Fractured Fences — On Post-Zionism and Diversity

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Abstract

In this paper I will discuss how, in a culturally pluralistic era, the notion of the Jewish democratic state—the nation that dreamed of itself as "a light unto all nations"—is maintained, especially in light of the lack of correspondence between its conceptual and physically disputed borders. In order to do this, I will extend the analysis of sociologist Baruch Kimmerling, who described Israeli society in terms of seven different warring cultures/countercultures. Into this I insert the culture of the military, and illustrate how all are combined to distort the Zionist enterprise, once envisioned to be a single, hegemonic, secular Hebrew culture. Finally, taking the temperature of attitudes towards the Separation Fence, I view the Fence itself as a metaphor, as these conflicting groups reach agreement only on the issue of their security, while never looking beyond the boundaries— latterly constructed or self-constructed—to see where the real problems might lie.

I. Palestine as Plurality

International relations theorists have variously predicted the ending of the era of national allegiances and the rise of more diffuse forces of transnationalism, while others have rung alarm bells at the reassertion of tribalism[1] and "civilization clash".[2] Arguments abound[3] about the diagnosis of these latter contradictory

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1. Benjamin Barber (March 1992) "Jihad v. McWorld," *The Atlantic Monthly*, pp. 53-65.
2. Samuel Huntington (Summer 1993) "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72:3, pp. 22-49.
3. Ian Buruma (October 2, 2001) "The notion that future wars will be fought between civilisations, not states, may be clever but it is wrong," *The Guardian*, retrieved October 8, 2004 from http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0%2C4273%2C4268152%2C00.html ; see also responses to Samuel P. Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" *Foreign Affairs* 72:4 (September 1993) from Fouad Ajami, Kishore Mahbubani, Robert L. Bartley, Liu Binyan, Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Albert L. Weeks and Gerard Piel—among others.

movements. The State of Israel finds itself at the conceptual crossroads in this respect—a nationalist project maintaining strong bonds with the Diaspora from which it evolved, and containing and administering a sizeable opposing populace. One such tireless campaigner for a resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, doubtless with Jacques Derrida in mind ("No culture is closed in on itself, especially in our own times … Every culture is haunted by its other"[4]) the late Edward Said fulminated, in an essay entitled "The Uses of Culture":[5]

> No culture today is pure. Huntingdon writes about the West as if France we still made up of exclusively of Duponts and Bergeracs, England of Smiths and Joneses. This is fundamentalism, not analysis of culture, which, it bears repeating, was made by mankind … Another way of using difference in culture is to welcome the "other" as equal but not precisely the same … We have a choice to work for conflict, or against it. We must not be fooled by Huntington's martial accents into believing that we are condemned to ceaseless strife, because in fact we are not.

The plurality of cultures in societies, and not being "condemned to ceaseless strife" in Israel/Palestine was a combined pressing preoccupation for Said throughout his long career, finding expression in his plea for a binational (rather than two-state) solution to the conflict:

> … Palestine is and always has been a land of many histories; it is a radical simplification to think of it as principally, or exclusively, Jewish or Arab, since although there has been a long-standing Jewish presence there, it is by no means the main one. Not only the Arabs, but Canaanites, Moabites, Jebusites, and Philistines in ancient times, and Romans, Ottomans, Byzantines, and Crusaders in the modern ages were tenants of the place which in effect is multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious. In fact, then, there is as little historical justification for homogeneity as there is for notions of national or ethnic and religious purity today …[6]

Besides, Said argued, even small groups of Jewish/Zionist thinkers such as Judah Magnes, Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt called for a binational state before the

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4. Jacques Derrida (1984) "Deconstruction and the Other" in Richard Kearney (Ed.) *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, Manchester, University of Manchester Press.

5. Edward Said (2000) *The End of the Peace Process—Oslo and After*, London, Granta Books. Published originally in February 1997 in *Al-Ahram Weekly, The Gulf Today, Al-Khaleej, Al-Hayat*.

6. Op. cit, p. 318. Originally published in the *New York Times* magazine, January 10, 1999, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, January 14, 1999, and *Al-Hayat*, Febuary 1, 1999.

"logic of Zionism naturally overwhelmed their efforts".[7]

This fragile coexistence was formerly to be found briefly in pre-state Palestinian cities such as the joint Arab-Jewish municipality of Haifa, where on the eve of conflict, "some 65,000 Arabs and 70,000 Jewish inhabitants" lived together, as Israeli "new historian" Benny Morris noted:[8]

> In December 1947, Haifa was a mixed Jewish-Arab city, well-managed, rich … Many different kinds of communities lived there in harmony. There was the German Colony, communities of Syrians, Egyptians (both of whom came to work in the port or oil pipelines); there were Christians, Jews and Muslims living there, and there was no tension between the communities.

Whatever the nature of that coexistence, subsequent history recalls only the emptying-out of the city's Arabs in 1948. The UN partition resolution designated Haifa as a part of the future Jewish state, demoralizing the city's Arab inhabitants before the onset of battle, flight and expulsion, according to Morris.

In response to Palestinian academic and politician Hanan Ashrawi's demand for "a genuine recognition, an admission of guilt and culpability by Israel"[9], Israeli historian Ephraim Karsh is also compelled to acknowledge and underline the diverse demography of the city:

> The city of Haifa, on Israel's northwest coast, has come to epitomise this demand for "rectification" (to use Ashrawi's term). It is not difficult to understand why.
>
>   In 1948, Haifa's Arab population was second in size only to that of Jaffa. No less significantly, Haifa then constituted the main socio-economic and administrative center in northern Palestine for both Arab and Jews.

When hostilities between Arab and Jews broke out in 1947, there were 62,500 Arabs in Haifa; by May 1948, all but a few were gone, accounting for fully a tenth of the total Palestinian dispersion. Today Haifa is still considered a mixed city,

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7. Ibid.

8. *Al-Nakba:The Palestinian Catastrophe 1948* (Israel/Netherlands 1998, video, 60 min., English, Hebrew & Arabic with English voice-over. Directors: Benny Brunner & Alexandra Jansse. On the mixed population of Haifa, see Benny Morris (2004) *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Cambridge , Cambridge University Press, pp. 33-4, p. 99

9. Quoted in Ephraim Karsh, "Were the Palestinians expelled? The story of Haifa." Reprinted from *Commentary*, July-August 2000 and retrieved on October 8, 2004 from http://www.aijac.org.au/review/2000/258/essay258.html

although a shadow of what it once was. Little wonder, then, that Haifa has acquired a mythical place in Palestinian collective memory, on a par with Jaffa's and greater than Jerusalem's.[10]

For the most part, however, the places that hold mythical prominence in Palestinian collective memory are not the bustling cities, but the villages. Benny Morris records that 30 percent of the Arab population lived in towns by the end of 1947, although 65-70 percent of the 1.1 million Muslims and 150,000 Christian Palestinians lived in some 800-850 villages.[11] A survey of *Nakba* ("Catastrophe", the term given by Palestinians to the expulsions and war of 1948) and "Electronic Intifada" type sites on the internet reinforces this, with their catalogues of ethnic cleansing and depopulated or razed villages.[12] Mourid Barghouti's lyrical reflection on exile and return to Palestine in *I Saw Ramallah* evokes the present pain for the vanished homeland:[13]

> I asked myself, what is so special about except that we have lost it? It is a land, like any land.
>
> We sing for it so that we may remember the humiliation of having had it taken from us. Our song is not for some sacred thing of the past but for our current self-respect that is violated anew every day by the Occupation.

