

RETHINKING “HOME” ABROAD: RELIGION AND THE REINTERPRETATION OF NATIONAL BOUNDARIES IN THE INDIAN AND JEWISH DIASPORAS IN THE U.S.

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Abstract

In this article, I contend that exploring the divergences between "homeland" and "diasporas" could facilitate the proliferation of loci of analysis and foci of peacebuilding efforts which are yet under-explored both in Peace Studies and specific scholarship on diasporas and conflict. I therefore suggest that imagining, identifying, cultivating, and mobilizing alternative conceptions of a national identity could (1) serve to enrich the scope of diplomacy (especially as it relates to the engagement of religious, cultural, and national communities as highlighted in the Task Force on the role of religion in world affairs), (2) expand the scope of peacebuilding, and (3) connect the study of immigration and multiculturalism to international relations.

Introduction

This article argues that an engagement with diasporas could provide new horizons for peace researchers and practitioners. At the same time that I recognize the inclination to study diaspora nationalisms as furthering belligerence and structural and cultural violence in their respective “homelands,” I focus on alternative diaspora nationalisms and their potential to be operationalized toward tangible policy formation and contestation of seemingly axiomatic perceptions of identity. Hence, I look at the two cases of Jewish Voice for Peace and the Coalition against Genocide (CAG). These alternative Indian and Jewish diaspora groups in the U.S. contest dominant portrayals that equate Judaism with Zionism and India with Hindutva. While constraining the analysis to the Jewish and Indian diasporas in the context of the U.S., with its distinct cultural and political formations, the insights that emerge from this study open up new research possibilities concerning the role of diasporas in “homeland” conflicts. The focus on less audible diaspora nationalisms underscores diasporic spaces as potentially subversive and creative sites for reimagining the “nation” and engaging in processes of conflict transformation and peacebuilding (1). In my use of the twin concepts of conflict transformation and peacebuilding I rely on the definitions of John Paul Lederach and Scott Appleby. These thinkers develop a conceptual framework to think about peacebuilding as *strategic* and comprehensive intersecting processes designed to *transform* “inhumane social patterns, flawed structural conditions, and open violent conflict that weaken the conditions

necessary for a flourishing human community” (Lederach and Appleby, 2010, p. 22) (2). In the contexts of diaspora politics, participation in peacebuilding processes can range from direct involvement in lobbying and public relations to financial practices and resistance to the logic undergirding a perceived homogeneity of communal interests and narratives.

Religion Matters

Mary Kaldor analyzed the wars of the twenty first century as “new” because they are articulated in terms of political goals surrounding questions of internal power struggles for intra-state ethnic homogeneity rather than focused on the foreign policy interests of states. The new wars also mark a break from traditional forms of mobilization, mode of warfare, and their economic infrastructures. Further, new patterns of conflict also involve novel opportunities for *external* support. Rather than a reliance on superpowers’ support, local conflicts are often sustained through diaspora, foreign mercenaries, criminal mafia, and regional powers (Kaldor, 1997). In this context, Kaldor recognizes the “diaspora” as either contributing to the belligerence of intra-state conflict, by assuming a form of “long-distance” reactionary ethnocentricity, or exhibiting an anti-nationalistic *cosmopolitan* stance. While not viewing the “diaspora” as a monolithic space, Kaldor’s analysis is characteristic of a prominent scholarly trend in that it construes the diasporic as either an extension of a homeland nationalist fervor or as a space where such defining boundaries of identities are eroded (3). However, Kaldor’s dichotomizing of the diaspora as either nationalistic or anti-nationalistic overlooks the possibility of renegotiating the meanings of the “nation.” It also overlooks questioning how and why the “nation” endures as a defining point of reference, even if its imagining entails various and contested conceptions of inclusivity and exclusivity. The normative presupposition is that “cosmopolitanism” constitutes the antidote for violent manifestations of ethnoreligious national entitlements. Grounded in an unrevised secularist orientation, this normative stance is also reflective of a negative view of religion as a cause or, at least, a contributing factor in the escalation of the “new wars.” The implication is that somehow overcoming religion will also facilitate a transition toward peaceful cosmopolitanism (4).

The Report of the Task Force on Religion and the Making of U.S. Foreign Policy (convened in 2008 by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs) (5) marks an important departure from this conventional mode of thinking about religion’s role in international relations and diplomacy (6). What people believe in, how they understand their identity, the relevance of local religious leadership to international politics and, in this case, American objectives, and the broad transnational networks of religious communities, among other patterns—mount a substantive challenge to the resilience of conventional framing of the “religion” variable as one that, while carrying a certain ‘Kumbaya’ factor (7), is statistically insignificant and/or irrelevant for ‘real’ international relations, diplomacy, and conflict analysis (8).

The analysis of religion as a significant variable in international relations conjures up theoretical conversations in the study of religion and secularism that challenge the framing of 'religion' as a trans-cultural and trans-historical category and its analysis as either a cognitive choice of individuals and/or as primarily manifesting as a 'faith' in a supernatural being or a transcendent reality. Such framings, discursive analysts charge, are thoroughly individualistic, Christo- and Euro-centric and are deeply entangled with the histories and legacies of the Protestant Reformation, colonialism, Orientalism, and imperialism (9). This particular and pervasive framing of *religion-qua-faith* overlooks the need to analyze how religion (a marker that does not necessarily entail a belief in a transcendent reality or a god) intricately relates to the imagining and reimagining of national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.

Theorists of nationalism and civil religion identify the role of religion in the emergence and cultivation of modern nationalism and national consciousness (10). Their insights are further relevant to analysis of how religion continues to play into the drawing and redrawing of cultural, national, and ethnic boundaries. These conversations, furthermore, are not restricted to or synonymous with geopolitical boundaries. Since conceptions of national identity and entitlements vindicate and authorize violence, processes of peacebuilding and diplomacy cannot ignore demands to contest such entitlements and the myths that constitute them. Such contestations need not and should not prioritize spokespersons from the "homeland" as if their rootedness within state boundaries entitles them to greater authenticity over and against uprooted, displaced, or expatriate or diasporic coreligionists or co-nationals. This is especially the case when state policies are vindicated as acts done in the name of "Islam," "Judaism," "Catholicism," Hinduism, or "Buddhism," to name a few familiar instances.

If one accepts Benedict Anderson's famous articulation of the nation as an "imagined community," the relevance of diasporas to processes of imagining the nation cannot be dismissed. This is despite the fact that Anderson's modernist orientation initially limited the "imagined community" horizontally to coincide with state boundaries. In later works, Anderson develops the category of "long distance nationalism." Here, however, he focuses on expatriates who support belligerent activities in a homeland while retaining the comfort of suburban life in places like Canada, the U.S., and Europe. He provides the example of a middle-aged successful businessman from the Punjab who while residing in Toronto "is also a fanatical supporter of the movement for Khalistan." This support translates into generous monetary donations that go, most certainly, toward militarization. This form of nationalism is rendered "long distance" because it is enacted through E-mail and with no intention to actually live there or subject this man's children to the kind of sacrifices called upon from young Sikh activists at home. Anderson argues that "Canada indeed, by its profound indifference to him and to his fellows, encourages him to Sikhify himself, and to live out a suburban dream-politics of his own. His political participation is directed towards an imagined heimat in which he does not intend to live, where he pays no taxes...in effect, a politics without responsibility or accountability" (Anderson, 1992, p.11). Not unlike other political scientists, Anderson, therefore, focuses on the *negative* aspects of long-distance nationalism, analyzing this phenomenon in terms

of the failure of immigration and cultural assimilation and measuring it by observing patterns of support of belligerent causes “at home” (11).

