

Palestine Studies in Western Academia: Shifting a Paradigm?

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Abstract

The West's support for Israel constitutes a central controversy in the Middle Eastern Studies; knowledge production about the question of Israel/Palestine in Western academia, where a pro-Israeli is the dominant one, is one significant extension of that controversy. This article starts with considering 'fresh developments in the field', to examine the real dimensions, and the capacity to introduce a fundamental transformation in the field of the Palestine studies in the West. Formulated within Kuhn's theory of 'paradigm' and the conditions he proposes for a 'paradigm shift', this study analyses the way the 'counter attack', by those supporting the pro-Israeli paradigm, behaves towards the new challenge posed by a competing (alternative) paradigm. According to the main argument of this study, what those supporting the pro-Israeli paradigm do/say, when dealing with the alternative knowledge, might suggest that a paradigm shift, or a similar occurrence, is taking place in Western universities.

Keywords: Palestine Studies, Middle East Studies, Paradigm Shift, Palestine, Israel

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Introduction

The opening of a new centre for 'Palestine Studies' in SOAS⁽¹⁾, University of London, on March 1, 2012, shortly after the inauguration of the first Western centre for the Palestine Studies in University of Exeter⁽²⁾ in 2009, and Columbia University⁽³⁾ in 2010, might be a sign of a significant development in the 'Palestine Studies' in Western academia over the past decade, almost a century after the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestine conflict. There is, also, evidence on the other side of this conflict, the Israeli/pro-Israeli one, which supports the view that something novel has been happening in this area of Middle Eastern study in recent years: pro-Israeli 'Campus Watch', with a primary mission to 'watch' Middle Eastern Studies in Western universities, was established in 2002. Several other bodies with a similar mission, such as 'Scholars for Peace in the Middle East' (SPME) and 'Engage', have appeared in the same period. Furthermore, a book published in 2001 by a leading pro-Israeli think tank (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy) was dedicated to explaining what 'went wrong' in Middle Eastern Studies in American Universities, labelling them 'Ivory Towers on Sand,' (Kramer 2001). The importance of these developments can be seen in the reaction of scholars sympathetic to the concerns expressed by the pro-Israeli camp. For instance, in a recent interview (April 2012) Bernard Lewis, the well-known expert in Middle Eastern Studies, referred to the developments, 'Middle Eastern Studies in this country (US) is dominated by the Saidians ⁽⁴⁾ ... The situation is very bad. Saidianism has become an orthodoxy that is enforced with a rigor

unknown in the Western world since the Middle Ages' (Goldstein 2012).

All these, along with further evidences provided by this article, might suggest that a 'paradigmatic shift' in the 'Palestine Studies' has taken place in the Western academia. The aim of this paper is to examine this whether it is a paradigm shift and if so, in what way this can be considered as a paradigm shift. For the purpose of this argument, first explain the Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm shift will be explained. Then the main competing paradigms in the 'Palestine Studies', the pro-Israeli and its alternative, are identified. The central concern of this article, however, is with what I term as 'the pro-Israelis'_production to counter the challenge posed by the new 'alternative paradigm'. The counter attack, that entails the main body of this article, has the capacity, I argue, to demonstrate the nature of the recent developments in this contentious area of the Middle Eastern Studies.

The term 'paradigm shift' is employed here after the model provided by Thomas Kuhn in his influential text 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' (1962). Kuhn argues that a body of knowledge develops on the basis of a sequence of discrete stages of thought. He calls these stages 'normal' and 'revolutionary'. According to him, when a theory can effectively answer the existing questions in a given area of study and address its problems, it assumes the status of being an example of broadly accepted 'conventional wisdom' or a 'paradigm' (Marshall and Scott 2012). A paradigm, according to Kuhn, plays a decisive role in constructing any item of knowledge; It creates, in general, the basic assumptions of a discipline, which ensures that the latter operates in a more or less unquestioned framework (Gregory 2012).

Kuhn argues that this situation remains stable as long as the paradigm in question can maintain its dominant position in addressing the principal problems in its area of enquiry; the science produced in such a period is called 'normal science'. When irresolvable problems

begin to arise within the paradigm and the number of ‘anomalies’ increases, a process of ‘revolutionary science’ begins to operate, which challenges the existing paradigm, and generates a period of conflict between the competing forces, which continues until a new paradigm emerges to threaten the existing paradigm (or is itself defeated). This occurs only when a fresh idea arrives that has the potentiality to answer the new questions and address the problems they pose. Such a development is what Kuhn defines as a ‘paradigm shift’ (Gregory 2012).

I. Main Paradigms in the ‘Palestine Studies’

Two main paradigms are acknowledged here, which constitute the central competition in the ‘Palestine Studies’ in Western academia: the dominant one, in this article is termed the ‘pro-Israeli paradigm’ and its main rival, labelled here the ‘alternative paradigm’. The knowledge produced within these paradigms is called accordingly ‘pro-Israeli’ or ‘alternative’ knowledge. If we wish to review some of the areas of knowledge where the dominance of the pro-Israeli paradigm can be seen most clearly, two main approaches can be established: the ‘text based’ and the ‘context based’:

1. Textual Approach: A direct route through which the dominance of the pro-Israeli paradigm can be demonstrated involves the analysis of those texts which can be seen as constituting the major written component of ‘Western knowledge’ in the area of the ‘Palestine Studies’; related textbooks, journal articles and encyclopaedia articles are considered as the main ones (Myers 1991). There are several important studies about the way Western textbooks treat the Israeli/Palestinian question, most of which make reference to American textbooks. A considerable number of the texts confirm the pro-Israeli bias which governs these publications (Perry 1975; Griswold 1975; Nabti 1981; Jacobs 1981; Barlow 1994; Morgan 2002; Brockway 2007; Morgan 2008; Walls 2010; Smith 2011). These researches support the idea that the pro-Israeli paradigm plays a

dominant role in production of Western texts about the Middle Eastern Studies.

