

Title: Ethnic Lobbying and Diaspora Politics in the U.S.
The Case of the Pro-Palestinian Movement

Author: Michelle M. Dekker, 3001245
Billitonkade 74, 3531 TK, Utrecht
The Netherlands

Email: michelle_dekker@yahoo.com

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Introduction

"The US has the leverage to get Israel to make tough decisions. It just needs to use it".
Dan Ephron and Joanna Chen in *Newsweek* (2010, 8)

"The United States has enormous potential leverage at its disposal for dealing with Israel and the Palestinians".
Walt and Mearsheimer (2007, 226)

As these statements suggest, the key to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies perhaps not in Palestine, but in the United States of America. The US is the only superpower in the world that has enough leverage at its disposal to pressure Israel into accepting a two-state solution. Being able to influence what stance the US will take towards the conflict would therefore put one in a powerful position. This means that the more influence you have in the US, the more you can bend the developments in the conflict in the direction of one's wishes. The American Jewish population has understood this thoroughly and has acquired a stronghold position in the making of US foreign policy towards the region. This lobby has effectively prevented the US government from using the leverage it has over Israel. However, contrary to what one might expect, we hear very little about those in the US who lobby on behalf of the Palestinians and who advocate a more critical attitude towards Israel. If the political 'battlefield' has indeed shifted to the US, if the final fate of the Palestinians is in the hands of America, then why does one not see them 'fighting their fight' on Capitol Hill, trying to convince the US government to make use of the leverage they have? There is a very clear duality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East. A duality one would also expect to find in the American arena, where the course of the conflict and possibly its solution can, for a large part, be determined. This paper sets out to learn more about the unknown 'other' in this dual battle: to study what pro-Palestinian efforts are being undertaken in the US and how this movement fits in the larger trend of ethnic lobbying and diaspora politics in the US. Are domestic ethnic groups, and Arab Americans specifically, able to affect US foreign policy?

Thus, the main question that will be examined is; *why* is the Arab American movement not (considered to be) successful in influencing US foreign policy, in the

context of the current US trend in diaspora politics and ethnic lobbying. What strategies do these ethnic groups employ and what makes some effective and others not? In order to find out whether these ethnic groups are able to influence US foreign policy, and especially foreign policy towards the Middle East, different International Relations theories have to be examined. One of the main questions that these International Relations' theorists have tried to answer over the years is how US foreign policy can be explained. What are the motivations and processes behind the policies? Vaughn P. Shannon (2003) has devised a very useful system of analysis. With this system, one looks at US foreign policy through three different 'lenses': the 'geo-strategic', 'domestic political', and 'individual beliefs' lens. Each of these 'lenses' offers a different perspective on what the possible sources of certain foreign policies might be. In this paper, US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is looked at through all three lenses.

Though the first 'lens', the geo-strategic lens, does not take into account the ethnic lobbies that are the topic of this paper, it is still important to explain what this 'lens' is about. This because it helps to show that there is a general trend in US foreign policy decision-making of ethnic lobbies being powerful enough to influence US foreign policy in a direction that is going in against, what can reasonably be determined to be, the 'US (geo-strategic) interest' (Smith 2000, 94). What Shannon (2003) terms as the geo-strategic lens, can be linked to the theory of Realism. This IR (International Relations) theory holds that states will compete with other states for security and power, since this is essential to their survival (Dunne & Schmidt 2006, 165). Within the theory of Realism, the state is the main actor in international politics (statism) and the most important goal of the state is survival, for which it will do anything. Lastly, the realists argue for self help, which means that every state will look after its own interests, because they cannot depend on others to do it for them (Dunne & Schmidt 2006, 176). Two elements of the Realist perspective are especially useful for theorizing US foreign policy towards the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians: 1) the structure of the international system being anarchical and the subsequent issue of power distribution, and 2) the element of geo-politics, which refers to the importance of material resources for state power. Looking at the structure of the world system, the notion of polarity is important, since this is something that "affects policy by placing different constraints

and opportunities on policy” (Shannon 2003, 4). Realist theorists argue that the system that arose after World War II was a *bipolar* system, with the two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union (SU) placing pressure on one another to secure their own power and security. This resulted in the US for example in Containment politics, the aim of which was to completely contain Soviet influence in the world. The US government tried to accomplish this by seeking allies and fighting wars. Thus, under such a system of bipolarity, an important motivation or basis for decision for a certain foreign policy is the continuous battle to win more power and influence, and containing the influence of the other, in for example the Middle East. One can then be reasonably certain in concluding that the choice for a certain foreign policy course had been influenced by the bipolarity of the system. There is also another type of polarity, which is called *unipolarity*. This is the system that many Realists assume is now in place. It refers to the situation in which, after the Cold War ended, one superpower prevailed (the US). In the unipolar system, this superpower acquired immense freedom and numerous opportunities, because the constraints it had had to deal with in the bipolar system, which had limited the state’s policy options, were now no longer there.

Another component of Realist theory is ‘geopolitics’. It refers to the idea that other important aspects for determining foreign policy are apparent threats to such things that sustain a state’s political, military and economic powers, such as material resources, powerful allies and important regions. Applied to the US, this would mean that the government would do whatever it sees fit for combating these apparent threats and making sure its own interests are secured. ‘Material resources’ is one of the elements mentioned, and when talking about the Middle East, one then immediately thinks about oil. Wanting to secure their oil imports from the Middle East is bound to have influence on the US approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Threats to oil supply would mean a threat to US stability. These geopolitical concerns are therefore often an important part of foreign policy considerations.

Looking to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through this US geostrategic and geopolitical lens, one would have to conclude that it would be in America’s (self)interest to be supportive of the Palestinians and to help them establish their own state. The conflict is a major source of instability in the Middle East and an obstacle in having good relations with the Arab countries and its peoples. In this way it does not only threaten

oil supply, but also US security. Many regimes and terrorist organizations that are hostile to the US, base their hatred of America on US support for Israel (Shannon 2003, 133) (Mearsheimer 2008, 148). "America's perceived complicity in Israeli violence carries a heavy price. It is a potent terrorist recruitment tool" (Cohen 2010, 30). Recently, for example, Osama bin Laden reaffirmed that "the United States will not dream of enjoying safety until we live it in reality in Palestine" ("Report" 2010, 1). Pressuring Israel into agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state, for which the US has the necessary leverage at its disposal, would thus seem to take away one of the major recruiting tools of terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda and could improve America's security situation (Brown 2000, 3). Mearsheimer and Walt even argue that Israel has become a "strategic liability" for the US in the sense that "Washington's close relationship with Jerusalem makes it harder, not easier, to defeat the terrorists who are now targeting the United States" and it also "undermines America's standing with important allies around the world" (2007, 5). America has always claimed to uphold international law and human rights, and has criticized numerous regimes, in for example the Middle East, for not abiding by these (democratic) ideals. Unconditionally supporting Israel while it has continued, for over 60 years now, to violate international law and several United Nations General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions, damages America's moral standing around the globe¹ (Cobban 2009, 2). Moreover, as argued by Noam Chomsky, it is not just that the US *stands by* Israel: it is the economic, military, diplomatic and ideological support given by the US that *enables* Israel to continue to 'crush' the Palestinians in the first place (Chomsky 2007, 35). Thus, by

¹ Israel's settlement policies for example, violate Article 49 of the Geneva Convention (van Agt 2009, 31). In this Article, it is stated that "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies" (*Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, Geneva, 12 August 1949. On the website of the International Committee of the Red Cross, www.icrc.org). On the basis of Article 49 of the Geneva Convention, the Security Council of the United Nations has ruled in Resolution 465 (March 1, 1980) that the settlement policies of Israel are in violation of International Law (van Agt 2009, 31). The Resolution determined that "all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, or any part thereof, have no legal validity and that Israel's policy and practices of settling parts of its population and new immigrants in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East" (Resolution 465, on website UN, www.unispal.un.org).

facilitating it, the US seems to have become an 'accomplice' in Israel's numerous and repeated violations of International Law.

From a Realist and geostrategic perspective, it thus does not make sense that the US supports Israel unconditionally. It may have during the Cold War, when struggling to balance Soviet influence in the region, but the current situation as described above seems to ask for a different approach to the conflict. Policy however has not dramatically changed. Why not? To answer this question, one would have to look through another 'lens'; the domestic political lens (Shannon 2003). If US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not based on US geostrategic considerations, then what motivations are at its core? In this paper, it is argued that, when US foreign policy does not seem to follow US strategic interests, this is often due to the influence of ethnic lobbies. Because so many political theorists have traditionally adhered to the theory of Realism, in which only states are seen as actors and domestic politics as insignificant, the study of ethnic interest groups and their considerable influence over US foreign policy is a relatively new 'field' of study. Haney and Vanderbush (1999) have examined the different works that up to that point had been written about ethnic interest groups. On the basis of the existing literature, they have discerned the main factors that determine whether an ethnic interest group will be successful at influencing foreign policy or not. The factors discussed in this paper are: (1) ethnic group population and electoral power, (2) an ethnic group's financial resources, and (3) the ethnic community's organizational strength. Whereas Haney's article is quite theoretical, Tony Smith (2000) provides interesting examples of how ethnic group influence works out in practice. As for the ethnic groups in the US that lobby for a US foreign policy that is more pro-Palestinian, which is the main topic of this paper, the works by Smith (2000) and Haney and Vanderbush (1999) are not very useful. Though both these scholars point to several influential ethnic lobbies, they have not analysed the pro-Arab or pro-Palestinian lobby in the US. The Arab American groups are mentioned, but only as a 'side-note' when discussing the Israel lobby. A very good analysis of the latter lobby, which was used for this paper, is one by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2007). For an understanding of Arab American ethnic groups and their strategies, one would have to turn to one of the excellent works available from Yossi Shain (1994-1995, 1995, 1996). He provides a detailed history of Arab American organizations and their attempts to

influence US foreign policy. However, these articles were written in the 1990s and therefore cannot shed light on what happened in the past twenty years. Therefore, the recent book by Khalil Marrar (2009), titled *The Arab Lobby and US Foreign Policy: The Two-State Solution*, is such a valuable contribution to the academic discourse. This book combines theories on ethnic group influence such as those described by Smith (2000) and Haney (1999) and applies these to the Arab American situation. He also provides explanations of the political contexts in which the Arab American groups operate and how political developments impacted their strategies and effectiveness. The book by Paul and Paul (2009) is especially valuable for its analysis of the finances of the Arab American organizations and Political Action Committees and how these were spent, since this is something which Marrar and Shain do not discuss (extensively). *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East – The Role of Lobbies and Special Interest Groups*, a book by Janice Terry (2005) gives an especially interesting insight into how different Presidents and their Administrations have dealt with the Arab Americans, something which was not discussed in such detail by Marrar and Shain.

On the basis of the aforementioned works, ethnic lobbying in the US is scrutinized in this paper. It turns out that ethnic interest groups can exert considerable influence over US policy, sometimes even to the extent that, according to Smith (2000), ethnic groups ‘take over’ US foreign policy completely. Their level of influence is dependent though on the factors mentioned above, as theorized by Haney (1999). The lobby that has most influence and is seen as the ‘model’ for other ethnic groups that want to affect US foreign policy, is the pro-Israel lobby (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 344). Though the Arab American lobby, the Israel lobby’s opponent when it comes to US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is ignored by many political analysts, the argument made in this paper is that this lobby has become more and more influential over the years. It is argued that currently, the lobby finds itself at a pivotal moment in its history. Though US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has always been more favourable to Israel, and it will probably always remain that way, the current official government policy aims are that a Palestinian state should be created. This is a remarkable development, since forty ago, in the 1970s, the US government did not even regard the Palestinians as a separate people, merely as ‘Arabs’, and certainly not as warranting the creation of a state. The present situation, in which the policy preferences

of the Arab Americans coincide with official US government policy, provides historically unparalleled opportunities for Arab Americans to have an impact on US foreign policy. In addition, it will be argued that the election of Barack Obama raises Arab American momentum to an even higher level. This is related to the third 'lens' that Shannon (2003) discerns: the individual beliefs lens. Obama's openness to ethnic group influence, including Arab Americans and more liberal Jewish American groups, provides an unique opportunity for Arab Americans to affect US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the coming years.

Thus, the main topic of this paper is the Arab American lobby, a lobby that has been, in contrast to the Israel lobby, ignored in works on ethnic lobbying in the US. The main question that is being addressed, is how this lobby compares to other ethnic organizations as for their strategies and why it has, so far, not been seen as being successful in influencing US foreign policy. The period under examination is from the creation of the Israeli state onwards (1948-present). The focus, however, will be on the post-Cold War period, since the end of the Cold War constituted a major structural change that made US foreign policy more susceptible to ethnic group influence.

Chapter One

International Relations (IR) theories on geopolitics and system structure, and their influence on a state's foreign policy, can be associated with Realist theory. According to Dunne and Schmidt (2001, 161), this Realist theory dominates IR studies, because "it provides the most powerful explanation for the state of war which is the regular condition of life in the international system". Realist theorists see the State as the most important actor in world politics; all others (i.e. NGO's, International Organizations, domestic groups) are not significant enough (Dunne & Schmidt 2001, 176). Survival is according to Realist theory the main objective of a state: its security is the main national interest and a state will do whatever is necessary to attain or maintain that security. In order to accomplish this it has to act in its own self-interest (Dunne & Schmidt 2001, 176) and can rely only on itself to guarantee its survival (Dunne & Schmidt 2001, 176).

The US operates within the 'international system' that is described above. Therefore, it cannot determine its foreign policy in a vacuum: the events that take place in world politics have to be taken into account in US foreign policy considerations. There are geo-strategic elements at play that, for a large part, can determine the course of action the US will take. Especially during the Cold War these geo-strategic considerations were important. Because of the bi-polarity of the system, of the US and the Soviet Union fighting over influence in the world, foreign policy of the US towards the Middle East during the Cold War was relatively straightforward. Straightforward in the sense that with every policy the main goal was to contain the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, since containment was seen as necessary for the survival of the US. Support for Israel during that time made sense from a Realist point of view: the US wanted to expand its own sphere of influence in the Middle East, and Israel was a 'beacon' of Western influence in the region. However, as Shannon states (2003, 4), "the system's polarity affects policy by placing different constraints and opportunities on policy". After the Cold War ended, the polarity of the world system changed. What remained was a unipolar system, with the US as the world's only superpower, no longer constrained in policy decisions by the bipolarity of the system. Concerns of containing Soviet influence, which had been the main strategic motivation behind US support for Israel, thus were no longer relevant. Realists would argue though that the geo-political constraints remained:

a stable Middle East and a free flow of oil is in the interest of America's security and survival. On this matter Shannon remarks that "perceived threats, including regional or outside powers that would threaten control or disruption of this resource, would be of top concern in American calculations, *superior to the 'low politics' of domestic interests*" (Shannon 2001, 5, emphasis added). However, sometimes one finds that, when examining US foreign policy, the Realist perspective does not apply; the chosen policy cannot be explained by looking through this 'lens' only and there must thus be other motivations behind policy. This is also the case with US foreign policy towards the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. If it were only geo-political elements at play, one would expect the US to have solved the conflict already by pressuring Israel into accepting the establishment of a Palestinian state. The strategic importance of Israel had, after all, seized to exist when the Cold War ended, while the establishment of a Palestinian state would increase stability in the region and would consequently increase US security. As Terry (2005, 127) states, "although a resolution of the Arab Israeli conflict will not solve all of the region's problems, it would alleviate much of the hostility, anti-American feeling and violence that characterizes the area at present". Recently, US General David Petraeus "hero of Iraq and America's commander in the wider Middle East, told a Senate committee that the unresolved conflict in Palestine was fomenting anti-Americanism in the region" ("American Israeli Relations" 2010, 46). Mearsheimer adds to this that "the unique relationship between Israel and the US is helping to fuel America's terrorism problem, not solve it" (2008, 149). From the Realist point of view, America's unconditional support for Israel, which has continued after the end of the Cold War, does not make sense. Apparently, when it comes to US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, strategic interests are not driving policy. As opposed to what Realists argue, one would thus have to look at other elements for an explanation. In this case, it seems that one will have to turn to US domestic politics to find a reason for why the US has always been pro-Israel. The 'low politics' of domestic interests are thus apparently not as unimportant as Realists suggest (Shannon 2001, 5).

Ethnic Lobbying in the US

When examining the domestic political situation of the US, an element that immediately comes to the fore is that of ethnic groups and their power in the making of American foreign policy. This is also known as 'diaspora politics', 'Ethnic lobbying' or 'multicultural foreign policy'. It is with these domestic interest groups that one can find an explanation for why certain foreign policy decisions were made. Instead of having been made on the basis of geo-strategic considerations, ethnic lobbying groups have pushed through the policy they desired, which has resulted in US foreign policy decisions that cannot be explained from a Realist perspective. According to Tony Smith, the author of *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy*, the influence that domestic ethnic lobbies have over the formation of US policy in world affairs, is generally highly underestimated (Smith 2000, 1). These groups play a far larger role and have much more influence than is being recognized by IR theorists and politicians. This is not that surprising given that Realist theory has been the dominant theory ever since the beginning of academic IR (Dunne & Schmidt 2001, 165). Scholars trained in the Realist tradition have after all not been taught to look at domestic politics in their political analyses. Nowadays though, there is a growing number of scholars who have broken with that tradition and who have studied the influence of domestic politics on a country's foreign policy.