The question that remains, however, is how to explain the belligerent support of homeland conflicts by thoroughly integrated (and otherwise cosmopolitan) constituencies such as American Jews. This question already illuminates that a simple depiction of “long distance” nationalism as a function of deficiencies in acculturation and assimilation into the host-land is insufficient as an explanatory framework. Anderson’s intuition, however, is critical: the analysis of a so-called “long-distance nationalism” and its potential *positive* influences on the dynamics of conflict is intricately connected with discussions concerning migration, immigration, multiculturalism, and trans-nationalism.

This article attempts to expand the insights of the Task Force inwardly by looking at the relevance of diasporas to the dynamics of conflict and peace, with a special emphasis on how diasporants might re-imagine the meanings of their national, ethnic, and religious belongings to a “homeland” marked by explicit and exclusionary identity claims. The implications for peacebuilding and diplomacy are then grounded in the capacity to mobilize inclusivist and self-reflexive conceptions of identity in a form that will exert significant political and social pressure on policymakers in their “hostlands” and on political leaderships “at home.” How to mobilize and when such counter-“peaceful” voices become politically significant are questions that fall within the purview of social movement theory and community organizing. Instead, exploring two instances of diaspora nationalism articulated in the form of social movements and pressure groups, my focus is on the kind of resources diasporants draw on in reimagining their relationships to a homeland and a national cause. I scrutinize how these processes of reinterpretation are deeply hermeneutical as they demand a rethinking of how markers such as ethnicity, religion, and nationality might relate to one another. The choices faced by the Punjabi businessman profiled by Anderson are not either a fanatic support of Sikh nationalism or a total assimilation into Canadian society (whatever that might mean). This dichotomization is too simplistic and presupposes a homogeneous (and static) interpretation of group identities (including the American one). Instead, identities are complex, internally plural, and elastic.

Some Definitional Groundwork

Diasporas: real and metaphorical

Rogers Brubaker describes the proliferation and expansion in the 1990s and onward of the use of the term diaspora (Brubaker, 2005, p.1-19). This trend, dubbed the “Diaspora’s diaspora”, challenges the paradigmatic hold of the Jewish diaspora (as well as the Greek and Armenian ones) as seen in the work of William Safran, for example (Safran, 1991, p.83-99). New metaphorical interpretations of diaspora confronted Safran’s ‘centered’ model and its necessitating of ‘a teleology of return’ (12). This model comes under scrutiny especially with Arjun Appadurai’s debunking, in his “Disjuncture

and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," of the presumed hierarchical relations between a "home" and "diasporas." This presumption betrays a dichotomous framing of center vs. periphery, a construal that cannot sustain the kind of challenges posed by globalization. The metaphorical approach also called into question the immigrationist, assimilationist, and methodically nationalist presuppositions informing the perception of the immigrant's journey as unidirectional, involving a sharp break with the "homeland" (Brubaker, 2005, p.7-8).

Similarly, Martin Sökefeld stresses, the study of diasporas cannot merely focus on identifying patterns of "preservation" and "perpetuation" of a supposed "original" culture/religion/group identity. "The rhetoric of preservation," accordingly, "obscures the fact that actors constantly re-constitute and re-invent (or refuse to reconstitute) in diverse ways what is imagined as simply continuing" (Sökefeld , 2004, p.151).

Therefore, the potential resourcefulness of the "diasporic" in processes of conflict transformation resides in viewing the interrelation between "diasporas" and "homelands" as multidirectional and dynamically continuous and as constituting a trans-national and multi-local "imagined community" (13).

Identifying the conceptual tension between boundary maintenance and erosion, Brubaker concludes that certain triumphalist cosmopolitan currents within the new industry of diaspora theory may have jumped too hastily to declare "radical breaks and epochal shifts," from a world of nation states to the age of diaspora where, as Clifford heralded, "non-exclusive practices of community, politics and difference" may emerge to the fore (Brubaker, 2005, p.8-9) (14). While the exclusive claims of the nation-states have been eroded, "The 'nation-state,'" Brubaker stresses, "is the primary conceptual 'other' against which diaspora is defined—and often celebrated." This 'other-ing,' however, carries an essentialist risk of presenting the 'nation' as "a timeless, self-actualizing, homogenizing 'logic'" (Brubaker, 2005, p.10). Hence, "The conceptual antithesis between nation-state and diaspora," Brubaker concludes, "obscures more than it reveals, occluding the persisting significance (and great empirical variety) of nation-states" (Brubaker, 2005, p.10).

Therefore, while theories of diasporas have overcome the "metaphysics of the nation-state as a bounded territorial community," they retained the "metaphysics of 'community' and 'identity'" when even de-territorialized diasporas are depicted using essentialist indicators (Brubaker, 2005, p.12). This is also apparent in Anderson's conceptualization of "long-distance nationalism." Subsequently, Brubaker's analysis brings to the fore the relevance of cultural theory in problematizing the supposed "wholeness" of cultural and national identities. Diaspora, he writes, is "*a category of practice*" that, often with a strong normative orientation and motivation for change, "is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties." This helpful definition excludes those who merely hold "symbolic ethnicity" with no active "stance" viz. a "homeland." Thinking in such a way of diaspora as a category of practice and critically integrating a non-essentialist analytic approach to culture and identity also pave the way for a hermeneutical reframing and

reimagining of the boundaries and meanings of cultural, religious, and national identities. This understanding of “diaspora” informs this article.

Hence, “diasporas” could provide potential spaces for conflict transformation that are not necessarily rooted in the actual geopolitical and ethnoreligious confines of a conflict. Nor do they constitute mere “dis-embodied” and de-contextualized extensions of a “nation” whose authenticity is rooted within its territoriality. Diasporic communities could provide transformative loci for peacebuilding because of their ability not only to articulate but also mobilize alternative conceptions of national boundaries, whereby becoming “diasporic” in Brubaker’s understanding of the idiom as constituting a normative “stance” and ‘orientation’ viz. a “homeland.” Such processes may significantly alter the dynamics of conflict at “home,” (even if this is only by deciding to withdraw financial support) thereby revealing diasporas as obvious sites for conflict transformation and peacebuilding efforts on their own right (15).

Therefore, the multifocal analytic lens that I propose here expands the conventional line of research in Peace Studies, which is still beholden to a Westphalian logic. This logic enables an unproblematic conceptual delineation of conflicts within their geopolitical confines. Indeed, some work in peace studies does focus on the influence of transnational religious networks on questions of peacebuilding (16). Further, the research devotes much space for the role of international NGOs, the universal conventions of human rights, international law and international relations more broadly. But, seldom does peace research address how symbolic, cultural, and religious affinities expand beyond the Westphalian framework of nation-states and how this trans-locality may affect the dynamics of conflict, peace, and international relations (17). To be challenged in this way, the study of diasporas needs to be engaged across rigid disciplinary divides.

Diasporas, Conflicts & Peacebuilding: Bridging Disciplines

Indeed, there is a narrow scholarly thread that focuses on potential peacebuilding capacities of diasporas (18). Another current within Diaspora studies has underscored the relevance of social processes of internalizing cultural values and sensibilities of one’s context of dwelling to the potential constructive role of diasporas in disarming ethnocentric and chauvinistic interpretations of nationhood (19). Yet another scholarly current, however, highlights that there is no inevitable process of such internalization of the values of human rights and pluralism (20).

Despite those nascent conversations, the literature is lacking a systematic study of how and why diasporas may provide an especially effective and creative space for conflict transformation—one that will take into consideration the insights of cultural theoretical study of diasporas as occupying spaces of hybridity. Whereas hybridities reside also in the contexts of conflicts “at home,” diasporic spaces may be especially conducive for reframing the meanings of national, religious, and cultural belongings (21).

Such a study, I contend, will need to bridge between peace research and its focus on international conflict and the study of multicultural and identity politics in Europe and North American contexts. The latter usually falls within the purview of political theory, domestic sociology, and migration studies.

