



Zionism and Academic Hegemony: The Intersection of Power, Knowledge, and Suppression in the United States Universities

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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Abstract

This paper critically explores the impact of Zionism on academic freedom and knowledge production in U.S. universities. It emphasizes how political lobbying, financial influence, and allegations of antisemitism are strategically employed to establish a cultural hegemony that determines what discourse is acceptable. Based on Michel Foucault's theory of power-knowledge, which posits that knowledge and power are intimately linked and shape one another, and Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which explains how dominant groups maintain power through ideological means, this study examines how Zionist organizations influence higher education frameworks, research priorities, and public discourse. This manipulation often serves to marginalize, silence, or delegitimize critical perspectives that oppose or challenge Israeli policies and actions, especially those related to the occupation of Palestinian territories and human rights violations. This paper analyzes certain instances highlighting these dynamics, such as the rescinded job offer to Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois following his criticism of Israel's genocide in Gaza on social media. This case, among others, underscores how Zionist lobbying and donor pressures can directly affect university governance, academic appointments, and freedom of expression within academic settings. Additional examples include the suppression of pro-Palestinian viewpoints and the punishment of students and faculty who advocate for Palestinian rights at various prominent U.S. institutions, which further demonstrate the broader, systematic efforts to control academic discourse. By examining these cases, the study reveals that Zionism's influence is not limited to isolated cases but creates a widespread atmosphere where academic freedom is restricted. Universities meant to be pillars of free thought and critical inquiry, increasingly become arenas where dissent is suppressed and ideological conformity is imposed. This paper highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which Zionism shapes the intellectual landscape in the U.S., reinforcing power structures that limit open debate and critical scholarship.

Keywords: Zionism, Academic freedom, Cultural hegemony, Power-Knowledge, USA universities.

Siyonizm ve Akademik Hegemonya: Güç, Bilgi ve Baskının ABD Üniversitelerindeki Kesişimi

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Öz

Bu makale, Siyonizm'in ABD üniversitelerindeki akademik özgürlük ve bilgi üretimi üzerindeki etkilerini eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Çalışma, siyasi lobcilik, finansal güç kullanımı ve antisemitizm suçlamalarının, kabul edilebilir söylemi belirleyen bir kültürel hegemonya oluşturmak için stratejik olarak nasıl kullanıldığını vurgulamaktadır. Michel Foucault'nun bilgi-iktidar teorisine—bilgi ve iktidarın birbirini karşılıklı olarak şekillendirdiği anlayışına—ve Antonio Gramsci'nin kültürel hegemonya kavramına—egemen grupların iktidarlarını ideolojik araçlarla nasıl koruduğunu açıklayan teorisine—dayanan bu makale, Siyonist organizasyonların yükseköğretim çerçevelerini, araştırma önceliklerini ve kamusal söylemi nasıl etkilediğini analiz etmektedir. Bu etkiler, genellikle Filistin topraklarının işgali ve insan hakları ihalleriyle ilgili İsrail politikalarına ve eylemlerine karşı çıkan veya bunları eleştiren perspektiflerin marjinalize edilmesi, susturulması veya gayrimüserru ilan edilmesi şeklinde kendini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, zikredilen dinamikleri somut örneklerle inlemektedir. Örneğin, Steven Salaita'nın İsrail'in Gazze'deki soykırımını sosyal medyada eleştirmesi sonrasında Illinois Üniversitesi'nde kendisine yapılan iş teklifinin geri çekilmesi, Siyonist lobiciliğin ve bağımsız baskıların üniversite yönetimlerini, akademik atamaları ve akademik ortamlardaki ifade özgürlüğünü doğrudan nasıl etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, ABD'deki çeşitli önde gelen üniversitelerde, Filistin haklarını savunan öğrenci ve akademisyenlerin susturulması ve cezalandırılması gibi örnekler, akademik söylemi kontrol altına almaya yönelik daha geniş ve sistematik çabaları gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu vakaları inceleyen makale, Siyonizm'in etkisinin yalnızca münferit olaylarla sınırlı kalmadığını, aksine akademik özgürlüğün kısıtlandığı yaygın bir atmosfer yarattığını ortaya koymaktadır. Özgür düşüncenin ve eleştirel sorgulamanın merkezleri olması gereken üniversiteler, giderek muhalefetin bastırıldığı ve ideolojik uyumun dayatıldığı mekânlara dönüşmektedir. Bu çalışma, Siyonizm'in ABD'deki entelektüel ortamı şekillendiren mekanizmalarının daha derin bir şekilde anlaşılmasına ve açık tartışma ile eleştirel akademik çalışmaların kısıtlayan güç yapılarının nasıl pekiştirildiğine dair bir farkındalık oluşturmaya amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyonizm, Akademik özgürlük, Kültürel hegemonya, Bilgi-İktidar ilişkisi, ABD üniversiteleri.

Introduction

The Israeli war crimes in Gaza since October 7 have significantly impacted not only the Israel-Palestine conflict but also the broader Middle Eastern and global political landscape. Israel's multifaceted genocide in Israel has deliberately targeted civilians, bombed UN schools and facilities, and occupied hospitals, creating an emerging concept in academic literature referred to as "war on hospitals".¹ International and human rights organizations report that Israel intentionally violates the laws of war and effectively rewrites them² to justify its actions.³ These articles illustrate Israel's approach to international law, particularly war law. In this sense, Israel seeks exceptions to established international norms in a similar way to the United States, reinterpreting these laws to justify military invasions that would otherwise be considered illegal under current international standards. In other words, this suggests a deliberate strategy to reshape international law according to national security interests, thus challenging its universality and consistency. Like American practices, Israel's exceptionalism underscores a broader trend where powerful states reshape global laws to meet their interests.

It has been argued that Israel is deliberately committing genocide in its actions. This has triggered a global uprising against it, dubbed a "global intifada" in Palestinian political terminology.⁴ The Israeli genocidal war on Gaza has revitalized the Palestinian national cause, bringing it back to international attention. As a result, the Israeli-Palestine conflict has re-emerged as a central topic of international discourse. Additionally, civil society, non-governmental organizations, and universities have begun to speak out against Israel's genocidal war on Gaza despite Western political hegemony's unconditional support for Israel.