2. The Contextual Approach: While textual approach can reveal the paradigm through textual analysis, the broader 'context' within which the knowledge is produced, can be revealing as well. From this standpoint, the produced knowledge can be seen as social construction. Ideas and values that govern a given society, in this sense, affect the produced knowledge and bias in that society accordingly. Thus if the relationship between the West and Israel is taken into consideration context within which Western knowledge regarding Israel and Palestine is 'constructed' gains a special significance. In fact, the Western powers were the main foreign forces that helped and supported the establishment of Israel in the Middle East. The Balfour Declaration, delivered by the British government to support the realization of the Zionist plan in Palestine is a classic example in this respect. There are numerous sources which shed more light on different aspects of Western's support in establishing and consolidating a Jewish state in Israel (see for instance Pappé 1988; Mulhall 1995; Mendes 2009; Lewan 1975; Bercuson 1985; Cronin 2011; Williams 2007; Organski 1991; Stephens 2006). Furthermore, and from a historical perspective, Western support for Israel has not been limited to its establishment; it continued after that, and still works as a major factor in international relations, generally in the Middle East generally particularly in the Israel-Palestine conflict. An analysis of the pattern of Western positions towards Israel in the United Nations General Assembly or the UN Security Council is quite revealing.

Western countries are considered as the main supporters of Israel in the international arena. The few non - Western countries which **often** vote in favour of Israel in the UN or other international forums are small Pacific or Caribbean states, whose position on the question is heavily influenced by the Western powers, particularly the US. There is also a body of evidence suggested by some academic

investigations, including that of ‘The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy’ that supports the idea that pro -Israeli lobbies are very powerful not only in the US but also in other Western countries, including the UK (Mearsheimer and Walt 2008; Thompson 2011). Edward Said’s theory of ‘Orientalism’ is also of significance in explaining the context of knowledge production about the Middle East, including Palestine, in Western societies (Said 1979).

The mentioned factors are also relevant to the theory of ‘power and knowledge;’ it argues that the process of knowledge production is influenced by power interests. Based on this theory, powerful parties influence knowledge production to ensure that the construction knowledge serves their interests. Hence, identification of the main sources of power and their area of operation can reveal significant information about the main areas of bias in knowledge. What has been suggested above about the history of Western-Israeli relationship in general, and the influential role of pro-Israeli lobbies in Western countries, in particular, can shed light on sources of power in the West, and what they do when engaged in producing knowledge about the Israel/Palestine question. Agencies that will be introduced later in this article and operate to oppose ‘the paradigm shift’, can further clarify the dominant position of the pro-Israeli paradigm in the West.

Fresh signs are appearing in the Western academia that support the view that pro - Israeli paradigm, is experiencing a different condition against its dominant background. The emergence of the ‘Palestine Studies’ as a ‘title’ for newly-established academic centres in the West shows the decline of the dominance of pro-Israeli paradigm. This is a sign that the time when the question is studied only under ‘Israel Studies’, ‘Jewish Studies’ or ‘Middle East/Near East Studies’, the titles which the dominant paradigm promotes, has passed. This position against the ‘Palestine Studies’ originates in a long lasting strategy of the dominant paradigm. On one hand it rejects and obscures whatever is Palestinian, on the other it promotes and

privileges the alternative Zionist narrative, which concentrates almost exclusively on Israel. The profound impact of this approach can be seen in pro-Israeli terminology; 'the Israel/Palestine question' or 'the Israel-Palestine conflict' are preferred terms nowadays when dominant paradigm preferences such as 'the Arab-Israeli conflict' lost ground in Western academia. This intellectual move to overlook anything that is 'Palestinian', comes, preferably, from an understanding that Palestine, as a term for a territorial concept, conflicts with 'Israel' when used in the same sense.

Less emphasis on 'Palestine', if not none, characterizes a central character of the pro-Israeli paradigm. Another key characteristic is regarding the Israel/Palestine question through an Israeli perspective, at the expense of a Palestinian one. Denial of 'Palestine', at different levels, plays a remarkable role in pro-Israeli knowledge. The history of the conflict, for instance, is seen through the Jewish experience. As a result, two key moments in Jewish history, the diaspora and the holocaust, are taken as the essential context of the Israel/Palestine question. The history of the conflict is not seen as starting from Palestine at the Palestinian period, that is, the actual place and time for what really happened. It skips, instead, much further back in history to 2000 years earlier, and travels geographically 2000 kilometres away from Palestine, to construct the context of the conflict. As a result, the very fact that the conflict took place in Palestine, when populated by Palestinians, is not taken as a principal perspective from which to understand the conflict. In the pro-Israeli paradigm Zionist accounts of history are taken for granted: the expulsion of the Jewish people from Palestine, a narrative that is founded on religious texts is one example. This can be seen, also, in assuming that the European Jews of different nationalities are the same Jews, who were exiled, allegedly, from the land 2000 years ago. The expulsion of the Palestinians, in contrast, which happened only 67 years ago is treated as a complicated event, whose details are obscure, one that does not offer enough evidence/detail to allow

generalization, or to establish a clear recognition of what happened to the Palestinians. There is great emphasis, on the pro-Israeli history of the conflict, on the suffering of the Jewish people, wherever it happened even in places thousands of kilometres distant from Palestine that were perpetrated by people whom Palestinians have not had a chance even to know. Palestine and how its whole population, the Palestinians, suffered from what happened because of the Zionist claim on what they themselves actually owned is treated differently. The pro-Israeli paradigm occupied a dominant position soon after the establishment of Israel but experienced various levels of dominance. One main reason for this variance was that the Israeli and Western scholars, challenged the dominant paradigm from inside which led to some revisions. The main figures in this trend, like Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim were different from those who belonged to the alternative paradigm, mainly at the level of challenge they posed. These scholars hardly posed a major challenge to the fundamental principles of the pro-Israeli paradigm, and to the status quo. They showed sympathy with Palestinians and their story but they did not advance to the point where they could view Palestine free from Zionist ideology.

