would ensue. Within a decade the only civilized nation on the African continent would collapse.⁵⁹

This apocalyptic vision would often feature the Soviet Union quite prominently as the agent of South Africa's destruction. "Goaded south by Soviet Agents, black Communist hordes would invade from the primordial North," wrote Porter on the prospect of ending apartheid, and "soon all Africa would groan under the Russian jackboot."⁶⁰ The Western Canadian Society of South Africa warned that the country was a bulwark against the Soviet Union, and its fall would threaten the West; therefore, "for the survival of all democracies we must support South Africa in their struggle against communist conquest."⁶¹ Yet, the most striking image comes from Lockman's comic in a panel on the "Soviet encirclement of South Africa;" here the artist presents an image of a giant bear with a hammer-and-sickle, moving down from the African continent upon frightened South African factories and mines who are completely surrounded, and declaring "We shall drive South Africa into the Sea!"⁶²

Such was the universal opposition among friends of South Africa towards extending equal democratic rights that in 1985 CSAS director Denis Black offered to make a bet with a journalist that "you won't see one-man-one-vote in your lifetime."⁶³ In

⁵⁹ McKenzie Porter, "It's an illusion," clipping of column, *Calgary Sun*, October 6, 1981, box 177, folder 19, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶⁰ McKenzie Porter, "It's an illusion," clipping of column, *Calgary Sun*, October 6, 1981, box 177, folder 19, Fonds Maurice Sauvé.

⁶¹ Letter from Western Canadian Society of South Africa to "Friends of South Africa," September 16, 1987, box 28, folder 64, ANC Archives.

⁶² Vic Lockman, "Who's Behind the South African Crisis?" cartoon, June 10, 1985, box 452, folder 5, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁶³ Quoted in Michael Doyle, "Anglican quits S. Africa group," *The Gazette*, August 2, 1985.

its place, there were many suggestions for alternative political arrangements which would retain a degree of white control; such proposals envisioned a “commonality of purpose” among groups,⁶⁴ but would guarantee that South Africa was “a society of neither the tyranny of the minorities nor the tyranny of the majority.”⁶⁵ These proposals ranged from a confederation or constellation of states,⁶⁶ to consociationalism or “government by coalition,”⁶⁷ to various notions of “power sharing,”⁶⁸ but they all had in common the inclusion of safeguards to preserve white self-determination against the will of a black majority.

Ultimately, none of these alternative democratic proposals gained any real popularity, in part because they appeared to be mere modifications of the basic partition implied by separate development, and more importantly because the ANC and other liberation movements had always insisted on a unitary democratic state. As a whole, the accusatory defensive position of South Africa’s supporters was never particularly convincing or credible, as its complaints about double standards, the tone of the debate, and so on, failed to address the underlying problem, which was South Africa’s fundamental character as a white supremacist state.

⁶⁴ “South Africa: Its ambassador to Canada tells his government’s side,” *Ottawa Citizen*, September 14, 1985, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁶⁵ Jan. S. Marais, *The New South Africa: A Unique Opportunity!* (Maskew Miller Limited: Cape Town, South Africa, August/September 1982), box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁶⁶ Jan. S. Marais, *The New South Africa: A Unique Opportunity!* (Maskew Miller Limited: Cape Town, South Africa, August/September 1982), box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

⁶⁷ Hilf, “Consensus Politics,” 10.

⁶⁸ Michele Wheeler, “South African Ambassador outlines history of apartheid,” *Kemptonville Weekly Advance*, newspaper clipping, March 5, 1986, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection; J. H. De Klerk, “Speech by Ambassador JH De Klerk, McPhail Memorial Baptist Church Dinner, National Press Club,” communiqué of the Embassy of South Africa in Ottawa, September 14, 1990, box 444, folder 10, Wiseberg and Scoble Collection.

Chapter 6: Impact of the South Africa Lobby on the Anti-Apartheid Movement

The Canadian anti-apartheid movement faced significant counter-initiatives from pro-South Africa forces, which included both the Embassy and the domestic pro-South Africa lobby. However, the impact of these anti-boycott initiatives on the anti-apartheid movement was highly bifurcated. Activists in the movement do not recall that either the Embassy or the lobby were particularly effective in their propaganda campaigns, or that they posed a direct obstacle to their work, other than spreading misinformation which had to be countered. However, the main reference point for the boycott campaign — the African National Congress — was at war with the South African government, and ANC members faced very real threats to their personal safety, while the more radical solidarity groups had to deal with surveillance and infiltration by various actors.

For the most part, the anti-boycott activities of the South African Embassy and lobby took the form of propaganda, and while they demonized the liberation movements, they rarely targeted activists directly; an exception would be the focus on the World Council of Churches, which attracted right-wing demonstrations and doctored press releases in an attempt to smear them, as noted in a previous chapter. However, these incidents are not representative of the larger conflict, and the backlash to boycotts was primarily experienced as vigorous debate. Anti-apartheid activists were annoyed by the influence of certain pro-South African individuals, and they found it challenging to counter certain pervasive messaging (some of these are highlighted below). There would frequently be pushback to boycott or divestment proposals from institutional investors, corporations, and bureaucrats, and sometimes the backlash even came from constituents. However, when I asked interview participants about the role of organized opposition to

their efforts, the majority of their answers seemed to downplay the role and influence of pro-South African forces.

The United Church's Jim Kirkwood remembers the activities of Charles Plaskett and the CCBP, and says that their "coup" was to attract the prominent doctor Robert McClure to their board; he was quite influential and gave the organization more legitimacy. However, their activities did not seem to get much in the way of church activists. Despite the intense focus of those in the CSAS regarding the Solidarity Conference in 1982, Kirkwood says that he does not remember having picked up on any sense of that opposition, even in his position as chair of the conference committee. McAvity "seemed so far out that we didn't waste much time on him," Kirkwood tells me, "but honestly, I'm not much aware of that society at all."¹

Moira Hutchinson similarly downplays the role of pro-South African lobbies like the CCBP and the CSAS in trying to undermine the work of the Taskforce, noting that they were quite ineffective and unable to convince any of the churches to withdraw from the coalition. As she told me, these lobby groups did not pose a real barrier to their work, and the "real barrier came directly from the companies," the banks, and government bureaucrats. She recalls that companies would try to argue that the churches in South Africa were opposed to disinvestment, or that disinvesting would hurt vulnerable people in South Africa.² However, these claims could be easily countered by directly gathering information from South Africa and listening to partners on the ground.³

¹ Kirkwood, interview.

² Hutchinson remembers instances in which a company would bring in a worker from one of their South African operations to testify as to what a wonderful employer they were (interview).

³ Hutchinson, interview.

On the McGill campus, Adrian Harewood and Gwen Schulman remember the prominent presence of CSAS director John Shingler quite well, reflecting on his influence over the undergraduate student body, and his role in undermining their pro-divestment messaging and assisting the McGill Board of Governors in their opposition. Schulman remembers that it was a “very tough fight” to counter the messaging coming from Shingler, McGill administration, and conservative students, noting that the most effective argument against divestment was that it would hurt the black South African victims of apartheid, which they had to counter by emphasizing that “it was the South Africans themselves who were asking us to do this.” She also notes the challenge of trying to prevent the South African consulate from speaking on campus.⁴ However, both Harewood and Schulman deny that organized opposition played any prominent role; Harewood doesn’t remember any active group on or off campus that worked against them,⁵ and Schulman asserts there were “definitely not” any organized attempts to counter divestment, apart from the university itself.⁶

In a labour context, Ken Luckhardt highlighted the backlash from a small segment of workers themselves: he remembers that they would sometimes push back with arguments about sanctions harming “black employment,” and the possibility of undermining Canadian jobs (“what’s it going to mean for us”). The SSC call to boycott Carling O’Keefe beer was particularly divisive; Carleton students excluded the beer from a list of proposed boycotted goods, due to a letter from the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) claiming that the company’s workers had taken other anti-

⁴ Schulman, interview.

⁵ Harewood, interview.

⁶ Schulman, interview.

apartheid actions, and therefore the beer was exempt from the boycott.⁷ SACTU coordinator Mahlangu reported in 1986 that workers were blaming a loss of jobs on the boycott of Carling O’Keefe, and asking them to abandon the boycott. As Mahlangu argued, “this is not possible - we cannot renounce this important tactic in our struggle; we must try as best we can to explain this to Canadian workers.”⁸ Luckhardt once even received an angry Sunday morning phone call from NDP member of parliament Dan Heap about the boycott:

[Heap] said, “the members of the union who work for Carling O’Keefe called me, and they are upset with your committee because you’ve included on your leaflets Carling O’Keefe products.” It was a pretty popular beer at the time. I said “well Dan it’s very simple. Nobody knows this, but Carling O’Keefe’s is owned by Rothmans, which is a South African corporation. So, if you’re going in and buying Carling O’Keefe beers, you’re supporting Rothmans, a South African company. It’s not hard to figure out, so this is why we did it.” He said “well I don’t support that.” I said well, that’s our position. So that’s an example of a conflict between people who should not have had a conflict.⁹

Moreover, as Luckhardt remembers, in a given union crowd there was always a chance of there being racist members, or those who defended apartheid “mostly out of ignorance rather than out of real knowledge of what they were supporting.”¹⁰

These types of barriers within the labour constituency — as with students and church members, among others — were clearly influenced by the initiatives of the South Africa lobby, in the sense of being swayed by and adopting their arguments, but the

⁷ Jill Rutherford, and Lynn Marchildon, “CUSA kills boycott,” *The Charlatan*, October 24, 1985.

⁸ “SACTU Report” in minutes of RPC meeting, October 28, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives. Mahlangu explained the backlash this way: “Canadian workers are not yet at a stage where they are prepared to sacrifice for something they perceive unrelated to their immediate problems. Those problems being nothing else except additional pay and more and more accumulation of property. The system is such that they are at an employer’s mercy since their concern is their Mortgage and the probability of losing everything in case you lose your job. That terrifies them.” Peter Mahlangu, “SACTU Canadian Office Report - 1988,” January 1989, box 37, folder 31, ANC Archives.

⁹ Luckhardt, interview.

¹⁰ Luckhardt, interview.

impact of this backlash on typical supporters of the boycott movement was typically indirect and minor. This is quite different from the experience of the ANC, which was keenly aware of significant threats from South Africa and even other intelligence services. In 1976, ANC Secretary General Alfred Nzo sent a message to all ANC units with this warning:

We must work on the assumption that BOSS [South Africa's Bureau for State Security], our enemy, is everywhere. We must always remember that where BOSS is not present, the CIA, MI6 and other Intelligence and counter-intelligence organizations of the Western imperialist countries are present and are committed allies of BOSS.¹¹

This was echoed ten years later, when the ANC's Regional Political Committee warned ANC members in Canada that the "SA Govt said it would hit the ANC wherever they are. We must all be vigilant about security."¹² The ANC Canada Mission therefore undertook a variety of security precautions, including strict vetting of the South Africans recruited to become ANC members,¹³ and in 1979 all ANC members were banned from travelling to South Africa without first receiving permission from the Chief Representative. This was due to the risk of members being detained and questioned by security forces, and possibly facing "full scale interrogation and torture."¹⁴ This policy was reaffirmed in 1981, noting that the arrest of any ANC member could risk the security of the entire movement:

Let us not be naive enough to think that the South African Government does not

¹¹ Alfred Nzo (ANC Secretary General), "Message of the National Executive Committee to All the Units of the African National Congress of South Africa on the Current Situation," September 14, 1976, box 54, folder 8, ANC Archives.

¹² RPC, "Minutes of Extended Regional Political Committee meeting," Toronto, February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

¹³ RPC, "Minutes of Extended Regional Political Committee meeting," Toronto, February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

¹⁴ ANC Canada Mission, memorandum to all members of ANC units in Canada [ca. 1979], box 50, folder 3, ANC Archives.

know exactly who is coming and going, especially ANC members, and especially since visas are required. We cannot predict how they may use this information against our struggle or to embarrass the ANC in Canada.¹⁵

In addition to these precautions, in 1979 the ANC circulated a discussion paper on “Problems of Social Behaviour in our Movement,” which warned about drinking, drugs, irresponsible sexual behaviour among ANC members in exile. As Alfred Nzo put it in an accompanying note, “Who would deny that this state of affairs is opening the doors of our revolutionary movement wide to enemy penetration and subversion?”¹⁶ As the discussion paper noted, however, the way to combat such tendencies was “not through moral condemnation or hypocritical puritanism,” but by “collectively develop[ing] a revolutionary morality which means at all times being conscious of our responsibility to the furtherance of the struggle.”¹⁷

The ANC remained alert to any signs of a threat to the organization, expressing concern whenever there was an “increase in hate mail and obscene phonecalls,”¹⁸ for example. In 1981, ANC headquarters informed the Canada mission that it had uncovered “infiltrators into our organizations,” specifically a “very anti-ANC” person from South Africa who came to Canada sponsored by World University Service of Canada (WUSC); she then met with the RCMP, South African embassy and the US embassy, and had been “trying to sow dissent,” including trying to dissuade NGOs from supporting ANC

¹⁵ RPC, “Draft Memorandum [to all ANC units] on Visits by ANC members to SA,” April 8, 1981, box 50, folder 4, ANC Archives.

¹⁶ Alfred Nzo, letter to all ANC units introducing the document “Problems of Social Behaviour in our Movement,” February 5, 1979, box 50, folder 3, ANC Archives.

¹⁷ RPC (East Africa), “Problems of Social Behaviour in Our Movement” [ca. 1979], box 50, folder 3, ANC Archives.

¹⁸ RPC, “Minutes of Extended Regional Political Committee meeting,” Toronto, February 15-16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

projects.¹⁹ There was also some concern among ANC members when in 1986 a number of members reported being interviewed by the RCMP or immigration officials, in which they had to answer questions about the ANC, including about the size of the ANC Manitoba unit, or about their involvement. Some members wondered if this was an attempt at intimidation. Regardless, all members were instructed that if they were approached by the RCMP, they must “consult the Chief Representative BEFORE they have the interview, for advice as to how to proceed.”²⁰

As it turns out, the ANC’s Canada Mission had significant reason to be worried about threats from the South African regime, as later confirmed by South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC):

ANC offices, or what were described at the time by the South African government as such, were subjected to sabotage attacks in at least seven countries. These were Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, England and Sweden. In addition, attempts were made to assassinate ANC representatives in France and Belgium in their offices – successfully in the French case. South African government involvement in all but the Swedish and Belgian cases has either been admitted or conclusively established. In the two cases in doubt, circumstantial evidence points to the involvement of South African state agents.²¹

In the UK, the TRC concluded that the South African Security Branch had been responsible for burglaries and even a bombing attack on the ANC’s London office in March 1982, and that this operation was “authorized by the South African government at the highest level.”²² At one point, South African Security Branch operatives were planning to assassinate Joe Slovo in London, but were foiled by UK intelligence agencies which became aware of the scheme and had warned the South Africans that they would

¹⁹ RPC, “Minutes of meeting,” September 23, 1981, box 51, folder 4, ANC Archives.

²⁰ RPC, “Minutes of RPC meeting,” September 16, 1986, box 51, folder 9, ANC Archives.

²¹ TRC, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 157.

²² TRC, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 157-8.

be arrested if they carried out the murder in Great Britain. Through this confrontation, the South Africans discovered that the UK had bugged the phones of the ANC and SACP offices in London as well.²³

The most chilling incident outside of Southern Africa took place in France in 1988 with the assassination of Dulcie September, the ANC's Chief Representative for France, Switzerland, and Luxembourg. Leading up to her assassination she had reported signs of being followed, and of other threats against her, and on March 29 she was murdered by a gunman as she entered the ANC's office in Paris.²⁴ The TRC failed to make a "definitive finding" on the case, but "believe[d] on the basis of evidence available to it that she was a victim of a CCB [Civil Co-operation Bureau] operation involving the contracting of a private intelligence organization which, in turn, contracted out the killing."²⁵ According to Hennie Van Vuuren, the evidence points in the direction of "two probable instigators: South African security services and French intelligence,"²⁶ and believes it was related to her investigation into South African-French intelligence and arms dealing.²⁷ South African spy Craig Williamson confirmed to Van Vuuren that Dulcie September was on a kill list, and told him that if the war had "gone on long enough they would have killed more of them."²⁸ As it happens, the ANC representative who replaced Dulcie September turned out to be a double agent recruited by South Africa, and who was handled by Williamson.²⁹

²³ Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 359.

²⁴ Van Vuuren, 211; TRC, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 119-121.

²⁵ TRC, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 121.

²⁶ Van Vuuren, *Apartheid Guns and Money*, 216.

²⁷ Van Vuuren, 252.

²⁸ Van Vuuren, 214.

²⁹ Van Vuuren, 211-2.

Dulcie September's assassination shook the ANC's Canada Mission. During a meeting of the ANC's Toronto Unit in September 1988, Chief Representative Saloojee reported on the ongoing security situation, noting that the South African Embassy in Ottawa had been put on notice by the Canadian government:

In brief, [Saloojee] said that because of the increase in profile of the ANC, threats to some members had increased in recent months. Experts on Canadian security matters had indicated that both the office and the ANC house were somewhat vulnerable from a security point of view. The Government had been consulted, and Joe Clark had told the SA Embassy he would hold them responsible for any attacks on ANC personnel or property.³⁰

Considering the extensive evidence about South Africa's covert operations and sabotage against the ANC's overseas missions, it is almost certain that the country's intelligence and security services were active to some extent in Canada as well. However, when I asked Babb whether the Embassy was engaging in covert activity, he responded: "Absolutely not. We were excluded [from those discussions, and] didn't have any cooperation with the intelligence service." Babb claims to have had no knowledge of Canadian operations at all, and expresses doubt that it would be useful: "I don't think there would be anything to be gained from Canada as far as covert operations were concerned."³¹ There are, nevertheless, a few indications that South Africa was involved in secretive behaviour in Canada, such as Bernstein's suspicions about mysterious funding to the CSAS, and the Embassy's role in operating a front network and recruiting students to infiltrate anti-apartheid organizations.³² Additionally, in January 1987 Canada quietly expelled two South African embassy officials for allegedly "misbehaving," but Babb

³⁰ ANC Toronto Unit, "Minutes of Toronto Unit meeting," September 19, 1988, box 54, folder 23, ANC Archives.

³¹ Babb, interview.

³² See Chapter 4.

claims he never received any explanation or evidence for this, and that it was just an attempt to “harass” him.³³ Years later, the Reform Party’s Preston Manning admitted that “he and his party were concerned that South Africa might attempt to infiltrate their 1988 campaign” against Joe Clark — although a CSIS investigation “failed to substantiate” allegations that his party had received \$45,000 from the South African government.³⁴ This is certainly not evidence of covert activity on the part of South Africa, but rather illustrates the high degree to which the Canadian public, security agencies, and even Preston Manning were suspicious of its activities in the country.

While ANC members were at the highest risk from the South African government, other actors within the anti-apartheid movement occasionally faced some degree of repression. In one instance, Jim Kirkwood was temporarily barred from entering South Africa, suggesting a practice if not a policy of banning critics; when he eventually received his visa, he was given a lecture about how his initial denial was based on his support for “communists” and “violent revolutionaries,” and that he was let in on the condition that he would behave himself.³⁵

Some of the more radical anti-apartheid groups also faced surveillance, infiltration, and other security issues, which came not just from South Africa, but also from domestic intelligence agencies, local police, and even private companies. During the time that TCLSAC was leading a shareholder activism campaign against Gulf Oil, which had operations in Angola, they hired a private investigator to look into a member at their

³³ Bill Schiller, “Pretoria’s form envoy reveals Tory ‘harassment,’” *Toronto Star*, August 27, 1989; Babb, interview.

³⁴ “No South African cash went to Manning: CSIS; Probe can’t uphold allegation of secret funding,” *Hamilton Spectator*, December 16, 1994.

³⁵ Kirkwood, interview.

meetings who seemed suspicious. The investigation revealed that the member was in fact a spy for Gulf Oil, who did a “sheepish retreat” when he was called out as an agent.³⁶ As John Saul insists, “You can’t underestimate the extent to which these people were active.”³⁷ Years later, Saul obtained a redacted RCMP file on TCLPAC/TCLSAC, demonstrating that the Canadian government had been infiltrating anti-apartheid organizations as well. Although the file showed that Canada had a spy at TCLPAC’s very first meeting in 1972, half of its 1000 pages were blacked out, and Saul wonders: “what’s in the other half?”³⁸

Security issues were also a feature of anti-apartheid activism on campus. For example, Gwen Schulman remembers suspecting that supporters of South Africa might have infiltrated McGill’s Southern Africa Committee (SAC), based on the “sense that there were students joining or trying to join SAC who clearly were not aligned with us.” SAC leadership wondered if someone might have been “planted within the organization,” and this concern was supported by the presence of a couple of students who seemed to be trying to derail the organization and “definitely created difficulty within the group,” although they were quickly sidelined.³⁹ In a different way, Sulley Gariba remembers being questioned by police due to his role in anti-apartheid work as an international student leader at Carleton University:

Those of us at the forefront of the student movement were questioned, in particular when it was suggested, I don’t know by who, that the student movement leadership against apartheid were planning some kind of acts of sabotage, to threaten public peace... so they brought police to sweep the halls, and they questioned some of us about our links with any liberation movements,

³⁶ Saul, interview; Saul, *On Building a Social Movement*, 104.

³⁷ Saul, interview.

³⁸ Saul, interview.

³⁹ Schulman, interview.

any banned organizations... They were not harassments, they were pretty polite situations, but you can imagine as a student, and as a foreign student in particular, to be questioned [on campus] ... from that point on you knew that you were a person of interest.⁴⁰

Issues of surveillance took on a much greater significance for radical activists in Montreal, and Aziz Fall of Groupe de Recherche et d'Initiative pour la Libération de l'Afrique (GRILA) remembers the lengths that they would go in order to protect their safety and privacy:

We knew that people were looking [at us] with scrutiny, and in those days it was not computers it was basically fax and telephone, so we were adopting our own techniques of how we do our meetings, how we exchange secret letters, codes on how you enter and exit from another door, and who is following, who is there, who is the new face, who is the new idea on the block, you know. Yeah, it was probably paranoia most of the time, but truly there was surveillance, and if you are not paranoiac enough you don't notice those surveillances in fact.⁴¹

Fall claims that they were being monitored by the RCMP, and that he himself was “under surveillance” from various sources. This was likely due to his close association with the ANC, but it is also consistent with the RCMP's long history of surveilling black activists in Montreal, and constant efforts to “stifle Black self-organization.”⁴² In one instance, Fall says that his home was visited by a Bell Canada employee with a suspicious accent, and that a few days later the door to his safe fell off, and he concluded that someone (he believes it was the South Africans) had used acid to open the safe: “they managed to probably scan or photograph most of the things because everything was there, nothing was missing, but the door was crumbling and fell, so I realized that I had a break-in.” On

⁴⁰ Sulley Gariba, interview by Michael Bueckert, February 28, 2018, Canadian Anti-Apartheid Oral Histories Project, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada. <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/conferences/oral-history-interviews-solidarity-and-shifting-patterns-of-hegemony-in-southern-africa/>

⁴¹ Fall, interview.

⁴² David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex, and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013), 177.

another occasion, and shortly after the murder of Dulcie September in Paris, who Fall considered a “very dear friend,” he remembers being followed by a car through the streets of Montreal after a jazz quartet practice: “they knew what I was doing regularly on Wednesday and Tuesday, I guess they wanted to scare me.” Fall says that at this moment he “realized that okay, these guys are among us.”⁴³

For those activists on the furthest edge of the anti-apartheid movement, their proximity to the liberation movements was dangerous: as Fall reflects, “for most of us we thought that we were going to a liberation struggle and we would die for this, so it was already something that we have accepted.”⁴⁴ Other active solidarity groups like TCLSAC and some campus groups also faced issues with security, as discussed above. However, this was not the common experience for most supporters of the ANC and its call for boycotts and sanctions, who experienced the struggle against apartheid entirely in terms of vigorous debate. The South African regime’s war against the liberation movements was murderous, and its propaganda war was overwhelming in its scope and intensity, but for the average boycott supporter overseas this was almost background noise, a nuisance but not a personal threat. As I will demonstrate in the next case study, although Israel is not at war with BDS in the same way that South Africa was at war with the ANC, when it comes to civil society and ordinary solidarity activists, the activities of the contemporary pro-Israel lobby are far more repressive.

⁴³ Fall, interview.

⁴⁴ Fall, interview.

Part Three: Israel Case Study

Chapter 7: Palestinian Solidarity and the BDS Movement in Canada

On July 9, 2005, a group of 170 organizations representing Palestinian civil society released a public statement, known as the “BDS call,” which urged the international community to adopt tactics of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel. The BDS call was released around the end of the second Intifada, and on the one-year anniversary of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion that found Israel’s ongoing construction of a “security barrier” or “apartheid wall” on Palestinian land to be illegal. In the wake of the failure of political actors to negotiate a solution through the peace process, the BDS call — itself following the creation of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) in 2004 — represented a new approach in which civil society “reclaimed the agenda.”¹ Specifically citing the precedent and example of the anti-apartheid movement against South Africa, the call stated:

We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel. We also invite conscientious Israelis to support this Call, for the sake of justice and genuine peace.²

The BDS call mandated that these “non-violent punitive measures should be maintained” until Israel fully complies with international law by: 1) “Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;” 2) “Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality;” and 3) “Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their

¹ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 56.

² “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” BDS Movement, July 9, 2005, <https://bdsmovement.net/call>.

homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.” These goals moved Palestine advocacy away from a narrow focus on the occupation to include the Palestinian people in their entirety, and this was also reflected in the signatories of the document, which included a broad section of political parties, trade unions, community associations, NGOs, refugee rights’ groups, and more. As the statement claimed, together the signatories “represent the three integral parts of the people of Palestine: Palestinian refugees, Palestinians under occupation and Palestinian citizens of Israel.”³

The BDS call was picked up in various ways in Canada by students, unions, churches, and other members of civil society. Not only was it compelling as a popular call for solidarity coming from Palestinians themselves, but its demands were flexible and capable of being taken up by a loose and decentralized solidarity movement. As a non-violent strategic framework, BDS has transformed Palestinian solidarity organizing — but the movement’s fragmented character means that “BDS” as a reference point has been at times inconsistent and contradictory.

Transforming Solidarity with Palestine

The arrival of BDS transformed the nature of organizing around Palestine. Following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, and until the early 2000s, the Palestine solidarity movement had been largely dormant.⁴ Within the Canadian labour movement, solidarity with Palestine had always been relatively “fragmented and weak,” with new initiatives emerging in “waves” since the 1970s, “based on loose networks of activists, and

³ “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” BDS Movement, July 9, 2005, <https://bdsmovement.net/call>.

⁴ Rafeef Ziadah, “Outside the Multicultural: Solidarity and the Silencing of Palestinian Narratives” (PhD diss., York University, 2013), 5.

[remaining] quite marginal until quite recently.”⁵ This shifted dramatically in the early 2000s, with the collapse of the Camp David negotiations and the outbreak of the second

Intifada:

The second Intifada breathed life into the solidarity movement internationally. As Israeli human rights abuses against the Palestinian people intensified, the solidarity movement began to orient itself towards mass education, teach-ins, and public meetings. Demonstrations were organized and, importantly, contingents focused on Palestine took place within the broader anti-war movement that emerged over the invasion of Iraq.⁶

Even during this early period, the specific form that solidarity took was often symbolic, such as “[cultural] manifestations of association with Palestinians,”⁷ or consisting primarily of “awareness raising” through events and protests.⁸

When the BDS platform was announced in 2005, it provided a new “strategic framework” for Palestine solidarity organizing,⁹ reorienting the movement from educational events to a specific call for action.¹⁰ BDS “directly questioned and challenged” the complicity of universities, corporations, and other institutions in the Israeli oppression of Palestinians, and “appealed directly to people to act in their own capacity” to challenge those institutional ties,¹¹ demands which had enough flexibility to accommodate the strategic decision-making of activists in their own contexts.¹² BDS actions were available to anyone — for example, rank and file workers could initiate their

⁵ Nastovski, “Workers Confront Apartheid,” 216.

⁶ Ziadah, “Outside the Multicultural,” 7.

⁷ Dan Freeman-Maloy (former student activist at York University), interviewed by the author, July 16, 2017.

⁸ Hammam Farah (student activist with Students Against Israeli Apartheid and YUDivest), York University, interviewed by the author, February 20, 2019.

⁹ Freeman-Maloy, interview.

¹⁰ Ziadah, “Outside the Multicultural,” 7.

¹¹ Ziadah, 7.

¹² Freeman-Maloy, interview.

own actions and campaigns, instead of relying on union leadership.¹³ Since BDS was based in a “clear call from Palestine,” it operated as a “unifier” for solidarity efforts, bringing people in and giving them direction.¹⁴

The single most important feature of BDS has been the fact that it is a request for solidarity coming directly from a broad section of Palestinian civil society. Adopting BDS, therefore, is understood by activists like Tyler Levitan of Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) as “taking leadership from the Palestinian people” who are living under occupation.¹⁵ For Jewish activist David Zinman, supporting BDS means responding to demands that were identified by Palestinians themselves, and is something that is easy to do: “as someone who feels very strongly about the need for an end to colonialism, apartheid, and occupation in Palestine, it seemed like the least I could do.”¹⁶

For Canadian civil society groups that traditionally supported solidarity work with international partners, this popular Palestinian mandate forced them to take BDS seriously. This was the case when, in May 2006, CUPE Ontario “became one of the first unions internationally to adopt a resolution at its annual convention calling for a BDS strategy against Israeli apartheid.”¹⁷ Katherine Nastovski was the chair of the International Committee and co-wrote the successful BDS resolution, which was closely modelled after the 2005 BDS call, after learning about it from a friend who had spent years working in Palestine with political prisoners. As she recalls, the committee was

¹³ Nastovski, “Workers Confront Apartheid,” 221.

¹⁴ Katherine Nastovski (former chair of CUPE Ontario’s International Committee), interviewed by the author, January 14, 2019.

¹⁵ Tyler Levitan (campaigns coordinator for Independent Jewish Voices Canada), interviewed by the author, January 25, 2017.

¹⁶ David Zinman (co-host of *Treyf Podcast*, Montreal), interviewed by the author, September 21, 2018.

¹⁷ Nastovski, “Workers Confront Apartheid,” 217.

always trying to “put out resolutions that were useful” or action-oriented, and which had “demands that were coming out of whatever struggles we were in solidarity with,”¹⁸ and the BDS call had been endorsed by the “majority” of Palestinian trade unions.¹⁹ The CUPE Ontario motion was followed by a successful BDS vote by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) at their national convention in 2008, and various other resolutions across Quebec.²⁰

A similar process took place within Canadian churches and their affiliated institutions as they considered the possibility of endorsing BDS. Initial conversations within the United Church around a possible boycott were centred around the question about how to support their partners on the ground in Palestine, recalls Steve Berube, an ordained minister and co-chair for the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel.²¹ Esther Epp-Tiessen, former public engagement coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), says that she had first heard about the BDS call in 2005 while working in Palestine, and the following year MCC staff formed a delegation to the region to hear what their organizational partners on the ground were saying about it. “The point for us was to listen,” she says, “because many of our MCC partner organizations had signed onto the original call.” Since MCC’s advocacy is built around the demands and messaging of their partners, they had to take this request to endorse the BDS call “really seriously.”²² Moreover, in 2009 a broad coalition of Palestinian Christians, including

¹⁸ Nastovski, interview.

¹⁹ Nastovski, “Workers Confront Apartheid,” 216.

²⁰ Nastovski, 217.

²¹ Steve Berube (ordained minister and co-chair for the United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel), interviewed by the author, February 10, 2017.

²² Esther Epp-Tiessen (former public engagement coordinator, Mennonite Central Committee), interviewed by the author, November 1, 2018.

church leaders in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, released a public statement known as the *Kairos Document*, which affirmed the right of Palestinians to non-violent resistance, and in several places encouraged the international community to adopt tactics of boycott, divestment, and sanctions.²³ This influential document was shared widely within Canadian church circles and served as a focus for mobilizing, as church officials believed that it was important to listen to the Christian community in Palestine.²⁴

There are several other additional virtues of BDS that are often cited by solidarity activists. First, the strategic framework of BDS puts the Palestinian narrative at the forefront. As Ziadah writes, one “principal aim” of the BDS movement has been to “place the Palestinian narrative and the ethnic cleansing of Palestine as a starting point for discussions of any solution to the conflict,”²⁵ which itself is a challenge to the ongoing “erasure, silencing, and censorship of the Palestinian narrative of dispossession.”²⁶ The popularity of BDS grew alongside an analysis of Israel as an “apartheid” state, which was popularized by Israeli Apartheid Week (a campus event founded in Toronto in 2005 before itself becoming an international phenomenon) as well as the rise of community and campus groups in Toronto including the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid, Students

²³ “Palestinian civil organizations, as well as international organizations, NGOs and certain religious institutions call on individuals, companies and states to engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation. We understand this to integrate the logic of peaceful resistance. These advocacy campaigns must be carried out with courage, openly sincerely proclaiming that their object is not revenge but rather to put an end to the existing evil, liberating both the perpetrators and the victims of injustice. The aim is to free both peoples from extremist positions of the different Israeli governments, bringing both to justice and reconciliation. In this spirit and with this dedication we will eventually reach the longed-for resolution to our problems, as indeed happened in South Africa and with many other liberation movements in the world.” Kairos Palestine, “A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering,” 2009, <http://www.kairospalestine.ps/sites/default/files/English.pdf>, 9.

²⁴ Berube, interview; Epp-Tiessen, interview.

²⁵ Ziadah, “Outside the Multicultural,” 87-8.

²⁶ Ziadah, 86.

Against Israeli Apartheid, and Queers Against Israeli Apartheid, all of which advanced BDS as a central campaign.²⁷ Together, BDS and the language of “apartheid” allowed the debate over Israel and Palestine to break free from the “both sides” equivocating of the Oslo paradigm, while emphasizing the colonial character of the conflict.²⁸

Another virtue of BDS is that it provides a role for civil society to contribute to a solution to the conflict, in a context in which governments, high-level peace processes, and traditional diplomatic efforts have failed, and as conditions on the ground in Palestine have continued to worsen. Activists argue that the failure of the international community to bring about a two-state solution, and the inaction by governments to hold Israel accountable for violations of human rights and international law, leave civil society with no choice but to adopt BDS as a way to put external pressure on the Israeli government.²⁹ Further, BDS is an easy way for people to participate in action against the occupation,³⁰ and is a “first step toward engaging in meaningful Palestine solidarity organizing,”³¹ although it is not and cannot be the only solution or form of solidarity.³² One limitation, however, is that even if people take up BDS campaigns in their own capacity and pass divestment resolutions in their churches or student unions, there may be barriers to implementing that policy if the people who actually manage the finances are not fully on board.³³

Importantly, student activists Lina Assi and Mariam Nokerah both say that BDS is

²⁷ Ziadah.

²⁸ Ziadah, 7-8; Nastovski, “Workers Confront Apartheid,” 216; Levitan, interview.

²⁹ Levitan, interview; Berube, interview; Farah, interview.

³⁰ Lina Assi (President of Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights, McMaster University), interviewed by the author, April 12, 2017.

³¹ Zinman, interview.

³² Assi, interview; Zinman, interview.

³³ Berube, interview; Assi, interview.

attractive to potential supporters because it is a non-violent form of protest;³⁴ students tend to support BDS once they discover that it “doesn't target anybody physically” but is a “peaceful” and “pro-active means of resistance” that only wants to isolate Israel economically.³⁵ That doesn't necessarily mean that BDS is entirely a substitute for armed struggle, for many supporters of BDS assert that Palestinians have the right to resist occupation, including turning to armed resistance, so long as violence is not used against civilians.³⁶ Omar Barghouti, a founding member of the BDS movement, insists that Palestinians are “not ashamed to have armed resistance as well as peaceful resistance throughout our existence,” and that “people under occupation have a right to resist by all means.”³⁷ At the same time, Barghouti promotes the BDS movement as “an empowering strategy of nonviolent, creative resistance to injustice and oppression — a strategy to which people of conscience all over the world can contribute.”³⁸ For many like Barghouti, it is not a contradiction to see that armed struggle is legitimate in principle, but that BDS is powerful because of its nonviolence. It is difficult to tell whether most supporters of BDS also hold this position, or if they interpret BDS as replacing armed struggle altogether. Regardless, it is ubiquitous for individuals and organizations to emphasize the “non-violent” character of BDS in order to demonstrate the movement's legitimacy.

³⁴ Mariam Nokerah (executive of Students for Justice in Palestine, University of Ontario Institute of Technology), interviewed by the author, Feb 28, 2017; Assi, interview.

³⁵ Assi, interview.

³⁶ Jeff Halper, *An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 156; Abdo, *Captive Revolution*; Ali Abunimah, “Why is the UN telling Palestinians to protect their occupiers?” *Electronic Intifada*, April 4, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/why-un-telling-palestinians-protect-their-occupiers>.

³⁷ Omar Barghouti, “The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights,” video recording of a speech at *Socialism 2011* conference in Chicago, July 3 2011, <https://youtu.be/QODAPfPAaw>.

³⁸ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 226.

Decentralization and Fragmentation

Another key feature of BDS is that the movement is relatively decentralized, without any organization playing a strict oversight or disciplinary role. In this way, BDS marks a distinct break from the previous so-called Arab Boycott, which was first formulated in 1945 and bureaucratized within the Arab League. The Arab Boycott forced foreign businesses to agree to boycott Israel if they wanted to do business with Arab states, and as a “state boycott” it was “enforced comprehensively” by states themselves “without the need for [popular] mobilization.”³⁹ The boycott was “fully enforced by all [Arab League] members” until the Camp David Accords, and since then its enforcement has been “sporadic.”⁴⁰

In contrast, the BDS movement operates entirely independently of states, or other bodies that could enforce behaviour. In fact, the major Palestinian political parties have been slow to endorse the BDS movement, and do not play a meaningful role in coordinating or even advocating for BDS initiatives. The Central Council of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), after making contradictory statements about BDS in the past, finally adopted a resolution in January 2018 to:

Adopt the BDS movement and call on world countries to impose sanctions on Israel to put an end to its flagrant violations of international law and to end its continued aggression against the Palestinian people and the apartheid regime [Israel has] imposed on them.⁴¹

³⁹ Abdel Razzaq Takriti, “Before BDS: Lineages of Boycott in Palestine,” *Radical History Review* 134 (2019): 77. The Arab Boycott actually consisted of three types of boycotts: “a primary boycott by which Arab states and nationals were prohibited from dealing with the Israeli state and its nationals; a secondary boycott blacklisting non-Israeli concerns contributing to ‘Israel’s economic and military strength’; and a tertiary boycott prohibiting ‘trade with those concerns that are blacklisted.’” Takriti, “Before BDS,” 78.

⁴⁰ Takriti, 79-80.

⁴¹ Cited in “PLO Endorses BDS, Makes Unprecedented Call for Sanctions,” BDS Movement, January 17, 2018, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/plo-endorses-bds%C2%A0makes-unprecedented-call-sanctions>.