Just as the historian Benedict Anderson and the cultural theorist Homi Babha famously talked about nationalism and the sense of national belonging in terms of "imagined communities"[14], so Barghouti must confront the dissonance between the imagined utopian past and its present reality. In the taxi which bears him toward Ramallah, he ponders his reunion with a lost landscape, exclaiming in disbelief:

> I used to tell my Egyptian friends at university that Palestine was green and covered with trees and shrubs and wild flowers. What are these hills? Bare and chalky. Had I been lying to people, then? Or has Israel changed the route to the bridge and exchanged it for this dull road that I do not remember ever seeing in my childhood?[15]

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10. Ibid.

11. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, Op. cit. p18.

12. See http://www.alnakba.org/villages/villages.htm ; http://www.palestineremembered.com/ and its links to many other sites at http://www.palestineremembered.com/Links.html; http://www.poica.org/index.htm

13. Mourid Barghouti (2004) *I saw Ramallah* (transl. Ahdaf Soueif), London, Bloomsbury, p.7.

14. Benedict Anderson (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso; Homi Babha.(1994) *The Location of Culture*, New York, Routledge.

15. Op. cit. p. 28.

The especial empowerment of those who share a sense of belonging to that amplified "community" of the past is painfully denied him by ruined villages and barren hills, and a landscape interrupted by surprisingly solid, "elegant houses" served by their own well-paved roads, that were not there before:

> If you hear a speaker on some platform use the phrase 'dismantling the settlements,' then laugh to your heart's content. These are not children's fortresses of Lego or Meccano. These are Israel itself; Israel the idea and the ideology and the geography and the trick and the excuse. It is a place that is ours and that they have made theirs. The settlements are their book, their first form. They are our absence. The settlements are the Palestinian Diaspora itself.[16]

For Palestinian Knesset member Azmi Bishara, the Palestinian tendency to cling to the rural idyll neither helpful nor progressive:

> We have nostalgia for 'the village' … It is reactionary. Our culture became provincial, marginalized … but we lost our cities too … We were marginalized …[17]

Yet "Israel the idea and the ideology and the geography" is no more solid than the lost Palestine. The concept of the Jewish democratic state—whether the nation that dreamed of itself as "a light unto all nations", or as in now-preferred parlance, *like* all other nations, is taking its place among all other nation-states in the world and assuming "a complete correspondence between the boundaries of the nation"[18] and the boundaries of those who live within its disputed borders—remains unanchored, without a convincing accord. The "fiction" of the national enterprise, the evocation of the collective soul, is as much of a burden in its own way for Israelis as it is for Palestinians; the source of the conflict, and of many other conflicts. Its effects, as Israeli cultural theorist Nira Yuval-Davis notes, are to "naturalize the hegemony of one collectivity and its access the ideological apparatuses of both state and civil society", constructing minorities who are excluded from important power resources.[19]

In this case, it is not only "hegemonization" (or Zionist normalization) of the

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16. Op. cit. pp 29-30.
17. Interview in the video documentary *Al-Nakba:The Palestinian Catastrophe 1948*, Op. cit.
18. Nira Yuval-Davis (1992) *Gender and Nation*, London, Sage Publications.
19. Yuval-Davis, Op. cit. p. 11.

Jewish collective at the expense of the indigenous population, but of the Ashkenasi founding elite at the expense of the Mizrahi immigrant (Eastern or "Oriental" Jews, Jews of Asian and North African origin); of one ethnicity at the expense of another; of one religious denomination (Orthodox Judaism) at the expense of other more liberal or "inclusive" forms of Judaism; and of one gender at the expense of another, as a "prioritizing of national security needs … has constructed men as superior to women".[20] Despite the active role of women in the early days of the Yishuv or pre-state organized Jewish community, the retreat from gender egalitarianism in the kibbutz, in civil life and in the army is marked (where women serve only two years of national service in the IDF, generally in non-combat positions that are often low-status and clerical in nature, and do not give them access to the circles of power and privilege leading to top positions or political leadership).[21] "The army is a male world, in the main, and does not offer women public visibility nor serve them as a springboard into politics and government as it does for men," observe Swirski and Yechezkel[22] of Adva Center for Information on Equality and Social Justice in Israel. (It is not only a male world, but also a world that the majority of Israel's ethnic minorities may not or do not enter; only a small percentage of minorities such as some Druse, Circassians and some Bedouin serve.) Thus 18 women hold seats in the current 16th 120-member Knesset, while three are government ministers—Limor Livnat, Tzipi Livni, Yehudith Naot—but for "softer" ministeries, respectively Education, Culture and Sport, Immigrant Absorption and Housing, and Environment.[23] It is, if you will, a sort of Separation Fence of ethnic, social and religious groups, built along social fault lines and over the rights of others. Like the Fence, it is designated to keep the entity safe from deadly assailants; there are sections which are concrete and inviolable; but there are other more permeable sections of barbed wire, and places where the separation is more notional and instinctive. And like the Fence, there are those who bitterly object to its imposition, and those who object to being divided from a new world order.

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20. Tamar Mayer (2000) "From Hero to Zero in Jewish nationalism" in Tamar Mayer (Ed.), *Gender Ironies of Nationalism—Sexing the Nation*, London, Routledge.

21. Valerie Bryson (1998) "Citizen warriors, workers, mothers in Israel" in Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjens (Eds.), *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*, London, Routledge.

22. Dr. Shlomo Swirski, Yaron Yechezkel (February 1999) *Women's Representation in the Legislature and the executive in Israel and Worldwide*, Adva report. Retrieved on October 9, 2004 from http://www.adva.org/womrep-e.html .

23. Data retrieved on October 10, 2004 from Knesset web site http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/MKIndex_Current_eng.asp?view=3

II. The conflict within

Just as the conflicts of 1948 and 1967 were to put paid to the degree of indigenous diversity, the staggering influx of immigrants before, during and after those years were to provide ethnic, social and religious tensions of another order . It is often said that the only glue that binds the extraordinary stresses and strains of Zionist enterprise together is the binary "other"[24] of the conflict with the Palestinians.

The founders of the state envisioned a single, unified society, the creation of a

24. Immigration (*aliya*, meaning "ascension") to Israel has been traditionally divided into various waves:

1. The First Aliyah (individuals and small groups, mainly members of the Hibbat Zion and the Bilu movement) established the early rural settlements or *moshavot*. Around 25,000--mostly from East Europe--came during this period. There were two main influxes: in 1882-1884 and 1890-91.

2. The Second Aliyah (1904-1914) consisted of about 40,000 young people, mainly from Russia, many of them with socialist ideologies; World War I interrupted this influx.

3. The Third Aliyah (1919-1923) brought in 35,000 immigrants, many from pioneering Zionist youth movements: 53% from Russia, 36% from Poland and the rest from Lithuania, Rumania, and other East European countries, apart from 800 from Western and Central Europe.