In contrast, those who subscribed to the alternative knowledge have taken the necessary steps to free themselves from the Zionist discourse, and the mega frame that views the conflict one-sidedly. As a result, their treatment of Palestine is substantively different. A number of academic studies have been published that undermine, arguably, the pro-Israeli narration of certain events, by providing significant alternative accounts. A number of mainly Palestinian, Israeli and American scholars, including Edward Said, Rashid Khalidi, Noam Chomsky, Ilan Pappé, Nur Masalha, Shlomo Sand and Norman Finkelstein have established a competing literature which exemplifies an 'alternative paradigm' on the Israel-Palestine 'question'. This is beginning to have an impact on 'the conventional wisdom' held by many in Western academia (this will be discussed later in the article). They, at the same time, belong to different classifications based

on different adopted approaches; some of the scholars see the question, predominantly, from Palestinians' perspective; they tend to use/rely on Palestinian narrative, and not the Israelis' sources and evidence. A number of Palestinian scholars including Edward Said and Rashid Khalidi can be classified in this category. A remarkable class originates in a left of centre, post-colonial perspective that chooses to promote the narrative and the voice of the powerless where the powerful have hitherto had enough influence to distort and corrupt the relevant knowledge; Noam Chomsky, Ilan Pappé and Shlomo Sand can be placed in this class. There are others who stress more on 'truth' as the ultimate/only value of history. They discredit the dominant paradigm for being inadequate to represent what really happened in the area, or were unable to present the truth about the question. Norman Finkelstein (yet from the left) and Israel Shahak can be classified in this category.

The classification offered here is too brief to describe, in detail, the existing classes, and their complexities and mixed treatment. All these different classes have, at the same time, one character in common; they pose a serious challenge to the pro-Israeli paradigm, and advocate a fundamental transformation in the current understanding of the conflict.

II. The 'Counter Attack'

The challenge posed by the 'alternative knowledge' is now being confronted by a pro-Israeli counter attack; the way this counter offensive deals with the alternative knowledge has the capacity to reveal significant points about the challenge the latter poses and also about where this confrontation is going. The paper argues that this will possibly lead to a 'paradigm shift'. For this argument, it should be presumed that the counter attack is, mainly, a rational reaction and behaviour based on a realistic evaluation of the alternative paradigm, and its significance and the power.

The paper offers an analysis of the produced references mainly

in the United States as well as some references from other Western countries including the UK to detect how the pro-Israelis treat with the alternative knowledge. The pro-Israeli forces, in the US use different levers, including the mass media, movies, lobbying, and financial resources and etc., to advance their policy to support Israel. As it is a very broad and extensive discussion this article focuses only on those initiatives that take place, mainly in the academic sphere. The key areas of this investigation include pro-Israeli 'institutions' established to counter the alternative knowledge, and pro-Israeli 'publications' produced for the same purpose.

New Pro-Israeli 'Institutions': new institutes are established whose prime mission is monitoring universities and lecturers to detect what is called 'anti-Israeli' scholarship. What makes them relevant to the discussion of the paper on 'a possible shift in paradigm' is, primarily, their rapid emergence in recent years. Following are a number of most important institutions which promote pro-Israeli paradigm in the US academia: 'Campus Watch, 2002; Israel Academia Monitor, 2004; IsraCampus, 2008; Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, 2002; Israel Campus Roundtable, 2002; The Academic Friends of Israel, 2002; Engage, 2005; Stand With Us, 2001; Israel on Campus Coalition, 2002; The David Project, 2002; and Students for Academic Freedom (SAF), 2003.

Professor Leslie Wagner, in his article, 'Watching the Pro-Israeli Academic Watchers', published in 'Jewish Political Studies Review': 'Watching academics for evidence of anti-Israeli bias is largely a twenty-first-century phenomenon'(Wagner 2010) discusses the issue. Such systematic monitoring to 'watch' universities is evidence for what is happening there has become an area of grave concern for pro-Israeli groups. Further investigation into these establishments provides more evidence on how their activity and their very existence is related to a critical concern about the alternative knowledge; there are certain elements in their stated missions or objectives. Some of these organizations are multi-purpose ones that were established,

originally, to support Israel in broader areas but engaged later in academia - monitoring adventures. A number of organizations can be named in this category. The presence of an organisation in this category does not mean it is as equally involved in the relevant matter as are others in the group. Some, like CAMERA, are significantly involved in this. Others, such as AIPAC, are less involved. Further instances of this category include the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, Stand with Us, the David Project and the B'nai B'rith Hillel foundation.

There are other pro-Israeli bodies, however, that have been established solely for campus monitoring. The recent decade has witnessed rapid emergence of such institutions in many Western countries. Even in Israel such organizations are constantly raising the alarm about the danger of a growing number of Israeli scholars who challenge the pro-Israeli paradigm. It is not difficult to recognize the US as a very central location for these organizations: 'Campus Watch', 'Scholars for Peace in the Middle East' and 'Students for Academic Freedom (SAF)' being three main examples. 'Campus Watch' works 'to review and critique Middle East studies in North America with an aim to improve them' as based on the official website ("About Campus Watch" 2012). This monitoring tool was founded by the Middle East Forum because, it is claimed, 'they (Middle East Studies courses) were increasingly showing anti-Israeli bias and were increasingly led by academics who were not just critical of some Israeli policies but fundamentally anti-Israeli' (Wagner 2010). In Wagner's words, it 'focuses on the anti-Israeli biases of Middle East courses and the academics who teach them'(Wagner 2010). Campus Watch undertakes a number of initiatives to advance its mission; it encourages university students to report cases of 'anti-Israeli' bias. This has contributed to forming dossiers on university professors who have critical views on Israel. Publishing these dossiers has created such controversies in American universities, that 'Campus Watch' has been forced to remove such a list from its website

(Schevitz 2002). But this hasn't changed the 'Campus Watch' policy of monitoring and catching college lecturers when they criticize Israel. 'Campus Watch' still publishes reports and a search for a scholar's name on its website provides a dossier about 'biased activities' of the scholar.

'Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (SPME)' is another monitoring organization that was established with a purpose 'to address the growing number of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic incidents in classrooms and on campus' as the founder of the institution Beck put it (Wagner 2010). The stated mission of the SPME goes further to make its purpose clear, 'to inform, motivate, and encourage faculty to use their academic skills and disciplines on campus, in classrooms, and in academic publications to develop effective responses to real or perceived anti-Semitic and anti-Israel statements' ('Scholars for Peace in the Middle East' 2012).

What is stated by the organization, as presented above, suggests that the anti-Israeli productions of Western universities are a main area of SPME's concern. SPME's activities can also demonstrate the realization of such a mission in practice. For instance, on one occasion Richard Cravatts, SPME's president, reacted to a conference on the 'one state solution' in the Kennedy School (Harvard University). He stated, 'A conference whose goal is to demonize and delegitimize Israel is not an academic enterprise'. He described it as 'propaganda parading as scholarship'. He added further 'The one-state solution, far from (being) a rational plan for Palestinian statehood, actually proposes to do with votes and demography the same thing that Arab armies have themselves failed to do for the past 64 years' (Meir-Levi 2012).

Another institute, 'Students for Academic Freedom (SAF)' was established by a pro-Israeli think tank, 'The David Horowitz Freedom Centre', acting as its student body, works to address issues of 'liberal bias', as they are called, in American universities (Horowitz 2009, 142). 'Academic Bill of Rights' is a main project that is followed by

SAF. Universities are persuaded to adopt it as university policy (Horowitz 2003). This Bill is criticized broadly in the US for the danger it poses through 'limiting freedom', 'over sighting universities' and 'imposing extra-academic standards on universities' ('ALA Votes to Oppose 'Academic Bill of Rights' 2006). This initiative appears as a main instrument designed to protect the dominant position of the pro-Israeli paradigm, through imposing restrictions on alternative knowledge production. SAF also works to monitor course syllabuses and their reading lists to hunt out cases of 'anti-Israeli' publications. Two such cases are; 'the Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy' and 'Palestine: Peace not Apartheid'. The very existence of such books on a course reading list is opposed as 'propagandistic material' (Fish 2006); the first book was written by two prominent university professors at a time when many were wondering about a significant gap in American political literature concerning the powerful role of the Israel lobby in the formulation of American Middle Eastern policy. The second book is written by the former American president, Jimmy Carter, who managed the first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab adversary.

A nationwide protest in the US has been organized with 'Stop Campus War against Israel and Jews' as its title ('Stop the Campus War Against Israel and the Jews: October 12-16, 2009 – David Horowitz |' 2009). It is regarded as another move to combat what the opponents of the alternative knowledge believe is anti-Israeli scholarship. Besides this campaign, ten individuals and institutes, labelled as 'hardcore' anti-Semites and adversaries of Israel, have been selected as 'the worst of the worst' of those who target Israel and Jews through a 'vicious campaign of slander and incitement to violence' ('The Campus War Against Israel and the Jews' 2012). The alternative knowledge and its contributors are targeted far and wide; SAF attacked the University of Michigan for hiring 'Neve Gordon' to teach 'History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict' (Benshimon 2008); Professor 'Georg Wolfe', Director of the Centre for Peace and

Conflict Studies at Ball State University, is labelled as an academic who is not qualified to teach ‘Social, Economic and Political Causes of War and Peace’ (Students For Academic Freedom 2004).

When the professor for the course selected a book entitled ‘Peace and Conflict Studies’ written by Barash and Webel, it was opposed as not being an appropriate academic text (Students For Academic Freedom 2004). The level of opposition went too far, however, when an academic course ‘Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution’ was opposed as it was claimed the content is not proper for academic program (Students For Academic Freedom 2004). The paper argues that all such activities of the SAF is for dealing with the challenges posed by the alternative knowledge and its contributors toward the the pro-Israeli paradigm and its dominant position in the Western academia.

The pro-Israeli monitoring organizations are springing up in different Western countries. In UK at least two new organizations were established recently: ‘Engage’ and ‘The Academic Friends of Israel’ (AFI). Engage’s stated mission demonstrates its relevance to the main argument of this article, Engage challenges left and liberal anti-Semitism in the labour movement, in our universities and in public life more generally. Anti-Semitism here manifests itself mainly as anti-Zionism. We are a resource for the monitoring and the critique of left and liberal anti-Semitism’ (“Engage (organization)” 2012).

The way ‘Academic Friends of Israel’, also, introduces itself gives the same message, ‘We are concerned about the increasing number of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic incidents on British campuses as well as the anti-Israel policies of the UK’s education unions ... We are opposed to the ‘new’ anti-Semitism, which is aimed at Israel, which often hides behind legitimate criticism of Israel’ (“The Academic Friends of Israel’ 2012). The above statements can demonstrate an anxiety over anti-Israeli/anti-Zionist critiques in Western (British in this case) universities as the main reason for establishing such monitoring organizations. Moreover, it shows the

attempt of the pro-Israeli paradigm in blocking the advancement of alternative knowledge through delegitimizing academic endeavours that challenge the pro-Israeli sources of knowledge by attributing unacceptable traits such as anti-Semitism to the critics. As it was argued, a review of the motivations and reasons for establishing the monitoring bodies, their activities and programs for dealing with the so called 'anti-Israeli' or 'anti-Zionist scholarship', one might recognize the emergence of a considerable body of relevant knowledge that is not only challenging to pro-Israeli circles, but dangerous and worrying.