This statement notwithstanding, the official Palestinian representatives in Ottawa do not use their presence to push the Canadian government or civil society to adopt BDS initiatives, as ANC representatives did during the 1970s-80s. Student activist Hammam Farah notes that this constitutes a difference between BDS and the South African anti-apartheid movement; not only does the PLO fail to push for BDS, he regards it as less unified and active than the ANC had been.⁴² If anything, the civil-society-led BDS movement is itself a response to “the absence of a comprehensive national anticolonial strategy” on behalf of the PLO.⁴³

Instead of official Palestinian liberation movements, political parties, or the Arab League, the core leadership of the BDS movement comes out of civil society, and is organized through the BDS National Committee (BNC), which was formed in 2007 to coordinate the movement worldwide. In addition, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) oversees the cultural and academic aspects of the boycott, and is itself a founding member of the BNC. Together, these organizations provide a central reference point for the movement, outlining its official demands and providing clarification and guidance to local activists, including targets to boycott and guidelines for what constitutes official BDS-approved activities.

While much of this guiding information is available online, the BNC also has a physical presence, with “offices in various parts of Palestine, a small staff spread across five countries and a network of international partners.”⁴⁴ Hammam Farah has had some

⁴² Farah, interview.

⁴³ Takriti, “Before BDS,” 85-6.

⁴⁴ “Palestinian BDS National Committee,” BDS Movement, no date, accessed March 9, 2019, <https://bdsmovement.net/bnc>.

experience working with a representative of the BNC who took an advisory role on their campaigns at York University, but says that this tended to be “an arms-length relationship.” Local activists can approach BNC representatives if they have questions, but he says “they don’t interfere” with grassroots campaigns. As Farah explains:

I think that people in their locales have a better sense of how to pursue Palestine solidarity than the BNC, and I think we're on the same page here. I think the BNC understands that and that's why they don't try to influence our direction, because in fact those of us who are experienced in Canada do have a better sense of how to pursue BDS in the Canadian landscape than people from the BNC.⁴⁵

BDS organizing in Canada is therefore highly decentralized and grassroots-led, in which activists have access to specific reference points but ultimately determine their own initiatives. As noted above, the flexible and participatory character of BDS is a strength, as it allows campaigns to adapt BDS to their local context. At the same time, this can have the effect of fragmenting the movement, as various campaigns operate across the country with minimal coordination or contact.

One effect of this fragmentation is that activists will often distance themselves from the term “BDS,” even when their solidarity initiatives are inspired by the BDS call. For example, after years of internal debate about how to respond to the Kairos Document, the United Church of Canada’s General Council passed a resolution in 2012 to recommend that individual churches consider boycotting settlement products,⁴⁶ and then in 2015 for the church to engage in “a program of education and advocacy” around divestment and economic sanctions.⁴⁷ The United Church also developed a campaign called “Unsettling

⁴⁵ Farah, interview.

⁴⁶ Mike Milne, “Day Seven: General Council affirms boycott of settlement products and opposition to Israeli occupation,” *United Church Observer*; August 2012.

⁴⁷ Mike Milne, “Day Three: Support for Mideast peace, but no demand for divestment,” *United Church Observer*; August 2015.

Goods,” which involves “engaging” with Canadian retailers about Ahava, Keter Plastic, and PayPal, three corporations that are complicit in business with settlements.⁴⁸ Tyler Levitan of IJV, which supported the United Church on these initiatives, suggests that the church’s approach had “distanced themselves from the BDS movement writ large,” but had instead framed it as a “conscientious consumer avoidance campaign.” He believes the church may have “worded it in a way [so] that they wouldn’t be hammered so badly by the [Israel] lobby over it.”⁴⁹

Within MCC, internal discussions around the BDS call led to the publication of an edition of their Peace Office newsletter that was titled “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: A Question for the Church,” featuring articles from Palestinian and Israeli partners endorsing BDS,⁵⁰ and in 2013 the MCC U.S. board decided that it would “not knowingly invest in companies that benefit from products or services used to perpetrate acts of violence against Palestinians, Israelis and other people groups.”⁵¹ However, as Epp-Tiessen recalls, the MCC leadership was very resistant to supporting BDS, possibly out of the fear of backlash:

Our leadership just became quite adamant that no, even though we support the goals of the movement, even though we have taken some steps [towards divestment], we could not endorse the movement. The official line is that MCC does not support, and it does not condemn, so it takes a non-position.⁵²

If MCC ultimately distanced itself from the BDS movement itself, Mennonite Church

⁴⁸ “Economic Action against Settlement Products,” United Church of Canada, no date, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/economic-action-against-settlement-products>.

⁴⁹ Levitan, interview.

⁵⁰ “Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: A Question for the Church,” *MCC Peace Office Newsletter* 42, no. 3 (July-September 2012), <https://mccintersections.wordpress.com/peace-office-newsletter/>.

⁵¹ Cheryl Zehr Walker, “MCC U.S. Board acts for peace through its investments,” Mennonite Central Committee, March 26, 2013, <https://mcc.org/stories/mcc-us-board-acts-peace-through-its-investments>.

⁵² Epp-Tiessen, interview.

Canada (MC Canada), one of MCC's major constituent organizations, overwhelmingly passed a motion at the 2016 Assembly which quite explicitly endorsed "boycotts, divestment, and sanctions."⁵³ This resolution is currently being implemented by provincial working groups, including in Manitoba where they have created and distributed to churches a list of Israeli "Products to Avoid."⁵⁴

A distancing approach has also taken place during policy debates within Canadian political parties. One resolution brought forward at the 2018 convention of the federal New Democratic Party (but which never made it to a debate on the floor) called for a boycott of settlement goods, and endorsed "using other forms of diplomatic and economic pressure to end the occupation." Organizers behind the resolution, however, explicitly distanced it from the BDS movement, insisting that it was different from BDS because it had a narrower scope.⁵⁵ Earlier in 2016, there was a crisis in the Green Party after the membership passed a motion which specifically endorsed "BDS."⁵⁶ Party leader Elizabeth May threatened to resign over the decision, which she called "wrong-headed,"⁵⁷ but instead the party convened a special session to overturn the motion, resulting in a "compromise" motion which eliminated the reference to "BDS."⁵⁸ However

⁵³ Dan Dyck, "Action seeks solution for Israelis and Palestinians: Delegates at Mennonite Church Canada Assembly affirm non-violent solutions to ongoing injustice in Israel-Palestine," *Canadian Mennonite*, July 23, 2016, <https://canadianmennonite.org/stories/action-seeks-solution-israelis-and-palestinians>.

⁵⁴ Epp-Tiessen, interview.

⁵⁵ Jeremy Nuttall, "NDP Delegates Urged to Take Tougher Stance on Israel, Palestine," *The Tyee*, February 15, 2018, <https://thetyee.ca/News/2018/02/15/NDP-Take-Stance-Israel-Palestine/>.

⁵⁶ "Palestinian Self-Determination and the Movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions," Green Party of Canada, policy resolution code G16-P006, no date, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.greenparty.ca/en/convention-2016/voting/resolutions/g16-p006>.

⁵⁷ David Cochrane, "Elizabeth May could quit as Green Party leader this month," *CBC News*, August 12, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/elizabeth-may-green-party-israel-1.3716764>.

⁵⁸ "Measures to pressure the government of Israel to preserve the two-state solution: addendum to current Middle East policy," Green Party of Canada, policy resolution code S16-P013, no date, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.greenparty.ca/en/sgm-2016/voting/resolutions/s16-p013>.

Dimitri Lascarus, who brought forward the original motion, understood the new motion to be even stronger in its demands, and argues that it endorsed both the tactics and the three goals of the BDS movement.⁵⁹ Despite the party's strengthened commitment to a range of tactics associated with the BDS movement, the party announced the new policy as a "rejection" of BDS.⁶⁰ Lascarus felt that this was "shocking in its mischaracterization of the resolution," and that the opposite was true.⁶¹

Compared to churches and political parties, students have been less likely to distance themselves from the wider BDS movement. The BDS movement was explicitly endorsed by L'Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ) in 2008, and by the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) in 2018.⁶² And as noted above, BDS has become a central mobilizing focus for Palestine solidarity on campuses alongside Israeli Apartheid Week, and groups including Students for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) at McMaster University and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology have been able to get their student unions to vote in

⁵⁹ Dimitri Lascarus (retired lawyer and former shadow critic for the Green Party of Canada), interviewed by the author, April 8, 2017. However, the compromise motion included only an oblique reference to Palestinian refugees, by calling on Israel to "respect the intent of UN Resolution 194, the implementation of which is to be negotiated in good faith with the legitimate representatives of the Palestinians."

⁶⁰ May claimed that by replacing the original BDS motion with the compromise one, the Green Party "explicitly rejects the notion of boycotting the state of Israel" and rejects "the goals of the 'BDS movement' as they do not include supporting the right of the state of Israel to exist." Marie-Danielle Smith, "Green Party rejects BDS movement, but still supports economic pressure on Israel." *National Post*, December 5, 2016. However, a comparison of the two motions shows that they both supported a two-state solution and limited the boycott to settlements or "complicity" in the occupation, not the entirety of Israel itself.

⁶¹ Lascarus, interview.

⁶² For full text of these motions see "Support L'Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ) Decision to Join the BDS Movement," BDS Movement, June 3, 2008, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/support-1%E2%80%99association-pour-une-solidarit%C3%A9-syndicale-%C3%A9tudiante-ass%C3%A9-decision-join-bds-movement>; "Statement on Motion of Support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement," Canadian Federation of Students, November 29, 2018, <https://cfs-fcee.ca/statement-on-motion-to-support-boycott-divestment-and-sanctions-bds-movement/>.

favour of BDS.⁶³ In some cases however, campus divestment campaigns do appear to distance themselves somewhat from the movement by framing the vote on a broader thematic terrain. For example, a successful graduate student divestment campaign at Carleton University in 2012 called on the university to “divest from companies complicit in illegal military occupations and other violations of international law,”⁶⁴ and the ongoing YUDivest campaign at York University, which has been endorsed by student unions and the faculty association, calls for divestment from all weapons manufacturers.⁶⁵ For Hammam Farah, who is involved in YUDivest, whether or not to associate with the “BDS” branding can be determined on a “case-by-case basis,” as a strategic approach can further the practical goals of BDS while getting buy-in from a broader coalition.⁶⁶

Labour unions have also tended to be explicit about their endorsement of the BDS movement. CUPE Ontario’s motion adopted the BDS demands almost “word for word,”⁶⁷ while CUPW passed a motion to “support the international campaign of BDS” in 2008⁶⁸ and the private sector union Unifor voted to support the BDS movement in 2017.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Nastovski says that union leaders continue to be “very cautious” about BDS, and that some have told her that adopting it has “actually set them back” because of

⁶³ Nokerah, interview; Assi, interview.

⁶⁴ Ali Abunimah, “In Canadian first, Carleton University students pass Israel occupation divestment resolution by large margin,” *Electronic Intifada*, March 23, 2012, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/canadian-first-carleton-university-students-pass-israel-occupation-divestment>.

⁶⁵ Ryan Moore, “YU Divest officially endorsed by York University Faculty Association,” *Excalibur*, March 15, 2015, <https://excal.on.ca/york-faculty-union-formally-endorses-weapons-divestment-campaign/>.

⁶⁶ Farah, interview.

⁶⁷ Nastovski, interview.

⁶⁸ Matthew Brett, “Postal Workers Union boycott Israeli Apartheid,” *Canadian Dimension*, April 18, 2008, <https://canadiandimension.com/blog/view/postal-workers-union-boycott-israeli-apartheid>.

⁶⁹ Sheri Shefa, “Unifor, Canada’s largest private-sector union, adopts BDS motion,” *Canadian Jewish News*, August 31, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/unifor-canadas-largest-private-sector-union-adopts-bds-motion>.

the resulting backlash. “I don’t agree, that’s not my experience,” she says, “In my experience [BDS] opened up a huge amount of space for us to do this [solidarity] work.”⁷⁰

The occasional tendency of activists to distance themselves from the wider BDS movement turns “BDS” into a somewhat contradictory reference point for solidarity efforts, simultaneously referring to a movement and its core goals, but also as a set of tactics. Making things even more complicated are initiatives by organizations to adopt targeted boycotts or economic measures while rejecting BDS and/or describing their activities as entirely outside of the movement. These include Amnesty International’s call for an arms embargo;⁷¹ the attempted delisting of West Bank settlement rental homes by AirBnB,⁷² and targeted settlement boycotts by liberal Zionist organizations like Peace Now.⁷³ Therefore, whether or not a specific initiative should be properly understood as “BDS” is itself a matter of debate, and this can be quite flexible: for example, the BDS movement will claim victory when an action takes place without reference to the movement (that is, by an actor who does not endorse BDS); at the same time, activists may distance themselves from the term in order for their campaigns to be less controversial. Either way, opponents of BDS will usually categorize an action as being within the BDS framework, whether or not activists intended it to be — although the pro-Israel community itself is quite divided on the question of how to categorize and respond

⁷⁰ Nastovski, interview.

⁷¹ “Israel: Arms embargo needed as military unlawfully kills and maims Gaza protestors,” Amnesty International, April 27, 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/04/israel-arms-embargo-needed-as-military-unlawfully-kills-and-maims-gaza-protesters/>.

⁷² Sara Ashley O’Brien, “Airbnb will allow Israeli settlements listings but won’t profit off them,” *CNN*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/09/tech/airbnb-reverses-israeli-settlement-stance/index.html>.

⁷³ Ben Hartman, “Peace Now launches boycott of settlement products,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 12, 2011, <https://www.jpost.com/National-News/Peace-Now-launches-boycott-of-settlement-products>.

to limited settlement boycotts by Zionist organizations.⁷⁴ In other words, for supporters and opponents alike, BDS can either be an umbrella term to explain all economic or cultural actions against Israel, or it can be a very specific platform which places unofficial actions outside of its orbit. “BDS” can be interpreted to be as powerful or as irrelevant as the context demands.

This is not necessarily a weakness, as distancing from “BDS” may in fact allow greater participation by providing flexibility, and it may provide space for groups to avoid some of the worse backlash from opponents. That said, there is something seemingly contradictory about activists responding to a call from Palestinians themselves, while simultaneously being willing to distance themselves from that original call when circumstances require it. If the BDS call widened the goals of the solidarity movement to incorporate Palestinian refugees and equality within Israel, this is perhaps weakened when groups are free to ignore them. As Barghouti has argued, ignoring these issues is “tantamount to accepting” them, and this is why a limited boycott is not sufficient:

Therefore, wherever necessary in a particular context, advocating a boycott of settlement produce should be only a first, relatively easy step toward a full boycott of all Israeli products and services. It cannot be the final goal of activists committed to international law and human rights in a morally consistent way.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This was discussed in a leaked report from 2017 by the Anti-Defamation League and Israel’s Reut Institute, which was based on consultations and dialogue with a range of stakeholders. The report lamented that targeted boycotts by liberal Zionists are difficult to categorize, as the BDS movement “occasionally supports targeted boycott as it tarnishes Israel’s reputation and is easier to garner support around,” but that “the call for a targeted boycott by Israelis and Jews is often driven by a genuine Zionist motivation.” The report warned that delegitimizing even partial boycotts, while settlements are continuing to expand, would make Israel appear uncommitted to a two-state solution. Anti-Defamation League and Reut Institute, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy: The Frustrating 20X Question: Why Is It Still Growing? Condition, Direction and Response,” Version A, January 2017, unpublished internal document leaked by the *Electronic Intifada*, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/leaked-report-highlights-israel-lobbys-failures>, 23.

⁷⁵ Barghouti, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*, 189.

However, elsewhere Barghouti has gone at length to emphasize the principle of “context sensitivity” in the BDS movement:

But BDS is not a one-size-fits-all type of movement. As a decentralized human rights movement, it has its rights-based platform that all its partners agree on, but beyond that, when it comes to tactics and targeting, it adopts the principle of “context sensitivity.” This means that activists anywhere decide what to target, how to target it, and what kind of coalition they will build to achieve their goals. We defer to our partners’ decisions in this respect and we rely on their moral consistency and unbound creativity. Many partners choose to boycott only settlement products, and that is perfectly fine as a major step toward fully isolating the entire regime of oppression.⁷⁶

In practice, therefore, there is little evidence that Palestinians or the BDS national committee actively disapproves of actions that reject the maximalist and comprehensive approach of the BDS movement. After all, even “non-BDS” resolutions usually appeal to the demands of Palestinians themselves, if not the BDS call specifically, and so these remain within the spirit of the movement. In the end, this distancing tendency is a dynamic that is facilitated by the decentralized character of the movement (in the absence of a body enforcing message discipline), and it can also be understood as a response to the threat of severe backlash, as activists try to avoid controversy by disassociating with the movement itself.

⁷⁶ Omar Barghouti, “Two degrees of separation: Israel, its Palestinian victims, and the fraudulent use of antisemitism,” in *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Jewish Voice for Peace (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017), 147.

Chapter 8: The Israel Lobby in Canada

The BDS movement has many opponents, and very little support among political and economic elites, or among the leadership of most civil society institutions in Canada (with the exception of some churches, unions, and student representative organizations).

However, to understand the organized backlash to BDS, it is necessary to evaluate the core actors who are not simply opposed to BDS, but who are actively engaged in anti-BDS lobbying and campaigning. In Canada, these actors can be understood as the “Israel Lobby” or the “pro-Israel lobby.”¹

The Israel Lobby

Any discussion of pro-Israel lobbying is likely to be controversial. Perhaps the most notorious public debate on this issue focused on Mearsheimer and Walt’s 2006 study of the “Israel Lobby,” in which the authors claimed that the lobby’s political power was the main factor behind why U.S. foreign policy was so biased in favour of Israel. Even many sympathetic readers found their claim unconvincing,² but the most intense criticism came from those who accused the authors of merely recycling classic antisemitic tropes. In the *Canadian Jewish News*, Sheldon Kirshner argued that by overstating the lobby’s importance, their portrayal of the lobby “flirts with the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and plays into the hands of unreconstructed anti-Semites.”³ Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League wrote an entire book called *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and*

¹ Mersheimer and Walt refer to the “Israel lobby,” while Waxman prefers “pro-Israel lobby” (see below). For the purposes of this research I treat these terms as interchangeable, referring in both cases to civil society organizations (specifically in Canada) that advocate on behalf of pro-Israel interests.

² Robert C. Lieberman, “The ‘Israel Lobby’ and American Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 2 (2009); Noam Chomsky, “The Israel Lobby?” *ZNet*, March 28, 2006, archived web page, <https://arquivo.pt/wayback/20090701051422/http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/4134>.

³ Sheldon Kirshner, “A misleading account of the Israel lobby,” *Canadian Jewish News*, December 6, 2007.

the Myth of Jewish Control, arguing that the authors' work "serves merely as an attractive new package for disseminating a series of familiar but false beliefs" about Jews.⁴

There is certainly always a risk of exaggerating the power of any lobby or interest group, and such exaggerations can have serious negative implications when they appear to reproduce or affirm antisemitic tropes of "Jewish power." Nonetheless, the existence of pro-Israel lobbying in the US, Canada, and elsewhere is a political and sociological fact, with its own dynamics and implications, and with a certain degree of institutional and political power, and therefore this is a subject which must be open to study like any other. This means, of course, that the fact of pro-Israel lobbying must not be understood as a conspiracy, but regarded on the same terms as any other lobbying activities, and assumed to have the same legitimacy as any other form of lobbying within the political system (putting aside the question of whether lobbying itself improves or erodes the democratic quality of that system). This point was acknowledged by Mearsheimer and Walt themselves.⁵

The definition of what exactly constitutes the "Israel lobby" is itself a contentious point. In their study, Mearsheimer and Walt defined it as follows:

We use "the lobby" as a convenient short-hand term for the loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively work to shape U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction. Our use of this term is not meant to suggest that "the lobby" is a unified movement with a central leadership or that individuals within it do not disagree on certain issues. The lobby is not a cabal or conspiracy, and its activities are essentially consistent with the interest-group tradition that has long governed American political life.⁶

⁴ "Anti-Defamation League Takes on Stephan Walt," *Fresh Air*, National Public Radio, September 4, 2007, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14154089>.

⁵ Mearsheimer and Walt, "The Israel Lobby," 42.

⁶ Mearsheimer and Walt, "The Israel Lobby," 40.

For Dov Waxman, the problem with this definition is that it is “too broad and elastic,” for it encompasses all individuals and organizations who desire a more pro-Israel foreign policy. Instead, he defines the “pro-Israel lobby” as those formal “groups who actively lobby the U.S. government on issues concerning Israel,” and which are motivated “by a fundamental concern for Israel’s welfare and a commitment to ensuring Israel’s existence as a Jewish state.”⁷ Even within this narrower frame, Waxman argues that the pro-Israel lobby is not monolithic but “internally diverse and politically divided,” increasingly fractured between centrist, right-wing, and centre-left groups—“so much so, in fact, that it may be more accurate now to refer to three, distinct Israel lobbies, rather than just one.”⁸ Nonetheless, these political divisions “accurately reflect the divisions within the American Jewish community regarding Israel,” and therefore “a more divided lobby ... is also a more representative one.”⁹ As I will show below, the pro-Israel lobby in Canada is similarly fractured, although in somewhat different ways.

The pro-Israel lobby cannot be reduced to a “Jewish lobby.” The boundaries of the Israel lobby (as necessarily pro-Zionist) exclude non- or anti-Zionist Jewish groups, including Jewish Voice for Peace and Independent Jewish Voices, while it includes organizations with significant non-Jewish members or leadership, including the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and Christians United for Israel. In other words, “the key dividing line is not ethnic or religious or communitarian but political and ideological.”¹⁰ In the US context, therefore, the Israel lobby is not “a primarily ethnic

⁷ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 150.

⁸ Waxman, 148, 169.

⁹ Waxman, 149.

¹⁰ Pierre Guerlain, “The Israel lobby, American democracy and foreign perceptions of the USA,” *Journal of Public Affairs* 11, no. 4 (2011): 375.

lobby but functions more as the agent of a foreign state.”¹¹ However, this categorization becomes much more complicated in the Canadian context where the predominant and most visible actors engaged in pro-Israel lobbying are Jewish communal organizations. For this reason, the study of the pro-Israel lobby in Canada has indeed tended to fit within the framing of “ethnic lobby groups.” This presents its own problems. Taras and Weinfeld have argued that ethnic lobbies face issues with gaining legitimacy — not only is lobbying itself commonly perceived as illegitimate and opposed to the democratic process, but:

Ethnic lobby groups face the additional challenge of avoiding the charge of conflict of interest or, to put it more directly, of dual loyalty. Thus, while economically based interest groups are deemed to be acceptable, ethnic interest groups, with their connotations of foreign entanglements and extra-territorial ties, are allegedly too particularist and may be thought to undermine national interests.¹²

Jewish organizations are particularly vulnerable to these accusations, given that the suspicion of “dual loyalty” is a prominent antisemitic trope; these antisemitic narratives posit that Jews are rootless cosmopolitans who have no loyalty to their “host” country, but are instead insidiously working to undermine the existing order. This is a real phenomenon facing Jewish organizations, which may be targeted with antisemitic vitriol or hate crimes by individuals motivated by these narratives. Unlike other lobbies, therefore, criticism of the Israel Lobby carries its own specific challenges. When critics of Israeli policies come into direct opposition with organizations which claim to represent the Jewish community as a whole, it can be difficult to distinguish between criticism that is grounded in legitimate grievances over policy and criticism that is motivated by

¹¹ Guerlain, “The Israel lobby,” 377.

¹² Taras and Weinfeld, “Continuity and Criticism,” 299.

antisemitism. The sensitivity around these issues means that those who criticize pro-Israel lobbying efforts may be erroneously accused of antisemitism. This problem is accelerated when explicit efforts are undertaken to conflate antisemitism with anti-Zionism, as explored below. As I will demonstrate, a great deal of the ability of Canada's pro-Israel lobby to deflect criticism and delegitimize the Palestinian solidarity movement is rooted in these ambiguities.

The Israel Lobby in Canada, 1967-2000

From 1967 until the 2000s, the main pro-Israel body in Canada was the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC), which was established “on a sometimes shaky alliance of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), the Canadian Zionist Organization, and the fraternal organization, B’nai Brith,”¹³ and was later joined by delegations of various other organizations and local Jewish federations. The CIC took the pro-Israel advocacy work of its constituent organizations and centralized it; the CIC “was mandated to serve as the formal liaison between the Canadian Jewish community and Ottawa as well as Israel’s advocate before the Canadian media and public.”¹⁴ Its status as the “principal representative of Jewish pro-Israel interests in Canada” was affirmed during the 1973 “Yom Kippur” war, and the CIC expanded its operations “dramatically” with a permanent office in Ottawa, and offices in Montreal and Toronto.¹⁵ The CIC engaged in lobbying members of political parties on a “nonpartisan” basis, adapting its approach to appeal to the various “ideological dispositions” of those in power, while also establishing

¹³ Taras and Weinfeld, 300.

¹⁴ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 31.

¹⁵ Goldberg, 31-2.

“institutionalized relations within the federal cabinet and senior bureaucracy.”¹⁶

This structure of the CIC distinguished the Canadian pro-Israel lobby from its counterpart in the United States. Whereas CIC was a “fully federated organ of the national Canadian Jewish community,” with a membership consisting only of a small number of representatives from Jewish communal organizations, AIPAC, the main American pro-Israel lobby organization, has always been independent and “formally autonomous” from American Jewish organizations, and by the end of the 1980s had grown into a mass membership organization open to anyone. Moreover, AIPAC’s status as a registered lobby means it has been able to engage in partisan initiatives and actively campaign for pro-Israel candidates.¹⁷ Compared to the American pro-Israel lobby, Taras and Weinfeld have suggested that “CIC’s efforts are somewhat anemic;” whether because of a relative lack of resources or impetus, the CIC has not been nearly as successful at lobbying or fundraising.¹⁸

Despite its claims to represent the entire Jewish community on the issue of Israel, the CIC’s legitimacy on this front was always somewhat limited; first by its corporate and role-based model (not just any individual could join), and second by the fact that its leadership was “dominated” by the socioeconomic elite within the Canadian Jewish community.¹⁹ Although the CIC held annual policy conferences which anyone could attend, Goldberg argued that “even this degree of democratization tends to be more apparent than real,” as even the rare popular decision on resolutions would not

¹⁶ Goldberg, 37.

¹⁷ Goldberg, 162; Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 156.

¹⁸ Taras and Weinfeld, “Continuity and Criticism,” 300.

¹⁹ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 32, 33.

“significantly restrict” the decision-making of CIC elites.²⁰ In this way, the CIC was quite similar to most other organizations within the Canadian Jewish establishment, as power within community structures tended to be centralized, with a leadership appointed from the community according to socioeconomic status, and without regular public elections to governing boards.²¹ “All of these considerations show,” Waller concluded, “that decision-making—and hence power—in Jewish communal life rests mainly with an elite.”²² The “notable exception” to this rule was the CJC, whose national officers were elected at a “triennial plenary assembly with perhaps 1000 voting delegates representing virtually all Jewish organizations in the country.”²³

This does not mean that the official position of the Canadian Jewish establishment on Israel did not represent the dominant attitudes within the community. Taras and Weinfeld argue that since at least 1948, when the Israeli state was established, Israel has had a central place within Jewish life in North America,²⁴ providing diverse Jewish communities, including non-observant Jews, with a “common Jewish experience.”²⁵ Support for Israel reached a high point with the “exuberance” following the 1967 war, when “Israel assumed mythic proportions for some Jews,”²⁶ but the unanimity and

²⁰ Goldberg, 33.

²¹ Harold M. Waller, “Canadian Jewish Polity: Power and Leadership in the Jewish Community,” in *The Jews in Canada*, ed. Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, 2nd ed. (Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press Canada, [1993] 2010), 255-7.

²² Waller, 262.

²³ Waller, 257.

²⁴ Taras and Weinfeld, “Continuity and Criticism,” 293.

²⁵ Taras and Weinfeld, 294. However, there is nothing inevitable about the current popularity of Zionism. Prior to 1948 the Zionist cause was widely contested within the North American Jewish community, and its eventual mainstream acceptance was the result of intensive advocacy efforts by Zionist organizations, coupled with a rise in liberal support for Zionism on humanitarian grounds after the Holocaust. Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 152-4; Kaplan, *Our American Israel*, 10ff. Even today Zionism is opposed by a minority of Canadian and American Jews, and some of these debates within the Jewish community will be explored below.

²⁶ Taras and Weinfeld, “Continuity and Criticism,” 294.

enthusiasm of this support occasionally faltered, corresponding with events in the region. At times the CIC faced internal dissent over how to respond to specific events, such as Joe Clark's reneged pledge to move the Canadian embassy to Jerusalem,²⁷ but these debates rarely took place in public. "Many Jews in Canada and elsewhere accept an internalized self-censorship regarding Israel, arguing that life-and-death decisions affecting Israel ought to be made by Israelis alone," often out of fear that any critique could be weaponized by opponents.²⁸

This apparent consensus was moderately strained during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the first Palestinian intifada from late 1987; both events forced the internal divisions within the Jewish community out into the open. Although Jewish leadership continued to support Israel in "official pronouncements," criticism from within the community was increasingly "voiced in public."²⁹ In response to the invasion of Lebanon, a group called the Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Jews contested the CIC's claim to speak for the entire Jewish community,³⁰ although these critics "did not constitute an organized or serious challenge" to the establishment or the consensus on Israel.³¹ More significant was the intifada; as the mainly nonviolent Palestinian resistance was brutally repressed by Israeli forces, a centre-left group of liberal Zionists called the Canadian Friends of Peace Now went on the offensive. By making public statements, running advertisements, and writing in the *Canadian Jewish News* opposing Israel's actions, Peace Now "challeng[ed] the community's official position that the CIC and its

²⁷ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 35.

²⁸ Taras and Weinfeld, "Continuity and Criticism," 305.

²⁹ Taras and Weinfeld, 305.

³⁰ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 141.

³¹ Goldberg, 35.

constituent organizations spoke on behalf of all Canadian Jews.”³² Despite representing a small segment of the Jewish community, Peace Now’s highly public initiatives “presented a potential challenge to the communal consensus on Israel-related matters.”³³

The signing of the Oslo Accords and the start of the “peace process” in 1993 signalled a shift for the Israel lobby in both the United States and Canada. In the United States, the pro-Israel lobby was deeply divided over the deal. “More than anything else,” Waxman argues, “it was the Oslo peace process that led to the fracturing of the pro-Israel lobby.”³⁴ On the centre-left, Americans for Peace Now strongly supported the agreement, while the right wing Zionist Organization of America was lobbying against the deal and becoming a “competitor” to AIPAC; the latter itself was internally divided over the agreement, and was criticized from both sides, while finding itself having to adopt compromise positions (for example, aid to the Palestinian Authority) that it had previously opposed.³⁵ In Canada, the response to Oslo was less polarized. The Canadian Friends of Peace Now were enthusiastic about the agreement, whereas the CIC’s support for the Oslo accords was cautious and “lukewarm” — as a CIC official was quoted, “we endorse all decisions of a democratically elected government of Israel.”³⁶ In fact, the optimism surrounding Oslo ended up benefitting the CIC substantially. Almost immediately, the Liberal government promised to undertake a “comprehensive rethinking” of its policies towards Israel, including a review of the ban on military trade

³² Waller, “Canadian Jewish Polity,” 265-6; Taras and Weinfeld, “Continuity and Criticism,” 304.

³³ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 35.

³⁴ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 158.

³⁵ Waxman, 158-161.

³⁶ Irwin Block, “Reaction from local Jews, Palestinians is lukewarm to proposed peace accord,” *The Gazette (Montreal)*, September 1, 1993.

which had been introduced during the Mulroney government,³⁷ and in 1996 Canada and Israel signed the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement even as critics warned that it was sending the wrong message at a time when the peace process was currently being sabotaged by Netanyahu's Likud government.³⁸

The “fracturing” of the US pro-Israel lobby continued long past Oslo; the subsequent collapse of the peace process, and the loss of optimism amid continued violence in the region, further polarized the lobby, and most importantly, opened up space on the centre-left. After years of the Jewish “antiestablishment” remaining “generally weak and restricted to the periphery of the mainstream of organized American Jewry,”³⁹ in 2008, a breakaway group of centre-left Liberal Zionists formed J Street, a pro-Israel lobby group intended to represent those moderate voices who were being drowned out in existing institutions. Unlike Americans for Peace Now, J Street had its own Political Action Committee and was able to raise money to support like-minded political candidates, and quickly amassed 100,000 members.⁴⁰ Even more recently, several anti-occupation and anti-Zionist Jewish organizations have either been established or seen rapid growth, some of which explicitly endorsed the BDS movement. Although most of these remain firmly outside of the pro-Israel lobby, they nonetheless demonstrate a radically shifting political environment as increasing numbers of young Jews in North America are joining solidarity movements for Palestine.⁴¹

³⁷ Edward Greenspon, “Canada-Israel relations wide open to change Mideast policies to be reviewed, Rabin told,” *Globe and Mail*, November 18, 1993.

³⁸ Peyton Lyon, “Free Trade with Israel (Letter to the Editor),” *Globe and Mail*. August 7, 1996.

³⁹ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 26.

⁴⁰ Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe*, 163-4.

⁴¹ Tom McCarthy, “Israel’s violent rule increasingly driving liberal American Jews on to the streets,” *The Guardian*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/16/israel-palestine-protests-american-jewish-groups>; Tom Pessah, “Fed up with myths, these American Jews are challenging their

Canada's pro-Israel lobby also experienced a significant shift during this same period post-Oslo, but unlike in the US, this was characterized by a radical restructuring of the lobby, paradoxically leading to both centralization and fragmentation of the main Jewish pro-Israel bodies.

Restructuring of the Canadian Pro-Israel Lobby, 2000-2011

The collapse of the peace process and the eruption of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000 marked the beginning of a new era, for both the pro-Israel lobby and the Palestinian solidarity movement alike. The brutal repression of Palestinian resistance by Israeli forces, the apparent failure of the Oslo process, and the rise of a hardline Likud government under Ariel Sharon (which began to build a “security barrier” or apartheid wall deep into the West Bank), all contributed to fuelling anger, a dissatisfaction with the status quo, and the feeling among activists that they needed a new approach. Two moments in particular crystallized this frustration: the widely-publicized launch in 2005 of the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions, and later the rise of Israeli Apartheid Week at universities across the world.

It was in this same moment of upheaval that a small group of elites initiated a “dramatic restructuring” of the Canadian Jewish establishment.⁴² Alarmed by the growing “anti-Israel” atmosphere, and in particular events like the successful cancellation of a 2002 speech by Netanyahu at Concordia University by pro-Palestinian activists,⁴³ a group

Israel education,” *+972 Magazine*, January 13, 2019, <https://972mag.com/young-american-jews/139639/>; Julia Métraux, “The new Jewish left,” *Briarpatch Magazine*, February 13, 2019, <https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/the-new-jewish-left>.

⁴² Dan Freeman-Maloy, “AIPAC North: ‘Israel Advocacy’ in Canada (Part 1 of 3),” personal blog, June 26, 2006, <https://notesonhypocrisy.com/node/19>.

⁴³ David Noble, “The New Israel Lobby in Action,” *Canadian Dimension*, November 1, 2005, <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-new-israel-lobby-in-action-david-noble>.

of donors began to lobby the United Appeal Israel Federations Canada (UAIFC) — the major fundraising agency representing Jewish federations across the country — to restructure Jewish pro-Israel institutions so they could more efficiently advocate for Israel’s interests. Calling themselves the “Emergency Cabinet,” this ad hoc group was described in the *Canadian Jewish News* as “a nationwide group of committed volunteer leaders in response to emerging world trends and the continuing crisis in Israel.”⁴⁴ Far from just volunteers, however, the composition of the Emergency Cabinet betrayed its elitist and class character: members of the self-appointed group included “some of the most prominent names in Canada’s Jewish community,” including the corporate leadership of Onex Corp, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, Indigo Books and Music Inc, and CanWest Global, among other business elites.⁴⁵

At the “insistence” of the Emergency Cabinet, the UAIFC voted in September 2003 to create “a new governing council” called the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA), with a board of 18-22 individuals, including the cabinet’s original 15 members, that would now oversee the budget and activities of the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) and the Canadian Jewish Congress.⁴⁶ Although the budgets of both organizations were initially doubled, they were also brought under CIJA’s “effective control.”⁴⁷ CIC, the longstanding coalition which claimed to represent the Jewish community’s position on Israel, was also significantly changed, “reconfigured to function

⁴⁴ “Our new advocacy organization: what it means for Canadian Jewry,” *Canadian Jewish News*, October 16, 2003.

⁴⁵ Ross Oakland, “Spending on Jewish advocacy to be doubled; Canadian Jewish Congress, Canada-Israel Committee to get \$5M extra. New council places lobbying efforts in hands of wealthy few, critics say,” *Toronto Star*, October 9, 2003.

⁴⁶ Ross Oakland, “Spending on Jewish advocacy to be doubled,” *Toronto Star*, October 9, 2003.

⁴⁷ Noble, “The New Israel Lobby in Action.”

as a committee of individuals acting in their own right rather than on behalf of constituency organizations.”⁴⁸ B’nai Brith was dropped from the coalition, and the CIC’s reconstituted board consisted entirely of “ad personal appointments,” including, “for the first time, a number of non-Jewish directors.”⁴⁹ After the initial influx in funding, however, the CIC and CJC quickly saw their funding steadily cut, and their members felt no choice but to submit to CIJA’s increasing demands, including a 2007 bylaw change that placed CIJA representatives on the CJC board.⁵⁰ Finally, in 2011, both the CIC and CJC were effectively eliminated through a “merger” with CIJA, which was now renamed the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (the acronym remained the same).

The intent of centralizing Jewish and pro-Israeli advocacy within a single organization was purportedly to “save money and streamline pro-Israel and Jewish activities by speaking with one voice on both domestic and foreign affairs,”⁵¹ but the elimination of the CJC in particular was a highly controversial move which created a “lot of bad blood” in the Jewish community.⁵² Critics were furious that the CJC, which was a highly respected 92-year old agency with a national leadership elected by member organizations at various plenaries, was being “destroyed” through “a totally undemocratic process,” and replaced with a body lacking any equivalent democratic representation.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ross Oakland, “Spending on Jewish advocacy to be doubled,” *Toronto Star*, October 9, 2003.

⁴⁹ “CIC appoints new national chair and board,” *Canadian Jewish News*, February 26, 2004.

⁵⁰ Jodie Shupac, “Historian laments demise of Canadian Jewish Congress,” *Canadian Jewish News*, September 16, 2016, <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/historian-laments-demise-canadian-jewish-congress>.

⁵¹ Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, “Is CIJA better or worse than what came before?” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 27, 2013, from <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cija-better-worse-came>.

⁵² Kathryn Blaze Carlson, “Last act of Congress; ‘Bad blood’ as change comes to Jewish advocacy,” *National Post*, August 30, 2011.

⁵³ Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, “Is CIJA better or worse than what came before?” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 27, 2013, from <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cija-better-worse-came>.

One regional chair of the CJC criticized CIJA's Board of Directors for not reflecting either "the socio-economic diversity" or the "political spectrum" of the Canadian Jewish community.⁵⁴ Many were also concerned that CIJA would not be able to replicate the work of the CJC, and that they were losing its "historic role as a defender of human rights, advocate for immigrants and refugees, and leader of campaigns to prosecute war criminals and stamp out hate crimes;"⁵⁵ already by 2009, long-time CJC members were criticizing the organization for starting to focus more on Israel than on other issues.⁵⁶ As the merger loomed, one former Ontario region chair claims that "promises were made ... that human rights would remain a central pillar of CIJA and that senior staff at Congress would remain part of CIJA... [but] none of these promises were kept."⁵⁷

The newly organized CIJA has been widely described as taking a more aggressive, hard line in support of Israel, but it has also been criticized for shifting its advocacy positions rightward in general,⁵⁸ and for its seemingly close relationship to the Conservative Party. Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld claim that in the 2000s "a substantial number of Canadian Jews" had switched their support from the Liberal Party to the Conservatives based on the perception that they are stronger supporters of Israel,⁵⁹ and this was the case for several prominent members of the Emergency Cabinet.⁶⁰ Instead of

⁵⁴ Kathryn Blaze Carlson, "Last act of Congress," *National Post*, August 30, 2011.

