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Between Arab and French Agendas: Defining the Palestinian Diaspora and the Image of the Other

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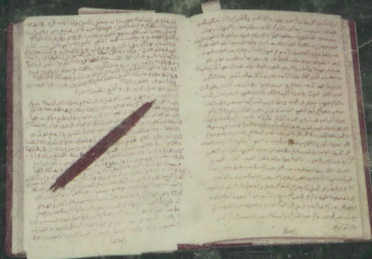
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Between Field and Text:
Emerging Voices in Egyptian
Social Science

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BETWEEN ARAB AND FRENCH AGENDAS: DEFINING THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA AND THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER

SARI HANAFI

The Mercurial Boundaries between Research Agendas

A hot debate has appeared periodically in Egypt and in other Arab countries during the past few decades regarding the issue of research agendas. This issue is usually posed in terms of an opposition between local agendas and that of others, often those of the West. In addition, socially and politically contentious topics often lead to a discussion of research agendas and priorities. For example, the categorization of Copts in Egypt as a 'minority' in a regional conference, organized by the Ibn Khaldoun Development and Research Center in Cairo in 1990, quickly turned the discussion toward research agendas and whether the center was submitting to the interests of foreign, 'neo-colonial' donors. In 1998, another polemic arose concerning the funding provided by the British Consulate to the Cairo Center for Human Rights to conduct research on violence in an Egyptian village called Kisheh. On the one hand, the Egyptian state expressed its anger over the 'abuse' of freedom of speech and the increasing role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in social and political development by arresting the Center's director. At the same time, the debate appeared within the Egyptian research community regarding a crisis in research priorities and the need to discuss local and foreign agendas.

Clearly, while this subject has political implications, it has also academic ones. From the outset, one has to consider that ideas cross national borders and research agendas are not formulated in isolation. Rather, they are the result of interpenetration. This article will explore some of the factors that influence the construction of agendas and then to compare features of Arab and French research agendas. What are the agendas of famous researchers such as Samir Amin, Galal Amin, Anwar Abdel Malek, Edward Said, other Arab researchers at the American University in Cairo or at the French research institution in Cairo, the Centre d'Etudes et de

Documentation Economique et Juridique (CEDEJ)? Are they Arab or Western agendas, a combination of the two, or something in-between?

Researchers with multiple allegiances are not a new phenomenon. Renowned scholars such as Taha Hussein, Malek Ben Nabi, and Mohamed Iqbal had allegiances, at least intellectually, to more than one society. They were trans-national figures who have been influenced by the research problematics of their own homelands and also by the cultures of the institutions in which they studied and by the professors who shaped them intellectually. Still, the magnitude of multiple allegiances has grown in recent decades and has had an increasing impact on scholarly thought. Geographical mobility and sweeping globalization have been largely responsible for the increasing number of researchers operating within multiple contexts and accommodating multiple allegiances.

In contrast, a parallel and contradictory phenomenon has also emerged. Many researchers emphasize in their studies the specificity, particularism, and exceptionalism of their societies as compared to perceived 'others,' which necessitate special social science agendas and methods governed by national considerations. I will explore this phenomenon using the process of defining the Palestinian diaspora as an example.

The Decomposition and Recomposition of Research Agendas: A Complex Process

It is important to delineate here the ways in which agendas mutually affect each other. In his book *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens (1994) says that modernity has facilitated the access to and the transfer of phenomena and life styles from industrial to developing societies, through a process he calls "homologation." In other words, the whole world is now witnessing a process of 'McDonaldization' and computerization, as well as the transfer of modern medicine, science, and world music. These discretely and subtly penetrate boundaries despite controls imposed by states and dominant social actors. While Giddens describes the process of simple homologation, Dina El Khawaga (1997) and Jean-Noel Ferrié (1996) have criticized this concept and instead characterize the transfer process as quite complex. The complexity is introduced because the transferred phenomena do not necessarily carry the same normative dimensions or functions that they

do in the original societies. These 'imported' phenomena are primarily symbols, which are dismantled and analyzed before they are incorporated into social structures, in conformity with dominant social and cultural processes. El Khawaga has named this process "encoding," or the appropriation of symbols and the assignment of new meaning.