4. The Fourth Aliyah (1924-1928) brought 67,000 immigrants, half from Poland. In 1926, however, the influx was halted by a severe economic crisis. Of the 13,000 who arrived in 1926, more than half left again. In 1927, over 5,000 people left the country and only 2,300 arrived. In 1928, the number of arrivals and departures were about even-- around 2,000. The first signs of economic recovery came in 1929, when immigration picked up.

5. The Fifth Aliyah (1929-1939) consisted of around 250,000 Jews, beginning with a small trickle in 1929, but in 1933--when Hitler rose to power in Germany --the trickle became a flood. Over a quarter of these Jews were from Germany. Between 1933-36, more than 164,000 Jews entered the country legally, while thousands of refugees came as "illegal" immigrants.

6. The years 1948-51 were a period of mass influx. Former illegal immigrants detained by the British in Cyprus arrived (33,000 during May-August 1948). From September-December, 70,000 arrived, mostly Holocaust survivors from DP camps. From January-April 1949, 100,000 more arrived—a total of 203,000 Jews from 42 countries for the first year of statehood. Until the end of 1951 this trend continued, with almost entire Jewish communities transplanting to Israel; more than 37,000 of Bulgaria's Jews came; two-thirds of Polish Jewry (103,732) and a third of the Jews of Rumania (118,940). More than the entire Jewish population when statehood was declared in 1948--684,201 immigrants—came between May 14, 1948 and the end of 1951.

7. In 1945, over 870,000 Jews were living in Arab lands. As a result of the establishment of the State of Israel, many of them were forced to flee. Between 1948-72, about 600,000 immigrated to Israel, and more followed afterwards. From Morocco, 260,000 came; from Iraq, 129,000 came in "Operations Ezra" and "Nehemia"; from Tunisia, 56,000; from Yemen and Aden, 50,552 (in May 1949, when the Imam of Yemen agreed to let 45,000 of the 46,000 Jews in his country leave, Israeli transport planes flew them to Israel in "Operation Magic Carpet"). From Libya, 35,666 Jews came; from Egypt, 29,525; from Algeria, 14,000; from Lebanon, 6,000; from Syria, 4,500.

unique Israeli identity, a hegemonic secular Hebrew culture complete with a revived language. But today Israel is going through a fast-forward re-invention; the Zionist project, by no means homogenous from the start,[25] is constantly evolving, in counterpoint to the discourses of Post-Zionism. The latter, which has written about in many "different and confusing ways"[26] may be divided into a social condition and a political claim, or "specific methodological, analytical and normative approaches in Israeli social sciences, especially history and sociology" or it may be analyzed from the point of view of "political trends and forces within contemporary Israel" or even identify "a particular period/project of the Israeli

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8. Ethiopia's Jews (Beta Israel) were mainly airlifted en masse to Israel through "Operation Moses" (1984) and "Operation Solomon" (1991), although there also have been later arrivals of Falashmura (crypto-Jews who were forced into conversion to Christianity) in smaller numbers. To date, about 35,000 Ethiopian Jews have come to Israel.

9. Between 1990-1996, over 600,000 Jews left the CIS for Israel.

10. All the above statistics were provided by the Jewish Agency at http://www.jafi.org.il/ . More are available from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www.cbs.gov.il/engindex.htm .

25. The different streams have been variously identified as Political Zionism, originating with Leo Pinsker and Theodor Herzl; Cultural Zionism, sometimes known as Spiritual Zionism, inspired by Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsburg); Labour Zionism, whose intellectual founders are said to be Nachman Syrkin, the Marxist Zionist Ber Borochov and A D Gordon, together with the Socialist Zionism of the pioneering youth movements; Vladimir Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism which became the rightist, nationalistic Zionism of Herut and ultimately Likud; Practical Zionism, espoused by Chaim Weizmann, who became Israel's first president; Liberal Zionism (a combination of nationalism and liberalism); Synthetic Zionism, a merger of practical and political Zionism; Religious Zionism; and Radical Messianic Zionism (the variety espoused by Gush Emunim and the settler movement). In opposition to these stands the non-Zionist Canaanite narrative, the Autonomists (Bundists and Sejmists) who were diasporic socialists; and the ultaorthodox religious anti-Zionist groups such as Neturei Karta.

Historically, the different streams of Zionism adopted quite different approaches to the "Arab question"; the Minimalists sought dialogue and were willing to accept an egalitarian binational state, holding that the land belonged to both peoples, and asserting that Zionism could not be realised without the (unlikely!) prior consent of both; the Maximalists believed that the national struggle between two peoples would ultimately require resolution by force, and rejected Arab national rights, seeing no need for negotiation; the Realists, who were divided into liberal and socialist subgroups, did not believe that it was possible to avoid conflict, but sought to mitigate this by taking positions of moderacy, favouring negotiations and supporting the development of the country for all its inhabitants. Yet they too remained unwilling to compromise on Zionist objectives such as a Jewish demographic majority through unrestricted *aliya* (immigration), and the establishment of the Jewish state itself. Some socialist realists, such as Ben Gurion himself, maintained that the Jewish and Arab proletariat shared common class interests (against Jewish bourgeoisie and Arab feudalism).

26. Nira Yuval-Davis (2003) "Some Thoughts on Post-Zionism and the Construction of the Zionist Project" in Ephraim Nimni (Ed.) *The Challenge of Post-Zionism —Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics*, London and New York, Zed Books.

polity/society as a whole as post-Zionist".[27]

According to the Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling[28] (often linked with "new historians" Ilan Pappé, Benny Morris and Avi Shlaim) the most dramatic change in the Jewish state is "the evaporation of the image of a single, unified Israeli society, the decline of a unique Israeli identity and the diminishment of hegemonic secular Hebrew culture." Kimmerling sees a system of cultural and social plurality emerging, in the absence of a concept or ideology of multiculturalism. Israel is:

> undergoing an accelerated process of invention, creation, and institution-building by about seven different cultures and countercultures, without an accepted hierarchy among them … based on and reinforced by ethnic, class, and religious components and differ[ing] in the sharpness of their boundaries, the level of their organization, and their consciousness of the degree to which they are separate.[29]

The seven different warring cultures/countercultures, "each at different stages of crystallization" – are cited as the previously hegemonic Ashkenasi upper middle class, the national religious, the traditionalist Mizrahim (Orientals), the Orthodox religious, new Russian immigrants, Ethiopian immigrants and Arabs (both Christian and Muslim). Among those groups there are many additional subdivisions to be discerned–the Druse, the Bedouin, the Circassians, the Karaites, the Samaritans, the Black Hebrews, the Bahais and more. Many of these social, religious or ethnic groups are not homogenous within themselves, and subdivide into further political and ideological camps, for example on the issue of the peace process; yet each maintains its distinct sense of self while declaring open season—a "cultural war", according to Kimmerling—on others.

The above seven different cultures/countercultures are reinforced by ethnic components, class differences, and gendered[30] and religious components, together with vigorous subdivisions of identity, nationalism, and collective memory, which especially in Israel/Palestine is considered objective history. Who was "here first",

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27. Ibid. p. 183.

28. Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness—State, Society, and the Military*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London , University of California Press.