⁵⁵ Marian Scott, "Jewish Congress may vanish; Founded in Montreal in 1919. Proposed reorganization would replace advocacy group with centralized body," *The Gazette*, December 10, 2010.

⁵⁶ Stuart Laidlaw, "Has Jewish group forgotten its roots?; Critics say Canadian Jewish Congress has clout in top circles, but not in community," *The Toronto Star*, May 32, 2009.

⁵⁷ Jodie Shupac, "Historian laments demise of Canadian Jewish Congress," *Canadian Jewish News*, September 16, 2016.

⁵⁸ Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, "Is CIJA better or worse than what came before?" *Canadian Jewish News*, March 27, 2013, from <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cija-better-worse-came>.

⁵⁹ Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, "Introduction to the Wynford Edition," in *The Jews in Canada*, ed. Robert J. Brym, William Shaffir, and Morton Weinfeld, 2nd ed (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press Canada, 2010), viii-ix.

⁶⁰ Patrick Martin, "Canada's Jewish community divided over which party should be elected," *Globe and*

reflecting Canada's "rich diversity of Jewish voices," CIJA has been criticized for "trivializ[ing] them," and for being partisan in its approach to rebuking (or ignoring) the words and actions of politicians.⁶¹

CIJA has increasingly modelled itself after AIPAC, in part by adopting a stronger focus on Israel and by incorporating non-Jews into its leadership positions. Unlike AIPAC, however, CIJA also claims to represent the Jewish community, a representational claim which is challenged by both anti-Zionist Jews and many liberal Zionists. Left-wing anti-Zionists argue that CIJA effectively represents the politics and values of its donors, but point out that this neglects large segments of the Jewish community who are uncomfortable with the occupation.⁶² Independent Jewish Voices emphasizes that CIJA's leadership is unelected and is "in no way accountable to the diverse Jewish communities in Canada," and that CIJA "rejects the idea that [Jews who are critical of Israel] have any place in the broader Canadian Jewish community."⁶³ Mira Sucharov, who has described herself as a liberal Zionist, has criticized CIJA's right-wing advocacy for pushing liberal Zionist organizations like the New Israel Fund or Canadian Friends of Peace Now "outside the tent of official Canadian Jewish organizing."⁶⁴ This lack of a safe space available within the Jewish community to criticize "obnoxious policies of the present

Mail, October 16, 2015, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canadas-jewish-community-divided-over-which-party-should-be-elected/article26854943/>.

⁶¹ Andrew Cohen, "Canada's Jews don't speak with one voice," *Ottawa Citizen*, March 24, 2015, <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/cohen-canadas-jews-dont-speak-with-one-voice>.

⁶² Levitan, interview; Freeman-Maloy, interview; Zinman, interview.

⁶³ Tyler Levitan, "Kathleen Wynne: Please refuse 'honour' from Israel lobby group," *Canadian Dimension*, June 8, 2015, <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/kathleen-wynne-please-refuse-honour-from-israel-lobby-group>.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Levy-Ajzenkopf, Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, "Is CIJA better or worse than what came before?" *Canadian Jewish News*, March 27, 2013, from <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cija-better-worse-came>.

government of Israel” is what motivated the formation of the liberal Zionist group JSpaceCanada.⁶⁵ However, some critics note that CIJA’s connection to the Jewish Federation structure does provide it with the ability to claim some representational legitimacy: for example, a portion of donations from Federation fundraising campaigns, whether to food banks or Jewish campus or schools, “goes directly to CIJA.”⁶⁶ Regardless of whether you agree with CIJA, if you are interacting with the “institutional Jewish community” — whether synagogues, community organizations, or social services — “you are funding CIJA.”⁶⁷

This conflation of Israeli advocacy with domestic Jewish advocacy worries CIJA’s critics. “[CIJA’s structure] should not have conflated the two,” says Janet Mock, for it does so “in a way that we try to tell the rest of the world not to conflate [them]. And that’s when the antisemitism creeps in.” Mock recalls an event during the 2001 Durban conference in which a pro-Palestinian march surrounded the Durban Jewish Club (which is not a pro-Israel lobby group), effectively turning the protest anti-Jewish instead of anti-Israel.⁶⁸ David Zinman agrees that this conflation “has had the effect of normalizing the antisemitic trope” which equates the actions of Israel with all Jewish people, and therefore “in a very straightforward way increases antisemitism.”⁶⁹ For the purposes of CIJA, however, this conflation has had mixed results. Mock suggests that CIJA has struggled with branding; whereas the CJC had been highly respected, now that CIJA is

⁶⁵ Janet Mock (President of JSpaceCanada, speaking in personal capacity), interviewed by the author, November 23, 2018; more on this below.

⁶⁶ Mira Sucharov (Associate Professor of Political Science at Carleton University, commentator and op-ed writer on issues of Israel/Palestine and Jewish politics), interviewed by the author, September 12, 2018.

⁶⁷ Zinman, interview.

⁶⁸ Mock, interview.

⁶⁹ Zinman, interview.

“totally aligned with Israel advocacy” it is less represented in other coalition work.⁷⁰ On the other hand, Freeman-Maloy argues that CIJA’s elite leadership was “intent on maintaining the guise of Jewish community representation,” precisely because this has more prestige and legitimacy than representing “a nexus of corporate-U.S.-Israeli power.”⁷¹ In other words, CIJA’s conflation of Israel and Jewish advocacy has strengthened the legitimacy of the former at the direct expense of the latter.

In summary, the restructuring process initiated by the “Emergency Cabinet” centralized significant aspects of the Canadian Jewish establishment, stripping it down to a single mouthpiece and giving it the mandate of both pro-Israel advocacy and all other advocacy priorities of the Jewish community. Simultaneously, it downgraded and then eliminated the most democratic organ within the Jewish establishment, and codified elite control of CIJA’s Board of Directors, and hence all policy and budgeting matters. Unlike under the CIC, in which positions were the result of decision-making between various representatives of Jewish communal institutions, under CIJA the “official” Canadian Jewish public position on Israel is determined by self-nominating board of elites, some which are not Jewish, and without any pressure to compromise with a democratically-elected CJC or the more rightwing B’nai Brith. In effect, this process has consolidated and strengthened the pro-Israel lobby in a right-of-centre position, without the possibility of a democratic challenge. At the same time, however, it has fragmented the lobby by shutting out other groups from coalition work, ensuring that there continue to be multiple pro-Israel voices, and with less cohesion between them.

⁷⁰ Mock, interview.

⁷¹ Dan Freeman-Maloy, “AIPAC North: ‘Israel Advocacy’ in Canada (Part 3 of 3),” personal blog, June 26, 2006, <https://notesonhypocrisy.com/node/21>.

Outlining the Contemporary Israel Lobby

Following Dov Waxman's appraisal of the US pro-Israel lobby, the contemporary Canadian scene can also be analyzed to some extent as three relatively distinct lobbies (loosely: a centre-right establishment, a right-wing, and a centre-left), but the balance of power between them is such that the centre-right is by far the dominant bloc.

The centre-right CIJA monopolizes the space of the Canadian pro-Israel lobby. CIJA perceives its constituency in remarkably broad terms; it calls itself the "advocacy agent of the Jewish Federations" and "the only registered lobbyist for the Jewish community,"⁷² while at the same time it claims to have been "established to better serve the diverse advocacy needs of Jewish Canadians (*and pro-Israel Canadians in general*)."⁷³ CIJA has over forty staff in offices in five cities, including its office in Jerusalem to liaise "directly with Israeli government officials."⁷⁴ CIJA's approach to lobbying is one of "Shared Values," which means that in addition to fighting boycotts it also works to "strengthen and expand practical bilateral ties across government, business, and civil society," while building close partnerships with all political parties.⁷⁵ One central element of this approach are sponsored "fact-finding" missions to Israel; its website boasts that "since 2011, CIJA has taken over 600 influential Canadians, nearly all non-Jews, to Israel," and that "about a third of current Canadian MPs have participated in

⁷² "Frequently Asked Questions," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, January 31, 2019, <https://cija.ca/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>.

⁷³ "CIJA's History," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, August 10, 2016, <https://cija.ca/about-us/our-history/>, emphasis added.

⁷⁴ "The CIJA Team," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://cija.ca/about-us/our-team/>.

⁷⁵ Shimon Fogel, "Building support for Israel the Canadian way," *The Times of Israel*, January 19, 2014 <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/canada-as-a-model-for/>.

a CIJA mission.”⁷⁶ CIJA spends more than any other lobby group on this kind of program, and in 2016 CIJA-paid trips accounted for “more than a third of the total value of all paid travel taken by MPs.”⁷⁷ CIJA is politically very well-connected, and has recruited influential non-Jewish politicians to its thirty-member board: in the past few years board members have included John Baird (former Conservative Minister of Foreign Affairs), Darrell Dexter (former NDP Premier of Nova Scotia), Marie Poulin (former Senator and President of the Liberal Party), and Stockwell Day (former leader of the Canadian Alliance party).

To CIJA’s political right are B’nai Brith Canada and the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre (FSWC). B’nai Brith refers to itself as the “grassroots voice of the Jewish community” and as “a staunch defender of the State of Israel and global Jewry,”⁷⁸ and FSWC refers to itself as a “non-profit human rights organization” that engages in Holocaust education.⁷⁹ Both of these organizations self-describe as human rights organizations, and the work of both organizations involves tracking antisemitism and hate crimes. However, critics like IJV’s Tyler Levitan argue that they have shifted away from their history as credible human rights organizations, and have essentially become pro-Israel lobby groups — albeit less professional and more aggressive versions of CIJA.⁸⁰ As I will explore below, a significant aspect of their work is to directly target “anti-Israel”

⁷⁶ “Educational Missions to Israel,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, August 14, 2015, <https://cija.ca/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>.

⁷⁷ Beatrice Britneff, “CIJA frequently lobbied MPs it took to Israel in 2016,” *iPolitics*, March 31, 2017, <https://ipolitics.ca/2017/03/31/cija-frequently-lobbied-mps-it-took-to-israel-in-2016/>.

⁷⁸ “What is B’nai Brith Canada?” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/what_is_b_nai_brith_canada.

⁷⁹ “About FSWC” Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com/about-us>.

⁸⁰ Levitan, interview.

individuals and organizations with smear campaigns. They have been able to capture significant press coverage, and are frequently given space in the media to frame public discussions around antisemitism, Israel, and Palestinian activism.

It does make some analytical sense to treat this right-wing bloc as distinct from the establishment CIJA, but this should not be overstated. Zinman argues that together these three groups play complementary roles: CIJA provides an official face for the pro-Israel lobby, while B'nai Brith and FSWC outflank CIJA on the right, pushing it along with them and identifying targets that CIJA might not think as strategically useful or beneficial to go after.⁸¹ Moreover, while CIJA and these rightwing groups differ on tone and aggressiveness, the actual substance of their policy on Israel is often quite similar, for CIJA's policy positions in practice have lined up closely with the hardline Likud government. Recent examples include CIJA's public support for Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, its support for Israel's use of lethal force against demonstrators in Gaza during the Great March of Return, and the adoption of Israel's "Nation-State Law."⁸² When it comes to speaking out publicly about Israel and BDS, the centre-right and right-wing pro-Israel lobbies form a greater conservative bloc with little public division between them.

Also operating somewhere in and between these two camps are a number of campus-based organizations which engage in pro-Israel advocacy. Most notable is Hillel

⁸¹ Zinman, interview.

⁸² "CIJA's Position on Jerusalem," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, December 5, 2017, <https://cija.ca/cijas-position-on-jerusalem/>; "CIJA Available to Comment on Israel-Hamas Border Clashes," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, April 5, 2018, <https://cija.ca/cija-available-to-comment-on-israel-hamas-border-clashes/>; "Analysis: Israel's Nation-State Law," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, August 7, 2018, <https://cija.ca/analysis-israels-nation-state-law/>.

Ontario, which operates on a number of campuses to “amplify Jewish campus life,” and which “views Israel as a core component of Jewish Identity and as a portal to Jewish life for students.”⁸³ There is also Hasbara Fellowships, a program that sends students on trips to Israel and trains them to engage in pro-Israel advocacy, and which describes itself as a “leading pro-Israel campus activism organization,”⁸⁴ and StandWithUs, a “non-profit Israel education organization” which formed a Canadian branch in 2012, and whose key program is the Emerson Fellowship, a “prestigious” pro-Israel leadership program for students.⁸⁵ Finally, CIJA, B’nai Brith Canada, and FSWC all have their own campus programs, variously offering student guides, paid internships, and ambassador positions. These organizations often work together in coalitions against BDS activity on campus.

Other fellow travellers include Christian Zionist organizations, most notably Christians United for Israel — Canada (CUFI - Canada), which is the Canadian affiliate of US evangelical John Hagee’s organization. Led by evangelical and social conservative Charles McVety, and former executive of B’nai Brith Frank Dimant, CUFI - Canada describes itself as a “national association through which every pro-Israel church, parachurch organization, ministry or individual in Canada can speak and act with one voice in support of Israel.”⁸⁶ Some of its activities include pastors’ briefings and tours of Israel, and the distribution of pro-Israel literature. More-so than others in the rightwing bloc, CUFI - Canada is closely aligned with the social conservative and anti-Muslim far-

⁸³ “Israel,” Hillel Ontario, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://hillelontario.org/israel/>.

⁸⁴ “Overview,” Hasbara Fellowships, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://hasbarafellowships.org/overview>.

⁸⁵ “Emerson Fellowship,” StandWithUs, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.standwithus.com/emerson-fellowship>.

⁸⁶ “About Us,” CUFI – Canada, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, <http://cufi.ca/zion/about-us/>.

right; for example, their 2017 gala event featured US Republican Michelle Bachmann and Rebel Media's Ezra Levant. Other Christian Zionist groups in Canada include International Christian Embassy Jerusalem Canada, Canada Celebrates Israel, Operation Exodus Canada, and Bridges for Peace. Unlike in the United States where Christian Zionists are a tremendously powerful political bloc, and whose influence increasingly rivals that of AIPAC,⁸⁷ in Canada they appear to have a lower public profile, instead holding behind-the-scenes influence through various church networks.⁸⁸

Finally, there are several organizations that engage in pro-Israel education and public events from a liberal or progressive Zionist perspective, and which together form a distinct centre-left bloc. These include Canadian Friends of Peace Now (CFPN), a peace movement which advocates for a two-state solution, and the New Israel Fund of Canada (NIFC), which funds progressive Israeli civil society and NGOs. More recently, JSspaceCanada was founded in 2011 by progressive Jews as a safe space for conversations on Israel and Palestine within the community.⁸⁹ It defines itself as an “alternative to both the vehemently anti-Israel left and the rigidly pro-Israel right,”⁹⁰ that is, as opposed to both CIJA and Independent Jewish Voices, with a goal of highlighting the fact that “many

⁸⁷ Ed Kilgore, “The Christian Right, Not AIPAC, Drives the GOP’s Pro-Israel Stance,” *New York Magazine*, February 11, 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/02/christian-right-bigger-deal-than-aipac-in-gop-israel-policy.html>; Jane Eisner, “Trump Has Handed The Israel Lobby To Evangelicals. That’s Terrifying,” *Forward*, January 15, 2018, <https://forward.com/opinion/392156/trump-has-handed-the-israel-lobby-to-evangelicals-thats-terrifying/>.

⁸⁸ Despite a lack of public profile, Christian Zionists also have a significant presence within the Conservative Party. At one point during Harper’s tenure, both the chair and “more than half” of the executive of the Canada-Israel Friendship Group was made up of “evangelical Conservatives,” many of them holding Christian Zionist views. Marci McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2011), 332.

⁸⁹ Mock, interview.

⁹⁰ “NDP convention urged to reject resolution on Israel/Palestine,” JSspaceCanada, February 13, 2018, <http://jspacecanada.ca/images/pressreleases/ndpconfresolution.pdf>.

people in the Jewish community feel the same as we do.”⁹¹ All of these organizations defend Israel against the BDS movement (see the next chapter), but they also take strong public positions that are highly critical of Israeli policy, such as Israel’s Nation-State Law, and they are tolerant of some limited forms of economic protest. This sets them far apart from both the centre-right and right-wing pro-Israel lobbies as previously discussed.

Unfortunately, this centre-left bloc is also the most marginal segment of the pro-Israel lobby. Zinman suggests that organizations like JSpaceCanada largely “exist on paper” and play a minor role in Canada compared to J Street in the US, and that Canadian Jews who align with these views “increasingly don’t have an institutional context or ideological coherence.”⁹² Sucharov agrees that JSpaceCanada has a “small footprint,” but argues that it nonetheless represents a “significant strand of Canadian Jewish public opinion.”⁹³ Two recent surveys of Canadian Jewish opinion provide some evidence for this claim. On the one hand, an Environics survey found that 48% of Jews in Canada feel very emotionally attached to Israel, and another 31% feel somewhat attached, which is much higher proportion than American Jews.⁹⁴ However, it also found that Canadian Jews are divided on Israel-Palestinian relations, and specifically the issue of West Bank settlements, and that 39% believe that the settlements are hurting Israel’s security.⁹⁵ Moreover, an EKOS poll commissioned by IJV reveals that 37% of Canadian Jews hold a

⁹¹ Mock, interview.

⁹² Zinman, interview.

⁹³ Sucharov, interview.

⁹⁴ Robert Brym, Keith Neuman, and Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada: Final Report,” survey conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, University of Toronto, and York University, March 11, 2019, <https://www.environicsinstitute.org/projects/project-details/survey-of-jews-in-canada>, 57.

⁹⁵ Brym, Neuman, and Lenton, 59-60.

negative view of the Israeli government,⁹⁶ 31% are opposed to the blockade of Gaza,⁹⁷ and a surprising 45% are opposed to Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.⁹⁸ While most of these constitute minority positions, they nonetheless indicate a significant segment of the community that is not represented by the specifically Jewish organizations within either the centre-right or right-wing blocs of the pro-Israel lobby.

When taken as a whole, the pro-Israel lobby in Canada is less diverse and more monolithic than in the United States. It is dominated by the centre-right mainstream CIJA, with right-wing groups including B'nai Brith Canada and FSWC playing an influential role, but with a great deal of shared priorities and politics between these two blocs. Meanwhile, there is a reduced role for both Christian Zionists and liberal or progressive Zionists, at least in terms of a public profile and shaping the pro-Israel agenda. As noted above, this means that Jewish communal organizations are the predominant (and virtually the only) actors engaged in pro-Israel lobbying, and in leading public anti-BDS initiatives. Of course, there are many non-Jewish Canadians who are supportive of Israel and who oppose BDS, but they have not been organized political actors in the same way. Zinman suggests that this may simply be because the existing Jewish infrastructure is so well funded and effective, that it just doesn't make sense for anybody else to get involved.⁹⁹ Regardless, the consequence of this is that the political struggle against the Palestinian solidarity movement first and foremost appears to be

⁹⁶ Diana Ralph, "Two Jews, Three Opinions: Jewish Canadians' Diverse Views on Israel-Palestine," survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates co-sponsored by Independent Jewish Voices and the United Jewish People's Order, February 19, 2019, <https://ijvcanada.org/2019/new-ekos-poll-jewish-canadians-sharply-divided-on-israel-palestine/>, 21.

⁹⁷ Ralph, 24.

⁹⁸ Ralph, 26.

⁹⁹ Zinman, interview.

fought through the mode of religious and cultural conflict, with BDS commonly framed in terms of an attack on the Jewish community itself. As the Jewish community rightfully holds significant respect and moral authority within Canadian society, these organizations confer onto pro-Israel lobbying a certain moral legitimacy, and have considerable influence in shaping how Canadians view Palestinian demands and forms of resistance.

Chapter 9: Defining and Redefining BDS as Antisemitism

By definition, a lobby that is dedicated to promoting the interests of the state of Israel will be opposed to any movement to boycott or isolate that country. Neither is it surprising that a body like CIJA, dominated by a corporate business elite, would reject initiatives to sever economic ties between Canada and Israel, or to boycott Israeli products. And indeed, the pro-Israel lobby deploys a multitude of arguments against the BDS movement, with many of them focusing on the movement's alleged non-constructive or counter-productive tendencies; these include arguments that BDS prohibits cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, that it undermines efforts to reach a peace agreement, that it violates the principles of academic freedom, that it unhelpfully inserts politics into culture or sports, or that it contributes to Palestinian unemployment.

However, I would argue that these arguments are relatively minor features of the debate; they may be influential in specific moments of contention, but they are not central to motivating the opposition to BDS. In some cases these arguments may be taken up by individuals who are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, but who simply disagree with BDS over tactics, and they are likely to be mobilized to appeal to progressive audiences (see below). But while these may serve as helpful supporting arguments by those who oppose BDS, they are not driving the activities of the Canadian pro-Israel lobby nor the global counter-movement against BDS.

Instead, the single most important charge that the pro-Israel lobby makes against the BDS movement is that it is antisemitic and harmful to the Jewish community. While most pro-Israel advocates agree that BDS should be understood in terms of the "new antisemitism," in that it represents an unacceptable and illegitimate critique of Israel and

Zionism, its specific relationship to antisemitism is contested. When it comes to public advocacy, however, the pro-Israel lobby is increasingly relying on new and dubious ways to define and frame BDS as antisemitic.

The New Antisemitism

Morton Weinfeld, McGill professor of sociology and historian of the Jewish community in Canada, has concluded that most “traditional indicators” of antisemitism — for example, anti-Jewish attitudes, degree of income or education, and the exclusion of Jewish Canadians from business or social networks — “suggest that Canadian antisemitism has been declining since the 1950s and is relatively low by comparative standards.”¹ The exception to this trend is the increasing numbers of reported antisemitic incidents, including harassment, although this may be a result of better reporting practices.² Despite this, Weinfeld warns that there is still a “palpable concern” that antisemitism is a “real and growing danger,”³ and Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld claim that “in [the] place” of traditional forms of antisemitism “we witness growing attacks on Israel and Israeli policies, including the spread of Israel Apartheid Week on Canadian university and college campuses.”⁴

This claim that anti-Israel and anti-Zionist sentiments are driving a new resurgence in antisemitic activity has been repeatedly articulated by scholars and Jewish activists

¹ Morton Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” in *Contemporary Antisemitism: Canada and the World*, ed. Michael R. Marrus, Derek J. Penslar, and Janice Gross Stein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 41; Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, “Introduction to the Wynford Edition.”

² Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, “Introduction to the Wynford Edition,” vi-vii; Robert Brym, “Antisemitic and Anti-Israel Actions and Attitudes in Canada and Internationally: A Research Agenda,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 53, no. 4 (2019): 5.

³ Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” 41.

⁴ Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, “Introduction to the Wynford Edition,” vii-viii.

since the early 2000s. This was a period in which criticism of Israel was growing, largely in response to the Israeli crackdown against the second intifada, leading to key events including high profile demonstrations on Canadian campuses against pro-Israeli speakers. Irwin Cotler, a human rights lawyer and former Liberal federal cabinet minister, described this new trend in alarming terms:

What we are witnessing today — which has been developing incrementally, almost imperceptibly, and sometimes indulgently, for some 30 years now — is a new, virulent, globalizing and even lethal anti-Jewishness reminiscent of the atmospherics of the 1930s, and without parallel or precedent since the end of the Second World War. This new anti-Jewishness overlaps with classical anti-Semitism, but is distinguishable from it.⁵

Often referred to as a “new antisemitism,” this phenomenon is distinguished from classical antisemitism in that it no longer discriminates against individual Jews but is instead “aimed at the Jewish state,”⁶ and therefore constitutes an assault on “the right of the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations.”⁷ According to David Matas, human rights lawyer and consul to B’nai Brith Canada, this phenomenon sits alongside Holocaust denial as one of the two main forms of antisemitism today, and is “by far the greater threat to the Jewish community.”⁸ Despite its current popularity, the idea that anti-Israel sentiment constitutes a “new antisemitism” goes back to at least the 1970s, with Forster and Epstein’s book by the same name.⁹

⁵ Irwin Cotler, “Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness: Sounding the Alarm,” The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, Alert Paper no. 1 (November 2002): 3.

⁶ Natan Sharansky, “3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16 (2004).

⁷ Cotler, “Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness,” 4.

⁸ David Matas, *Aftershock: Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2005), 196.

⁹ Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974). “Of course one can be unsympathetic to or oppose Israel’s position on specific issues without being anti-Jewish. But many of the anti-Israel sentiments from non-Jewish sources, often the most respectable, carry an undeniable anti-Jewish message. Some of the public utterances that pass for legitimate discussion mask a real hostility to Jews as Jews; they are often couched in language or contain innuendo that is plainly anti-

Supporters of the “new antisemitism” thesis are quick to clarify that there is a distinction between antisemitism and the legitimate criticism of Israeli policy (excluding criticism of the constitution of Israel itself), but precisely drawing this line has been notoriously difficult and subject to considerable debate. “In fact,” write Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, “one of the challenges for Diaspora Jews involves distinguishing criticism of Israeli policies, anti-Zionism, and anti-Semitism.”¹⁰ There is a general feeling that much criticism of Israel is ultimately motivated by antisemitic attitudes, which is difficult to parse out; even though “many critics of Israel are not anti-Semites,” it would be “disingenuous” to claim that antisemitism doesn’t play a role in “generating or sustaining anti-Zionist sentiment and action.”¹¹ Therefore, some authors have decided that criticism of Israel can be considered antisemitic when it becomes excessive — a determination which is of course entirely up for interpretation. For example, Matas argues that when “extremely inflammatory language” is directed towards the state of Israel, this is “by implication” accusing the Jewish community itself of being “complicit in those crimes.”¹² Taking a somewhat different line of argument, Weinfeld asserts that when criticism is “harsh,” “one-sided,” and has no “constructive purpose,” then it is “indeed antisemitic in

Semitic” (17).

¹⁰ Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, “Introduction to the Wynford Edition,” viii.

¹¹ Brym, Shaffir, and Weinfeld, viii.

¹² Matas, *Aftershock*, 38. David Matas offers several of his own methods for determining when criticism of Israeli policies can be considered legitimate rather than antisemitic. “Internationally,” he argues, “that criticism should be done in the context of a global survey, country by country, of such practices and policies, using the same standards and language to judge all countries.” Further, he argues that criticism over alleged wrongdoing should be directed not against the Israeli state but against specific individuals, for accusations against individuals may be “libellous when inaccurate” but are not an “attack on the whole Jewish people.” Finally, he asserts that certain policies must be off limits for criticism if they are determined to be “intrinsic to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state,” as such criticism “amounts to criticism of the existence of Israel.” These guidelines not particularly satisfying, for the restrictions on criticism are extremely limiting, impractical, and not something that is expected of any other state. Matas, *Aftershock*, 38, 194, 195.

its consequences, and possibly in motive.”¹³ Regardless of intentions then, there may be antisemitic consequences of criticizing Israel in too strong terms, although exactly what consequences those could be are not spelled out.

In an attempt to overcome these ambiguities, Natan Sharansky developed a popular conceptual framework for distinguishing between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism, known as the “three D’s of antisemitism” or the “3D test.” Following this method, any given criticism towards Israel is evaluated against three “D’s”: 1) demonization, as when “Israel’s actions are blown out of all sensible proportion;” 2) double standards, as when Israel is “singled out” or criticism is “applied selectively”; and 3) delegitimization, that is, when “Israel’s fundamental right to exist is denied.” If the criticism of Israel in question is determined to meet any of these criteria, then it is deemed antisemitic and therefore illegitimate.¹⁴

The 3D test has proven to be tremendously popular, and is promoted as a resource by organizations including the Anti-Defamation League¹⁵ and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs,¹⁶ and the same language is used by liberal Zionist organization JSpaceCanada when they say they oppose “any claims that question Israel’s right to exist, and reject[s] attempts to vilify, demonize or delegitimize the State of Israel.”¹⁷ The framework was codified by the US State Department in 2010,¹⁸ and its key elements were

¹³ Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” 46.

¹⁴ Sharansky, “3D Test of Anti-Semitism.”

¹⁵ “Response to Common Inaccuracy: Israel Critics are Anti-Semites,” Anti-Defamation League, no date, accessed February 12, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/response-to-common-inaccuracy-israel-critics-are-anti-semites>.

¹⁶ “FAQs: Ten Big Questions You Might Face On Campus,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, no date, accessed February 12, 2019, <https://cija.ca/about-us/campus/faqs-10-big-questions/>.

¹⁷ “Where We Stand,” JSpaceCanada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <http://jspacecanada.ca/where-we-stand/>.

¹⁸ “Defining Anti-Semitism,” U.S. Department of State, archived web page, June 8, 2010, <https://2009->

incorporated into the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)'s working definition of antisemitism, which has been taken up by the Canadian government.¹⁹ In fact, when defending their government's decision to adopt the IHRA definition, Liberal MPs Housefather and Levitt explicitly pointed to "delegitimization, demonization, and double standards" as features of antisemitic rhetoric as defined by the IHRA.²⁰ B'nai Brith Canada's campus guide to antisemitism even offers additional examples: demonization is when "a student compares the Israeli government to that of Nazi Germany;" a double-standard is when "your student union motions to support BDS, while ignoring human rights violations around the world"; and delegitimization is when "Israel is accused of being a 'settler' and 'colonial' state that practices apartheid," and is therefore "punished simply for existing."²¹

If there remains any ambiguity about how to legitimately criticize Israel, the one red line that cannot be crossed is to question Zionism itself. Proponents of this view will qualify this somewhat, conceding that not every criticism of Zionism is necessarily antisemitic, but they will then assert that anti-Zionism and antisemitism today are "indelibly linked,"²² that those very marginal yet legitimate critics of Zionism do not count as "true anti-Zionists,"²³ or that anti-Zionism is the form that antisemitism takes

2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2010/122352.htm.

¹⁹ "Policy Brief: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, June 12, 2019, <https://cija.ca/policy-brief-ihra-defining-antisemitism/>.

²⁰ Anthony Housefather and Michael Levitt, "Housefather & Levitt: Why Canada's adopting the IHRA definition of anti-semitism," *Canadian Jewish News*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/opinions/housefather-levitt-why-canadas-adopting-the-ihra-definition-of-anti-semitism>.

²¹ "A Guide to Fighting Antisemitism on Campus 2017-18," B'nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed February 12, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/campus_antisemitism, 5.

²² Weinfeld, "The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism," 44.

²³ Matas, *Aftershock*, 30.

today.²⁴ Anti-Zionism is antisemitic, according to Weinfeld, because it “denies to the Jewish people the right to national liberation and self-determination, rights accorded to most other peoples.”²⁵ Cotler argues that to challenge Israel as the manifestation of this right is to target the Jewish people itself:

To the extent that Israel has emerged as the “civil religion” of world Jewry — the organizing idiom of Jewish self-determination — this new anti-Semitism is a *per se* assault, in contemporary terms, on the religious and national sensibility of the Jewish people.²⁶

In more practical terms, Weinfeld says that support for anti-Zionism in the present day “leads to the defence of positions that are devastating to the well-being of Israeli Jews.”²⁷ One such position is the Palestinian right to return, which is widely perceived by supporters of Israel as an attack on Israel’s “right to exist” as a Jewish-majority state. “For those in support,” Matas claims, “‘the right to return of the Palestinian people’ is today what ‘the final solution to the Jewish problem’ was in the days of Hitler — a mask of words obfuscating the end result: destruction of the Jewish people.”²⁸ Moreover, Matas accuses anti-Zionists of being “bigots”²⁹ who are motivated by “the hatred of Jews,”³⁰ and accuses anti-Zionism of being “racism” and in itself a “human rights violation.”³¹

In short, the concept of the “new antisemitism” formalizes the position that criticism of Israel can be deemed antisemitic in and of itself, so long as it is alleged to be unfair or uses inflammatory terms, or if it challenges Zionism — or key policies or

²⁴ Cotler, “Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness,” 5-6.

²⁵ Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” 44.

²⁶ Cotler, “Human Rights and the New Anti-Jewishness,” 5.

²⁷ Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” 44.

²⁸ Matas, *Aftershock*, 101.

²⁹ Matas, 31.

³⁰ Matas, 219.

³¹ Matas, 30.

aspects of the Israeli state which are perceived to be essential to its Zionist character, and especially those that maintain its demographics as a Jewish majority. Given that these conditions are themselves up for interpretation, even among people who have adopted this framework there are very different understandings of which specific criticisms should be considered markers of antisemitism.

BDS as Antisemitism

The Palestinian call for BDS arrived at precisely the same historical moment as this “new antisemitism” framework was being developed and debated, and the movement is generally understood by critics through that lens. Whereas the different political camps of the pro-Israel community are divided on whether specific criticisms (e.g. of the occupation) should be considered antisemitic, both the “establishment” pro-Israel groups and liberal Zionists believe that the BDS movement crosses the line and goes beyond legitimate criticism; they share the belief that the “core goal” of the movement is to dismantle Israel as a Jewish state, and in so doing it is applying a double standard and denying only the Jewish people their right to self-determination. Therefore, the movement can be considered antisemitic insofar as its goals are antisemitic.³² However, Max Samarov of StandWithUs offered to make a distinction between the core of the BDS movement and its general supporters:

Now do I think that everybody who supports BDS is doing it because [the destruction of Israel is] their goal? Absolutely not. I mean, the reason that BDS is successful is because it has this fairly vague and broad message that is able to appeal to a broader audience than just people who want to see Israel cease to exist.³³

³² Max Samarov (Executive Director of Research and Campus Strategy, StandWithUs), interviewed by the author, August 29, 2018; Mock, interview.

³³ Samarov, interview.

Indeed, Samarov admits that “plenty of people support BDS without any antisemitic intent.”³⁴ Similarly, Janet Mock of JSpaceCanada believes that many people who use boycotts as a tactic against Israel are not antisemitic, but are simply concerned individuals who “would rather have nonviolent strategies to indicate their protest to the Israeli government.” Mock even suggests that she would be able to support the boycott herself if the movement’s platform did not call for the dismantling of Israel, but was simply about “bringing attention to the plight of Palestinians in the West Bank, and to promote equality and fairness and shared society within Israel.”³⁵

A similar distinction between the core of the BDS movement and its supporters was made in an internal 2017 report conducted jointly by the American Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Israel’s Reut Institute. Although the report claimed that the BDS campaign “represents a form of anti-Semitism” for delegitimizing Israel, it acknowledged that antisemitism was “merely one driver” and that the movement was “also driven by other motives.”³⁶ Moreover, the report recommended that the pro-Israel community should make a distinction between the “head” of the movement, which is allegedly made up of hardcore anti-Zionist instigators, and the “Long Tail,” which consists of many individuals who are critical of Israel but who do not necessarily “seek Israel’s elimination.”³⁷ While the report argued for handling instigators “uncompromisingly,” it also warned that individuals in the Long Tail must be engaged and won over, and that “a

³⁴ Samarov, interview.

³⁵ Mock, interview.

³⁶ Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Reut Institute, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy: The Frustrating 20X Question: Why Is It Still Growing? Condition, Direction and Response,” Version A, January 2017, unpublished internal document leaked by the *Electronic Intifada*, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/alibunimah/leaked-report-highlights-israel-lobbys-failures>, 9.

³⁷ ADL and Reut, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy,” 10-11.

heavy-handed approach toward soft critics may actually drive them away and closer to the anti-Israel camp, rather than to bring them closer to Israel.”³⁸

This idea that general supporters of BDS should be engaged, rather than aggressively condemned, more or less describes the approach of Canadian liberal Zionist organizations. These organizations will express their opposition to BDS on the grounds that it crosses the line of appropriate discourse, but they seldom if ever directly accuse the movement’s supporters of being antisemitic. For example, as noted above, JSpaceCanada opposes “any claims that question Israel’s right to exist, and reject[s] attempts to vilify, demonize or delegitimize the State of Israel.”³⁹ However, in their statement opposing a 2018 NDP resolution that would have endorsed economic pressure to end the occupation, they did not use the term antisemitism but instead argued that the policy would “limit engagement” with progressive Israeli activists, and would “end up isolating allies” including “most Jewish Canadians.”⁴⁰ In a similar manner, the Canadian Friends of Peace Now (CFPN) oppose BDS over its demand for the Palestinian right to return and on the grounds that it delegitimizes the whole of Israel, but they do support both a targeted boycott of the settlements and the European Union’s efforts to label settlement goods.⁴¹ Their criticisms of BDS, therefore, tend to be quite measured. When the CFPN criticized a Green Party resolution in 2016 for aligning with the wider BDS movement, they did not

³⁸ ADL and Reut, 26. More about this report below.

³⁹ “Where We Stand,” JSpaceCanada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <http://jspacecanada.ca/where-we-stand/>.

⁴⁰ “NDP convention urged to reject resolution on Israel/Palestine,” JSpaceCanada, February 13, 2018, <http://jspacecanada.ca/images/pressreleases/ndpconfresolution.pdf>.

⁴¹ “CFPN supports EU guidelines for labelling settlement products,” Canadian Friends of Peace Now, November 13, 2015, <http://www.peacenowcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/News%20Release/11.13.2015.png>.

accuse the party of antisemitism, but of negating the two-state solution.⁴² The organization also came to the defence of the United Church over endorsing a settlement boycott in 2012; although CFPN did not endorse the resolution because of its “lack of balance,” they pushed back against both B’nai Brith and CIJA for their “over the top” and “foolish” criticism of the church.⁴³

Of course, Liberal Zionist organizations represent only a small fraction of the organizing against BDS in Canada, and this more delicate approach to engaging with critics of Israel is far outweighed by the aggressive anti-BDS posture of establishment and rightwing organizations including CIJA, B’nai Brith, Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre (FSWC), Hillel, and others. If Liberal Zionists tend to avoid accusing BDS supporters of antisemitism, the greater pro-Israel community has no hesitation to do so. In addition to the “new antisemitism” and “3D model” frameworks as described above, the Canadian pro-Israel lobby has developed several other ways to conceptualize and describe BDS as a form of antisemitism, in some cases re-defining the goals and targets of the movement in order to make their case.

One new line of argument from the pro-Israel lobby has been to conceptualize BDS as a form of discrimination against Israelis, as if the movement targeted individuals rather than institutional or economic complicity. As CIJA argues, “In targeting all Israelis, BDS is a modern-day blacklist and a form of discrimination based on national origin.”⁴⁴ B’nai

⁴² “CFPN opposes Green Party’s BDS campaign,” Canadian Friends of Peace Now, August 15, 2016, http://www.peacenowcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Green_party.jpg.

⁴³ “United Church resolution is a wakeup call, says CFPN,” Canadian Friends of Peace Now, August 13, 2012, <http://www.peacenowcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/News%20Release/8.12.13.pdf>; “CIJA’s outrage is outrageous, says CFPN,” Canadian Friends of Peace Now, August 16, 2012, <http://www.peacenowcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/News%20Release/8.16.12.pdf>.

⁴⁴ “Understanding Boycott-Divestments-Sanctions,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://cija.ca/resource/bds/>.

