

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I set foot in Palestine for the first time on May 31, 2011. Earlier that spring, revolution and upheaval had swept through Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain. From the privileged safety of my Ann Arbor apartment, I, like many others around the world, watched history unfold in the region. I had been awarded a language and area studies fellowship, but now it appeared that most of the region would be off limits. I watched Syria's descent into war with particular despair. I had been profoundly shaped by a summer spent in the country in 2006 and my subsequent time working for a Syrian-run human rights organization. With neither the means nor a principled justification for traveling to Syria amidst its horrific unraveling, I began developing a backup plan. Fortunately, in parallel, I had submitted an application to pursue a faculty-mentored research project in Palestine. At the time, and in language that now strikes me as technocratic and sterile, I proposed studying the political factors that shaped the size and nature of public sector employment in the Palestinian Authority.

Perhaps the language I used was a relic of my time spent in Washington, DC, before attending graduate school, or perhaps it was an indication that I was wary of writing about Palestine altogether. Former professors, mentors, and other researchers had warned me it was a "minefield," that trying to write one's first book on Israel and Palestine would kill one's career. On the other hand, my advisor, Mark Tessler, had written one of the

preeminent political histories of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the English language. He was encouraging. So, once the University of Michigan approved my travel, I prepared for a summer of research and continued language study at Birzeit University's Palestine and Arabic studies program.

After my first trip to Palestine, there was no looking back. Still, as I write these words in the fall of 2023, I cannot help but feel that twelve years is barely enough time to call oneself an expert in anything. Just over one week before the wholesale destruction of the Gaza Strip began in October of this year, I delivered a presentation at the University of Michigan in which I aimed to consider potential sources of either stasis or disruptive change in the future political order of the occupied West Bank. The talk referenced Antonio Gramsci's idea of a "morbid" interregnum—an oft-cited quote that appears in the concluding paragraphs of this book—between two political equilibria or stages of history. Perhaps I could claim that subsequent events—the massacre in southern Israel, followed by the ongoing, almost incomprehensible, obliteration of the Gaza Strip, its infrastructure, its homes, its natural resources, its heritage, and, most of all, its people—validated some prior theory I held about the inherent instability of Israel's regime in the occupied Palestinian territories. I do not know if they have. Certainly many of us have made such arguments. But, when bearing witness, remotely, through a phone or computer screen, to the shattering of a people, words fail, past predictions wither away, and all one is left with is the morbidness and the enormity of loss.

As alluded to in the introduction to this volume, I have intentionally deconstructed and reconstructed this manuscript many times. Any remaining oversights, errors, or omissions are my own. Nonetheless, this book exists because I have benefited from the support of many brilliant and generous people along the way.

First and foremost, more than fifty Palestinians from small and large towns across the West Bank sat down with me for formal interviews. Many others, some of whose names I never knew, assisted in providing various forms of logistical support—arranging schedules, transmitting paperwork, chauffeuring, and fueling conversations with coffee and tea—during my multiple visits to Palestine between 2011 and 2019. Still others took the time to share their lives with me in more informal ways—on the phone, over a meal

or coffee or nargileh, on a road trip, at their universities, in long taxi rides between cities, at art exhibits, in their villages, with their children, at their weddings, and in their homes. I, quite literally, could not have written this book without them. The Palestinian people are why I chose to write this book, hence I dedicate it to them.

Mark Tessler, more than any other, is responsible for my obsession with Israel and Palestine. Mark is brilliant and humble. From Mark I have gained a deep appreciation for both the privilege and responsibility we bear as foreign scholars trying to get things right. My other committee members at the University of Michigan, William Roberts Clark, Mark Dincecco, Brian Min, Anne Pitcher each challenged me in unique and invaluable ways, contributing to my development as a social scientist. Nathan Brown also generously connected me to some of his contacts in Palestine prior to my first trips to the region.

From 2017 to 2018, I wrestled with this manuscript during a postdoctoral fellowship at the Middle East Initiative (MEI) at the Harvard Kennedy School. Tarek Masoud, the faculty director of MEI, is one of the least boring people I know. I am very lucky to have him as a mentor, intellectual foil, and friend. No one challenges me more. At Harvard, I was also deeply fortunate to meet Hilary Rantisi, who codirected MEI. Conversations with Hilary were eye-opening, pushing me to ground my abstract social science language in the lived experiences of Palestinians. Readers will see just a small slice of Hilary's beautiful and rich family history referenced in the introduction to this book. My fellow fellows, Matthew Buehler, Jonas Bergen Draege, Allison Hartnett, Elizabeth Nugent and Hind Ahmed Zaki, defined my community while at the Kennedy School. I was, and continue to be, sustained by their wisdom and friendship.

The Department of Political Science and the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at the City College of New York have been my academic home since 2018. I completed the bulk of this manuscript while here, and I am immensely thankful to have done so among such fascinating, amicable and funny colleagues. I am especially grateful to Nicholas Rush Smith for many thought-provoking and rich discussions over the years on, among other topics, apartheid, the making and unmaking of states, and how we know what we know. I have learned a great deal about the colonization and decolonization of India from a set of references supplied by Raphaëlle Khan. Colleagues including Bruce Cronin, Rajan Menon, and

Dirk Moses have generously provided feedback on my work. My department chair, Dan DiSalvo, and my dean, Andy Rich, have provided unfailing support and guidance. Whether over Zoom, in the hallway, over drinks, at an academic talk, or in a raucous faculty meeting, my colleagues have each, in their own way, brought energy and light to this process. I am also indebted to our professional staff and to the awe-inspiring students of the City College of New York. My students make me a better thinker.