29. Op. cit. p. 2.

30. Kimmerling does not regard women as a separate culture or counterculture in Israel, since he alleges that each of the cultures or countercultures he surveys has its own gender cleavage—a perspective that may be taken either as inclusive or insufficiently attentive to the gendered nature of the Zionist enterprise. However, it is the reason for excluding an in-depth discussion of gender in this paper and reserving the right for discussion elsewhere.

whose faith, myths, archaeology and "meta-narratives" have the most validity, who has the most compelling claim to the land, who is more Jewish or not Jewish, whose Zionism is the most authentic--all of these combine to segment, fracture or distort the Zionist enterprise.

The alienation of these groups from the Zionist project has at times come close to critical mass. Chief among these has been the tension between Israelis and immigrants of Mizrahi ("Oriental") origin and the founding Eastern and Central European elite, a tension which built up from the moment of arrival in to *ma'abarot* (absorption camps, where Mizrahi Jews were treated as the great unwashed, their traditions and dignity denied from the get-go, and, it is alleged, some children of Yemenite parents were stolen from their parents for adoption by childless Ashkenasi Jews[31]).

Professor Yehouda Shenhav, head of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University and a member of *Hakeshet Hademokratit Hamizrahit* (the Eastern Democratic Rainbow movement) attacks the Zionist left and the "new historians", whom he accuses of a kind of Orientalism:

The Israeli Zionist "Left" is willing to invest its all in exposing the injustices which were inflicted, and are still inflicted, on the Palestinians, but is not willing to take a stand in denouncing the racism of its parents' generation toward the Mizrahi Jews. … This generation is not prepared at all to acknowledge the urgency and centrality of the Mizrahi question. … They flaunt "Leftist" emblems just as the generation of their parents used the term "equality." Just as their parents were not truly egalitarians, so they are not Leftists. The result is that lower class Mizrahis, neighborhood activists and even Mizrahi intellectuals harbor animosity toward the traditional Avoda (Labour) movement as well as its heirs. Why is the Left so eager to deal with the Palestinian question, and why does it ignore the Mizrahi issue, even while participating in its exacerbation? The very fact that the young generation of the Israeli "Left" does not identify the salient common denominator of these two communities - Palestinians and Mizrahis - is cause for suspicion and wonder. But the fact is readily explicable: denouncing the injustice done to the Palestinians does not endanger the status of our contemporary Ashkenazi intellectuals. It does not endanger their position as a hegemonic cultural group in Israeli society or as an

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31. "Controversy over theft of Yemenite Jewish children" retrieved on October 10, 2004 from the Middle East Times at http://www.metimes.com/issue34/reg/3children.htm; links to many articles and reports about the reported cover-up can be found at http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/9302/ym.htm

economic class. It does not endanger their self-definition as representatives of western culture in the Arab orient (or the 'Mediterranean' region, as it is euphemized for the sake of those troubled by the term 'Arab').[32]

On to these waves of discontent, the Black Panther movement of Mizrahim exploded in the early 1970s. Linked in solidarity with the civil rights struggle in the United States, the Marxist movements of the developing world, and, for the first time, to the Palestinian struggle in Israel, the uprising signified an awakening of Mizrahi cultural consciousness that was only tamed later through the ranks of Shas and the Likud (Mizrahi politicians or politicians who played to the Mizrahi gallery being despised by the early revolutionaries). In a salute "Thirty Years to the Black Panthers in Israel", Sami Shalom Chetrit writes:

> Israeli historiography continues to push the Black Panthers' movement to the outermost margins of the Israeli historical narrative, by largely labeling them a negative event that everyone would be better off forgetting. After thirty years since their initial emergence, only a handful of academic studies about the Black Panthers have been published. The most prominent question emerges of why this is the case? ...[33]

Originating among the disaffected youth of the North African and Iraqi residents of Musrara, a poverty-stricken former Arab neighborhood on the border between East and West Jerusalem, the Panthers began with demands for better education and extra-curricular activities, rising to a campaign of demonstrations of increasing violence (together with the radical leftist Matzpen party), and Robin Hood-style "redistribution" of milk from rich to poor neighbourhoods.

Of his rise to consciousness, former Black Panther leader Charlie Biton says, "We were 17-year old boys who rose up against the oppression. We didn't even know who were the oppressors and how they oppressed us. Only through struggle we understood who steps over us and why they do so."[34]

"Our first revolt was against the Mizrahi organizations," recounted former Panther leader Kochavi Shemesh:

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32. Shenhav's article "The Bond of Silence" originally appeared in *Ha'aretz* weekend supplement, December 27, 1996, and was retrieved online on October 10, 2004 at http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/3716/publications_eng/the_bond_of_silence.html

33. Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Either the cake will be shared by all or there will be no cake: 30 years to the Black Panthers in Israel*, retrieved October 10, 2004 from http://www.israels-black-panthers-speak.com/

34. Ibid.

We thought of them as enemies. The regime used them for Divide and Rule against us. There were dozens of organizations for each and every ethnic group: the federation for North African Jews, and Moroccan Jews. And then those for the Jews of Iraq, and Iran and so on. And all of them served the purpose of oppressing the Mizrahim. The regime got scared when we rose up and said, throw them all to the garbage!

… We were a generation ahead of Israeli society. In 1972 we already met with the PLO leaders and recognized them as the leaders of the Palestinian people. We understood their need for the end of occupation and independency and we agreed that both our and their problems integrate. No equality for Mizrahim while occupation exists. And the Palestinian fight will not stop while Mizrahim are used as an anti-Arab lever."[35]

After a failed attempt to enter the political scene through elections to the Knesset, the movement collapsed, although individual leaders continue their activism.

The oppression of Mizrahi females was intensified by both their own culture and that of the Ashkenasi-Zionist hegemony. In her moving essay, "You're So Pretty, You Don't Look Moroccan,"[36] Henriette Dahan-Kalev recounts a bitter childhood and adolescence spent covering her cultural traces, Ashkenasifying herself:

… Spivak suggests that I re-examine the Freudian fiction … according to which my identity was constructed, the fiction upon which my educators leaned. Postcolonial women, in her opinion, do not necessarily have a European story versus a traditional one. She provides me with the explanation that I am caught between two worlds. I feel that my story is primarily one of oppression: traditional European oppression, colonial oppression, Western oppression, and Zionist oppression. Inside of all these lies a shattered, confused identity that is fighting a Sisyphean struggle for control over my consciousness, my values, my feelings, my passions, and my will. I am trapped in a world of mirrors.

This is a process whose nature and power I am still largely unable to comprehend. It is not a return to my roots, nor a rehabilitation or reconstruction of identity. These are suspicious and dangerous words to my ears. One thing though is clear to me: whether I am conscious of it or not, I am a product of an educational, intellectual and economic steamroller that squashed everything and left no room for any self-

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35. Ibid.
36. Henriette Dahan-Kalev, in Nimni (Op. cit.)

development outside that of a distorting Ashkenasi, Zionist, Israeli, European hegemony.

