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Ido Zelkovitz, *Students and Resistance in Palestine: Books, Guns and Politics*, Routledge, 2014, 224 pp., \$145.00 US (hbk), ISBN 9781138802971.

The classic Orientalist framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one in which Palestinians are out of control and unable to rule themselves. Mainstream portrayals of Palestinian youth are of unwieldy, angry people who are easily roused to violence. Images often show young men, faces covered, throwing stones and rolling fire-lit tires. In the knowledge equals power paradigm such representations can justify the continued Israeli occupation.

Ido Zelkovitz's *Students and Resistance in Palestine: Books, Guns and Politics* offers a new perspective on the conflict by examining the history of Palestinian university students. One of the book's main achievements is to represent Palestinian youth as rational, nuanced, and conscientious leaders in the Palestinian struggle for statehood. Through a detailed political history of twentieth century Palestinian student movements, the book makes the case that youth in the West Bank, Gaza, and diaspora played and continue to play a significant role in shaping Palestinian national identity and the call for the establishment of a sovereign state. Zelkovitz argues that the Palestinian student movement is a microcosm of larger Palestinian politics. Zelkovitz draws his evidence from the Israeli archives as well as various Palestinian student magazines, political party documents, media publications, and memoirs.

The book is organized chronologically to follow the synergistic evolution of Palestinian student culture and Palestinian national identity. Chapter 1 argues that the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 was a catalyst for young Palestinian activism, giving formation to future leaders such as Yasir Arafat and bringing into existence national days and symbols of remembrance. In the 1950s, refugees formed the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) at the University of Cairo, which served as the only political party representing the Palestinian issue until the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) entered center stage in the mid 1960s. The 1960s' power struggle between GUPS, the PLO, and the Egyptian and Jordanian governments is covered in the second and third chapters. Chapter 4 examines the impact of the Lebanese Civil War on the GUPS, as well as the rise of an Islamic bloc within GUPS at the University of Kuwait. In a few brief pages, Chapter 5 outlines the shift of GUPS headquarters to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Chapters 6 through 8 take a step back from detailing the GUPS leadership to exploring the founding and functioning of the Palestinian system of higher education. The contemporary struggle between Fatah and Hamas student groups constitutes Chapter 9.

The aforementioned mainstream portrayal of Palestinians as being incapable of self-rule depends largely on representations of internal divisions. If Palestinians cannot speak in a unified or representative voice, then blame for the deadlock in negotiations can be shifted away from Israel to Palestine. Interrupting and ultimately demythologizing this narrative, *Students and Resistance in Palestine* presents numerous examples throughout the past decades of Palestinian students taking calculated steps towards a united leadership. For example, in the climate of the pan-Arab nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s, GUPS encouraged Arab leaders to call for the establishment of a Palestinian Entity as a means to unify Arabs. Furthermore, with the rise of competing student associations, GUPS in Egypt formed ties with European offices of Fatah members. Palestinian student leaders were constantly trying to forge new political alliances; for example, the GUPS built powerful connections with Afro-Asia and Latin American student unions working on the international anti-imperialism movement. It is equally important to note that Palestinian youth were mindful and strategic in their use of symbols, such as Land Day, to unite people around the common cause of social and political justice for Palestinians. Zerkovitz makes clear that Palestinian students have and continue to work together toward these peaceful ends, but their efforts, he shows, have often been undermined by Israeli policies. For example, he explores at great length the implications of Israeli military directive no. 854, issued in 1980, that facilitated Israel's intervention in all levels of Palestinian university life.

*Students and Resistance in Palestine* gives context to Palestinians' use of violence against Israel. Instead of focusing on Islam as the driving force behind the violence, Zerkovitz makes clear that Palestinian armed struggle is driven by a desire for self-determination. Zerkovitz meticulously examines reports from student group conferences to show that armed struggle was contentiously debated among the Palestinian student leadership. Again, contrary to the reductive and deterministic myth that insists otherwise, violence is not an innate part of Palestinian character, but a reaction to the failure of diplomatic missions and the pressure of daily humiliations from the occupation. Zerkovitz also provides evidence that many Palestinian youth have been focused less on guns and more on social issues, such as advocating for fee waivers to help needy Palestinians attend university.

Zerkovitz does not explicitly state that his goal in writing the book is to counter Orientalist depictions of Palestine and Palestinians. In fact, the reader must locate for him/herself the larger context in which to place the book as I have attempted to do above. Consequently, *Students and Resistance in Palestine* reads like a dissertation, missing opportunities to engage with the growing body of literature on diverse forms of Palestinian resistance and making connections with the wider implications of this research.<sup>1</sup> While the author diligently summarizes large quantities of student group proceedings, the reader is left wondering why the author does not engage much with theory. Despite these shortcomings, in light of the continued influence Palestinian student politics will have on the larger political climate of Palestine,<sup>2</sup> Zerkovitz's book remains of high value.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance: Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Nasser Abufarha, *The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Ali Abunimah, *The Battle for Justice in Palestine* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Alex Shams, "Amid repression, Palestine student politics revive democratic hopes," *Ma'an News Agency*, June 2, 2015: <<http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=765731>> (accessed August 3, 2015).

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