Yoav Peled and Gershon Shafir

THE ROOTS OF PEACEMAKING: THE DYNAMICS OF CITIZENSHIP IN ISRAEL, 1948–93

The Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993 marked a dramatic about-face in Israel's traditional policy toward the PLO and the Palestinian issue in general. This turn of events came as a surprise not only to journalists and commentators following day-to-day political events, but also to scholars engaged in the academic study of Israeli society. The prevailing notion among these scholars had been that the Israeli polity was suffering from what Horowitz and Lissak (1989) called "overburden" due to domestic debates over the disposition of the occupied territories. Thus, it was concluded, Israel was unable to launch bold policy initiatives to try to solve its deadlocked conflict with the Arabs.

In this paper, we offer a critique of the theoretical and historical analysis that underlies this conception, which we argue presents Israeli society as overly insular and inward-looking, and propose our own interpretation. We emphasize two aspects of Israeli society that have been neglected or underplayed in the existing literature. First, Israel is a society open to the world—economically, politically, and culturally—and influenced by global opportunities and constraints. Second, it is a society significantly constituted by its conflict with the Palestinian Arabs, a conflict that we think has acted in many ways as an internal, rather than external, influence. Thus, the radical departure in Israeli policy toward the Palestinians, as well as its 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, which has also remained largely unexplained, could be accounted for by the concurrent effects of changes in global and bilateral relationships on Israeli society and politics. Israel's responses to these challenges, we will argue, have been steering Israeli society away from its origins as an exclusionary frontier society toward a more inclusionary civil society.

Our purpose in this paper is not, however, to provide a comprehensive explanation for the Oslo agreement and the subsequent development of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Such an endeavor would require a detailed analysis of both structural and conjunctural factors that have converged at a particular time to achieve this political and diplomatic breakthrough. Our aim is both more modest and more ambitious than that. It is more modest because we cannot, within the confines of this paper, analyze the changes in the international environment, such as the breakup of the...
Soviet Union and the effects of the Persian Gulf War on Arab solidarity, that have played a crucial role in initiating the peace process. It is, at the same time, more ambitious because we employ theories of citizenship in order to construct a conceptual framework that can make sense of the changes in the fabric of society that have propelled Israeli governments to undertake multiple domestic reforms, and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by international developments. It is these changes, we argue, that continue to nurture the peace process, in spite of the uncertainties that accompany it.

We will begin with a critical review of the dominant paradigm in the sociology of Israeli society. This review will show how the uncritical acceptance of Labor Zionism's claims to be motivated by universalist values have led adherents of this paradigm to adopt the idea of overburden. We will then present our own conceptual framework that deconstructs the multiple and competing conceptions of citizenship through which Zionists have masked their exclusionary practices with universalistic rhetoric. This will be followed by a description of the hierarchical and fragmented citizenship structure that resulted, we argue, from the interplay between exclusionary, colonial practices and the real universalistic impulse that was the kernel of truth within the universalistic rhetoric.

Thus, our main thesis in this paper will be that the exclusionary and universalistic practices displayed by Israeli society represent two imperatives that have coexisted uneasily and vied for dominance within it: a colonial, frontier imperative and a democratic, civil imperative. In the last two decades, as we will show in the final section of the paper, Israeli society has been moving steadily away from its frontier origins and assuming more and more the character of civil society. It is this dynamic that has created the conditions that prompted and enabled Israel to take advantage of changes in the international environment and adopt a policy of accommodation.