Therefore globalization does not entail the hegemony of one particular lifestyle, social pattern, or agenda, but rather the recognition of difference between societies, as Clifford has stressed in his description of the main features of 20th century anthropology (1988). To those who say that there is a "Coca-Cola colonialization" and that Coca-Cola does not recognize differences between societies, Maricio Marereo, a Coca-Cola executive, responded that: "If this drink is part of the rituals of friendship (i.e., two people chatting over a drink), then the meaning of friendship and this ritual differ from one country to the other" (Bayart, 1994: 16). In other words, I would agree with Marereo that Coca-Cola reflects the values of the society that drinks it; it does not necessarily project the values of the original society on the societies that import it.

Therefore I think that when Arab research agendas address topics such as civil society, the image of the 'other,' ethnic and religious minorities, tradition and modernity, and local and international development, they do not necessarily imply that these topics have the same meaning and content that they have in the Western societies from which they emanated. For example, in some seminars I have attended in Egypt, social scientists have dealt with the issues of tradition and modernity as a dichotomy; any cultural phenomenon is thus understood as pure tradition or pure modernity. While this trend may reflect the influence of American sociology, though reinterpreted in the local context, it is far from the French literature in which modernity is seen as emanating from tradition. That is, the French understand modernity and tradition as contemporaneous rather than as disjunctive or as a duality (see Michel Foucault, especially *Words and Things*). In another example, the concept of civil society in Tunisia has been tailored to suit the forms of alliances between the political regime and some academic groups to the exclusion of Islamic political parties and associations. More generally, the Tunisian sociologist Taher Labib shows us how Arab researchers used fragmented pieces of Gramsci's thoughts in an

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ideological manner in order to confirm some of their ideas (Brondino and Labib 1994).

Hence the borders between Arab and French agendas are mercurial. The nature of their intersections is changing constantly as a resut of various factors. Perhaps it is timely to ask the question: What are the contents of the two agendas and who determines them? I do not believe that agendas are dictated by a group of people, social class, or political authority in a way that can determine research priorities or contents. They are rather the result of negotiated decisions of various groups of researchers, each of them influenced by social conditions. An in-depth study of these decisions allows the understanding of the common denominators in the choice of topics and the ways that they are then addressed. Thus one should be careful when examining research agendas and consider at which level the analysis is situated. As Bernard Lepetit noted, the field of valid explication should be a function of the scale of observation (1993:137). For example, a map with a small scale would not allow one to determine the water resources in a given country but it would be sufficient to situate the biggest cities. Accordingly, one can consider the Egyptian research agenda as a local agenda, part of an Arab agenda, or even part of an international agenda, depending on the level of observation. Moreover, one can discern more than one agenda in one country, considering that the research field is divided by various schools and trends. In this respect, the words agenda and agendas are used in this article according to the context.

Prior to characterizing each agenda separately, I would like to examine the conditions that influence the research space. These can be summarized in the following points:

Internal constraints of the agenda: In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn pointed out that each discipline has a set of axiomatic ideas and principles, which he called a "paradigm," and those who part from them are regarded as outside the discipline or not producing scientific knowledge. He explained how this paradigm affects the production of knowledge in a certain society and a certain era. He also noted that only scientific revolutions are capable of causing the shift from one paradigm to another, and that such revolutions can only take place under certain conditions (Kuhn 1970).

Censorship: State censorship discourages researchers from addressing topics that may cause problems with state security, or with their direct supervisors if the researchers are also government employees. In some cases, researchers exercise self-censorship since they have unconsciously internalized what the regime desires. Censorship is not only imposed by the state but sometimes by social and political forces that do not follow the democratic tradition. In addition to some radical Islamist groups, some nationalists, leftists, and communists also belong to these forces and could influence the debate and the choice of research topics. However they are less influential than the state.