Multiculturalism and the ethnicization of religious identities

My discussion below of Indian and Jewish diaspora nationalisms illuminates the complex interrelations between religious, ethnic, cultural, and national modalities of identification and mobilization. The Hindu-nationalist cause is not easily distinguishable from a particular interpretation of Hinduism. Likewise, Jewish champions of a Zionist-Israeli agenda deploy a particular narrative of Jewish history and identity. Recognizing what Max Weber famously called the “elective affinity” between religion, nationalism and ethnicity explains why, for example, cultural events celebrating the Hindu tradition in the American context also entail a “nationalistic” and “ethnic” homogenizing agenda, where Hinduism and Judaism—to continue with these two examples—are represented as essentially “x” or essentially “y.” The conflation of markers of identity is structurally and culturally aided by a deep-seated American tradition that, while encouraging religious plurality, may function to fossilize, essentialize, and domesticate religious groups within an overall framework of multicultural politics (22). Such processes of domestication may explain why scholars like Anderson and Kaldor conclude that diasporas by and large contribute to the escalation and perpetuation of conflicts defined by competing identity claims.

Therefore, the relevance of the ethos and structure of multiculturalism to an analysis of diaspora nationalism brings to the fore the importance of linking literatures on diaspora and conflict, and political theory that focuses on the premises informing multiculturalism, as well as the related study of immigrant communities in multicultural societies. The ramifications of applying this framework of multiculturalism to the articulation of diaspora nationalism are that already-ethnicized interpretations of identity such as Hindutva and Zionism become even more codified and homogenized, making any attempt to voice divergences, as in the case of JVP, difficult, occasionally even “unpatriotic” and/or “self-hating”. However, recognition of the presence of an overwhelming discourse does not necessitate resigning into a pessimistic mode but rather encourages exploration of competing and alternative (albeit sometime inaudible and inchoate) discourses of diaspora nationalisms, with a practical intention to mobilize such alternatives if such mobilization would entail a substantive transformation of conflicts and redress of injustices. In the case of the CAG, one identifies an inclusivist and even “pan-ethnic” (South Asian) interpretation of Indian nationalism, one that counters Hindu-centric attitudes. Likewise, the case of JVP reflects challenges from within (if Jewish diasporas indeed constitute a part of a “Jewish nation”) to a military occupation and human rights violations committed in the name of a supposed Jewish objective.

A contextual analysis that bridges peace studies, political theory and migration studies in an effort to explain diasporas’ involvement with “homeland” conflicts and

agenda needs to be supplemented with substantive engagement with the kind of cultural, religious, and historical resources that may be available for diasporants in the process of reimagining their links to a particular identity formation. This is where conceptual bridging with cultural theory and the study of religion could provide constructive insights into alternative traditions, interpretations of symbols, and notions of political identities (23). Both groups under scrutiny draw on such alternatives in articulating their *raison d'être* and their type of activism. Section III of this article subsequently turns to discuss them with some details. .

Religion-qua-Nationality and Ethnic Lobbies in the U.S

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) provides an example of how diaspora nationalisms, especially in the northern American and European contexts, actively influence the dynamics of conflict through political and cultural influence. Because of the relative wealth and socioeconomic high location of the Jewish community in the U.S., AIPAC has lobbied extensively in the corridors of power in Washington DC, exerting pressure on both Democrats and Republicans. In reflecting on its “key achievements,” AIPAC lists the passing of more than a dozen bills and resolutions condemning and imposing tough sanctions on Iran; obtaining critical security assistance to Israel; passing legislation requiring the Administration to evaluate military sales to Arab states, ensuring ‘Israel’s qualitative military edge over potential adversaries; passing resolutions affirming congressional support for Israel’s right to self-defense against groups like Hamas and Hizbollah; strengthening U.S. –Israel homeland security cooperation, among many other legislative successes (24).

This line of activism intimates a view of Israel as necessitating special protection from the U.S. in its attempt to survive in the midst of constant regional threats to its very existence. The rationale for what is framed as a relation of strategic and cultural partnership is a perception of “the common threats to both nations.” America and Israel reportedly confront a host of challenges, ranging “from terrorism, the spread of radical Islamist ideology and nuclear and missile proliferation to narcotics, counterfeiting, and cyberwarfare.” The source of the “high level of strategic cooperation” is not only that Israel is “a reliable democracy,” but also because it “shares America’s values and world view in a region often dominated by radical forces, dictatorial regimes and extremist non-state actors” (25).

Indeed, despite the plenitude of competing Jewish voices and activism, AIPAC is a powerful player in a broader landscape that is receptive to the view of Israel as a western democracy at the heart of a region that is otherwise depicted using orientalist brushstrokes (26). An undergirding Orientalism is reflected even in President Obama’s reassurance to AIPAC of an enduring American support of Israel. Obama declared: “The bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable. It encompasses our national security interests, our strategic interests, but most importantly, the bond of two democracies who share a common set of values”. These words reinforce a presumption

concerning Israel’s position as an outpost of the “West” in the midst of a neighborhood that betrays ostensibly antithetical “values” (27).

Even in the supposed controversial recognition (in reality, it reflects a long-standing policy) by an American president of the 1967 borders (with “mutually agreed swaps”) as key and a starting point for a lasting negotiated peace, President Obama reassured in May 2011 a concerned crowd at an AIPAC event: “In both word and deed, we have been unwavering in our support of Israeli security” (Stone, 2011). In response to Obama’s underscoring of the 1967 borders as legitimate and necessary (with qualifications), the president of another pro-Israel public affairs group (The Israel Project) is reported as having said: “Jobs and the economy are still top issues but Israel is as much a part of American values and traditions as are hot dogs, apple pie and freedom.” Why is Israel framed here as “a part of American values”?

One Nation, One Jewish Voice?

Clearly, the question of U.S. support of Israel goes beyond geopolitical considerations (or miscalculations). Therefore, substantial shifts in attitudes cannot take place simply by recognizing that an unconditional “love” of Israel is no longer in the best interests of the U.S. But—drawing on Melanie McAllister’s thesis in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (2001)—U.S. support of Israel reflects a deep cultural and religious affinity and presuppositions concerning the ‘western’ and ‘democratic’ character of the Israeli state (28).

In this context, AIPAC upholds an exclusivist interpretation of Israel as a Jewish democratic nation-state, an interpretation that lends itself to a commitment to defend Israeli policies at all costs. Whether relating to the direct occupation of the Palestinians or to a commitment to an automatic granting of citizenship rights to all Jews the world over, Israeli policies are rationalized through the invocation of the security argument. The security argument informs strategies, mechanisms, and infrastructures to contain a physical danger from the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab countries, as well as an existential sense of insecurity grounded in an ethos of looming extinction.

AIPAC functions as a forceful extension of a dominant Zionist narrative that conceives of Jewish history in a teleological manner. Accordingly Israel is the center and fulfillment of a Jewish narrative marked by successive catastrophes, extending from the destruction of the Temples to the Holocaust and the eventual attainment of a “home.”

In response to the question “Why Israel?” the website of AIPAC narrates: “Based on the tenets of Zionism, Jews once again controlled their destiny in a sovereign state on the ancient land of their forefathers. Since her re-establishment, Israel has served as a refuge for Jews the world over, a country built on the principles of freedom and democracy, fulfilling a political and historical imperative.”

Notably, while drawing selectively on theologically laden motifs like “return,” and “the ingathering of the exiles,” this dominant Zionist framing is secular in that it reframes the “messianic” as a fulfillment of “a political and historical imperative” and in that it neutralizes theological underpinnings, construing a Jewish identity in terms of “history,”

“ethnicity,” “culture,” and “nationality.” The meaning of contemporary Jewish identity, as a result, becomes synonymous with the Zionist project in Israel, consequently inviting the confused rendering of any critical stance towards Israel as “anti-Semitic” or, when the critics are Jews, a form of “self-hating” (29). Unsurprisingly, AIPAC’s narration of a Jewish history silences and indeed omits any reference to the Palestinians (beyond their constituting a serious threat to the “fulfilling” of “a political and historical imperative”) (30).