CRISIS AND OVERBURDEN

Since the Lebanon War of 1982, many Israeli social scientists have adopted the view that the Israeli state was in crisis. This crisis, they have argued, was rooted in the Six Day War of 1967 and in Israel's dual political commitment—to being a Jewish state and a Western-style democracy at the same time (Horowitz & Lissak 1989). Until 1967, the argument goes, the tension created by this dual commitment was manageable by the state, because the major issues of the society's collective identity, both territorial and demographic, had been decided by the end of the Arab–Israeli War of 1948. The Six Day War reopened these issues by extending the boundaries of Israeli control and including within them the entire territory of Mandatory Palestine, with its close to 2 million (in 1967) Palestinian inhabitants. The reopening of the most crucial issues of societal identity has given rise to intensive conflicting demands that pull in opposite directions. The national and religious right have demanded that the newly occupied territories, particularly the biblically significant West Bank, be formally incorporated into Israel and their Palestinian inhabitants expelled or retained as non- or second-class citizens. The universalist, secular
left has been demanding that at least the most populous areas of the Occupied Territories be relinquished in order to maintain the demographic balance between Arabs and Jews in Israel and, with it, the balance between the country’s commitment to Jewishness and its commitment to democracy. Because the fault line between these camps passed within the ruling Labor Party itself (Beilin 1985), the party, and the state with it, have fallen into a crisis of “overburden” (Horowitz & Lissak 1989). This crisis has manifested itself in paralysis and inaction over the most crucial issues facing the country, and eventually in Labor’s loss of its hegemonic position in the society in 1977.

Likud’s coming to power in 1977 signified, according to mainstream Israeli social science, the victory of irrational, primordial, anti-democratic nationalism over the modern, universalist, democratic ethos of the Labor Zionist movement. This is all the more so because Likud had come to power on the strength, primarily, of the votes of mizrachi (Middle Eastern and North African) Jews, whose political culture, it was argued, was particularistic, authoritarian, and anti-modern (see Peled 1990). These political character traits manifested themselves in the policies adopted by the Likud-led governments: massive settlement in the occupied territories; the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, designed to destroy the PLO and settle the Palestinian question by force; and a populist economic policy that resulted in disastrous inflation by the time Labor came back to power in partnership with Likud in 1984.

This conceptualization of the crisis, which enjoys the status of conventional wisdom, is based on a number of “framework decisions” relating to the boundaries of the collectivity under study, to major turning points in its history, and to the important research questions that need to be asked about it (Kimmerling 1992). Thus, the collectivity is defined as Jewish, Western, democratic, and “revolutionary.” The most important turning points are considered to be the achievement of sovereignty in 1948, the Six Day War of 1967, and the victory of Likud in 1977. And the cardinal research question is: How successful has this collectivity been in dealing with the challenges posed by its inhospitable non-Western, non-democratic environment and by the influx of non-Western, non-modern—albeit Jewish—immigrants?

The answer to this question, in works written after 1982, has been generally pessimistic. The two dominant trends in post–1967 Israeli political culture have been identified as “routinization of the Zionist revolution” and the growing ascendance of the particularistic, ethnic Jewish elements in Zionism over its universalistic, liberal components (Eisenstadt 1985; Horowitz & Lissak 1989; Lissak 1990; Cohen 1989; Kimmerling 1985; Medding 1990, 23; Ezrahi 1993, 258). And as culture has generally been regarded in these works as determinative of social and political action, the outlook for Israeli society has been one of continuing inability to cope with the major challenge facing it—normalizing relations with its Arab neighbors. Thus, the major breakthrough in Israeli–Arab relations prior to the Oslo agreement—the peace treaty with Egypt—was mentioned only in passing and without any theorization in the two main texts of the dominant paradigm in post–1982 Israeli political sociology (Eisenstadt 1985, 510–11; Horowitz & Lissak 1989, 196–97, 201).

This analytic blind spot can be explained by some of the methodological and framework decisions adopted by the dominant paradigm—most importantly, by the
decision to define the collectivity under study as Jewish and as held together by a Zionist normative consensus. This definition implied, necessarily, that the Jewish–Arab conflict be viewed as external to the society itself, as a problem it had to deal with rather than as one of its constituent elements (Deutsch 1985; Ehrlich 1987). This view was not altered even after the conquest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip brought the majority of the Palestinian people under direct Israeli rule. By defining the Jewish–Arab conflict as external to the Israeli collectivity, at this as at earlier stages, the dominant paradigm overlooked the formative impact of the conflict on Israeli society itself. Thus, in the post–1967 period, the Occupied Territories have been seen as an “issue” affecting Israeli society from without, primarily through its corroding effect on the Zionist consensus. What has not received adequate attention was the fact that the occupation had resulted in a new, inherently unstable political entity comprising Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. Similarly, by focusing on (Jewish) Israeli political culture, where particularism was indeed gaining ground on universalism, the dominant paradigm neglected the economy, whose growth, integration with the global economy, and consequent liberalization, steadily although silently worked to reduce the idiosyncrasy of Israeli society and reinforce its universalistic aspects.