Brith similarly refers to BDS as discrimination against Israeli nationals.⁴⁵ After the Canadian Federation of Students endorsed the BDS campaign in 2018, a statement released by Hasbara Fellowships, B'nai Brith Canada and a fraternity claimed that the resolution violated the organization's policy against discrimination based on "place of origin, ethnicity, or citizenship."⁴⁶ This description of BDS is contradicted by the movement's official guidelines, which state that "the BDS movement does not boycott or campaign against any individual or group simply because they are Israeli."⁴⁷ Given the decentralized nature of the movement, however, it is possible that its supporters might occasionally misinterpret the boycott. There is one example from 2017 in which a trade school in British Columbia refused to accept applicants from Israel, citing "the conflict and illegal settlement activity in the region" as well as UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (which had condemned Israeli settlement expansion). The school's policy was later reversed, but Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre warned that "this incident is cause for serious concern about the harm done by UNSC Resolution 2334 in encouraging a rising tide of anti-Semitism."⁴⁸ I'm not aware of any similar incidents that could be argued to justify this interpretation of the BDS movement.

Another line of argument from the pro-Israel lobby is that the BDS movement, and

⁴⁵ "Anti-Israel Boycott Movement," B'nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/bs_movement.

⁴⁶ Hasbara Fellowships and B'nai Brith Canada, "Canadian Federation of Students Must Rescind Discriminatory BDS Motion," November 20, 2018, <http://hasbarafellowships.org/canadian-federation-of-students-must-rescind-discriminatory-bds-motion/>.

⁴⁷ "Isn't a boycott of Israel Anti-Semitic? [FAQs: Section 2: Responding to common arguments against BDS]," BDS Movement, no date, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://bdsmovement.net/faqs#collapse16241>.

⁴⁸ Lauren Kramer, "B.C. school rescinds ban against Israeli students." *Canadian Jewish News*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/b-c-construction-school-rescinds-ban-israeli-students>; Lidar Gravé-Lazi, "Canadian trade school retracts ban on Israeli students after row," *Jerusalem Post*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Canadian-trade-school-rescinds-restrictions-on-Israeli-students-after-row-480219>.

other forms of Palestinian solidarity, actually target Jews themselves. “For many involved in this movement,” argues B’nai Brith, “there is no difference between the Israeli government and the average Canadian Jew, regardless of their level of involvement with, or interest in, Israeli political life.”⁴⁹ The FSWC similarly suggests that campus events like Israeli Apartheid Week are not actually about Israeli policy, but should be identified as “acts of hatred and aggression towards Jewish students.”⁵⁰ Responding to the BDS resolution adopted by the CFS in 2018, a group of Hillel chapters across Canada argued that “In its obsessive campaign against exclusively one country *and one community*, the CFS has further marginalized the thousands of Jewish students whom it is tasked with representing.”⁵¹ Finally, a bipartisan bill considered by the Ontario legislature in 2016 included a definition of the BDS movement which claimed that it targeted “corporations, businesses and cultural institutions owned by Jewish Canadians.”⁵² These claims are difficult to assess, as they are presented without evidence, and appear to deliberately mischaracterize the stated goals and tactics of the BDS movement.

One controversial and revealing incident occurred in 2017, when a Jewish and pro-Israel student at McGill was voted off the board of the student union. Writing in the *Canadian Jewish News*, he claimed: “I was blocked from participating in student government because of my Jewish identity and my affiliations with Jewish

⁴⁹ “Anti-Israel Boycott Movement,” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/bs_movement.

⁵⁰ “About FSWC” Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com/about-us>.

⁵¹ “Hillels Across Canada Condemn Canadian Federation of Students’ Endorsement of BDS,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, November 19, 2018, https://cija.ca/pr_cfs_bds_20181119/, emphasis added.

⁵² Bill 202, *Standing Up Against Anti-Semitism in Ontario Act*, 1st Reading May 17, 2016, 41st Parliament, 1st session, http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=4020.

organizations.”⁵³ This accusation that he had been excluded because of his identity was affirmed by CIJA,⁵⁴ but contested by many who insisted the vote was based on the student’s anti-BDS positions and voting record, and therefore had “political – rather than prejudicial or racial – motives.”⁵⁵ The backlash from the incident prompted McGill administration to conduct an investigation, culminating in a report which concluded that the student’s removal was based on politics, not prejudice. As the report’s author wrote: “I can honestly say that my conclusion about this allegation, after what I believe was a thorough investigation of the facts, that is, indisputable evidence, does not substantiate the notion that the vote was motivated by anti-Semitism.”⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the report was widely dismissed by the pro-Israel community as a “whitewash,” in part because the author had allegedly “ignored how modern anti-Semitism hides behind anti-Zionism.”⁵⁷ This high-profile case shows how political debate over Israel and Zionism can easily be interpreted — whether honestly or cynically — as an attack on one’s Jewish identity.

Relatedly, there is a common concern that the presence of BDS campaigns (and anti-Israel sentiments more generally) on university campuses is alienating for Jewish

⁵³ Noah Lew, “The BDS campaign to stop Jews from serving on McGill student council,” *Canadian Jewish News*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/opinions/bds-campaign-stop-jews-serving-mcgill-student-council>.

⁵⁴ “CIJA deplores treatment of pro-Israel students by SSMU,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, October 24, 2017, <https://cija.ca/cija-deplores-treatment-of-pro-israel-students-by-ssmu/>.

⁵⁵ Mira Sucharov, “Was a McGill student evicted from the school board for being Jewish?” *Forward*, October 31, 2017, <https://forward.com/opinion/politics/386427/was-a-mcgill-student-evicted-from-the-school-board-for-being-jewish/>; Tali Ioselevich, “I’m Jewish, and I voted against ratifying Noah Lew,” *McGill Daily*, November 6, 2017, <https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2017/11/im-jewish-and-i-voted-against-ratifying-noah-lew/>; Ehab Lotayef, “Don’t conflate McGill student politics with anti-Semitism,” *Huffington Post Canada*, November 14, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/ehab-lotayef/dont-conflate-mcgill-student-politics-with-anti-semitism_a_23273708/.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Janice Arnold, “Anti-Semitism was not a factor in McGill vote: report,” *Canadian Jewish News*, February 8, 2018, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/anti-semitism-not-factor-mcgill-vote-report>.

⁵⁷ Gil Troy, “McGill whitewashes anti-Semitism on campus,” *Canadian Jewish News*, February 12, 2018, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/mcgill-admits-anti-semitism-not-factor-re-elections>.

students and faculty. As Rachel Fish warns, “the rhetoric around BDS does have a real consequence and it is not benign; it puts Israel-supporting faculty and students, especially those who are Jewish students, on the defensive, even outside of political conversations.”⁵⁸ This is because BDS has become a “litmus test” on campus, leading to self-censorship and the silencing of opinions, as “some faculty who believe in articulating a nuanced and sophisticated position about Israel often remain silent and avoid campus politics, fearful of being labeled the ‘AIPAC Professor’ on campus.”⁵⁹ This is aggravated by an “insensitivity towards Jewish concerns” among university administrators, who do not act to respond to anti-Israel sentiments as they are bound by a culture of “political correctness” and the desire to avoid “confrontation with Muslim students.”⁶⁰ Fish suggests this campus culture is the result of the dominance of certain intellectual currents, such as “Marxism,” “postcolonialism,” and “multiculturalism,” which together create “fertile ground of the demonization of the State of Israel,” and that without seriously challenging these paradigms, “the chances of Israel getting a fair treatment in the academy are dim.”⁶¹

In the more extreme form of this argument, pro-Israel advocates argue that BDS does not belong in the same historical tradition as the civil rights struggle or the anti-apartheid movement, but has more in common with the Nazi boycotts of Jewish businesses in 1933. On several occasions CIJA has hinted at similarities between the BDS

⁵⁸ Rachel Fish, “BDS: Binaries, Divisions, and Silencing,” in *Social Justice and Israel/Palestine: Foundational and Contemporary Debates*, ed. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper and Mira Sucharov (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 254.

⁵⁹ Fish, 253.

⁶⁰ Fish, 253.

⁶¹ Fish, 251.

movement and boycotts against Jews, suggesting that there are “lessons to be learned” from those experiences,⁶² and Fish similarly argues that Nazi boycotts constitute the “context” of BDS.⁶³ This argument is usually advanced by the more extreme far-right voices within the pro-Israel community; notably, far-right media organization Rebel Media argued that BDS is a modernized version of the Nazi “Don’t Buy From Jews” campaign, led by “extreme anti-Semites” who want to dehumanize Jews and “soften up public opinion” for eventual violence.⁶⁴ CUFI Canada has also featured a “then” and “now” graphic on its website, with Nazis next to BDS activists and the words “There is no difference / [BDS] is antisemitism.”⁶⁵

Finally, the pro-Israel lobby has made a variety of claims suggesting that BDS activity is linked to violence, harassment, and even hate crimes against Jewish individuals. In a sense, this argument has existed prior to the BDS movement, as several authors have also made this claim about anti-Zionism. Weinfeld argued that “the continued, aggressive advocacy of the anti-Zionist position - through debate, boycotts, and terror - aids and abets the potential genocide of the Jewish Israeli population.”⁶⁶ Matas asserts that even though “not all advocates of anti-Zionism preach the killing and maiming of innocent Jews ... even the anti-Zionism of those who refrain from overt incitement leads to murders.”⁶⁷ In a similar manner, pro-Israel groups will claim that

⁶² Shimon Fogel, “Concrete action key to fighting BDS,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, May 19, 2016, <http://www.cija.ca/concrete-action-key-to-fighting-bds/>.

⁶³ Fish, “BDS: Binaries, Divisions, and Silencing,” 247.

⁶⁴ Rebel Media, “Tax dollars subsidize Jew hatred in Canada: Help fight back against the Jewish boycott,” no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <http://www.therebel.media/fightbds>.

⁶⁵ “Homepage,” CUFI Canada, no date, accessed January 9, 2019, <http://cufi.ca/zion/>.

⁶⁶ Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” 45.

⁶⁷ Matas, *Aftershock*, 31.

BDS “has been consistently linked to violence, harassment and discrimination,”⁶⁸ and is related to a “dramatic increase” in antisemitic incidents.⁶⁹

Efforts to demonstrate the link between BDS and violent or antisemitic incidents, however, are undermined by a tendency to conflate obvious cases of antisemitism with legitimate political discourse. For example, a list put together by Hasbara Fellowships and B’nai Brith ostensibly to highlight “cases of where BDS lead to the harassment or discrimination of Jewish students on campus” identifies instances of anti-Jewish slurs and graffiti discovered in the aftermath of BDS initiatives — but fail to prove a link between BDS activity and the antisemitic incident in question. Moreover, the given examples of “intimidation” are instances of intense political debate in which the events are open to significant interpretation.⁷⁰ B’nai Brith’s introductory campus guide goes as far as to include a student union’s boycott of Israel in its list of “examples of antisemitic incidents on campus,” alongside swastikas and anti-Jewish stereotypes.⁷¹

And yet, even if there is little evidentiary basis to the idea that BDS activity on campus involves targeting and intimidating Jewish students, it has become widely adopted by members of the political class. During a parliamentary debate in 2016, Liberal MP Michael Levitt stated: “I have spent time on campuses over the last decade, working with students to oppose the BDS movement who feel the sense of intimidation, concern,

⁶⁸ Hasbara Fellowships and B’nai Brith Canada, “Canadian Federation of Students Must Rescind Discriminatory BDS Motion,” November 20, 2018, <http://hasbarafellowships.org/canadian-federation-of-students-must-rescind-discriminatory-bds-motion/>.

⁶⁹ “Anti-Israel Boycott Movement,” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/bs_movement.

⁷⁰ Hasbara Fellowships and B’nai Brith Canada, “Canadian Federation of Students Must Rescind Discriminatory BDS Motion,” November 20, 2018, <http://hasbarafellowships.org/canadian-federation-of-students-must-rescind-discriminatory-bds-motion/>.

⁷¹ “BB on Campus Introductory Package,” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed January 9, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/campus_antisemitism, 11.

and worry when they are heckled walking into classrooms, yelled at as they try to live their lives on campuses.”⁷² This idea was affirmed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who during a 2018 apology for Canada turning away Jewish refugees in 1939 pivoted to condemn BDS, saying “Jewish students still feel unwelcomed and uncomfortable on some of our colleges and university campuses because of BDS-related intimidation.”⁷³

The conflation between antisemitism and legitimate criticism and debate is a trend that goes beyond campus politics. Looking at B’nai Brith Canada’s reporting on antisemitism in Canada, Robert Brym argues that their data involve “some degree of conflation of antisemitic and anti-Israel acts.”⁷⁴ For example, B’nai Brith’s Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents for 2017 outlines many examples of hate speech, antisemitic graffiti, swastikas, white supremacist activity, and antisemitic tropes, but then also includes examples of legitimate speech, including a political candidate who called for the release of Palestinian political prisoners,⁷⁵ and an Alberta MLA who criticized Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.⁷⁶ The FSWC also maintains an overview of antisemitic incidents in Ontario, in which they compile hate crimes, racist graffiti, and neo-Nazi activity; in the same list they include many examples of political speech which they deem to be out of bounds, such as public statements critical of Zionism, resolutions about Israel at the NDP convention, boycotts of Israel by student unions, and efforts by

⁷² Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 18 February 2016 (Michael Levitt, Liberal), <http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/house/sitting-20/hansard>.

⁷³ “Trudeau’s anti-BDS Message During Apology for Turning Away Jews During WWII Continues to Make Waves,” *Haaretz*, November 12, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/trudeau-s-hard-line-anti-bds-stance-draws-attention-1.6639351>.

⁷⁴ Brym, “Antisemitic and Anti-Israel Actions and Attitudes in Canada and Internationally,” 5.

⁷⁵ “Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017,” B’nai Brith Canada and League for Human Rights, 2018, <https://www.bnaibrith.ca/audit>, 19.

⁷⁶ “Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2017,” B’nai Brith Canada and League for Human Rights, 2018, <https://www.bnaibrith.ca/audit>, 21.

the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to properly label wine originating in West Bank settlements.⁷⁷ These reports do not so much demonstrate a connection between boycotts of Israel and antisemitism as much as they confirm that these organizations do not make any real distinction between the two. Brym cautions that “by lumping together anti-Jewish and some anti-Israel actions, and labelling both antisemitic,” such reports ignore the possibility that one can be critical of Israel “without holding negative attitudes towards Jews.”⁷⁸

Countering the claims of antisemitism

Supporters of BDS reject the accusation that the “core” of their movement is antisemitic, and defend anti-Zionism as a legitimate political position, even if not everyone in the movement is an anti-Zionist. Similarly, most supporters will defend the legitimacy of positions in support of the right of return for Palestinian refugees, or for a one-state solution, which are frequently interpreted by critics as calls to “destroy” the state of Israel. According to political scientist Mira Sucharov, this core issue of whether Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish state is the biggest divide that separates liberal Zionist organizations like JSpaceCanada from groups like Independent Jewish Voices, who otherwise share similar critiques of Israeli policy.⁷⁹

The US-based organization Jewish Voice for Peace argues against interpreting criticism of Israel or Zionism as an attack on Jews, but insists that we should separate the notions of Zionism and Judaism:

Definitions of antisemitism that treat criticism of Israel or of Zionism as

⁷⁷ “Ontario: Antisemitism an Overview,” Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com/antisemitism/ontario>.

⁷⁸ Brym, “Antisemitic and Anti-Israel Actions and Attitudes in Canada and Internationally,” 6.

⁷⁹ Sucharov, interview.

inherently antisemitic are inaccurate and harmful. The majority of Jews are not Israeli, and not all citizens of Israel are Jewish. Israel is a state; Zionism is a political ideology; Judaism and Jewish identity encompass a diversity of religious and secular expressions and a robust, varied set of traditions, cultures, and lived experiences.⁸⁰

It wasn't until early in 2019, however, that Jewish Voice for Peace published a statement officially distancing itself from Zionism:

Through study and action, through deep relationship with Palestinians fighting for their own liberation, and through our own understanding of Jewish safety and self determination, we have come to see that Zionism was a false and failed answer to the desperately real question many of our ancestors faced of how to protect Jewish lives from murderous antisemitism in Europe.⁸¹

In Canada, Independent Jewish Voices does not take a particular position on Zionism, but claims to have a “broad spectrum” of opinion within its membership, from “strongly Zionist to strongly anti-Zionist.”⁸² Regardless, the organization strongly opposes the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism, and in particular the notion that anti-Zionism is akin to calling for the “destruction of the state of Israel.” Instead, IJV believes that challenging “the legitimacy of the existence of a Jewish state is not equivalent to calling for the physical destruction of the State, or advocating genocide against Israeli citizens.”⁸³

Specifically, on the question of whether a future resolution should take the form of a two-state or one-state solution, the BDS movement itself does not advocate for a

⁸⁰ Jewish Voice for Peace, “Appendix 1: JVP Statements on Antisemitism,” in *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Jewish Voice for Peace (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017), 215.

⁸¹ “Our Approach to Zionism,” Jewish Voice for Peace, no date, accessed January 14, 2019 from <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/zionism/>.

⁸² Independent Jewish Voices Canada, “Submission to the CPCCA,” in *Antisemitism Real and Imagined: Responses to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism*, ed. Michael Keefer (Waterloo, ON: The Canadian Charger, 2010), 104.

⁸³ Independent Jewish Voices Canada, “Submission to the CPCCA,” 106.

particular solution,⁸⁴ nor do most of its supporting organizations. Nonetheless many individual supporters are advocates for a one-state solution, or they at least do not consider a singular democratic state to be an antisemitic goal. For example, David Zinman, a Jewish leftist and co-host of *Treyf Podcast*, rejects the idea that being anti-Zionist or supporting a one-state solution amounts to denying Jewish self-determination:

I disagree very forcefully [with this view]. This equates Jewish self-determination with the colonial subjugation of an entire people. Jewish self-determination looks to me like Jews living among Palestinians and extending the franchise. To have a political viewpoint that calls colonialism and apartheid and occupation self-determination is just so twisted and based off of so many layers of ideology that have been used against Jews as a people that I don't have the stomach for it.⁸⁵

Zinman's position is anathema to most liberal Zionists, who oppose a one-state solution not only on the grounds that it negates Jewish self-determination, but also out of fear that an Arab majority in a single state would inevitably lead to discrimination or violence against the Jewish population.⁸⁶ In fact, Weinfeld argues that the one-state solution is not just an intellectual theory, but itself has harmful consequences: "such intellectual anti-Zionism provides cover and respectability to all those terrorist groups and states that seek actively to attack and eventually destroy Israel. This anti-Zionist position does not exist

⁸⁴ "What does BDS aim to achieve? [FAQs: Section 1: Understanding BDS]," BDS Movement, no date, accessed January 28, 2019 <https://bdsmovement.net/faqs#collapse16233>.

⁸⁵ Zinman, interview.

⁸⁶ This position is quite common, and may be based on any number of assumptions. First, there is the assumption that a Jewish minority would face the same violence as it has throughout history, as expressed by Mock: "When we talk with our Arab colleagues about a one-state solution that [would be] democratic? I said, you would think that Jews over history, over our 5,000 year history, have learned that that doesn't work for us. Germany, we can use that as a reference point, Jews lived in Germany for over a thousand years .. And eventually the same thing happened as has historically happened elsewhere. So, can we do that again? Especially in a part of the world where the hatreds run so deeply? [Pause] No." (Mock, interview). Second, there is an assumption that the political character of a single democratic state would be marred by supposedly Arab or Islamic patterns of governance: in this scenario, Israeli Jews would "live as an eventual minority in a Palestinian/Islamic state run by Arafat or Islamist groups like Hamas or both. ... Israeli Jews, like most readers of this chapter, would likely not prefer to live in such a state. They know that minorities of all sorts fare poorly in non-liberal states with Arab and/or Islamic majorities." Weinfeld, "The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism," 45.

in a real-world vacuum.”⁸⁷

The liberal Zionist position on these issues may not be static; Peter Beinart recently argued that anti-Zionism is not antisemitic and that the demand to replace Israel’s ethnic nationalism with a civic nationalism inclusive of Palestinians (that is, a one-state solution) is “not inherently bigoted” but is a legitimate political goal, although not his preference.⁸⁸ Similarly, Sucharov tells me that her opinions on this issue have changed somewhat over time. Sucharov has often publicly identified as a liberal Zionist, and speaks regularly at JSpaceCanada events. As recently as 2013, she argued in the *Daily Beast* that BDS is not compatible with a two state solution, due to its support for the Palestinian right to return, and that it therefore amounts to a denial of the Jewish people’s right to self-determination.⁸⁹ “I’m not opposed to refugee return anymore,” she now admits to me; she believes that “two collectives could co-exist in a state that fulfills the rights and yearnings of all individuals.” She says that she changed her mind after speaking to Palestinians, talking to colleagues in her field, and “feeling like I could no longer stand in the way of Palestinians’ justice ... and [realizing] that bringing justice for Palestinians didn’t have to mean taking justice from the Jewish community.”⁹⁰ Sucharov has not endorsed BDS, but her statement is perhaps a sign that there is growing diversity of opinion regarding the legitimacy of the Palestinian right to return, and even a one-state solution, as political demands.

⁸⁷ Weinfeld, “The Changing Dimensions of Contemporary Canadian Antisemitism,” 44.

⁸⁸ Peter Beinart, “Debunking the myth that anti-Zionism is antisemitic,” *The Guardian (UK)*, March 7, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/mar/07/debunking-myth-that-anti-zionism-is-antisemitic>.

⁸⁹ Mira Sucharov, “Why BDS isn’t compatible with two states,” *Daily Beast*, February 8, 2013, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/why-bds-isnt-compatible-with-two-states>; Mira Sucharov, “The world according to BDS,” *Daily Beast*, February 13, 2013, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-world-according-to-bds>.

⁹⁰ Sucharov, interview.

Aside from the debate over the core ideas behind the movement, BDS supporters also reject the accusation that their activism targets Jews or otherwise creates a hostile environment for Jewish students. As a matter of policy, Barghouti insists that BDS “has never targeted Jews or Israelis as Jews ... BDS targets complicity, not identity.”⁹¹ Of course, setting these formal guidelines does not necessarily guarantee that anti-Jewish activity has never taken place, especially in a movement that is so decentralized and operating without much oversight. Nonetheless, Jewish organizers within the BDS movement consistently assert that these claims are unfounded. Tyler Levitan, the coordinator for IJV Canada, calls accusations of antisemitism “ludicrous” and “baseless,”⁹² and Ben Lorber, the campus organizer for Jewish Voice for Peace, suggests that this is a false narrative originating from the efforts of a vocal minority of Jewish students who “frame their support for Israel, not as a personal political preference, but as the collective will of the Jewish campus community.”⁹³

Following the CFS endorsement of the BDS movement in late 2018, IJV released a statement on behalf of its eight campus chapters which directly asserted that “the idea that BDS creates an unsafe environment for Jewish students is simply unfounded,”⁹⁴ and Lorber has made an identical claim about the unfounded nature of such accusations in the United States.⁹⁵ According to Zinman, who supports BDS, “to suggest that antisemitism is some kind of unique factor in specifically leftist advocacy for Palestine, just doesn’t

⁹¹ Barghouti, “Two degrees of separation,” 141-2.

⁹² Levitan, interview.

⁹³ Ben Lorber, “This campus will divest! The spectre of antisemitism and the stifling of dissent on college campuses,” in *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Jewish Voice for Peace (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017), 162.

⁹⁴ “Jewish Students Applaud Canadian Federation Of Students’ BDS Resolution,” Independent Jewish Voices Canada, November 19, 2018, <https://ijvcanada.org/2018>.

⁹⁵ Lorber, “This campus will divest!” 163.

track with my experience, and I think its intellectually dishonest.”⁹⁶ Even Sucharov, who follows this issue closely, and who does not support BDS but identifies as somewhere in the middle of the debate, says that the burden of evidence is on the accusers, who have not made a satisfactory case: “I have not seen enough evidence to persuade me that BDS is fundamentally motivated by antisemitism.”⁹⁷

This is consistent with the analysis of American organizations Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights, who document and respond to incidents of what they deem to be the suppression of pro-Palestine speech. Their 2015 report on the “Palestine exception to free speech” argued that “the primary tool in the arsenal of Israel advocacy organizations is public vilification of supporters of Palestinian rights” with false accusations of being “antisemitic or pro-terrorism.”⁹⁸ Their report identified that over half of the incidents Palestine Legal responded to in 2014 involved “false accusations” of antisemitism “based solely on speech critical of Israeli policy,”⁹⁹ but even more troubling are the false accusations from pro-Israel advocates that Palestine groups or individuals are linked to terrorist activity, a claim which “frequently relies on anti-Muslim and xenophobic stereotypes about the inherent violence and hateful worldview of Arab, Muslim, and international students.”¹⁰⁰ Tom Pessah similarly argues that while accusations of antisemitism are generally “taken seriously by official bodies,” they “have usually been found to have no merit;”¹⁰¹ nonetheless, the proliferation of these stories is

⁹⁶ Zinman, interview.

⁹⁷ Sucharov, interview.

⁹⁸ Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack,” September 2015, <https://palestinelegal.org/the-palestine-exception/>, 17.

⁹⁹ Palestine Legal and CCR, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Palestine Legal and CCR, 21.

¹⁰¹ Tom Pessah, “BDS: A Diverse Movement in Support of Human Rights,” in *Social Justice and*

encouraged by the “rampant Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiment in the media,” as they fit within “existing stereotypes of fundamentalist, Jew-hating pro-Palestine activists.”¹⁰²

Supporters of BDS believe that pro-Israel advocates rely on false accusations of antisemitism because they know that it is a powerful tactic that can shut down debate and put their critics on the defensive. Pessah describes this tactic as “anti-Semitizing:” when arguments fail, “supporters of Israel and its policies attempt to ‘anti-Semitize’ BDS supporters by painting their words and deeds as resembling traditional anti-Jewish tropes.”¹⁰³ Similarly, Jewish Voice for Peace has described this as censorship:

Those seeking to maintain the status quo in Israel/Palestine routinely use false charges of antisemitism, and harmful and inaccurate definitions of antisemitism, in an attempt to silence voices critical of Israeli policies towards Palestinians. No one should underestimate the power of an accusation of antisemitism, and when false charges of antisemitism are used to deflect Israel’s responsibility for the dispossession of Palestinians, they should be recognized as censorship.¹⁰⁴

The United Church’s Steve Berube says that in his experience the accusation of antisemitism “comes out of the pocket very quickly to disarm and discredit” criticism of Israeli policy, and once an accusation of antisemitism is uttered it becomes the focus, drawing the conversation away from the reality on the ground in Palestine.¹⁰⁵ Beyond derailing debate, however, the charge of antisemitism takes a serious personal toll on the accused individuals themselves. When directed against people who have criticisms of the state of Israel, Judith Butler argues that “the point of the charge is not to utter what is true, but to do damage to the criticism as well as the person who speaks it.”¹⁰⁶ BDS

Israel/Palestine: Foundational and Contemporary Debates, ed. Aaron J. Hahn Tapper and Mira Sucharov (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 241.

¹⁰² Pessah, 241.

¹⁰³ Pessah, 240.

¹⁰⁴ Jewish Voice for Peace, “Appendix 1: JVP Statements on Antisemitism,” 216.

¹⁰⁵ Berube, interview.

¹⁰⁶ Judith Butler, “Forward,” in *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, ed. Jewish Voice

activists believe that pro-Israel advocates are intentionally aware that levelling the accusation of antisemitism against someone has the potential to “instantly” silence them and “destroy their career;”¹⁰⁷ activist Dimitri Lascarus goes as far as to refer to this tactic as “reputational terrorism.”¹⁰⁸ I will explore this issue further in the next chapter.

A more fundamental problem with defining anti-Zionism as antisemitism is that it displaces and erases Palestinian narratives. If you claim that it is antisemitic to deny Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state — however exactly this is defined — then fighting antisemitism comes “at the expense of the indigenous population of the land.”¹⁰⁹ For Barghouti, the practical implications of this demand amount to asking a “colonized people” to accept something which is “inherently unjust and racist.”¹¹⁰

Palestinian civil society and all Palestinian political parties, including those with representation in the Israeli parliament, do not and cannot accept the exclusionary, supremacist notion of Israel as a “Jewish state” or the “state of the Jewish people” in historic Palestine.¹¹¹

Moreover, the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism either removes Palestinians from the debate entirely, “serv[ing] to re-centre the conversation on Israel’s abstract ‘right to exist’” instead of the rights of Palestinians,¹¹² or it dramatically distorts their motivations and goals, “dehumaniz[ing] Palestinians by portraying our struggle against Israel’s regimes of oppression as if fuelled by a visceral ‘hatred’ toward Jews, not a genuinely human pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality.”¹¹³ In the end, the primary

for Peace (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017), xii.

¹⁰⁷ Levitan, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Lascarus, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Barghouti, “Two degrees of separation,” 146.

¹¹⁰ Barghouti, 147.

¹¹¹ Barghouti, 146.

¹¹² Lorber, “This campus will divest!” 165.

¹¹³ Barghouti, “Two degrees of separation,” 141.

effect is that Palestinian activism is silenced.¹¹⁴ As Said wrote as early as 1979:

One must admit ... that all liberals and even most “radicals” have been unable to overcome the Zionist habit of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Any well-meaning person can thus oppose South African or American racism and at the same time tacitly support Zionist racial discrimination against non-Jews in Palestine.¹¹⁵

Genuine risks of antisemitism in the BDS movement

Supporters of BDS do acknowledge that antisemitism may have a real presence within the BDS movement, but insist that this is marginal and does not reflect the movement’s main beliefs or initiatives. Indeed, both Levitan and Zinman concede that one can expect genuine instances of antisemitism to appear in almost any social movement, just as movements will not be completely free from other forms of oppression, such as racism or patriarchy.¹¹⁶ In some cases, it is possible that speakers may utter antisemitic tropes without even being aware of it, in which case it is necessary for organizers to respond and confront them about it.¹¹⁷ At other times, some of the more militant rhetoric may border on antisemitism,¹¹⁸ especially if it “uses stereotypical anti-Jewish language to describe Israel.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, Pessah notes several examples in which BDS groups have shunned supporters for expressing “anti-Jewish prejudice,” including the organization *If Americans Knew*.¹²⁰ As Barghouti writes, “given the hurt that verging on antisemitic language causes to Jewish communities, we who advocate for Palestinian rights must be

¹¹⁴ Assi, interview.

¹¹⁵ Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims,” 118.

¹¹⁶ Levitan, interview; Zinman, interview.

¹¹⁷ Levitan, interview.

¹¹⁸ Epp-Tiessen, interview.

¹¹⁹ Barghouti, “Two degrees of separation,” 144.

¹²⁰ Pessah, “BDS: A Diverse Movement in Support of Human Rights,” 242.

quite vigilant about using such language and must try our best to adhere to the most accurate, non-emotive description of the facts as possible.”¹²¹

This may be understating the underlying problem. Unfortunately, contemporary debates over Israel and Palestine take place in an historical context in which antisemitic ideas are widespread, and conspiracy theories about Jewish power are particularly rampant online and on social media. Given the ubiquity of these tropes, the people who reproduce them may not even be aware that they are doing so. An equally important problem is that the ambiguity around certain uses of language makes distinguishing antisemitism from legitimate debate even more difficult. One contested incident took place in 2018, when activist Dimitri Lascarus faced condemnation from B’nai Brith, CIJA, and even the Prime Minister, over his remarks that were critical of two Members of Parliament who are Jewish and pro-Israel. After he tweeted about the MPs being more “devoted” to Israel than to the position of their own Liberal caucus, many people interpreted his remarks as accusations of “dual loyalty,” an old antisemitic trope.¹²² However, Independent Jewish Voices came to his defence, claiming that his words had been jumped on too quickly, and stated “categorically that the accusation of antisemitism against him is false and irresponsible.”¹²³ In this case, what appears to some to be a legitimate political critique of a politician’s priorities appears to others to be closely mimicking an age-old antisemitic myth. Interpreting events like these depends

¹²¹ Barghouti, “Two degrees of separation,” 144.

¹²² Shimon Fogel, “An Urgent Note Before Rosh Hashanah: Fighting Antisemitism in 5779,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, September 9, 2018, <https://cija.ca/an-urgent-note-before-rosh-hashanah-fighting-antisemitism-in-5779/>.

¹²³ “Dimitri Lascarus is not an antisemite,” Independent Jewish Voices Canada, September 14, 2018, <https://ijvcanada.org/2018/statement-dimitri-lascaris/>.

significantly on the good faith assumptions about the values and motivations of the person in question, qualities that are usually lacking in controversial debates.¹²⁴

The use of the term “Zionist” is also subject to considerable ambiguity. Activists who use the term to refer to pro-Israel advocates may be legitimately referring to political ideology — and indeed, many people proudly self-identify as Zionist, including Christian Zionists. However, the term also has a long history in white nationalist circles as a code word referring to all Jews, regardless of their politics. By using the term too loosely, pro-Palestinian activists could open themselves up for misinterpretation, or even directly reproduce antisemitic ideas. In one contested case at McGill in 2017, a student politician created a scandal when he tweeted “punch a Zionist today” (a reference to the popular “punch a Nazi” meme). The McGill chapter of Independent Jewish Voices issued a statement in defence of the student, insisting his tweet was about political ideology and not an attack on Jewish students,¹²⁵ but this explanation was rejected by B’nai Brith whose representative referred to the tweet as “anti-Semitic garbage,” and it was this latter position that dominated news coverage.¹²⁶ On the other hand, anonymous messages on social media about “Zionist jewboys” following a BDS vote at McGill in 2016 clearly

¹²⁴ In the US context, there is an interesting example in the allegations against Congresswoman Ilhan Omar and President Donald Trump, who were both accused of expressing dual loyalty tropes. Omar’s controversial remarks consisted of legitimate criticism of AIPAC, while Trump’s remarks included an explicit charge that American Jews who voted for the Democratic Party were showing their “disloyalty” to Israel. However, the criticism of Trump was far more muted than that levelled against Omar. This is illustrative of a tendency to respond differently to allegations of antisemitic remarks depending on whether or not the individual who made the statement supports Israel. See Mairav Zonszein, “How the Right Has Tried to Rebrand Anti-Semitism,” *New York Review of Books*, September 4, 2019, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/09/04/how-the-right-has-tried-to-rebrand-anti-semitism/>.

¹²⁵ “Statement in support of Igor Sadikov, Faculty of Arts Representative to SSMU,” Independent Jewish Voices – McGill, no date, accessed January 28, 2019, <https://biasedmcgill.wordpress.com/2017/02/12/independent-jewish-voices-mcgill/#more-70>.

¹²⁶ “‘Punch a Zionist’ tweet by McGill student politician prompts concern for campus safety,” *CBC News*, February 10, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/punch-a-zionist-mcgill-student-politics-1.3975773>.

crossed the line into antisemitism, and although these have not been connected to the official BDS campaign, instances like these are shared by pro-Israel organizations as proof that BDS leads to antisemitic activity.¹²⁷

Given the widespread and latent availability of antisemitic tropes in an already heated climate of debate, there is a real risk that speech and activism which is critical of Israeli policy (and Israel's supporters) may unknowingly draw upon antisemitic narratives or resources. Even the suggestion of proximity to such narratives can create a massive problem for the Palestinian solidarity movement — not only because it creates a reputational problem for activists, but because it may lead to a legitimate concern among Jewish individuals that the movement actually would cause them harm. This is especially a threat when pro-Israel groups themselves are “intentionally aiming to blur these lines by branding critics of Israeli policies as antisemites,” as is claimed by Independent Jewish Voices.¹²⁸

To combat the real or potential presence of antisemitism in pro-Palestine organizing spaces, non- and anti-Zionist Jewish groups have developed a number of educational tools to understand and challenge antisemitism. In the United Kingdom, a group called Jewdas holds workshops on “How to effectively criticize Israel without being anti-semitic.” A flyer from the workshop goes over various myths and “stereotypes to avoid,” such as imagery that evokes antisemitic blood libels, or the idea that Jews control the

¹²⁷ “Jewish students say BDS vote triggered insults,” *CTV Montreal*, February 25, 2016, <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/jewish-students-say-bds-vote-triggered-insults-1.2792563>; Hasbara Fellowships and B'nai Brith Canada, “Canadian Federation of Students Must Rescind Discriminatory BDS Motion,” November 20, 2018, <http://hasbarafellowships.org/canadian-federation-of-students-must-rescind-discriminatory-bds-motion/>.

¹²⁸ “Dimitri Lascaris is not an antisemite,” Independent Jewish Voices Canada, September 14, 2018, <https://ijvcanada.org/2018/statement-dimitri-lascaris/>.

world (or media, or the banks). As the flyer notes, “often people who use these images aren’t aware of the violent connotations.”¹²⁹ In North America, the producers of *Treyf Podcast* also lead workshops for progressive Jewish groups, sometimes in association with Independent Jewish Voices, on the topic of “Deconstructing Antisemitism.” These workshops aim to critique the “dominant framework” of antisemitism, and “work toward clearer understandings of the ways anti-Jewish marginalization intersects and interacts with other systems of oppression.”¹³⁰ Worth noting is that all of this educational work is being done for an internal audience, rather than an external one; since many pro-Israel groups consider anti-Zionist positions to constitute antisemitism in themselves, these workshops will not convince them that the work of organizations like Independent Jewish Voices is not antisemitic. Instead, these workshops are aimed at addressing what anti-Zionist organizations consider to represent genuine forms of antisemitism within their movements.

The Israel Lobby, Racism, and the Far-right

While pro-Palestinian solidarity activists are forced to constantly respond to their initiatives being branded as antisemitic, much less attention is paid to the pro-Israel lobby’s tolerance of anti-Palestinian bigotry and the antisemitism on the far-right.

In the most immediate sense, the practice of advocacy in support of Israeli actions and policies towards the Palestinians is to effectively support concrete instances of systemic racism and oppression. In some cases, pro-Israel advocates may consider this

¹²⁹ “Avoiding Anti-Semitism: A Primer: Or, How to Effectively Criticize Israel Without Being Anti-Semitic,” Jewdas, flyer, no date, accessed January 28, 2019, <http://www.jewdas.org/how-to-criticise-israel-without-being-anti-semitic/>.

¹³⁰ “Workshop dates,” *Treyf Podcast*, no date, accessed January 28, 2019, <https://treyfpodcast.wordpress.com/workshop-dates/>.

support a regrettable choice and a lesser evil, but that does not change the racist character of the actions being supported. Often this support finds justification in blatantly racist tropes, as when US Republican and pro-Israel mega-donor Sheldon Adelson claims that Palestinians “are an invented people” whose “purpose of existence ... is to destroy Israel,”¹³¹ or when US official Jared Kushner claims that the Palestinians are not yet capable of governing themselves.¹³² Perhaps the best indication of the widespread racism towards Palestinians is the degree of which prominent Israeli lawmakers and supporters can openly call for the permanent denial of either full rights or sovereignty to Palestinians, as is the current de facto position of every major Israeli political party,¹³³ and receive little to no backlash. When in July 2019 Israeli Education Minister Rafi Peretz gave an interview in which he came out in support of gay conversion therapy, followed by a call for full annexation of the West Bank without extending political rights to Palestinians — he did not object when his interviewer used the term “apartheid” — there was widespread condemnation from Israeli and American pro-Israel leaders about his anti-LGBTQ comments, while his embrace of open apartheid was met with virtual silence.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Quoted in Rebecca Shimoni Stoil, “Adelson: Palestinians are an invented people out to destroy Israel,” *Times of Israel*, November 10, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/adelson-palestinians-an-invented-people-out-to-destroy-israel/>.