The hegemonic hold of AIPAC has crumbled as a result of the emergence in 2008 of a counter-lobby in the form of J Street. J Street defines itself as “the political home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans.” The organization professes a dual commitment “to advocate for urgent American diplomatic leadership to achieve a two-state solution and a broader regional, comprehensive peace and, second, to ensure a broad debate on Israel and the Middle East in national politics and the American Jewish community” (31). Especially with the second commitment, J Street emphasizes an attempt to move beyond the dominance of AIPAC and its rendering of critique as ultimately anti-Israel if not anti-Semitic. Instead, J Street highlights diversity rather than homogeneity within the Jewish American community and the need for healthy debate over what policies might be in Israel’s best interests.

Providing a home for Americans who are committed to a Jewish Israel yet vehemently oppose the occupation of the 1967 territories, J Street has rapidly gained momentum in Washington DC as well as through launching a national grassroots field program in nearly 40 cities across the U.S. and through establishing a student-led campus movement. This rapid momentum (J Street claims approximately 170,000 supporters) was even noticed by Israeli politicians. In March of 2011, a hawkish Likud legislator (Danny Danon) and a conservative legislator (Otniel Schneller) from the centrist Kadima party convened a hearing in the Knesset, intended to “expose J Street for what they believed it to be—a group of self-doubting American Jews more worried about what their neighbors say than what is good for the state of Israel” (Bronner, 2011). The legislators reportedly criticized J Street for not being truly “Zionist” and for offering “love with strings attached.”

In response to this critique, J Street’s founder Jeremy Ben-Ami defended his organization’s commitment to work toward intra-Jewish dialogue. Ben-Ami argued that “It only weakens Israel and the Jewish people to make differences of opinion into something greater and to accuse those who criticize Israeli policy of being anti-Israel or worse.” This peculiar hearing that debated whether a group proclaiming itself as pro-Israel is truly pro-Israel illuminates the strength of diaspora nationalism and its capacity to challenge national agendas as articulated by Israeli policy makers and reinforced by AIPAC. That the young J Street was the target of a parliamentary debate in Israel exposes an internal diversity that exists despite a dominant ethos of Jewish homogeneity and unitary historical consciousness (32). Ironically, however, J Street does not even denote a paradigm shift because it only problematizes territorial maximalism rather than embedded axiomatic conceptions of the meanings of a Jewish nation-state.

JVP articulates an alternative interpretation of the meanings of Israel viz. Judaism, Jewish history, and the diasporas, challenging the hierarchical construal of the diaspora as a lesser and peripheral location for Jewish flourishing and challenging the ethnocentric national project of Zionism. While considerably less vocal and influential than J Street, JVP’s position is not unusually subversive. It resonates with the tone of Tikkun, the interfaith journal founded by Rabbi Michael Lerner. Tikkun is a Kabbalistic concept entailing a process of healing and transformation of the world, connoting the role of human agency in the unfolding of the process of redemption. Tikkun conveys a Jewish morality that grounds its vision in the prophetic tradition—one that “requires a challenge to all governments, including that of Israel, to live by the highest ethical standards”(33). “The more Israel rejects Jewish morality and the Torah’s injunction to ‘love the stranger’ in its treatment of the Palestinians,” Tikkun suggests, “the more it loses the support of the most ethically sensitive people in the world and of many younger Jews in the diaspora.”

JVP therefore provides an example of such a diasporic voice, expressing a moral outrage concerning the continuous Israeli occupation of the Palestinians. The group confronts the dominant acquiescence with the occupation of Palestinian territories and with the kind of arguments that vindicate it and delegitimize any possibility of critique. One of the campaigns that JVP is thoroughly involved in is the call issued by students around the U.S. and other western centers for investor activism. In April 2010, JVP focused especially on the effort of students at the University of California at Berkeley to overturn the veto of the student council on a motion calling for divestment from companies that profit from the occupation. While this effort to pass SB 118 by the Associated Students of UC Berkeley failed, it generated a new momentum in influencing investor activism and in contesting the premises and ideological stance of the dominant contingent of the Jewish diaspora.

In response to the discrediting campaign launched against the divestment bill by wide spectrum of Jewish groups from the liberal J Street to the right-wing David Project and the Jewish National Fund (organizations that co-signed a letter condemning the divestment bill as “anti-Israel,” “dishonest,” and “misleading”), Sydney Levy, on behalf of JVP and joined by Yaman Salahi from the “Students for Justice in Palestine at Berkeley,” ask “Why are American Jewish groups so intent on defending illegal Israeli settlements and other human rights violations?” “How many more decades of occupation and dispossession,” they ask, “will it take for our nation’s major Jewish organizations to issue a statement calling these injustices what they are, an inhumane and morally indefensible system of occupation?”

This response to the Jewish condemnation of the bill illuminates divergences within the American Jewish community. Instead of an undifferentiated “Jewish voice,” this controversy brings to the fore competing understandings of the relations between “Judaism” and Jewish identity and Israel as well as competing perceptions of the nature of Jewish support of Israel. One prominent Jewish thinker who lent her support to the divestment campaign is Judith Butler, the UC Berkley Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature. Butler underscores the plurality of Jewish views, despite the strong rhetoric that encourages the framing of Jewish history

and Jewish identity as homogeneous. She writes: “there is hardly a Jewish dinner table left in this country—or indeed in Europe and much of Israel—in which there is not enormous disagreement about the status of the occupation, Israeli military aggression and the future of Zionism, binationalism and citizenship in the lands called Israel and Palestine.” “There is no one Jewish voice,” Butler underscores, “and in recent years, there are increasing differences among us, as is evident by the multiplication of Jewish groups that oppose the occupation and which actively criticize and oppose Israeli military policy and aggression.” To counter accusations that opposition to the occupation “offends the Jews,” Butler provides a long list of Israeli and Jewish-American groups such as Jewish Voice for Peace, American Jews for a Just Peace, Jews Against the Occupation, Boycott from Within, New Profile, Anarchists Against the Wall, Women in Black, Who Profits?, Btselem, Zochrot, Black Laundry, Jews for a Free Palestine (Bay Area), No Time to Celebrate. “If someone says that ‘Jews’ have one voice on this matter”, she continues, “you might consider whether there is something wrong with imagining Jews as a single force, with one view, undivided. It is not true” (Butler, 2010).

This last point about the internal plurality of the Jewish world introduces an important critique of the Zionist historiography that universalized and homogenized a Jewish experience, overlooking millennia of Jewish learning and culture in diverse contexts (34). Indeed, “the negation of exile” is one of the building blocks of this historiography (Zertal, 1989). This concept of “the negation of exile” informed a mode of telling Jewish history that glosses over the independent relevance of Jewish communities the world over. Rescuing the prophetic ethical tradition as in JVP’s activism attempts to both reclaim Jewish meanings beyond the Zionist paradigm and to critique Zionist policies and Israel’s supposed acting on behalf of Jewish interests. Next, I identify a similar attempt to reframe how diasporas might intervene in nationalist discourse in the case of the CAG and its confrontation with the dominant ideology of Hindutva or Indian-ness.

The Coalition against Genocide – Context: Hindutva

There are approximately 2.8 million Indians in the U.S. Their demographic data suggest a relative affluence and concentration in white-collar professions (35). This community’s relative wealth also positions it as an increased influence on election campaigns and policy formation (36). Hindu nationalism, or what may be termed a pro-Hindutva lobby, is the most vocal current within a broader spectrum of Indian diaspora activism (37). Before proceeding, I provide a brief context for the discussion.