Several universities and educational institutions played an important role in shaping the global awareness of Israel's genocide in Gaza. There was widespread criticism of Israel's genocide and war crimes at leading universities in the United States, such as Columbia and Harvard. This reaction resulted in creating a powerful environment of resistance within Western universities against Israeli genocide, driven by students and civil society.⁵ A new trend of criticism against Zionism has been evident through university encampments in the United States. The encampments for Palestinians on U.S. college campuses, sparked by President Biden's firm support for Israel, are creating significant political ramifications. Dunne says these protests reflect growing discontent among younger voters and civil rights activists, who view Biden's stance as neglecting Palestinian human rights. Dunne further argues that this process could result in an "American Intifada", potentially altering the

¹ Alessandra Bajec, "Israel's war on hospitals in Gaza", *The New Arab*, 21 November 2023, <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/israels-war-hospitals-gaza>, (Accessed Date 22 May 2024).

² Neve Gordon, "Israel seeks to rewrite the laws of war", *Aljazeera* (15 July 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/7/15/israel-seeks-to-rewrite-the-laws-of-war>, (Accessed Date 09 August 2024).

³ Leonard Rubenstein, "Israel's Rewriting of the Law of War" (21 December 2023), <https://www.justsecurity.org/90789/israels-rewriting-of-the-law-of-war/>, (Accessed Date 07 July 2024).

⁴ Hanna Alshaikh, "The US Academy and the Destruction of Gaza's Education System", *Arab Center Washington DC* (03 July 2024), <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-us-academy-and-the-destruction-of-gazas-education-system/>, (Accessed Date 10 July 2024).

⁵ Charles Dunne, "Gaza, Biden, and an American Intifada", *Arab Center Washington DC* (27 March 2024), <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/gaza-biden-and-an-american-intifada/>, (Accessed Date 30 June 2024).

political landscape in the U.S. He also emphasizes that this unrest could influence upcoming elections, as the President risks turning away a vital voter base crucial for his re-election. The election results demonstrate the significant influence of pro-Palestinian activism in American politics. Notably, the shift of young, pro-Palestinian voters toward third-party candidates played a decisive role in shaping the outcome. Statistical data reveals that this trend may have directly contributed to Biden's loss, emphasizing the critical impact of alienating a vital voter base essential for Democratic candidates. In Michigan, for instance, Arab American voters overwhelmingly supported third-party candidates, leading to a noticeable decline in Democratic support.⁶ This shift underlines the importance of addressing foreign policy concerns to maintain the loyalty of key voter demographics.⁷ Moreover, considering the extent of these encampments, it is evident that Israel has lost support in the West and has created a generation of Jewish Americans generation that opposes Zionism.

Israel's actions in Gaza have caused a strong backlash from university students, but university administrations and higher education establishments have aligned themselves with Israel. This alignment has manifested itself in aggressive practices, illegal actions, detentions, and violent interventions against protesting students and supporting academics. By deploying police forces, administrations have brutally pressured and suppressed students and academicians.⁸ Furthermore, the U.S. academy has significantly failed Gaza by not adequately addressing or intervening in the destruction of its education system by Israeli forces. According to Alsaikh⁹, American universities have largely remained silent or have engaged in insufficient condemnation of Israel's genocidal war targeting Gaza's educational infrastructure. This passive attitude has not only allowed the continued suffering of Palestinian students and educators but has also resulted in a lack of accountability for human rights violations. US academics' indifference reveals a broader failure to uphold educational and humanitarian values internationally.

Mearsheimer, Walt¹⁰ and Pappé¹¹ point out that this scenario illustrates the profound influence of Israel's lobbying power over Western institutions, particularly those in the United States. Zionism has significantly undermined free thought within the US' prestigious universities, paralleling Australia.¹² A significant part of Zionism's influence in the US is the co-opting of the educational sector, resulting in a change in academic and scientific production. Consequently, academic institutions in the U.S. are experiencing an erosion of independent thinking due to Zionist pressures and ideological influences such as Zionism, as observed in Australia. It illustrates the difficulty of maintaining academic freedom when faced with powerful political and ideological forces.

⁶ Abdelhalim Abdelrahman, "Why Michigan's Arab Americans Voted for Trump" (13 November 2024).

⁷ Charles Dunne, "Gaza, Biden, and an American Intifada" (27 March 2024).

⁸ Alice Speri, "'A police state': US universities impose rules to avoid repeat of Gaza protests", *The Guardian* (17 August 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/aug/17/campus-protest-rules> (Accessed date 21 September 2024).

⁹ Alshaikh, "The US Academy and the Destruction of Gaza's Education System".

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 112-128.

¹¹ Ilan Pappé, *Lobbying for Zionism on Both Sides of the Atlantic* (London, the UK: Oneworld Publications, 2024), 251-315.

¹² Jumana Bayeh and Nick Riemer, "Palestine Solidarity and Zionist Backlash in Australian Universities", *Middle East Critique*, 4.

Given all these considerations, this study contends that Zionism influences academic freedom and production at U.S. universities. By employing case studies as a method, the paper demonstrates the pressures and systematic attacks on academics and students who criticize the Israeli genocide in Gaza. It begins by critically reviewing the literature about academic production and power relations since many suggest that academic production is not independent. The study then combines Foucault's theory of knowledge and power with Gramsci's concept of hegemony to provide a theoretical and conceptual framework. This framework argues that Zionist-influenced Western hegemony shapes scientific publications. Finally, it examines the U.S.' relationship with Zionism and Israel, highlighting the post-October 7 restrictions on academic freedoms in American universities.

1. Literature Review: The Interplay of Education, Politics, and Power

Several studies have examined the relationship between education, politics, and economics, concluding that politics and economics often influence educational systems and academic productions. In addition, it has been argued that science is not independent of foreign influences, and scientific publications do not always offer concrete solutions to contemporary problems. Certain social sciences disciplines, such as political science and international relations, are becoming increasingly irrelevant to international crises. It can be argued that concentrating only on academic studies, producing scholarly publications, and teaching theories without practical applications continues to serve those shaping the current political science and international relations crises. The failure of this approach not only preserves the existing power structures and systemic injustices that cause these crises, but it also fails to address pressing global issues. Because of neglecting concrete problem-solving and meaningful actions, academia becomes complicit in maintaining the status quo rather than fostering meaningful change, forcing it to call for a radical shift toward practices that confront and dismantle systemic injustices and harms so that universities can become relevant to global crises.