¹³² Josh Wingrove and Kim Chipman, “Kushner said Palestinians aren’t ready to govern themselves,” *National Post*, June 3, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/news/world/kushner-said-palestinians-arent-ready-to-govern-themselves>.

¹³³ Ben White, *Cracks in the Wall: Beyond Apartheid in Palestine/Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), 31-49.

¹³⁴ Nahum Barnea, “Is Israeli apartheid fine as long as it is not homophobic?” *YNetNews*, July 15, 2019, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5550540,00.html>; Tovah Lazaroff, “Gay conversion therapy’s a problem, but apartheid Israel is just fine — analysis,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Gay-conversation-therapys-a-problem-but-apartheid-Israel-is-just-fine-595770>; Ben White, “What Rafi Peretz’s remarks on the West Bank tell us about Israeli society,” *Middle East Eye*, July 17, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/what-rafi-peretezs-remarks-west-bank-tell-us-about-israeli-society>.

In one of the most shocking examples of open Israeli racism, during the Spring 2019 election Netanyahu's Likud party entered into a political alliance with far-right Israeli party Jewish Power, a openly pro-segregationist party which has widely been described as Israel's equivalent of the Ku Klux Klan. In a rare move, AIPAC made a public statement condemning the party as "racist and reprehensible,"¹³⁵ and it was similarly condemned by liberal Zionist groups Canadian Friends of Peace Now and JSpaceCanada. However, CIJA declined to comment on the matter, merely expressing "confidence in the Israeli people's commitment to an open, inclusive democracy with equal rights for all its citizens."¹³⁶ Neither has CIJA commented on Netanyahu's election promise to annex the West Bank, which would undermine any possibility of a two-state solution and permanently entrench apartheid. In essence, CIJA's policy is one of unconditional support for any action promised or taken by the Israeli government, without the slightest gesture of complaint in the face of that government's embrace of full and explicit racist ideology.

Aside from Israeli politics, pro-Israel actors have come under criticism for aligning with burgeoning far-right movements worldwide. This is in a context in which Netanyahu himself has been embracing far-right allies, including Brazil's Bolsonaro, Hungary's Orban, and America's Trump.¹³⁷ In this moment the far-right is increasingly divided on

¹³⁵ Eric Cortellessa, "US Reform leader: Netanyahu's deal with extremists is like 'welcoming the KKK,'" *Times of Israel*, February 25, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/liberal-us-jews-pms-embrace-of-extremists-makes-it-harder-to-defend-israel/>.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Alex Rose, "Canadians blast Israeli far-right political alliance," *Canadian Jewish News*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/canadians-blast-israeli-far-right-political-alliance>.

¹³⁷ Raphael Tsavkko Garcia, "Netanyahu Cozies Up to Far-Right President," *Jewish Currents*, April 26, 2019, <https://jewishcurrents.org/netanyahu-cozies-up-to-brazils-far-right-president/>; Giorgio Gomel, "Netanyahu's Embrace of Ethno-nationalists Endangers Jews in Europe," *Haaretz*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-s-dangerous-embrace-of-europe-s-ethno-nationalists-1.6953230>; Zeev Sternhell, "Why Benjamin Netanyahu Loves the European Far-Right," *Foreign Policy*,

Israel; while antisemitism is prominent and growing alongside the uptick in white supremacy, many on the far-right strongly support Israel, whether because they see it as a model of a racist ethnostate, out of support for a contrived “Judeo-Christian” heritage, or based in a shared hostility to Muslims and “Islamism.” Indeed, some Jewish voters may have supported white nationalist Faith Goldy in the 2018 Toronto mayoral election, precisely due to her support for Israel’s “anti-immigration” policies and out of a shared “visceral anti-Muslim antipathy.”¹³⁸

As the Canadian pro-Israel lobby is almost entirely on the centre-right to rightwing of the political spectrum, it is perhaps understandable that it would share much in common with the broader conservative movement, which is showing increasing tolerance towards open racism. For example, in some cases these groups have aligned themselves with far-right figures and tendencies. In 2017, CIJA and B’nai Brith joined in the campaign against M-103, a non-binding motion opposing Islamophobia, which was primarily led by far-right anti-Muslim actors including Rebel Media. That same year, Hasbara Fellowships co-sponsored an event about “Sharia takeover” using language that “directly mirrors the alt-right’s anti-Muslim arguments,”¹³⁹ and in 2018, B’nai Brith, Hasbara Fellowships, and McVety of CUFI - Canada, all defended their participation in another conference in which “a significant number of organizers and featured speakers are active in Canada’s anti-Muslim or alt-right circles.”¹⁴⁰ Rebel Media founder Ezra

February 24, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/24/why-benjamin-netanyahu-loves-the-european-far-right-orban-kaczynski-pis-fidesz-visegrad-likud-antisemitism-hungary-poland-illiberalism/>.

¹³⁸ Bernie Farber, “Farber: The Jewish White Supremacist Vote,” *Canadian Jewish News*, January 11, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/farber-the-jewish-white-supremacist-vote>.

¹³⁹ Steven Zhou, “Zionist Groups In Canada Are Jumping On The ‘Creeping Sharia’ Bandwagon,” *BuzzFeed News*, November 15, 2017, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/stevenzhou/zionist-groups-in-canada-are-jumping-on-the-creeping-sharia>.

¹⁴⁰ Steven Zhou, “A Toronto conference on racism will feature both anti-Islam speakers and Jewish

Levant spoke alongside CIJA, StandWithUs, and others at a pro-Israel advocacy training workshop as recently as 2015, where he advocated screening Muslim immigrants to Canada to determine whether they “believe in the jihad.”¹⁴¹ After one high profile incident in which Rebel Media produced horrifyingly antisemitic videos by far-right host Gavin McInnes, CIJA initially responded by dismissing the videos as merely “offensive and stupid,” while both B’nai Brith and FSWC declined to comment.¹⁴² B’nai Brith also sponsored an event in 2018 with far-right personality Ben Shapiro,¹⁴³ who is known for his racist statements about Palestinians, notably tweeting: “Israelis like to build. Arabs like to bomb crap and live in open sewage. This is not a difficult issue.”¹⁴⁴

The liberal Zionist wing of the pro-Israel lobby has a much better track record on these issues. First, liberal Zionist groups will often issue strong statements opposing specific Israeli policies. Janet Mock says that one of JSpaceCanada’s original purposes was to be an alternative to the “far-right” in the Jewish community, which takes the view of “Israel, right or wrong” and makes it “unsafe for people to criticize obnoxious policies of the present government of Israel.”¹⁴⁵ There are limits to this criticism, but it far surpasses the centre and right-wing blocs of the lobby. Second, liberal Zionists

groups,” *Vice News*, December 19, 2018, https://news.vice.com/en_ca/article/gy7n33/a-toronto-conference-on-racism-will-feature-both-anti-islam-speakers-and-jewish-groups.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Toby Trompeter, “Immigrants Need Jihad Litmus Test, Levant Tells Israel Advocacy Event,” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 17, 2015, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/immigrants-need-jihad-litmus-test-levant-tells-israel-advocacy-event>.

¹⁴² Ron Csillag, “Rebel Media Star Gets Flak For ‘10 Things I Hate About Jews’ Video,” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 17, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/rebel-media-star-gets-flak-10-things-hate-jews-video>.

¹⁴³ “You Are Invited To ‘An Evening with Ben Shapiro,’” B’nai Brith Canada, October 12, 2018, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/you_are_invited_to_an_evening_with_ben_shapiro.

¹⁴⁴ Ben Shapiro, (@Benshapiro), “Israelis like to build. Arabs like to bomb crap and live in open sewage. This is not a difficult issue. #Settlementsrock,” Twitter, September 27, 2010, 3:06 p.m., <https://twitter.com/benshapiro/status/25712847277>.

¹⁴⁵ Mock, interview.

consistently condemn far-right and anti-Muslim hate. For example, Mock has correctly accused Ezra Levant of finding “common cause with known anti-Semites,” warning that he “tarnishes Israel by associating his reprehensible views with support for Israel,”¹⁴⁶ and she convinced a synagogue to pull out of an anti-Muslim conference in which right-wing pro-Israel groups were participating.¹⁴⁷ Bernie Farber, former CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) and a director of JSpaceCanada, lamented on *Treyf Podcast* in 2017 that while the CJC (now CIJA) and B’nai Brith used to track white supremacist organizations “very studiously,” today their attention has shifted to issues of Islamic terror. Farber said that he is “despondent” to see “Jewish groups who have been, and continue to be, targets of white supremacist organizations, almost giving [far-right organizing] no attention whatsoever.”¹⁴⁸

For anti-occupation and anti-Zionist Jewish organizations, the willingness of the pro-Israel lobby to align with and downplay the racism of the far-right is a major obstacle to defeating antisemitism and other forms of oppression. Following the US election in 2016, IJV released a statement expressing concern with the “deafening silence” from CIJA and B’nai Brith regarding Trump’s promotion of bigotry and far-right figures.¹⁴⁹ IfNotNow claims that “the alliance between segments of the alt-right and pro-Occupation groups is rooted in an incredibly narrow conception of Israeli and Jewish self-interest and

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Ron Csillag, “Is Ezra Levant Good for the Jews?” *Canadian Jewish News*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/ezra-levant-good-jews>.

¹⁴⁷ Steven Zhou, “A Toronto conference on racism will feature both anti-Islam speakers and Jewish groups,” *Vice News*, December 19, 2018, https://news.vice.com/en_ca/article/gy7n33/a-toronto-conference-on-racism-will-feature-both-anti-islam-speakers-and-jewish-groups.

¹⁴⁸ Bernie Farber, “Short: Bernie Farber,” interview by Sam Bick and David Zinman, *Treyf Podcast*, November 19, 2017, <https://treyfpodcast.wordpress.com/2017/11/19/short-bernie-farber/>.

¹⁴⁹ “It Is Long Past Due For Major Jewish Organizations To Challenge Real Bigotry,” *Independent Jewish Voices Canada*, December 13, 2016, <https://ijvcanada.org/2016/it-is-long-past-due-for-major-jewish-organization-to-challenge-real-bigotry/>.

a shared disregard for Palestinian lives,”¹⁵⁰ while Jewish Voice for Peace asserts that “the misplaced focus of those who demonize Palestinian rights advocacy while ignoring or defending the antisemitism of white supremacists dilutes the understanding of antisemitism and makes it ever more difficult to fight.”¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, to the extent that the pro-Israel lobby has successfully framed the debate around the BDS movement in terms of antisemitism, it has made it nearly impossible to acknowledge the forms of anti-Palestinian racism that the BDS movement was founded to address.

¹⁵⁰ IfNotNow, “Beyond Talk: Five Ways the American Jewish Establishment Supports the Occupation,” report, no date (ca. October 2018), accessed April 8, 2019, <http://ifnotnowmovement.org/beyond-talk-5-ways-the-american-jewish-establishment-supports-the-occupation-2/>, 14.

¹⁵¹ Jewish Voice for Peace, “Appendix 1: JVP Statements on Antisemitism,” 215.

Chapter 10: Canada and the Global Backlash to BDS

I have looked at the pro-Israel lobby in Canada, and how the main feature of their opposition to BDS has been to define the movement and its goals (and anti-Zionism more generally) as antisemitic and thus outside of the bounds of legitimate discourse. The way that this backlash to BDS has been organized, however, has not been confined to debate, but has taken the form of a heavy-handed crackdown against pro-BDS speech and Palestine solidarity activists. It is important to note that this is not localized to Canada, but that anti-BDS initiatives are part of a “widening pattern of repression of social movements” around the world.¹ The particularly harsh nature of the backlash against BDS is well known, and Bakan and Abu-Laban argue that this makes mobilizing around Palestine quite difficult, at least compared to the boycott initiatives against apartheid South Africa.² As I will outline below, in Canada anti-BDS initiatives have included the repression of campus activism, legal and legislative attempts to put a chill on BDS initiatives, smear campaigns against individual activists, and the narrowing of space for debate within the Jewish community.

In fact, Canadian anti-BDS initiatives should be understood as part of an international counter-movement operating simultaneously at different levels and by different actors. First, there is a local civil society response, driven by pro-Israel organizations and community members.³ This opposition started to form in the period immediately prior to the BDS call, responding to a general rise of anti-Israel and anti-

¹ Bina Ahmad, Ben White, and Phyllis Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” Transnational Institute, November 13, 2018, <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/shrinking-space-and-the-bds-movement>, 4.

² Bakan and Abu-Laban, “Palestinian Resistance and International Solidarity,” 46-7.

³ See Chapter 8 for an outline of the pro-Israel lobby.

Zionist sentiment. Second, there is a top-down response to BDS led by the Israeli government, featuring the repression of activists in Israel and covert operations against activists abroad. In recent years, these bottom-up and top-down responses have been increasingly enmeshed, with expanded international cooperation between pro-Israel civil society and the Israeli government as part of shared multi-stakeholder strategies to counter BDS. The degree of integration and coordination between actors is difficult to interpret, and the role of the Israeli state is deliberately covert. In fact, within this space the lines between the Israeli state and pro-Israel civil society seem to disappear.

Prior to examining the trends within the local Canadian backlash to BDS, I will briefly outline the global counter-movement to BDS, introducing the efforts by the Israeli government as well as state-civil society collaboration.

Israeli Government

The Israeli government today plays an outsized role in countering BDS internationally, but initially it was slow to respond; Ahmad, White, and Bennis argue that prior to 2014 official state responses had been “tepid,” and that Israel declined to take BDS particularly seriously until after that year’s offensive on Gaza.⁴ Since then, Netanyahu and various other public officials have made increasingly exaggerated condemnations of the movement, referring to BDS as “classical antisemites in modern garb,” a “strategic threat,” and “a new extension of terrorism.”⁵ Rhetoric aside, however, Israel’s anti-BDS efforts were already well underway in 2010, when Military Intelligence established a “delegitimization department” dedicated to monitoring left-wing organizations abroad

⁴ Ahmad, White, and Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” 6-7.

⁵ Ahmad, White, and Bennis, 6-7.

who advocate for BDS. By 2015, this list reportedly included “dozens” of groups under surveillance.⁶ Notably, Netanyahu has been Prime Minister for the duration of the entire decade (2009-2019) during which the Israeli government has been actively strategizing against BDS.

The most severe measures by the Israeli government to counter BDS have been implemented on the “home front,” where “legislation and state-level intimidation has sought to undermine the political activism of international visitors and of Israeli citizens themselves.”⁷ In 2011, Israel passed a law that allows Israelis to file civil lawsuits against individuals and organizations who call for boycotts of Israeli (or settlement) businesses, thus making the promotion of boycotts a civil offence,⁸ and in 2017 Israel legislated that foreigners can be deported or barred from entering the country if they “knowingly [issue] a public call for boycotting Israel.”⁹ This latter move codified into law what was already being experienced by many BDS activists, largely based on racial profiling, but now broadened in scope to affect many Jewish Americans¹⁰ and leading to the deportation of a director of Human Rights Watch.¹¹ In 2018 Israel published a “blacklist” of twenty BDS organizations banned from Israel, which included Jewish Voice for Peace and U.S.

⁶ Barak Ravid, “Military Intelligence Monitoring Foreign Left-wing Organizations,” *Haaretz*, March 21, 2011, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5139433>; Gili Cohen, “Israel’s Military Intelligence Monitoring Dozens of BDS Groups Around the World,” *Haaretz*, August 18, 2015, <https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-idf-monitoring-bds-groups-around-the-world-1.5388403>.

⁷ Ahmad, White, and Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” 7.

⁸ Yonah Jeremy Bob, “High court upholds part of anti-boycott law, strikes part and splits on ‘1967 Israel,’” *Jerusalem Post*, April 15, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/High-Court-rules-on-boycott-law-398206>; Ahmad, White, and Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” 7.

⁹ Ilan Ben Zion, “Israel court orders expulsion of Human Rights Watch director,” *Associated Press*, April 16, 2019, <https://apnews.com/dd8c6110726d48b88dc3af866148ba90>.

¹⁰ Rebecca Vilkomerson, “I’m a U.S. Jew on Israel’s BDS Blacklist. But I Won’t be Silenced,” *Haaretz*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/i-m-a-u-s-jew-on-israel-s-bds-blacklist-i-won-t-be-silenced-1.5729781>.

¹¹ Ilan Ben Zion, “Israel court orders expulsion of Human Rights Watch director,” *Associated Press*, April 16, 2019, <https://apnews.com/dd8c6110726d48b88dc3af866148ba90>.

Quakers,¹² and Israel regularly enforces an “arbitrary” de facto travel ban on BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti, who is a permanent resident.¹³

On the international stage, the primary state body responsible for combatting BDS has been Israel’s Ministry of Strategic Affairs (MSA). Formed in 2006 as a political object to reward cabinet ministers, the MSA’s role and priorities have shifted alongside its change in directors, with little funding or responsibility until Likud lawmaker Gilad Erdan was promoted to the role in 2015.¹⁴ Under Erdan, the ministry took on primary responsibility for Israel’s fight against BDS, shifting its approach from defence to offence, and by 2017 had managed to secure a budget of 215 million NIS (\$70 million USD), which allowed the MSA to expand by setting up a “24/7 operations room” to monitor BDS activity abroad, and hire “local workers” to be stationed in embassies around the world.¹⁵ Much of the MSA’s work has been dedicated to intelligence gathering and covert operations, as well as digital initiatives to “flood the internet” with pro-Israel content;¹⁶ Sima Vaknin-Gil, director-general of the MSA, has said that “in order to win” against BDS “we must use tricks and craftiness,”¹⁷ but she has also made assurances that

¹² “Rights groups slam ban on entry to Israel for BDS activists,” *Times of Israel*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rights-groups-slam-ban-on-entry-to-israel-for-bds-activists/>.

¹³ “Israel: end the arbitrary travel ban on human rights defender Omar Barghouti,” Amnesty International, February 9, 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/9811/2019/en/>.

¹⁴ Anshel Pfeffer, “Israel’s Ministry of Silly Affairs,” *Haaretz*, October 11, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-s-ministry-of-silly-affairs-1.6549920>; Uri Blau, “Inside the Clandestine World of Israel’s ‘BDS-busting’ Ministry,” *Haaretz*, March 26, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/MAGAZINE-inside-the-clandestine-world-of-israels-bds-busting-ministry-1.5453212>.

¹⁵ Itamar Eichner, “Israel vs. boycott movement: From defence to offence,” *YNetNews*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4987758,00.html>.

¹⁶ “Israel prepares to fight boycott activists online,” *YNetNews*, February 18, 2016, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4767932,00.html>.

¹⁷ Quoted in Itamar Eichner, “Israel vs. boycott movement: From defence to offence,” *YNetNews*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4987758,00.html>.

the ministry would “not fund unethical or illegal digital initiatives.”¹⁸ Other initiatives include paying to place anti-BDS articles in Israeli newspapers and television,¹⁹ cooperating with the Jewish Agency to distribute educational materials to Jewish high school students in the US to prepare them for countering anti-Israel “misinformation” in university,²⁰ cooperating with the Israeli labour body Histadrut to counter BDS in foreign unions,²¹ and plans to establish an “international legal network” that would coordinate and provide grants for member organizations to “fight BDS on the legal battleground.”²²

Since Erdan’s arrival, the MSA has worked to frame BDS as a movement that is intimately connected to terrorism, and whose goal is antisemitic violence. Officials in the ministry refer to BDS (and anti-Israel education campaigns) as “consciousness terrorism,”²³ and although Erdan has conceded that BDS poses no economic threat to Israel, he nonetheless argues that the goal of the movement is to “wipe [Israel] off the map” in the same way that the Nazi Party wanted to “wipe out the Jewish people.”²⁴ In

¹⁸ “Israel prepares to fight boycott activists online,” *YNetNews*, February 18, 2016, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4767932,00.html>.

¹⁹ Itamar Benzaquen, “The Israeli government is paying for anti-BDS journalism,” *+972 Magazine*, December 20, 2017, <https://972mag.com/the-israeli-government-is-paying-for-anti-bds-journalism/131718/>.

²⁰ Tamara Zieve, “Program unveiled to help students fight BDS on campus,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 28, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/Program-unveiled-to-help-students-fight-BDS-on-campus-482819>.

²¹ Uri Blau, “Inside the Clandestine World of Israel's 'BDS-busting' Ministry,” *Haaretz*, March 26, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/MAGAZINE-inside-the-clandestine-world-of-israels-bds-busting-ministry-1.5453212>.

²² Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman, “Strategic Affairs Ministry to form Anti-BDS Legal Network,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Ministry-of-Strategic-Affairs-to-create-international-anti-BDS-legal-team-574946>.

²³ Itamar Eichner, “Israel vs. boycott movement: From defence to offence,” *YNetNews*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4987758,00.html>.

²⁴ Gilad Erdan: “Just as the Nazi Party called for a boycott of Jewish businesses as a first step in their plans to wipe out the Jewish people, so too the BDS campaign calls for the boycott of the Jewish state as a means to wipe it off the map.” Quoted in Judy Maltz, “BDS Poses No Threat, Says Israeli Minister in Charge of Fighting It,” *Haaretz*. November 6, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-israeli-minister-leading-fight-against-bds-calls-movement-a-failure-1.6631505>.

2018 the MSA released a “hate net” map, which alleged close relationships between pro-BDS groups and terrorist organizations,²⁵ followed in 2019 by a report titled “Terrorists in Suits,” which made allegations that a number of officials in organizations promoting BDS were also members of “terrorist” groups. The latter report laid out a narrative that amounts to a conspiracy theory, specifically that “ Hamas and PFLP operatives have infiltrated and adopted seemingly benign NGOs ... for the purpose of advancing their ideological goal: the elimination of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.”²⁶ Erdan concluded that BDS should be understood as a “a parallel and complementary track to terrorism.”²⁷

Secrecy is key to the activities of the MSA, and although its officials privately boast of several cases in which they had thwarted anti-Israel initiatives, they very rarely make its achievements public.²⁸ In recent years, the Knesset has advanced legislation to make the MSA exempt from the Freedom of Information Law,²⁹ and reports have revealed that the MSA regularly “cooperates” with the Mossad security agency on issues related to BDS, but “hide the content and full scope of these activities on grounds that if these would be revealed, it would undermine the covert efforts being made against BDS

²⁵ “BDS’s ‘Network of Hate’ Revealed by Ministry of Strategic Affairs,” 4IL: Defending Israel Online, June 24, 2018, <https://4il.org.il/ministry-of-strategic-affairs-reveals-bds-network-of-hate/>.

²⁶ State of Israel: Ministry of Strategic Affairs, “Terrorists in Suits: The Ties Between NGOs promoting BDS and Terrorist Organizations,” February 3, 2019, <https://4il.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MSA-Terrorists-In-Suits-English-1.pdf>, 3.

²⁷ Quoted in Lahav Harkov, “Dozens of Hamas members hold senior positions in BDS NGOs.” *Jerusalem Post*, February 3, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/BDS-THREAT/Over-30-Hamas-PFLP-terrorists-hold-posts-in-anti-Israel-BDS-groups-govt-579544>.

²⁸ Itamar Eichner, “Israel vs. boycott movement: From defence to offence,” *YNetNews*, July 12, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4987758,00.html>.

²⁹ The Knesset, “Bill calling to keep Strategic Affairs Ministry’s efforts to combat delegitimization secret passes first reading,” July 18, 2017, https://main.knesset.gov.il/EN/News/PressReleases/Pages/Pr13526_pg.aspx.

and its leaders.”³⁰ However, this secrecy has been controversial, even within the Israeli cabinet. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which cooperates with the MSA even though its own official position has always been that BDS should be ignored, has criticized the MSA for its secrecy and lack of coordination during joint missions.³¹ Similarly, the MSA was criticized for secretly coordinating anti-BDS activities with UK Jewish organizations without informing the Embassy.³²

In fact, the MSA’s Gilad Erdan has been quite explicit about its use of front organizations to secretly pursue Israel’s anti-BDS agenda:

One of the principles for success is keeping our methods of action secret... Since most of the ministry’s actions are not of the ministry, *but through bodies around the world who do not want to expose their connection with the state*, we must protect the information whose exposure could harm the battle.³³

In at least one case, the MSA has boasted about a successful operation that relied on front groups to target the financial accounts of organizations that promote BDS. By using pro-Israel organizations to file complaints with fundraising platforms, based on the accusation that BDS is connected to terrorist groups, the MSA claims it was able to shut down the accounts of thirty groups, including Samidoun and the BNC.³⁴ As senior MSA officials told journalist Barak Ravid, the campaign “was carried out through ‘front organizations’ -

³⁰ Noa Landau, “Mossad Involved in Anti-boycott Activity, Israeli Minister’s Datebooks Reveal,” *Haaretz*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-mossad-involved-in-anti-boycott-activity-israeli-minister-s-diaries-reveal-1.7360253>.

³¹ Noa Landau, “Israeli Foreign Ministry Director Slams Government’s Clandestine Anti-BDS Arm,” *Haaretz*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-foreign-ministry-chief-slams-government-s-clandestine-anti-bds-arm-1.5849993>.

³² Barak Ravid, “Israeli Ministries Feud Over anti-BDS Warfare in U.K.,” *Haaretz*, September 29, 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israeli-ministries-feud-over-anti-bds-warfare-in-u-k-1.5443589>.

³³ Gilad Erdan quoted in The Knesset, “Bill calling to keep Strategic Affairs Ministry’s efforts to combat delegitimization secret passes first reading,” July 18, 2017, emphasis added.

³⁴ “30 BDS-Promoting Orgs’ Financial Accounts Closed For Ties to Terrorism,” 4IL: Defending Israel Online, June 10, 2019, <https://4il.org.il/30-bds-promoting-orgs-financial-accounts-closed-for-ties-to-terrorism/>.

Israeli and non-Israeli civilian bodies that do not belong to the Israeli government but were operated by the Ministry for Strategic Affairs.”³⁵ This follows the policy of the Foreign Ministry to use front groups abroad, and therefore remove the “fingerprints” of the Israeli government from its propaganda efforts, which it had been doing since at least 2010.³⁶

However, not all pro-Israel organizations have been willing to be used as proxies for the MSA. The *Forward* reported that in late 2017, major U.S. Jewish institutions had turned down offers of grants from the MSA, out of the concern that they would then have to register as “foreign agents.” In response, the MSA proposed a scheme in which money for anti-BDS initiatives would be “funneled” through Kela Shlomo (later renamed Concert), “a mysterious Israeli nonprofit that has a war chest of \$35 million in Israeli government funds,”³⁷ and which also receives private donations from far-right pro-settler organizations.³⁸

Other covert anti-BDS activities undertaken by the Israeli state — both by the MSA and by Israeli Embassies themselves — can be gleaned from Al Jazeera’s undercover investigations into the pro-Israel lobby in the U.K. and the U.S. For example, Al Jazeera secretly filmed Shai Mascot, an official of the Israeli embassy in the U.K., boasting of

³⁵ Barak Ravid (@BarakRavid), “3 / כי המבצע הזה נגד גיוס התרומות של / 3” בכירים במשרד לעניינים אסטרטגיים אמרו לי כי המבצע הזה נגד גיוס התרומות של / 3 בוצע באמצעות “ארגוני חזית” - גופים אזרחיים ישראלים ולא ישראלים שאינם שייכים לממשלת ישראל אך BDS-ארגוני ה הופעלו ע”י המשרד לעניינים אסטרטגיים” Twitter, June 10, 2019, 2:38 p.m., <https://twitter.com/BarakRavid/status/1138153546535383040>; and Google Translate.

³⁶ Barak Ravid, “Foreign Ministry to Use Front Groups for PR Efforts in Europe,” *Haaretz*, May 31, 2010, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5127138>.

³⁷ Josh Nathan-Kazis, “Jewish Groups Reject Israel Funding For Fear Of Being Branded Foreign Agents,” *Forward*, May 29, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/401876/israeli-ministrys-repeated-efforts-to-fund-american-jewish-groups-rejected/>.

³⁸ Josh Nathan-Kazis, “Israeli Government Teams Up With Far-Right U.S. Jewish Funders For Anti-BDS Effort,” *Forward*, September 26, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/411028/israeli-government-teams-up-with-far-right-us-jewish-funders-for-anti-bds/>.

working behind the scenes to establish “independent” pro-Israel groups, and plotting to “take down” anti-Israel MPs.³⁹ The same official says he was asked by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs to join a new private company (possibly referring to Kela Shlomo/Concert) which he explains “will basically work for the Israeli government” to fight BDS.⁴⁰ In the U.S., Al Jazeera filmed a staff member of the Israeli Embassy describing how her job involves liaising with pro-Israel student groups and giving them “behind the scenes” support. She also described her role in information gathering for the MSA; she would use fake social media accounts to monitor the activities of pro-BDS students, write a report for the MSA, and wait to receive further instructions.⁴¹ According to the *Electronic Intifada*, this amounts to evidence of the “collusion” between pro-Israel groups and the Israeli government in their efforts to “spy on, smear and intimidate US citizens who support Palestinian human rights.”⁴²

In Canada, it is not a secret that the pro-Israel lobby maintains a close relationship with Israeli officials, including the Israeli Embassy and Consulates. The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) regularly hosts meetings and joint events with the Israeli Ambassador, and its board of directors met with Israeli President Rivlin in Jerusalem in February 2019. What is unknown is the extent to which Israeli officials actively collaborate in local anti-BDS initiatives, or otherwise provides any logistical,

³⁹ Ewen MacAskill and Ian Cobain, “Israeli diplomat who plotted against MPs also set up political groups,” *The Guardian*, January 8, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/08/israeli-diplomat-shai-masot-plotted-against-mps-set-up-political-groups-labour>.

⁴⁰ *Al Jazeera Investigations*, “The Lobby Episode 4: The Takedown,” January 14, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/lobby-episode-4-takedown-170112091750073.html>.

⁴¹ *Al Jazeera Investigations*, “The Lobby — USA, Episode 1: The Covert War,” unpublished and leaked by the *Electronic Intifada*, November 3, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/watch-film-israel-lobby-didnt-want-you-see/25876>.

⁴² “Watch the film the Israel lobby didn’t want you to see,” *Electronic Intifada*, November 2, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/watch-film-israel-lobby-didnt-want-you-see/25876>.

intelligence, or financial support. It is also unknown whether the Ministry of Strategic Affairs is active in the country, but it is very likely that it plays a role — whether or not pro-Israel groups are aware of its activity.

The Ministry of Strategic Affairs declined to participate in this research, stating that the “ministry doesn't give interviews on the topic at this time to anyone.”⁴³ However, Max Samarov, a U.S.-based director of StandWithUs, was willing to talk to me about the role of the Israeli government in local anti-BDS initiatives. He says that he doesn't know specifics about the MSA's activity, and that StandWithUs maintains a “firewall” between them due to the legal implications if they were to receive funding. When asked about his perception of the Israeli government's own anti-BDS initiatives, he says it is too early to assess their impact, but that the negative press they have received is not helpful, and that ultimately there needs to be a grassroots basis in order to be successful. In terms of the overall relationship between StandWithUs and the Israeli government, Samarov emphasizes that while there is some communication between them, “there's no marching orders from the Israeli government:”

I know that there's a lot of news stories and investigative articles trying to prove that there's some kind of marching orders coming from [the Israeli government] to organizations elsewhere, but those of us who work in this field generally laugh about that, because honestly if anybody needs direction it is them, not us [laughs].⁴⁴

Contracting out civil society

There is no reason to believe that pro-Israel groups are given “marching orders” from the

⁴³ E-mail correspondence with the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, August 16, 2018.

⁴⁴ Samarov, interview.

Israeli government, or that they passively fall into line behind the MSA's anti-BDS strategy. That said, it is true that Israel boasts of covertly using civil society as "front groups" for its agenda, and in recent years the organized opposition to the BDS movement has been characterized by significant international collaboration between pro-Israel civil society and the Israeli government, to the point where it is often difficult to make clear distinctions between the various actors. There are also a number of public efforts to coordinate between state and civil society, some which are initiated by the Israeli government, while other projects are undertaken by civil society organizations themselves but include Israeli officials. Many of these efforts were initiated in 2010, in the wake of the 2008-09 military offensive against Gaza, and around the time of the highly publicized Gaza Flotilla in which international activists had attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade.⁴⁵ The Flotilla incident in particular was seen by pro-Israel advocates as a "wake-up call," demonstrating that BDS was a threat which required a significant and coordinated response.⁴⁶

One prominent multi-stakeholder initiative is led by the Israeli government. Since 2010, Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs has been convening closed-door gatherings with pro-Israel organizations under the banner of the Global Coalition for Israel or GC4I.⁴⁷ The inaugural meeting saw participation from individuals in over 30 countries,

⁴⁵ In May 2010, a flotilla consisting of about 700 activists from 50 countries attempted to reach Gaza in an effort to defy Israel's naval blockade as well as to deliver humanitarian aid. Early in the morning of May 31, an elite Israeli commando unit commandeered the flotilla in international waters. In the course of raiding the Turkish flagship Mavi Marmara, Israeli commandos killed nine Turkish citizens who were resisting the raid. The incident led to widespread international condemnation, a United Nations investigation, and a severe diplomatic fallout between Israel and Turkey.

⁴⁶ ADL and Reut, "The Assault on Israel's Legitimacy," 13, 9.

⁴⁷ Hilary Aked, "Inside the 'secret' public-private partnership Israel is using to fight BDS," *Mondoweiss*, February 1, 2017, <https://mondoweiss.net/2017/02/inside-private-partnership/>; David Daoud, "Jewish Leaders Attend 'Global Coalition for Israel' Conference in Jerusalem," *Algemeiner*, February 22, 2016,

whose attendance put them in “direct collaboration with no less than 7 Israeli government ministries.”⁴⁸ As it was described by the World Jewish Congress, the GC4I “brings together Israeli government ministries and leading international Jewish organizations into working task forces to identify best practices for confronting the political warfare being waged against the Jewish state, specifically [BDS].”⁴⁹ The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs is a GC4I member,⁵⁰ and Canadian MP Irwin Cotler was a guest speaker at its first meeting in 2010.⁵¹

Israel’s Reut Institute is another important intervenor which has been facilitating government-civil society collaboration. In 2010, the institute published a landmark report called “Building a Political Firewall: Against Israel’s Delegitimization,” which was based on consultations with a wide range of pro-Israel stakeholders, mostly UK NGOs and Israeli political and security officials. The report warned that “Israel faces a systemic, systematic, and increasingly effective assault on its political and economic model,”⁵² and located BDS within a larger movement that it named the “Delegitimization Network,” which was described as a diverse assortment of individuals and organizations who “negate Israel’s right to exist based on a variety of political and philosophical

<https://www.algemeiner.com/2016/02/22/jewish-leaders-attend-global-coalition-for-israel-conference-in-jerusalem/>.

⁴⁸ Hilary Aked, “Inside the ‘secret’ public-private partnership Israel is using to fight BDS,” *Mondoweiss*, February 1, 2017, <https://mondoweiss.net/2017/02/inside-private-partnership/>.

⁴⁹ World Jewish Congress, “Making a Real Difference in the Real World,” report, November 10, 2014, https://issuu.com/lasharts/docs/world_jewish_congress-making_a_diff, 11.

⁵⁰ “Frequently Asked Questions,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, January 31, 2019, <https://cija.ca/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>.

⁵¹ Maram Stern, “Strategic Consultation - ‘Building Partnerships and Synergies in Countering the Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy,’” World Jewish Congress, archived web page, December 19, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140823174659/http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/en/events/showEvent/id/11>.

⁵² Reut Institute, “Building a Political Firewall: Against Israel’s Delegitimization,” 15.

arguments.”⁵³ The Delegitimization Network was understood to operate without a leadership mechanism that could issue “directives, guidelines, or orders,”⁵⁴ but instead functioned through the decentralized interaction of various “hubs” — and it named Toronto in its list of major delegitimization hubs.⁵⁵

The Reut Institute report concluded that “it takes a network to fight a network,”⁵⁶ and made the case for adopting a “network” strategy that would go on the offensive, targeting delegitimization “hubs” and undermining them through “legal, media, political, and diplomatic means.”⁵⁷ The report specifically emphasized the importance of “cultivating [personal] relationships with elites” and influential figures in the realms of “[politics], business, cultural, media, and security.”⁵⁸ What is most significant, however, is that it was a proposal for strategic collaboration between all relevant stakeholders: not only “mobilizing and training civil society partners,” but calling for the “significant expansion” of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, and increasing Embassy staff in “hub” cities.⁵⁹ MSA minister Gilad Erdan directly echoed the language of this report when he outlined his anti-BDS strategy in 2016, saying “it takes a network to fight a network.”⁶⁰

Seven years after the release of the first report, however, a second internal report by the Reut Institute and the U.S. Anti Defamation League (ADL) found that efforts to date

⁵³ Reut Institute, 13.

⁵⁴ Reut Institute, 43.

⁵⁵ Reut Institute, 44.

⁵⁶ Reut Institute, 68.

⁵⁷ Reut Institute, 70.

⁵⁸ Reut Institute, 70.

⁵⁹ Reut Institute, 75.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Lahav Harkov, “Erdan: ‘We have a broad government program to fight boycotts,’” *Jerusalem Post*, May 5, 2016, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Erdan-We-have-a-broad-government-program-to-fight-boycotts-453276>; Hilary Aked, “Inside the ‘secret’ public-private partnership Israel is using to fight BDS,” *Mondoweiss*, February 1, 2017, <https://mondoweiss.net/2017/02/inside-private-partnership/>.

had not made an impact on the growth of the BDS movement. The report, which was leaked and published online, was the result of consultations with more than 150 individuals from U.S. pro-Israel and Jewish advocacy organizations, across the political spectrum, as well as many Israeli government officials. Titled “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy: The Frustrating 20X Question: Why Is It Still Growing?”, the report was intended to be a “platform for accurate and focused professional discussion” among stakeholders, and was an attempt to explain why increased funding into pro-Israel initiatives — reportedly a “massive investment of resources and talent,” increasing by twenty-fold over six years — had not stopped the growth of BDS.⁶¹ The report admitted that BDS’s momentum had been “boosted by reactions to Israeli military campaigns that have occurred in 2009, 2012 and 2014, coupled with the lack of progress in the political process,”⁶² and that it was strengthened by the “growing institutionalization and professionalization” of groups like Students for Justice in Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace,⁶³ and had benefited from the rise of “intersectionality” and “identity politics,” in which “the Palestinian cause has been widely adopted as a core and prominent threshold for solidarity by many marginalized groups.”⁶⁴ The report concluded that additional funding would not solve this problem, but that the pro-Israel network had to learn to be more strategic with how it used existing resources;⁶⁵ this would include adopting a “broad tent” that would be inclusive of diverse pro-Israel actors, and a “segmented”

⁶¹ ADL and Reut, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy,” 13.

⁶² ADL and Reut, 18.

⁶³ ADL and Reut, 14.

⁶⁴ ADL and Reut, 16.