Despite apparent beneficent intentions, as many mistakes were made with the absorption of other groups of immigrants, primarily the Ethiopian Jews or Beta Israel, who arrived mostly in two waves, 1984 (Operation Moses) and 1991 (Operation Solomon), and whose youth have shown intermittent signs of Black Panther-style disaffection. On their homepage, the IAEJ (The Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews) appeals for support to change the following statistics:

> 70% of Ethiopian families have no incoming salary. 63% of employed Ethiopians work in non-professional fields. The average Ethiopian salary is below the poverty line. Only 32% of Ethiopian fathers and 10% of Ethiopian mothers are employed. 40% of Ethiopian students in grades 1-9 are below the class level for reading. 60% of Ethiopian students in grades 1-6 are below the class level in Hebrew and Mathematics. 6.2% of Ethiopian students drop out of school between the ages of 14-17. This is double the national average. Only 28% of Ethiopian students pass the matriculation exams-less than half the national average. 46% of Ethiopian students are sent to boarding schools due to financial hardship. 45% of Ethiopian parents can not speak even basic Hebrew. 49% of Ethiopian families live with two or more people in each room. Due to multiple hardships, the number of juvenile delinquents is double among the Ethiopian population. Between 1996-1999, the number of Ethiopian youth arrested increased by 255%.[37]

Ethiopians currently hold the lowest economic position in Israeli society, excluding Palestinians and migrant workers from Asia and Africa. Knesset member Ran Cohen's Committee to Investigate Social Gaps reported on the drop-out rate of Ethiopian students (more than double the national average) and the fact that 47% of Ethiopian Israelis, aged 25-54, are not in the labor force. Executive Director of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews Shula Mola comments, "Surely this struggle, against debilitating poverty, was not part of the Ethiopian dream of returning to Zion."[38] In response to these issues, the Ethiopian National Project (ENP) was kick-started by the Jewish Agency (JAFI) and other bodies, a $660 million effort to redress the balance.

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37. Retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.iaej.co.il/pages/community_news_facts.htm
38. Shula Mola, "A turning point for Ethiopian-Israelis". Retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.iaej.co.il/pages/community_articles_shula_mola.htm

The economic slow-down caused by the Second Intifada has had an even greater impact on low-income communities in Israel. Says Shola:

> Increased security spending has led to the drastic reduction of social budgets; making day to day life a struggle for many. In Israel today 66% of Ethiopian families are dependent on government welfare benefits in order to meet basic needs. Ethiopians are under-represented in government offices, and schools with high academic reputations have low Ethiopian enrollment. We must alter this reality and diminish existent social gaps. The survival of Israel depends on both external security and on internal solidarity. The kind of solidarity that makes young Ethiopians volunteer for combat units and risk their lives to protect the Jewish homeland. Poverty, despair, and prejudice attack the very roots of this kind of solidarity.
>
> … The ENP remains low on the list of governmental priorities and I fear that without immediate action, the community's faith will begin to wane. …These immigrants, many of whom, like me, walked through the desert with faith and determination to succeed, should be given the full opportunity to do so. We are approaching a turning point in the history of Ethiopian absorption. In the past, poverty was seen as a temporary condition, a natural byproduct of all new immigrants' journey towards the social mainstream. … If Israel is unable to effectively absorb the Ethiopians then it has failed as a Jewish democratic state and our vision of a Jewish homeland was simply an illusion.[39]

Shola cites a recent court case concerning Ministry of Education discrimination against an Ethiopian child who was refused a place in a first grade school in Hadera (near Haifa). The State's Attorney (on behalf of the Ministry) is reported to have said: "Ethiopians have low learning abilities . . . they don't improve regardless of how much the government invests in them." The Ministry was then forced to defend its remarks by citing that "researchers in both Israel and abroad have proven that there is a correlation between low socio-economic status and low academic ability."

"When an educational system blames the children under its care rather that examining itself, it is moving in all the wrong directions," Shola retorts. "The Ministry of Education cynically employs "facts" and statistics to shirk its responsibility towards them. Is it any wonder that Ethiopian students are having trouble in school? "[40]

In addition to this, Beta Israel and Falas Mura or Falashmura (crypto-Jewish

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39. Ibid.
40. Mola, 'Beta Israel, Not Home Yet' . Retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.iaej.co.il/pages/community_articles_shula_mola_speaks_out.htm

Ethiopians) have had to face controversies regarding their "Jewishness" which delayed their immigration to Israel[41] and subsequently have required a symbolic "conversion" ceremony for legitimacy:[42]

> They were in their 60s and 70s and had come to Israel with the last immigration wave of the Falashmura [Ethiopians whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity while maintaining Jewish religious practices]. All had grandchildren and great grandchildren, all were married, but despite it all, they were getting ready to be remarried.
>
> Just over an hour earlier, the men were subjected to the extraction of blood from their genitalia as part of their conversion process. After they were gathered into the room, one of the rabbis asked the men to remove their pants and checked whether they were circumcised. Those who were, moved on to the next phase: a dip in the *mikvah* [ritual bath]. Then they were taken to the wedding ceremony.
>
> … This is one of the most guarded secrets among the Falashmura in Israel. A married man who is part of the Falashmura must remarry his wife as a condition for being recognized in Israel as a Jew. The requirement is stringent and affects Falashmura of all ages, even people who have lived with their wives since they were teenagers. In Israel, the Orthodox rabbinate doesn't recognize their marriages.
>
> In the last few years, 2,500-3,000 Falashmura were converted that way out of the 17,000 Falashmura residing in Israel. For a small percentage of them their Judaism was never in doubt; they were granted immigrant status based on the Law of Return. But the rest entered on the basis of the Law of Entry, which states that they belong to the seed of Israel but are required to pass a conversion process as a condition of receiving full citizenship. The process is long … Sometimes it takes up to one year, but in the absorption centers, where the Falashmura are initially placed, many of the elderly have already been undergoing the conversion process for two or three years.
>
> … Unlike those who emigrated from Ethiopia in Operation Moses [in the early and mid-1980s] and Operation Solomon [in 1991], who took to the streets in violent protests in front of the Knesset against the rabbinate's demand that they go through the difficult conversion process, the Falashmura have a lot to lose. Almost all of them

41. The struggle is described in the Israel Yearbook and Almanac (1994, 1995), retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.jafi.org.il/education/50/act/shvut/23.html. Ethiopian immigrants already in Israel pressurized the Government to permit the immigration of Falas Mura to enable family reunification. Some Falashmura reject the assertion that they are Christians (they are not regarded as such by the Ethiopian Government) and are offended by demands that they convert. In February 2003, the Israeli approved Interior Minister Eli Yishai's plan to immediately bring some 20,000 Falashmura from Ethiopia to Israel

42. Puriya Gal, "Bleak Wedding," in *Ma'ariv*, April 25, 2003. Retrieved on October 10 2004 from http://www.worldpress.org/Mideast/1119.cfm

have families back home who are waiting to leave Ethiopia and are relying on the conversion of their relatives in Israel.

… The rabbinate regards the wedding ceremony as a vital part of the conversion process. It wasn't always like that. In 1993, the Falashmura were still recognized as Jewish descendants and were only required to pass a quick process of "returning to Judaism" that lasted a few weeks. [In 1995], division over religious issues regarding the Falashmura led the chief rabbinate to tighten its grip on the immigrants. Today, they are seen as gentiles and are forced to undergo a conversion process that is required of anyone who converts to Judaism.