Research funding agencies: When funding agencies support a specific research topic, they do so at the expense of other topics. Thus, research topics are indirectly 'manipulated' but donors rarely exert control over the research process: the methodology or the findings. Thus one should not exaggerate this influence and should not project the official political positions of the donors' governments on the NGOs that receive funding from them. According to a survey that I conducted in Palestine during the summer of 1998 regarding donor assistance to Palestinian NGOs, it was rather clear that donors had either a broad framework for sector priorities, which allowed flexibility and was left open for interpretation or, if there was a defined sector, the donor did not have defined programs or projects within the sector. Hence, there was a significant margin of negotiation between donors and local partners. For example, a German foundation supported a conference organized by the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) entitled: "The Impact of the Peace Process on Some Industrial Sectors in the Middle East" held in Amman in June 1997. Although it was clear that the foundation sought to emphasize the positive impact of the peace process on the industrial economies of the concerned countries, most of the studies presented at the conference pointed to the opposite, at least in the transitional period imposed by the fitful progress of the peace process.

Research fads: Some topics become research fads because they are part of heated social and political debates, with the mass media playing a

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significant role in enhancing them. For example, Islamic fundamentalism was a research fad in Western countries in the 1980s because they fear the impact of this phenomenon on their own societies. This fad is apparent also in Arab social research in which researchers often analyze Islamist groups as a political phenomenon and not as a social one having its roots in the structures of the society.

The conclusion we can draw here is that agendas are the result of the interaction of complex conditions related to the production of knowledge, the impact of which differs from one society to the other.

The French Agenda(s)

Unlike other Western countries, France has a central research institution, the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). This institution employs 2,200 people including researchers representing all social and natural science disciplines. Other research institutions of lesser importance also exist, those concerned with social and agricultural issues in societies previously occupied by France, especially in Africa, such as Institut pour la Recherche en Cooperation (ORSTOM)[1]. Many research centers are also affiliated with universities. They are supported primarily by the French government but also obtain their own resources from publications and scientific discoveries. Minor funding is also provided by the private sector. These institutions are guided by committees that comprise an overwhelming majority of scientifically renowned members in addition to small number of government-appointed individuals. The committees determine the budget allocation and general policies for each department within a center and therefore give priority to some fields and geographic areas at the expense of others. Thus, it is not a question of whether or not governments and donors influence a research agenda but rather of the extent of this influence. The relative independence of researchers and research in countries like France undermines the influence of donor agencies. Therefore I think the government does influence the choice of topics but it does not affect the

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[1] France's current interest in Africa has declined in comparison with the 1960s and 1970s, which has led laboratories specialized in these areas to shift to other geographical areas or other topics that coincide with its interests.

methods of the research, its process, nor does it shape the research results. The individual researcher plays the major role in determining these.

Thus one can talk about the relative independence of the French research sphere from the political arena. Following the invasion of Kuwait (1990-1991), French specialists on the Arab world adopted nearly a unified stand denouncing France's policy of military involvement against Iraq. Hence, this French research sphere is governed by individual and professional considerations, as well as by collegial relationships. Some studies undertaken by Pierre Bourdieu illustrate how the agenda of a scientific field (*champ*) is constituted and the influence of internal factors of conflict, especially between the new arrivals in a field and the old ones (1980). This process produces various trends and interests in research within the same university or center. Institutes and their agendas also differ in approach and in the topical interests identified by their committees. Several centers in France work on sociological issues such as social movements (for example, the Center of Social Intervention under former director Alain Touraine and current director Michel Wieviorka) while others are concerned with the mechanisms of social reproduction of ruling elites (such as the Center of European Sociology directed by Pierre Bourdieu). It is therefore difficult to speak of a single French research agenda; rather one must speak of several research agendas among different research centers or units.