As Smith (2000, 30) argues, "the end of the Cold War has weakened the American state relative to the society so that in many domains interest groups are gaining in strength". The fact that ethnic lobbies are able to play such a large role is due to the structure and workings of the American political system. Because of the decentralized nature of the system, it takes, as Smith qualifies it to be, "surprisingly little political capital" (2000, 93) to exert influence on policy. As a pluralist democracy and a nation of immigrants, the US political process is open to social interest lobbying. Ethnic groups have the right to speak out and have their own views on US domestic and foreign policy. Notably, since the end of the Cold War, the different branches of the US government (the executive, the legislative) have been less in agreement on what course to take in foreign policy. Furthermore, also Congress is divided, with less bipartisanship. This weakening of 'government leadership' gives organized civic interest groups, like ethnic lobbies, more power in defining American foreign policy (Smith 2000, 77). American democracy

is herein quite an exception relative to other democracies, where organized interests do not play such an important role. According to Smith this is due to the historical evolution of the structure of state-society relations in the US. He argues that at the founding of the US state, the choice, for various reasons, fell on the creation of a weak central government (2000, 87). One of these reasons was that differences existed between different areas and states, and thus authority was to be organized federally. Next to that, the way in which the system of American capitalism evolved separately from the state, “meant that the market and society in general opposed regulation *to a degree unfamiliar in most other democracies* (as in Scandinavia, France, Germany, or Japan)” (Smith 2000, 87). The end-result of these different forces at work in the establishment of the American political system, has been that ‘the People’ have maintained much power to themselves by binding and constraining the power of the central government. Smith holds that this degree of pluralism is distinctly American (2000, 87). The checks and balances put in place by the Founding Fathers of America ensure that no single institutional branch can monopolize power. When it comes to foreign policy, power is divided between the Presidency and Congress. The former needs the latter to, *inter alia*, ratify treaties or declare war. Interest groups can get access by putting pressure on one branch that has power over the other (Smith 2000, 93). When it comes to interest groups, that pressure is often put on Congress, who in turn pressure the President. Haney (1999) theorizes that ethnic interest groups “are more likely to be successful when the policy in question requires a congressional role, since it is usually more porous than the executive” (1999, 345). Though the Executive branch is the prime decision-maker when it comes to US foreign policy, a President still has to deal with the reactions to that policy on the Hill, especially when Congress is controlled by the opposition party (Shannon 2003, 5). The President is thus constrained in his actions by the US Congress. Interesting to note as well in this regard, is that it is often the case that ethnic lobbies find support for their policy preferences in Congress, whereas the Administration wants to move in another direction and is opposed to the lobby’s influence. Overall, the US Administration usually tends to prefer a more ‘balanced’ approach in foreign policy than Congress does. To give an example regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the main ‘theme’ that can be discerned historically is “a pro-Zionist and pro-Israel Congress clashing with an Executive interested in balancing considerations” (Shannon 2003, 5).

Also for example the Greek and Armenian lobby were met with opposition from the US Administration in office².

Furthermore, the way political parties are organized in the US is also a significant factor in the degree of power that social forces have there. Since candidates for public office are not named by the political party they 'belong' to, but are nominated through primaries by local electorates, the local constituency has much influence on the elected public official (Smith 2000, 88). Apart from listening to his or her party leadership, the elected official will thus be responsive to pressure from his or her constituency. Entry into the system by social forces thus has two sources: at the local level during primaries, and nationally in the legislature in Washington, mostly through lobbying Congress (Smith 2000, 88). Besides ethnic lobbies, also religious and economic interest groups are active on these levels. Ethnic lobbies are thus only a subset of what is in general termed 'interest groups'.

Overall, it can be argued that the nature of the political system of the US is such that, at times, ethnic lobbies and other interest groups can determine domestic and foreign policy. They have this influence even on matters that are of major importance to the US and, as Smith holds, "at times in ways that may contradict what may reasonably be construed to be the common good" (2000, 94). In this way, American politics can be characterized as 'the politics of organized interests'. Smith argues that when there is an interest group that is determined and focused, while at the same time the general public is largely unaware of or unconcerned about the issue, "then the structure of American politics allows a determined, self-interested minority to speak for America in world affairs, especially at historical moments such as that following the Cold War when the unity and purpose of the state has weakened and social activists stand ready with their demands" (Smith 2000, 94). The importance of capturing the 'ethnic vote' is acknowledged by both the Democratic and Republican parties in the US. Since the 1880s both have had what Smith (2000) terms 'nationalities sections', which have been set-up in order to keep in touch with different ethnic communities in the US. Though the communities were at first not always taken seriously, this has changed since the 1940s. During this time, it became clear that these ethnic communities could potentially be very

² These examples will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this paper.

powerful and could even make the difference in an election. Sadd and Lendenmann (1985) looked at the national parties and their attitude towards ethnic groups in 1984, and found that, in that year, the Republican party “paid much more attention than the Democrats to wooing ethnic voters” (1985, 22). The party even kept detailed records of volunteers recruited by 40 ethnic groups (1985, 22). Nowadays, both parties pay really close attention to ethnic groups and even the White House has an ‘ethnic outreach’ section, dedicated to liaising with organized ethnic interests in the country (Smith 2000, 98). In addition, the growing importance of ‘ethnic politicking’ can be seen in the growing number of congressional caucuses (informal issue groups) focused on ethnic interests (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 2).

Influential Ethnic Lobbies in the US

There are several examples in US foreign policy history in which ethnic lobbies have had influence on policy. Take for example the US intervention in Haiti, September 1994, during the Presidency of Bill Clinton. Neither before, nor after the intervention, was there a national consensus on whether an intervention would be in the American interest. On the contrary, polls even showed 80% *opposition* to military intervention (Smith 2000, 71). Nonetheless, Bill Clinton sent American troops to Haiti to aide and reinstate Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the ‘President-in-exile’ since the military coup in 1991. Political analysts hold that Clinton acted this way because of organized African American interest groups such as the *Congressional Black Caucus* and *TransAfrica* (Shain 1995, 72) (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 2). An important tool of the latter group was a hunger strike by its executive director, Randall Robinson. African American groups also played an important role in the formation of US foreign policy towards South Africa. They called for trade sanctions against the South African government, but were met with opposition at the federal level. The African American activists thus turned to institutions at the *local level* to have them install sanctions (Shain 1995, 71). Their strategy worked. Their efforts made opposing Apartheid one of the most important political concerns for several local governments, the media, and universities, who had all been “pressured by black organizations to rid themselves of holdings that involved U.S. and foreign companies with interests in South Africa” (Shain 1994-1995, 838). The campaign also

had an enormous impact on elected officials and the general public, which created the political momentum that was necessary to pave “the way for an unprecedented congressional coalition in the House and the Senate, which adopted the sanctions legislation” (Shain 1994-1995, 838).

Another influential group are the Cuban Americans. During the Clinton Administration, people generally favored a more liberal position of the US towards Cuba (Moore 2002, 84). This included strong forces such as the Catholic Church and the Chamber of Commerce. However, Clinton was hesitant to make his policy towards Cuba more liberal, since he feared the Cuban communities in New Jersey and Florida would disapprove of these measures and that their dissatisfaction would be reflected in the elections (Smith 2000, 89). In addition, the Cuban Americans showed their power and influence with regard to the Helms-Burton bill in 1996. This bill extended “the jurisdiction of US courts over suits brought by American citizens to defend property rights that the Castro government had nullified after 1959” (Smith 2000, 69). Cuban Americans formed the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) and persuaded Congress to pass, and President Clinton to sign, the bill. Though a major success for the CANF, this bill came at a huge cost for the US as a whole; it hurt US relations with its most closest trading partners (the EU, Canada and Mexico), who denounced the bill in strong terms (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3) (Smith 2000, 119).

There is also a lobby of Armenian Americans in Washington. They have, for example, lobbied for the acknowledgment of the 1915 genocide (Walt & Mearsheimer 2007, 11). They have been successful when it came to the 1992 Freedom Support Act (US Congress) that limited US relations with Azerbaijan (Shain 1994-1995, 821). The Armenian American community is mainly concentrated in California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York (Newhouse 2009, 10). The first Washington lobbying office of this ethnic minority was opened in 1973. However, their timing was odd, because at the time, Armenia was still a small Soviet Republic, not a separate state. There thus was not much to lobby for in the US, because the US could not really affect what happened in Armenia. This started to change after an earthquake hit Armenia in 1988. Armenian Americans donated money en masse to the victims of the disaster. Most of the funds were transferred through the Armenian lobby, the ‘Armenian Assembly’, after which this organization was able to set up an aid office, the first one from the West,

in Armenia (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 2-3). Not long after that, the Soviet Union collapsed and Armenia became an independent country in 1991. However, in neighboring Azerbaijan a civil war broke out between the government and the Armenian ethnic minority in that country, an enclave at Ngorno-Karabakh. With the growing involvement of America in Armenia, through the establishment of an embassy and by taking on a mediating role in the civil war in Azerbaijan, there was now really something to lobby for in the US for the Armenian Americans. The Armenian Assembly thus tripled its staff from five to 18 (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3). Over the years, their sway over US policy towards Armenia has grown immensely, especially in Congress, and they have even overcome strong opposition from the Clinton Administration. This Administration, and especially Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, was very critical of the Armenian lobby. She tried to repeal Section 907 of the aforementioned Freedom Support Act, which “barred foreign aid to Azerbaijan in retaliation for its embargo of Armenia” (Smith 2000, 14). The Administration argued this aid ban impeded US relations with “oil-rich Azerbaijan” (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3) and thus hurt US interests. Besides lobbying for blocking aid to Azerbaijan, the Armenian Americans lobbied Congress for economic aid for Armenia. These efforts succeeded brilliantly: the level of US aid to Armenia is the second highest (after Israel) per capita in the world (Smith 2000, 69) (Newhouse 2009, 10), “despite the fact that the Armenian government was highly authoritarian, that it was an aggressor state, and that it was friendly with Iran and Russia, the two rivals of the United States in the region” (Smith 2000, 70). It is remarkable that the Armenian American lobby was able to accomplish this high level of aid for Armenia, and at the same time blocking US aid to Azerbaijan, while their efforts were opposed by the Clinton Administration. This clearly shows that the Armenian American lobby was in a position of considerable influence regarding US foreign policy towards that region.

The Armenian lobby worked on occasion together with the Greek lobby, another influential ethnic lobby in the US. These Greek Americans have, for over two decades, “successfully mitigated what would otherwise surely be, in the minds of most observers, a much more pro-Turkish policy on the part of Washington” (Smith 2000, 70). After the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Greek Americans lobbied in Washington for the US to take the side of Greece and to impose an economic and military embargo on Turkey (Shain 1994-1995, 824). It was important for US interests to handle the Greece-Turkey

situation very carefully; “the danger was that the NATO’s eastern flank would disintegrate if Greece and Turkey went to war – a danger the United States had to work hard to avoid” (Smith 2000, 63). The policies that resulted from Greek American pressure in Washington were making a balanced approach from the US towards the conflict very difficult, if not impossible. The relentless efforts of the Greek lobby led *inter alia* to a three-year embargo of weapon-sales to Turkey, after which, in retaliation, Turkey closed NATO listening stations on its soil. Just as the Armenian lobby, the Greek lobby was opposed by the US Administration that was in place at the time. President Ford for example, lobbied Congress himself to repeal the arms ban. Ford stressed that the embargo jeopardized US security interests, because Turkey had threatened to close down NATO and US military bases on Turkish territory if the ban was not going to be lifted (Terry 2005, 46). Ford did not succeed in breaking the hold of the Greek lobby over Congress, and consequently Turkey closed down the military bases as it had warned it would do. Even though during the election campaign (1976) Carter criticized Ford for being pro-Turkey, when he himself became President, he also lobbied for lifting the ban, which eventually happened in August, 1978. The Greek lobby was thus not able to have a *lasting* influence on US foreign policy. The case does however demonstrate how an ethnic lobby can effectively counter, at least for a while, the foreign policy preferences of the White House or the Pentagon (Terry 2005, 48).

Another ethnic group of influence are the Irish-Americans. It was mainly to please Irish-American groups and politicians, that the Clinton Administration became involved in the peace process in Northern Ireland (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 2) (Smith 2000, 72). The most well-known and powerful ethnic lobby, however, is the Israel Lobby. In their famous work *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, Walt and Mearsheimer have come up with the following definition of this lobby; it is “the loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively work to shape US foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction” (2007, 112). The American Jewish Community (and others who sympathize with Israel) has been very influential when it comes to US foreign policy towards the Middle East. The lobby has “friends in every office of any importance on Capitol Hill” and therefore instant access to policymakers (Findley 1985, 110). This level of access is unparalleled by any other ethnic lobbies. In the 1980s, the lobby was challenged by the Carter Administration. Carter strongly opposed the Israeli settlement policies and declared

them to be “illegal” and a “serious obstacle to peace” (Tivnan 1987, 118). In March 1980, Israel expropriated 1,000 acres of land in a Palestinian suburb, Beit Hanina, near East Jerusalem. In doing this, Israel defied a UN Security Council Resolution against the building of settlements and the seizure of property (Wall 2006, 45). The land that Israel had expropriated belonged to Palestinians, including *Palestinian Americans*, who now lived in Detroit. Under US law, the ‘Hickenlooper Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961’ to be precise, “foreign aid is to be suspended to any country seizing control of American-owned property” (Wall 2006, 45). Israel thus not only violated international law, but also US domestic laws. However, as Congressman Pete McCloskey realized, it was unlikely that Congress would actually enforce that law when it came to Israel and would as a result suspend the \$3 billion dollars Israel received every year from the US. Thus, he examined the State Department estimates on the costs of Israel’s settlement activity in the occupied territories, which was \$150 million, and suggested that US aid to Israel would be reduced by this amount (Wall 2006, 45). That way, the US then at least technically did not finance Israel’s actions that were in violation of US law. However, McCloskey withdrew his amendment before the vote took place: he had been pressured by the State Department to do so. Official Morris Draper argued that, if McCloskey’s resolution would be defeated it would “send the wrong signal” to the Israelis, and if it were passed it would upset negotiations on West Bank autonomy (Wall 2006, 45). Though this meant the end of the aid-reducing bill in Congress, the political struggle shifted to the Senate, where Illinois Senator Adlai Stevenson put forward the same amendment as McCloskey had wanted to introduce in Congress (Wall 2006, 45). In a speech on the Senate floor before the vote, Stevenson pointed out how outrageous it was that even though Begin blatantly ignored US calls to halt the building of settlements, the US continued to give Israel half of US aid money (Wall 2006, 45). What Stevenson described were facts and since it was also clearly shown that US law had been violated, one could reasonably expect the Senators to vote in favor of Stevenson’s proposal. However, because of the stronghold of the Israel lobby in the Senate, “the Israeli side is the only one that is seriously considered” (Findley 1985, 107). Only six Senators voted with Stevenson in favor of the proposed amendment, a staggering 85 against. As Wall (2006) states, “Stevenson’s 1980 effort to withhold aid money may well have been the last time any US Senator took a critical look at Israel’s illegal settlements” (2006, 45).

Another instance in which the Israel lobby was able to block an amendment that would have had financial consequences for Israel, was the amendment proposed by Congressman Nick Rahall in May 1984. He proposed to cut \$250 million from the appropriation bill, which was the amount that Israel had earmarked for the development of the Lavi fighter plane. In total, this Israeli project was funded by the US for about one billion dollars. Rahall proposed to only cut the \$250 million that was part of the pending bill (Findley 1985, 109). Rahall expected that he would receive considerable support for his amendment. After all, the Lavi fighter plane was going to compete on the world market with US-built fighter planes, and so the US was actually financing its economic competition, which does not seem to be a very sound economic policy. Since the manufacturing of US planes involved union labor jobs, which one would think politicians to want to preserve for their constituency, the amendment had 'nationalistic appeal' (Findley 1985, 109). However, that appeal was not enough to overcome the power that the Israel lobby had over Congress. Less than ten percent of the vote was in favor of Rahall's amendment. Those that had voted in favor, received angry phone calls afterwards from pro-Israel constituents. The whole episode really shows how effective the Israel lobby works. After a few cases like the one of Rahall and Stevenson, those politicians on Capitol Hill who were more critical of Israel, came to think "What's the point?" (Findley 1985, 108). It is not worthwhile for them to speak out, because the lobby is simply too powerful.