I could not have completed this book without the help of a team of part-time research assistants, both in Palestine and in the United States. The brilliant H. J. researched the results of the 2004–5 local elections and helped arrange and provide interpreting for several interviews in 2014. Also in 2014, I met Ali Musa, who supplied excellent research, interpreting, and logistical assistance during my field visits in 2014 and 2019. Further, my research has profited greatly from discussions with Ali over the years about the nuances of Palestinian politics. His role in the 2019 interviews was particularly instrumental. Zane Jarrar generously coordinated with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to obtain geocoded data on the location of Palestinian police stations and helpfully validated election results from the Palestinian Central Elections Commission. L. J. is a truly first-class Arabic-English interpreter; they also provided expert written translations of interview transcripts. Rabab Alhadae, Husam Kaid, Atsuko Sakurai, and Reda Souaidi worked with me during their time as CUNY undergraduate students. Reda and Husam did admirable data entry work, drawing on a labyrinthine set of budget files in Arabic; Rabab conducted valuable archival analysis of Palestinian news sources around the 2004–5 local elections; and Atsuko deployed her programming and geographic information system (GIS) skills to help complete an array of data analysis tasks, including measuring distances along Palestinian-accessible roads in the West Bank and validating municipal-level measures of the West Bank's security zones and built-up areas.

I am thankful to the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute for providing me with office space and allowing me to participate in seminars with their brilliant researchers in 2014. Samir Abdullah was particularly generous and welcoming. I am grateful to B'Tselem for sharing some of its geocoded data, and for the extremely important work it does in the occupied territories. My thanks go, as well, to the Palestinian Ministry of Local Government in Ramallah for sharing the municipal budget files, and to Jamal Numan

and the team that launched the Ministry's GIS portal. I also wish to thank Khalil Shikaki and Walid Ladadweh at the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Although this book does not rely on survey data for its primary analysis, I have frequently drawn on the center's abundant archive of polls to understand the nuances of Palestinian public opinion.

Over the course of writing this book, I received funding from the United States Institute of Peace, the Rackham Graduate School and International Institute at the University of Michigan, the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS), and the Research Foundation at the City University of New York. I could not have completed this book without their support.

This work was vastly improved from the tremendous feedback provided by attendees of the 2015, 2018, and 2022 American Political Science Association (APSA) annual meetings; the 2015 Political Economy Workshop at the University of Michigan; the 2017 Governance and Local Development Institute Annual Conference at the University of Gothenburg; the 2017 State Capacity in Comparative Perspective Conference at Harvard University; the 2019 Comparative Politics Workshops at both the CUNY Graduate Center and at Yale University; and a 2023 presentation at the CUNY James Gallery cosponsored by the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center. I received in-depth feedback on this project at two book workshops. At the 2018 POMEPS Junior Scholars book workshop, Ian Lustick and Pete Moore read a full draft of a much earlier version of this manuscript. Their feedback, and the input from other colleagues at the workshop, was critical in forcing me to address tough questions about what kind of contribution I wanted this project to make. For the 2022 Minority-Serving Institutions virtual book workshop convened by APSA, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Howard University, Ana Arjona, Nadya Hajj, and Paul Staniland read a revised version of the manuscript. Their incisive critiques and suggestions helped push me over the finish line.

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I am grateful to Marc Lynch for not only supporting this project as editor of the Studies in Middle East Politics series but also for his tireless work in cultivating an ecosystem to support junior Middle East–focused political scientists. POMEPS, which Marc founded, has introduced me to countless fellow scholars, enabled me to sustain necessary relationships and friendships within the Middle East politics community, and allowed my work to reach new audiences. Furthermore, many thanks are due to my editor at Columbia University Press, Caelyn Cobb, for her patience and support, and to the rest of the editorial, marketing, design, and production staff for their professionalism and clear communication throughout this process. Two reviewers solicited by the press engaged very closely with my work, contributing immeasurably to improving the framing and clarity of my findings. Hossam Abouzahr provided essential and timely assistance with Arabic transliterations.

My parents, Roy and Gail Greenwald, and my sister, Katy Greenwald, have always been my role models. I could not have gone “to the end of school” without having been inspired by their examples. Matilda Groff has grown up in parallel with this book, and I am so delighted that we share approximately 25 percent of our genes. Thank you, Brandon Groff, for all the music recommendations and ridiculous Reese’s products. I have been nurtured and sustained by the McWilliams, McLaughlins, Zimmerings, Schiffs, Jains, Cyndi Morrison, and Maisie O’Brien. My late dog, Io, was a source of endless joy, comfort, amusement, and wonder. I cannot overstate how important friendship has been during these long years of learning and writing. My friends are my chosen family—some have been in my life since high school, and others I met within the last few years. My friends amaze, inspire, comfort, and entertain me. They give me life. Finally, I feel so lucky to be alive on the planet at the same time as David McWilliam. Dave, thank you, more than anyone, for your patience, your inspiring creativity, your (literal) warmth, and your love. I think I have finally figured this thing out. I think we are finally figuring this thing out. I love you more every day.