These examples illustrate the research agenda inside France. Let us now examine in detail the agenda of a French research center outside of France, the Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Economique, Juridique et sociale (CEDEJ), which I know up close as a researcher working there. The center has two divisions, a documentation division that maintains a collection of Egyptian newspapers and periodicals. It also has a library rich with publications on Egypt and Sudan as well as the Arab Mashreq. The other division is for social science research programs. Some of the programs that were active in 1997 included: the preparation of a contemporain and historic atlas for Egypt, supervised by the Unit on Contemporary Cairo; the development of Egyptian demography since Mohamed Ali; sources of Law in Egypt; and the economies of the Palestinian diaspora. Most of the research programs are funded by the French government or private organizations in Europe such as the Agneli Foundation (affiliated with the Fiat car company), Volkswagen, or the Ford Foundation. French, Egyptian,

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as well as other Arab and European researchers are affiliated with CEDEJ. Like all French research centers overseas, the CEDEJ is affiliated with the CNRS or with the French Foreign Ministry[2]. The agenda of this center has been developed through a negotiation process similar to the centers in France. However, the countries that host these centers also have an important influence. For example, French researchers at CEDEJ influence the Egyptian academic context and are mutually influenced by i However the influence of CEDEJ on Egyptian academia is greater than the reverse, as some French researchers seem to feel superior to their Egyptian colleagues, which undermines their ability to learn about Egyptian social science approaches and methods. French researchers are nonetheless influenced by their Arab colleagues' selection of research topics. Gilbert Beaugé and Alain Roussillon (1988) noticed that European researchers who studied the migration of Arab labor to the Gulf countries were influenced by what Arab researchers presented as axioms. The assumption is that the Arab countries are an integrated unit: resource poor Arab countries such as Egypt and countries of the Arab Mashreq offer cheap labor to the rich Gulf states. In this regard, the French researchers could see Arab societies as mirrored in the works of their Arab counterparts.

Another example of the intersection between Egyptian and the French agendas at CEDEJ is the importance attached to the Nasserite era within Egypt as well as to the revival of Arab nationalism. During the 1990-1991 Gulf war, several French researchers in France such as Alain Touraine, Gilles Kepel, Michel Wieviorka, and Maxime Rodinson considered Arab nationalism as a myth (in the meaning given to this term by Levi-Strauss) without any roots among the Arab peoples, and as a mere political discourse that has no echo among the people. French researchers at CEDEJ had different considerations. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the death of former President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1996, CEDEJ organized a workshop and a special issue of *Peuples Méditerranéens* was prepared under the direction of Alain Roussillon, who was a researcher at CEDEJ at the time. This demonstrates and interpenetration of the French and Arab agendas.

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[2] The most important of these centers are located in Cairo, Beirut, Amman, Jerusalem, Tunis, Rabat, Damascus, Berlin, Rome and Oxford.

The Egyptian Agenda

Let us look now at the Egyptian research agenda as part of the wider Arab agenda. Here it must be emphasized that within an overall Arab agenda, there are differences in emphasis and topics between one Arab country and another depending on the degree of influence of the aforementioned factors. Censorship by government authorities in Arab countries restricts scientific research and limits its independence. However, like the French agenda, Arab research agendas do not derive from strict, military-like guidelines. In Egypt in particular, the differences between research centers are significant. In the section below, I will examine the research agenda in Egypt, which offers a good example of how complex factors influence research priorities.

Egypt is in some ways quite cosmopolitan and thus differs from the other Arab states. Many non-Egyptian researchers work in Egyptian, international, or foreign research centers in Egypt. International and national elements mix together to produce local agendas that are neither Arab, African, nor Middle Eastern. This intersection, however, does not imply that the influence of all non-Egyptian researchers on their Egyptian colleagues is the same. While some Egyptian researchers are 'fascinated' by their Western counterparts, the mutual impact is weaker between Egyptian and other Arab researchers residing in Egypt. For example, more than one Arab researcher has told me that they are unable to integrate into Egyptian academic life and feel isolated from their Egyptian counterparts despite their wish to break this isolation.