1.1. The Influence of Power on Historical Narratives

History writing or academic presentation is often far from being purely scientific and independent of politics. Jacob Burckhardt emphasizes how political agendas shaped historical narratives by analyzing the Medici family in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. During the Renaissance, Burckhardt argues, the Medici used art, culture, and history to legitimize their authority, exemplifying how historiography was intertwined with politics.¹³ Similarly, Gabriel Piterberg, in his examination of Sultan Osman II's deposition and assassination in 1622, places historiography as a subject. He offers a multi-layered perspective on the state concept through different and competing representations of events. Utilizing postmodern narrative theories, Piterberg emphasizes that historiography's contradictory and political nature is an undeniable part of Ottoman history. He explores the linguistic differences in archives where "lived history" and "written history" intertwine,

¹³ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, England; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books, 1990), 10–20.

seeking the methods and agendas behind them. Therefore, it can be argued that the influence of politics and power on scholarship practice is significant within the science of history.¹⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot¹⁵ examined how power dynamics shaped history writing, making, and recording. Trouillot argues that those who hold power often shape historical narratives to serve their interests, thereby silencing alternative perspectives and voices. He demonstrates this through various historical examples, such as the Haitian Revolution, where the mainstream historical narratives have minimized or ignored the contributions of Africans. Trouillot's analysis reveals that powerful political groups determine the significance of an event and its inclusion in historical narratives. This manipulation of historical narratives reinforces existing power structures and marginalizes dissenting voices, demonstrating that history writing is deeply intertwined with political and social power dynamics. Likewise, Lynn Hunt comprehensively explores historical thinking and methodology in her book *History: Why It Matters*. Hunt explores how historians interpret, analyze, and write about the past in her book, encouraging readers to reflect critically on history's role in shaping contemporary understandings.¹⁶

1.2. Zionism's Influence on Middle Eastern Historiography

Zionism has had a profound impact on the Middle East's historiography, particularly in the narratives surrounding historical Israel and Palestine. For instance, Sayegh's work critically examines the Zionist influence on academia, highlighting how it fosters biased historiography that marginalizes Palestinian experiences while legitimizing Zionist settler narratives. He underscores the normalization of violence, racial discrimination, and the dismissal of Palestinian rights in academic discourse, calling for a more balanced and critical approach to historical writing.¹⁷ Similarly, Keith W. Whitelam,¹⁸ in "The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History," criticizes Zionist influences on academic history as a means of marginalizing Palestinian narratives and constructing an idealized version of ancient Israel in the study of history. This narrative has been reinforced through biblical studies, particularly in Western academia, where the focus on ancient Israel often overshadows and undermines the rich history of ancient Palestine.

Zionism has heavily influenced biblical studies discourse, emphasizing ancient Israel's historical significance. Scholars like Philip Davies¹⁹ in "In Search of Ancient Israel" argue that most of what is commonly accepted as ancient Israel history is, in fact, scholarly construction rather than objective historical reality. This construction legitimizes modern Zionist claims to the land while neglecting or ignoring Palestinian civilizations' historical presence and contributions. Publications shaped by Zionist influence often depict Palestine

¹⁴ Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 102.

¹⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 70-108.

¹⁶ Lynn Hunt, *History: Why It Matters* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), 130.

¹⁷ Faye A. Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut, Lebanon: Research Center Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965), 11-21.

¹⁸ Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 44-45.

¹⁹ Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel": A Study in Biblical Origins (The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies)* (London, the UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 85.

as an empty or underdeveloped land before the arrival of the Israelites. This reinforces the narrative of a “return” to a promised land. This narrative completely rejects the diverse and long history of Palestinian society and culture.

According to Joseph A. Massad, Zionist settlers have renamed and reconfigured Palestinian geography, showing the direct influence of Zionist ideology on archaeology and history. Before Israel was established, “Israel” referred to the Jewish people rather than a physical state. However, the renaming of Palestine as Israel was part of a broader Zionist strategy to reshape the land’s history and identity. Archaeology played a crucial role in this transformation, serving as a tool to revive the so-called ancient Jewish lands and reframe Palestinian histories according to Zionist narratives. Massad highlights how Zionist institutions like the Jewish National Fund’s “Place Names Committee” systematically renamed villages, towns, and regions to erase Palestinian presence and reinforce a Jewish historical claim.²⁰

1.2.1. Zionism’s Control Over Academic Institutions

Zionism has had a significant impact on academia, profoundly shaping literature. Many works in this area are instruments of Zionist ideology and reflections of its influence. According to Ghassan Kanafani²¹, literature became integral to the Zionist movement. It played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, mobilizing political and military support, and expanding the network. Notable examples, such as George Eliot’s “Daniel Deronda” and Theodor Herzl’s “The Old New Land,” are classic examples of literature promoting Zionist ideals, preparing the groundwork for political Zionism. These works often portray Jewish characters overcoming oppression, emphasizing Jewish superiority and the inevitability of reclaiming Palestine. In addition, Eliot and Herzl marginalize Arab populations. For example, Herzl’s work, in particular, is cited as laying the foundational style for Zionist literature, depicting Palestine as an uninhabited land awaiting Jewish revival, a narrative that disregards the existing Arab population.

The impact of Zionism extends beyond literature to the broader academic landscape. The Israeli academy, despite its alleged commitment to free speech, systematically represses criticism of Israeli genocide in Gaza, revealing its dependence on Zionist influences. Maya Wind²², in her book “Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom,” provides a compelling critique of the academic environment in Israel, focusing on how Zionism controls and diverts knowledge production. Wind argues that Israeli universities have become academic apparatuses for Judaization policies as part of Zionist strategies, serving beyond their role as educational entities to support Israel’s demographic and strategic objectives.

Wind presents specific examples illustrating how Zionism influences academic production in Israel and Palestine. A prime example is the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, founded in 1918. Strategically positioned on Mount Scopus, its location has symbolic

²⁰ Joseph A. Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinian Struggle* (New York, New York: Routledge, 2006), 36.

²¹ Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestinian Literature and the Zionist Narrative* (London, the UK: Pluto Press, 2022), 42-43.