A similar discussion over the Jewish identity of many of the immigrants from the CIS has occupied centre stage in Israel in recent years, together with reports of inter-ethnic tension between Russian and Ethiopian immigrants. Ultimately, as Kimmerling notes, the Jewish state requires Judaism "for the 'final' legimization of Zionism".[43] At the heart of the matter lies the constantly-debated Law of Return,[44] formulated in the early years of the state (1950), amended in 1970 and again latterly modified around "security issues" (designed implicitly to monitor the movement of Palestinians, and reportedly causing devastating hardship for the "family reunions" of Palestinians resident in the Occupied Territories with spouses and family resident inside the Green Line). The original Law famously gives automatic right of immigration to Jews, without defining according to *halacha* (Jewish religious laws and customs) "who is a Jew" (a concession Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion made to Orthodox Jewry, who continue to control the civil/private domain of marriage and divorce of Jews in Israel until today;[45] there is no civil law which takes precedent over the religious domain,

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43. Kimmerling, Op. cit., p. 204.

44. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH00kp0

45. "According to the existing laws of Israel matters of marriage and divorce are under the authority of the religious courts: the Shar'ia Courts for Moslems, the Religious Courts of the various Christian communities for Christians, and the Rabbinical Courts for Jews. According to the existing law, marriages and divorces are conducted in Israel only according to the religious laws and by religious ceremonies; and according to the existing law marriages and divorces of Jews are held in Israel only according to Jewish religious law." Ben Gurion's letter to Jewish scholars on the Law of Return, retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.jafi.org.il/education/50/act/shvut. Indeed, since political parties with a religious agenda can hold and have held political power according to Israeli's electoral list system, their sphere can be said to extend from this private domain throughout the civil sphere; a particular sphere of influence has historically been the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately due to limitations on the scope of this paper, this is a discussion which needs to be pursued separately.

although private contracts may be drawn up (but these are not considered as marriage). The 1970 amendment—with the reality of prior mixed marriages of immigrants and the status of their offspring somewhat in mind, particularly with reference to Soviet Bloc Jews—includes the "child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion". The Orthodox religious definition of "who is a Jew" is reflected in amendment 4B ("Jew" means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion"). However, for those immigrants wishing to marry in Israel, the burden of proof rests on them and all are required to provide evidence of the above. It is still impossible for a Jew and a non-Jew to marry in a religious or civil ceremony in Israel under this arrangement.

Former Minister of Justice in the Barak government and architect of the Geneva and Oslo Accords (currently leader of the left-wing Israeli political party Yahad) Yossi Beilin considers "Jewishness" to be a national rather than a religious definition, a viewpoint shared by many left-wing Zionists. Speaking "personally" at a Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee meeting in 2000 at which several proposed amendments to the Law of Return placed on the Knesset agenda, Beilin said, "I fail to understand why a non-religious Jew who wishes to define himself as a Jew by nationality needs the approval of the rabbinate."[46] Locking horns with the religious authorities in his campaign to introduce a secular definition of citizenship, current Justice Minister Tommy Lapid (leader of the Shinui Party) has described Judaism in an interview[47] as "a mixture of religion and nationality. Zionism emphasizes the national entity and not the religious entity, and we believe that Israel is that national state of the Jews." Naturally, says Lapid, everyone has a right to be religious, but those views should not be imposed on the secular.

Weighing in on the debate, Interior Minister Avraham Poraz has announced that his department will not automatically grant Israeli citizenship to those who convert to Judaism in Israel, purportedly to control attempts at obtaining citizenship by the large community of foreign workers in Israel[48] (a community, mostly

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46. Reported in *Global Jewish Agenda* Vol. 1, No. 4, January 27, 2000 and retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.jafi.org.il/agenda/english/index4.asp

47. *Faultlines*, Op. cit.

48. "Tampering with the Law of Return", *Ha'aretz*, retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=295702&contrassID=2&subContrassID=3&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y

emanating from African and Asian countries, which according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics has swollen to over 80,000 since the Intifadas; the latter rendered the labour supply of Palestinian workers intermittent due to restrictions and curfews imposed by regular closures of the Occupied Territories). Such a move implicitly reduces the status of a convert in Israel as inferior to one who underwent an orthodox conversion overseas. In addition, by focusing on converts from developing countries, a suggestion of ethnic and economic discrimination is created.

Among the cultures and countercultures identified by Kimmerling,[49] it should also be noted that although the Supreme Rabbinical Court is Orthodox (its current president is Sephardi chief rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Amar) Jewish religious groupings, movements and factions in Israel are not homogenous and run the gamut from religious Labour Zionist to ultraorthodox anti-Zionist (such as Neturei Karta, implacably opposed to the existence of a pre-messianic Jewish state). There has been an attempt in July 2004 to transfer the authority for the conversion courts to the Prime Minister's Office, under the responsibility of the more moderate Rabbi Haim Druckman,[50] but in the spirit of Kimmerling's "open war" between cultures, in this case that of the religious entity, it is likely to be resisted vigorously.

And what of those who do not fit neither the religious definition nor the secular Zionist definition of citizenship, specifically the sizeable Palestinian Arab minority? Although Arab parties and Arab lawmakers partake in the Knesset (Hadash and Balad supply three members each to the 16th Knesset and United Arab List supplies two members), theirs is an inclusion in the spirit of a giving a veneer of democracy and pluralism to the enterprise. Discussing his peculiar position as an Arab MK (member of Knesset) in the parliament of a Jewish state, Balad chair Azmi Bishara says:[51]

> You have here a nation-building process going on the whole time which excludes you in every step since it began, and this includes nationalization of the land, this includes nationalization of the history of this place, this includes nationalization of the religious myth, every single thing that is done in the process of nation-building in this country excludes the indigenous people. A citizenship that grants you privileges over the natives … over the indigenous people … this is an unbelievable situation; I think this is very, very unique.

49. Op. cit.
50. "Who needs Druckman's revolution?" reported on July 26, 2004 in *Ha'aretz*, retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/451606.html
51. *Faultlines* interview, Op. cit.

… On every step and corner, we contradict the Zionist character of the state, because the game, the democratic game is tribal, is inside the tribe, inside the family … inside a very, very strong identity… and we are excluded from that. Now how did we get in? We got in through citizenship, not through national identity … the fact that we were citizens of the state of Israel … we were given the right to participate … but democracy from the beginning was not meant for us. So from the beginning it was very conditional. You have to behave as a guest in this democracy, and have to respect that you are given rights … and if you don't respect it, you are reminded 'Go to Syria, go to Lebanon, go to Egypt – they don't have democracy there – you have democracy here, you have to be grateful for that…' Sometimes I tell them, 'Give me back Palestine, and take your democracy away.'

Physician and Arab MK Ahmed Tibi, a former political advisor to Yasser Arafat, agrees, but believes in working from inside to change the parameters:

Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic state; there is a real contradiction between the two values, Israel is not a total democracy, but I can say Israel is an ethnocracy. I am saying yes Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, but my explanation for this is: that Israel is 'democratic towards Jews and Jewish towards Arabs.' It is important to have right of elections as we have here in Israel, but is it enough for defining democracy? Democracy is not only the right of the majority to rule and to dictate, it is mainly the right of the minority to be different but equal. I do not find myself embarrassed by saying that there are dictatorships in the Arab world and lack of real democracy. The first item in our political platform of my party, Arab Movement for Change, is talking about the need for democracy, equality and civil rights in all Arab communities in the Middle East.