Unlike many Arab countries, Egypt houses numerous research centers that allow for the many hues of the Egyptian research agenda. For example, The Ibn Khaldoun Development and Research Center and The Arab Research Center address the subjects of democracy and civil society from different angles, and the involvement of the Middle East Studies Center with the government also differs from the approach of the Cairo Center for Human Rights, which attempts to keep a distance from the government. However, despite this pluralism there are still some common denominators among the centers. Their agenda is in some ways uni-dimensional, meaning that each center includes a number of researchers and thinkers that share a common ideological trend. Thus the knowledge they produce is conditioned by that trend.

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Research agendas are also determined by thinkers or more properly, ideologues. These ideologues, whose starting point is not empirical field research but ideological axioms that shape their conceptions, have power and determine the academic research field. Thus the role of the researcher becomes that of dependent or commentator on the ideas put forth by the ideologues. Social research, therefore, becomes vulnerable to the influence of ideology of the state or of the opposition rather than remaining relatively independent of the political field. This phenomenon is not only Egyptian one, but the extent of its presence is very different from a country like France. No research centers or agendas are immune from ideology. However, the question is whether a given research center is willing to expand its network, to allow more debate and discussion among different parties.

Finally, I will present two examples that show differences between the Arab agendas, particularly the Egyptian one, and the French agendas and that clarify the uni-dimensional nature of the Arab agendas and their relationship to daily political reality. The first example is the image of the 'other' and the second is the definition of Palestinian diaspora.

The Image of the Other

The following section reviews the general characteristics of the research priorities in France and in Arab countries. Following the Gulf war and the rise of security problems created by political Islam in Europe, researchers in the Arab world and in the West realized the importance of studying the image of the 'other' vis à vis the self. The Arab Sociologists Association (ASA) was the first organization to give attention to this topic. The Association does not represent all trends of Arab researchers in sociology. However, it at least reflects the interests of a segment of researchers who do not share the same ideology. The Association represents the intersection of a number of networks whose members are linked primarily through personal relations.

An international conference sponsored by the ASA was held in Hamamat, Tunisia in March 1993 and attended by 120 researchers: 40 Arabs and 80 European and other Western scholars. This important European presence reflected the need, recognized by the Association, to establish dialogue between the two sides of the Mediterranean following the 1991

Gulf war. The Association had no problem examining this topic with those 'responsible for distorting the image of the Arabs' both through the media and academic discourse. The organizers suggested that the conference examine the image of the other based on the study of the self starting from the post-Gulf war context and avoiding the eternal critique of how the other regards the self. However, some Arab participants did not take this recommendation into consideration. Instead, they presented papers on the image of the Arabs or Islam in the West and moreover focused on how the West distorted this image.

The papers were extremely diverse. For the Arab, French, Russian, Japanese, or Chinese self, the other could be the West, a women, a religion, or a society. However, a general trend prevailed among the studies considering the other as a single Europe presented as the horrible oppressor, the destructive authority, and the barbarian vis à vis the usurped self.

The seminar was followed by another meeting in Hamamat in November 1996. Only Arab researchers were invited to this meeting in order to restore the balance of papers previously produced by Arab and foreign researchers. The need to study the image of the West for the Arabs, and not the other way around, was reiterated. This time, the other was defined as the West the seminar carried the title: "The Image of the West for the Arabs." To my knowledge, the two seminars were among the most important events organized by the Arab research community on the subject.

On the other hand, CEDEJ organized two seminars on how the West is viewed by Arabs, commissioned by the Italian Agneli Foundation. The French researcher Jean-Noel Ferrié from CEDEJ formed a work team comprising primarily French researchers but also including some Arab ones. Within this research framework, a round table met in Cairo in February 1996 with the participation of researchers from the ASA, and a conference was organized in Turino, Italy in October 1996. Below are some points drawn from the comparison between Arab and Western conferences and thus between their agendas:

1. In the Arab conference, the role of history in the image of the other was omnipresent in the minds of researchers. Subjects such as the European imperialist presence in Arab countries were addressed. In the two CEDEJ conferences, the image of the other was made devoid of

history, while in the Arab events, history was dealt with as though it has an eternal effect on the image of the West to the Arabs and will remain foremost in the minds of the colonized people. On the other hand, the French side studied the phenomena of the intersection between the East and the West through the introduction of technology and Western cultural values into the East and the presence of the East in the West through Arab migrants.