There are other pro-Israeli institutions, mainly think tanks, which were established earlier for other purposes but play an active role in countering the body of alternative knowledge. These institutions help in suppressing the production of alternative knowledge in universities and departments of Middle East Studies, in particular those active in the Palestine Studies. The Middle East Forum (MEF), a well-known pro-Israeli think tank, *inter alia*, has a program, called 'Campus Speakers Bureau'. According to Whitaker (a former Middle East editor of the *Guardian*):

'The MEF also targets universities through its campus speakers Bureau - that in adopting the line of Mr Kramer's book, seeks to correct "inaccurate Middle Eastern curricula in American education", by addressing "biases" and "basic errors" and providing "better information" than students can get from the many "irresponsible" professors that it believes lurk in US universities'. (Whitaker 2002).

The Forum does more to deal with the alternative knowledge; it publishes a journal, the 'Middle East Quarterly', to 'balance', according to the Forum, the anti-Israeli bias in academia⁽⁶⁾. To supplement the journal, the Forum's website is also a rich source of materials published to advance its mission to silence the producers of the alternative knowledge. There are 147 articles, under 'Academia' as a heading ('Academia: Writings by The Middle East Forum' 2012), most of which work to target and attack universities and scholars of

the Middle East and Islamic Studies who are active in producing the alternative knowledge. The language used against them is frequently aggressive.⁽⁷⁾ The Forum has also structured ‘The Legal Project’, a program that can work to defend, through legal means, those who attack scholars active in producing alternative knowledge. This is done through what is called protecting researchers and analysts who work on the topics of terrorism, terrorist funding, and radical Islam from lawsuits designed to silence their exercise of free speech’ (‘About the Legal Project’ 2012).

Pro-Israeli think tanks also work to remove the academic centres that are considered as the main source of the alternative knowledge, from occupying a position from which they can inform the public about the Israel/Palestine question. This is done, partly, by producing and disseminating pro-Israeli knowledge. They frequently justify this with a claim that what is produced in American universities about Israeli/Palestinian conflict is biased or misleading (Kramer 2001, ix for instance). This, in itself, can demonstrate that the alternative knowledge is starting to function effectively in Western universities. Think tanks provide a convenient place for the production of knowledge to advance a political agenda. Universities, basically, have obligations to set limitations on such attempts. Like-minded writers, however, neutralise such limitations in a think tank, and produce what serves their ideological or political positions. Pro-Israeli think tanks frequently charge universities with being biased and political, and introduce their mission as an attempt to correct the biased knowledge produced in universities about the Middle East (Whitaker 2002). In this sense their very existence is related to the alternative knowledge. They have been quite successful, in fact, in influencing knowledge in the public domain. Most ‘experts’ on the Middle East and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict who appear on TV channels and other mass media outlets come from these think tanks. Their presence has been evaluated as being much more effective than the work of those professors and scholars who study and teach in the

Middle East Studies programs in American universities (Whitaker 2002).

Think tanks use other instruments/projects to advance their goals related to the alternative knowledge; they put pressure on knowledge producers, including universities and scholars, from the top of the profession to bottom. Enjoying effective and privileged access to a powerful lobby, they try to make Congress and higher education administrations to impose a laws or regulations that can limit the opportunity for the alternative knowledge producers to develop and compete. Also they work from the bottom to exert pressure on scholars through students and in their classes. Students are stimulated to challenge scholars who do not approach the subject matter from the perspective of the dominant paradigm. They are educated to regard such an approach as 'biased' and 'illegitimate' treatment or a case of misusing academic freedom. In this way they ring fence a narrow area of opinion such as that of legitimate teaching so that a teacher risks being accused of illegitimate conduct such as anti-Semitism, political activism, supporting terrorism or sympathising with Islamism if he just differs from the pro-Israeli paradigm. The example is a warning by a pro-Israeli body, the 'Jewish Civil Rights Group'; this group issued a warning to hundreds of university and college presidents around the United States that their schools may be subject to civil and criminal liability over (what is called) anti-Israel hate on their campuses ('Jewish Civil Rights Group Warns Hundreds of University Presidents over Anti-Israel Hate on American College Campuses' 2011).

An overall examination of what pro-Israeli think tanks do in relation to knowledge production about Israel/Palestine, can support the claim that the challenge posed by the alternative knowledge is recognized and addressed by these think tanks. There is substantial evidence here to demonstrate a heavy investment by the pro-Israeli side in a widespread undertaking whose main aim is to target the capacity of the alternative paradigm to 'produce' and 'inform' in

Western academia.

New Pro-Israeli ‘Publications’: publications, in general, and books, in particular, are used, as main vehicles, for the counter attack, by the dominant paradigm. The opposition to alternative knowledge has reached an unprecedented level when almost all departments of Middle Eastern Studies in US academia are being condemned. Kramer’s ‘Ivory Towers on Sand’, is designed to critique what is called the American illness in treating Middle East Studies (2001, ix). The book blames the alternative knowledge producers, especially Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said, in a section entitled ‘Said’s splash’, as the main reason responsible for what went wrong in the Middle East Studies (Kramer 2001, 27). This book is a clear pro-Israeli attack on the production of the alternative knowledge; departments of the Middle East Studies are described, in this book, as ‘factories of error’ (Kramer 2001, 142). The book is a good example to demonstrate the hostile position that is being developed in the pro-Israeli camp against all centres of ME Studies, in general, and against a main producer of the alternative knowledge (Said), in particular. The writer reveals his ideological roots when he considers what he calls the ‘anti American’ and ‘anti-Israeli’ bias of the knowledge produced as the central reason for the Middle East departments going wrong, labelling such works ‘pro-Palestinian’.

Another book that is designed to target the scholars of the alternative knowledge, is ‘The Professors’, published in 2007. A remarkable number of those who are introduced in the book as the most dangerous scholars in the US, or the ‘worst of the worst’ (Horowitz 2007 Front cover) are professors of the Middle East and Islamic Studies. The book lists 101 American professors, and tries to justify why they should be regarded as the most dangerous. One main reason that is mentioned repeatedly for consigning them in such a category is what is called ‘their anti - Israeli bias’; a large number of the main producers of the alternative knowledge in the US, including Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, Joseph Massad, Ali al-Mazrui,

Joel Beinin, Richard Falk, Shahid Alam and Hamid Dabashi, are on the list.

