

MAIA CARTER HALLWARD. *Transnational Activism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 260 pages, notes, index, bibliography. Hardcover US\$105.00 ISBN 978-1-1373-4985-9.

*Transnational Activism* is a much welcomed and sophisticated addition to the literature on social movements generally and solidarity with Palestinians specifically. Maia Carter Hallward describes four distinct manifestations of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in the U.S. and demonstrates that pro- and anti-BDS activists operate with competing conceptions of peace and justice. Each chapter in the book discusses an individual case: (1) Code Pink's "Stolen Beauty" campaign targeting cosmetics that profit from the occupation of Palestinian territories, (2) the University of California at Berkeley's Student Government Divestment Bill, (3) Olympia Food Co-op's boycotting and de-shelving efforts, and (4) the Presbyterian Church's divestment from U.S. companies that directly benefit from the Israeli Occupation. The four campaigns are distinct, with different institutional cultures, values, and memberships.

This point provides the conceptual tools to problematize the counter-critique of anti-BDS voices, which portray BDS activism as a transnational "movement" with many tentacles, insidiously bringing anti-Semitism through the back door while deploying the discourse of human rights and international law. *Transnational Activism* recognizes this pattern of argumentation in the four cases examined and concludes that pro- and anti-BDS activists operate with competing conceptions of peace and justice. The first is grounded in a human rights paradigm, and the second in a dialogue paradigm.

Further scholarly investigation is needed to move beyond this descriptive observation to an analysis of the implications of the supposed incompatibility of these two paradigms. This difficult task requires researchers to recognize the instrumental and cynical use of the accusation of anti-Semitism or self-hate but also to take seriously the phenomenon of anti-Semitism and the instrumentalization of the human rights discourse itself. *Transnational Activism* only flirts with this important discussion. However, it provides an important conceptual intervention more broadly in social movement literature on collective action transnationally.

Hallward's connection of the peace and conflict literature on nonviolent resistance (especially her discussion of Gene Sharp's work) with a discussion of social movement theorizing is certainly the most profound contribution of

this book. The author could have gone further in challenging and expanding the theoretical scope of the discussion on collective action as it relates to consumer boycotts and spent less space documenting microscopic details and interviewing activists in each campaign. Although the testimonies of interviewees from all four campaigns add personal texture to the analysis, the repetition of the take-away issues in each case diminished their impact. The reader is left wishing for more conceptual unpacking than the book provides.

In analyzing each BDS campaign, Hallward illuminates the contestability of the discourse within which each group operates and which informs the debates surrounding boycotting and divestment efforts. The question of Jewish identity and its contestability is threaded throughout each campaign, with a careful consideration of the forcefulness of the label of anti-Semitism as well as how Jewish white privilege plays out in the deliberations surrounding each BDS campaign. The four cases all include Jewish actors, whether as full participants or as supportive “certifying” interlocutors. The question of Jewish identity and its contestability is a crucial point needing further development and contextualization because it intersects in profound ways with the primary focus of Palestine transnational work to change the prevailing narratives about the conflict.

The success of nonviolent resistance, as many scholars and activists have noted, hinges on generating empathy, outrage, and recognition in third parties of their own complicity in some evil (in this case, the Occupation, by way of consumerism and investment). But as Hallward rightly argues, the impact of each instance of activism does not necessarily need to be measured in terms of bringing a significant economic challenge to Israel. Rather, the aim of each campaign is to challenge the legitimacy of a particular Zionist narrative and make audible silenced Palestinian narratives. This point conveys the importance of cultural and contextual sensitivities in imagining an effective counter-narrative. The efforts of BDS campaigns are threatening precisely because they challenge the narrative and image of Israel, which explains why Israel has launched, as *Transnational Activism* mentions, a rebranding campaign portraying itself as friendly to gay rights and environmental concerns. Hallward brings to life effective counter-discourses through concrete examples of focused efforts to boycott or divest. She captures the voices of activists and reflects analytically on patterns of debates as they unfold within a specific context. In this regard, an explicit discussion of Orientalism could have been beneficial. Still, *Transnational Activism* offers an impressive interpretive frame that

illuminates the complexity of the BDS “movement” as well as transnational solidarity activism more broadly. ✂

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.14](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.14)

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**MARIA HOLT AND HAIFAA JAWAD.** *Women, Islam, and Resistance in the Arab World*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013. ix + 211 pages, preface, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$55.00 ISBN 978-1-58826-925-6.

**Standard media and government stereotypes tend to portray women in the Islamic world as powerless, passive victims in need of rescue from abusive men, laws, and governments. Maria Holt and Haifaa Jawad’s *Women, Islam, and Resistance in the Arab World* challenges these stereotypes through in-depth case studies of women in three critical conflict zones: post-civil-war Lebanon, post-invasion Iraq, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The book highlights instances of women’s agency and resistance in the midst of violent warfare. Based on fieldwork involving questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in 2002–2003, 2006–2007, and 2010–2011, Holt and Jawad analyze the interplay among violence, religious faith, and women’s presence in crisis situations, ultimately concluding that Islam serves as a source of comfort and strength, and a tool of empowerment, albeit at the individual level, for Arab Muslim women in conflict zones.**

The most important contribution of this work is its original data set, particularly the chapter on Iraqi women, which represents the first in-depth fieldwork on the experiences of Iraqi women living in exile in Syria and Jordan. Particularly informative is the recognition of the triple challenges faced by Iraqi women—namely, the U.S.-led invasion and subsequent occupation government, the rise of Iraqi militias, and sectarian violence—all of which victimized women in different ways, whether through direct abuse and humiliation, loss of family members, forced exile, or removal from jobs and the accompanying loss of livelihood. The chapter challenges government and media portrayals of the U.S.-led “liberation” of Iraq, looking at its impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who lost their jobs, homes, families, and, most of all, personal security. This led to the rise of a strong, broad-based group of resistance movements, the most important of which are the Iraqi National Foundation Congress and the Association of Muslim Scholars, neither of which has been acknowledged by the U.S.