This neglect of the formative impact of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and of global economic forces on Israeli society made the dominant paradigm's references to and interpretations of the peace process perfunctory, if not unintelligible. All that could be said about the peace treaty with Egypt, for example, was that it was not consonant with the revisionist (i.e., right-wing nationalist) Zionist values of its promulgators (Eisenstadt 1985, 510–11). As to the recent Israeli–Palestinian agreement, it could be argued from within the dominant paradigm that this breakthrough was preceded by the return to power of the Labor Party, with its labor–Zionist universalist values, and that these values dictated subsequent political developments. This explanation, however, would not withstand more careful scrutiny.

To begin with, until 1977 it was Labor-led governments that consolidated Israeli control over the occupied territories, whereas a Likud government relinquished the Sinai to Egypt and recognized that the Palestinians had “legitimate rights” in the West Bank and Gaza in 1979. Furthermore, it was a Likud government that, in 1991, formally launched the current peace process in Madrid. In addition, Labor's narrow electoral victory in 1992, and even narrower coalition government, can hardly signify a fundamental value change in the society. In fact, ideological polarization reached new heights both before and after the Oslo agreement, as tragically attested by the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Besides, the return of Labor has not been accompanied by a reassertion of socialist Zionist values in any other policy area. Finally, since the late 1980s the Israeli polity has had to face two new challenges: the Intifada and massive non-ideological immigration from the former Soviet Union. Both of these processes have added greatly to the burden of the polity. Thus, if overburden is an obstacle to new policy initiatives, one should have expected even greater paralysis on the part of the government than before (see Lissak 1990, 32).

In this paper, we offer an alternative analysis of Israeli history and of the crisis of the Israeli state, based on different framework decisions. We view the social entity
under study as composed of all groups, Jewish and Palestinian alike, that reside in Palestine–Israel and are effectively ruled by a single political authority at any given moment. Thus, one of the defining characteristics of this social entity is that it lacks clear-cut boundaries (cf. Kimmerling 1989). Inter-group relations within this collectivity have been determined not by ideological consensus, we argue, but by a frontier-type conflict typical of colonial societies. Thus, the Jewish–Palestinian conflict is incorporated into the analysis as a constituent element of Israeli society rather than as an exogenous force.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: COLONIALISM, DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP

We propose to analyze the trajectory of Israel's attitude toward the Palestinians as integrally related to the country's evolution from a frontier to a civil society. A frontier society is "a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies" (Lamar & Thompson 1981, 7), and is characterized by a more or less open conflict between differentially incorporated ascriptive groups. According to Lamar and Thompson, "probably the nearest contemporary approach to the kind of frontier . . . where rival societies compete for control of the land, is to be found in Israel" (1981, 312). Civil society has been variously defined as a society in which a sphere of private, largely economic activity exists autonomously of the state and as a society where a sphere of voluntary public activity exists autonomously of both the state and the market (Taylor 1990; Seligman 1994). By general agreement, Israel has been moving from a state-dominated society to a civil society in the former, narrower sense. In terms of our analysis, Israeli society was state-dominated precisely because, as a frontier society, it was engaged in a massive, publicly financed and organized colonial-settlement project.

The tension between the exclusionary impetus of frontier society and the inclusionary impetus of civil society has expressed itself in a hierarchical and fragmented citizenship structure. In other words, the state and related institutions (most importantly the Histadrut) have been mobilizing societal resources and dispensing rights, duties, and privileges, in accordance with a multilayered and complex index of memberships. This citizenship structure has been mediated and made ideologically coherent through the simultaneous use of three conceptions of citizenship—liberal, republican, and etno-nationalist—each of which has its own definition of the array of social groups that make up the society.