Ethnic Lobbying Strategies

There are several factors that will determine whether an ethnic group will be successful or not in influencing US foreign policy. Factors that are discussed repeatedly in the literature on ethnic lobbying are electoral power (population), financial resources and organizational strength (unity).

Electoral Power

In the literature on ethnic interest groups, it is argued that, for a group to be successful in its lobbying efforts, it needs to have a community behind it that is politically active and votes as a bloc (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 344). In addition, "members need to be

assimilated into American society, but still retain a significant identification with the ethnic homeland” (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 344). Through voting, these groups can make their voice heard in Washington and in that way influence policy. It would be expected that ethnic groups with larger populations will be able to influence policy better than smaller groups; their power comes from the number of people in the community who vote (Paul & Paul 2009, 102). An example of this is how Irish Americans, who constitute about 12 percent of the US population (Paul & Paul 2009, 105), had an impact on the Presidential elections of 1992. In the Democratic primary in Connecticut, Bill Clinton lost to Jerry Brown. Brown, who was of Irish descent, had reportedly won due to support from the Irish Catholics in that state. Advisors told Clinton that support from the Irish Catholics in New York, Boston and Chicago was critically needed, and in order to gain that vote, he would have to become more involved in the events in Northern Ireland (Smith 2000, 95). Clinton therefore soon after pledged that, if elected President, he would be personally committed to the peace process in Northern Ireland. Political analysts argue that this indeed won him the ‘Irish vote’, since the (Irish) Catholics voted more for Clinton than for the Republicans. This was a very significant development, since it constituted a reversal of the trend of the three previous presidential elections in which the Republican candidates received more votes from the Catholics than their Democratic opponents (Smith 2000, 96).

If an ethnic groups does not have enough members to influence a national election, this does not mean that its voice will not be heard on Capitol Hill. It can be enough to have certain well-placed Congress members on one’s side. Paul (Paul & Paul 2009, 102) theorizes that “the degree of geographic concentration of an ethnic group may influence the group’s ability to gain access to members of Congress”. Jewish Americans for example, constitute only 3 percent of the national population. They are, however, over 9 percent of the population of New York. Since most people in the NY Jewish community vote for the Democratic party, they constitute about 15 percent of the Democratic voters in New York (Smith 2000, 99). In addition, “since they tend to vote at twice the levels of the state average, they may perhaps account for 30 percent of all the votes cast in a Democratic primary in that state. Through their vote in New York State alone, then, Jews rather automatically have a place at the table in foreign policy deliberations in Washington” (Smith 2000, 99). It is estimated that 90 percent of

American Jews live in 12 key electoral states, one of which is New York. Together with votes from non-Jewish Israel supporters in the general public and Christian Conservatives, this makes the Jewish (pro-Israel) community in the US a power to be reckoned with during elections (Shannon 2003, 7).

According to Smith, this voting pressure is especially strong when it comes to the US Congress and is thus an important source of access to decision-makers for ethnic groups (2000, 99). For example the Albanian Americans; though nationally seen their numbers are very small, in one of the congressional districts of New York State, they constitute 17 percent of the population. This means the representative of that district will most likely do his or her best to make sure that the needs of the Albanian Americans are attended to, since getting their support is important for being (re)elected. The same counts for Cuban and Armenian Americans, who are centered demographically in certain areas, which political analysts cite as the main reason for the success of these lobbies. The Armenian Americans for example, almost one third (123,000) of them, lived in just five districts of the 106th Congress (Paul & Paul 2009, 110). The Cuban Americans are concentrated in Florida and New Jersey: 57 percent lived in five districts, and 71 percent in a mere twenty districts (Paul & Paul 2009, 110). These politically active groups urge their congressional representative to take up their case in Washington (Smith 2000, 99). Though little research has been done into this, Paul estimates that an ethnic group, in order to get attention from the member of Congress in a certain district, will have to comprise around 10 percent of the voters in that area (Paul & Paul 2009, 109). An important condition though, is that a group does not have strong opposition in the district and is well organized, otherwise it may be more difficult to influence the member of Congress. It should also be noted that it is likely that the geographic centeredness of the group will increase ethnic identification and the formation of a strong ethnic identity. This will make it more likely that the group votes as a bloc, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of this group being influential in an election (Paul & Paul 2009, 103). For the Armenians and Cubans it has worked out well: "California and New Jersey senators have championed the views of Armenians, and Florida and New Jersey senators have advocated the issue positions of Cuban Americans" (Paul & Paul 2009, 111).

Being demographically centered can thus work out well for an ethnic group. However, an ethnic group can also gain influence when its population is *dispersed* and diffused across different congressional districts. This way, many members of Congress can be targeted by the ethnic group, which increases the opportunities for the group's wishes to be heard (Paul & Paul 2009, 103). The chance of persuading Congress members to support the group's positions will be more likely, according to Paul (2009), when the members of Congress are not opposed to the group a priori. An example of an ethnic group whose population is dispersed across more congressional districts, and whom have been successful in influencing US foreign policy, are the Greek Americans. Only 6.8 percent of the Greek American population lived in the five districts with the largest concentration of Greek Americans, and only 19.3 percent in the twenty largest districts (Paul & Paul 2009, 111).

The Jewish Americans are the only group though who bring both 'population strategies' together. This group has, in several districts, a large *concentration* of people, yet also substantial numbers *across* a large number of districts. The group is thus both concentrated in some districts, giving it substantial electoral clout, and also dispersed over the country, thereby influencing a large number of members of Congress. "Jewish Americans composed 25 percent or more of four congressional districts in 2000, 14.4 percent of Jewish Americans lived in five congressional districts, and 35.9 percent lived in the twenty congressional districts with the largest number of Jews" (Paul & Paul 2009, 111). Interesting to note is that evangelical Christians, a group that also wants the US to have strong ties with Israel, has a population pattern that benefits the Israel lobby: "evangelical Christians are concentrated in many areas of the United States where Jews tend to be absent" (Paul & Paul 2009, 111). Thus, where Jews are not represented, the evangelical Christians can advocate the Israeli cause by their Member of Congress. Because of their interpretation of the Bible, the Christian right is just as devoted to the work of Israel and the conquest of greater Israel as the Jews are (Ionides 2003, 93). "Many of these believers are also voters quick to punish any presidential candidate with even the slightest pro-Palestinian stance" (Ionides 2003, 93).

Financial Resources

What comes to the fore in the literature is that, besides electoral power, financial resources help the ethnic lobby achieve its goals (Paul & Paul 2009, Smith 2009, Terry 2005). These financial resources can be used to contribute to political campaigns. “There is no denying the power that campaign financing has in getting officials elected” (Ionides 2003, 93). Though most donations to campaigns come from business interests, according to Smith, contributions that come from different ethnic lobbies are also a “critical part of the process” (Smith 2009, 101). Interestingly, one does not have to live in a certain district to be allowed to donate to a campaign there; “individuals from *outside* a congressional district may make contributions for races in which they are not themselves eligible to vote” (Smith 2009, 101). This means that, if an ethnic group does not have electoral clout in a district, it can still try to influence a member of Congress by supporting him or her financially. An example of how funding from an ethnic group can play an important role in an election, is the 1996 senatorial race in South Dakota. The ethnic groups involved in this case were Indian and Pakistani Americans. Republican Larry Pressler, backed by Indian donations, was against military aid to Pakistan. He lost, however, to his democratic opponent, Tim Johnson, who received substantial campaign donations from Pakistani Americans. The India/Pakistan issue thus played an important role in that election, even though in that district no one of the ethnicities involved actually lived (Smith 2009, 102).

Politicians sometimes get into trouble for accepting such (ethnic) campaign contributions, because the funds raised can be illegal. In the 1996 election the Indian embassy reportedly made illegal donations and so did the Chinese government. In 1996, Vice President Al Gore accepted, though he returned it later after it became known, \$80,000 in illegal contributions from Asian Americans.

Of all ethnic groups donating to political campaigns, Jewish Americans make the largest contributions. They are “contributing half or more of the funds the Democratic party receives for the national (not state and local) elections” (Smith 2009, 107). Most of the funding is done through PACs: Political Action Committees. Some of the PACs that are pro-Israel are the ‘Citizens Organized PAC’, ‘Washington PAC’ and the ‘Heartland PAC’. These PACs use what Paul (2009, 71) terms a “stealth PAC strategy”. This means that, though they are single-issue PACs that are completely devoted to a US foreign

policy that is pro-Israel, they want to stay 'hidden'. In order to do so, they use names that have no direct connection to Israel, thereby making it more difficult for researchers to chart and analyze contributions made by such (pro-Israel) ethnic PACs (Paul & Paul 2009, 70). What is clear though from the PACs that *have* been identified as pro-Israel, is that huge amounts of money are spent in order to accomplish their goal. For example by donating to politicians that are pro-Israel or supporting politicians who are running against someone who is seen as an 'enemy' of pro-Israeli policies (Terry 2005, 78). By the mid-1980s their financial contributions reached \$3.8 million. The level of funding has grown ever since. Ten years later,

“there were 61 pro-Israeli PACs that donated almost \$3 million to candidates in a single election year. From 1990 to 2004, pro-Israeli PACs gave an estimated \$41.3 million to federal candidates and political parties. By 2003 the number of pro-Israeli PACs grew to over 100 and, with private donations by Jewish Americans, totaled as high as \$25 million in the 1996 election alone” (Terry 2005, 78).

AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, is not a political action committee, though some believe they should be considered as such. In 1988, a group of former government officials brought a complaint against AIPAC, arguing that the Committee “created pro-Israeli PACs and channeled money through board members to PACs” (Terry 2005, 78). Under federal law however, AIPAC, since it is not a PAC, is not allowed to direct such political contributions.

Another successful ethnic lobby that has made large contributions to political candidates are the Cuban Americans. In the 1992 primary for example, on a visit of Bill Clinton to a Café in the 'Little Havana' section of Miami, he received \$300,000 right there, on the spot, and at least another \$160,000 by the time of the elections (Smith 2009, 107). These generous contributions were given to him after he had stated that he believed that the US should take a hard line towards Fidel Castro and Cuba, which was the strategy most of the Cuban Americans preferred.

It is difficult though to determine in each case how decisive financial contributions from ethnic groups have been and to measure their level of influence. It is impossible to know whether the same positions would have been adopted had the

money *not* been donated. In 1997, President Bill Clinton was quoted to have said; “I don’t think you can find any evidence that I changed government policy *solely* because of a contribution” (as cited in Smith, 2009, 108, emphasis added). The use of the word ‘solely’ implies that, though it is certainly not the only factor, donations (sometimes) do play a role when policy decisions are made. “The question of measurement nonetheless remains” (Smith 2009, 108).

Organizational Strength

Financial resources are also important for the establishment and funding of permanent organizations. These permanent organizations are necessary to ‘channel’ and direct the other two assets of the ethnic community: votes and money. “An ethnic community becomes a seriously viable political force only when it has an organization whose chief purpose is to influence decision makers to adopt policies favorable to the group’s interests” (Smith 2000, 109). One of the characteristics of a powerful ethnic interest group is thus that it has organizational strength (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 344). This strength entails that the specialized institution of the ethnic community needs to fulfill certain tasks, such as ensuring unity within the group, forming alliances with other groups on certain issues, advocating the group’s position to policymakers and the US public and monitoring political developments.

Firstly, one of the challenges for the organization is to, as mentioned, maintain unity within the group. Before an ethnic group can lobby policymakers, there needs to be an ideological consensus on what policies the ethnic community prefers. There need to be clearly defined policy goals (Terry 2005, 30). It is possible that an entrepreneur, who leads the organization, sets the agenda and gives direction to the community. For CANF this was for example Jorge Mas Canosa and for TransAfrica Randall Robinson was of immense importance (Smith 2000, 110). However, an entrepreneur might leave, retire or die (Paul & Paul 2009, 122). A case in point is the death of Jorge Mas Canosa in November 1997, which resulted in an organizational crisis for the CANF (Smith 2009, 110). To prevent becoming too dependent on one individual, and the crises that may be the result if that person cannot lead anymore, it is of critical importance for an ethnic movement to become institutionalized. This means that it needs to develop “regularized procedures for selecting its leadership and reaching a consensus that is more broad

based than one person can provide” (Smith 2000, 110). An ethnic community that is seen as a ‘organizational model’ for other ethnic communities in the US that want to become powerful, is the Jewish community (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 344). Their most dominant lobbying group, AIPAC, founded in 1951, was ranked by *Fortune* in 1997 as the second most powerful pressure group – only after the American Association of Retired Persons – in Washington (Smith 2000, 110). Already before World War II the American Jewry tried to influence US foreign policy, but the creation of the state of Israel was an enormous unifying force which made it possible to strive for an even larger degree of influence. In 1953, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations was formed on request from, interestingly, the US State Department. This institution (the Conference of Presidents) is expected to articulate general policy and to be the representative of the Jewish Americans to the US President (Smith 2000, 111). AIPAC then has to advocate those policies to US policymakers, dealing mostly with the US Congress. Though there are other influential Jewish organizations, AIPAC has been the most important one of all when it comes to US foreign policy since the early 1980s. Smith (2000, 111) notes that AIPAC has been aided by the Israeli government in the process of becoming the leading Jewish US foreign policy organization. The government of Israel “saw that unity was clearly essential to its own influence in Washington” (Smith 2000, 111). Unity for the Jewish community means not only unity within Jewish organizations in the US, but also a ‘unity of policy’ for the US Jewry and Israel. The direction of policy is established by Jerusalem and advocated in the US by the Jewish lobby. It might be the case that there are disputes within the community in the US, or that the US organizations do not agree with Jerusalem, but these disputes will be kept behind closed doors and not become public. “In the event of unresolved disagreements, the argument prevailed that the position of the Israeli government superseded all others” (Smith 2000, 112). For example during the Carter Administration in the US, Begin was elected Prime Minister of Israel. Begin was a hardliner and determined to make Gaza and the West Bank, or, as he referred to these areas by the biblical names ‘Samaria’ and ‘Judea’, part of Israel. He therefore authorized three existing settlements, shortly after a visit to the US halfway 1977. President Carter was shocked by Begin’s announcement on this matter and said that the US position was that these settlements were illegal and a “serious obstacle to peace” (Tivnan 1987, 118). A large part of the

Jewish community did not agree with these settlement policies of Begin either. However, “as the 1977 annual report of the Presidents’ Conference stated it, “dissent ought not and should not be made public because.. the result is to give aid and comfort to the enemy and to weaken that Jewish unity which is essential for the security of Israel” “ (Tivnan 1987, 119). Thus, for the sake of unity, which was believed to be critical for Israel’s security, the Jewish Community did not speak up against the settlements. Tivnan (1987, 133) makes in this respect an interesting comparison to the Sicilian *omerta*: just like the Sicilian mafia, the Jewish lobby has taken a vow not to speak to outsiders about what is going on internally and this means that they will not criticize the actions of the Israeli government in public, even though they might not agree. This degree of (outside) unity is unparalleled by any other ethnic lobby in the US. Yet there are some that come reasonably close, according to Smith. He argues that Greek and Armenian Americans have a similar sense of solidarity that comes forth out of their Orthodox churches, from the foreign governments they can relate to, and from the threat both feel of the ‘enemy’ of the homeland, which is Turkey in both cases. Furthermore, both the Greeks and Armenians have assimilated into American society and have acquired socio-economic positions that allow them to fully focus on foreign affairs (Smith 2000, 115).

Secondly, besides maintaining unity, an ethnic organization, in order to be successful, has to build coalitions and be involved in agenda setting. Smith (2000) defines three sets of demands made by American ethnic groups: demands related to values, demands that are economic in nature, and demands with regard to security. Demands made on the basis of values, such as human rights and democracy, have been made by several American ethnic groups, such as those of African, Irish, Cuban, Armenian and East European origin (Smith 2000, 118). Economic demands are made by virtually every ethnic group in the US; they advocate for more (financial) aid from the US to their countries of origin. The Israel lobby has been most successful in this, with Israel receiving over \$3 billion annually, but also Ukraine, Armenia and Greek Cyprus receive far more than one would expect were ethnic lobbies not so active (Smith 2000, 118). With regard to economics, ethnic groups also make demands for economic embargoes against enemies of their ‘homeland’. A case in point are the Armenian Americans, who lobbied successfully for a halt on aid to Azerbaijan. The call for an embargo can also be targeted to a certain regime in the ‘homeland’. TransAfrica for example, strengthened by

the success it had had with its Haiti campaign, launched a campaign to restore democracy in Nigeria (Shain 1995, 84). They urged the US government to take a hard line towards the military junta by no longer buying Nigerian oil. Demands that are related to security, are most critical for ethnic lobbies though, because those demands might lead to military involvement of the US “for the sake of the survival of a foreign state” (Smith 2000, 119). The Israel lobby has also been successful on this point, considering that the US has repeatedly pledged to defend the security of Israel. In order to have these different sets of demands met, ethnic groups need to build coalitions (Paul & Paul 2009, 64). “Developing and participating within coalitions has the advantage of stretching organizational resources, as different coalition partners may provide the coalition with distinct resources” (Paul & Paul 2009, 65). Jewish Americans have allied themselves on many occasions with the (conservative) Christian right, African Americans have supported Arab Americans, and Greeks have cooperated with Armenian Americans. These coalitions are often fluid, with groups joining the alliance on a specific issue, and leaving again when the purpose or target of the coalition shifts (Paul & Paul 2009, 65). Coalitions are most effective when they are bipartisan, which means that they have support from both the Democratic and Republican party, something which AIPAC has largely succeeded in, in most of its coalition endeavors.