While the “ism” of Hindu-ism reflects a particular colonial history and the imposition of “religion” taken from specific Abrahamic and monotheistic presuppositions about ‘religion’(37) as a descriptive and normative category that does not compute with the diversity of deities, texts, and practices that came to be designated “Hinduism,” the processes of constructing, imagining, and reproducing Hindu nationalism has necessitated homogenizing a Hindu identity (38). The paradox of Hindu nationalism, therefore, is not that it emerged in reaction and as an act of anti-colonial resistance but

that its emergence necessitated a codification of a Hindu identity that glosses over its definitional internal pluralities and conforms Hinduisms to hegemonic conceptions of the “nation” as monocultural and monoethnic.

Hindutva or Hinduness was first coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1957). A poet and revolutionary, Savarkar engaged in violent resistance against the British in India before rendering the Muslim inhabitants of India as the Hindus’ real enemies. In 1925, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or the National Volunteers’ Association was founded on the basis of the ideology of Hindutva that renders Hindus as the authentic inhabitants of India, meanwhile classifying Christians and especially Muslims as inauthentic and thus inferior. Rajmohan Gandhi explains that “Hindutva literature defines good Indians as those to whom India is both their homeland and their holy land, a criterion that makes India’s Muslims and Christians unpatriotic by definition” (Gandhi, 2004, p.50).

Hindutva as an identity construct undergirded the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in the state of Uttar Pradesh on December 6, 1992. The demolition executed by a mob of Hindu nationalists culminated a campaign against the mosque’s location on the presumed birth site of the Hindu god Rama. The Ram temple movement, which called for the construction of a temple to Lord Ram on the site of the demolished Babri mosque, marked the resurgence of Hindutva in contradistinction to the inclusivist and secularist orientation framed by Nehru and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948). The latter emphasized the Hindu ideals and traditions of pluralism, tolerance, nonviolence, and equality to counter the chauvinism inherent in Hindutva (Gandhi 2004, p.52). Gandhi was, of course, assassinated by Hindutva enthusiasts.

At the forefront of the Ram movement was the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP, World Hindu Council). This movement was founded in 1964 consciously “To establish VHP as the voice of Hindus everywhere and represent Hindu organizations and institutions on matters of Hindu interests” (Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, 2011). The VHP of America (VHPA) was founded in 1970 with a similar motivation: “Promote Unity amongst Hindus through a network of Parishad chapters and like-minded organizations” (Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America, 2011). This denotes a shift toward a homogenized and universalized narration of Hindu identity in a way that resonates with how AIPAC is beholden to a dominant Zionist historiography, one that presupposes “one-ness” of culture and destiny between people in diverse contexts.

Hindutva has informed (while not always dominated) the coalition government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which ruled from 1998 to 2004 (39). Combined with the popularizing of the internet and the coalescing of Hindu expatriates around a codified conception of Hinduism, the strengthening of the BJP during the 1990s provided an impetus for mobilizing Hindu Americans primarily along pro-Hindutva agenda but also, gradually around an alternative inclusivist and secular discourse. The Babri mosque demolition and the Gujarat riots have become two definitional points of reference for both Hindutva and anti-Hindutva organizing and coalition formation (Kurien, 2007, p.766).

Still, Hindutva diaspora activism, as in the case of AIPAC, ranges broadly along a cluster of issues. For example, the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) exerts considerable lobbying energy on informing Congress of geopolitical ramifications for Kashmir of the “Taliban’s gaining control in Pakistan as well as the religious cleansing of the minority Hindu population from India’s state of Jammu and Kashmir (J & K) by Pakistan-sponsored jihadi terrorists” (Hindu American Foundation, 2009). This issue, framed as “human rights and terror implications over Kashmir,” is jointly lobbied with the International Kashmir Federation (IKF), resonating with a broader American discourse about ‘jihadi terrorism,’ with the engrained Orientalism that informs it. The various activities of HAF illustrate a process of codification and homogenization of Hindu identity and interests. This is reflected in HAF’s sponsoring of a field trip to the Minnesota Hindu Mandir for journalists who attended the Religions Newswriters Association’s (RNA) annual conference. The visit involved a panel discussion on “Hinduism in America: Changes and Challenges.” Reportedly, the discussion emphasized “that Hindus must make the effort to self-define and articulate Hindu perspectives, in order to ensure a correct understanding and portrayal of Hindu belief and practice.” This concern with self-definition is also communicated by the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA (HSS) (40). The latter likewise presents itself as a promoter of “Hindu ideals and values” (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, 2011). This active promotion of Hindu ideals entails the imagining and codification of Hinduism as a transnational yet homogeneous community. This trend has influenced the focus of the Hindu Foundation on the representation of Hinduism in American textbooks. Notably, the HAF successfully sued the California State Board of Education over middle school textbooks which it deemed demeaning of Hinduism and especially their portrayals of women’s role in ancient India, the caste system, and the roots of Hinduism (41).

The process of codifying Hinduism and construing it as a unified system of belief also enabled the consolidation of Hindutva as a homogenized national consciousness with a distinct historiography and destiny—one that renders Muslims and Christians as foreign to an authentic India. The multicultural framework and its encouragement of ethnicized and codified interpretations of identity proved conducive for equating India with Hinduism, in a manner that echoes the reduction of Judaism to Zionism.

Further, a probe into an undergirding American orientalism does not only provide an explanatory framework for analyzing the currency of homogenizing narratives such as those inherent in Zionism and Hindutva. Orientalism also explains the patterns of interaction between Hindu and Jewish lobbies in the U.S., with the Hindu lobby modeling its strategies on the example of AIPAC. The influence of AIPAC in this respect can be understood both on the level of organizational strategies but also substantially in terms of a rhetoric that capitalizes on currents of Islamophobia and presents the two cases of India and Israel as confronting a similar enemy: “Muslim terrorists.” Further, this cross-fertilization between the Jewish and Indian lobbies underscores how a multicultural landscape that encourages the ethnicization of religious identity lends itself to more exclusivist conceptions of identity and therefore to reification of identity claims viz. conflict zones defined by such claims. These local patterns of politicking and

participating in the ethos of a multicultural society, when combined with sociopolitical and economic capacity to exert influence on policy designs, should become sites of analysis for peace and conflict research.

The CAG as an alternative discourse of Indian Identity

While the Jewish diaspora in the U.S. is well established, the Hindu diaspora is relatively recent and its engagement in the corridors of power in D.C. as an ethnic-national interest group presents different challenges. In the case of the Jewish diaspora, a deep-seated question revolving around Judaism and the crisis of modernity animates and enables the dominance of a particular narrative and its deployment within the local landscape of identity politics and multicultural society.

To understand why Zionism has gained dominance as a Jewish response to the question of modernity and post-modernity out of a wide spectrum of responses, one needs to explore the legacy of the Holocaust and the near extermination of European Jews. In the 1940s, in the midst of WWII, one could identify a significant narrowing of Jewish internal debate and a significant disqualification of previously pertinent interpretations of the possible relation between political self-determination and Jewish identity. The Holocaust has vindicated Zionist narration of Jewish history and destiny—an ethos that resulted in the conflation of nationality, ethnicity and religion. The hegemonic location of Zionism (and this is not a monolithic movement) is nonetheless challenged, especially by groups like JVP and on the pages of Tikkun as well as other venues and especially within the spaces formed by new generations removed from the Holocaust and who internalized liberal values and sensibilities inconsistent with Israeli policies (42).

The focus of an organization like JVP on the question of the occupation and how it reflects on a contemporary Jewish identity facilitates a process of rethinking the underlying axiomatic tenets of Zionism. Thinkers like Butler aspire to recover alternative ethical Jewish traditions to both critique Israeli policies and rescue Judaism from the dominance of Zionist construals of history and identity (importantly without delegitimizing Jewish Israeli identity).