²² Maya Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 23.

significance, playing a significant role on the road to pre-Nakba Israel.²³ The university's law faculty has played a major role in establishing laws governing property acquisition, citizenship, security, and emergency measures, which support and legitimize Israel's apartheid regime. These laws have facilitated Israel's ongoing displacement of Palestinians and Jewish settlement policies, deepening the occupation. As Sen noted²⁴, it is obvious how academia is involved in Israeli crimes, particularly its suppression of criticism of Israeli policies in Gaza. Israeli universities are far from being neutral but rather serve Zionism, censor Palestinians and Palestinian voices²⁵ or critical voices from Israel, and mobilize international support for Israel's military actions, as seen in responses from institutions like Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University. Wind documents several examples and provides strong evidence to demonstrate how Zionism holds significant influence over academic institutions, curtailing free speech and critical scholarship that challenges the Israeli state narrative.²⁶

1.3. Financial Influence on Academic Production

A well-documented correlation exists between academic curricula, academic activities, publications, and university donations, demonstrating the link between power, money, and academic production. According to Draege and Lestra²⁷, financial dependencies, especially those from Gulf countries, can potentially restrict academic freedom and research topics. Financial dependencies weaken the independence of universities and largely determine educational and research policies, even affecting curricula. Therefore, universities and academic institutions confront significant challenges in maintaining independence amidst the political and ideological pressures accompanying external funding.

Aldo Geuna²⁸ examined how financing mechanisms impact university behavior, performance, and independence. Geuna's analysis, particularly with Ben R. Martin²⁹, shows that funding and third-party contributions are significant in universities' strategic decisions and priorities. These funding structures often lead to unintended negative consequences, such as reduced academic freedom and a shift toward market-driven behavior within universities. Geuna's research demonstrates that fund allocations can divert universities to prioritize specific research areas and determine policies to secure more funding, potentially at the expense of academic freedom and independence.³⁰ University funding can be diverted to prioritize specific research areas, resulting in policies that may adversely affect academic

²³ Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London, the UK: Verso, 2008), 143.

²⁴ Somdeep Sen, "Israeli academia is directly complicit in the crimes of the state", *Aljazeera* (10 September 2024), <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/9/10/israeli-academia-is-directly-complicit-in-the-crimes-of-the-state> (Accessed Date 25 September 2024).

²⁵ Lana Tatour, "Censoring Palestine: Human Rights, Academic Freedom and the IHRA", *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, (13 August 2024), 1-9.

²⁶ Wind, *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom*, 105.

²⁷ Jonas Bergan Draege, Martin Lestra, "Gulf-Funding of British Universities and the Focus on Human Development", *Middle East Law and Governance* 7/1 (2015), 25-49.

²⁸ Aldo Geuna, "The Changing Rationale for European University Research Funding: Are There Negative Unintended Consequences?", *Journal of Economic Issues* 35/3 (2016), 607-632.

²⁹ Aldo Geuna and Ben R. Martin, "University Research Evaluation and Funding: An International Comparison" *Minerva* 41 (2003), 625.

³⁰ Geuna, "The Changing Rationale for European University Research Funding", 625.

freedom and independence. Marx critiqued this dynamic between the bourgeoisie and knowledge production, in which economic structures shape the superstructure, including the education systems that perpetuate them.³¹ By controlling resources, the “educators” are shaped by those in power, raising critical questions about academic autonomy and ideological influence.

This literature shows that Zionism significantly influences academic production, including historical narratives, academic institutions, literature, and financial ties. Zionism heavily shapes the academic discourse surrounding Palestine, marginalizes alternative perspectives, reinforces existing power structures, and manipulates historical and academic narratives to serve specific agendas in favor of Israel. As a result, grasping how knowledge is produced and controlled in contexts of power and conflict is essential to understanding how science links to power.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Power, Hegemony, and Academic Production

The interaction between power and knowledge production and the relationship between hegemony and knowledge have been central critical theory themes that Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci largely examine. Foucault’s concept of power-knowledge relations and Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony provide essential frameworks for understanding how dominant power structures shape academic production. This part of the paper argues that academic productions and publications are significantly influenced by power dynamics and hegemony, mainly focusing on how Zionism controls and diverts academia, especially in the United States.³²

The discussion about how power shapes knowledge or information production dates to years ago. Michel Foucault is one of the prominent scholars, having written many pieces about the topic, making him the discipline chief. Michel Foucault’s analysis of power-knowledge posits that power and knowledge are not separate entities but are interlinked, mutually reinforcing each other. According to Foucault, power is pervasive and productive, shaping what is considered knowledge and, in turn, being structured by that knowledge.³³ Foucault’s theory underscores that power is not merely repressive but also productive, creating regimes of truth that define what is accepted as legitimate knowledge. This relationship suggests that academic institutions and scholarly work are embedded within broader power structures that influence what can be known, said, and published.

In his book “Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison,” Foucault³⁴ illustrates how institutions, including education, produce, implement and consolidate power relations.

³¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin books, 1993), 83–89.

³² Vladimir Bortun, “How Academia Failed the Test of the War in Gaza”, *Jacobin* (27 July 2024), <https://jacobin.com/2024/07/academia-gaza-genocide-self-censorship> (Accessed Date 24 September 2024).

³³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 137-149; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 119.

³⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 133.

Using the panopticon as a metaphor, he illustrates how surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms regulate behavior and ensure conformity to authority's norms.³⁵

Foucault's power-knowledge concept is pivotal in understanding complex dynamics within educational institutions. According to Foucault, power is not only a top-down oppressive mechanism but also a complex network pervading all levels of society, including the academy. Therefore, power produces knowledge; in turn, knowledge produces power, reinforcing existing hierarchies and structures. This cyclical relationship implies that what is accepted as 'truth' within academic settings often reflects power dynamics.

According to Foucault, power dynamics do not naturally expose or affect knowledge. Instead, some institutions deliberately facilitate knowledge production by controlling, diverting, and managing it. For example, in "Discipline and Punishment", Foucault explores how power is embedded within institutional structures. As mentioned before, Bentham's panopticon, designed for a prison, became a symbol for Foucault of modern disciplinary societies. In a panopticon, prisoners know they can be watched anytime, prompting them to regulate their behavior. Therefore, power holders, or, in other words, governments or regimes that control society, decide and dictate the rules shaping life. Foucault extends this concept to schools, hospitals, and military bases, arguing that institutions can regulate behavior through surveillance by disciplining individuals.³⁶ These insights are crucial for understanding how Zionist influence shapes academic production at U.S. universities.