Lastly, another important task of the representative organization of an ethnic community is closely monitoring, and preferably even defining, the policymaking process (Smith 2000, 122). When groups make known what their policy preferences are, they need to monitor how the public and policymakers respond to this. In order to be able to do this, it is useful to have a good network of contacts, especially people in the media, White House, or Congress who can provide inside information. Securing support from the President would of course be a fantastic asset for an ethnic lobby, but it is generally more difficult to gain access to the President. Thus, though the White House is important, ethnic lobbies mostly focus on Congress, especially on the House, where it is easier to gain access and establish a close working relationship with members and staff (Smith 2000, 122). Besides establishing a network of contacts that are external to the community, it is also very useful for an ethnic lobby to have people from the community itself as lawmakers (Smith 2000, 122). However, support from lawmakers that are not part of the community can be just as valuable (Paul & Paul 2009, 66). “The purpose,

quite simply, is to have significant political players in Congress committed to the agenda of an ethnic community, for the critical concern is to “become part of the system” by having “a place at the table” where decisions are made” (Smith 2000, 123). To signal and identify possible problems or opportunities early on, groups have to stay in close contact with congressional staffers and meet regularly with representatives from different branches of government. The Israel lobby has been very effective herein. Former Republican Congressman Paul Findley (1985) gives an example of when a colleague of his informed the lobby that he [Findley] was *thinking* about proposing an amendment to the aid bill. Minutes later, two of his colleagues of the Congressional committee he was in had received phone calls from pro-Israel constituents who were worried about the ‘Findley Amendment’. Straight after, the two Congressmen came to see Findley to ask him about it so that they could report back to their pro-Israel constituents. Thus, even before Findley had actually proposed the amendment, it had already been countered. Findley’s example illustrates the ability of the Israel lobby to get information, pass it through quickly to other members, and to immediately get reports back from policymakers about it (Findley 1985, 111).

The Debate: Positive and Negative Views of Ethnic Politicking

There is a debate going on among political analysts whether the growing influence of ethnic lobbies on US foreign policy is a positive or a negative development. On the one hand, those who have an (overall) positive view of ethnic lobbying, such as Shain (1994-1995, 1995), and Glastris and Whitelaw (1997), argue that the openness of the US political system to ethnic minority influence is a valuable part of US democracy. Shain (1995, 84) notes that ethnic minorities in the US may “assume the role of a moral compass in US foreign policy”. He believes that these groups can become “marketers of the American creed abroad” (1995, 83). Groups such as the African Americans, in for example their anti-apartheid campaign, have built their foreign policy agenda “around American ideals of democracy, pluralism, self-determination, and human rights” (1995, 83). Influence of ethnic groups, Shain argues, will help ensure that such ideals and values remain important in US foreign policy decision-making. He calls attention to Clinton’s rapprochement towards China and his long delay in taking action on Bosnia,

which he [Shain] terms to be instances in which US policymakers have tried to move away from their “neo-Wilsonian pledge” and to revert back to traditional realism (Shain 1995, 84). Diaspora groups, he argues, can assume the role of a ‘moral compass’ by putting pressure on policymakers when their actions seem to suggest that they have ‘forgotten’ about the US commitment to democracy and human rights. The pressure they bring to bear on policymakers can create “strains on US relations with repressive regimes” and help ensure that oppressed groups are not ignored just because the policies based on human rights would not be in the ad hoc strategic interest of the US (Shain 1995, 84).

Glastris and Whitelaw (1997) point to both the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ effects of ethnic lobbying. A positive effect of the influence of an ethnic lobby, according to them, was the invasion of Haiti: “Thanks in part to domestic ethnic pressure, the United States helped desperate people restore some measure of democracy, against the advice of the State Department and the Pentagon” (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3). Just as Shain, Glastris and Whitelaw are glad to see that, because of pressure from an ethnic group, human rights considerations were valued above strategic interests. Of the effects of the Cuban lobby they have a more negative view, because their impact, they say, is an example of “the other extreme” (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3). They argue that in the case of Cuban Americans, the interests of this group completely override the “larger strategic factors” of the country as a whole (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3). They point to the signing of the Helm-Burton Act, which Clinton agreed to because he was “eager for Cuban votes in electoral-rich Florida”, and he therefore ignored objections from key American allies, hurting US relations with those countries (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3). Apart from this extreme though, the authors conclude that ethnic lobbies are useful players in US democracy. “ ‘It used to irritate the hell out of us’, says Lawrence Eagleburger, Secretary of State in the waning days of the Bush administration. ‘But it did remind us that this is a democracy and that you must be able to explain your policy to the American people’ ” (Glastris & Whitelaw 1997, 3).

Shain argues that another positive value of including ethnicity in US foreign policy is that their involvement therein has “contributed to the decline of ethnic tensions *inside* the United States” (1995, 86, emphasis added). He holds that “just as the openness of American government to the influence of ethnicity has guided diasporic groups to

champion the creed of democracy and human rights around the globe, it also forces them to be more committed to liberal pluralism domestically” (Shain 1995, 86).

There is on the other hand also a substantial number of political analysts who argue that the increasing influence of ethnic lobbies is a negative development, one that is damaging US national interests. These researchers do not negate that ethnic minorities should be involved in some way in the US political process, and have the right to have their voice heard. Thus far, they agree with supporters of ethnic lobby influence. However, they think that the *degree* of influence has become too great. Some authors, like Smith, fear that it is impossible for the US to formulate a coherent and clear foreign policy when there are ethnic groups within the country that are trying to impose their view on the rest of the country (Smith 2000, 3). The lobby groups will not qualify it as such, but the imposition of their desire on the many is inherent to their agenda, Smith says. He notes that, “the Founding Fathers may have feared the ‘tyranny of the majority’ and so provided special protections for minority rights, but in the event, the “tyranny of the minority” became a possibility as a wide variety of civic interests found ways to gain access to power in Washington” (Smith 2000, 5). Some multiculturalists claim that ethnic groups, because of ties to the countries of their ‘roots’, this “[..]confers on them a special authority to define American foreign policy in those areas” (Smith 2000, 44). The argument made is that the Cuban, Armenian, Turkish, Greek, Jewish, and African lobbies can each decide on US foreign policy towards their respective kinfolk abroad. Smith objects to this claim. He holds that ethnic groups in the US often lobby for the implementation of a policy that is desired by the foreign governments that are ethnically linked to these communities. Thereby they are putting the interest of their country of origin before that of the US. Smith believes that this is a negative development for the US as a whole. Though US law restricts direct lobbying by foreign governments on policies that affect them, they can still influence US policy through these domestic ethnic lobbies, if and when these choose to follow the desires of that foreign government (Marrar 2009, 86). A clear example of this would be the relationship between Israel and the Jewish lobby, which was discussed in the previous section on ‘Organizational Strength’. American Jewish organizations may not agree with the actions of the Israeli government, but they will never voice their disagreement in public and will still lobby for the policy desired by the Israeli government. Smith disapproves of this: he believes that US

national interests should be put first by these groups, which, he says, is often clearly not the case. Mearsheimer agrees with Smith when it comes to the Israel lobby: “The lobby-working with Israel itself- has altered US Middle East policy in ways that are in neither the American nor the Israeli national interest” (2008, 147).

The analysts do mention a ‘solution’ to what they see as the negative influence of ethnic lobbying. This solution is one by James Madison, one that he described in *Federalist 10*. In order for the US to limit, in a democratic manner, the effects of the influence of a subgroup, he suggests “setting faction against faction, maintaining that through the balance thereby achieved the nation would be protected against the excessive demands of a minority” (Smith 2000, 7) (Moore 2002, 85). In the case of the Jewish lobby there would thus need to be an Arab and Muslim lobby to make a more balanced US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict possible. About this pro-Palestinian lobby very little is known and very few have written about it academically. Whether there is such a lobby and whether it succeeds in balancing out the extensive influence of the Jewish groups, is what will be discussed and analyzed in the following chapters.

Chapter Two

Dimensions and History of Arab American Organizations in the US

Lobbying the US government on its policy in the Middle East has both a foreign and a domestic dimension. Even though *direct* lobbying by foreign governments is restricted by US law, this does not mean that foreign countries will not still try to influence the US (Marrar 2009, 86). This is very conspicuous in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Foreign governments attempt to exert influence through their embassies and their contacts with US government officials; heads of state, embassy staff and policymakers can talk about their views on the conflict in their (private or official) meetings with their US counterparts. Often however, these talks are 'behind-the-scenes' and their content is secret. It is therefore difficult to measure and study the degree of influence of that kind of foreign pressure.

Besides those tactics, of trying to exert influence through high-level diplomatic contacts, there are also some Arab countries that have hired lobbyists in Washington for publicity campaigns and contacts with US politicians. An example of such practices, which seem to be in conflict with US law, is the case of Kuwait, whose government hired a lobbying firm in the US, *Hill and Knowlton*, to make known what crimes the Iraqis committed in the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Their plan backfired however when some of their claims were exposed to be fabrications, which did their cause more harm than good (Terry 2005, 51). Furthermore, several other Arab lobbying efforts were ineffective due to a lack of coordination between the different governments. Had they worked together instead of independently from one another, they could probably have been more successful. It would have made sense for that coordinating role to be taken on by the League of Arab States. This organization would be in a good position to lead Arab (foreign) lobbying efforts in the US on, amongst other things, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the League has not been able to set up effective campaigns due to a profound lack of knowledge about the workings of the US political system and the dynamics of public opinion, especially the involvement of the media therein. The power and independence of the media in many Middle Eastern countries is minor; they are often practically an extension of the political regime. If one is familiar with such a

system, it is difficult to understand and make use of the power of the American media, which is an 'institution' in US society in and of itself, and which can exert immense pressure on the US government and have a great deal of influence over public opinion. In contrast to the lack of knowledge of the League on this topic, the Israelis have become experts;

“..since Israel was established over 50 years ago, the Israelis and their supporters in this country have put untold amounts of effort and money into propaganda, in regards to which not one single Arab regime or even the Palestine Liberation Organization has understood the power of the media and propaganda in this country.... We still have no understanding of the power of the media and what you might call the “cultural work” of civil society”

(2001 Interview with Edward Said, as cited in Terry, 2005, 52).

A complete misunderstanding of (how to reach) the US public is, according to Terry (2005), also one of the reasons why publicity campaigns from the fulltime PLO spokesman in Washington have mostly failed in the past. The images and terms used simply did not resonate with the American public (Terry 2005, 51). The aforementioned spokesman is part of the Palestine Liberation Organization Mission in Washington DC, which is the official representative of the PLO in the United States. Its primary objective, as stated on its website, is to “protect and promote the interests of the Palestinian people in the United States”³. This Mission was established in 1978. However, at the time it was called the ‘Palestine Information Office’ and became the ‘Palestine Affairs Center’ in 1988. Its current status as a ‘Mission’ only came into effect in 1994, as a result of the Oslo Accords of 1993. This in sharp contrast to the Israelis, who have had official diplomatic representation in the US for many decades prior to 1993.

Even though many foreign lobbying efforts have failed, it is possible that they did influence US policy in one way or another. Apart from the foreign dimension, there is however also a clear *domestic* dimension of the pro-Palestinian lobby. These domestic groups consist of *American nationals*, operate in public and can be studied through

³ Homepage, www.plomission.us

publications, internet homepages and public forums. Because their activities and lobbying efforts are more 'out in the open' it is possible to research their strategies and attempts to influence US foreign policy. However, so far, not much research has been done into this. Khalil Marrar, who has written a book titled *The Arab Lobby and US Foreign Policy: The Two-State Solution* (2009), is one of the very few academics who has studied the Arab lobby. Authors writing on ethnic lobbying and its influence on US policy in the Middle East often only mention the Israeli lobby and completely ignore the growing presence of the Arab Lobby. It is therefore interesting to break with that 'tradition' and look into the 'other' lobby in the broader context of ethnic lobbying in the US in general. In that way one can see what strategies the Arab lobby employs and in what way they differ from other lobbies in America. Since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East has two clear 'sides', it is fascinating to find out more about the interactions between the two, those who are (pro)Israeli and those who are (pro)Palestinian, inside the United States. In addition, examining the way each of these groups communicate with the US public and the US government and seeing how successful they are therein, in terms of their ability to influence US foreign policy decisions. This instead of only looking at the efforts of American Israeli groups, as many scholars have already done. How does the conflict between the two sides play out inside the US? How are the Pro-Palestinian Arabs (and others) in the US responding to the pro-Israeli stronghold there?

The pro-Palestinian lobby in the US includes not only those groups that directly lobby Congress, but also groups that try to influence US policy *indirectly*, by focusing on and trying to change US public opinion. The term 'direct lobbying' refers to a lobbying strategy in which lobbyists turn directly to decision-makers in an attempt to influence policy (Paul & Paul 2009, 60). Examples of pro-Palestinian groups that take the direct lobbying approach are the Arab American Institute (*hereafter* AAI), established in 1985, and the National Association of Arab Americans (*hereafter* NAAA), which was founded in 1972 by Richard Shadyac to counter the Israel lobby (Marrar 2009, 22) (Shain 1995, 78). A relatively new lobbying player is the American Task Force on Palestine (*hereafter* ATFP) that was set up in 2003 by Dr. Ziad J. Asali, who before had been active in several other Arab activist organizations like the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). On their website it is specifically mentioned that the ATFP has never received

funds from any government or government agency ('About Us', ATFP website). The direct lobbying strategies that these organizations employ include attending and speaking to lawmakers at committee hearings on Capitol Hill, reaching out to key policymakers and congressional staff by phone, writing to the White House on important issues, and providing information to influential politicians. Most lobbies who use the direct lobbying approach establish an office in Washington, DC, in order to be in close proximity to Congress. However, organizations can also hire representatives to do the lobbying on Capitol Hill for them (Paul & Paul 2009, 60). Even though these strategies are important, the Arab American organizations spend most of their time on indirect lobbying, also known as 'grassroots' lobbying (Paul & Paul 2009, 62). One can speak of this type of lobbying when (ethnic) groups mobilize their community and other supporters of their cause to "participate in some way so their voices will be heard by policymakers", says Berry (Berry 1997:116, as cited in Paul & Paul 2009, 62). As for the pro-Palestinian groups in the US, this means that they compose academic articles, provide the press with information, instruct their supporters on how to contact their member of Congress, attend and speak at conferences and take part in debates, appear on television shows, organize demonstrations and rallies, and try to find allies. As for the latter, pro-Palestinian lobbyist groups have for example allied themselves with human rights organizations and church and community activist groups, such as African Americans (Terry 2005, 57).

The community that all the Arab American organizations represent is difficult to qualify in numbers. This is due to the fact that in the US population census, there is no 'Arab American' classification. The estimates from the census of the year 2000 are that there are 1.2 million Arab Americans, but Arab American organizations have come up with estimates of over 3.5 million (Terry 2005, 60). This discrepancy is caused by the missing 'Arab American' category on the census forms. Only people who themselves decide to put down 'Arab' as their ethnic affiliation are counted as such. Moreover, some may fear to fill in the census at all due to a cultural fear of government reprisals (Terry 2005, 60). This fear turned out to be, at least partly, justified; "In the summer of 2004, it was revealed that the U.S. Census Bureau had provided tabulations in 2002 and 2003 on Arab Americans to the Department of Homeland Security that included detailed information on the number of people of Arab backgrounds living in selected ZIP codes"

(El-Badry & Swanson 2007, 470). The Census Bureau later realized their actions constituted a “breach of confidentiality ” and trust and announced therefore that the Bureau “would no longer assist law enforcement and intelligence agencies with tabulations on ethnic groups and other sensitive populations” (El-Badry & Swanson 2007, 470). The damage, however, was already done. It is probable that the number of 1.2 million in the year 2000 constitutes an undercount of the actual Arab American community. With immigration in the past ten years, the number of Arab Americans must have grown even further. However, with the Patriot Act and erosion of civil liberties in the wake of the September 11 tragedy, the number of Arab immigrants is likely to have become smaller, at least in the short term (Terry 2005, 60). Interesting to note is that of the total Arab American population, about 75 percent was born in the US (Zogby 2007, 1). One of the many misconceptions about Arab Americans is that they are all Muslim: in fact, only a minor twenty percent (20%) is (Howell & Shryock 2003, 456). As for demographics, most Arab Americans live in industrial states, mainly in the north of the United States. The largest concentration of Arab Americans however, can be found in America’s mid-west, in Michigan. Dearborn, a Detroit suburb, is known for its large Arab American population. Here you find the “biggest concentration of Arabs anywhere in the world outside the Middle East” (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 1). In Michigan they could constitute over 5 percent of the votes in a presidential election, which would seem to give them some electoral power (Terry 2005, 60). However, some analysts hold, the Arab American community does not seem to vote as a ‘bloc’ like Jewish Americans do (Shannon 2003, 7). This is mainly due to the different backgrounds that exist within the Arab American community. The Arab world is large and consists of many different countries, traditions and religions. Joseph Baroody, the former President of the NAAA said about this: “We can’t represent the Arabs the way the Jewish lobby can represent Israel. The Israeli government has one policy to state, whereas we couldn’t represent “the Arabs” if we wanted to. They’re as different as the Libyans and Saudis are different, or as divided as the Christian and Moslem Lebanese” (as cited in Marrar, 2009, 88). Even though there are so many internal differences and the Arabs do not (always) form a united political group, there is one very important binding element; almost all Arab and Muslim Americans, whatever Arab country they come from, are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. The plight of the Palestinians is what brings the community together

and is the main cause the Arab American organizations are lobbying for when it comes to US foreign policy.