⁶⁵ ADL and Reut, 23.

approach towards critics that would distinguish between “instigators” and “soft critics.”⁶⁶

These efforts to build a diverse, broad coalition have been hindered somewhat as the pro-Israel network struggles with internal divisions. The strategy advanced by the Reut Institute proposes a “broad tent and red lines:” that is, pro-Israel groups should create a united front that includes liberal and progressive Jews (and thus allow critical discourse about Israel), but that they should also delineate “red lines” that indicate when criticism becomes delegitimization and therefore is not acceptable. Those lines are intended to be drawn by local communities themselves, but must be based on Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state.⁶⁷ In keeping with this theme of a broad tent, there have been many proposals to direct pro-Israel advocacy towards a progressive audience. For example, the ADL and Reut report suggested that the problem of “intersectionality” should be addressed by reaching out to minority communities to build relationships and respect,⁶⁸ and Republican strategist Frank Luntz told a “#StopBDS” conference that pro-Israel activists need to emulate the language of the left to appeal to Democrats, by talking about equality and human rights.⁶⁹ The ADL and Reut consultation process itself demonstrated this broad tent approach, by including a handful of participants from liberal organizations J Street and Ameinu. However, this alliance is tenuous at best; J Street is routinely and strongly criticized by other pro-Israel groups for being too “one-sided” and sympathetic towards Palestinians, and its supporters were called “far worse than kapos”

⁶⁶ ADL and Reut, 26-27.

⁶⁷ Reut Institute, “Reut’s Broad Tent and Red Lines Approach,” March 2012, <https://www.reutgroup.org/Publications/Reut's-Broad-Tent-and-Red-Lines-Approach>, 1-3.

⁶⁸ ADL and Reut, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy,” 19.

⁶⁹ Rania Khalek, “Copy BDS tactics, pro-Israel activists told at UN conference,” *Electronic Intifada*, June 3, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/rania-khalek/copy-bds-tactics-pro-israel-activists-told-un-conference>.

by David Friedman, now Trump’s US Ambassador to Israel.⁷⁰ When J Street members introduced themselves at an anti-BDS conference in 2017, which was hosted by Israel’s UN mission and the World Jewish Congress, they were booed by the audience and called antisemitic.⁷¹ As I will highlight below, there are also significant tensions over the more “heavy-handed” approaches to BDS; although the ADL and Reut process concluded that these can backfire and alienate “soft critics,” these continue to be utilized by many actors within the pro-Israel network.

One problem posed by an analysis of this multi-stakeholder collaboration is that it is increasingly difficult to separate pro-Israel civil society from the Israeli state. The degree of cooperation between stakeholders, the willingness of non-state actors to participate in the Israeli government’s strategic approach to counter BDS, and the often covert role of state officials within these initiatives, is a challenge to the notion that pro-Israel civil society is “independent” from the state. That is not to suggest that pro-Israel civil society is captive to or controlled by Israel, but rather that it is (to an extent) willing to opt-in and perform functions on behalf of the Israeli government, almost equivalent to the role of private contractors. As Hilary Aked writes about the Global Coalition for Israel, this degree of collaboration shows that Israel is “seeking to instrumentalise, co-opt and ‘operate’ civil society organizations in the service of state power”⁷² — although I would emphasize that Israel’s success is entirely dependent upon the consent of those

⁷⁰ David Friedman, “Read Peter Beinart and you’ll vote Donald Trump,” *Arutz Sheva*, June 5, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/18828>.

⁷¹ Debra Nussbaum Cohen, “At Summit to Counter BDS Movement, J Street Feels the Heat,” *Haaretz*, March 31, 2017, https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-at-summit-to-counter-bds-movement-j-street-feels-the-heat-1.5455370?=&ts=_1555343658039. It also is not clear the extent to which J Street is interested in being part of this “broad tent.”

⁷² Hilary Aked, “Inside the ‘secret’ public-private partnership Israel is using to fight BDS,” *Mondoweiss*, February 1, 2017, <https://mondoweiss.net/2017/02/inside-private-partnership/>.

organizations.

The Israeli state's contracting out of civil society is quite blatant in the sphere of social media. The Israeli military began its "first official use of social media" in response to the online criticism against Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2008-09, recruiting civilians and international volunteers to "defend the country's image" online.⁷³ More recently in 2017, the Ministry of Strategic Affairs promoted an anti-BDS app (known as Act.IL) which coordinates the online activity of thousands of international users who complete "missions" by engaging in pro-Israel social media engagement.⁷⁴ These are examples of what Kuntsman and Stein refer to as "digital militarism," as "ordinary social media practices and users are being conscripted into the state's military project."⁷⁵ The Act.IL app itself is primarily developed, funded, and operated by pro-Israel civil society organizations, and the MSA insists that the app has never received government funding;⁷⁶ however, these claims are contradicted by reporting that revealed the MSA had spent \$570,000 US on building the app's website, and had placed sponsored content in Israeli newspapers to promote the app.⁷⁷ Moreover, the app's managers admittedly receive advice from Israeli military and security officials.⁷⁸

⁷³ Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca L. Stein, *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 26-7.

⁷⁴ "Israel launches 'Iron Dome of Truth' website at Celebrate Israel Parade," *Times of Israel*, June 5, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-launches-iron-dome-of-truth-app-at-celebrate-israel-parade/>; Michael Bueckert, "Release the Trolls," *Jacobin Magazine*, July 18, 2017, <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/07/israel-social-media-app-idf-shin-bet-bds>.

⁷⁵ Kuntsman and Stein, *Digital Militarism*, 7.

⁷⁶ Ishmael Daro, "How An App Funded By Sheldon Adelson Is Covertly Influencing The Online Conversation About Israel," *Buzzfeed News*, September 20, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ishmaeldaro/act-il-social-media-astroturfing-israel-palestine>.

⁷⁷ Itamar Benzaquen, "The Israeli government is paying for anti-BDS journalism," *+972 Magazine*, December 20, 2017, <https://972mag.com/the-israeli-government-is-paying-for-anti-bds-journalism/131718/>; Asa Winstanley, "Inside Israel's million dollar troll army," *Electronic Intifada*, June 12, 2019, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/inside-israels-million-dollar-troll-army/27566>.

⁷⁸ Reuven Weiss, "A lesson in hasbara," *YNetNews*, June 27, 2017,

In a related initiative, referred to as “DigiTell,” in 2018 the MSA convened a group of 100 “bloggers and activists” from around the world,⁷⁹ which then formed an ongoing “independent network of pro-Israel social media influencers” dedicated to promote Israel online through various collaborative initiatives. Although the network is officially separate from the government, the MSA admitted to providing support in “several ways,” including by bringing the “influencers” together and providing them with information.⁸⁰ In sum, DigiTell consists of pro-Israel personalities who have chosen to work on behalf of the Israeli government to further its agenda, while maintaining a loose independence.

More troubling is how Israel relies on civil society organizations for the purposes of intelligence gathering. A number of pro-Israel organizations collect data on pro-Palestinian activists and organizations in order to publicly “name and shame” them; these include the “watchdog” organization NGO Monitor, which tracks funding to Palestinian causes, and the secretive Canary Mission website, which anonymously compiles blacklists with lengthy profiles of individual activists. The information published by NGO Monitor “plays a key role in providing Israeli ministries and diplomatic missions with misleading information to defame Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations,”⁸¹ and Canary Mission’s blacklists are reportedly used by Israeli immigration officials to screen individuals and prevent them from entering the country.⁸²

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4981081,00.html>.

⁷⁹ Alan Rosenbaum, “Fighting BDS Online with Israel’s DigiTell Defenders,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 17, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/BDS-THREAT/Fighting-BDS-Online-with-Israelis-DigiTell-Defenders-592752>.

⁸⁰ Ilanit Chernick, “Fighting BDS Online: How DigiTell is working to change anti-Israel sentiments on social media,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 16, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/BDS-THREAT/Fighting-BDS-online-592678>.

⁸¹ Policy Working Group, “NGO Monitor: Shrinking Space: Defaming human rights organizations that criticize the Israeli occupation,” September 2018, http://policyworkinggroup.org.il/report_en.pdf, 6.

⁸² Noa Landau, “Official Documents Prove: Israel Bans Young Americans Based on Canary Mission

In a similar way, an Israeli civilian “watchdog” group called Lev B’Olam compiles research on BDS activists, in part by operating a tip-line centre, to “locate the activists arriving in Israel under the guise of a tourist and trying to sabotage the Zionist enterprise in Israel.” Lev B’Olam then transfers that information to Ministry of Interior and Internal Security, so that the state can deport them from Israel or prevent their arrival into the country.⁸³ These practices reveal the extent to which the Israeli state has contracted out — or conscripted in — global pro-Israel civil society as an agent of its repression.

The backlash to BDS in Canada

The Canadian backlash to BDS is located within this broader context of a global counter-movement, which is marked by various degrees of participation and collaboration between the Israeli government and pro-Israel civil society. While some anti-BDS initiatives are localized responses to anti-Israel campaigns, other initiatives are adapted from the playbook of the global counter-movement, particularly as it operates in the U.S. Moreover, Canadians have been active participants in international pro-Israel forums, and as such have contributed to the broader discourse on Israel and Palestine. It is therefore not surprising that the Canadian pro-Israel lobby’s response to the BDS movement has reflected many of the repressive tendencies of this larger counter-movement.

From the start, the backlash to BDS in Canada has been severe. Anti-BDS campaigns by the pro-Israel lobby are often heavy-handed and hyperbolic, condemning even minor boycott initiatives as an affront to the Jewish community itself. When the

Website,” *Haaretz*, October 4, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-official-documents-prove-israel-bans-young-americans-based-on-canary-mission-site-1.6530903>.

⁸³ Elisha Ben Kimon, “Israel’s watchdog centre fighting BDS,” *YNetNews*, August 12, 2016, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4840802,00.html>.

United Church endorsed a boycott of settlement goods in 2012, CIJA's Shimon Fogel claimed that "the reaction of the Jewish community is one of unbridled outrage,"⁸⁴ and CIJA widely distributed a letter contemplating an "immediate moratorium on all dialogue and partnership activities between the institutions of the Canadian Jewish community and the United Church of Canada."⁸⁵ In a similar way, when Mennonite Church Canada adopted a BDS resolution in 2015, CIJA called it "a slap in the face to those of us in the Jewish community who have been building bridges with our Christian neighbours," and even claimed that it "speaks to the moral blindness and increasing marginalization of a denomination in decline."⁸⁶ Inside the United Church, groups of members of clergy have been working with CIJA to counter BDS under the premise of maintaining this relationship with the Jewish community;⁸⁷ these groups argue that a settlement boycott has "damaged relationships that are vital to growing a just peace,"⁸⁸ and that the church can no longer be in "genuine dialogue with the Jewish community in Canada."⁸⁹ This framing of BDS as a threat to Christian-Jewish relationships is intended to deter efforts by churches (or others) to respond to the calls for solidarity from their Palestinian partners.

The tenor of the BDS debate has at times led to threats and intimidation against

⁸⁴ Quoted in Josh Tapper, "United Church members vote for boycotts of products from Israeli settlements," *Toronto Star*, August 16, 2012, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/08/16/united_church_members_vote_for_boycott_of_products_from_israeli_settlements.html.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, "CIJA Calls for Boycott of United Church," *Canadian Jewish News*, August 27, 2012, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cija-calls-boycott-united-church>.

⁸⁶ "CIJA Condemns Mennonite BDS Resolution," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, July 14, 2016, <https://cija.ca/cija-condemns-mennonite-bds-resolution/>.

⁸⁷ Berube, interview.

⁸⁸ "Our Statement," United Against Boycott, no date, accessed April 26, 2019, www.unitedagainstboycott.ca/.

⁸⁹ "United Church General Council Approves Divestment Against Israel," Bridges Not Boycotts, archived web page, August 11, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150907134325/http://www.bridgesnotboycotts.ca/>.

BDS activists. When CUPE Ontario passed its BDS resolution in 2006, International Committee chair Katherine Nastovski was “inundated” right away with thousands of e-mails and “threatening” phone calls; even her parents received calls saying “your daughter should be murdered,” forcing them to change their phone numbers. CUPE local offices faced protests, bomb threats, and intimidation of staff, such as incidents in which administrative staff were followed into underground parking. Their BDS resolution was publicly criticized by CUPE National and other major union leaders, and some union locals were upset that they had not been prepared for the resulting backlash; one local even decided to disaffiliate from CUPE altogether.⁹⁰ Ten years later, when Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) passed a BDS motion at the student union’s annual general meeting, Mariam Nokerah recalls that “we even had people contacting our university threatening to hurt anyone involved with the [BDS] movement. Someone sent an email to the school telling them that they know where each one of us lives, and that they will find us and hurt us if the school doesn't shut us down. [These were] basically death threats.”⁹¹

These examples are indicative of the character of the anti-BDS backlash, and the pro-Israel lobby has in many cases endorsed tactics designed to shut down or narrow the space for Palestinian solidarity activism. Below I will look at four recent trends which are particularly repressive.

Repression on University Campuses

University campuses are a major site for Palestinian solidarity activism, and are therefore

⁹⁰ Nastovski, interview.

⁹¹ Nokerah, interview.

also the focus of significant attention and resources from the pro-Israel lobby. Unlike other student campaigns, BDS and Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) receive considerable attention from the mainstream media (usually the coverage is negative), and politicians will often release statements denouncing them, usually citing alleged intimidation of Jewish students.⁹² As Justin Trudeau notably tweeted in March 2015, “The BDS movement, like Israeli Apartheid Week, has no place on Canadian campuses.”⁹³ The pro-Israel lobby has a number of strategies to counter BDS activity on campus, including education campaigns that highlight positive features of Israel, and they actively support student campaigns to counter BDS activity; for example, in the fall of 2017, students successfully defeated attempted BDS resolutions at the University of Ottawa and the University of Winnipeg with behind the scenes support from CIJA — who boasted about recruiting and mobilizing dozens of students — as well as support from Hillel, StandWithUs, and other pro-Israel groups.⁹⁴ In addition to these softer forms of pro-Israel advocacy, however, the pro-Israel lobby has occasionally worked with administrators and others in efforts to crack down on Palestinian solidarity initiatives.

In the early 2000s, York University was an important site of activism, with pro-Palestine actions taking place in the context of active anti-war organizing.⁹⁵ In the wake of Netanyahu’s 2002 speech at Concordia being cancelled by protestors, and with the

⁹² See Chapter 9.

⁹³ Justin Trudeau (@JustinTrudeau), “The BDS movement, like Israeli Apartheid Week, has no place on Canadian campuses. As a @McGillU alum, I’m disappointed. #EnoughIsEnough,” Twitter, March 13, 2015, 3:31 p.m., <https://twitter.com/justintrudeau/status/576465632884981760>.

⁹⁴ Paul Lungen, “University of Ottawa Students Reject BDS,” *Canadian Jewish News*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/university-ottawa-students-reject-bds-motion>; Myron Love, “University of Winnipeg Students Beat Back BDS Motion,” *Canadian Jewish News*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/university-winnipeg-students-beat-back-bds-motion>.

⁹⁵ Farah, interview.

prospect of similar protests against controversial speaker Daniel Pipes (who had been invited to campus by a student group for early 2003), organizations including the Canadian Jewish Congress lobbied York administration to make sure the event went ahead, which “set the precedent and the stage for the establishment of a regime of repression on campus.”⁹⁶ The following years saw severe efforts by the administration to clamp down on student protests, including the imposition of bureaucratic measures to restrict the activities of the Palestine solidarity movement.⁹⁷ According to York professor David Noble:

[This] effort entailed the formulation and imposition of administrative policies that effectively restricted freedom of speech and assembly on campus. These measures included the charging of prohibitive security fees to student groups wishing to bring controversial speakers to campus, severe limits on leafleting, poster and tabling, and outright bans on the use of central campus space.⁹⁸

Violating these measures led to swift disciplinary action against activists: Palestinian student Hammam Farah was fined for “unauthorized tabling,”⁹⁹ and in the spring of 2004, Jewish student Daniel Freeman-Maloy was suspended for three years, ostensibly over the use of a megaphone at a protest. He sued the university, and in 2007 reached an out of court settlement.¹⁰⁰ Nearly a decade later in 2013, York student group Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) faced serious repercussions for holding a “celebratory” rally after they successfully convinced the undergrad and graduate student unions to pass BDS motions: York administration revoked SAIA’s club status for six months over the

⁹⁶ Noble, “The New Israel Lobby in Action.”

⁹⁷ Farah, interview; Ziadah, “Outside the Multicultural,” 97.

⁹⁸ Noble, “The New Israel Lobby in Action.”

⁹⁹ Farah, interview.

¹⁰⁰ Ben Spurr, “Suspended York University student sues for \$850k,” *The Varsity*, October 18, 2004, <https://thevarsity.ca/2004/10/18/suspended-york-u-student-sues-for-850k/>; Louise Brown, “Protestor back at York U,” *Toronto Star*, May 9, 2007, https://www.thestar.com/news/2007/05/09/protester_back_at_york_u.html.

“disruption of academic activities,” and Farah was issued a trespass order and banned from campus for a year over the use of an “amplification device.”¹⁰¹

Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) has perhaps been the most high profile target of pro-Israel lobbying, including many attempts to ban the word “apartheid” in the context of Israel.¹⁰² The first IAW event in 2005, which was held at the University of Toronto and featured Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, was called a “hate fest” by B’nai Brith Canada, who urged the university to ban the event.¹⁰³ The FSWC claims that it works to “hold universities accountable for activities that are held in their facilities,” and “demands that [universities] identify events like Israeli Apartheid Week for what they are - acts of hatred and aggression towards Jewish students.”¹⁰⁴ IAW is routinely condemned by politicians, and Canadian newspapers publish articles denouncing the event almost every year. This political pressure has not usually convinced universities to ban the event, but there have been several cases of repressive administrative action: for example, in 2008, McMaster University banned student clubs from using the phrase “Israeli apartheid,”¹⁰⁵ and in 2009, Carleton University and the University of Ottawa banned an IAW poster which featured an Israeli helicopter firing a missile at a child in Gaza, which the universities called “inflammatory and capable of inciting confrontation.”¹⁰⁶ On a few occasions, measures to

¹⁰¹ Farah, interview; Nora Barrows-Friedman, “‘Boycott Israel’ activist banned from Toronto University,” *Electronic Intifada*, August 12, 2013, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/boycott-israel-activist-banned-toronto-university/12674>.

¹⁰² Bakan and Abu-Laban, “Israeli Apartheid, Canada, and Freedom of Expression,” 176.

¹⁰³ Beth Duff-Brown, “Canadian Jewish groups condemn ‘Israeli Apartheid Week,’” *Jerusalem Post*, February 1, 2005.

¹⁰⁴ “About FSWC” Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com/about-us>.

¹⁰⁵ Karen Ho, “McMaster ban on phrase ‘Israeli Apartheid’ stirs protest,” *The Varsity*, February 28, 2008, <https://thevarsity.ca/2008/02/28/mcmaster-ban-on-phrase-israeli-apartheid-stirs-protest/>.

¹⁰⁶ Sheri Shefa, “Ottawa universities ban apartheid week poster,” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 5, 2009, <https://www.cjnews.com/featured/jewish-learning/ottawa-universities-ban-apartheid-week-poster>.

censure IAW on campus have been led by student unions themselves. In 2005, the student union at Western University responded to a SPHR display, which featured a “mock wall” with a map labeled “Palestine,” by banning the group from posterizing or using public space for a year,¹⁰⁷ and in 2013 the University of Manitoba student union voted to revoke club status from SAIA, a move that was celebrated by B’nai Brith as something “that should be emulated by students on every campus.”¹⁰⁸ In response to incidents like these, the group Faculty 4 Palestine issued an open letter in 2009 decrying the “increasing efforts to limit advocacy of Palestinian rights on Canadian universities,” which they concluded “amount[s] to a pattern of the suppression of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.”¹⁰⁹ By 2011 the letter had been signed by 400 academics.¹¹⁰

The lobby has targeted the presence of Palestinian narratives within academia in other ways. Outrage against a Masters thesis on “Jewish racism” from the University of Toronto in 2010, and attempts by York University to undermine a conference about Israeli and Palestinian statehood in 2009, are incidents within a series of what Cairns and Ferguson describe as attempts to “discredit and therefore silence scholarly and activist work done in solidarity with Palestinian struggles on the basis of its political character.”¹¹¹ There have also been efforts to retaliate against pro-BDS student

¹⁰⁷ “SPHR banned from atrium: Clubs Policy Committee sanctions club in response to last year’s mock wall,” *The Gazette (Western University)*, November 8, 2005, <http://www.usc.uwo.ca/gazette/generate.asp?day=8&month=11&year=2005>.

¹⁰⁸ Bryce Hoye, “SAIA no longer? Students Against Israeli Apartheid banned from U of M campus,” *The Manitoban*, June 17, 2003, <http://www.themanitoban.com/2013/06/saia-no-longer/15452/>.

¹⁰⁹ Margaret Aziza Pappano, “Academic Freedom Threatened in Ontario Universities,” *Socialist Project*, February 18, 2009, <https://socialistproject.ca/2009/02/b187/>.

¹¹⁰ Ziadah, “Outside the Multicultural,” 137.

¹¹¹ James Cairns and Susan Ferguson, “Political Truths: The Case of Pro-Palestine Discourse in Canada,” in *Apartheid in Palestine: Hard Laws and Harder Experiences*, ed. Ghada Ageel (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2015), 182.

organizations by targeting their funding. In the wake of policy changes by Doug Ford's right-wing government in Ontario, which made it possible for students to opt-out of most student fees, B'nai Brith Canada, Hasbara Fellowships, and StandWithUs Canada launched a joint campaign encouraging all Ontario students to opt-out of their CFS dues. The lobby groups claimed this was an "a unique opportunity to deny funding to one of Canada's most prominent supporters of the antisemitic BDS movement."¹¹² The campaign was also endorsed by an associate director of CIJA in an op-ed for *Canadian Jewish News*, titled "Take a Stand Against Anti-Israel Groups on Campus."¹¹³

In a more systematic effort to suppress BDS campus activity, lobbying by CIJA may have influenced Universities Canada's 2016 decision to update their non-discrimination policy to include protection for "place of origin," which requires its 97 member universities to incorporate this definition into their codes of conduct by 2020. CIJA hopes this policy will be used by university administrators to stop BDS activists, on the basis that CIJA defines BDS actions as "discrimination against Israelis based on their country of origin." A representative for CIJA called the adoption of the policy a "crucial defeat" for BDS, explaining that "this vote by Canada's universities entrenches a zero-tolerance approach to bigotry based on nationality, and CIJA will be working hard to ensure that this policy is used to block BDS efforts."¹¹⁴ However, it is unknown whether universities will attempt to enforce their updated non-discrimination policies in this way,

¹¹² "Attention: Calling All Ontario Students!" B'nai Brith Canada, July 26, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/calling_all_ontario_students.

¹¹³ Sophie Helpard, "Take a Stand Against Anti-Israel Groups on Campus," *Canadian Jewish News*, July 30, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/opinions/helpard-take-a-stand-against-anti-israel-groups-on-campus>.

¹¹⁴ Sheri Shefa, "Groups hope new university policy will stymie BDS," *Canadian Jewish News*, October 28, 2016, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/groups-hope-new-university-policy-will-stymie-bds>.

and it is unlikely that such efforts would succeed, given that this strategy depends on a mis-definition of the BDS movement and its aims, which does not aim to discriminate against individuals based on “place of origin.”¹¹⁵ In a possible precedent, a Texas judge recently blocked an anti-BDS law on the basis that its “prohibition on boycotts of Israel suppresses speech bearing no relation to discrimination on the basis of national origin.”¹¹⁶

Legislative and Legal responses

The pro-Israel lobby has engaged in a number of legislative and legal strategies to suppress BDS activism. One of the main approaches has been to push for official government definitions of antisemitism which include anti-Zionism and some criticism of Israel. In 2009, a group of Parliamentarians formed the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (CPCCA), which adopted a statement called the “Ottawa Protocol on Combatting Antisemitism;” in its definition of antisemitism, it included singling out Israel or denying its right to exist.¹¹⁷ The CPCCA also convened an inquiry panel whose report spent significant attention to campus events including Israeli Apartheid Week, and had included boycott petitions and student protests against Netanyahu in its list of antisemitic incidents.¹¹⁸ The report relied almost exclusively on submissions from pro-Israel lobby groups, while ignoring or dismissing submissions from groups including Independent Jewish Voices, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the

¹¹⁵ See Chapter 9.

¹¹⁶ *Bahia Amawi v Pflugerville Independent School District*, 2019, 27.

¹¹⁷ Specifically, the Ottawa Protocol states: “However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. Let it be clear: Criticism of Israel is not anti-Semitic, and saying so is wrong. But singling Israel out for selective condemnation and opprobrium – let alone denying its right to exist or seeking its destruction – is discriminatory and hateful, and not saying so is dishonest.” See “Ottawa Protocol on Combating Anti-Semitism,” *Canadian Jewish News*, November 11, 2010, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/ottawa-protocol-combating-anti-semitism>.

¹¹⁸ Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism, “Report of the Inquiry Panel,” no date, <http://www.cp-cca.ca/inquiry-panel/>.

Middle East, and Faculty 4 Palestine. Many of these critical submissions were published in a volume edited by Michael Keefer.¹¹⁹

More recently, the pro-Israel lobby has been pushing for the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.¹²⁰ CIJA, which is a member of the IHRA group, has wanted the definition to be adopted by all levels of government and to be used in the investigation of hate crimes. In its policy brief, CIJA notes that according the IHRA definition “some rhetoric toward Israel could be considered forms of antisemitism,” including “denying the right of the Jewish people to self-determination by claiming Israel’s existence is a racist endeavour”, and “demanding that Israel uphold standards expected of no other democratic nation.”¹²¹ Speaking to me in 2018, Mira Sucharov argued that this definition is “problematic” as it “locks in anti-Zionism as antisemitism,” but that it is therefore “not surprising” that it would be welcomed by “Zionists of all stripes.”¹²² Independent Jewish Voices signed an open letter with over 40 other Jewish groups internationally to reject the IHRA definition, warning that it “is worded in such a way as to be easily adopted or considered by western governments to intentionally equate legitimate criticisms of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian rights with antisemitism, as a means to suppress the former.”¹²³

The pro-Israel lobby got its way on June 25, 2019, when the Trudeau government

¹¹⁹ Keefer, Michael, ed., *Antisemitism Real and Imagined: Responses to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism* (Waterloo, Ontario: Canadian Charger, 2010).

¹²⁰ See Chapter 9.

¹²¹ “Policy Brief: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, June 12, 2019, <https://cija.ca/policy-brief-ihra-defining-antisemitism/>.

¹²² Sucharov, interview.

¹²³ “First-Ever: 40+ Jewish Groups Worldwide Oppose Equating Antisemitism with Criticism of Israel,” Jewish Voice for Peace, July 17, 2018, <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/first-ever-40-jewish-groups-worldwide-oppose-equating-antisemitism-with-criticism-of-israel/>.

announced its intention to adopt the IHRA definition across government, as part of its anti-racism strategy.¹²⁴ Troublingly, the definition’s main proponents have been pushing a broad interpretation of the IHRA which would apply to most Palestinian solidarity organizing. In CIJA’s press release, board co-chair Jeffrey Rosenthal was quoted as saying that the IHRA definition “explicitly recognizes that anti-Zionism – that is the delegitimization and demonization of the Jewish state – is a clear and unequivocal expression of antisemitism.”¹²⁵ In the *Canadian Jewish News*, Liberal MPs Anthony Housefather and Michael Levitt specifically pointed to Israel Apartheid Week and the BDS movement as examples of Palestinian solidarity that would be considered antisemitic under the IHRA.¹²⁶ These explicit references to anti-Zionism are not outliers, but are consistent with Trudeau’s statement on Israel Independence Day in 2017 which boasted that Canada “reaffirm[s] our commitment to fight anti-Semitism *and anti-Zionism*.”¹²⁷ Although it is not clear how the IHRA will be implemented or utilized, this language from key proponents suggests a direct threat to activists and the right to dissent. As such, the IHRA has been “strongly oppose[d]” by the BC Civil Liberties Association and the Ontario Civil Liberties Association,¹²⁸ and the New Democratic Party fears the

¹²⁴ “Canadian government adopts IHRA definition,” *Canadian Jewish News*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/canadian-government-adopts-ihra-definition-of-anti-semitism>.

¹²⁵ “Press Release: CIJA Applauds Integration of IHRA Definition into Canada’s New Anti-Racism Strategy,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, June 25, 2019, <https://cija.ca/press-release-cija-applauds-integration-of-ihra/>.

¹²⁶ Anthony Housefather and Michael Levitt, “Housefather & Levitt: Why Canada’s adopting the IHRA definition of anti-semitism,” *Canadian Jewish News*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/opinions/housefather-levitt-why-canadas-adopting-the-ihra-definition-of-anti-semitism>.

¹²⁷ “Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada on Israel Independence Day,” Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, May 2, 2017, <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/05/02/statement-prime-minister-canada-israel-independence-day>, emphasis mine.

¹²⁸ British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, “The BCCLA opposes the international campaign to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of antisemitism,” June 18, 2019, https://bccla.org/our_work/the-bccla-opposes-the-international-campaign-to-adopt-the-international-

IHRA “could be a threat for people who legitimately denounce grave human rights abuses by the government of Israel against Palestinians.”¹²⁹

The international pro-Israel lobby has also been pushing for legislation that would concretely suppress BDS activity. This strategy was first proposed at the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism (GFCA), a meeting convened by Israel’s Ministry of Strategic Affairs; recent participants in the GFCA have included CIJA, B’nai Brith Canada, and sitting Canadian cabinet ministers and senators. In the inaugural meeting in 2009, a GFCA anti-BDS working group proposed the idea of developing “legislative prohibitions” on BDS, and over the next several meetings GFCA task forces proposed identifying and pursuing legislation that could be imposed to stop BDS.¹³⁰ This strategy is being aggressively pursued in the United States, where as of April 2019 anti-BDS laws have been adopted by 27 states, and in at least three cases these have been struck down by federal courts for violating free speech.¹³¹ One investigation found that in many cases pro-Israel lobbyists were directly providing lawmakers with “copy and paste” bills and executive orders, which were adopted by Capitols almost word for word.¹³² These state-level anti-BDS efforts have tended to focus on the “regulation of state contracts” and

holocaust-remembrance-association-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/; Ontario Civil Liberties Association, “OCLA opposes the international campaign to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of antisemitism,” June 19, 2019, <http://ocla.ca/ocla-opposes-the-international-campaign-to-adopt-the-international-holocaust-remembrance-association-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/>.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Maura Forrest, “There’s a debate over Canada’s new definition of anti-Semitism, and it might sound strangely familiar,” *National Post*, June 27, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/theres-a-debate-over-canadas-new-definition-of-anti-semitism-and-it-might-sound-strangely-familiar>.

¹³⁰ Ahmad, White, and Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” 7.

¹³¹ “Anti-Boycott Legislation Around the Country,” Palestine Legal, no date, accessed April 29, 2019 <https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott>.

¹³² Liz Essley Whyte, “One way to silence Israel boycotts? Get lawmakers to pass anti-BDS bills,” *USA Today* (with Center for Public Integrity), May 1, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2019/05/01/statehouse-model-bills-bds-protest-bans/3575083002/>.

“prohibiting financial state ties with companies who might comply with the boycott.”¹³³ Such laws have been used to force state divestment from Danske Bank over its social responsible investment policies,¹³⁴ to threaten legal action against AirBnb for its decision to boycott West Bank settlements,¹³⁵ and to force state contractors and vendors (including speech pathologists, translators, and debate judges) to sign an oath stating that they will not boycott Israel.¹³⁶ However, not everyone within the pro-Israel community is convinced about this strategy. The internal ADL and Reut report questioned how far this type of anti-BDS legislation should be pursued, noting that these state-level initiatives have “raised concerns regarding their possible violation of free speech,” and arguing that future legislation needs to carefully consider this issue to “avoid the potential for rallying progressive groups in coordinated opposition” and alienating soft critics.¹³⁷

Even more contentious are initiatives at the U.S. Federal level, where Congress is currently debating a bi-partisan anti-BDS bill that would impose “criminal penalties” on citizens who boycott Israel.¹³⁸ In this case, the “Israel Anti-Boycott Act” would build upon existing anti-boycott legislation from 1977, which was designed to prevent US

¹³³ Ahmad, White, and Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” 7.

¹³⁴ “New Jersey divests from Danish bank to comply with state anti-BDS law,” *Times of Israel*, January 14, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/new-jersey-divests-from-danish-bank-to-comply-with-state-anti-bds-law/>.

¹³⁵ Gray Rohrer, “Florida leaders blast Airbnb over West Bank rental ban,” *Orlando Sentinel*, November 29, 2018 <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/politics/os-ne-airbnb-israel-florida-20181128-story.html>.

¹³⁶ Emanuella Grinberg and Janet DiGiacomo, “ACLU sues Texas over law that says contractors can’t boycott Israel,” CNN, December 20, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/19/us/aclu-lawsuit-texas-israel-anti-boycott-law/index.html>; “Third Federal Court Blocks Anti-BDS Law as Unconstitutional,” ACLU, April 25, 2019, <https://www.aclu.org/news/third-federal-court-blocks-anti-bds-law-unconstitutional>.

¹³⁷ ADL and Reut, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy,” 22.

¹³⁸ Kate Ruane, “Congress is Trying to use the Spending Bill to Criminalize Boycotts of Israel,” ACLU, December 10, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/free-speech/rights-protesters/congress-trying-use-spending-bill-criminalize-boycotts-israel-and>; Ahmad, White, and Bennis, “Shrinking Space and the BDS Movement,” 8-9.

companies from complying with the Arab League’s boycott of Israel.¹³⁹ Defending the Act in the *Washington Post*, Greenblatt and Eizenstatt explain that it would “extend the 1977 law to international organizations, such as the United Nations or even the European Union” and therefore prevent American individuals or companies from boycotting Israel “at the behest of international governmental organizations, just as they are now prohibited from doing at the behest of Arab nations.”¹⁴⁰ This application does not make much sense, considering that the Arab League boycott was enforced by states and had compelled companies to adopt a boycott in order to sign business contracts, whereas BDS is a voluntary request from civil society actors. Moreover, the ACLU warns that the Act is unconstitutional, and that if passed, “failure to comply with the ban could carry criminal penalties of up to \$1 million,” although the penalties of jail time of up to ten years have been removed from recent versions of the Act.¹⁴¹ Once again, the Act is highly controversial even within the pro-Israel lobby; J Street has urged its members to lobby members of Congress against it,¹⁴² and even though the ADL is promoting the Act in public, an internal memo from 2016 reveals that ADL staff considered anti-BDS laws “ineffective, unworkable, unconstitutional, and bad for the Jewish community.”¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Takriti, “Before BDS,” 79.

¹⁴⁰ Jonathan A. Greenblatt and Stuart Eizenstat, “It’s time to update America’s important anti-boycott law for Israel,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/its-time-to-update-americas-important-anti-boycott-law-for-israel/2017/09/12/4a196a70-9728-11e7-b569-3360011663b4_story.html.

¹⁴¹ Kate Ruane, “Congress is Trying to use the Spending Bill to Criminalize Boycotts of Israel,” ACLU, December 10, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/free-speech/rights-protesters/congress-trying-use-spending-bill-criminalize-boycotts-israel-and>.

¹⁴² “Tell Congress: Oppose Anti-BDS Legislation that Helps the Settlements and Harms Free Speech,” J Street, no date (ca. 2019), <https://act.jstreet.org/sign/tell-congress-oppose-anti-bds-legislation-helps-settlements-and-harms-free-speech/>.

¹⁴³ Josh Nathan-Kazis, “Revealed: Secret ADL Memo Slammed Anti-BDS Laws as ‘Harmful’ to Jews,” *Forward*, December 13, 2019, <https://forward.com/news/416030/revealed-secret-adl-memo-slammed-anti-bds-laws-as-harmful-to-jews/>.

In Canada, the pro-Israel lobby made several efforts throughout 2016 to put anti-BDS initiatives on the legislative agenda. In May 2016, the Ontario legislature defeated 39-18 Bill 202, titled the “Standing Up Against Anti-Semitism in Ontario Act,” which had been drafted by FSWC president Avi Benlolo.¹⁴⁴ Similar to U.S. anti-BDS laws, the bill would have prevented the Ontario government from entering into a contract with any person or entity who supports the BDS movement, as well as preventing public pension funds or university foundations from supporting or participating in BDS (presumably, preventing them from making divestment decisions consistent with BDS), or from investing in an entity that supports BDS. In a sleight of hand, the bill incorrectly defined the BDS movement in a way that characterized it as antisemitic, namely: “as the political movement whose primary purpose is to boycott, divest from and apply sanctions against Israel *and various persons, corporations, businesses and cultural institutions that are Israeli, owned by Jewish Canadians or affiliated with Jewish Canadians or with Israel.*”¹⁴⁵ Interestingly, CIJA and B’nai Brith did not directly give their support to Bill 202, but released a joint statement commending both the movers of the bill and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne (who opposed the motion) for their “multi-party denunciations” of BDS.¹⁴⁶

Despite the failure of Bill 202, pro-Israel advocates were able to pass non-binding motions condemning BDS in both the Federal and Ontario legislatures that same year. On

¹⁴⁴ Sheri Shefa, “Anti-BDS bill defeated at Queen’s Park,” *Canadian Jewish News*, May 20, 2016, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/anti-bds-bill-defeated-at-queens-park>.

¹⁴⁵ Bill 202, *Standing Up Against Anti-Semitism in Ontario Act*, 1st Reading May 17, 2016, 41st Parliament, 1st session, http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&Intranet=&BillID=4020., emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶ “CIJA and B’nai Brith Commend Ontario’s Leaders for Strengthening Ties with Israel, Speaking out Against BDS,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, May 19, 2016, <https://cija.ca/press-release-bds-commend-ontarios-leaders-for-strengthening-ties-with-israel-speaking-out-against-bds/>.

February 22, Canada's House of Commons passed 229-51 an opposition motion to reject the BDS movement, and to "call upon the government to condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad."¹⁴⁷ CIJA, JSpaceCanada, B'nai Brith, and FSWC all expressed support for the motion leading up to the vote.¹⁴⁸ During debate, Conservative MP Peter Kent announced his intentions of going further and initiating private members' legislation that would ban public universities from participating in boycotts of Israel.¹⁴⁹ Later, on December 1, the Ontario legislature passed 49-5 a private members' motion to "reject" BDS;¹⁵⁰ CIJA had drafted a petition in support of the motion, and spoke alongside its sponsors at a press conference prior to the vote.¹⁵¹ The debate in support of both motions

¹⁴⁷ Full text: "That, given Canada and Israel share a long history of friendship as well as economic and diplomatic relations, the House reject the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which promotes the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel, and call upon the government to condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement, both here at home and abroad." *Opposition Motion — Israel*. 42nd Parliament, 1st Session. February 22, 2016.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Lungen, "Anti-BDS motion backed by Liberals, Tories in Parliament," *Canadian Jewish News*, February 19, 2016, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/anti-bds-motion-backed-by-liberals-tories-in-parliament>.

¹⁴⁹ "I considered putting a private member's bill before the House that would condemn BDS. Such a bill would compel the administrations of publicly funded institutions across Canada to take firm actions against all forms of hate speech. It would also encourage development, through the appropriate committees of our Parliament, of legislation that would bar publicly funded higher learning institutions from boycotting Israeli goods and services, in line with the Government of Canada's own trade agreements with the State of Israel." Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 18 February 2016 (Peter Kent, CPC), <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=42&Ses=1&DocId=8105393&File=0#Int-8795079>.