'One Party Classroom', is another book, which targets a number of US universities and courses that are involved in 'intellectual corruption'⁽⁸⁾ or 'academic tragedy' (Horowitz and Laksin 2009 Introduction), terms used by the book to describe the new situation emerging by the alternative knowledge. It lists and introduces 16 American universities, including Columbia, California and Southern California, as those with the worst records in this area. One main item of 'extreme ideological cant', out of four as central matters of indoctrination, proposes that they are 'persuading students that America and Israel are 'imperialistic' and 'racist' states and that the latter has no more right to exist than the South African regime in the days of apartheid'⁽⁹⁾. This book is interesting in showing how a link is established between the so -called 'intellectual corruption' and the emergence of 'alternative knowledge'. This can demonstrate how ideas such as 'academic tragedy' are used to suppress alternative knowledge producers; after developing such treatment with 'individual' (university professors), 'institutions' (universities) they are effectively involved in alternative knowledge production.

'UnCivil University', a book published in 2005, describes American contemporary academia as having 'lost its civility' (Tobin, Weinberg, and Ferer 2005 Front Flap). The book is more open to establishing a direct linkage between the alleged 'crisis' and 'the alternative knowledge': 'Nowhere is this loss more apparent than in the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism on college campuses. This book documents the alarming rise in bigotry and bullying in the academy, using a range of evidence from first-hand accounts of intimidation of students by anti-Israel professors to anti-Semitic articles in student newspapers and marginalization of pro-Israel scholars.' (Tobin, Weinberg, and Ferer 2005, Front Flap) Moreover the book considers the phenomenon it identifies as unprecedented since the 1960s: 'The American university is suffering from a moral

crisis unseen since the great social upheavals of the 1960s' (Tobin, Weinberg, and Ferer 2005, Front Flap).

There are other publications in this category, one of which appearing recently is titled 'Intellectual Assault' (Yeager and Yeager 2010). Another recent book, 'Genocidal Liberalism: The University's Jihad Against Israel & Jews' calls what is being produced in US universities about the question 'a Jihad against Israel' (Cravatts 2012). Such titling can work, I argue, to attach this undertaking of Liberal academia to the worst crime that can happen, genocide. Furthermore this publication is quite obvious about its purpose to attack the alternative knowledge, differing from some previous works mentioned here, which disguise their real motive under other more general titles such as the 'illness of Middle Eastern Studies', 'dangerous professors', 'one party classrooms', 'uncivil university' or 'intellectual corruption'. The Jihad, as the writer contends, is led by American professors (Cravatts 2012, 41) to delegitimize and destroy Israel. They, Cravatts argues, blame Israel for whatever wrong happens in the ME, and take a radical position about subjects which are related to 'Israel's right to exist'. The roots of such a phenomenon, called 'anti-Israelism', in American academia are viewed mainly through two factors; 'hatred of Israel by the academic left' (Cravatts 2012, 3) and 'the embracement of 'Palestinianism' by liberal academia' (Cravatts 2012, 25). The terms used to describe this development in US academia, the rise of anti-Israelism and the embracement of Palestinianism, can refer, clearly, to the direction of the change that is taking place in American universities. Further elaboration by the writer when he considers 'the Middle East Studies programs' as the main 'battleground' is another indicator that the central concern is focussed on where the alternative knowledge is being produced (Cravatts 2012, 125).

Two other books, at least, can be mentioned in this category that belongs to pro-Israeli published attacks on the alternative knowledge; 'Academics Against Israel and the Jews' (Gerstenfeld

2007), and 'Brainwashed: How Universities Indoctrinate America's Youth (Shapiro 2004). According to a review of 'Brainwashed' by Baum and Perna 'Shapiro's central thesis is that the academy is overwhelmingly comprised of people who are anti-Republican, anti-Israel, and anti-American' (Baum and Perna 2005). The first book, *Academics Against Israel and the Jews*, contains eighteen essays that deal with anti - Israeli activities in different universities of western countries, and how pro-Israelis respond to them.

A general analysis of what is produced about the above - mentioned publications can suggest that: whatever cover is used for such published attacks, 'intellectual corruption', 'academic tragedy', 'uncivil university', 'dangerous professors that threaten the US', 'American Illness in studying the Middle East' or 'ME departments becoming an ivory tower on sand and factories of error', it is recognizable that what challenges the pro-Israeli paradigm remains the main concern. The terms used to describe the situation; 'academic tragedy,' 'intellectual corruption,' 'American illness,' 'genocidal liberalism,' 'intellectual assault' and 'university's Jihad,' demonstrate that what is recognized in the field is regarded as highly serious and represents a real threat to the dominant position which the pro-Israeli paradigm occupies in Western academia. all these publications which attack academia as a whole, or Middle Eastern departments in particular are designed and published by well-known pro-Israeli parties that work to preserve the dominant position of the pro-Israeli paradigm. And, all those books were published in a specific period of time in the last decade or so when the alternative knowledge started to gain credit in Western academia.

There are certain testimonies by pro-Israeli experts in Middle Eastern Studies, which set out to explain the afore-mentioned attack made by 'pro-Israeli institutes' and also 'pro-Israeli publications' against the alternative knowledge, which do so in terms that clearly refer to the challenge posed by that knowledge, and its power to shift the governing paradigm. One important testimony mentioned earlier

in this article comes from Bernard Lewis: 'Middle Eastern Studies in this country (US) is dominated by the Saidians' (Goldstein 2012). This is also expressed in a more radical way by another ME expert, an Israeli writer of Jerusalem Post:

'Over the past 15 years, much has been written and said about the fact that Palestinian school textbooks don't promote peace and coexistence and that the Palestinian media often publishes anti-Israel material. While this may be true, there is no ignoring the fact that the anti-Israel campaign on U.S. campuses is not less dangerous. What is happening on these campuses is not in the frame of freedom of speech. Instead, it is the freedom to disseminate hatred and violence'. (Abu Toameh 2009).