In distinction, anti-Hindutva Indian diaspora groups focus on contestation over the meaning of Indian nationalism as exclusivist and chauvinistic, aspiring to both broaden the meanings of Indian-ness and to redress the legacy of state-sanctioned inter-communal violence. While both offer alternatives to ethnoreligio-centric conceptions of their respective national identity, the case of an Indian diaspora nationalism I portray below shows a greater focus on discussing the role of religion vis-à-vis Indian nationalism than the focus of the Jewish diasporic activism on how and why certain Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians violate ethical and humanistic Jewish orientations. While questions concerning social justice, and full and meaningful equality to non-Jewish citizens of Israel, are related to the modes of critiques offered on the pages of Tikkun, the alternative Jewish discourse represented in JVP and similar organizations underscores the geopolitical and ethical ramifications of an ethnocentric conception of identity and

expresses an outrage for reducing and subordinating Jewish plurality to a homogenizing and universalizing Zionist narrative.

In the case of Indian diaspora nationalism, the CAG represents one example of an attempt to both resist ethnocentric nationalist discourse and articulate an alternative Indian-ness. The CAG includes an alliance of diverse organizations and individuals, located primarily in the U.S. and Canada. The coalition was formed as a reaction to what the CAG's website deems "the Gujarat genocide" and in order to "demand accountability and justice." (<http://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/about.php>). The CAG emerged to the fore as an important player within the Indian diaspora because of the coalition's focus on protesting the visit of Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, to the U.S. in March 2005. Modi was invited by the Asian American Hotel Owner's Association (AAHOA) as chief guest for the AAHOA Annual Convention and Trade Show at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/ Broward County Convention Center in Florida. He was also scheduled to speak at Madison Square Garden in New York.

Modi is associated with sanctioning and overseeing the violent outburst and targeting of the Muslim community of Gujarat (February-May 2002) (43), following the death of 58 Hindu nationalists who were on a train that caught fire near Godhra station in Gujarat. This invitation galvanised the activism of an alternative and otherwise less audible Indian diasporic discourse (44). The eventual refusal of the State Department to issue a diplomatic visa (under the Immigration and Nationality Act), and the repeal of his tourist/business visa in accords with Section 212 (a)(2)(g) of the Act because of recognition of Modi as the one responsible for the violence against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, is clearly linked to the anti-Modi campaign spearheaded by CAG (Biswas, 2010, p.704) (45).

While Modi's visit was successfully cancelled, the controversy surrounding Modi continued, greatly assisted by the expansion of those conversations into multiple forums on cyberspace (Biswas, 2010, p.704). In 2007, various segments within the Indian diaspora mobilized in support of Modi's reelection campaign. For example, Biswas writes about how the website of the Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBP) underscored in various publications Modi's "economic and security-related achievements." Another New-Jersey-based group launched an internet campaign, emphasizing "Modi's administrative efficiency and 'modern' outlook." Similarly to other blogs and websites, Support Gujarat highlighted Modi's successful track record in "fighting terrorism" (Biswas, 2010, p.705). Recognizing the importance of this support, after his reelection in 2007, Modi connected with his supporters in the U.S. via video link, expressing his gratitude for their loyalty and active support (Biswas, 2010, p.705). When the possibility of another visit was introduced, supported by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, the CAG, however, was able to continue and influence a ban on visits by Modi to the U.S. (ibid, 705) (46).

The CAG's imagining of India upholds a conception of secularism as entailing a separation of religion and state in order to systemically support religious liberties and individual and collective rights (Biswas, 2010, p.707). As mentioned, the CAG is comprised of a coalition of groups and organizations. One central to the CAG's operation

is the South Asian Progressive Action Collective (SAPAC), which is characteristically of “pan-south Asian composition,” comprising of Indian and Pakistani immigrants. The SAPAC, according to Biswas, “viewed the riots as inimical to the intrinsic values of both their country of origin and their adopted country” (Biswas, 2010, p.705). The formation of the CAG, therefore, enabled SAPAC and similar groups to express “their outrage at the events in Gujarat” and how the ideology associated with Modi contradicted their envisioning of an Indian identity (Biswas, 2010, p.705-6). Hence, the controversy surrounding the intended visit of Modi provided a ripe moment for progressive organizations to articulate their alternative views and affect an actual US policy.

Substantively, the inclusivist challenges to the Hindutva agenda draw selectively upon the resources of Indian histories and traditions. For example, the Alliance for a Secular and Democratic South Asia which partakes in the CAG campaign was formed in 1993 in response to the communal violence unleashed throughout South Asia in response to the demolition of the Babri mosque the year prior. This Alliance was founded with the explicit mission to “combat rising religious intolerance in South Asia” through the promotion of democracy and secularism, viewed as “not a choice but a necessity for the diverse and deeply interlinked societies of South Asia” (South Asian Alliance, 2011).

The account of the Modi controversy shows the diaspora as a space enabling the contestation of national identity and where tangible policy can be actualized. Illuminating a non-essentialist conception of identity, the internal pluralities of diasporic communities, and the possibility of mobilizing these divergences could significantly contribute to Peace Studies, making diaspora politics an important aspect of the study of conflict and conflict transformation. This is not a mere theoretical exercise in connecting differentiated disciplinary silos, but an endeavor that could carry potential policy implications, once both theorists and practitioners in the field of Peace Studies recognize that divergent discourses of nationalism articulated in diasporic contexts could provide spaces for attaining political outcomes. Therefore, while I highlight concrete implications of counter diaspora activism, my primary focus is on the kind of resources and counter modes of imagining a national identity that the diasporic contexts with their hybridities and multidimensionality could provide and enable. (47)

Implications:

Diplomacy and Peacebuilding, Re-Imagined

Diasporas, as the focus on the CAG and JVP illuminates, are not homogeneous. Neither are they a mere extension of homeland rhetoric. Nor are they reduced to their most audible spokespersons or interest groups. It is this last point about interest groups and their effectiveness as agents in a lobbying culture that brings me back to the Task Force and its recommendations. The recommendations of the Task Force come down to engaging religious communities and leaders as part and parcel of formulating and implementing American foreign policy. When expanded to include a look inward into the internal diversity of diasporic communities, whether they define themselves along religious, national, cultural, and/or ethnic lines, the Task Force’s recommendations could

open a way forward for creative new spaces for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. This insight has not been theorized and operationalized in the context of Peace Studies. Neither was it extended to a broader conception of diplomacy and the making of foreign policy.

Incorporating these insights into diplomacy would not amount to the already tried method of parachuting alternative leaderships into conflict zones. The question is not only to what degree powerful cultural, religious, and ethnonational lobbies or interest groups influence diplomatic agendas and foreign policy (48). This question, as I have shown, has been studied in the literature. Instead, I ask whether a thicker knowledge and an intentional engagement with domestic communities (an examination that recognizes but moves beyond audible and already mobilized segments of diasporas) could sway the course of violent conflicts abroad and especially the parameters informing American policy makers in formulating positions vis-à-vis various conflict zones from Palestine-Israel and Sri-Lanka to Tibet, to cite only a few examples.

This line of inquiry prompts imaginative engagement with ethnographic realities as well as comprehensive fluency with the resources available for communities to draw upon: symbols, narratives, stories, ethical traditions. In the case of JVP and other likeminded groups, the traditions of Jewish humanism anchor their attempts to reframe the meanings of a Jewish national identity. Similarly, Indian diasporants who oppose a pro-Hindutva articulation of Indian identity may draw upon Gandhian conceptions of national identity as well as the traditions of Indian secularism informed by the legacy of Gandhi and Nehru. Further, ethnographic realities born out of the actual contexts and experiences of diasporas, migrants, offspring of migrants, and communities who are merely metaphorically linked to a “homeland” may provide their own unique and highly contextual resources for contesting and articulating the meanings of their identities. The resources to draw upon are not fixed or contained, or codified in any particular tradition or sacred scriptures. They are always also situational and multiperspectival. In other words, beyond the tradition of the Hebrew prophets and the legacy of Gandhi as symbolic resources to be retrieved for rethinking conceptions of identity and the acts of violence they authorize, Indians and Jews embody various other traditions and experiences that can inform their contestations of exclusivist and homogenizing national rhetoric.