The history of the Arab American lobby started in the 1960's, around the time of the Six Day War in 1967. Before that time, Arab Americans lacked political organization, funding and an ideological core; "Arab Americans, chiefly second- and third- generation Christians of Lebanese origin, retained little homeland affinity and remained politically inactive" (Shain 1995, 76). The first wave of Christian immigrants from Syria and Lebanon surged into the US between 1875 and 1948 (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 19). Already since the nineteenth century there were Arab American clubs and churches in the US, that represented particular villages or regions (Terry 2005, 61), but there were no Arab-American organizations that operated on the national level until the establishment of the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) in 1967 (Samhan 1987, 16). This association was set up mainly by Palestinian students and professors in the US (Alnasrawi 2007, 111). The War of 1967, in which the Arabs were painfully defeated by the Israelis, together with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel, and the negative attitude of American society towards Arab Americans, was what apparently led to the uprising of a more vocal Arab American community. Paul (2009) theorizes that a common (historical) trauma may mobilize and provide unity to an otherwise diverse ethnic community (Paul & Paul 2009, 114). Esman adds to this that "ethnicity cannot be politicized unless an underlying core of memories, experience, or meaning moves people to collective action" (as cited in Paul & Paul, 2009, 114). Thus, it seems that for the Arab Americans, the War of 1967 was the traumatic experience that brought about political awareness and a sense of unity. According to Sadd and Lendenmann, there was however another factor that contributed to the rise in activism: changes within the Arab American community itself. They state that the wave of Arab migrants to America after 1948 consisted of many Palestinians, "a significant number of whom are highly educated and have deep concerns about the Arab-Israeli conflict and US policy toward it" (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 20).

According to Shain (1995, 75), communities like the Arab American one, but also the African Americans for example, that have been excluded from playing a role in American society and politics, have two strategies they can choose from when confronting their marginalization: isolationism or integrationism. The former means

that you avoid assimilation, see your own culture, religion or tradition as different from and superior to American culture, and promote a “cultural war” against the dominance of the European heritage in that American culture. It was such an isolationist strategy that the AAUG started out with. The organization was against assimilation and found support for their beliefs in the Black Power movement. At the time, late 1960s, this movement sympathized with their “Palestinian brothers and sisters” in seeing in Israel the same imperialist and racist characteristics as they saw in America (Shain 1995, 76). The Arab Americans concurred with the black nationalists in seeing the US as an imperialist and racist nation. The theory of and writings on ‘orientalism’ by Edward Said became part of that vision. In his book *Orientalism* he defined the term as follows:

“Taking the eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point, Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1978, 3).

He later explained this further by saying that there persists, in the US, “a widespread cultural hostility to the Orient, to the Arabs and Islam in particular” (Said 1979, 23). In his opinion this hostility could be seen as “another version of Western anti-Semitism”, whose “roots are old and very deep” (1979, 23). He called this the “culture of Orientalism, a culture whose contemporary forms have turned the Arabs either into oil-suppliers or, in the case of the Palestinians, into bloody-minded terrorists” (1979, 23).

The AAUG, as the first national Arab American organization, came to fill the information gap there was in the US on the Arab world by publishing position papers, organizing conferences and lectures, and even arranging educational trips to the Middle East for both policymakers and for example students. In addition, in the 1970’s they created a scholarly journal, the *Arab Studies Quarterly*, which is currently still one of the foremost journals about the Arab world (Terry 2005, 61) (Talhami 2007, 125). The 1970s were also the decade that the NAAA was established (1972). The founders of this organization were convinced that it was of critical importance to expose Congress to

alternative viewpoints about the Arab-Israeli conflict, in order to balance the claims of the pro-Israel lobby (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 18). According to Sadd and Lendenmann, the formation of the NAAA constituted a milestone in the “emergence of an Arab American political identity” (1985, 18), by providing Arab Americans with a ‘vehicle’ for attracting attention from US policymakers for Arab American views and interests (1985, 19). In 1980 another important organization was founded: the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)⁴. Under the inspirational leadership of James AbouRezk, a former Democratic Senator from North Dakota, the ADC quickly became *the* advocate for Arab Americans (Terry 2005, 61). They focused not so much on changing US foreign policy, but more on changing Americans’ attitudes towards Arabs in general by combating stereotypes, defamation and ethnic discrimination (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 21). 1985 was a dramatic year for the ADC: that year, on October 11, their Director of the West Coast regional offices of the ADC, peace activist and Palestinian American Alexander Michel Odeh, was killed in a bomb attack (Terry 2005, 62) (Christison 1989, 34). Ever since his murder, the ADC commemorates him every year with a special ‘Alex Odeh Day’ on October 11 (ADC 2009)⁵. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has still not closed the investigation of the murder and no arrests have been made so far.⁶ However, based on the type of explosives used, the FBI announced days after the attack that it suspected the Jewish Defense League (JDL) (Terry 2005, 62) (Samhan 1987, 17). This suspicion grew when the Washington Post reported that the JDL chairman, Irv Rubin, said the following about Odeh’s death: “The person or persons responsible for the bombing deserves our praise for striking out against the murderers of Americans and of Jews” (ADC 2009). However, these remained suspicions and no one has been convicted for the murder. Two months after Odeh’s death, William Webster, the FBI Director at the time, warned that “Arab individuals or those supporting Arab points of view have come within the zone of danger, targeted by a group as of yet to be fully identified and brought to justice” (as cited in Samhan, 1987, 17). This tragic episode shows how the violent dynamics of the

⁴ In the mid-1990s, the NAAA merged with the ADC (Marrar 2009, 201).

⁵ <http://www.adc.org/index.php?id=3509>, last accessed: March 19, 2010

⁶ <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/seekinfo/odeh.htm> last accessed: March 19,2010

conflict in the Middle East also crossed the borders into the US. On a more positive note, 1985 was also the year that the Arab American Institute (AAI) was established by James Zogby, a well-known name in the Arab American community. This organization encourages Arab American participation in local and national politics and has been quite successful in increasing Arab-American voting registration.

Since the 1990's, the isolationist approach has been abandoned by the main part of the community and moderate voices have taken over the Arab American movement. Of course there are still groups that are hostile to the US, but those are mainly extremist, orthodox Muslims, who see the United States as the Great Evil and the main enemy of the Islamic religion (Shain 1995, 77). Most Arab Americans now seek *integration* and though they still find their heritage to be important, many of them do identify themselves first and foremost as Americans. As Neal Lendenmann and David Sadd of the NAAA said:

“Arab Americans are deeply proud of their culture and heritage. They seek to promote the closest possible relations between the United States and the Arab world. But there is no question as to where their loyalties lie: *They are Americans first, last, and always*. Their approach to lobbying therefore, is to identify America's national interests in the Middle East and to promote those interests through advocacy and education” (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 29, emphasis added).

The turn from being outsiders seeking to penetrate the US system, to an integrationist approach, can be seen in the way Arab American organizations started to frame their agenda and policy-goals. They internalized US (Wilsonian) values in their lobbying efforts and tried to present their case to the public in terms of US national interests (Shain 1996, 52). The Palestinian issue remained to be the ideological core of the Arab American community, “a cause portrayed as an extension of ‘America's most cherished ideals – Wilsonian self-determination, human rights and freedom” (Orfalea as cited in Shain, 1995, 81). By framing the issue in a manner that was truly ‘American’, it was thought that the American general public could better understand and appreciate the Arab American cause. This new kind of ‘framing’ could help break open the debate on

Palestinian rights, something which, until then, had rarely (if ever) been part of policy considerations. The AAI addressed the Palestinian cause as a human rights issue during an unprecedented debate at the Democratic National Convention of 1988 in Atlanta (Shain 1996, 53). The President of the AAI, James Zogby, spoke during the Convention and said: "Today we respond to the Palestinian people. We address... the violation of their basic human rights, the killings and the beatings, and agonizing expulsions, the daily humiliations of being a people without a state" (as cited in Shain, 1995, 82). The AAI sees this moment as a huge breakthrough, because it finally called attention to Palestinian suffering, an issue that was normally ignored by the political establishment. Some Jewish Americans qualified Zogby's speech as 'the Arab American Intifada' (Shain 1995, 82). Besides taking a human rights angle on the Palestinian struggle, the new integrationist approach of the Arab American organizations also included a call for democratization and respect for human rights in the Arab world. This was necessary, Zogby argued, because "if the diaspora remains mute on the issue of spreading democracy into the Middle East, then it will compromise its political credibility" (Shain 1995, 85).

1988 was also the year that Zogby called for cooperation and reconciliation with American Jews. Arab American integrationists, such as Zogby, understood that a fierce fight against American Jews could not be won, and thus sought to work with those in the Jewish community who were sympathetic to a peaceful and just solution to the conflict. Zogby called on the American Jewish community to keep in mind the dire situation the Palestinians were in. He said; "We do understand Jewish fears and the need for security felt so deeply by Israelis. Now I urge you to understand realities like Palestinian nationalism and the emergence of an Arab American political constituency" (as cited in Shain, 1995, 83). This rapprochement led to the partnership of Zogby with Jewish American leaders in the 'Builders for Peace' initiative of the White House. This initiative aimed at developing the "private sector economy in the West Bank and Gaza" (Shain 1995, 83).

The 90s brought an enormous challenge for Arab American unity: the Gulf war. Arab American organizations such as the AAI and the NAAA "moved uneasily between supporting US intervention to restore Kuwait and requiring American 'consistency'

when it comes to Israel and the Palestinians”⁷ (Shain 1995, 82). The fallout from the Gulf War also led to financial problems for some Arab American organizations, since their patron states in the Middle East cut funding (Marrar 2009, 100). The rise of Islamic terrorism was also a major problem for the Arab American community. The community as a whole was held responsible for the actions, such as the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 1993, of a small group of Muslim extremists (Shaheen 2001, 29). According to Shaheen (2001), such events led to a misguided mindset: “some of us began even perceiving our fellow Americans of Arab descent as clones of Iraq’s Saddam Hussein and the terrorist Osama bin Laden” (Shaheen 2001, 29). The moment an attack occurred, Arab(s) (Americans) were immediately pointed to as suspects. This was also the case with the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. The American public and the media immediately assumed – wrongly – that it must have been Arabs or Muslims who were responsible for the attack (Terry 2005, 17). Such accusations have left a ‘collective stain’ on the Arab American community. These events and the mindset that resulted from them have frustrated the foreign policy efforts of Arab American organizations.

The signing of the accords between Israel and the PLO on September 13, 1993 was a “huge relief” for many Arab American integrationists (Shain 1995, 83). The AAI stated that the accords were an important opportunity for Arab Americans “to achieve full empowerment and assimilation into the mainstream of American culture and life” (Shain 1995, 83). It should be noted though that this sense of relief was not felt by everyone in the Arab American community. The passionate endorsement of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) by the AAI’s leader, James Zogby, and his aforementioned cooperation with Jewish American leaders in the ‘Builders for Peace’ initiative, led to him being denounced a “collaborator” by several other activists (Shain 1996, 55). Earlier, Zogby had also been criticized by his fellow Arab American leaders for his approval of President Clinton’s appointees to key Middle East policymaking positions in the Administration (Shain 1996, 53). Clinton had appointed Martin Indyk, the “former director of the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy”, as a member of the National Security Council (Shain 1996, 53), a choice that many Arab

⁷ Being ‘consistent’ in the sense that the Palestinian territories were also occupied, only then by Israel: if the US would intervene on behalf of Kuwait, then why not on behalf of the Palestinians?

Americans disapproved of. Many of the attacks on Zogby came from Edward Said, who declared that Zogby and Khalil Jahshan, of the NAAA, must have been “bewitched” by the Clinton Administration and the Israel lobby (Shain 1996, 55). Said had been opposed to the DOP from the outset and termed it a “Palestinian Versailles” and “an instrument of Palestinian surrender” (Shain 1996, 51). Said was not the only one who was troubled by the developments in the peace process: many Arab Americans did not know whether they should see the DOP as a victory or as capitulation (Marrar 2009, 103). Marrar (2009) argues that the domestic impact on Arab Americans of the Oslo peace process were threefold. Firstly, it splintered the pro-Arab alliance, with the AAI and NAAA embracing it and leaving others organizations, such as the ADC, with strong reservations about the nature of the agreement. Most notably, they were concerned whether the recognition of the Palestinians as a people and their right to an independent state would ever come, since this was an issue that had been ‘delayed’ until final status negotiations. Secondly, the Oslo peace process “forced the Palestinians to settle for a small fraction of their ancestral land”, something which many Arab Americans were not pleased with (Marrar 2009, 103). This meant giving up the dream of a Palestinian state that would encompass more than just the West Bank and Gaza. Thirdly, “Oslo signified a *near* waiver of rights by the PLO leadership on behalf of Palestinians living outside of the West Bank, and Gaza” (Marrar 2009, 103, emphasis in original). This was hard to accept for the Arab American community and other supporters of the Palestinian cause, for whom the refugee issue and the ‘right of return’ was an important part of their envisioned comprehensive solution to the conflict. Thus, the difficulty for the Arab American lobby was that Oslo split the Arab American community and completely ‘changed the game’. On a more positive note, the peace process did promote some of the key aims of the Arab American lobby, aims that before had been ignored by US policymakers. When back in 1978 Zogby had advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state, he had been shunned, because there was no support for the land for peace formula. Oslo laid the foundation for the two-state solution that the Arab Americans so desired. “During the early 1990s, land for peace was not only on the table, it also seemed within reach of implementation as Israelis and Palestinians were setting aside animosity in favor of negotiations” (Marrar 2009, 103). With America starting to develop a more positive perspective on Palestinian aspirations for statehood, there was

a “collective warming up” to Arab American groups (Marrar 2009, 102). This process had already been set in motion at the time of the Intifada (1987-1993). This Palestinian uprising had “permanently changed the prevailing mindset on the conflict” (Marrar 2009, 93). For many decades, the US had not questioned the Israeli occupation over the Palestinians. “The intifada pushed them to be more critical” (Marrar 2009, 93). The intifada forced people to accept that there was no military solution to the conflict: a peace process was necessary. The intifada also started to change the image of Israel in the minds of the US public. People saw on TV the unarmed, stone-throwing Palestinians, who were up against the heavily armed Defense Forces of Israel (Marrar 2009, 95) (Shain 1994-1995, 817-818). The hitherto common imagery, of the brave Israeli David against the brutal Goliath in the form of ruthless Arab armies, was being challenged. During the Intifada, pro-Arab lobby groups such as the ADC and the AAI attempted to convey to Americans the new imagery and tried to explain what was happening, highlighting the unjustness of the Israeli occupation in the ‘court of public opinion’ (Marrar 2009, 95). Once the peace process started, Arab American leaders were asked to participate and assist the various parties involved. Since then, they had a ‘place at the table’ and were being taken more seriously than before.

As noted, the Intifada and the Oslo peace process had a major impact on the US perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Another event that brought about a major change was the end of the Cold War. It brought about a *structural* change that allowed the US to reevaluate its policies in the Middle East, the possibility of which gave rise to optimism amongst those in favor of a less Israel-biased US policy. Pro-Palestinian supporters thought that, since the “chess game between the two Cold warriors had ended”, the blanket support for Israel, which had been part of the strategy of combating the Soviet Union, could (and would) be reduced (Marrar 2009, 99). The US would now no longer have to take containment policies into account in their dealings in the Middle East. The collapse of the Soviet Union together with the Oslo agreement created the possibility for a redefinition of US interests. Pro-Arab lobbies tried to convince policymakers that the US now had the potential to become a positive force that could bring peace to the Middle East, which would decrease anti-Americanism in the region. Their activities ranged from publishing talking points, to setting up letter-writing campaigns, to “making a presence in the media” (Marrar 2009, 106).