2. When Arab and French researchers in the Cairo conference did not agree on how to study the image of the other, some researchers spoke about the specificity of a methodology with which the Arab societies have to be examined, and consequently about an Arab sociology that is different from Western sociology. Talking about specificity in this sense was a tool in order to cut short the discussion and brand the others, the Westerners, as ideologues.

3. To many Arab researchers, the other was one and eternal, that is, the West. The West had an essence vis à vis the self, which also had an essence. Thus the West, as well as the Arab, become a unit in which all components are bad or good, independent of social class and of transformations through history. Conversely, French researchers asserted that the self and the other are changing forms and not substance, so the image continuously changes according to the historic moment and the historicity of societies. This point seems to demonstrate that the Arab agenda has difficulty in dealing with the concept of a society having various representations of the other.

4. Despite the prominence of the topic of the West as other in the first ASA seminar, other topics were also discussed, such as men vis à vis women, and *effendis* vis à vis commoners (*al 'awam*). What seemed unthinkable in this context, however, was to consider an Arab as other to other Arabs. The Libyan scholar Dr. Mustafa Al Tir presented a paper on the image of Arabs seen by Libyans in which he analyzed the results of a field study undertaken by his research center in Libya. He used Egyptians and Tunisians as examples of neighboring Arabs, and Kuwaitis as distant Arabs. To provide a comparative dimension, he took

the Swiss as a non-Arab case. Dr. Al Tir was surprised to note that the Libyans' most negative image was of Egyptians, followed by Tunisians. The image improved with the Kuwaitis and became absolutely positive with the Swiss. He noted that the study results negated his preliminary assumptions, that geographical proximity is an important factor in producing positive images and that the image of the Arab seen by Libyan Arabs would be more positive than the image of the Westerners. To sum up, many researchers are still incapable of conceiving that the Arab can be the other to other Arabs. In spite of the fragmentation of historical Arab 'empires' and the impact of borders between Arab states, a dominant vision among Arab researchers considers differences between Arab societies as superficial rather than that the absence of Arab unity is not only a result of dictatorial Arab regimes, but also the result of differences between Arab peoples. This shows that social science research is often dependent on the ideas of nationalist thinkers who regard the state as the only force obstructing Arab unity.

5. Research approaches were also different between the Arab and Western conferences. The presentations in the Arab conferences used a macro-level rather than a micro-level unit of analysis. For example, one of the presentations in the first Arab conference dealt with the image of the Israelis for the Arabs. The question that follows is: Which Israeli? The individual, the society, the government, the Israelis portrayed in the mass media or in Israeli literature, and so forth? This lack of clarity sometimes reflects the absence of field studies and the dominance of descriptive discourse based solely on theoretical analysis. Of course not all research has to be empirical; research can aim at an integrative and overall vision of societal phenomena. However this should be practiced with some caution. We find sometimes the same individual in seminars dealing with different topics; the same 'thinker' would speak about Islamic groups, the problem of water, the problem of poverty in Egypt, and Moroccan civil society. Here I am talking about well-known people who switch from subject to another according to demand. In this respect, to be a sociologist or anthropologist is merely a status that confers legitimacy to write on all subjects even without prior field

research. Thus, the eagerness of researchers to shift from the micro-level field studies to more broad, macro-level studies reflects the desire to move from the status of dependent researchers to independent thinkers or ideologues. In fact, this phenomenon exists as well in French society but with less intensity.

On the other hand, most of the papers presented in the French conference in Turino were micro-level anthropological and sociological studies. One example was a study on the image of the West in women's salons in Egypt and Morocco, in which Susan Osman attempted to understand the dynamics that create the image of the West to Moroccans[3].

The Concept of the Palestinian Diaspora: The Problematic

Another example that clarifies the characteristics of the Arab agenda(s) and how it/they differ(s) from the French agendas, is the concept of the Palestinian diaspora. This also shows how the research agenda is dependent upon the political agenda.