The surveillance in educational institutions goes beyond physical surveillance to include intellectual surveillance as well.³⁷ Curricula, research agendas, and publication opportunities are all subject to monitoring, censorship, and control, often serving the interests of powerful institutions or power structures. For instance, research funding might be allocated to areas aligned with corporate or governmental interests while critical or oppositional perspectives are marginalized. The result is a situation where specific knowledge is produced and disseminated while others are suppressed. There is evidence in German academia that research collaborations with Israeli institutions have contributed to the development of surveillance technologies used against Palestinians. Max Planck Society and the German government have funded Israeli research centers that use AI technologies for mass surveillance.³⁸ Concerns have been raised about how such technologies contribute to human rights violations in occupied Palestinian territories, as well as reinforced power structures that suppress critical thinking.

As governments or power holders have been superior in creating, disseminating, and removing discourse by force, if necessary, the dominant power structures ensure that the narratives and knowledge produced within these institutions serve their interests. This is done through selective funding, censorship, and intellectual filtering, where only research that aligns with the desired narrative is supported or allowed to thrive. In contrast, critical, oppositional, or alternative perspectives are often silenced, marginalized, suppressed, or discredited. This results in a 'homogenized' intellectual environment where certain concepts,

³⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 137–140.

³⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 103.

³⁷ Barry Chazan, *A Philosophy of Israel Education: A Relational Approach* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 20–30.

³⁸ Hebh Jamal, "How German top research institute benefits Israeli AI tech used against Palestinians" (The New Arab, 18 July 2024), <https://www.newarab.com/investigations/how-german-academia-contributes-surveillance-palestinians> (Accessed Date 18 August 2024).

theories, and discourses dominate. This is not necessarily because they are the most accurate or truthful but because they are the most aligned with the interests of those in power. Consequently, this dynamic reinforces existing power hierarchies and prevents the emergence of diverse or dissenting voices that could challenge the status quo.

2.1. Discourses and Power Dynamics

In “The History of Sexuality”, Foucault examines how power relations construct and maintain discourses.³⁹ Discourses are not merely ways of speaking or writing but are systems of thought defining and limiting what can be said and thought about a particular subject. Power relations shape these discourses, determining which perspectives are legitimate and which are not. This process of legitimization and marginalization is crucial in academic knowledge production. For example, discourses on sexuality in the 19th century were determined by power relations within medical, legal, and religious institutions. These discourses defined ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ sexual behavior, affecting people’s perceptions of their own sexual characteristics. Similarly, power relations determine, manipulate, and alter discourses on different academic topics, including social science disciplines such as politics, history, and international relations. Dominant groups influence these discourses by funding certain kinds of research, promoting particular theoretical frameworks, and marginalizing dissenting voices.

Applying Foucault’s theory to the context of Zionist influence in U.S. academia reveals how power-knowledge dynamics operate within educational institutions. Zionist groups, through their financial and political influence, can shape the production of knowledge by funding research that aligns with their interests and by marginalizing critical perspectives on Israel. This creates a regime of truth where certain narratives about Israel and its policies are promoted, while others are suppressed.

Applying Foucault’s theory to the context of Zionist influence in U.S. academia reveals how power-knowledge dynamics operate within educational institutions. Zionist groups, through their financial and political influence, shape knowledge production by funding research that aligns with the interests of Israel. Furthermore, Israel marginalizes critical perspectives by pressing on academicians and researchers. This creates a regime of truth where certain narratives about Israel and its policies are promoted, while others are suppressed.

One of the primary mechanisms by which Zionist influence manifests is through control over funding sources. It is widely known that universities and researchers often rely on external grants and donations to support their work. Organizations and individuals with Zionist affiliations can direct substantial financial resources to universities, creating dependencies that influence research agendas. Even though Israel has been committing genocide in Gaza since October 7, many journals published by Elsevier, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Springer Nature, and SAGE have ignored collecting articles for a special issue about the Israeli genocidal war on Gaza except for the *Middle East Critique*.⁴⁰ This omission highlights the broader issue of academic gatekeeping, where editorial decisions and

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 17–36.

⁴⁰ See this issue: *Middle East Critique* 33/2 (2024).

institutional constraints often marginalize politically sensitive topics. As explored in ‘The Politics of Academic Publishing’, such practices reflect underlying power dynamics that shape the dissemination of knowledge and limit the representation of critical perspectives.⁴¹

Furthermore, significant donations from pro-Israel organizations are used to prioritize Israel-positive projects and undermine Israel-critical research. Consequently, critical perspectives on Israel and its actions, particularly when it comes to the treatment of Palestinians, are excluded as a result of this financial leverage. On the other hand, academic conferences, big publishing houses, and venues also play a crucial role in determining and sharing the concepts, perspectives, and generally what is accepted as ‘academic’. For instance, the Marcus Foundation’s funding of pro-Israel programs in U.S. universities, such as establishing Israel Studies chairs and redefining campus antisemitism, demonstrates how financial contributions influence academic priorities.⁴² Similarly, the Canary Mission platform has been heavily criticized for its role in blacklisting academics and activists who engage in or support Israel-critical research, leading to professional marginalization, reputational damage, and restricted opportunities for dissenting voices. By anonymously maintaining profiles filled with inflammatory accusations, the Canary Mission creates a chilling effect on academic freedom and public discourse, deterring individuals from expressing solidarity with Palestinian rights or questioning Israeli policies.⁴³ These platforms are not only beyond academics, but they turn academicians and researchers into profit machines by utilizing their work.⁴⁴

Journals and conference organizers face pressure to reject papers that challenge Zionist narratives or promote pro-Israeli studies. This filtering and censorship function ensures that certain viewpoints are promoted while others are suppressed. Individual academic careers can also be affected, as those who produce critical scholarship in Israel may find it more difficult to secure tenure, promotions, or publication opportunities. For example, Cornel West’s tenure application at Harvard was rejected because he publicly criticized Israeli policies and supported Palestinian rights.⁴⁵ Norman Finkelstein’s dismissal was another striking indication of Zionism’s suppression of academia by prominent anti-Zionist Jewish American academics.⁴⁶ The process has been extended to students as well. Students at prestigious universities⁴⁷ such as Yale, Harvard, Columbia, and Rutgers faced disciplinary action from their administrations for organizing pro-Palestinian rallies.⁴⁸ Furthermore, almost all Palestinian students have been frequently exposed to surveillance, disciplinary

⁴¹ Pamela Shoemaker, *The Gatekeeping of Political Messages*, ed. Kate Kenski - Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Oxford University Press, 2016), 1/347–358.

⁴² Erica L. Green, “The Man Who Helped Redefine Campus Antisemitism”, *The New York Times* (24 March 2024).