Practitioners involved in the peacebuilding industry, in a variety of sectors from diplomacy, NGOs, to negotiation and mediation need to integrate into their analysis and engagement with the various facets of conflict the diasporas not as mere extensions of “homeland” identity but as constituting diverse spaces for rethinking this identity as well as influencing the dynamics of conflict. The debates in the Knesset, over whether or not J Street lends an authentic support of Israel, illustrate that diaspora activism does not go unnoticed and could influence internal debates as well as external lobbying.

The focus of the scholarship and practice of conflict transformation on reimagining relational patterns that reside at the heart of systemic and institutional expressions of violence needs to be broadened beyond conceptual confines that limit its focus to the geographic boundaries of a conflict. Peace scholars have long focused on the local “community” as the primary site for conflict transformation, presupposing the

local’s as the most “authentic” point of view (here lies the Westphalian bias of Peace Studies). However, the insights from diaspora studies and the challenges of globalism suggest that the contestation of the meanings of the “community” —the articulation of grievances, memories, and identities—is not solely the prerogative of the “local,” with the diasporic as mere extensions of a territorially bounded “national self.” Despite the homogenizing inclinations of national rhetoric, diasporas are uniquely positioned with the possibility of challenging all those who wish to speak and act on behalf of a “Jewish” or “Hindu” or “Tibetan” nation. If the debate has multiple foci, then peacebuilding (including diplomacy) too should move beyond the enduring hold of the Westphalian construct concerning the interpretations of questions of conflict and peace.

Conclusion

To conclude, I suggest the theoretical and practical need for cross-fertilization between the study of diasporas (both in the realm of international relations with its focus on tangible effects and influences and in cultural studies with its focus on diasporas as sites of hybridity, fluidity, and cosmopolitanism) and Peace Studies with its focus on conflict transformation as a process that necessarily challenges perceptions and modes of narrating one’s identity and relational patterns of interaction among groups and individuals. This kind of exercise in bridging can be pregnant with possibilities both for peace practitioners and for policy makers. Hence, I suggest, a careful analysis of the role of diasporas as they relate to questions of conflict and peace needs to involve a dynamic engagement with the literatures on diasporas, the politics of multiculturalism, and peace research’s emphasis on the tools and resources necessary for conflict transformation.

Notes

- (1) Indeed, diasporas’ likelihood to exert such tangible change and influence is closely related to their relative socioeconomic comfort level in their “host-land.” Both the Jewish and Indian diasporas have gained relative sociopolitical and economic affluence (with the Jewish diaspora more established and chronologically veteran) that put them in such position of influence both domestically on U.S. policymakers but also in their respective “homelands.”
- (2) The concepts of strategic peacebuilding as articulated by Lederach and Appleby provide a new articulation of an important conversation in peace research concerning the meanings of peace (negative vs. positive) and the meanings of violence (direct vs. indirect or structural/cultural).
- (3) See also Kaldor, Mary. 1996. “Cosmopolitanism versus Nationalism: the New Divide?” In R. Caplan and J. Fetters, eds., *Europe’s New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.42-58.
- (4) The kind of dichotomization central to Kaldor’s analysis is by no means unusual. In fact, it characterizes much of what has been written on ethnic and religious violence in the post-Cold War era. See for example, Barber, Benjamin, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Ballantine Books, 1995 ;

- (5) The Task Force was co-chaired by R. Scott Appleby, John M. Regan Jr., Director of the Kroc Institute and professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, and Richard Cizik, president of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good, Open Society Fellow, and senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation. Accessed on August 15, 2011 at: http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/Task%20Force%20Reports/2010%20Religion%20Task%20Force_Full%20Report.pdf
- (6) This convention is marked by the enduring hold of the paradigms of secularism that equates modernism with secularism and progress and presupposes the diminishing influence of religion on public and political life. Political theorist Elizabeth Shakman-Hurd exposes how the discourses of secularism have informed theory and practice in international relations. Duffy, Monica, Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Shah in their *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) provide an empirical survey of instances since the 1970s that profoundly challenges the presumptions of the secularism thesis and underscore the need to rethink how to analyze religion as it relates to global politics. See also Fox, Jonathan, 2006, *Bringing Religion into International Relations*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. Another tradition in international relations does take religion seriously and render it as the single most significant cause of violence and conflict. For a prominent example of such a monocausal and reductionist approach, refer to Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).
- (7) Examples of a growing subgenre of "religion and peacebuilding" include works such as Johnston, Douglas & Cynthia Sampson, eds. *Religion: The Missing Dimension of State Craft* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; Johnston, Douglas *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003 and Appleby, Scott *The Ambivalence of the Sacred* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.
- (8) Examples of reductionist analyses that render 'religion' as epiphenomenal can be found in the works of Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* vol. 97, no.1 (February 2003), pp. 75-90; Collier, Paul "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001, pp.143-62; Uvin, Peter "Global Dreams and Local Anger" in *Rethinking Global Political Economy* New York: Routledge, 2003.
- (9) For such discursive critiques, see Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* Stanford. Stanford University Press.; Cavanaugh, William. 2009. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. New York: Oxford University Press.; Connolly, William. 1999. *Why I am not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press ; Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. 2008. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (10) Marx, Anthony. 2003. *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.; Hibbard, Scott. 2010. *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United State*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.; Hastings, Adrian. 1997. *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.; Mitchell, Claire. 2006. *Religion, Identity, and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief*. Burlington, England: Ashgate Publishing.
- (11) For the role of diasporas in global politics, see for example, Angoustures, Aline and Valérie Pascal. 1996. "Diasporas et financement des conflits." In François Jean and Jean-

- Christophe Rufin, eds., *Économie des guerres civiles*. Paris: Hachette, pp. 495-542.; Biswas, Bidisha. 2004. "Nationalism by Proxy: A Comparison of Social Movements Among Diaspora Sikhs and Hindus," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2004, pp.269-95.; Biswas, Shampa. 2005. "Globalization and the Nation Beyond: the Indian-American diaspora and the rethinking of territory, citizenship and democracy." *New Political Science*, Vol. 27, No.1, pp.43-67.
- (12) See Clifford, James. 1997. "Diasporas." In J. Clifford, Cambridge ed. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press' pp.244-77.; Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.; Bhabha, Homi, K. 1990. *Nation and Narration*. London and New York: Routledge.; Bhabha, Homi, K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- (13) For an analysis of transnational solidarity as an ambiguous category, see Omer, Atalia. 2009. "It's Nothing Personal: The Globalization of Justice. The Transferability of Protest, and the Case of the Palestine Solidarity Movement." *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 497-518.
- (14) For a selection of interdisciplinary merging of migration studies with transnationalism, see Abelman and Lie 1995; Basch, Linda, Nina Glick Schiller, and Christina Szanton Blanc. 1994. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and De-Territorialized Nation-States*. Langhorne, Pennsylvania: Gordon and Breach. For example of a focus on boundary maintenance, see Sheffer, Gabriel.2003. *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (15) Recognizing that diasporas do not reside in a cultural vacuum and that they cannot be analyzed simply as mere extensions of a "homeland" underscores the importance of analyzing how diasporic contexts may influence perceptions of one's collective identity and how such perceptions may vary inter-generationally as well as along the axes of gender and class. See, for example, Al-Ali, Nadje. 2007. "Gender, Diaporas and Post Cold war Conflict." In Smith, Hazel and Stares, Paul, eds., *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace Wreckers?* New York: United Nations University Press, pp. 39-62.
- (16) See, for example, Banchoff, Thomas ed. 2009. *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.; Appleby, Scott "Building Sustainable Peace: The Roles of Local and Transnational Religious Actors"; Boesenecker, Aaron and Leslie Vinjamuri. 2008. "Religious Actors and Transitional Justice." In Tom Banchoff ed. *The New Religious Pluralism*. Massachusetts: Oxford University Press, pp. 155-194; Marshall, Katherine. 2008. "Religion and Global Development: Intersecting Paths." In Thomas Banchoff ed. *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- (17) One thread of scholarship in Peace Studies (see Jackie Smith for example), however, looks at transnational social movements and their recognition of global interconnectedness as this is related to local questions of systemic injustice. Here, the Westphalian paradigm is indeed challenged. What I propose here attempts to take the authentic perceptions of boundaries seriously in the analysis. This undertaking requires looking at the content and substance of identities.
- (18) See, for examples, Smith, Hazel and Paul Stares, eds. 2007. *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace-Makers or Peace-Wreckers?* Toronto: United Nations University Press.
- (19) (Shain 1999; Haklai 2008)
- (20) (Brinkerhoff 2008; Lal 1999)