In the period after the Oslo Accords, the US has been dedicated to finding a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflicts in the Middle East. In order to bring both sides to the negotiating table, the US had to step back, though perhaps only a little, from its “unfettered support for Israel” and recognize the rights of the Palestinians as a people (Marrar 2009, 107). And though US policy still very much leans towards Israel, much has changed in the attitude of the US towards the Palestinians. They received a level of recognition, including a “high degree of control over their own affairs”, that had been unthinkable ten years earlier (Marrar 2009, 108). Marrar describes the role of Arab American groups therein as follows: “The pro-Arab lobby acted like a recipient and translator of global developments. Although it has a legendary pro-Israel rival, from the late 1980s through the 1990s, it served as a conduit for a message sympathetic to a Palestinian homeland during times of upheaval and change” (Marrar 2009, 108). In 2001 though, a tragic event took place, in the aftermath of which it became nearly impossible for Arab American groups to seize the opportunity and focus on lobbying for a Palestinian state: the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The community’s standing had been hurt before, such as with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, but that was nothing compared to the effects of 9/11. After the attacks, Arab American organizations were “swamped” with domestic problems. All the gains made in the years before, improving the position of Arab Americans in American society, were now overshadowed by Arabs and Muslims being targeted throughout the country as possible terrorists. Discrimination and incidents of anti-Arab violence surged, mosques were vandalized and there were fatal shootings of Arab Americans in Texas, California and Arizona (Cho et al. 2006, 979). Though the US government quickly condemned these violent acts against Arab Americans, the subsequent passage of the Patriot Act provoked even more anxiety (Cho 2006, 979). The defense of civil liberties thus became the top priority for Arab American organizations (Marrar 2009, 109). Though this has been a difficult period for Arab American groups, during which they have suffered major setbacks on many points, contrary to what one might expect, the ordeal also has had positive outcomes for the community. A study (Gimpel et al. 2007) found that the ‘policy aftermath’ of 9/11 has actually “acted as an accelerant to Arab American political incorporation” (Gimpel 2007, 330) by giving many Arab Americans a visible stake in US government policy action (Cho 2006, 979). The researchers argue that significant

political events can often serve as a catalyst for political mobilization, especially if this event involves threats of some kind (Gimpel 2007, 330). The war of 1967 had already been a catalyst for the initial political mobilization of Arab Americans, and the events following 9/11 seem to have increased their political activism. In places where the community previously had been 'dormant', they were mobilized, and where the community had already been active, their presence was strengthened (Gimpel 2007, 331). Gimpel et al. looked at voting registration data of Arab Americans after 9/11 and compared these with Arab American voting registration trends *before* 9/11 and also made a comparison with non-Arab voting registration after 9/11. The researchers observed that, in many neighborhoods in the larger cities, Arab Americans "became a larger share of the *total* electorate" after 9/11 (Gimpel 2007, 348). Cho (2006) argues that this increased voter mobilization "likely reflects the activity of party and interest group activists, many of whom play upon political anxieties when registering voters" (2006, 989). Also interesting to note is that, compared with the general population that registered after 9/11, the members of the Arab American community that registered were younger, more male, and "more likely to be unaffiliated with the two major political parties" (Gimpel 2007, 348). The study also found that greater waves of registration after 9/11 by Arab Americans were recorded in more peripheral areas rather than in highly central locations with concentrated Arab American populations. The researchers think this is due to the fact that the 'threat' that emanated from the events following 9/11 was felt more strongly by those Arab Americans who lived in more 'out-of -the way' locations, "where their isolation made them feel even more apprehensive" (Gimpel 2007, 348). Geographically seen, this political mobilization in areas where Arab Americans previously had been inactive, "broadened Arab American political influence beyond traditional areas of Arab American settlement" (Gimpel 2007, 348). As for the finding that Arab Americans, as noted above, registered more after 9/11 relatively to the non-Arab population in the largest cities, Gimpel et al. conclude that though this "may still not make this group a powerhouse in statewide or national elections, the mounting numbers are still worth noting" (Gimpel 2007, 348).

Shortly after the horrendous 9/11 attacks, something quite remarkable happened: George Bush called for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. He was the first President ever to utter such a statement. His predecessor, Clinton, was

working towards “mutual recognition” and “limited autonomy”, but never worked to “Palestinian statehood” as the outcome of the DOP (Marrar 2009, 112).

Chapter Three

The Workings of the Arab American Lobby: Strategies

Electoral Power

As noted, an ethnic lobby’s main resource is its people, and especially those who vote (Paul & Paul 2009, 102). Although according to census projections the Arab American population in 2005 constituted about 1,4 million people, the Arab American Institute (AAI) asserts that there are around 3.5 million Arab Americans in the US (Paul & Paul 2009, 104). They are concentrated mostly in industrial swing states, such as New Jersey, Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. In Michigan, in the Detroit Metropolitan area, there are about 300,000 ethnic Arabs (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 1). What impedes their potential electoral clout however, is that many of those who emigrated from despotic states are not familiar with democratic institutions and processes and do not know how to participate in it. They thus need to be taught ‘civic skills’: how to register to vote, that it is possible to meet with elected officials and policymakers, and that it is permitted to volunteer on a political campaign (Paul & Paul 2009, 125-126). Herein, in this ‘civic education’, Arab American organizations have an important role to play. The AAI has for instance been working relentlessly, since its establishment in 1985, on increasing Arab American voting registration. Their efforts have been quite successful (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2). When AAI’s founder, James Zogby, visited Dearborn (a Detroit suburb, Michigan) back in 1985, a mere 700 of the 18,000 local Arab Americans were registered to vote. The mayor at the time was even running on an anti-Arab ticket (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2). By the year 2000 however, registration had skyrocketed in the Dearborn area. The Arab American votes had a major impact on the outcome of the local elections: the same mayor who had first run on an anti-Arab ticket, now had Arab Americans in his cabinet (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2). In 1996, 62% of registered Arab American

voters “turned up to the polls, somewhat more than the national average” (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2). As for their ability to influence elections, there is a study that suggests that the narrow Presidential victory of George W. Bush in 2000 could be attributed to the increasingly organized bloc-voting constituency of Muslim and Arab Americans (Shannon 2003, 8). Also interesting to note is that Paul (2009) conducted several surveys in which policymakers on Capitol Hill participated and found that respondents thought that the influence of the Arab American community will probably increase in the future, due to the fairly large groups of Arab Americans that have settled in Michigan and elsewhere (2009, 152). The data of the study by Gimpel et al. (2007), discussed above, also shows that voter registration in the Arab American community has significantly increased after 9/11, increasing their political and electoral clout in several neighborhoods in the US.

Arab American organizations also assist members of the community in making a choice *whom* to vote for, by issuing voter guides, such as the one the AAI published in 2004, on the Presidential candidates for the Democratic party. This guide detailed the stance of each of the candidates on issues that are important to Arab Americans, such as Palestine, civil liberties and immigration (Terry 2005, 67). Next to giving support to those politicians that the Arab American organizations want to see elected, Arab American groups have also applied a strategy that AIPAC is usually known for: targeting ‘enemies’ of one’s preferred policies, by supporting their opponent (Terry 2005, 78). In the mid-1980s, the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) “began targeting members of Congress who the organization believed were hostile to Arab interests” (Paul & Paul 2009, 67). The research arm of the NAAA had developed a system to “rate members of Congress” on their positions on matters that were important to the Arab American community (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 23). It found that a candidate who was up for election did not ‘score well’ on the NAAA rating, they would work hard to try to have this person defeated. According to Sadd and Lendenmann (1985) the most notable and successful political effort was the campaign to defeat Clarence Long, Democratic Representative of Maryland and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the House Appropriations Committee (1985, 24). He had been vital in the political effort for increasing aid to Israel, even more than the Reagan Administration had requested. In order to get attention from his constituents, the NAAA

had radio advertisements broadcasted that questioned Long's efforts for more aid for Israel at a time when cutbacks were made on all sorts of domestic US programs (1985, 24). In addition, Arab American volunteers worked hundreds of hours on the campaign of Long's opponent, Republican Helen Bentley. When the elections were held, Arab Americans in the district voted overwhelmingly for Bentley. Sadd and Lendenmann (1985) hold that Long's defeat was a "benchmark in the developing Arab American ability to influence political races" (1985, 24).

Besides voting, the people of the community can also be employed by the organizations to apply as much civic pressure on elected officials as possible. Most ethnic groups "focus a great deal on grassroots mobilization" (Paul & Paul 2009, 97). This means that these organizations urge their people to contact the member of Congress in their district and any other policymakers involved and press them on issues that are important to the community. Some organizations for example ask their supporters to forward an email to their elected representative about a certain issue. Other organizations have set up more elaborate campaigns for grassroots participation, by for example creating a website that instructs members of the community and other supporters of the cause how to become involved in policymaking and how they can effectively influence their representatives (Paul & Paul 2009, 97). A case in point is the 'Get Active' section on the website of the ADC. Therein it is described in detail "how citizens can become more effective citizen lobbyists" (Paul & Paul 2009, 98).

Financial Resources

As for Congressional contributions, Israeli PACs outspent Arab American PACs 99 to 1 between 1978 and the year 2000 (Shannon 2003, 7). But then, pro-Israel ethnic PACs outspend everyone else as well: a staggering 75.4 percent of the ethnic PAC contributions to federal candidates comes from Jewish and pro-Israel PACs, and they also account for 74.0 percent of the federal expenditures of ethnic PACs from 1998 to 2006 (Paul & Paul 2009, 74). They spent \$13.4 million to federal candidates over the five election cycles between 1998 and 2006. The combined contributions of the Arab American and Lebanese American PACs in that same period totaled \$660,000 (Paul & Paul 2009, 78). Though this seems like nothing compared to the contributions of pro-Israel PACs, the Arab American Leadership Council PAC was one of the only thirteen

non-Jewish PACs that spent more than \$100,000 in total federal expenditures over the five election cycles, together with for example the US-Cuba Democracy PAC, the Irish American Democrats and the Armenian American PAC (Paul & Paul 2009, 74). When examining who received the PAC money, Paul (2009) found that with pro-Israel PACs the money mainly went to Jewish politicians, key supporters and congressional leaders (2009, 83). The latter was not the case for non-Jewish groups, where fewer congressional leaders made the list of top recipients. Paul argues that this is due to the fact that congressional leaders are important for setting the policymaking agenda and so-called 'gate-keeping', which is what pro-Israel forces need. They want to protect the status quo, which is what Congressional leaders can facilitate, and which is the opposite of what most non-Jewish groups are focused on. These other ethnic groups are, according to the evidence Paul (2009) found, using PAC contributions mostly for supporting Congress members who "serve to champion the issues and goals important to their group", which often means that the Congress members in question will challenge the status quo instead of trying to protect it (Paul & Paul 2009, 83). As for the Arab American and Lebanese American PAC contributions, these were used to support several Arab American members of Congress, propelling them to the top of the list of recipients of non-Jewish PAC contributions. This included Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV), Senator John Sununu (R-NH), Representative Ray LaHood (R-IL) and former senator Spencer Abraham (R-MI) (Paul 2009:83-84). Pro-Arab PACs also financially supported Representative James Moran (D-VA) and Representative Cynthia McKinney (D-GA), members of Congress who have shown to be critical of Israel (Paul & Paul 2009, 84). Paul (2009) also notes that Arab American PACs were more likely "to give contributions to candidates who hail from states with larger populations of Arab Americans" (2009, 89). An example of this are the contributions they made to several candidates from Michigan, such as the aforementioned former senator Spencer Abraham and Representative John Conyers (2009, 89). The top recipient of contributions from Arab American PACs was however Representative Nick Rahall (D-WV), who is of Lebanese descent. He is known to frequently criticize Israel and to advocate closer ties between the US and Arab states (Paul & Paul 2009, 93). Over the five election cycles between 1998 and 2006 he received \$39,720 from pro-Arab PACs (Paul & Paul 2009, 93). However, Arab American attempts to "enter the political process through 'political

philanthropy” have sometimes been thwarted at national, state and local levels (Terry 2005, 41). In the past, some politicians, have shown reluctance to accept (financial) support from Arab American organizations. George McGovern and the mayor of Philadelphia, Wilson Goode, have refused or returned the donations they received. In the case of Goode, the money came from a Palestinian American who had raised it during a reception. Goode refused it after his Republican opponent had “baited him for accepting ‘Arab’ money” (Samhan 1987, 22). Also Walter Mondale, Democratic candidate for the Presidential election of 1984, returned donations that he had received from Arab American businessmen in Chicago (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2) (Samhan 1987, 22). But then, when Mondale was Vice President in the Carter Administration, a member of the administration said that Mondale was “really 150% pro-Israel”, and even “more pro-Israel than Begin” (as cited in Terry, 2005, 31). Thus, if he *had* accepted the donation, it would most probably not have had an effect on his policy preferences anyway. Still, the fact that it was rejected shows how ‘dodgy’ Arab American(s) (groups) were perceived to be by US politicians (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2).

Besides contributing to campaigns through ethnic PACs, ethnic groups also engage in *lobbying activities* that may cost money. While doing research on their finances, Paul (2009) found only three dozen ethnic organizations that reported direct lobbying expenditures (2009, 95). Also in this case the pro-Israel organizations are leading. AIPAC spent on average \$1.2 million per year in lobbying costs from 1998 to 2006, and all pro-Israel groups together on average just over \$2 million per year (Paul & Paul 2009, 95). The American –Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) was also included in the research, but they had started reporting lobbying expenditures only midway through the study. From the data Paul (2009) has received since 2002, it became clear that the ADC spent an average of \$96,000 per year on lobbying expenditures. It should be noted though that the type of lobbying that requires direct expenditures is just *one aspect* of direct lobbying. There are many direct lobbying activities, such as meeting with members of Congress and their staff, that have just as much, or possibly even more, of an effect on the policymaking process than activities that organizations have to dedicate funds to. These activities, since they do not require expenditures, do not have to be disclosed under US regulations and are thus difficult to track (Paul & Paul 2009, 97). In conclusion, it is possible that the ADC engages in much

more direct lobbying than the annual expenditures of \$96,000 would suggest, simply because those additional activities do not require funds. Figures on direct lobbying expenditures may thus be misleading.

Raising money for the funding of PACs, lobby expenditures, and educational and cultural projects has not been easy for Arab American organizations. “All suffer from the lack of philanthropy in the Arab-American community and an unwillingness to give money without either a lot of recognition or direct control” (Ionides 2003, 92). Though Arab Americans have incomes that are 22 percent higher than the American average (Ionides 2003, 90) (Paul 2009, 121, Table 4.6, average income Arab Americans in 2005: \$50,538), they give less to ethnic organizations (Terry 2005, 66). This is problematic for the activists in those organizations, because it means that they will have to spend much time on raising money, time which they otherwise could have spent on lobbying activities.

Organizational Strength

As noted above, the Arab American community has several organizations that lobby for Arab American interests. Two of these appear, according to Paul (2009), to be based on the AIPAC model (2009, 123): the Arab American Institute (AAI) and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). These organizations have a mixed focus, on both domestic issues (racial profiling, civil rights) and on US foreign policy. Attempting to change foreign policy is thus one of many concerns, but a very important one at that. As Marrar states, “to accomplish a Palestinian state through the assistance of American policy would signal that the US has something invested not just in the Middle East, but also in its own population with ties to that region” (Marrar 2009, 113). The Arab American organizations have concluded that the only remedy for their domestic problems is the cessation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, because they believe this will “advance their status in American society, boost their influence on US decision makers, and improve their relations with American Jews” (Shain 1996, 52). Their foreign policy goals are thus, as they perceive it, intertwined with the possibility of domestic empowerment. An example is something the deputy director of the AAI, Helen Hatab Samhan, wrote in 1987. She wrote that “anti-Arab prejudice in America will continue to confront the Arab American community as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict remains

unsolved” (Samhan 1987, 27). Even though the main stated objective of the AAI was to empower Arab Americans in the US electoral system, by its very nature it has to try to influence foreign policy (Marrar 2009, 107). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was hence always going to be a central focus in the organizations’ activities.

One of the tasks of an ethnic organization is to unify the community. Maintaining that unity has been far from easy for Arab American organizations. The fact that they represent people from so many different countries, religions, ideological persuasions and economic classes has often caused problems in their lobbying efforts, as has been described in Chapter Two. After all, before one can convince policymakers of certain policy preferences, such preferences need to be formulated and agreed on within the community itself. Though the Palestinian cause has been the central unifying factor and provided a basis for a pan-Arab ethnic identity in the US (Shain 1996:46), at times, this unity has been very fragile. Divisions often came to the surface, such as during the Gulf War, impeding the lobby’s effectiveness. Overcoming their internal divisions is thus crucial for Arab American organizations if they want their influence over US foreign policy to grow. According to an article in *the Economist* (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000), it is a powerful cultural revival that is now drawing them together and overcoming those differences. “They are sinking millions into their mosques and churches. They have created a series of institutions such as the Arab American Chamber of Commerce and ACCESS, a huge social-services agency, which reinforce their sense of common identity” (2000, 2). They publish a magazine that celebrates Arab culture, titled ‘Arabica’, and every year an ‘Arab International Festival’ is organized that attracts over 150,000 people (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 2).