⁴³ Murtaza Hussain, “The Real Cancel Culture: Pro-Israel Blacklists” (The Intercept, 4 October 2020).

⁴⁴ Arash Abizadeh, “Academic journals are a lucrative scam – and we’re determined to change that”, *The Guardian* (16 July 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/article/2024/jul/16/academic-journal-publishers-universities-price-subscriptions> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁴⁵ “Renowned Professor Cornel West Claims Harvard Tenure Refusal Linked to pro-Palestine Stance”, *The New Arab* (15 March 2021).

⁴⁶ Matthew Abraham, “The Question of Palestine and the Subversion of Academic Freedom: DePaul’s Denial of Tenure to Norman G. Finkelstein”, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 33/3–4 (2011), 179–203.

⁴⁷ “Institutionalising Zionism in American Academia”, *Middle East Monitor* (30 January 2014).

⁴⁸ Cemil Aydın, “American Universities under Attack for Challenging Pro-Israeli Political Consensus”, *Anadolu Agency* (23 May 2024).

action, and expulsion for their activism. These illegitimate actions left these students with loan debts and limited academic prospects, decreasing their enthusiasm. These cases highlight how academicians and students have been subject to systemic challenges and repercussions when opposing hegemonic Zionist narratives.

While Foucault focuses on the relationship between power and knowledge, Gramsci's cultural hegemony examines how dominant groups maintain control by appealing to ideological consent rather than coercion alone. These frameworks reveal the dual nature of control in academia, where power and consent lie at the center of knowledge production.

2.2. Cultural Hegemonic Academia

Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony complements Foucault's insights by explaining how dominant groups maintain control through the consent of the governed rather than through coercion.⁴⁹ Gramsci argued that the ruling class sustains and secures dominance by establishing and disseminating a hegemonic culture—a set of beliefs, values, and norms. This hegemonic culture extends to all levels of society, including educational institutions, thus shaping academic knowledge and production. In "Selections from the Prison Notebooks," Gramsci discusses how intellectuals and educational systems play a crucial role in maintaining this hegemony, evident in how Zionist ideologies are prioritized, promoted, and penetrated within US academia.⁵⁰ It can be argued that academic institutions' support of Zionist perspectives is part of this broader hegemonic strategy, ensuring that critical voices and alternative narratives remain marginalized.

As Gramsci's cultural hegemony is applied to this case study, it is evident that Zionism has established a hegemonic influence within US academia. This hegemony is maintained through various mechanisms, including charitable foundations that fund universities and research centers, steering academic research to serve Zionism.⁵¹ These foundations often provide considerable grants and endowments to universities, research centers, or institutes, which determine and influence research agendas and academic discourse worldwide. For example, organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Middle East Forum⁵², and other pro-Israel lobbying groups have been known to influence academic institutions by funding programs that promote Zionist narratives, thus marginalizing critical perspectives on Israeli policies and the Palestinian struggle.

Moreover, leading academic journals, publications, and media platforms are not immune to Zionist propaganda, interference, manipulation, and influences. Editorial boards, peer review processes, and publication policies often reflect the prevailing power structures, ensuring that certain narratives are promoted while others are suppressed.⁵³ This control over academic production serves to legitimize Zionist policies and marginalize critical scholarship

⁴⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers: New York, 1971), 113.

⁵⁰ Kate Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and Its Narratives* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 25.

⁵¹ Ilan Pappé, Tariq Dana, Nadia Nasser-Najjab, 'Palestine Studies, Knowledge Production, and the Struggle for Decolonisation' 33/2 (2024), 173–193.

⁵² "Daniel Pipes' pro-Israel think-tank holds anti-Qatar event", *Aljazeera* (07 February 2019), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/2/7/daniel-pipes-pro-israel-think-tank-holds-anti-qatar-event> (Accessed Date 25 September 2024).

⁵³ Rabea Eghbariah, 'The Harvard Law Review Refused to Run This Piece About Genocide in Gaza', *The Nation* (21 November 2023).

that challenges the dominant narratives regarding Israel and Palestine. For instance, as shown in the case of Steven Salaita, whose job offer was terminated by the University of Illinois due to his tweets criticizing Israeli actions in Gaza, academic freedom is often compromised to align with pro-Zionist sentiments.⁵⁴

Zionist hegemony has a negative impact on academic freedom, which has been long debated all over the world, especially in the UK, for being ‘elitist’.⁵⁵ Scholars often face significant obstacles in publishing work critical of Israel or supporting Palestinian rights, including difficulty receiving funding or scholarship, hostility from colleagues, and challenges in publishing their work.⁵⁶ This creates an environment where self-censorship becomes a survival strategy for academics, further entrenching the hegemonic influence of Zionism in academia. This phenomenon is discussed in works like “Academic Freedom and Palestine: A Personal Account” written by Petersen-Overton⁵⁷, which explores various instances where academic freedom has been curtailed to protect Zionist interests.

Furthermore, Zionism’s influence in US academia is not restricted to one specific discipline. Instead, it is a wide range of subjects such as economics, law, political science, and international relations. Research questioning or criticizing the legitimacy of Israeli policies, especially regarding the genocidal wars, occupation or settlement policies, or drawing attention to Palestinian struggles, is often ignored, sidelined, and marginalized, and Palestinians are being dehumanized for justifying Israeli genocide and for the sake of Zionism.⁵⁸ This selective production and dissemination of knowledge bolster, strengthen, and protect the power structures preserving Israeli hegemony. The suppression of Ilan Pappé’s works, an Israeli historian who has faced significant backlash for his critical views on Israel, exemplifies this dynamic.

In conclusion, the nexus or integration of Foucault’s power-knowledge framework and Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony provides an analytical framework to comprehend how power dynamics influence academic production. In the case of US academia, Zionism holds significant control over scholarly work, shaping research agendas, publication practices, and academic discourse. This hegemonic influence not only marginalizes critical perspectives but also sustains the dominant narratives and policies of Israel, including the occupation of Palestinian territories by settling Jews in the West Bank or the invasion of Gaza.

2.2.1. The Role of Zionism in US Academia

As an example of how power and ideology intersect to construct and shape discourse and silence critical voices, Zionism’s role in the US academia presents an excellent example.

⁵⁴ Steven Salaita, *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 24.

⁵⁵ M. J. Harrison, Keith Weightman, ‘Academic Freedom and Higher Education in England’, *Academic Freedom and Higher Education in England* 25/1 (1974), 35.