… we as a leadership are trying to bridge and narrow the gap between the Jewish majority and Arab minority in Israel. Most of the decision-makers in Israel do acknowledge and say that Jews should be preferred always 'because it's the state of the Jews.' It is an anti-civic position that creates and deepens inequality and discrimination. That's why I do believe that there is a pure contradiction between the value of democracy and the value of ethnicity. Democracy is total equality between citizens and ethnicity is creating a superior group and an inferior one. In any case, I don't accept being inferior to anybody and to any group, especially as I am representing the indigenous people who were living here before the construction of Israel.[52]

52. *Q and A* conducted on September 2, 2004 in *Ha'aretz*, and retrieved on October 10, 2004 from http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/pages/QA.jhtml?qaN=110

As'ad Ganem, analyzing a range of different Jewish perspectives in Israel towards Arabs,[53] from totally egalitarian to conciliatory, and from pragmatic to exclusionist, concludes that by and large, Jews hold ethnocentric Zionist attitudes and find it difficult to countenance compromise in the nature of the state. The Palestinians surveyed wish to achieve equality, but regard it is problematic or impossible given that Israel is a "Jewish-Zionist state". Almost half (about 48 percent) believe that as such, Israel has no right to exist, and around 86 percent support its abolition. Nearly 60 percent do not agree that the state may intervene to preserve its Jewish character, and 66.5 percent believe that the state should be for both Arab and Jewish citizens.

Added to these cultures, or perhaps more accurately, over and above these cultures, prevails that of Tzahal (the Israel Defence Forces). Extreme security issues dictate a lack of clarity between where the military zone ends, and the social (public and private) zones begin, especially since requirements for national service in the IDF (three years for young men at 18) and reserve service (for the most part, the latter obligation of approximately one month is for males) blur the lines between civilian and military. Israeli (mostly male) civilians are "partly militarized" and the Israeli (mostly male) military is "partly civilianized". In addition, the military is a powerful a tool for the homogenization of Israeli society, particularly its immigrants, through "imposing newly invented identities on existing ideologies, symbols and identity codes".[54] As has been mentioned previously, the military is also a human resource—the training ground for the elite, particularly male leadership in the political and business spheres. The networks and bonds of an army unit may last a civilian lifetime; the nickname a young soldier acquires may stay with him for life. Private David Chacham-Herson describes how the army both shapes and mirrors Israeli society:[55]

> The Israeli army defines Israeli identity. It blurs our differences and consolidates them into a singularity, a sameness. Similarly, it erases our myriad memories and formulates a single recollection. Your entry card into Israeli society comes through the army. Russians and Ethiopians become Israelis through the army.
>
> The army reflects society. Most of the non-elite units are made of up of Mizrahi Jews

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53. "Jewish-Arab Conflict over the Nature of the State," in Nimni, Op. cit.

54. Op. cit., p. 4.

55. Ronit Chacham (2003), *Breaking Ranks—Refusing to Serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, New York, Otherpress, pp. 148-9.

… Meanwhile, the Ashkenasi Jews reap the benefits of maintaining their elite status. …

Those outside these margins—ethnic minorities who do not serve, women who do not serve meaningfully, older immigrants, those with disabilities—are all excluded from this culture.

At this point it is worth mentioning those who voluntarily stray outside the culture of the military. While ultraorthodox and orthodox religious Jews have controversially been able to opt out of national service—an additional source of tension between secular and religious society in Israel, as the latter may offer a form of national service in the civil sector, typically volunteering in educational institutions—there has been a growing trend of *refusenikim* or *servim* (in Hebrew, *lesarev* means to refuse) who refuse to carry out military service in the Occupied Territories, an action which carries serious implications in Israeli society, questioning its identity and the basis on which it came into being; the *refusenik* himself (or herself—there are and have been female *refusenikim*, such as Laura Milo and Talia Rachmani) faces imprisonment, fines, reduced social benefits, social ostracism and will experience difficulty in obtaining a employment thereafter. Two recent books, *The Other Israel* (Carey and Shainin 2002) and *Breaking Ranks—Refusing to Serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (Chacham 2003) explore this phenomenon, which is documented on a day-by-day basis on the internet.[56] Those who refuse to serve, according to Refusenik Watch, currently number 1,376 soldiers, including pilots, combat officers and reservists. Within the refusenik movement, once again, a wide variety of principles are given for refusing. There are those who believe, like the signatories to the Courage to Refuse charter,[57] that they "were issued commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people." These commands, they say,

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56. These include *Yesh Gvul* ("There is a limit") http://www.yeshgvul.org/english/; the Five Conscientious Objectors http://www.refuz.org.il/ (the latter are currently on release). Supporting websites include Refuser Solidarity Network (http://www.refusersolidarity.net/) and the Israeli Youth Refusal Movement, http://www.shministim.org/. The activities of *Ometz Lesarev* or Courage to Refuse, the oldest movement of refusenikim—officers and reserve combat officers who believe that service in the Occupied Territories endangers the Zionist character of the state—are documented on http://www.seruv.org.il/Hebrew/default.asp. New Profile (http://www.newprofile.org/) describes itself as a group of feminist women and men who are convinced that they "need not live in a soldiers' state. Today, Israel is capable of a determined peace politics. It need not be a militarized society. We are convinced that we ourselves, our children, our partners, need not go on being endlessly mobilized…"

57. Chacham, Op. cit. pp. 1-2.

"destroy all the values that we were raised upon" and have given them to understand now that "the price of Occupation is the loss of the IDF's human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society." Thus they resolve not to continue to fight "beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people". Others, such as members of the New Profile movement, take a totally anti-militaristic stance. While the foreign press has given a certain amount of coverage to these phenomena, the Israeli media has by and large closed ranks and remained notably silent. At the time of writing, however, much attention is being paid to the pronouncements of rabbinic leaders on the religious right, who have called for soldiers refuse to carry out Sharon's "disengagement" plans, which may require them to evacuate settlements in Gaza. (There are additional unsubstantiated reports of a *din rodef* (curse) being pronounced against Sharon—an eerie echo of events leading up to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin prior to his assassination by Yigal Amir on November 4, 1995.)