¹⁵⁰ Full text of the motion: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should: stand firmly against any position or movement that promotes or encourages any form of hatred, hostility, prejudice, racism and intolerance in any way; recognize the longstanding, vibrant and mutually beneficial political, economic and cultural ties between Ontario and Israel, built on a foundation of shared liberal democratic values; endorse the Ottawa Protocol on Combatting Antisemitism; and reject the differential treatment of Israel, including the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement." Motion 36, *Support for Israel*, December 1, 2016, 41st Parliament, 2nd Session, <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-41/session-2/2016-12-01/votes-proceedings#tidyout>.

¹⁵¹ Ron Csillag, "Ontario passes motion rejecting BDS campaign against Israel," *Canadian Jewish News*, December 1, 2016, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/ontario-passes-motion-rejecting-bds-campaign-against-israel>.

was characterized by politicians frequently mischaracterizing the BDS movement as anti-Jewish hatred and as discrimination based on national origin.

To date, there has been no real movement in Canada towards imposing criminal or civil penalties upon supporters of BDS. In 2015, there was significant concern that the Harper Government's "zero tolerance" approach to BDS, in the context of a recent Canada-Israel memorandum of understanding which committed Canada to oppose criticism of Israel, could pose a threat to freedom of expression,¹⁵² and in response 75 civil society organizations published an open letter opposing any attempts to "criminalize" BDS or other forms of dissent.¹⁵³ A CBC report even suggested that the government might start using hate crime laws against BDS activists, although this was dismissed by the government as a "conspiracy theory."¹⁵⁴ In the end these fears were not realized, although this is possibly due to a change in government later that year. Nonetheless, B'nai Brith's website includes a policy recommendation to develop legislation along the lines of Israel's to allow "civil action" against anyone who calls for a boycott,¹⁵⁵ and their recommendations in the 2019 federal election included asking all parties to "support the adoption and implementation of legislative initiatives preventing

¹⁵² "Freedom of Expression and the Canada/Israel Relationship," Amnesty International, May 4, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/freedom-of-expression-and-the-canadaisrael-relationship>.

¹⁵³ "IJV-Initiated Statement Defending The Right To Criticize The State Of Israel Gets 75 Organizational Endorsement," Independent Jewish Voices Canada, no date, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://ijvcanada.org/2015/ijv-initiated-statement-defending-the-right-to-criticize-the-state-of-israel-gets-75-organizational-endorsements/>.

¹⁵⁴ Neil Macdonald, "Ottawa cites hate crime laws when asked about its 'zero tolerance' for Israel boycotters," *CBC News*, May 11, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ottawa-cites-hate-crime-laws-when-asked-about-its-zero-tolerance-for-israel-boycotters-1.3067497>; Amy Minsky, "Suggesting use of hate laws against Israel boycotts is 'conspiracy theory,' feds say," *Global News*, May 11, 2015, <https://globalnews.ca/news/1991748/report-suggesting-hate-laws-to-be-used-against-israel-boycotts-is-conspiracy-theory-feds-say/>.

¹⁵⁵ "Anti-Israel Boycott Movement," B'nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, https://www.bnairbrith.ca/bs_movement.

racist boycott activities such as BDS,” and to “work to prevent BDS-related activities from taking place on public property.”¹⁵⁶ Finally, it is possible that political conditions could become favourable to a more repressive agenda, particularly with the arrival of hard-line conservative governments in Ontario and Alberta, and an unstable Liberal minority government at the federal level.

It is also worth noting that unlike in the US, Canada does not have federal anti-Arab Boycott laws which could be extended to apply to BDS. Although in the late 1970s Canada introduced a bill that would require companies to report any boycott requests from foreign governments, this failed to pass due to an election in 1979.¹⁵⁷ At the provincial level, however, Ontario passed anti-boycott legislation in 1978, which prohibited Ontario businesses or individuals from agreeing to “discriminatory boycott provisions,” and placed fines of up to \$5000 for individuals and \$50,000 for corporations who violated the ban.¹⁵⁸ This legislation was replicated by Manitoba in 1986.¹⁵⁹ As this legislation is still on the books, B’nai Brith claims that BDS is technically already illegal (though not enforced) in the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba.¹⁶⁰

Finally, there has been an upsurge in the pro-Israel lobby’s use of legal initiatives to

¹⁵⁶ B’nai Brith Canada, “2019 Elections Guide,” September 13, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/elections_guide_launch_2019, 12.

¹⁵⁷ Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 113. In Canada, the Arab Boycott was widely considered by the political class to be discriminatory, and was characterized as extortion or a violation of Canadian sovereignty, although the Arab League of Canada insisted that the boycott was a “legitimate weapon of self-defence,” and that it was not anti-Jewish, but anti-Zionist. Howard J. Stanislawski, “Elites, Domestic Interest Groups, and International Interests in the Canadian Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process: The Arab Economic Boycott of Canadians and Canadian Companies Doing Business With Israel,” (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1981), 214-7.

¹⁵⁸ Stanislawski, “Elites, Domestic Interest Groups, and International Interests,” 305.

¹⁵⁹ A. J. Withers, “Boycotting Apartheid: Ontario’s 50 Year Long Attack on the Campaign for Palestinian Rights,” *The Bullet (Socialist Project)*, December 8, 2016, <http://socialistproject.ca/bullet/1338.php>.

¹⁶⁰ “Anti-Israel Boycott Movement,” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/bs_movement.

stop BDS activity. In the United States, groups like the Lawfare Project initiate lawsuits against businesses, universities, and students, in order to shut down or deter BDS activities. As the Lawfare Project's director said in 2016, "the goal is to make the enemy pay ... and to send a message, a deterrent message, that similar actions such as those that [BDS activists] engage in will result in massive punishments."¹⁶¹ Similarly, StandWithUs also provides "legal support for combating anti-Israel activity," and recently opened a legal department with over 140 "pro bono attorneys across the US."¹⁶² Palestine Legal claims that while these lawsuits have been mostly unsuccessful, they "nevertheless exact a significant emotional and financial toll" and are intended to suppress advocacy.¹⁶³ This has been less common in Canada, with a couple of exceptions: in 2017, a student at the University of British Columbia filed a petition to stop a BDS referendum from being held by the UBC student union, but this was rejected by the B.C. Supreme Court.¹⁶⁴ According to Lascarus, this was likely the first time that such litigation was attempted in Canada.¹⁶⁵ In a somewhat different case in 2016, Hasbara Fellowships filed a human rights complaint against the UOIT student association after being denied tabling space to the university's "Social Justice Fair," due to its character as a pro-Israel advocacy group. They reached an out of court settlement the following year, which included an apology

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Ali Abunimah, "Israel law fare group plans 'massive punishments' for activists," *Electronic Intifada*, June 25, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/israel-lawfare-group-plans-massive-punishments-activists>.

¹⁶² "StandWithUs Saidoff Legal," StandWithUs, no date, accessed May 1, 2019, <http://www.standwithus.com/legal/>.

¹⁶³ "The Issue: Suppression of Palestine Activism," Palestine Legal, no date, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://palestinelegal.org/about-the-issue>.

¹⁶⁴ Lauren Kramer, "B.C. Supreme Court denies petition to stop BDS vote at UBC," *Canadian Jewish News*, March 31, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/b-c-supreme-court-denies-petition-stop-bds-vote-ubc>.

¹⁶⁵ Lascarus, interview.

from the student association.¹⁶⁶ Mariam Nokerah, a student with SJP at UOIT who spoke to me prior to the settlement, described Hasbara Fellowship's actions as "legal bullying," and says it took an emotional toll on activists and negatively impacted the ability of SJP to organize. As she tells me, "there was nothing discriminatory about the decision [to deny space to Hasbara Fellowships]" and that the "whole point of that lawsuit [was] basically to discourage people from being involved" in BDS activism.¹⁶⁷

Smear Campaigns

Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights argue that "the primary tool in the arsenal of Israel advocacy organizations is public vilification of supporters of Palestinian rights ... as antisemitic or pro-terrorism."¹⁶⁸ This is, it would seem, an official strategy: in 2010 the Reut Institute's influential report recommended "Establishing a 'Price Tag'" to make criticizing Israel "a more risky enterprise,"¹⁶⁹ and this has been echoed by the Israeli government itself; Minister Erdan warned in 2016 that BDS supporters should "know that there will be a price" for their activism,¹⁷⁰ and an official of the MSA told an audience in 2017 that "If you want to promote boycotts against Israel, be my guest, it's your right. But there will be a price tag."¹⁷¹ Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz even suggested that Israeli intelligence should engage in "targeted civil

¹⁶⁶ Sheri Shefa, "Hasbara reaches settlement with UOIT student association," *Canadian Jewish News*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/hasbara-reaches-settlement-uoit-student-association>.

¹⁶⁷ Nokerah, interview.

¹⁶⁸ Palestine Legal and CCR, "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech," 17.

¹⁶⁹ Reut Institute, "Building a Political Firewall: Against Israel's Delegitimization," 74.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man, "Senior Israeli minister: Make BDS activists in Israel 'pay a price,'" *+972 Magazine*, June 16, 2016, <https://972mag.com/senior-israeli-minister-says-working-to-make-bds-activists-in-israel-pay-a-price/120084/>.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Philip Weiss, "'Want to boycott Israel? Be my guest, there will be a pricetag' - Israeli official warns Europe," *Mondoweiss*, November 15, 2017, <https://mondoweiss.net/2017/11/boycott-pricetag-official/>.

eliminations” of BDS leaders.¹⁷² This “price tag” strategy was qualified slightly by the ADL & Reut in their 2017 report, proposing that while BDS “instigators” should be handled “uncompromisingly, publicly or covertly as appropriate,” other less prominent critics should be engaged and won over.¹⁷³

In Canada, many actors within the pro-Israel lobby work both publicly and behind the scenes to disparage BDS activists, in an attempt to prevent other organizations from hosting or partnering with them. Tyler Levitan says that B’nai Brith has been engaging in a smear campaign against IJV by reaching out to church partners and student governments to spread lies about them.¹⁷⁴ Mariam Nokerah confirms that B’nai Brith had sent private letters “slandering” IJV to the UOIT student union because they had supported SJP’s BDS campaign.¹⁷⁵ When a number of organizations including Mennonite Central Committee and Independent Jewish Voices sponsored an event in Winnipeg with Palestinian speaker Naim Ateek in 2018, the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg sent a letter to Canadian Mennonite University, which hosted the event, issuing their “strong objections” to the idea that the campus would give a platform to a proponent of the “toxic” BDS movement, and writing that “many in the Winnipeg Jewish community can only conclude that local Mennonite institutions are not only hypocritical but also plagued by an unhealthy, obsessive hostility toward the world’s only Jewish state.”¹⁷⁶ B’nai Brith Canada called for the revocation of the charitable status of the Friends of Sabeel Canada,

¹⁷² Quoted in Mairav Zonszein, “In Israel, BDS is winning,” *+972 Magazine*, March 28, 2016, <https://972mag.com/in-israel-bds-is-winning/118198/>.

¹⁷³ ADL and Reut, “The Assault on Israel’s Legitimacy,” 26.

¹⁷⁴ Levitan, interview.

¹⁷⁵ Nokerah, interview.

¹⁷⁶ “Response to the Canadian Mennonite University hosted event on April 25th,” Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, April 23, 2018, <https://www.jewishwinnipeg.org/news/advocacy-israel/community-relations-news/response-to-cmu>.

which had sponsored the cross-Canada tour,¹⁷⁷ and Esther Epp-Tiessen recalls that MCC received a letter from B'nai Brith after the event which labelled Ateek as antisemitic.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, when U.S. Muslim activist Linda Sarsour was invited to speak in Toronto in 2018, groups including CIJA and B'nai Brith called on the conference to rescind the invitation or bar her from entering Canada altogether, although JSpaceCanada spoke against these proposals,¹⁷⁹ and Sarsour's presence at a panel in Winnipeg in 2019 was protested by the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, B'nai Brith, and even Mayor Brian Bowman, who accused her of propagating "anti-Semitic views and hate" and saying that "she has continually attacked the foundation of the state of Israel's right to exist."¹⁸⁰ In a more extreme case, CIJA and B'nai Brith successfully led calls for elementary school teacher Nadia Shoufani to be suspended from her teaching job after speaking at an Al Quds rally in 2016, claiming that she "glorified" terrorism;¹⁸¹ she returned to her job after a year-long investigation which found that she had not breached professional conduct.¹⁸²

Levitan argues that cases like these demonstrate coordinated attempts to "set an example" of activists, destroying their careers and ruining them publicly.¹⁸³ During the Human Rights Tribunal case at UOIT, SJP members were "slandered ... all over the

¹⁷⁷ Ran Ukashi and Aidan Fishman, "Canadian Charity Promotes Antisemitic Book Tour," B'nai Brith Canada, April 27, 2018, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/canadian_charity_promotes_antisemitic_book_tour.

¹⁷⁸ Epp-Tiessen, interview.

¹⁷⁹ Paul Lungen, "Jewish groups call for activist Linda Sarsour to be banned from Canadian speaking event," *Canadian Jewish News*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/jewish-groups-call-for-activist-linda-sarsour-to-be-banned-from-canadian-speaking-event>.

¹⁸⁰ Quoted in Bartley Kives, "Mayor calls for removal of American activist from Winnipeg panel," *CBC News*, April 23, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-mayor-sarsour-1.5107583>.

¹⁸¹ Jodie Shupac, "Peel teacher suspended for anti-Israel speech at Al-Quds rally," *Canadian Jewish News*, August 9, 2016, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/peel-teacher-suspended-for-anti-israel-speech-at-al-quds-rally>.

¹⁸² Ali Abunimah, "Canadian teacher wins against effort to have her fired," *Electronic Intifada*, September 19, 2017, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/canadian-teacher-wins-against-israel-lobby-effort-have-her-fired>.

¹⁸³ Levitan, interview.

media,” with personal attacks featuring their images, making them feel shamed and vilified.¹⁸⁴ Lascarus says he faced multiple accusations from B’nai Brith that he was a “supporter of terrorism” because of his support for Palestinian solidarity groups,¹⁸⁵ and he is currently suing B’nai Brith for defamation.¹⁸⁶ Those in the solidarity movement believe that this aggressive targeting of individual BDS supporters has been successful in discouraging people from getting involved; as Lascarus says, “I can deal with these [attacks] because I’m retired and economically secure, but most people can’t survive those kinds of attacks, especially students with their whole careers ahead of them.”¹⁸⁷ Levitan agrees that the attacks on BDS supporters prevents IJV from reaching more people, as nobody wants to set themselves up as a target.¹⁸⁸ Lina Assi explains: “I know a lot of friends who want to be involved with Palestinian activism but are too scared to engaged with it, because of job prospects, or what people will think of them. There’s just an atmosphere of fear, and issues of security with Palestinian activism.”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Steve Berube laments that the backlash to his activism has taken a personal toll, as he was labelled an antisemite and lost many of his previous Jewish friends, “which was incredibly painful.”¹⁹⁰

These efforts to target individual BDS activists are assisted by the recent development of blacklist websites like Canary Mission, which anonymously publishes

¹⁸⁴ Nokerah, interview.

¹⁸⁵ Lascarus, interview.

¹⁸⁶ Jane Stevenson, “Ontario Court of Appeal rules defamation suit against B’nai Brith can proceed,” *Grande Prairie Daily Herald Tribune*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.dailyheraldtribune.com/news/local-news/ontario-court-of-appeal-rules-defamation-suit-against-bnai-brith-can-proceed/wcm/21148e67-a919-43cf-bfb8-37b1905f05a2>.

¹⁸⁷ Lascarus, interview.

¹⁸⁸ Levitan, interview.

¹⁸⁹ Assi, interview.

¹⁹⁰ Berube, interview.

lengthy and salacious profiles on students and professors engaged in pro-Palestinian activism, scouring social media history in an attempt to frame and harass them as antisemitic or supporters of terrorism.¹⁹¹ The funding and identities of the individuals behind Canary Mission are kept secret, although reporting by Al Jazeera has tied the organization to Adam Milstein, a prominent donor to pro-Israel organizations,¹⁹² and the *Forward* reported that the website has secretly received significant funding from major Jewish federations.¹⁹³ Although the targets of Canary Mission are primarily American, a number of Canadians have also been profiled; in 2017, the website released a report profiling 39 individuals supposedly involved with Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) at McMaster University, alleging that then-SPHR president Lina Assi “regularly expresses support for terrorists and terrorism.”¹⁹⁴ The report also focused on old antisemitic tweets by several individuals, including several tweets that praised Hitler, which led to a major media scandal and a university investigation; meanwhile, SPHR condemned the tweets as “vile” and “intolerable,” and claimed that some of the tweets came from individuals who were not affiliated with the organization, while others were from executives who “have long shed anti-Semitic sentiments” and have become more

¹⁹¹ Canary Mission does sometimes discover examples of bigoted or antisemitic remarks, often social media comments that were made by student activists when they were high school students. More often, however, Canary Mission’s characterizations are based on distorting or exaggerating anti-Israel or pro-BDS remarks. See Alex Kane, “‘It’s killing the student movement’: Canary Mission’s blacklist of pro-Palestine activists is taking a toll,” *The Intercept*, November 22, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/11/22/israel-boycott-canary-mission-blacklist/>.

¹⁹² Asa Winstanley and Ali Abunimah, “Censored film names Adam Milstein as Canary Mission funder,” *Electronic Intifada*, August 27, 2018, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/censored-film-names-adam-milstein-canary-mission-funder/25356>.

¹⁹³ Josh Nathan-Kazis, “Revealed: Canary Mission blacklist is secretly bankrolled by major Jewish federation,” *Forward*, October 3, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/national/411355/revealed-canary-mission-blacklist-is-secretly-bankrolled-by-major-jewish/>.

¹⁹⁴ Canary Mission, “Report on McMaster University,” December 2017, <https://canarymission.org/campaign/mcmaster>.

educated on the issues.¹⁹⁵ Prior to the publication of the report Assi had already been profiled by Canary Mission, and she told me about how she was disturbed to find that they were somehow using information from her private social media accounts.¹⁹⁶ She calls the website “McCarthyite,” and says that for a lot of Palestinian students “if they were put on Canary Mission they would stop their activism, and that’s exactly what the website wants to do.”¹⁹⁷ Reporting from the *Intercept* shows that many students targeted by the website suffer “anxiety and paranoia,” and quotes one student activist as saying that Canary Mission is “killing the student movement.”¹⁹⁸ Similar to the case of anti-BDS legislation, the heavy-handed and confrontational nature of Canary Mission has made it controversial even within the pro-Israel lobby; in 2018, an open letter signed by three Hillels, six campus pro-Israel organizations, and 107 individual students condemned Canary Mission and its intimidation tactics as “antithetical and destructive” to their cause of supporting Israel, going so far as to say that “much of the rhetoric employed to villainize these individuals [is] hateful and, in some cases, Islamophobic and racist,” and arguing that Canary Mission “wrongfully” equates support for BDS with “some of the most virulent expressions of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel rhetoric and activity.”¹⁹⁹ Max Samarov of StandWithUs also tells me that his organization does not support the practice

¹⁹⁵ Andrew Dreschel, “McMaster University completes probe in anti-Semitic remarks,” *Hamilton Spectator*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/8288868-mcmaster-university-completes-probe-into-anti-semitic-remarks/>.

¹⁹⁶ Assi, interview.

¹⁹⁷ Assi, interview.

¹⁹⁸ Alex Kane, “‘It’s killing the student movement’: Canary Mission’s blacklist of pro-Palestine activists is taking a toll,” *The Intercept*, November 22, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/11/22/israel-boycott-canary-mission-blacklist/>.

¹⁹⁹ Gabrielle Roth and Joseph Goldberg, “Jewish students: a blacklist of BDS supporters is hurting our efforts to defend Israel on campus,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 23, 2018, <https://www.jta.org/2018/04/23/opinion/jewish-students-blacklist-bds-supporters-hurting-efforts-defend-israel-campus>.

of targeting someone based on political debate, and that some of the pro-Israel students they work with believe that Canary Mission's tactics have gone too far. However, he also believes that the website has exposed "some truly vile racism and antisemitism," and that "those people should be held accountable."²⁰⁰

Finally, the practice of "naming and shaming" is also regularly used by the pro-Israel lobby to target funding to Palestinian causes and civil society. The "watchdog" organization NGO Monitor plays a role in tracking the pro-Palestinian activities of Canadian charities, as well as government funding to Palestinian civil society groups. It boasts of "working closely" with CIJA to lobby the Canadian government on increasing "oversight" of its funding to NGOs,²⁰¹ and its advisory board includes Canadian Senator Linda Frum and former Canadian Ambassador to Israel Vivian Bercovici.²⁰² The organization produces detailed profiles on the finances and activities of organizations including the United Church and Mennonite Central Committee, which involve allegations of support for BDS and even connections to terrorist organizations (often via association of Palestinian partners). The Israeli collective *Policy Working Group* has criticized NGO Monitor for its "recklessness, means of deception and bad faith," alleging that it "fabricate[s] grave allegations against a vast number of Palestinian NGOs and their employees and board members, in order to fatally damage their reputation and credibility and embarrass their donors."²⁰³ Esther Epp-Tiessen recalls how NGO Monitor stirred up

²⁰⁰ Samarov, interview.

²⁰¹ NGO Monitor, "Annual Report 2018," December 18, 2018, http://www.ngo-monitor.org/pdf/2018AnnualReport_Web.pdf, 31; see also "Frequently Asked Questions," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, January 31, 2019, <https://cija.ca/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>.

²⁰² NGO Monitor, "Annual Report 2018," December 18, 2018, http://www.ngo-monitor.org/pdf/2018AnnualReport_Web.pdf, 67.

²⁰³ Policy Working Group, "NGO Monitor: Shrinking Space: Defaming human rights organizations that criticize the Israeli occupation," September 2018, http://policyworkinggroup.org.il/report_en.pdf, 39.

a backlash by criticizing one of MCC's partner organizations as "anti-Israel," which led some of their more conservative constituents to make angry calls to MCC provincial directors.²⁰⁴ NGO Monitor's profiles also contribute to the ongoing campaigns by other pro-Israel groups and by politicians to end government funding for Palestinian projects, including UNRWA and the Palestinian civil society organization Wi'am.²⁰⁵ These campaigns have had mixed success; while the pro-Israel lobby has not been able to dissuade Trudeau from re-establishing funding to UNRWA, their complaints have been able to convince the Canadian government to defund or otherwise undermine the activities of many charities supporting Palestinians, particularly under the Harper government.²⁰⁶

Excluding pro-BDS and Non- or Anti-Zionist Jews from Institutional Jewish Spaces

One important feature of the pro-Israel lobby's crackdown on BDS has been to sideline and marginalize Jewish supporters of the BDS movement, which is significant because Jewish activists are key figures within the movement in Canada. Independent Jewish Voices plays an important role in the movement by engaging in coalition work and providing support for the initiatives of other activists and organizations;²⁰⁷ they have been involved in supporting many campaigns by unions, churches, and student groups, and groups like MCC are happy to work with IJV as Jewish partners who have similar

²⁰⁴ Epp-Tiessen, interview.

²⁰⁵ See Ron Csillag, "Canada commits \$50 million more to UNRWA," *Canadian Jewish News*, October 15, 2018, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/canada-commits-50-million-more-to-unrwa>; Ron Csillag, "Sen. Frum calls out taxpayer dollars supporting BDS," *Canadian Jewish News*, April 18, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/sen-frum-calls-out-taxpayer-dollars-supporting-bds>.

²⁰⁶ See Jeremy Wildeman, "Undermining the Democratic Process: The Canadian Government Suppression of Palestinian Development Aid Projects," *Canadian Journal for Middle East Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017).

²⁰⁷ Levitan, interview.

political persuasions.²⁰⁸ The role of Jewish activists within the BDS movement has something of a strategic importance; as Zinman acknowledges, his perceived “Jewish authenticity” gives him more leeway to talk about these issues and face minimal repercussions, compared to other non-Jewish activists.²⁰⁹ When CUPE Ontario passed its BDS resolution, Nastovski says it was important that Jewish members spoke in favour of the resolution, as it emphasized to other members that “this isn't about antisemitism, this is about oppression and justice,”²¹⁰ and when CUPE BC issued an educational booklet about Israel’s “apartheid wall,” they made sure to include a preface from the “Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians” welcoming the publication.²¹¹

It is precisely for this reason that pro-BDS and non- or anti-Zionist Jews have been largely excluded from institutional Jewish spaces. As discussed above, the primary organizations doing “anti-BDS” work in Canada are Jewish communal organizations, and their primary means of addressing BDS has been to re-define and frame it as a form of antisemitism. If the influence of the Canadian pro-Israel lobby comes, in part, from the claim that they represent the Jewish community, and if their argument against BDS is that it is anti-Jewish, then the very presence of Jewish activists within the BDS movement undermines the lobby’s basic moral claims about the movement as a whole. The Jewish community is therefore a critical site for internal conflict over BDS that can have ramifications that go far beyond it.

The existence of red lines within the Jewish community is not new; writing about

²⁰⁸ Epp-Tiessen, interview.

²⁰⁹ Zinman, interview.

²¹⁰ Nastovski, interview.

²¹¹ CUPE BC’s International Solidarity Committee, “The Wall Must Fall,” educational booklet, 2007, <https://archive.cupe.ca/updir/WallMustFall2007-eng.pdf>.

conflict within the American Jewish community in the 1980s, Goldberg argued that while differences of opinion about specifically Israeli policies were “generally accepted,” “when intracomunal dissent degenerates into a questioning of the very legitimacy of the Jewish state ... dissent is no longer tolerated. The organized community then employs all of its tangible resources and moral sanctioning capacity to reimpose cohesion and solidarity.”²¹² In the same spirit, many Jewish institutional spaces in Canada have imposed policies to exclude any debate on BDS or anti-Zionism. “CIJA strives to be inclusive of a wide range of viewpoints,” its website says, but with an important exception: “As a matter of policy, CIJA does not provide a platform for the promotion of boycott-divestment-sanctions measures against Israel.”²¹³ In practice, this red-line on BDS means that Independent Jewish Voices has been barred from renting space at Jewish community centres, which means that they have no space where they can speak to other Jews about BDS.²¹⁴ A similar policy is in effect on campuses, as Hillel Ontario “fully supports” the guidelines introduced by Hillel International in 2010 which outline the following “Standards of Partnership” for campus activities:

Hillel will not partner with, house, or host organizations, groups, or speakers that as a matter of policy or practice: Deny the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state with secure and recognized borders; Delegitimize, demonize, or apply a double standard to Israel; Support boycott of, divestment from, or sanctions against the State of Israel; Exhibit a pattern of disruptive behavior towards campus events or guest speakers or foster an atmosphere of incivility.²¹⁵

These guidelines have been widely criticized for limiting the space for debate,

²¹² Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups*, 22-23.

²¹³ “Frequently Asked Questions,” Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, January 31, 2019, <https://cija.ca/about-us/frequently-asked-questions/>.

²¹⁴ Levitan, interview.

²¹⁵ “Hillel Israel Guidelines,” Hillel International, no date, accessed May 6, 2019, <https://www.hillel.org/jewish/hillel-israel/hillel-israel-guidelines>; “Israel,” Hillel Ontario, no date, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://hillelontario.org/israel/>.

“constricting the breadth of the conversation about Israel in the most important centers for Jewish life on college campuses,”²¹⁶ and “by default ... cast[ing] many Palestinian activists and their arguments as outside the bounds of acceptable political discourse.”²¹⁷ This is part of what Mira Sucharov called “a disturbing attempt to police the kind of discussion that Jewish students may engage in within the auspices of their Hillel organizations,” which she says has even included Hillel Ontario discouraging students from meeting with Peter Beinart during a tour organized by liberal Zionist organizations Peace Now and the New Israel Fund.²¹⁸

Red lines on BDS are not confined to the centre and centre-right blocs of the pro-Israel lobby, but are also enforced by liberal and progressive Zionist organizations. For example, the New Israel Fund Canada does not fund organizations that support BDS or otherwise “deny the right of the Jewish people to sovereign self-determination,” and they discourage their Israeli and Palestinian partners from signing on to BDS platforms.²¹⁹ JSpaceCanada has hosted discussions on the value of targeted settlement boycotts, but will not allow space for proponents of the BDS movement. Janet Mock says that although individual members of IJV are welcome to attend JSpaceCanada events and conferences, “we are not going to have them on a panel.” As she says, “we’re not silencing anybody and we do welcome them to join our conversation, [but] are we going to give [IJV] a platform to tell everybody about why we shouldn’t have the state of Israel? No.”²²⁰

²¹⁶ Batya Ungar-Sargon, “How the Israel Lobby captured Hillel,” *Foreign Policy*, November 23, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/23/how-the-israel-lobby-captured-hillel-international-college-campus/>.

²¹⁷ IfNotNow, “Beyond Talk,” 22.

²¹⁸ Quoted in Andy Levy-Ajzenkopf, “Is CIJA better or worse than what came before?” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 27, 2013, from <http://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cija-better-worse-came>.

²¹⁹ “NIFC Response to Attacks,” New Israel Fund of Canada, no date, accessed January 21, 2019 <https://www.nifcan.org/about/faq/nifc-response-to-attacks/>.

²²⁰ Mock, interview.

Public debate about BDS and anti-Zionism is also blocked by Jewish community newspapers and media, and specifically the *Canadian Jewish News* (CJN). IJV is effectively barred from writing in the pages of CJN — CJN insists there is no “blanket prohibition” on statements from IJV, only that “they’re generally unwelcome due to incompatible values”²²¹ — and Mira Sucharov, a former columnist for the publication, says that she was not even allowed to write a full and fair description of IJV’s views.²²² In fact, the space for debate within CJN is so limited that her use of the term “occupation” in a column sparked significant backlash from readers, irritating Sucharov to the point that she chose to resign from the publication.²²³ During an interview on the podcast *Canadaland*, CJN’s editor Yoni Goldstein defended the policy of excluding anti-Zionist voices by arguing that if he accommodated those views then he would also have to accommodate the right-wing fringe;²²⁴ Zinman interpreted this as an equation of IJV with far-right groups like the Jewish Defence League, and therefore a suggestion that “anti-Zionism in Jewish political life is on the same track as Jewish fascism,” which he called “reprehensible in our current political moment.”²²⁵ Zinman argues that it is this lack of space for discussion about anti-Zionism within Jewish institutional spaces that has

²²¹ Alex Verman, “How Jewish Media Excludes Jewish Voices,” *Canadaland*, March 27, 2017, <https://www.canadalandshow.com/jewish-media-excludes-jewish-voices/>.

²²² Sucharov, interview.

²²³ Mira Sucharov, “Mira Sucharov: Why I’m resigning my CJN column,” *Canadian Jewish News*, June 2, 2017, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/mira-sucharov-cjn-column>; Sucharov, interview.

²²⁴ Yoni Goldstein, “Being Jewish in Public,” interview by Jesse Brown, *Canadaland*, podcast, March 27, 2017, <https://www.canadalandshow.com/podcast/being-jewish-in-public/>; JSpaceCanada’s Karen Mock made the same comparison, as reported in the *Canadian Jewish News*: “finding a middle ground between what JSpace considers two extreme poles – the Jewish Defence League on the right and IJV on the left – isn’t easy, Mock joked, ‘We must be doing something right if the far right lumps us in with IJV and IJV lumps us in with the far right.’” Quoted in Jodie Shupac, “CJN Feature: Making Space for Critical Voices,” *Canadian Jewish News*, September 16, 2014, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/cjn-feature-making-space-critical-voices>.

²²⁵ Zinman, interview.

contributed to a huge growth in new and independent Jewish organizations in North America, and he co-founded *Treyf Podcast* precisely because no media context existed for his views.²²⁶

Beyond denying them access to Jewish institutional spaces, some organizations are aggressive in actively targeting Jews who are too critical of Israel. In early 2019, the Jewish Community Relations Council in Boston passed a resolution banning its member organizations from partnering with anti-Zionist Jewish groups, and threatened to eject one of its member groups if it did not withdraw its signature from a joint statement with Jewish Voice for Peace.²²⁷ The same year, the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg disinvented an event speaker after receiving community backlash over the fact that the speaker was a member of IfNotNow, a Jewish anti-occupation group which does not have a position on either BDS or anti-Zionism. In a press release, the Federation claimed that “the values of the speaker are not in-line with ours, as the representative body of Winnipeg’s organized Jewish community.”²²⁸ At the same time, the pro-Israel lobby has been trying to discredit anti-Zionist Jewish organizations, and even question their legitimacy as Jews. For example, StandWithUs describes Jewish Voice for Peace as a “mostly non-Jewish fringe organization” which “is frequently called upon to inoculate SJP and its allies against deserved charges of anti-Semitism by claiming that there is substantial Jewish support for the BDS movement.”²²⁹ Similarly, B’nai Brith Canada’s Michael Mostyn called IJV “a

²²⁶ Zinman, interview.

²²⁷ Josefin Dolsten, “Boston JCRC says members can’t work with anti-Zionists, setting up showdown,” *Forward*, January 21, 2019, <https://forward.com/news/national/417790/boston-jewish-community-council-says-members-cannot-work-with-anti-zionist/>.

²²⁸ Quoted in Myron Love, “Shabbat Across Winnipeg speaker disinvented over ties to IfNotNow,” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 1, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/shabbat-across-winnipeg-speaker-disinvented-over-ties-to-ifnotnow>.

²²⁹ StandWithUs, “Explaining the BDS Movement,” booklet, no date, accessed May 6, 2019,

Jewish fig leaf for neo-Nazis and antisemites of all stripes,”²³⁰ and B’nai Brith published to their website the following “positive reaction” that they received about their investigation into IJV:

"Well Done! Now remove all their [IJV’s] funding and get the other half [of their website] deleted! We have no need for these enemies under our roof. And insist they remove the word ‘Jewish’ from their site...their behavior is most un-Jewish and unwelcome. And there is no room for them under the so called tent....no more tolerance for such garbage!"²³¹

More recently, CIJA’s Shimon Fogel wrote an op-ed to criticize IJV’s “liberation seder” honouring the Great March of Return in Gaza:

That Jews would honour such a “march” begs a bigger question: when does Jewish anti-Zionism become Jewish anti-Semitism? We would not hesitate to call out those beyond our community who lend credibility to Hamas. So too must we condemn the behaviour of Jews who lead BDS campaigns against Israelis, target respected Jewish organizations like the Jewish National Fund, and falsely claim that Zionism can be erased from the core identity of the Jewish people. Such activities are clearly aimed at offering a hechsher – a ‘kosher seal of approval’ – for non-Jewish, anti-Zionist activists to falsely claim immunity from legitimate charges of anti-Semitism.²³²

These charges against Jewish activists seek to push them not just outside of the mainstream Jewish community, but outside the bounds of Jewishness itself. In fact, for B’nai Brith, groups like IJV lose their claim to Jewishness simply by expressing solidarity with Palestinians. In May 2019, B’nai Brith widely shared a statement by an IJV spokesperson, who had said that IJV “take[s] direction from Palestinian leadership.”

<https://www.standwithus.com/booklets/ExplainingBDS/files/ExplainingBDS.pdf>, 5.

²³⁰ Aidan Fishman, “‘Independent Jewish Voices’ promotes Holocaust denial,” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed May 6, 2019

https://www.bnaibrith.ca/_independent_jewish_voices_promotes_holocaust_denial.

²³¹ Quoted in Jordan Zaitchik, “B’nai Brith investigation on IJV produces positive reactions,” B’nai Brith Canada, no date, accessed May 6, 2019,

https://www.bnaibrith.ca/b_nai_brith_investigation_produces_positive_reactions.

²³² Shimon Fogel, “Counter Jewish Anti-Zionists by Keeping Israel on the Seder Table,” *Canadian Jewish News*, April 18, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/perspectives/opinions/fogel-counter-jewish-anti-zionists-by-keeping-israel-on-the-seder-table>.

This was the most basic expression of solidarity, and yet as B’nai Brith’s Michael Mostyn claimed: “this admission demolishes any credibility IJV could ever claim as a so-called Jewish organization,” and that “real Jewish groups take direction from within the Jewish community, and certainly not from outside groups [Mississauga-Based Palestine House] with a history of celebrating anti-Jewish terror.”²³³

²³³ “‘We Take Direction from Palestinian Leadership,’ IJV Representative Admits,” B’nai Brith Canada, May 21, 2019, https://www.bnaibrith.ca/_we_take_direction_from_palestinian_leadership_ijv_representative_admits.

Conclusion: Reasserting Hegemony: From Consent to Coercion

The parallel anti-boycott offensives by South Africa and Israel have been shaped by their shared self-perception as states which face existential threats, which in their view has justified unorthodox diplomatic measures. Facing pressure from grassroots movements which have adopted boycott campaigns in solidarity with oppressed people under South African and Israeli control, the two countries responded by launching controversial propaganda and lobbying campaigns overseas — relying on the support of domestic lobby groups, acting either independently or in cooperation — to counter and even suppress boycott activity. In this way, both anti-boycott campaigns have represented a particular response to crises of hegemony within North American civil society, where they face challenges to their ideological support.

South Africa's crisis of hegemony first unfolded in the early 1960s. Reports of the Sharpeville massacre horrified the world, the African National Congress (ANC) had just initiated an international call to boycott the country, and South Africa was kicked out of the Commonwealth. In response, South Africa banned the ANC and other liberation movements, and developed a sophisticated propaganda campaign which included secret government projects, which was supplemented by independent public relations efforts on behalf of the country's private sector. This campaign intensified and expanded throughout the 1970s and 80s as the anti-apartheid movement gained traction, especially after the Soweto uprising in 1976 and the crises of the mid-1980s.

Israel's moment arrived in the early to mid-2000s with the second Intifada, the apparent failure of the peace process, and the rise of the BDS movement which gave new form and strategic direction to a growing Palestinian solidarity movement on university

campuses and elsewhere. This crisis deepened over the next decade with new reports of Israeli violence, and especially with the military offensives on Gaza in 2008-09, 2012, and 2014. As the Israeli government slowly adopted what would become a heavy-handed approach to crack down on BDS supporters at home and abroad, in Canada the pro-Israel lobby was also restructured to become more centralized and aggressive.

The (relative) erosion of hegemony in both cases was a response to events on the ground which demonstrated South African and Israeli capacity for state violence against civilians, resulting in a loss of moral legitimacy in the eyes of BDS supporters, and opening up space for dissenting perspectives. In both cases, it took about a decade before the official government response to criticism overseas took a more aggressive approach. Nonetheless, despite these parallel trajectories, the South Africa lobby was not able to stop the growing popularity of the anti-apartheid movement, which by the late 1980s had found support across nearly all civil society organizations and was partially endorsed by a Conservative government, whereas the Israel lobby has successfully maintained its hegemonic support at the level of Canada's historical bloc, and has suppressed (but not defeated) the popularity of BDS within the institutions of civil society – all with the support of both Conservative and Liberal governments.

In this concluding chapter, I will outline the key findings from this comparative study. As outlined in Chapter 2, this analysis is grounded in a political economy theoretical framework which explains the conflict over boycott campaigns in terms of ideological struggle, rather than as purely economic phenomena. As such, the struggle over what Gramsci called 'common sense' is shaped by a number of social and political factors which may affect the ability of opposing social forces to find a receptive audience

for their ideas and to reshape the ideological terrain in their favour. In this way, I have identified several features that distinguish between the two case studies – such as the dynamics of solidarity, the nature of the institutions leading the backlash, and the strategies of opposition – which together provide an answer for why Israel’s counter-movement against boycotts has proven to be more popular, and therefore successful.

First, however, I will bring together both sets of interviews to evaluate whether the participants themselves endorse the comparison between the anti-apartheid movement and the BDS movement.