A recent (2012) statement by 'Michael Oren' (American-born Israeli historian, and former ambassador to the United States) can introduce another instance: 'Having failed to destroy Israel by conventional arms and terrorism, Israel's enemies alit on a subtler and more sinister tactic that hampers Israel's ability to defend itself, even to justify its existence' (Oren 2012). All these discourses, recognizing the threat posed by the competing knowledge to the position the pro-Israeli paradigm occupies in Western academia, work to suppress the alternative knowledge.

There are pro - Israeli conferences that recognize the recent developments in Western academia and target its main source, the alternative knowledge: CAMERA convened a conference in 2010 with 'War by Other Means: The Global Campaign to Delegitimize Israel' as its title. In this conference 'college campuses' were introduced as a main place 'used by Israel's enemies to undermine her legitimacy' (Catz 2012). In fact 'systematic delegitimization of the Jewish state' is introduced as a main aim of the challenge to the Israeli narrative in the universities; 'Whether it is conferences at Harvard or the University of Pennsylvania or other universities, the campaign to delegitimize Israel has found fertile ground in academia'(Catz 2012). This is rooted, as Jonathan Schanzer (American scholar in Middle

Eastern Studies) argues, in what is produced in ME Studies; ‘The anti-Israel sentiment on American university campuses, encouraged by an anti-Israel professorate, stems in large part from the way Middle Eastern Studies is taught at the post-graduate level’ (Catz 2012). The way Western universities are changing under the influence of the alternative knowledge produced in ME studies departments is tackled, also, by another conference held by Israel’s foreign ministry, 4th International Conference of the Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism, that regularly monitors anti-Israel developments, as a kind of anti-Semitism;

‘The use of traditional antisemitic imagery and comparisons between Israel and Apartheid or Nazi Germany, mixed with post-colonial mythologies, are entering into mainstream discourse, even within respected academic institutions throughout Europe, North America and beyond’ (‘Mission Statements’ 2013). The alternative knowledge is characterised as responsible even more strongly in the conference’s outcome; ‘Biased scholarship and an anti-Israel Middle East departments on campuses internationally develop curriculum disconnected from historical reality, which encourages the delegitimatization of the Jewish State, preparing a generational bias against Israel. The 2011 One State Conference at Harvard University is a reflection of the hostile ideology that is increasingly permeating campuses’ (‘Mission Statements’ 2013).

The serious challenge posed by the alternative knowledge is taken, in the conference, as a ‘propaganda’ and also ‘psychological’ war against Israel; ‘College campuses, as well as the academic and intellectual environment have ... become the frontline of the propaganda war against Israel and the Jewish people. Israel is increasingly delegitimized and demonized on campus and also within more course curriculum’ (‘Mission Statements’ 2013). There is also a reference, in the conference, to Professor Manfred Gerstenfeld’s call ‘for the Israeli government to combat delegitimization “as military and cyber wars are fought,” with Mossad the “logical candidate” to be

assigned as “the focal point to fight this war” (White 2013). Another contribution in the conference called for ‘name and shame’, proposed by Small, to make scholars attacking Israel pay a price (White 2013). This can confirm, again, that the pro-Israeli paradigm in Western universities is under pressure by its new rival. The seriousness of the threat posed by the alternative knowledge can be seen here in mentioned calls to use various weapons at hand to stop the advancement of the alternative knowledge through criminalizing it, using Zionist definitions of anti-Semitism for instance.

The serious concern in the pro-Israeli camp about what Western universities have started to produce on the Israel/Palestine question, has driven them into a position of discrediting the whole of academia through constructing negative images about Western universities and their alleged role in what went wrong in Western history; the Nazi experience, for example, is used; ‘In the 1930s, the universities were the first German institutions to capitulate to Adolf Hitler. Martin Heidegger, Germany’s greatest 20th century philosopher and the intellectual idol of American academics, hailed the advent of the Third Reich from the rectorship of Freiburg University’(Horowitz and Johnson 2004, 3).⁽¹⁰⁾

A similar argument is applied to the rise of Fascism; ‘Fascism was an idea so messianic in its conception, so elitist in its attitudes, and so anti-capitalist in its social philosophy, that intellectuals found it irresistible’ (Horowitz and Johnson 2004, 3). Universities are seen as guilty, in the same way, in relation to communism; ‘The seeds of the contemporary opposition to the War on Terror were sown in the 1960s in the movement to support the Communist aggression in Vietnam. Once again the universities and the intellectual culture provided the most dependable support in the West for the totalitarian agendas of the Communist bloc’ (Horowitz and Johnson 2004, 3).

The opposition which comes from universities against the ‘war on Terror’ is located in the same context; ‘Now we are (in the West) engaged in a new war with a totalitarian enemy. Radical Islam despises

capitalism and its democracies in the West. And once again, totalitarianism finds its most dependable allies on college faculties' (Horowitz and Johnson 2004, 3). The formulation of such attacks against Western academia, as a whole, by well-known pro-Israeli experts has the power, I argue, to show the real dimensions of the threat perceived about what is happening in Western universities.

In addition to establishing a debatable link between current happenings in Western universities now and in the Nazi era and with Communism or Fascism, a more focused Jewish/Israeli context is also adopted; the alternative paradigm is being read in the context of violent threats against Jews/Israel. A book published recently, 'Academics against Israel and the Jews (2007)', formulates this. The main message of this publication can be seen in the 'book's description': 'Anti-Semites succeeded in murdering six million Jews only after significant parts of the supposedly enlightened world accepted as a matter of fact that Jews were dangerous and inferior beings. Genocide became legitimate when this attitude permeated universities, the intelligentsia, and other elites. Against this historical background, the inroads of the anti-Israeli campaign into the Western academic world are extremely worrying. The infrastructure for future crimes or even genocide is being laid by ideologists at universities of the free world' ('Academics Against Israel and the Jews: Amazon.com: Books' 2012).