Lastly, over the summer a great deal of publicity has been given to the case of Tali Fahima, not a refusenik as such, but a young woman from an untypical background (Mizrahi, disadvantaged, from a poor Southern Israeli town, formerly a Likud voter) who became the first Israeli female to be detained in administrative detention without charge for defying the military by carrying out independent peace activities in off-limits Jenin. (Fahima contacted Zakariya Zbeidi, the commander of the El Aqsa regiments in Jenin, and started a humanitarian project for the children of the refugee camp.) The Shabak (Israeli Security Forces) chose to make an exception of Fahima. Leftist Israelis have visited Zbeidi before, who has survived around five IDF attempts on his life, but none were arrested and subject to the same harsh treatment as Fahima. Why not? She is not the student or academic from the Ashkenasi middle-class background, a member of one of the obscure leftist groups, easily monitored and easily dismissed. She comes from the visibly vocal margins, those who elected the current administration. The nature of Fahima's subversive threat is discussed by Lin Chalozin Dovrat, an activist in the Women's Coalition for Just Peace:[58]

> If a good girl of Kiryat Gat and a Likud voter thinks that the occupation is a catastrophe, who knows, maybe more people will awake from the coma and find out we are all being screwed? What if tomorrow some more Tali Fahimas will get up and start thinking independently? What if tomorrow some more Tali Fahimas will get up

58. "Who is afraid of Tali Fahima?" This article was originally published in Hebrew on August 12 2004 by walla.co.il

and start thinking independently? Women? Mizrahi? Disenfranchised? Should we shoot live ammunition at their legs that will accidentally reach their heads? It is not Palestine here, and above all it's really impractical. … How will the state be run then?

How indeed?

III. Divide not conquer

At this point, by way of conclusion, it is worthwhile returning to the metaphor and the reality of the Separation Fence, which appears to be at the heart of the fractured postmodern society.

In a Q and A interview this summer with the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, then-Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs and former celebrated Soviet refusenik Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky, rebuts the often-asked question (together with the oft-made Berlin Wall analogy) "Do you think that building an 8-meter high concrete wall through prime Palestinian farmland and beating old farmers who protest against this is a further step towards peace in the region?"

> "The Berlin Wall was built to keep millions of people isolated from freedom. The security fence in Israel is being built in order to prevent terrorists from killing hundreds and thousands of Israelis - Jews and Arabs - in buses and cafes. The 8-meter high concrete wall you are referring to is only a very small part of the fence, and is in those areas that are most densely populated. The section of the wall you may be referring to, near Jerusalem, is in a place where 17 suicide bombers crossed into Jerusalem with a ticking bomb on their bodies. This wall prevents them from doing this now."[59]

Those outside Israel understand less about the effect of the suicide bombs on the diversity of Israeli opinion; it has caused an extraordinarily widespread rallying around the Fence, despite the work of the peace camp, and the International Court of Justice's condemnatory judgment.[60] Surveyed in July of last year by the Peace Index project at Tel Aviv University (576 respondents representing the adult Jewish and Arab population of this country (including Judea, Samaria and the kibbutzim), about 80 percent of the Israeli-Jewish respondents stated that they were very or fairly supportive of the Separation Fence; 15 percent were

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59. June 24, 2004; retrieved October 10, 2004 from
http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/QA.jhtml?qaNo=10
60. The text is available at http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/idocket/imwp/imwpframe.htm

opposed (5 percent did not know). However, the consensus:

> does not extend to the fence contours. A fence that leaves Jewish settlements "outside" is supported by a far smaller majority, and the number of those who support placing Palestinian territories "inside" the fence equals the number of those opposing it.
>
> ... The high degree of support for the separation fence indicates that the consensus on this issue has cut across political camps. In effect, a comparison between the voters body of the seven major parties shows that each contains a clear majority of some form of support for erecting the fence.
>
> Moreover, the differences between the various degrees of support are not graded along the customary right-left axis: Shinui - 87.5 percent in favor; Labor - 82 percent; Likud - 80.5 percent; SHAS and NRP - 70 percent; National Union - 69 percent, and Meretz - 63 percent.
>
> These findings hint at the presence of additional and, perhaps, contradictory considerations motivating the Jewish public, beyond the common desire for the erection of a fence, which - as we have shown in previous months - derives from the expectation that it will significantly lessen the risk of terror.
>
> What is more, where the inclusion of Palestinian territories inside the fence is concerned, findings show a balanced result of supporters and opponents.[61]

In short, support for the Separation Fence cuts across the public and across political camps from left to right; a culture of seeming chaos becomes united on this one symbol of division. When you have good neighbours, says Minister of Justice and Shinui leader Tommy Lapid, you don't need fences:

> The American-Canadian border has no fences; the American-Mexican border has fences, for good reason. We need fences along our Palestinian neighbours' borders because of the misuse of freedom of movement.[62]

One of the architects of the Geneva Accords and leader of Israeli left-Zionist party Yossi Beilin, in a similar *Ha'aretz* interview, avers, "The separation wall is by its nature a short-term solution. It will not defend Israel for good. And its only route

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61. Prof. Ephraim Ya'ar and Dr. Tamar Steinmetz (6 August 2003) "The July Peace Index: Support for the fence, and for the hudna" in *Ha'aretz*, retrieved 10 October 2004 from http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=325842&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y

62. Lapid in an interview for the ITV documentary *Faultlines*, broadcast on British television in 2003.

should be the 1967 borders."[63]

A more sophisticated analysis of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's true intentions with regard to the Fence is made by Yossi Alpher, former director of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, and one-time senior adviser to former PM Ehud Barak. Alpher believes that "Sharon and others on the right intend to subvert the original design of the fence yet further, and to use it to delineate the outlines of a Palestinian enclave state on about half of the West Bank." If the Palestinians do not agree, the prime minister "will seek to impose the new arrangement", exploiting the public's support for the fence, for separation and removing settlements, while taking advantage of the Bush administration's preoccupation with the Iraq War, the prevention of terrorism and latterly, elections.[64] Ghassan Khatib, minister of labor in the Palestinian government, concurs:[65]

> Maps show the barrier's predicted path slicing into the West Bank, taking half of the land inside of the green line--half of the land that Palestinians and the world agreed would make up the Palestinian state.
>
> But Sharon's hints that he is ready to dismantle some settlements are not an anomaly in his position, rather they are the natural conclusion of the promise Sharon made decades ago to render Palestinian statehood inoperable by dividing Palestinian land into cantons and surrounding them by Israeli military control. Sharon was never happy about building this "separation wall"--for him, it was an unnecessary division of land that God promised the Jews. But Sharon and his allies also recognized that building the wall was simply another way to proceed with his plan--to push Palestinians into as little space as possible, making their freedom and independence unattainable and leaving the rest of the land for Israel.

In short, completion of the Fence will render any two-state solution impossible; a binational solution is totally out of the question. Trapped inside will be three million Palestinians, separated from each other and their land, unable to maintain financial viability, requiring Israeli permission to move around, with little to look forward to save the discussions about which areas of the Fence might

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63. July 28, 2004, retrieved October 10, 2004 from
http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/QA.jhtml?qaNo=106

64. Yossi Alpher (December 15, 2003) "No suicide bombings = no fence" in *The fence/wall revisited* (bitterlemons.org).

65. Ghassan Khatib (December 15, 2003) "This wall is a land grab," in *The fence/wall revisited* (bitterlemons.org). Ghassan Khatib is coeditor with Alpher of bitterlemons.org.

re-routed or dismantled. Protected by it will be the settlements whose existence necessitates the continuing Occupation and administration over a disadvantaged and angry populace.

The lid on the pressure cooker will be almost sealed, and with it the likelihood of any deconstruction of the twin Zionist and Palestinian nationalisms that might indicate a solution to the conflict. There will be no looking over the fence to consider those; meanwhile the self-constructed boundaries within will remain, and can only proliferate.