The theoretical problematic in my book, *Between Two Worlds: Palestinian Businessmen in the Diaspora and the Establishment of a Palestinian Entity* gave rise to various reactions among Arab and French researchers (Hanafi 1996). Among the debatable issues were the definition of the Palestinian, the problem of dual allegiance, the use of the term 'diaspora,' and the comparison of the Palestinian diaspora with other world diasporas.

The Definition of the Palestinian

The theoretical section of the book dealt with the international legal definition of the Palestinian. I considered Palestinians "all those who were born and lived in Palestine before 1948, and their children and grandchildren, regardless of the present country of residence and the nationality they carry." I urged negotiators in the Palestinian Israeli Refugee Working Group,

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[3] All the papers presented in this conference were published in a special issue of *Egypte/Monde Arabes*, no. 30-31, 2nd and 3rd trimesters.

resulting from the Oslo agreement, to adhere to this comprehensive definition. On the other hand, this definition would not be appropriate to study Palestinians of the diaspora because of its general and 'loose' nature. I therefore suggested introducing the concept of identity in order to take into consideration those who identify themselves as Palestinians.

The above definition raises several complex questions: Can we redefine as Palestinians those who are called "the Arabs of Israel" sometimes by themselves and sometimes by others? Can Jordanians of Palestinian origin who reside in Jordan declare their origins? To what extent can the children of a Palestinian family that has lived in Chile for three generations and has intermarried with Chileans be identified as Palestinian? I asserted in my book that it is not my goal to formally determine who is a Palestinian for the purpose of resolving the political issue of who has the right to return and to compensation. My objective is to understand all possible ways that identity is formed, taking into consideration factors related to historic, individual, and family trajectories, socioeconomic status, and the political context.

I explained that I do not view the Palestinians outside Palestine as one entity. I classified them according to their legal status in the host country, and their right to return, in the following way:

Diasporized Palestinians: They are Palestinians in exile who were able to integrate into other societies after obtaining citizenship or permanent residence in the host country. This group of Palestinians is mostly present in North and South America and Jordan.

Palestinians in transit: They have legal, but fragile and weak status in the host country. The best example is the Palestinians in Lebanon.

Economic migrants: Unlike the above two groups, they have the right to live in Palestinian territories or in Israel (even after the formation of the Israeli state), but they opted to live outside for economic reasons. They have a fragile legal status because they carry temporary residence permits, since Israeli authorities forbid Palestinians with foreign nationalities from returning to Palestinian territories. Members of this group live mostly in the Gulf countries.

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Some Egyptian and Palestinian researchers had negative reactions to this classification, based on their belief that it harms the Palestinian negotiations with Israel over the ultimate solution of the refugee problem. They felt a need to consider all Palestinians outside Palestine as refugees. They claim that their legal status, vis-à-vis integration, into the host countries should not be facilitated until a final settlement is reached[4]. For these researchers, their political agenda imposes limits on what can and cannot be said. On the other hand, the French researchers had a more positive reaction, even if some of them reflected in their views the Palestinian demands. Again, this shows that the borders between French and Arab researchers are not always clear.

Multiple Allegiances

In my book (1997:12) I noted that the Palestinian identity cannot be expressed by all Palestinians in the diaspora in the same way or with the same intensity. I refuse to create an essence for the collective identity, regardless of its historicity, that renders it immutable despite the passage of time (Ferrié 1991). What remains is to analyze the collective Palestinian identity within the context of its conflict with the collective or differential identity produced in the new societies. Each people in the diaspora has a history, one part of which is common and related to heritage and the other which is affected by processes in the new societies. In other words, we pose the question whether Palestinians abroad have preserved their ethnicity as a community, in congruence with their social class position and acculturation in the diasporic societies. Thus, we shall not question whether it is appropriate to feel two simultaneous identities: the Palestinian identity and that emerging from the receiving society, even though the concept of dual allegiance has been criticized by many researchers, at least in France. The concept is being more and more recognized in the European social sciences, particularly for citizens who belong to a religious or ethnic minority.