⁵⁶ Ian S. Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 7–25.

⁵⁷ Kristofer J. Petersen-Overton, ‘Academic Freedom and Palestine: A Personal Account’ 33/3–4 (2011), 256–267.

⁵⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Boston: South End Press, 1999), 535; Jaiori I. Funez-Flores, “The Coloniality of Academic Freedom and the Palestine Exception”, *Middle East Critique* (2024), 2.

Through political lobbying, financial pressures, and utilizing antisemitism for accusation, Zionist organizations have established a form of cultural hegemony within US academic institutions. This has determined what is considered legitimate knowledge and acceptable discourse. This dynamic reflects Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge relations and Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, where dominant groups shape the intellectual and cultural sphere to serve their interests.⁵⁹

Political influence is exerted by Zionist organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. These organizations leverage their power to shape campus discourse. Moreover, these groups use financial and political pressure to influence university administrations, pushing them to adopt policies and practices that promote pro-Israel stances while suppressing pro-Palestinian perspectives. Therefore, as the most steadfast supporter of Israel, the U.S. extends its support beyond foreign policy to educational institutions. For instance, organizations like the ADL and the Brandeis Center have systematically pressured universities to restrict the activities of "Students for Justice in Palestine" and other groups critical of Israel based on unverified accusations of antisemitism and terror.⁶⁰ These actions align with Foucault's assertion that power is exercised through the production and regulation of knowledge⁶¹; in this case, the concept of antisemitism is used strategically to silence opposition and legitimize only certain narratives within academic spaces.

Several cases illustrate how Zionist influence shapes the United States academy. A notable example is the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's decision to rescind a job offer to Steven Salaita in 2014. Salaita had been critical of Israel's actions in Gaza on social media. He was framed by pro-Israel American media channels such as The New York Times and CNN for sharing 'uncivil' or anti-Israel tweets exposing the curtailment of academic freedom⁶² in the U.S. when criticizing Israeli genocide, occupation, and ethnic cleansing.⁶³ Moreover, his appointment was revoked by the university after pressure from pro-Israel donors. This case sparked widespread debate about academic freedom and highlighted how external pressures can influence university decisions. Another example is the cancellation of a course about Palestine at the University of California, Berkeley, in 2016. The course was canceled after pro-Israel groups complained that it was biased against Israel. Although this course was later reinstated after objections from academic freedom advocates, the case clearly revealed and illustrated how Zionist lobbying affects the academy in the US.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ "Bill Ackman leads reaction to Claudine Gay's resignation as he celebrates shortest tenure in Harvard history and asks if MIT president Sally Kornbluth is next" (02 January 2024).

⁶⁰ Azad Essa, "At US universities, free speech isn't free for pro-Palestine activists", *Middle East Eye* (01 November 2023), <https://www.middleeasteye.net/big-story/israel-palestine-war-us-universities-free-speech> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, 158.

⁶² Peter N. Kirstein, "Steven Salaita, the Media, and the Struggle for Academic Freedom", *American Association of University Professors* (February 2016), <https://www.aaup.org/article/steven-salaita-media-and-struggle-academic-freedom> (Accessed Date 20 September 2024).

⁶³ Mayra Cuevas, "Anti-Israel tweets cost professor new job at University of Illinois, rep says", *CNN* (09 August 2014), <https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/us/anti-israel-tweets-tenure/index.html> (Accessed Date 21 September 2024).

⁶⁴ Emily Mulder, 'UC Berkeley's Ban on Palestine Course "McCarthyist"', *Aljazeera* (18 September 2016).

The dismissal or penalization of academics who express opposing perspectives about Israel further exemplifies U.S. academia's control mechanisms. Many cases demonstrate how universities, under pressure from Zionist lobbies and donors, suppress critical scholarship. For instance, Arizona State University attempted to require Palestinian-American academic Hatem Bazian to sign an agreement not to criticize Israel as a condition for speaking on campus.⁶⁵ Similarly, Professor John Cheney-Lippold received administrative punishment at the University of Michigan after refusing to write a recommendation letter for a student to study at Tel Aviv University due to his academic boycott of Israel.⁶⁶ These incidents exemplify Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, wherein dominant groups, such as Zionist lobbies, maintain supremacy by molding the cultural and ideological context to maximize their control. The suppression of pro-Palestinian voices and the promotion of Zionist narratives in US academia have created a hegemonic Zionist culture, demonized Israeli criticism, and encouraged compliance with Zionism. Lastly, Rabea Eghbariah's paper⁶⁷ conceptualizing the Nakba, titled "Toward Nakba as a Legal Concept," was declined to be published by Columbia Law Review and Harvard Law Review after the pressure of Zionist lobbies. Harvard solicited and edited it but did not publish it; Columbia removed and reinstated his article following staff protests.⁶⁸ This example clearly proves the controversy and highlights that Palestinian scholarship has been silenced.

On the other hand, accusations of antisemitism have become a powerful tool for Zionism to silence criticism of Israel within academic institutions. This tactic is evident in recent Congressional resolutions, such as the 2023 resolution condemning "Hamas' and antisemitic student activities on U.S. campuses".⁶⁹ The resolution equates support for Palestinian rights with antisemitism, thus justifying restrictive measures against student organizations and academic discussions critical of Israel. Furthermore, the proposed "Stopping Antisemitism on College Campuses Act," introduced by Senator Tim Scott, threatens to withdraw federal funding from institutions that permit or support so-called antisemitic activities, effectively narrowing the scope of permissible discourse to exclude critiques of Israel.⁷⁰ This reflects Foucault's argument that power is not just repressive but productive—it creates norms, discourses, and truths. In this context, labeling anti-Zionist speech as antisemitic creates a normative framework where pro-Palestinian perspectives are delegitimized and suppressed, shaping U.S. academia's intellectual atmosphere.

Financial leverage is another key mechanism through which Zionist groups retain control over U.S. academia. Rich donors and alumni with strong ties to Israel have used their financial contributions as leverage to influence university policies and decisions. Harvard

⁶⁵ Nora Barrows-Friedman, "Arizona university forces speakers to sign pledge they don't boycott Israel", *Electronic Intifada* (07 March 2018) <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/arizona-university-forces-speakers-sign-pledge-they-dont-boycott-israel> (Accessed Date 21 September 2024).

⁶⁶ "Michigan professor embroiled in Israel boycott row", *BBC* (21 September 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45592553> (Accessed Date 19 September 2024).