- (21) For analyses of the potential transformative resources of subaltern groups see Omer, Atalia, *When Peace is Not Enough: How the Israeli Peace Camp thinks about Religion, Nationalism and Justice*, forthcoming from Chicago University Press.
- (22) For an analysis of how American multiculturalism has contributed to the ethnicization of Hinduism, see Kurien, Prema. 2007. "Who Speaks for Indian Americans? Religion, Ethnicity, and Political Formation." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, September, pp.764.
- (23) For an overview of how the academic study of religion could provide a unique scholarly angle on the study of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding, see Omer, Atalia. 2011 "Can a Critic be a Caretaker too? Religion, Conflict, and Conflict Transformation." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 79, No. 2, June.
- (24) See "AIPAC Achievements" <http://www.aipac.org/about_AIPAC/Learn_About_AIPAC/26832.asp?view=print> accessed August 15, 2011.
- (25) See AIPAC website "America's Partner: Israel," <<http://www.aipac.org/36372.asp?view=print>> accessed August 15, 2011.
- (26) Notably, the U.S. has a strong record of supporting authoritarian regimes in the Middle East (a record it began to face with the popular revolutions of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt, spreading to other locations in the Middle East).
- (27) Upholding the strategic value of Israel-U.S. cooperation recently began to crumble with Mearsheimer, John and Stephen Walt. 2007. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Critiques of their argument abound. See for instance Dershowitz, Alan. 2006. "Debunking the Newest – and Oldest – Jewish Conspiracy: A Reply to the Mearsheimer-Walt 'Working Paper'", www.comw.org/warreport/fulltext/0604dershowitz.pdf, accessed August 15, 2011. Suffice to mention that such critiques focused on basic flaws in the research, supposed misrepresentation of facts and quotes and on retrieving dark memories of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories—among other concerns.
- (28) It is not a dismissible nuisance that the Left Behind series with its end-time theology has sold in the millions.
- (29) See Judith Butler on Lawrence Summers's equation of critique of Israel with anti-Semitism in Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London: Verso, pp.101-127.
- (30) For an account that outlines a need to develop a multiperspectival approach to justice—one that does not allow the "justness" of fulfilling one's inspiration for self-determination to trump and to vindicate the suppression of another's—see Omer, Atalia. 2010. "The Hermeneutics of Citizenship as a Peacebuilding Process: A Multiperspectival Approach to Justice," *Journal of Political Theology* Vol. 11 No.5 October pp.650-673.
- (31) JStreetPAC, About, J Street, <http://jstreet.org/about/> accessed August 15, 2011.
- (32) Ethan Bronner who covered the story for the New York Times explains that the debate concerning the Zionist commitment of J Street took place in a parliamentary season that exhibits "a turn rightward." Prior to the hearing, the Knesset passed "the Naqba bill," which enables the Finance Ministry to remove funds from municipalities or groups who commemorate Independence Day as a day of mourning or object to the character of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.
- (33) See Tikkun, "Israel/Palestine," <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/israelpalestine> accessed August 15, 2011. See also, Michael Lerner: "A Jewish Renewal Understanding of the State of Israel," <http://www.tikkun.org/nextgen/healing-israel-palestine>, accessed August 15, 2011.

- (34) See, for instance, Shenhav, Yehouda. 2006. *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- (35) See http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table accessed August 15, 2011.
- (36) See, for examples of work on this specific issue, Biswas, Bidisha. 2010. "Negotiating the Nation: Diaspora Contestations in the USA about Hindu Nationalism in India." *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 16, No.4, pp.697-714.; Biswas, Shampa. 2005. "Globalization and the Nation Beyond: the Indian-American diaspora and the rethinking of territory, citizenship and democracy." *New Political Science*, Vol. 27, No.1, pp.43-67.; Kurien, Prema. 2007. "Who Speaks for Indian Americans? Religion, Ethnicity, and Political Formation." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 3, September, pp.764.
- (37) See also Biswas, Bidisha. 2004. "Nationalism by Proxy: A Comparison of Social Movements Among Diaspora Sikhs and Hindus," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2004, pp.269-95.; Van der Veer, Peter. 2007. "Transnational Religion: Hindu and Muslim Movements." *Global Networks*, Vol. 2, No.2, pp. 95-109.
- (38) For interesting works on the relevance of colonialism to scholarship on religion and the classification of people and practices under the category "religion," see Lopez, Donald. 1999. *Prisoners of Shangri La*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.; Cavanaugh, William. 2009. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- (39) Since 2004, the BJP constitutes the largest constituent of the opposition in the Indian parliament, the National Democratic Alliance.
- (40) HSS was established in 1989 and today has over 140 weekly meeting centers across the U.S.
- (41) See Manzo, Kathleen Kennedy. 2006. "Hindu Foundation Sues Calif. Over Middle School Textbooks." *Education Week*, Vol. 25, No.30, April, p.6. As reported by Kurien, the question of the representation of India and Hinduism in U.S. textbooks has been an ongoing concern and focus of Indian American parents. Mobilization on this issue began in 2004 surrounding the public review of a new set of world history textbooks in the school district in Fairfax, Virginia.
- (42) For explorations of the changing "place" of Israel viz. the Jewish diasporas, see Aviv, Caryn and David Shneer. 2005. *The New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*. New York: New York University.; Ben-Moshe, Danny and Zohar Segev eds. 2005. *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity*. New York: New York University Press.
- (43) For further information on the inter-communal violence in Gujarat, see <http://gujaratgenocide.org/http://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/reports/2005/cag.02mar2005.modi.pdf> accessed August 15, 2011.
- (44) Biswas helpfully focuses on the opposition of the CAG to Modi and, thus, to ethnocentric interpretations of Indian nationalism.
- (45) Also see Chatterji, A. 2005. "How we made US deny Visa to Modi's in Counter Currents. Available at: <http://www.countercurrents.org/guj-angana220305.htm>, accessed August 15, 2011.
- (46) Modi's interaction with the Indian diaspora reveals a link between neo-liberal restructuring of the nation-state system, on a global scale, and the concentrated efforts of leaders and governments to "reclaim" their diasporas through various accommodations (see Varadarajan, Latha. 2010. *The Domestic Abroad: Diasporas in International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press).

- (47) An example of the transformative potentiality of migrant communities yet not one that celebrates boundary erasure as in cosmopolitan triumphalism can be found in the ethnographic accounts of Das Gupta, Monisha. 2006. *Unruly Immigrants: Rights, Activism, and Transnational South Asian Politics in the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press. p.9
- (48) Indeed, the influence of powerful ethnic, national and religious lobbies on the formation of American foreign policies is not foreign to the literature in political science. However, this tends to focus on established diasporic communities such as Jews, Armenians and Irish.

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