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[4] Here I should distinguish between *integration* and *assimilation*. Integration means giving civil rights to Palestinians in their host countries, while assimilation suggests the 'melding' of Palestinians into the host countries, such that they become an indistinguishable part of the host country's population, the latter of which I reject totally.

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Several studies on this subject show that these people have joint allegiance (i.e., to their religion and to the nation) without any schizophrenic feelings. [See Michel Wieviorka's study of French Jews (1994)]. Social sciences no longer speak of single allegiances or single identities, but rather to an intricate management of several levels of identities.

Some Arab researchers also criticized whether a Palestinian could indeed have dual allegiance, i.e., how can a Palestinian be Palestinian and Jordanian or Palestinian and American at the same time. They considered that people have to specify the single identity they feel is most appropriate for them. Again this demonstrates their uni-dimensional vision of complex issues such as identity.

The Palestinians as Diaspora

I pointed in my book to the problem of using the term 'diaspora' (1997:17). The original Greek definition of the term '*diaspeirein*' is simple and points to a migration movement. However the technical meanings of terms often change[5]. Even if this word has been used to refer to Jewish groups around the world, it does not mean that it should be used exclusively for them. Comparisons among other groups, including the Palestinian diaspora and others, such as the Kurds, the Jews, the Armenians, and the Irish are useful in understanding the mechanisms of these scattered groups and the kin and economic networks that they create. After a lecture I gave upon the publication of my book in Egypt, I was again criticized for using the term Palestinian diaspora and my attempt to contrast it to other world diasporas. What is feared most is the elimination of the specificity of the Palestinian case. By definition, drawing comparison is to study a situation in light of similar (or parallel) situations so as to find out the level of specificity.

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[5] According to Gonzales (1992:161) the word diaspora indicates a mechanism of dispersal as well as the actual immigrant communities. Fossaert (1989) adds to this a condition, which is the non-assimilation of immigrants into the population. I would argue that exile is not enough to create a diaspora. There has to be a feeling of allegiance to one collectivity. As for Kodmani-Darwish (1994:57), this concept that is suitable for the Armenian and Jewish diasporas does not apply to the Palestinians because it assumes a certain level of accommodation and assimilation into the host country and that they generally obtain citizenship. This is not always the case with Palestinians.

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Comparisons, therefore, eliminate the assumption that specificity is axiomatic.

Conclusion

In this article I attempted to show that a research agenda is a complex outcome of a wide range of factors rather than a product shaped by a single state, culture, or religion by exploring some of the factors that shape the construction of a research agenda and exploring the dimensions of the French and Arab research agendas. I emphasized on one hand that while the French agenda with all its ideological and political dimensions is pluralistic, Arab agendas may be described as uni-dimensional within the same research center. Moreover I noted that the majority of research centers in Egypt tend to follow the agendas of the ideologues more than research centers do in France. Researcher's level of autonomy differs from one context and society to the other; it appears to be quite significant in France, for example, and marginal in Egypt and other Arab countries.

Moreover, I noted the difficulty of drawing strict lines between French and Arab agendas and portrayed the complex intersections and disagreements between them through the problematics of foreign research centers in Arab countries and trans-national researchers.

The problematic of the Palestinian diaspora shows that taboos are not imposed only by the political authorities but also by the thinkers themselves. The reason may lie in their intense politicization and undemocratic spirits.

I also tried to illuminate the trend toward case specificity in the Arab agendas (for example, that the Palestinians are unlike other diasporas), which limits the ability of researchers to benefit from the comparative perspective or the use of international concepts and terms. This culturalist trend is found very often in Arab agendas.

The examples mentioned here are indicators of general dominating trends. There is a great deal of resistance among researchers to these trends and continuous attempts to dispel them in order to move out to a much wider horizon. I did not attempt to present a model that would encompass all the forms of resistance, because their dynamics cannot be understood cross-sectionally. However, through this process of negotiation, one can transcend

stereotyped discussions of agendas and open the space for comparative research between societies within the region or even outside of it.

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