Israel and the South Africa Analogy

From its very inception, the authors of the BDS call conceptualized the Israel boycott within the tradition of the South African anti-apartheid movement. Consistent with this, all of the BDS supporters I interviewed either expressed their explicit support for the analogy, or at the very least did not object to it. A few also suggested that the “apartheid” language was particularly meaningful. For Nastovski, the apartheid analysis is important as it makes explicit that the conflict is not about religion: “just drawing those comparisons really helps change the discussion and reframe the discussion around colonialism and oppression, and also understanding the economic [aspect], which in a union [context] is very important.”¹ Levitan agrees, but cautions that because the situations are not identical, you cannot automatically apply lessons about what worked in South Africa to the Israel case.²

It is also generally a rule that those who oppose BDS have a strong opposition to

¹ Nastovski, interview.

² Levitan, interview.

the analogy with South Africa. Samarov argues that the analogy perpetuates a false idea that Jews are colonizers and foreign intruders in the region, rather than indigenous people who have reclaimed their right to self-determination, and he claims that this idea is at the core of the Israel-Palestine conflict. He suggests that it is a smart rhetorical and strategic move on behalf of the BDS movement to make the comparison, but that it is disingenuous; unlike BDS, the boycott against South Africa was a just cause, which he would have supported.³ Mock, who remembers boycotting South African wine and granny-smith apples, says “I just don’t think they are the same, at all,” and tells me that while it might be possible to discuss features of the occupation of the West Bank that could be “apartheid-like,” she rejects this approach: “what’s the point of co-opting language? It’s the same as using language of the Holocaust, it just shows complete ignorance of both cases.”⁴

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who had opposed the boycott campaign against South Africa tend to view today’s BDS movement in similarly negative terms, as an ineffective ‘feel good’ campaign. Babb says that Israel is “an easy target,” just like South Africa was, as a small country in the Middle East. He says that he does not really see the comparison between the two countries, but that “it’s just another moral campaign, another group of people who feel they can mouth-off easily without being counteracted.”⁵ Bernstein similarly suggests that while the boycott may make people “feel better about being involved and doing something,” he doesn’t think that it will make a difference, or “influence what the Israelis do.” He notes the particular difficulty that Israel is “a leader

³ Samarov, interview.

⁴ Mock, interview.

⁵ Babb, interview.

in many areas,” in fields such as technology, which is a major disincentive to breaking economic ties; “in the end of the day, nobody is going to stop that.”⁶

For those who were active participants in the anti-apartheid movement against South Africa, however, there is a general acceptance of the Israel comparison. Most participants said they welcomed the analogy, and although they all recognized that it is not an exactly identical system, the parallels are significant enough that they felt the comparison is justified and useful.⁷ One slight variance on this is Hutchinson, who says she has “real difficulty” with the comparison and that she would not draw “easy comparisons” between the two, but offers that she does think there is a case for taking economic action against the illegally occupied Palestinian territories.⁸ At the same time, most participants noted the weaknesses of the BDS movement when compared to their own experiences. Kirkwood argues that the comparison with South Africa is helpful because it is able to build on the educational work that was previously done by the anti-apartheid movement, providing “natural stigma” and an existing framework for action. However, he is “disappointed that [the movement] hasn’t gone farther than it has,” and notes that one obstacle to the Israel boycott is that it lacks a recognizable consumer good to boycott (as South Africa had fruit).⁹ Schulman says that she is “totally comfortable” with the analogy, but notes the difficulty that there is far greater public sympathy for Israel than there ever was for South Africa, which never had “any kind of broad or even narrow emotional support” in society,¹⁰ and this concern is echoed by Saul, who

⁶ Bernstein, interview.

⁷ Luckhardt, interview; Kirkwood, interview; Schulman, interview; Fall, interview; Saul, interview.

⁸ Hutchinson, interview.

⁹ Kirkwood, interview.

¹⁰ Schulman, interview.

remembers that it was hard to find a “moral legitimacy” for a defence of apartheid “if you took racism seriously as an immoral fact.”¹¹ Harewood declined to comment on the comparison with Israel directly, but he too notes that the anti-apartheid movement “had a certain kind of moral suasion [or societal solidarity] that the BDS movement does not have in society.” He does note, however, that the anti-apartheid movement on campus “was very connected to the Palestinian students’ movement, so a lot of us were friends and we worked together on campus very closely [...] At the time there was certainly a recognition of a kind of transnational solidarity, and [a recognition] that the [two] situations had a lot in common.”¹²

In summary, if the BDS movement against Israel has adopted the legacy of the anti-apartheid movement as its model, then this comparison is generally supported among those who were active participants in the earlier movement (and it is widely popular in South Africa itself).¹³ Meanwhile, those who had opposed the boycott campaign against South Africa tend to be dismissive of the BDS movement on similar grounds. Where the comparison becomes notably controversial is among those engaged in pro-Israel advocacy, even among those who used to support the anti-apartheid movement, as it is viewed as either an unhelpful mischaracterization or itself constituting a threat to Israel’s legitimacy. This particular position is also demonstrated in the public advocacy of Irwin Cotler, a former Liberal cabinet minister and past president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, who once served as Canadian counsel to Nelson Mandela in the 1980s, and had

¹¹ Saul, interview.

¹² Harewood, interview.

¹³ See Introduction.

been involved in anti-apartheid initiatives in Canada.¹⁴ Cotler has said that calling Israel an apartheid state is “slanderous” and a “form of apartheid denial,”¹⁵ and that having “fought against a real apartheid regime, South Africa, it is demeaning to make a comparison (with Israel).”¹⁶ Cotler has also elaborated that while using the term is not necessarily antisemitic, once the argument becomes that “because it's an apartheid state, it has to be dismantled - then you crossed the line into a racist argument, or an anti-Jewish argument.”¹⁷

By incorporating Cotler’s views into the analysis of my interview participants, it is therefore possible to see a division among former anti-apartheid activists, between a majority who support the comparison to Israel, and a minority who are also pro-Israel advocates and who believe the comparison is offensive. This division could be explained in a few ways: pro-Israel advocates could accuse the other side of being misinformed about the reality of Israel (and thereby misapplying the analogy out of ignorance), while those who support the BDS movement could say that the other side’s commitment to defending Israel is a disincentive to engaging with the similarities that do exist (and preventing proper analysis). Or, to put this in the terms of Gramsci and Hall, the ability to form an articulation between the two boycott campaigns — that is, to bring them into an ideological configuration in which the two struggles are understood to be part of the same tradition — may be blocked by ideological commitments about Israel which simply

¹⁴ Irwin Cotler, “A Remarkable Man, A Remarkable Legacy,” *Macleans*, December 6, 2013, <https://www.macleans.ca/news/world/a-remarkable-man-a-remarkable-legacy/>.

¹⁵ Paul Lungen, “Cotler Rejects ‘Israeli Apartheid’ - In South Africa,” *Canadian Jewish News*, March 2, 2012, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/cotler-rejects-israeli-apartheid-south-africa>.

¹⁶ Janice Arnold, “Cotler Speech Disrupted by Pro-Palestinian Activists,” *Canadian Jewish News*, June 5, 2019, <https://www.cjnews.com/news/canada/cotler-speech-disrupted-by-pro-palestinian-activists>.

¹⁷ David Sheen, “Canadian MP Cotler: Calling Israel an Apartheid State Can Be Legitimate Free Speech,” *Haaretz*, July 1, 2011, <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5024562>.

cannot tolerate the comparison.

One final note on the comparison of South Africa and Israel, and specifically on the question of apartheid. In the Introduction, I emphasized the history of South African apartheid as a process of separate development, and argued that this focus on the trajectory and goals of apartheid clarifies the analogy with Israel; it can help make sense of Israel's apartheid character in its totality, across various domains, and over time. A further implication of this approach is that it allows for a clearer analysis of Israel's potential futures. By failing to acknowledge the transitory character of apartheid, too many analyses keep Israel trapped in a temporary space, always on the verge of falling into apartheid but never doing so. Instead of waiting for annexation, demographic shifts, or some other indicator to declare that apartheid has finally arrived, each stage can potentially be understood as a moment within an ongoing process of separate development. This does not mean that every policy change is necessarily congruent with apartheid, but rather that the pursuit of apartheid can incorporate varying forms and elements, and can even tolerate the removal of certain forms of discrimination. Importantly, recognizing partition as the goal of South African apartheid points to an uncomfortable conclusion, which is that a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine represents "the opposite of an antiapartheid solution,"¹⁸ but rather the culmination of the apartheid dream.¹⁹ Even so, partition might be acceptable to most Palestinians if it results in a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, but this is not on offer from any of the

¹⁸ Bill Freund, "Apartheid As Solution," in *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*, ed. Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 79.

¹⁹ I previously explored this in Michael Bueckert, "Hendrik Verwoerd in Jerusalem," *Africa is a Country*, December 8, 2017, <https://africasacountry.com/2017/12/verwoerd-in-jerusalem>.

mainstream Israeli political parties. Of the current proposals, whether the demilitarized “separation” put forward by centrist and centre-left parties,²⁰ or the right-wing plan for full annexation of the West Bank with limited “autonomy” for Palestinians, none of these would represent a break from the apartheid process, but would be entirely consistent with its vision. They can ultimately be reduced to debates over the size and degree of autonomy of the proposed Bantustans.

Reference Points for Solidarity

There is an important parallel between the boycott campaigns discussed in the two case studies. For Canadian civil society, to a significant extent, the basis on which they have decided to endorse or otherwise support the boycott campaign arose out of existing partnerships with individuals and organizations in either South Africa or Palestine. This basis of solidarity is a strength of both movements, as their demands are not shallow or artificial but are grounded in personal relationships and organizational commitments, and this potentially makes it harder for opponents to dislodge that support. There are some important differences, however, between the organizational features of the solidarity movements which serve as the reference point for each boycott call.

While the Canadian anti-apartheid movement was itself decentralized, the African National Congress (ANC) enjoyed exclusive status as the legitimate representative of the South African people, and as the main reference point for the movement’s demands. As such, the ANC set maximalist demands for the movement, calling for nothing less than total economic isolation of South Africa. By means of its Canada mission in Toronto and

²⁰ White, *Cracks in the Wall*, 37-41.

its units across the country, the ANC played a disciplinary role, and had some success in keeping the anti-apartheid movement accountable to its demands. In contrast, the BDS campaign against Israel has virtually no connection to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) nor to political parties such as Fatah or Hamas. Instead, the boycott's authority originates in the 2005 call from Palestinian civil society, formally represented by the BDS National Committee (BNC). The BNC provides BDS with a sense of popular legitimacy, and serves as a point of reference, widening the demands of the movement beyond the occupation. However, the BNC's physical presence within the Canadian solidarity movement is minimal, and while it does sometimes provide support to local activists, it does not play a disciplinary role. As a result, the grassroots movement is more flexible and adaptive to local context, but it is also opened up to fragmentation and contradictions, and activists are free to voluntarily pick and choose which aspects of the BDS platform they want to endorse. At the same time, the BDS movement is able to avoid the sectarian conflicts that plagued the anti-apartheid movement over the question of exclusive affiliation with the ANC, versus the inclusion of rival movements.

Another implication of this organizational distinction is that the movements have different relationships to violence. For the anti-apartheid movement, boycotts had been understood to be one component of a multi-pronged liberation movement that necessarily included armed struggle, whereas BDS against Israel is typically proposed as an alternative to any form of violent resistance. Of course, this difference may be because the ANC was engaged in armed struggle against South Africa, whereas the BNC is not. Additionally, in the period following the Oslo Accords, the liberation struggle has been replaced with the governance approach as characterized by the Palestinian Authority. It is

also true that the ANC's armed struggle was in the global context of decolonization movements and the Cold War, whereas in today's post-9/11 era all violence is framed as "terrorism" and illegitimate. Given this stigma, which is attached to all forms of Palestinian resistance, the non-violent emphasis of BDS may be essential to its legitimacy — although this emphasis has not deterred opponents from conflating BDS supporters with terrorists dedicated to Israel's violent destruction.²¹

Further, while not the fault of the BDS campaign, there is an important distinction to be made between the demands of the ANC and the PLO. The ANC rejected the idea of partition as advanced by the apartheid regime, and its movement was non-racial and inclusive, built upon the demand for equal rights for all South Africans within a single state. As a result of the ANC's leadership, this demand was adopted by virtually the entire international community, which refused to countenance any proposal that offered less than universal suffrage. In contrast, the Palestinian national movement failed to find consensus on an "inclusive alternative" which could incorporate Israeli Jews into a shared political vision, and their approach has been closer to that of black nationalism than to the ANC's non-racialism.²² By the 1980s the PLO had adopted the demand for a separate Palestinian state, and with the Oslo Accords gave up claims to most of historic Palestine or the possibility of equal rights, and therefore had "accepted, rather than challenged,

²¹ In one notorious example, the David Horowitz Freedom Center ran a controversial poster campaign at UC Santa Barbara in 2016. The posters singled out and listed the names of prominent BDS supporters and stated: "The following students and faculty at UC Santa Barbara have allied themselves with Palestinian terrorists to perpetrate BDS and Jew Hatred on this campus." Quoted in "Anti-BDS group distances itself from conservative foundation's poster campaign," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 23, 2016, <https://www.jta.org/2016/08/23/united-states/anti-bds-group-distances-itself-from-conservative-foundations-poster-campaign>. Similar campaigns have taken place on other US campuses.

²² Ali Abunimah, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse* (New York: Metropolitan Books, and Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 146-8.

Israel's colonial reality and claim to separateness."²³ This approach has not achieved satisfactory results, but has locked resistance into an impossible situation; as Edward Said decried after the signing of the Oslo Accords, "No other liberation movement in the twentieth century got so little—roughly 5 percent of its territory. And no other leaders of a liberation movement accepted what in effect is permanent subordination of their people."²⁴ Today, the two-state solution is upheld by the international community as the only acceptable outcome, despite the fact that it has been abandoned by all mainstream political parties in Israel, and by Trump's administration in the US. The BDS movement refuses to take a position on a political solution, and its supporters include proponents of both two-state and one-state solutions. However, the movement's agnosticism on this issue, combined with a rights-based approach and a commitment to specific demands, means that it may be capable of expanding the conversation beyond a singular focus on two-states, and re-focus attention on whatever outcomes are most likely to guarantee justice for Palestinians.²⁵

Institutions and Moral Authority

In comparing the pro-South Africa and pro-Israel lobbies in Canada, the most significant distinction between them has proven to be their organizational features, or the specific institutions and social forces that constituted them. Most of the institutions of the South Africa lobby were voluntary "Friends of South Africa" type organizations, which were

²³ Farsakh, "Apartheid, Israel, and Palestinian Statehood," 169.

²⁴ Said, "The Middle East 'Peace Process,'" 391.

²⁵ That said, Noura Erakat argues that a rights-based approach, in the absence of a political program, is not sufficient. This is because an exclusive focus on discriminatory practices can overlook the "territorial dimensions of the Palestinian struggle," and a focus on rights "risks setting up a discourse of competing rights" between occupied and occupiers in which even settlers can claim that it is their human right to live in West Bank settlements. Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 231-2.

specifically formed to advocate for the country. Of these, some were composed of members of the political and economic elite, such as the Canadian-South African Society, which represented the private sector interests of both South African and Canadian capitalists. Others took the form of far-right groups, such as the Western Canadian Society of South Africa, which mobilized support for the country based on fringe political views. In each category, the singular mandate of pro-South Africa groups meant that they were entirely associated with apartheid, which made them quite unpopular in most circles. In comparison, the Israel lobby in Canada is constituted predominantly by Jewish communal organizations, which means that pro-Israel advocacy and Jewish advocacy (and claims to Jewish representation) are brought together within the same organizations. This itself distinguishes the lobby in Canada from that in the United States, which is dominated by AIPAC and Christian Zionists.²⁶ This expanded mandate for Canadian pro-Israel groups complicates their political role; due to the history and ongoing experiences of discrimination and violence faced by the Jewish community, its representative institutions have a legitimate claim to moral authority, and a valued voice in society, and this is transferred onto their pro-Israel advocacy.

These organizational differences translate into a tremendous gap between the two lobbies in regards to their moral authority and suasion in society; that is, in their capacity to exercise hegemony or “cultural leadership” (per Edward Said). For a while in the early 1980s, pro-South African groups did have some backroom influence among fractions of the political and economic elite, particularly due to the high profile of certain CSAS directors. The limits of this influence, however, are demonstrated by how many people,

²⁶ See Chapter 8.

including corporate executives with direct economic ties to South Africa, were unwilling to publicly be associated with the organization. Moreover, pro-South African tendencies within the Progressive Conservative Party were marginalized under Mulroney, and supporters of South Africa subsequently migrated to the right-wing Reform Party. In comparison, the institutions of the Israel lobby have significant influence and status within the historical bloc, as demonstrated by their close relationships with all political parties, and further indicated in how the board of CIJA is composed of a corporate and political elite, including prestigious (non-Jewish) former political leaders from across the political spectrum. Pro-Israel organizations, due to their expanded mandate as representational bodies, are rightfully taken seriously as constituents by ruling forces, and can boast of popular support more broadly in civil society.

Compounding these organizational factors, the South Africa lobby had another disadvantage, which is that its ideas were largely not compatible with existing ideological configurations, and it was therefore unable to successfully articulate its interests to any strong current within Canadian common sense. Fundamentally, this is because the dynamic of racism in regards to South African apartheid was self-evident; for the public, this was a clear issue of racial injustice, and the anti-apartheid movement easily articulated its own struggle to existing frameworks about civil rights and decolonization, aligning itself with struggles against racism in Canada. The institutions of the pro-South Africa lobby, with their focus on elitist and corporate interest-based advocacy, were completely incapable of adequately responding to these types of claims; their complaints of anti-white discrimination were unconvincing, and the anti-Communist framing of the liberation movements was unsuccessful in part because of the strong partnerships that had

developed between the ANC and civil society organizations. The only relatively grassroots constituency which was open to pro-South African advocacy was on the far-right, where support for South Africa fit within an existing ideological configuration based on the idea of shared Anglo heritage and fears of non-white immigration to Canada. These were fringe ideas which were not capable of gaining mainstream traction outside of the Reform Party and the rightwing press, where the issue of South Africa gave fuel to a reactionary backlash against Mulroney. In contrast, the particular ideological elements promoted by the Israel lobby have a strong resonance within common sense; since the 1970s support for Israel has been understood both as a response to antisemitism, and as a necessary safeguard to prevent a second Holocaust,²⁷ while Palestinian movements have been vilified by drawing on anti-Muslim currents and stereotypes, particularly in the context of the War on Terror. At an even deeper level, it is common for Canada and Israel to be framed as belonging to a “Western civilization” which not only excludes the Arab world but is set in opposition to it, and the racial divide implied by this categorization (which regards settler-colonial countries as superior vis-a-vis the post-colonial world) is complex and often not identified as racism.²⁸ The ideological terrain is therefore very receptive to the idea that support for Israel represents safety for the Jewish people, or that Palestinian demands (including BDS) represent an anti-Jewish and

²⁷ See Kaplan, *Our American Israel*, 179-183.

²⁸ In this way, Abu-Laban and Bakan suggest that the relationship between Israel and Canada is defined by an “international racial contract” which “assigns a common interest between [them] ... while absencing Palestinians as simultaneously non-white, the subjects of extreme repression, and stateless.” Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Abigail B. Bakan, “The racial contract: Israel/Palestine and Canada,” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 14, no. 5 (2008): 638. In this context, Canadians may possess what Vericini calls a “settler colonial sensibility”: “even if it is rarely articulated in these terms, what happens in Palestine makes a difference to settlers elsewhere.” This sensibility is not simply rooted in a sympathetic identification, but in a commitment to the principle of “settler sovereignty” itself. Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 90-1.

genocidal threat. Conversely, it is largely inhospitable to Palestinian narratives which challenge these popular stories about Israel.

The Israel lobby in Canada therefore has a serious advantage that the South Africa lobby lacked; by its very structure its pro-Israel advocacy has been conflated with Jewish advocacy, and this in turn provides the lobby with a moral authority that allows it to frame boycotts of Israel in terms of antisemitism. This dynamic has virtually guaranteed that the idea of “BDS as antisemitism” would be taken up by governments and would find some purchase within civil society institutions. It also means that the modality of the conflict is completely different. Whereas the issue of South Africa was fought in terms of maintaining economic ties versus ending support for racial discrimination (the lobby’s preferred framing was about choosing “evolution” over “revolution”), the Israel lobby tries to force the debate over BDS (and criticism of Israel more generally) into the mode of religious and ethnic conflict. In this way, the moral authority of the Israel lobby is weaponized to deflect from the issue of anti-Palestinian racism, both in terms of Israel’s actions and as it exists among elements of the lobby itself, and this framing threatens to erase the legitimacy of Palestinian claims in their entirety.

The specific context also poses disadvantages for the BDS movement in terms of the dynamics of ideological struggle, in ways that set it apart from the anti-apartheid movement. One of the problems with the debate over Israel and Palestine, which distinguishes it from the debate over South Africa, is a lack of a shared reality of the problem. Apartheid, after all, was an explicit political project based on racial logics, and the South African government was eager to explain and defend it. By the 1980s, opinions had shifted; most of South Africa’s ardent supporters were now formally opposed to

apartheid, and by the middle of the decade the South African government itself claimed that it rejected apartheid and was moving away from it. Of course, there were significant differences of opinion over the extent of South African oppression, the nature of the government's reforms, and most supporters of the country still did not support extending universal suffrage. Nonetheless, there was a shared understanding that apartheid (as it currently existed) was no longer defensible, and that things had to change. In the contemporary debate over Israel, however, there is no basic consensus or shared understanding about the nature of the system that Palestinians live under, let alone about what the solution should be. While there is an official international consensus on some key points relating to international law and a two-state solution, these are not shared by the parties themselves. Israel and many of its supporters reject the existence of an "occupation," refer to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria,"²⁹ and support ongoing settlement expansion. Israeli politicians promise annexation, and offer proposals to grant Palestinians limited autonomy but without full statehood or rights, and while liberals will publicly lament that the two-state solution is *almost* dead, this moment never actually arrives. In essence, there are no basic facts over which opponents can agree, and no shared terms for debate; as such, debate takes the form of conflict over the terms themselves, at the expense of pushing for alternative solutions.

²⁹ Many Israelis and right-wing supporters of Israel prefer to use the biblical terms "Judea and Samaria" to refer to the West Bank, as it is suggestive of Jewish history and Israeli ownership while deflecting from the issue of the occupation. In essence, the terms normalize Israel's settlement presence in the OPT. While the terms are more associated with the right-wing of the lobby, CIJA will sometimes use both terms while giving precedence to the pro-settlement version, referring to "Judea and Samaria/West Bank" or "Judea and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank)." See "Press Release: CIJA Calls on Government of Canada to Appeal Court Ruling on Israeli Wines," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, July 29, 2019, https://cija.ca/pr_israeli_wines_ruling_response/; "Analysis: Israel's Nation-State Law," Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, August 7, 2018, <https://cija.ca/analysis-israels-nation-state-law/>.

The conflation of pro-Israel advocacy with Jewish representation poses a number of other problems for BDS organizing. The BDS movement cannot isolate and marginalize the Israel lobby for its political advocacy in the same way that the anti-apartheid movement tried to isolate the South Africa lobby, as it is virtually impossible to separate their two dimensions in a satisfactory manner; if a campaign was successful in marginalizing pro-Israel groups entirely from public life, this would also represent the marginalization of Jewish communal organizations, which is not the goal of BDS, nor is it at all desired by BDS supporters. Similarly, if a politician wanted to refuse to speak to pro-Israel advocacy groups in the same way that many had shunned pro-South Africa advocacy groups, or if a student union wanted to ban clubs whose activities include promoting Israel in the same way that they targeted pro-South Africa advocacy, in many cases this would simply not be possible without also shunning or banning groups that also represent Jewish constituents. Campaigns can try to marginalize specific events or functions of the pro-Israel lobby (for example, events featuring Israeli wine), but face the risk of having their actions misconstrued. This is somewhat unlike in the United States, where it is possible to boycott AIPAC without boycotting the Jewish community, for example. In a similar manner, the BDS movement does not target businesses based on the identity of who owns them, and as such it does not target Jewish businesses. It is nonetheless true, of course, that many businesses in Israel are owned by Jews, and due to the existence of cultural and economic ties between Israel and Jewish communities around the world, it is inevitable that there will be cases in which stores or products subject to a boycott are, in fact, owned by Jews. Regardless of the fact that the BDS movement explicitly does not discriminate on this basis, any coincidence of the two

provides the Israel lobby with an opening to incorrectly re-frame the movement as boycotting Jews. This problem is aggravated by the existence of old antisemitic tropes which associate Jews with finance and money, which were never fully eradicated from common sense. This was simply not an issue for the anti-apartheid movement, which could call for a total boycott of South African goods without having to consider the identities of the capitalists involved. In both of the cases above, the BDS movement is faced with the task of trying to carefully make a clear distinction between isolating Israel without affecting Jewish Canadians as such, and this task is made harder, not easier, when the Israel lobby actively conflates these two.

It must also be said that it is much easier for the lobby to frame the BDS movement as a whole as antisemitic when antisemitic incidents or remarks (or accusations thereof) occur in connection with pro-Palestinian activism. As I discussed in Chapter 9, antisemitism may be peripheral to the BDS movement, but it nonetheless continues to have a presence within society, and there is an inherent risk that antisemitic ideas or tropes could be inadvertently invoked by activists, particularly in the context of a highly decentralized movement in which there is little oversight or discipline. Any such incident of an antisemitic remark (or anything that could be misconstrued as such) does tremendous damage to the BDS movement as a whole. To avoid any ambiguity, activists must therefore put significant effort into being sensitive about their language and staying on message. In contrast, the anti-apartheid movement simply did not have to be nearly as careful about its message discipline, as there was virtually no danger of accidentally reproducing racist messages (or of being credibly accused of such).

These immense advantages help to explain why the Israel lobby has been so

successful in maintaining hegemonic support for Israel (and opposition to BDS) at the level of the historical bloc. However, in spite of its advantages, the lobby has not been successful in completely suppressing or defeating BDS activism at subordinate levels within civil society, such as within universities, churches, or unions. In fact, the lobby's ability to entirely define BDS on its own terms is not guaranteed, but is subject to ongoing struggle over the ideological terrain of common sense. In this way, the BDS movement in Canada poses a number of counter-tendencies which may perform an anti- or counter-hegemonic function, constraining the lobby's ability to permanently associate BDS with the concept of discrimination, at least in certain spaces. First, BDS is finding popularity within institutions which have a history of fighting against discrimination, and are therefore able to make counter-claims about the movement. At the same time, support for Palestine and BDS is gaining ground on the political left, and building linkages with social movements such as Black Lives Matter. Whereas the left previously wanted to ignore the question of Palestine, within left-wing spaces "Palestine and support for Palestinians is [increasingly] acknowledged as a minimum requirement for political credibility."³⁰ This indicates a certain resonance with the framing of BDS as anti-racist activism. Second, to the extent that support for BDS is based in existing relationships with partners on the ground, and tied to the concept of solidarity, it will be difficult to dislodge this support or convince those people that BDS is motivated instead by the hatred of Jews. Third, popular support for BDS typically increases alongside reports of Israeli state violence against Palestinians. Israel's own actions therefore undermine the efforts of the lobby to maintain hegemony and shape public opinion. Fourth, growing

³⁰ Freeman-Maloy, interview.

Jewish support for BDS has the potential to disarticulate the BDS movement from claims of antisemitism, as the presence of Jews in the movement appears to contradict the main narrative of the lobby in a straightforward way. This is why the red lines on BDS and anti-Zionism within the organized Jewish community are so critical for the Israel lobby. All of the above factors help to explain why support for BDS continues to exist and grow among various segments of civil society, despite the Israel lobby's attempts to delegitimize the movement. However, even if BDS is never entirely defeated, there is a risk that the ongoing attacks on the movement could keep it permanently marginalized and limited to within these subordinate spaces, never capable of breaking into mainstream opinion and becoming truly hegemonic.

This last factor has contradictory implications for solidarity organizing. Precisely because Jewish support for BDS is so counter-hegemonic (in the sense that it breaks up or disarticulates the hegemonic idea that BDS is motivated by hatred of Jews), there is often a predominant media focus on those activists, and it incentivizes BDS supporters to seek their legitimacy through the support of pro-BDS Jewish groups, ahead of Palestinians themselves. One positive outcome of this tendency may be increased sensitivity to antisemitic tropes or narratives, which can be avoided or condemned. Too often, however, the ability of the Palestinian solidarity movement to assert the rights, claims, and narratives of Palestinians, is conditional on first seeking the approval of Jewish individuals or groups, which would be the equivalent of the anti-apartheid movement seeking the approval of white South African liberals before supporting the ANC. The impulse to seek consent from Jewish allies is therefore another important element of the current struggle which is entirely foreign to the dynamic of the anti-apartheid

movement.³¹

Offensive Measures

There are a few key dynamics of the backlash to boycotts which distinguish the activities of the Israel lobby from those of the South Africa lobby. First, there are parallels in the rhetoric of the two regimes in response to their critics, as South Africa and Israel have each adopted defensive, accusatory rhetorical frameworks in order to cast their critics as being essentially unfair. South Africa's supporters frequently complained that the country was being demonized and singled out for criticism, that it was being held to hypocritical double standards, and that the demands and tone of the anti-apartheid movement targeted not only the policies of apartheid, but the very legitimacy and existence of South Africa itself. Israel's supporters echo these very same complaints, but go further to codify them within the framework of the "Three D's of antisemitism" (demonization, double standards, and delegitimization), claiming that when these features are present, criticism of Israel can be deemed antisemitic. If their rhetoric appears to be nearly identical, it is because the two countries have found themselves in a similar position as semi-pariah states; they have shared histories of being subject to intensive isolation campaigns on the international stage, and in turn, they share an orientation towards the world based on their self-perception as states facing existential threats. It is self-evident that any country facing significant criticism will draw upon similar claims. However, whereas South Africa's complaints found little sympathy, Israel's supporters have been successful in

³¹ In fact, some of the most famous white South African liberals who opposed apartheid were also vocal opponents of the boycott, including author Alan Paton and Progressive Party MP Helen Suzman. Had the international movement privileged their approval over the demands of the liberation movements, the anti-apartheid struggle would have looked much different.

interpreting these as evidence of antisemitism, and popularizing these claims.

Israel's ability to popularize this framework would not be possible without the moral authority of the lobby, as discussed above. Its reception may also be related to a number of other ideological factors. Very few Canadians openly upheld Afrikaner self-determination as an important value to protect, but the idea of Jewish self-determination as manifested in the state of Israel has a great deal of public support and sympathy. Therefore, Israel's "right to exist" possesses a certain moral legitimacy that South Africa never had, and to which many people consciously give precedence over the realization of Palestinian rights. Relatedly, the experience of antisemitic attitudes and violence within Western societies gives plausibility to the argument that criticism of Israel may be *motivated* by racism, whereas arguments that opposition to South Africa might be based on anti-white racism were not convincing. However, these differences obscure the fact that the form, tone, and nature of the criticism levelled against the two countries is virtually identical. In effect, the "3D" test merely repackages South Africa's complaints and asserts them as evidence of antisemitism. Not only does the framework lack any real explanatory power, it is used to suppress legitimate activism and critique.

Second, there are parallels in the close relationships between the South African and Israeli governments and their respective lobbies in Canada, which to varying degrees have been willing participants in state-led international propaganda wars. However, both cases problematize the traditional distinction between government and civil society, as the nature of their collaboration blurs these lines. The South African government, particularly starting in the 1970s, undertook an extensive strategy to create and fund front organizations around the world in order to promote their interests, and many of these

initiatives may never be revealed. Most notably in the Canadian context, for a period in the late 1980s the South African Embassy had set up a network of pro-South Africa organizations which engaged in propaganda activity at the direction of the Embassy. Reporting suggests that the groups themselves were not legitimate or independent civil society organizations, but rather shell organizations set up by a paid agent of the embassy; however, they did rely on the participation of actual Canadian supporters of South Africa, who willingly volunteered to promote the country. Any other collaboration between South Africa and pro-South African groups was almost entirely behind the scenes, as the CSAS was fully aware that any open association with the South African government, or even the independent South Africa Foundation, would be toxic to their reputation.

Israel's relationship to pro-Israel organizations around the world is harder to define, and its collaboration with civil society has taken both covert and public forms. It is true that Israeli officials have boasted of using pro-Israel organizations as "front groups" to pursue the state's goals without being identified as such, and although activities of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs (MSA) are almost entirely secret, investigative reporting has revealed a number of examples in which the MSA has engaged in covert collaboration with pro-Israel groups. Unfortunately, little is known about such activities (if any) in Canada. At the same time, Israel openly engages in a number of state-civil society alliances, some of which include Canadians, in which legitimate civil society organizations have opted-in to support Israel's anti-BDS strategy. In some cases, independent organizations have been contracted out by the state to perform propaganda functions, or even to perform surveillance or other coercive tasks against BDS activists.

Whereas South Africa had to create its own artificial civil society organizations, Israel does not need to do the same, as there are plenty of existing organizations that are willing to partner with the country (either openly or behind the scenes).

Third, both South Africa and Israel have relied on repressive tactics to fight boycott movements, although these have been applied in very different ways. The South African government targeted the ANC and other liberation movements in exile with surveillance, vandalism of property, and even assassination, while the more radical Canadian solidarity organizations were subject to surveillance and infiltration on behalf of the RCMP, the South African government, and private businesses. However, when it came to most participants in the anti-apartheid movement, the backlash they faced from the South Africa lobby was relatively minor. South Africa's campaign was intense, particularly its attempts to demonize the ANC in the eyes of Canadians, but its actions were mostly at the level of propaganda. This was certainly frustrating to anti-apartheid activists, as pro-apartheid misinformation made the work of persuading the public much more difficult (especially when it came disguised through front organizations). Nonetheless, few of my interview participants characterized the lobby's actions as having any real impact on their work, or of posing actual barriers to their activism. Of course, it is worth keeping in mind that the anti-apartheid movement ultimately won, and their responses downplaying the opposition may reflect this.

Israel's war on boycotts has had a much different impact on solidarity activism. Unlike the boycott of South Africa, which was led by liberation movements officially at war with the South African government, the boycott of Israel is led by a coalition of civil society organizations, bypassing liberation movements entirely. For that reason, the

primary reference point for boycotts against Israel is not targeted for murder in the same way that the ANC had been. At the same time, however, the Israel lobby applies harsh and repressive tactics against ordinary supporters and participants in the boycott movement. These tactics include surveillance, as the Israeli government is reportedly monitoring BDS groups, and this is supported by independent monitoring of activists by organizations like the Canary Mission.³² More significantly, the Israel lobby targets individual activists, including even university students, with smears and shaming campaigns, and has made various attempts to ban or suppress BDS organizing, whether through campus policies or through legislation — although this has not yet been successful in Canada to the extent as it has been in the United States, France, or Germany. In other words, punishing boycott supporters is a deliberate feature of the Israel lobby’s anti-boycott agenda, which seeks to put a “price tag” on anti-Israel activism. It must be emphasized that this feature is unique to the Israel lobby; there simply was never any effort by the South Africa lobby to put a “price tag” upon anyone who merely

³² There is a broader context of surveillance which has not been previously raised. The pro-Israel Anti-Defamation League (B’nai Brith’s sister organization in the US) has a long history of infiltration, including against activist groups like the Organization of Arab Students since the 1960s, and spying on the anti-apartheid movement while sharing information with South African officials (Richard C. Paddock, “Infiltrated 30 Groups, ADL Figure Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1993; Grant F. Smith, “FBI files reveal Anti-Defamation League spied on Arab students,” *Electronic Intifada*, May 14, 2013, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/fbi-files-reveal-anti-defamation-league-spied-arab-students/12453>). In Canada, intelligence officials have placed informants in mosques (Omar El Akkad, “Muslims say CSIS has spies in may mosques,” *Globe and Mail*, July 28, 2006), and in recent years Muslim students have complained of constantly being approached by CSIS and RCMP agents for the purposes of information gathering, which they experience as intimidation (Jack Hauen, “Muslim Students Speak Out About Being Targeted By Canadian Spy Agency,” *Vice News*, November 19, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/zmd4yj/muslim-students-speak-out-about-being-targeted-by-canadian-spy-agency; Shanifa Nasser, “When CSIS comes knocking: Amid reports of Muslim students contacted by spy agency, hotline aims to help,” *CBC News*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/csis-students-university-muslim-campus-1.5229670>). This is in addition to Israel’s surveillance of Palestinians themselves. While surveillance did not emerge as a major theme of this research, it is very likely to be more commonplace than is already understood.

expressed support for the anti-apartheid movement. The effect of this overall approach is that the Israel lobby is narrowing the space for Palestinian solidarity activism.

Reasserting Hegemony

Israel's reliance on repressive tactics to re-establish its hegemony within North American civil society is not out of necessity or desperation, but precisely the opposite — because Israel *can*. The very fact that Israel still maintains ideological support and legitimacy, both at the level of the state and throughout society, has *allowed* Israel's response to shift from mechanisms of consent to mechanisms of coercion. This was not the case for South Africa. Even as South Africa engaged in brutal repression at home and murderous violence towards the ANC abroad, the regime's limited support within Canadian society was so fragile that in public its officials had to be careful in how they behaved towards their critics. Thus, South Africa's approach was one of seeking dialogue and “constructive engagement,” and they sought to speak with anyone they could. This is a strategy that depended on appearing reasonable and friendly, for if South Africa had been so bold as to replicate the same repressive tendencies against Canadian boycott supporters that were associated with the apartheid regime in public opinion, this would have further undermined their public relations efforts. Perhaps more importantly, neither did South Africa have partners in government who would ever agree to take action in a way that would disadvantage boycott supporters. Israel's degree of popularity and legitimacy in Canada means that its lobby is not bound to these same restraints, and it has partners who are willing to assist in its efforts to crack down on its critics.

This dynamic presents a problem for the future. At this moment, there are no signs that the BDS movement (or for that matter, criticism of Israel) is going to disappear. In

fact, the movement has achieved greater visibility within the past year, particularly due to its endorsement by popular left-wing U.S. Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar,³³ while Netanyahu's close alliance with Trump highlights Israel's illiberal values and thus threatens to further alienate liberal opinion abroad.³⁴ If proposals for annexing the West bank move ahead, the boycott will increasingly look like the only option available to North American civil society to register their protest and put pressure on the Israeli government. Should support for BDS among civil society remain stable, or even grow in popularity, while support for Israel is maintained at the level of the historical bloc, then we can expect to see the Israel lobby expand its coercive initiatives. Any gains made by the BDS movement are likely to be met with increased repression. Only if things change at the top — if support for Israel among the political and economic elite becomes more qualified, or if they begin to tolerate the boycott as an acceptable form of protest — will the Israel lobby be forced to give up coercive measures and find other ways to persuade the public. The lesson of the South African anti-apartheid movement is that such change is possible, and that grassroots activism can indeed transform public opinion, eventually forcing a change in government policies. Whether or not this success can be replicated by the Palestinian solidarity movement, which faces far greater ideological and material challenges, is an open question.

³³ Amir Tibon, "To Please Trump, Netanyahu Turned Omar, Tlaib and BDS into Prime Time News," *Haaretz*, August 20, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-to-please-trump-netanyahu-turned-omar-tlaib-and-bds-into-front-page-news-1.7726105>.

³⁴ Munayyer, "Alternative Bipolarity," 232.

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