⁶⁷ Rabea Eghbariah, "Toward Nakba as a Legal Concept", *Columbia Law Review*, 124/4 (2024), 887-992.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Guyer, "Why are America's elite universities so afraid of this scholar's paper?", *The Guardian* (09 June 2024), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/09/columbia-law-review-rabea-eghbariah-palestine-censorship-controversy> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁶⁹ "Stopping Antisemitism on College Campuses Act", *Scott Senate* (16 April 2023), <https://www.scott.senate.gov/media-center/press-releases/senator-scott-introduces-bill-to-take-on-antisemitism-on-college-campuses/> (Accessed Date 24 September 2024).

⁷⁰ "Stopping Antisemitism on College Campuses Act" (16 April 2023).

University and the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, have been threatened with a withdrawal of donations from prominent donors since the administrations of these universities did not publicly condemn pro-Palestinian student protests against Israel's genocide in Gaza.⁷¹ Billionaire Bill Ackman demanded that these universities disclose the names of students who signed pro-Palestinian petitions, stating that his companies would not hire them, thereby directly threatening their future professional opportunities.⁷² The role of donors in influencing academic policy is a clear example of Gramsci's cultural hegemony, where control is exerted not just through coercion but through the consent of those within the system. By aligning financial support with specific ideological stances, these donors help establish a hegemonic culture in which support for Israel is normalized, and criticism is marginalized.

Case studies further illustrate how Zionist influence operates within U.S. universities. At Columbia University, a report titled "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech" highlighted the suppression of pro-Palestinian voices on campus, documenting numerous instances where events were canceled, or speakers were banned in the name of preventing antisemitic propaganda.⁷³ Similarly, at Yale University, Professor Zareena Grewal was subjected to a campaign for dismissal after making public statements condemning Israel's policies and supporting Palestinian rights to resist occupation.⁷⁴ Although Yale defended Grewal under academic freedom, the backlash from Zionist groups and donors increased pressure on the administration to take harsh action. These cases reflect Foucault's idea that power operates through networks and institutions to control what is said and what remains unsaid, thereby shaping the boundaries of academic freedom.

Zionism's deep influence in U.S. academia has broader implications for academic freedom and intellectual diversity. The universities, once regarded as a space for critical inquiry and plurality of voices, have become a battleground where power dynamics dictate discourse and decide the course of the academy. The elimination of pro-Palestinian academics or any events and the eradication of critical thought about Israel fundamentally undermine academic freedom. As a 2016 Columbia University Law School report noted, the "Palestine exception to free speech" represents a disturbing trend that threatens academic institutions' integrity.⁷⁵ The suppression of dissent is often justified and legitimized by appeals to "security" and "safety," particularly concerning Jewish students' feelings of safety on campus. However, as Gramsci argues, this is part of a broader hegemonic strategy to align

⁷¹ Fiona Herzog, "Penn alumni, donors withdraw support from University following response to campus activism", *The Daily Pennsylvanian* (29 May 2024), <https://www.thedp.com/article/2024/05/penn-donors-react-encampment-university-response> (Accessed Date 21 September 2024).

⁷² Kwan Wei Kevin Tan, "'Bill Ackman Wants Harvard, MIT, and UPenn's Presidents to 'Resign in Disgrace'", *Business Insider* (07 December 2023), <https://www.businessinsider.com/bill-ackman-harvard-mit-upenn-presidents-should-resign-disgrace-2023-12> (Accessed Date 15 July 2024).

⁷³ "Palestine Legal & Center for Constitutional Rights. The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US", *Center for Constitutional Rights* (30 September 2015) <https://ccrjustice.org/the-palestine-exception> (Accessed Date 18 September 2024).

⁷⁴ Snejana Farberov, "Radical Yale professor faces calls to be fired over comments on Hamas attacks", *New York Post* (12 October 2023) <https://nypost.com/2023/10/12/radical-yale-professor-faces-calls-to-be-fired-over-comments-on-hamas-attacks/> (Accessed Date 10 September 2024).

⁷⁵ "Palestine Legal & Center for Constitutional Rights. The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US" (30 September 2015).

the interests of various social groups with those of the ruling elite—in this case, the Zionist establishment. Thus, the notion of security is weaponized to suppress dissent and maintain ideological conformity. This reinforces Foucault’s idea that knowledge production is a site of power struggles.

Conclusion

This study critically examines the influence of Zionism on academic production and freedom within U.S. universities, utilizing Michel Foucault’s concept of power-knowledge and Antonio Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony as its theoretical framework. The paper argues that Zionist organizations leverage political lobbying, financial pressures, and accusations of antisemitism to establish a form of cultural hegemony within academic institutions. This hegemony dictates what is considered legitimate knowledge and acceptable discourse, systematically marginalizing critical scholarship that challenges Zionist narratives and promoting pro-Israel stances. By exploring the dynamics of power and knowledge, the study reveals how the entanglement of ideological and financial interests shapes the contours of academic freedom, research agendas, and public discourse in higher education. Foucault’s power-knowledge framework provides insight into how knowledge production is intertwined with power dynamics; whereby dominant groups control which perspectives are amplified or silenced within academic settings. In the context of U.S. academia, Zionist groups have utilized their financial and political influence to shape educational policies and research agendas that favor their interests. By funding research centers, influencing academic programs, and promoting specific discourses, Zionist organizations create a regime of truth that supports Israeli policies while marginalizing pro-Palestinian perspectives. This dynamic reflects Gramsci’s notion of cultural hegemony, where dominant groups maintain control not just through coercion but through the consent and alignment of cultural and intellectual institutions with their ideology. The examples provided in this study, such as the rescinding of Steven Salaita’s job offer at the University of Illinois and the pressure on the University of California, Berkeley, to cancel a course on Palestine, highlight the tangible effects of Zionist lobbying on academic freedom. These incidents demonstrate how external pressures from donors and advocacy groups can shape university policies, curtail free speech, and suppress critical scholarship. The pervasive use of the antisemitism accusation further restricts the scope of permissible discourse, effectively delegitimizing criticism of Israel and protecting Zionist interests. As a result, U.S. academic institutions become sites where ideological conformity is enforced, and dissenting voices are systematically marginalized, undermining the principles of academic freedom and intellectual diversity. To foster a truly independent academic environment, it is crucial to challenge these power structures and advocate for greater transparency and integrity in knowledge production.

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