As for another important task of an ethnic organization, that of setting-up coalitions with other groups, Arab Americans have allied themselves often with African Americans. They worked for instance together with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Marrar 2009, 94). On occasion they also worked with free speech organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and libertarian groups, in joint opposition to racial profiling and the Patriot Act (Paul & Paul 2009, 98). In addition, they have received support from for instance moderate Christian leaders (Marrar 2009:104), the Presbyterian Church (Clarke & Flohr 1992, 72), and the Churches for Middle East Peace (C-MEP) organization (Marrar

2009:115) (Clarke & Flohr 1992:73). Though C-MEP has only limited resources, it has conducted elaborate phone campaigns, for example those in 1990 and 1991 in which they advocated against US housing loan guarantees to Israel. In 1992, they followed up on this campaign with teams of C-MEP members visiting Congress, urging policymakers and their staffers to make those loan guarantees dependent on a moratorium on Israeli settlements in the occupied territories (Clarke & Flohr 1992, 73). They also advocated this course of action in a letter to President Bush, which was signed by the leaders of fifteen prominent Christian organizations (Clarke & Flohr 1992, 73). Especially after the Oslo peace process, which made Arab Americans 'visible' and gave them a 'place at the table', support for the Arab lobby was reinvigorated. In 1995, the President of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, William H. Keeler, expressed concern over issues that might derail the peace process, such as the Israeli expropriation of Palestinian land and Israel's claim to have exclusive sovereignty over Jerusalem. Arab Americans were also worried about these violations by Israel. This placed the two groups in the same camp (Marrar 2009, 104). As Marrar states, "such alliances give the Palestinian cause in the US momentum from a variety of sources" (2009, 115).

Next to aligning with other groups to bear pressure on policymakers in a concerted effort, it is also useful, for an ethnic group seeking influence, to have people from within the community in office. These 'insiders' can then promote the policy preferences of the pro-Arab lobby from the inside. This is also what Member of Congress Mary Rose Oakar (D.-Ohio), who later became President of the ADC, tried to do (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 22) (Marrar 2009, 94). During the Intifada years, the Arab American community was concerned about the closing of Palestinian schools by Israel. Mary Rose Oakar reached out to her fellow lawmakers about the concerns and asked them to imagine what it would be like if that would happen to *their* children, what they would do then. Because she framed the issue in this way, bringing it 'close to home' for the policymakers, they could identify and sympathize with it. Mrs. Oakar's efforts eventually led to a House resolution in which Israel was urged to allow the schools to be reopened (Marrar 2009, 94). Though this is not a major policy change, it does show, Marrar argues, that under the right circumstances and with the right people (someone who takes the initiative), there is a great deal of potential for making changes (Marrar 2009, 95).

The Workings of the Lobby: Causes of Ineffectiveness

Anti-Arab Prejudice in the United States

One of the main difficulties Arab American organizations have (had) to overcome, is the negative view the average American has of everything 'Arab' or 'Muslim'. The cultural hostility that seems to be 'built in' in US society, puts Arab American interest groups at a major disadvantage. Even before these groups can try to get their policy preferences across, they have to overcome the negative stereotypes of Arabs that persist in the US. One can find these stereotypes everywhere, from the newspaper articles that people read in the morning, to the Hollywood movies that people watch on a Friday night. As for the latter, Jack Shaheen (2000, 2001, 2006) is *the* authority on the subject. He has written extensively about the vilification of Arabs and Muslims on the US silver screen⁸. For his book and accompanying documentary *Reel Bad Arabs – How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, he reviewed more than nine-hundred Hollywood films that feature Arabs. Practically without exception, these films portray Arabs in a very degrading and negative manner and are filled with anti-Arab stereotypes (Shaheen 2001, 11). The image of Arabs that comes forward from such films is often that of a villain on a constant 'killing spree'. This is not only how the 'foreign' Arab is portrayed: also the Arab American is depicted as such, rousing fear of Arabs supposedly working from the 'inside' to destroy the United States. In many TV-series in the US, the fear of 'domestic terrorism' is a key subject, for example in the popular series *24*. The scenario of one of the seasons of this series is centered on the existence of a network of deceptive Arab Americans who are secretly plotting against the US. Eventually they detonate a nuclear device on US soil. As Shaheen says, from series like these you get the impression that its makers must believe that "the only good Arab is a dead Arab" (Shaheen 2001, 18). Besides being 'evil', uncivilized, deceptive and violent, the Arab characters in these films are almost always unintelligent and incapable. This representation is, besides outrageous in and of itself, certainly incorrect when it comes to Arab Americans, who are highly educated. Of the Arab American community, 35 percent holds a college degree, compared to the US national average of just over 20 percent (Ionides 2003, 90). The 'stupid', inapt Arabs in

⁸ Parts of this section on the vilification of Arabs in Hollywood films, are an adaptation of a paper I wrote in 2009, titled *Orientalist Discourse in Hollywood Film*.

these films are often defeated by a Western protagonist who, without much effort, is able to take out a large number of them at once (Muscati 2002, 141). This is part of the scenario of mainstream American movies such as *The Siege* (1998), *Never Say Never Again* (1983), *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Mummy* (1999), *In the Army Now* (1994), *True Lies* (1994), and *Rules of Engagement* (2000) (Shaheen, 2001, 14-19). Shaheen has also looked specifically at the portrayal of Palestinians in Hollywood movies, and concluded that they are 'especially vilified'. In the 45 such movies, made in the 80s and 90s, that feature Palestinian characters, they are without exception portrayed as 'evil terrorists', killing not only Israelis but also Americans. A case in point is the film *True Lies* (1994), starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. In none of these movies there is mention of the occupation the Palestinians have to endure, the harassment at checkpoints, the refugee camps where some have lived since 1948 and the violent attacks from soldiers or settlers. Palestinians are never shown as fathers and mothers, who lovingly raise their children. As Shaheen points out, there is no 'humanity' in how Palestinians are depicted, they are merely being portrayed as 'sub-humans' (Akram 2002, 66). And, as in reality, the American character in the film stands side by side with the Israelis. Of the 45 movies with Palestinian characters, 28 were shot in Israel, 7 of which by production company *Cannon*, which is owned by Golan and Globus, two Israeli producers. The movies they produce "display violent, sex-crazed Palestinian 'bastards and animals' contesting Westerners, Israelis, and fellow Arabs" (Shaheen, 2001, 27). It is unlikely that people who have seen these films will be left with a 'sympathetic feeling' towards the Palestinian people. Moreover, the American public is *constantly* fed such representations of Palestinians, the negative stereotype being repeated over and over. Movies like *The Delta Force* (1986), *Ministry of Vengeance* (1989), *Navy SEALs* (1990), *Executive Decision* (1996), *True Lies* (1994), and *Death Before Dishonor* (1987) are just a few of the many examples (Shaheen 2001, 26 - 27). Shaheen has also identified over 250 movies that, though they have nothing to do with Arabs or the Middle East, still include degrading stereotypes about Arabs. Shaheen rightly wonders how moviegoers would have reacted had the negative images been of Jews or African Americans (Shaheen 2001, 27). However, when it comes to Arabs, people have apparently become largely inured to the persistent racist treatment in movies and TV-series (Terry 2005, 67).

As for the media, analysts have found that debate on the Middle East on TV and in newspapers and magazines is more and more limited to a small group of commentators, “often from Washington based pro-Israeli think tanks” (Terry 2005, 15). Terry holds that the decline of international news coverage in the US over the last twenty years has exacerbated the problem. The US public is increasingly unaware or ignorant of the situation in the Middle East and the information that they *do* get, is mostly biased in favor of Israel (Terry 2005, 15) (Marrar 2009, 17). After reviewing news coverage of the Middle East during the Cold War, some journalists came to the conclusion that “anti-Arab bigotry was rampant in US news” (Terry 2005, 16). As for the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Terry has found that the media accord extensive coverage to the death of Israelis, but hardly pay attention to Arab or Palestinian victims of the struggle. She states that there is an “undercurrent of anti-Palestinian animosity” in the media *and* to some extent in the government (Terry 2005, 17). This current is being ‘nourished’ by the pro-Israel lobby in the US, who patrols public discourse and scolds anyone who contradicts their vision of Israel (Beinart 2010, 5). Managing the perceptions the US public has of Arabs and Palestinians is important for these groups. In a recent report on how to foster Zionism in the US, Republican pollster Frank Luntz advised Jewish American groups to continue using the word “Arabs” instead of “Palestinians”. He argues that though the latter could perhaps evoke “images of refugee camps, victims and oppression”, the former would make people think about “wealth, oil and Islam” (Beinart 2010, 9). The cycle of negative imagery of the Middle East undoubtedly has an effect on the general public. Foreign policy professionals are not immune to this either (Terry 2005, 22). The widespread ignorance and misunderstanding of Islam and the Arab world impedes the formulation of “objective or effective foreign policy” (Terry 2005, 26). Added to that, reading lists for White House officials are heavily biased towards Israel and often present anti-Arab views. Some White House officials stated that they had based much of their view of Arabs and Muslims on *The Arab Mind* (1973) by Raphael Patai. In this book, Arabs are described as “sex-obsessed and shame-driven”. These descriptions would certainly have been termed outrageous and ridiculous had they been about any other ethnic or racial group (Terry 2005, 27) and a book that contained such descriptions would certainly not have ended up on a list for required reading for government officials. On the reading list Terry also

found a book by Joan Peters, titled *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict* (1984). Even though prominent scholars such as Norman Finkelstein and Albert Hourani have revealed the many historic errors and distortions in this book, it was still 'recommended reading' for White House officials (Terry 2005, 19). In addition, groups such as AIPAC have set up elaborate information campaigns to promote their perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the White House. They regularly send for example the *Facts and Myths, Near East Report* and other pro-Israel publications to the President and his staff. The *Facts and Myths* edition of 1976 was sent to President Carter with a letter saying it might be interesting reading material for him, since he "might not know the 'actual facts' of the 1948 war" (Terry 2005, 30). AIPAC also sent the White House a report on Middle East refugees by the author of the aforementioned *From Time Immemorial*. In this report, Peters made the absurd argument that, because "Syria had 100 percent employment", "therefore the 'sensible arrangement' would be for the Palestinian refugees to be resettled in Syria or elsewhere in the Arab world" (as cited in Terry, 2005, 30).

Trying to change anti-Arab prejudice in the US is a key part of the activities of Arab American organizations. In fact, most Arab organizations spend more time on countering stereotypes of Arab culture in American society than they do on trying to influence specific elections or directly lobby Congress. Percentage-wise, spokeswoman Laila Al-Qatami of the Washington office of the ADC says they spend at least 50 percent of their time on educating the US public about Arabs, and only 20 percent of their time on direct lobbying on Capitol Hill (Ionides 2003, 91). The idea behind this strategy, that focuses on changing public opinion on Arabs and Arab Americans, is that a better understanding of the (political) situation in the Middle East and Arab culture will "translate over time into a voting public interested in seeing a more responsible Middle East foreign policy" (Ionides 2003, 91). Since "public opinion is increasingly recognized as a central factor in the decisions about US foreign relations" (Marrar 2009), the ADC's long-term strategy, of trying to change foreign policy by changing public opinion, seems to be a valid one. The ADC has a special branch, the ADC Research Institute, that attempts to make the general US public aware of the anti-Arab prejudice in the media and popular culture, and also tries to educate people about Arab culture. Many other Arab American organizations do the same. However, the pro-Israel lobby is much more

persistent and consistent in its information campaigns: they devote more time, energy and money on it than Arab American organizations do (Terry 2005, 31). The groups that advocate more pro-Palestinian policies thus have to step up their effort if they want to be effective in countering the 'Israel promotion machine' of groups like AIPAC.

Limited Access to Policymakers

According to analysts, besides electoral power, financial resources and organizational strength, another factor that is an important determinant for whether an ethnic interest group will be successful or not, is the "permeability of and access to the government" (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 345). As for Arab Americans, their low level of access has probably been one of the main impediments in their efforts to become more influential in US foreign policy decision-making. The high and unparalleled level of access that AIPAC enjoys, is what many analysts point to as the source of their success. Because of their close relations with policymakers both in Congress and in the White House, they have early access to important information, which enables them to "mobilize its lobbying and public relations efforts quickly and early" (Haney & Vanderbush 1999, 345). Gaining access to policymakers is also necessary if one wants to effectively push for changes in US foreign policy (Terry 2005, 62)

Access can for example come through personal contacts with the President and White House officials. Presidents Truman and Ford for example, had several close friends who had interests in the Middle East, particularly Israel (Terry 2005, 33). A case in point is the friendship of President Ford with Max Fisher, an ardent supporter of Israel and a leading fundraiser for the Republican party. Ford regularly consulted Fisher on Middle East policies. Furthermore, Fisher led delegations of Jewish Americans to the White House for 'special briefings' (Terry 2005, 34). Not only was Fisher listened to, he also became an 'intermediary' between the US and Israel on the regular trips he made there. The National Security Council (NSC) asked him in the summer of 1976 to, during his next visit, 'reassure' the Israelis of Ford's policies and to inform the Israelis of public opinion in the US (Terry 2005, 34). There is no Arab American that has ever had such a close relationship with the US Administration (Terry 2005, 34). The NAAA and the leaders of other Arab American organizations were able though to meet with Reagan,

early March 1985, in reward for the valuable support Arab Americans had given to his campaign (Sadd & Lendenmann 1985, 23).

Apart from through an earlier established relationship with the President, ethnic groups can also gain access to the government through the specially appointed liaisons and offices of ethnic affairs of the White House. These liaisons, who are appointed by the President, meet with, and write about the activities of, the domestic pressure groups they are 'assigned' to. President Johnson was the first to designate such a liaison for special interest groups (Terry 2005, 37). When it comes to Arab Americans however, there is no special liaison they can meet with. Oddly, "contacts or meetings with Arab Americans are treated as matters of foreign, not domestic policy" (Terry 2005, 62). A request from Arab American groups for a meeting has to be approved first, and is often rejected, by the National Security Council or the US State Department. During the Ford Administration, the NAAA repeatedly requested to meet with the President, but the NSC rejected it again and again, reporting to Ford it was 'inadvisable' to meet with the group. The NAAA eventually did get the meeting it so desired, through a very clever strategy. They complimented Ford in a number of their publications, but at the same time wrote letters to the editors of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* in which they marked their disappointment of Ford's rejection to meet with them, and sent copies of these letters to the White House (Terry 2005, 63). This prompted the NSC to advise the President to meet with the NAAA after all, though on the condition that Henry Kissinger would be completely controlling the nature and substance of the meeting (Terry 2005, 63). Kissinger dominated the conversation to such an extent, that the NAAA did not even get the chance to discuss either the Lebanon crisis, the Palestinians, or the US-Israel relationship. Thus, though the NAAA succeeded in obtaining the meeting, Ford and Kissinger ingeniously avoided having to talk about any of the issues that were important for the Arab Americans. After the meeting, the White House was quick to assure the press that the meeting was only to 'solicit views' and would in no way impact Ford's policy decisions (Terry 2005, 63).