Conclusion

How can all the data provided in this article about pro-Israeli treatment of the alternative knowledge support the idea that a paradigm shift in Palestine Studies is taking place in Western academia? The cases of counter attack produced in this examination, by different pro-Israeli agencies, are used primarily as indicators to represent how those who support the pro - Israeli paradigm are treating the alternative knowledge. The treatment exhibited, I argue, makes sense when a transformation in knowledge production (on the

question) with a magnitude similar to that of a paradigm shift is seen to be taking place: academia monitoring organizations might provide more recognizable evidence in one sense; they have been established merely to counter a challenge posed by academic centres (in Western academia) to Israel. Why did what academic centres produce become a matter of such grave concern to those who subscribed to the pro-Israeli paradigm? Why did they become so active in attacking the alternative knowledge in recent years especially in the last decade or so? What has emerged just recently in Western academia that can work to challenge Israel and make this extensive monitoring a necessity? All the measures taken in this area seem meaningless, I argue, unless there is a significant development that is changing the landscape of Palestine/Israel Studies in Western academia. What has been produced above about other pro-Israeli bodies, think tanks, can confirm that this threatening change is taken very seriously; different strategies/tactics were developed by the pro-Israeli bodies to deal with such a threat. Books mentioned provide another chance to see how this threat is evaluated and treated. The evaluations provided refer to the threat's size that covers 'all departments of Middle East Studies' or 'the whole Western/American academia'. This is also confirmed by statements made by some key scholars who support the pro-Israeli paradigm, including Lewis. The powerful presence of this new force in knowledge production about the question can be seen when it is attacked as a reason for the corruption of the whole intellectual endeavour of Western academia. Another category of evidence produced in this article relates to the construction used to portray Western academia as responsible for what went wrong in recent Western history. This construction, used by pro-Israeli writers to contextualize the academic position towards Israel, introduces the examined transformation as an academia - wide phenomenon. There would be no need to produce such a construction against the whole of Western academia if universities as a whole had not been influenced by the alternative knowledge.

In general, if the negative terms used by pro-Israeli writers/scholars, mentioned in this study, to describe what is happening in the area of knowledge production about the question are neutralised, what remains is an obvious reference, I argue, to a transformation in producing knowledge about Palestine/Israel that poses a threatening challenge to the position the pro-Israeli paradigm occupies in Western academia. In addition, the vocabulary used by supporters of the pro-Israeli paradigm to address the alternative knowledge, if not exceptional, does not represent the conventional language employed for an academic debate; no legitimate place is considered for the alternative knowledge; there is no sign of recognising the alternative account as another part of the debate; there is no genuine attempt to enter a scholarly dialogue with the other. Almost all terms used to address the alternative knowledge characterise it as an illegitimate/wrong undertaking: 'Propagandistic,' 'dangerous,' 'genocidal,' 'dissemination of hate and violence,' 'serving the enemy' and 'anti-Semitic' are just some instances mentioned earlier in this analysis. The terminology used suggests that an attempt to destroy the very chance of the alternative knowledge to exist is a key function of pro-Israeli side when dealing with the alternative account. Such an attempt might refer to the genuine power the alternative knowledge has to answer new questions in the field more effectively and also to shift the governing paradigm. Thomas Kuhn argued, as mentioned earlier, that once a paradigm is not able to answer effectively the questions which arise in a field of study and solve its problems, it is due to lose its dominant position. This might propose a reasonable explanation of what the pro-Israeli paradigm is experiencing now in Western Middle Eastern Studies.

Notes

1. This investigation has been conducted while the author was in the European Centre for Palestine Studies (ECPS), in University of Exeter, under Professor Ilan Pappé's supervision.
2. Centre for Palestine Studies Launch Event: LMEI: SOAS." 2012. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). <http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei-cps/events/01mar2012-centre-for-palestine-studies-launch-event.html>.
3. Europe's First Centre for Palestine Studies." 2008. University of Exeter. http://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/excellence/keythemes/middleeast/news/title_4949_2_en.html.
4. Center for Palestine Studies About." 2012. Columbia University. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/palestine/about/>.
5. Saidians, here, is a term used to refer to scholars who are influenced by the ideas of Palestinian professor, Edward Said, who played a key role in challenging the pro-Israeli paradigm in the West.
6. According to the founder [of the MEF] Daniel Pipes, 'In the halls of academe, the Quarterly delivers a welcome balance to the many materials that relentlessly attack the United States and Israel ('Middle East Forum - Daniel Pipes' 2012).
7. A number of titles itemised in the website's article list can be seen here as instances: 'M. Shahid Alam: Northeastern University's Historical Hoaxer'; 'UCLA Honors Sharia Apologist Khaled Abou El Fadl'; 'The 'Angry Arab' Goes Mad'; 'John L. Esposito: Apologist for Wahhabi Islam'; 'Terrorist in the Ivory Tower?'; 'The Professor's Obsession'; 'The Professor's Paranoia'; ' Hamas's Academic Cheerleaders'; 'Juan Cole's Jihad Against Israel'; 'Safi's Soft Words are Front for Radical Jihadists'
8. One-Party Classroom: How Radical Professors at America's Top Colleges Indoctrinate Students and Undermine Our Democracy, Book Description." 2012. Amazon.com. <http://www.amazon.com/One-Party-Classroom-Professors-Indoctrinate-Undermine/dp/0307452557>.
9. One-Party Classroom: How Radical Professors at America's Top Colleges Indoctrinate Students and Undermine Our Democracy, Book Description." 2012. Amazon.com. <http://www.amazon.com/One-Party-Classroom-Professors-Indoctrinate-Undermine/dp/0307452557>.
10. In this regard a book, also, has been published recently to demonstrate how American universities had sympathy with Nazi Germany in the 1930s (Norwood 2011).

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