Carter also received requests for meetings from several Arab American organizations. Eventually he agreed for his public liaison, Midge Costanza, to a meet with the NAAA in February 1977. During the meeting, domestic issues were discussed, but matters of foreign policy were not raised by the liaison (Terry 2005, 64). Interesting to

note is that Costanza was responsible for a very long list of ethnic groups from Middle Eastern and also European descent. The Middle East group had been divided into different sub-categories such as Armenians, Egyptians and Jordanians, but notably not Palestinians, even though there is quite a number of Americans who are of Palestinian descent. Moreover, Costanza's list did not include Jewish Americans since they have "their own separate liaison" (Terry 2005, 63). The liaison to the Jewish community can easily arrange a meeting with the President or other officials of the Administration, giving the Jewish community ready access to the President and White House inside information. On the contrary, "no staff member deals solely with the concerns of Arab, Turkish or Iranian Americans" (Terry 2005, 37). Whereas Jewish Americans had already been granted meetings with President Carter, the Administration put off the Arab Americans with the excuse that the President was 'too busy' to meet with them (Terry 2005, 64). In November, members of the AAUG were granted a meeting with Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, whom they urged to include the PLO in the peace process and to recognize Palestinian rights. It took however several letter writing campaigns, as well as pressure from high-ranking officials, such as Arab American Democratic Congresspersons Mary Rose Oakar and Nick Rahall, before Carter finally agreed to meet with Arab American groups himself. The meeting took place on December 15, 1977 (Terry 2005, 64). NSC staff advisors William Quandt and Gary Sick had had to convince NSC advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to agree to it. They argued that meeting with the Arab Americans would "avoid giving offense to a small but increasingly vocal group and would be received with satisfaction by the Arab American community" (as cited in Terry, 2005, 64). Brzezinski eventually relented, but did orchestrate that Carter would be present at the meeting for only ten to fifteen minutes. He also made sure to invite a diverse group of Arab Americans, in order to have a broad spectrum of issues that could be discussed. He was thereby trying to avoid to have to pay much attention to the Palestinian question. After the meeting, the AAUG, NAAA and the 'Ramallah Association' presented a statement, similar to the one the AAUG had given to Secretary Vance earlier, to Carter, but he refused to accept it. Fouad Moughrabi, a Palestinian American and member of AAUG, tried to give the President the key of his

parents' home in Palestine⁹, but Carter did not want to accept this either. To put the time Carter spent on the meeting in perspective: that same day, he spent more time on lighting the Christmas tree than on the meeting with the Arab Americans (Terry 2005, 66). Particularly interesting to note is that, in contrast to meetings with other domestic interest groups, the reports and minutes of the meeting of December 15, 1977, are not kept in the archive of the office of the public liaison of the White House. Instead, they are part of the files of the National Security Council. This shows that, though the participants in the meeting were from *domestic* Arab American groups, the matter was dealt with by the Administration as a matter of *foreign* policy and defense concern (Terry 2005, 66). The same counts for letters and other correspondence with Arab Americans: all part of the NSC files.

Clinton did early on in his first term agree to meet with leaders of Arab American organizations, thereby recognizing their increasing political participation and influence (Terry 2005, 66). Clinton was also the first US President in office who addressed an Arab American Conference. On May 7, 1998, President Clinton spoke at the conference of the Arab American Institute. He stated that he was honored, but also somewhat disappointed, to be the first, since “the Arab American community has made an enormous contribution to this country with basic values that make us great” (Clinton 1998, 1). In addition, on October 5th, 2000, George W. Bush visited the Arab Americans of Dearborn, and talked to the leaders of the community. He was the first Presidential candidate ever to have made such a gesture (“Birth of an Arab American Lobby” 2000, 1). He also twice visited the offices of the ADC in Texas (Debre 2000, 1). Other candidates for the 2000 election also paid attention to Arab Americans, with Al Gore speaking via satellite connection to the National Convention of the AAI in November 1999 and John McCain and Bill Bradley addressing the community during their campaigns as well (Debre 2000, 1). This is a significant change compared to the previous elections, in 1996, when neither Bill Clinton nor Bob Dole paid any attention to Arab Americans. Going back further, in 1988 the candidate for the Democratic party, Michael Dukakis, even rejected the support and endorsements he had received from leaders of

⁹ Such keys have been transferred from one generation to the next, in the hope that, some day, one's descendants will be able to unlock the house in the homeland again with that very key. For Palestinians, keys have come to symbolize the Right of Return.

Ethnic Lobbying and Diaspora Politics in the U.S.
The Case of the Pro-Palestinian Movement

M.M. Dekker - 3001245

Arab American organizations, since it would, he explained, “alienate the Jewish vote” (as cited in Debre, 2000, 2). During the campaign for the 2004 elections, the candidates paid even more attention to the Arab American community. For example, in October 2003, eight of the nine Democratic candidates attended a leadership conference of the AAI in Dearborn (Ionides 2003, 90). Compared to the 2000 elections, during which only two candidates had accepted the invitation to attend the conference (Ionides 2003, 89), this was a major improvement.

Conclusion

After having examined the lobby, it can be concluded that the Arab American lobby has been quite active and has attempted, through both direct and indirect lobbying, to have an impact on US foreign policy. Many of the strategies they use(d) are similar to those of other ethnic lobbies. That the Arab American lobby is less effective than some of those other lobbies, is probably due to anti-Arab prejudice in the general US public, and a lack of resources, unity and access. Many of the difficulties that the Arab Americans are dealing with, are made even more difficult by their strong counterpart: the Israel lobby. However, one can also see 'trends' that indicate that the level of influence of Arab Americans is on the rise. Their electoral power is growing, Arab American organizations have developed lobbying expertise, and Arab Americans have had, over the years, more access to government. This makes the pro-Palestine lobby a 'player to watch' and certainly a worthy subject of more extensive research. For instance, what will these developments (more access, electoral clout) mean for the future, with a new US Administration in office since 2009?

For such an analysis one could use the third and final 'lens' that Shannon (2003) identifies: the 'Individual Beliefs' (IB) lens. From this analytical perspective, the *people* who make the decisions are considered to be important. It is a way of looking that takes into account the ideals, ideas, values and beliefs of individuals in policymaking positions. The idea behind the theory is that these values and beliefs of an individual determine how this person sees the world and how he or she will perceive certain situations. When that individual is an important actor in foreign policy decision-making, the President for instance, those individual beliefs can have an effect on the course of the country. Even if the geo-strategic and domestic situation is constant, different Presidents can arrive at completely different decisions as for foreign policy, IB theorists hold. The analysts argue that each President will have a different view on what is in the US interest (Shannon, 2003, 8). Thus, when looking through the IB lens, one takes the perceptions and beliefs from the individuals involved seriously, because these may lead to different foreign policies outcomes. An interesting question to pose in this regard, for the future, is whether perhaps US President Barack Obama will redefine US foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Will he take on the Israel lobby and pressure Israel into

accepting a two-state solution, something which his predecessors did not do? And will he be more open to pro-Palestinian voices in the US?

He started out promising with his 'landmark' Cairo address in June 2009, during which he said that he would "personally pursue" a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and would do this "with all the patience and dedication that the task requires" (Cobban 2009, 3). In the summer of 2009, the Administration seemed to make good on that promise by setting out to demand from Israel that it would halt the construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. However, this tough attitude was apparently short-lived. Netanyahu simply refused to completely stop the settlement activity, and only offered to build at a slower rate. When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Israel in late October, 2009, she even 'praised' and thanked Netanyahu for his 'unprecedented' offer ("Is Israel too Strong" 2009, 1). Thus, it seemed the Administration was already backing down on its demands, perhaps due to the polls in Israel that indicated that the level of support for Barack Obama was only 6 to 10 percent, "perhaps his lowest popularity in any country in the world" (Siegman 2009, 1). Obama also had to endure criticism from the pro-Israel lobby in the US for 'blowing the settlement row out of proportion' ("No Time" 2009, 1). The White House sent numerous messages to both Israel and pro-Israeli groups inside the US, to reassure them of President Obama's "friendship" and "unqualified commitment to Israel's security" (Siegman 2009, 1). This in turn worried the Palestinians, because they saw that Obama was 'caving in' to Israeli and domestic pro-Israel pressure ("Is Israel too Strong" 2009, 1). Clinton awkwardly 'backpedalled' *again* and assured the Palestinians that her congratulatory remarks to Netanyahu did not mean that she not still considered all settlements to be illegal ("Is Israel too Strong" 2009, 1). Thus, neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis were happy with this first, feeble effort of the Obama Administration. The next 'spark' came in March of this year. Israel's interior ministry approved 1,600 new homes in a Jewish suburb in East Jerusalem, the by the Palestinians envisioned capital of their state-to-be. The announcement coincided with a visit of Vice President Joe Biden to Israel, who took this as an insult. It also came just before the 'proximity talks' were supposed to begin that the US had finally convinced Abbas to enter into ("American-Israeli Relations" 2010, 45). Clinton reportedly made a 45-minute angry phone call to Netanyahu and told Biden to not just 'express concern', but to 'condemn'

the Israeli announcement (“American-Israeli Relations” 2010, 45). The response of the Obama Administration to Israel’s announcement was met with concern by the pro-Israel groups in the US, who said they were ‘troubled’ by the public scolding. AIPAC called on Obama to “handle differences with Israel privately”, a sentiment that was echoed by several US Senators and Representatives of the House (“American-Israeli Relations” 2010, 45). The Administration was quick to deny that there was any real ‘crisis’ in the relationship. Obama said on March 17 that “friends are going to disagree sometimes” and Clinton said that the bond between Israel and the US was still ‘unshakable’ (“American-Israeli Relations” 2010, 45). However, political commentators argue that the incident seems to be ‘more’ than just an argument between friends: Obama’s patience with Israel has run out, they say (“American-Israeli Relations” 2010, 45). In the mean time, proximity talks have now started, with Obama’s envoy to the region, George Mitchell, travelling back and forth between Netanyahu and Abbas. On both sides, the expectations of these proximity talks are very low. Akiva Eldar (2010), a well known Israeli journalist for the paper *Haaretz*, argues that the events of September this year will be a key turning point. The moratorium on the building of settlements will then end, and Obama will most likely insist that Netanyahu prolongs it. Netanyahu will then have to choose between Obama and his coalition partners in Israel. The stance that Israel and the US will take in September, is what will, according to Mr. Eldar, determine the future of Obama’s plans for peace in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Obama would be wise to avoid serious conflicts with Israel if he wants to maintain the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives, because there are midterm elections soon (November) and the pro-Israel lobby has a significant hold over them. Thus, it is not a good time to anger the Jewish lobby. As Eldar puts it, the best period for Obama to push Israel for peace is in the first 3 quarters of the year 2011. That is after the midterm elections, and *before* he has to start campaigning for re-election around November 2011. We will have to wait and see whether Obama will be able to gather momentum for his peace plans, both domestically and in the Middle East.

As for the role that ethnic interest groups can play in the formation of foreign policy during the Obama Administration, it seems that Obama will be particularly open to ethnic group influence. In his Inaugural Address, Obama pointed specifically to America’s ‘patchwork heritage’ and of being a ‘nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews

and Hindus, and non-believers' (Haney 2009, 1). His Administration seems intent on using US ethnic minorities as intermediaries to reconnect with countries around the globe (Haney 2009, 2). Also, Obama developed special outreach programs to different ethnic groups in the US during his campaign, including one for Arab Americans. This shows that he sees them as a group that is worth reaching out to. Also, he appointed George Mitchell, a Lebanese American, as his envoy to the Middle East. Though these are only small gestures, they can be seen as promising developments when it comes to the prospects of Arab Americans gaining access and influence. It should be noted though that Obama's openness to Arab Americans is part of an *overall openness* to ethnic minorities. It means that he will also be open to pro-Israel groups. However, I still believe that Obama's openness will be beneficial to the Arab American cause, *even more so* because of the access he gives to Jewish groups. I argue this because, contrary to Bush, who was mainly open to hard-line neoconservative pro-Israel groups, Obama has shown openness to a larger variety of Jewish groups, including more liberal ones that advocate peace, such as Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, Americans for Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum. On December 18, 2009, Obama's transition team met with many of these groups (Haney 2009, 6), whereas during the Bush Administration, when similar meetings were held, the liberal groups were excluded. Obama also pays attention to a new player in the field of Jewish organizations: J Street. This group presents itself as a counterweight to AIPAC (Hayes 2008, 5), in saying that it believes that Obama should be 'free to disagree' with the Israeli government (Lewis 2009, 2). Obama invited J Street to a meeting with leading American Jewish Organizations in the summer of 2009, and in October of that same year, he sent his National Security Advisor, Gen. James L. Jones, to J Street's convention (Lewis 2009, 2). It is clear that Obama supports this organization and is willing to grant it access to leading figures in the Administration, including himself. It is through seeking alliances with groups like J Street that Arab American organizations can advance their policy preferences. A Senior Fellow of the ATFP, Hussein Ibish, has for example participated in a panel discussion about 'Palestinian Perspectives' at the J Street conference on Oct. 27, 2009. The ATFP has also set up a joint internship program with Americans for Peace Now (APN). In this program, the APN will host a Palestinian student, and the ATFP an Israeli student.

Though Arab American groups have had to fight the status quo for decades, they find themselves now at a pivotal moment in US foreign policy history: the policy put forward by the US government is the same as the one desired by Arab Americans. Arab Americans have come a long way, before they arrived at this point. It was only very recently, in 2001, that an American President (George W. Bush) called, for the first time, for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, a call that was formalized in UN Resolution 1397 on March 12, 2002 (Shannon 2003, 114). As for public opinion, to which the Arab lobby has dedicated most of its resources and efforts over the years, polls show that a majority of the US public is in favor of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (Marrar 2009, 152). The call for a two-state solution by both the government and the general public has made Arab American lobbying easier in the sense that their position no longer is a controversial one (Marrar 2009, 113). Though this is a major breakthrough, what the community needs to keep in mind is that just 'saying it, does not make it so' (Darkazally 2004, 44). Without concrete actions from the US that will make it possible for a Palestinian state to be established, Bush's statement was merely an 'empty' promise. Herein lies an important task for Arab American organizations. They have to make sure that the momentum is maintained and lobby the US government on how to go about in the process of working towards such a Palestinian state. What they also would be well-advised to do, is to, as other ethnic lobbies in the US have successfully done, present their case in terms of the US national interest. This has been attempted already, but groups have not always been successful therein. Though the argument of morality and the justness of the Palestinian cause is an important one and should certainly be used, the question that Americans want to see answered is: how is pushing for a Palestinian state going to help the US? Instead of denouncing US support for Israel, the Arab American lobby has to focus on providing arguments for why the creation of a Palestinian state would be in the US national interest.

It is remarkable to see how the US stance towards Palestinian aspirations for statehood has evolved. Before 1948, the Palestinians were not seen as a separate people, but simply as 'Arabs' (Neff 1995, 4). Between 1948 and 1974, they were seen as either terrorists, refugees or "occupied civilians" (Neff 1995, 4). This changed when, in 1975, the US State Department declared that it recognized the Palestinians as a people (Neff

1995, 4). In the 1990s there was only talk of 'limited autonomy' for the Palestinians, while nowadays the two state solution has become an integrated part of US government policy aims. It is unfortunately not possible to say whether the Arab American lobby had a hand in this development. There are no clear examples of where the Arab lobby has been able to directly influence foreign policy decisions in this regard. This is probably why they have been ignored by scholars writing on ethnic lobbying: they are not 'visible' enough. But then, most of the resources of the Arab American lobbies were targeted at public opinion, and the effect that these efforts possibly have had is almost impossible to measure. Fact remains that, over time, Arab Americans have established themselves as a group to be 'reckoned with' in the US. The Arab American lobby has gained more and more access to policymakers and its policy preferences are being taken seriously. All in all, they are becoming more 'visible'. What they need to do now to capitalize on that is to translate that influence into actual policy change. Whether it was Arab American lobbying efforts that led to the more favorable perspective of the US on the Palestinians or not, clear is that their activities and efforts warrant more attention than they have received up to now from political analysts and scholars. The lobby itself should probably not linger for too long on the question of how influential they *have been*. Instead, Arab American organizations should focus on the question of how much influence they can have *in the future* and what steps they need to take to acquire it. Important also is to build a new coalition for the two-state solution, one that will not be impeded by anti-Arab prejudice. The partnership between the Jewish American APN and the Palestinian American ATFP is a case in point. Coalitions like these can urge the US to go forward towards the creation of a Palestinian state, because this is in the US national interest to do so. As Paul Findley already argued in 1985, solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not only the responsibility of Arab Americans, it has become "an American issue" (1985, 113). With a coalition that unites Arab and non-Arab Americans *as Americans*, united by their desire for a peaceful two-state solution that is in the interest of the United States, perhaps even opposition from AIPAC can be overcome. It has been the hard-line pro-Israel lobby that has prevented so far that the US would exercise its leverage over Israel in order to have them make concessions in the peace process with the Palestinians. As

for whether the Arab Americans have been able to 'balance out' the pro-Israel faction, as was the proposed solution by Madison¹⁰ for cases of excessive ethnic minority influence, this is, unfortunately, probably not the case. But then, the Israel lobby has had more time and resources to grow than the Arab lobby did. One could say that the Pro-Israel lobby is already in "graduate school" when it comes to ethnic lobbying, while Arabs are still in "eighth grade" (Ionides 2003, 92). However, this does not mean that they will be stuck in eighth grade forever: they have the potential to grow and to become a more substantial counterforce to the hard-line Jewish groups. With the rise in the US of liberal leaning Jewish groups, who argue that Obama can only be an effective peace broker if he has some room to disagree with Israel, and polls that show that most American Jews do not agree with Israel's settlement policies, Arab American organizations should rise to the occasion and lobby for a US foreign policy that will act against Israel if the peace process is seriously obstructed. This because the envisioned outcome of the peace process, the creation of a Palestinian state, is in the interest of the US.

"...it is, I believe, in the interest not only of the Palestinians, but also the Israelis and the United States and the international community, to achieve a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security"

Barack Obama, President of the United States of America

May 18, 2009

¹⁰ See Chapter One (final paragraph).

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