The liberal conception of citizenship assumes its individual, universal, equal, and public character. According to this conception, citizens possess an "unencumbered self" that is not beholden to the community. The latter is viewed as a contractual relationship in which individuals remain essentially strangers to one another. What citizenship actually consists of, according to this account, is a bundle of rights designed to protect each individual's private sphere from encroachment by fellow citizens and, especially, by the state. The best-known formulation of the historical evolution of this bundle of rights is that of the British sociologist T. H. Marshall (1973 [1949]). Marshall distinguished among civil, political, and social rights, each
of which evolves with its corresponding social institutions—courts of law, representative legislatures, and the welfare state—during a sequence of stages in the evolution of modern liberal society. (The final stage, that of social or “industrial rights,” Marshall implied, points beyond liberalism itself.) The liberal notion of citizenship is currently being challenged on two fronts. In the United States, a virtue-based, republican, or communitarian civic critique contends that citizenship should be seen as constituting a moral community. Members of this community experience, or should experience, their citizenship not intermittently, as protective individual rights only, but rather as active participation in the pursuit of a common good (Sandel 1982; Taylor 1989; Oldfield 1990). The other challenge comes from a third notion of citizenship, one that originated in German romanticism and has spread to Eastern Europe. This notion roots membership in a special kind of community: the nation or ethnic group. In this ethno-nationalist, or völkisch approach, citizenship is understood as an expression not of individual rights but of membership in a homogeneous community of descent (Greenfeld 1992).

The most universal of these three conceptions of citizenship is, of course, the liberal one. But as has been pointed out by critics such as Giddens (1985), Held (1989), Tilly (1992), and Gorham (1992), even the meaning of liberal citizenship is not immediately revealed by its formal characteristics alone. For civil, political, and social rights, with their corresponding institutions, establish not only entitlements but also mechanisms of surveillance and control and arenas of political contest. Thus, the precise meaning of citizenship and non-citizenship in each social context—that is, the extent to which either of them empowers or disempowers individual and collective members of society—is subject to political negotiation and struggle. By “citizenship,” in other words, we must understand not only a bundle of formal rights, but the entire mode of incorporation of individuals and groups into the society. We will refer to this mode of incorporation, combining formal, written principles and informal social practices, as “citizenship discourse.”

While the liberal conception of citizenship, as the most universal, is commonly the one put forth for legitimating purposes, the actual citizenship discourse in each particular society may consists of two or more conceptions of citizenship superimposed on one another (cf. Smith 1988). Thus, Israel’s citizenship discourse has consisted of the three conceptions of citizenship mentioned above: liberal, republican, and ethno-nationalist (Peled 1992). This particular combination, we argue, resulted from the subtle interaction between the exclusionary dimensions of Israel’s colonizing, or nation-building practices, and the inclusionary aspects of its democratic state institutions.

The differential allocation of entitlements, obligations, and domination by the highly mobilizational Israeli state has proceeded in a number of stages. First, the liberal idea of citizenship has functioned to separate citizen Jews and Palestinians from the non-citizen Palestinians in the occupied territories and abroad, whether these Palestinians were conceptualized as refugees or as stateless, rightless subjects of Israel’s military occupation. Then the ethno-nationalist discourse of inclusion and exclusion has been invoked to discriminate between Jewish and Palestinian citizens within the sovereign State of Israel. Finally, the republican discourse has been used to legitimize the different positions occupied by the major Jewish ethnic groups: ashkenazim (European Jews) versus mizrachim.
Historically, Israel's *ashkenazi* state-building elite has utilized the republican conception of citizenship to legitimize the privileges it derived from the colonial project through its control of the state and other public institutions. Conversely, the most oppressed group in society, non-citizen Palestinians, was deprived of a legal means of struggle through its definition as lying outside even the liberal conception of citizenship.

Our thesis in this paper is that, in recent years, two complementary developments relating to these groups have coincided to weaken the colonial project in favor of the civil aspects of Israeli society. The *ashkenazi* elite has outgrown the confines of its colonial phase of development and now seeks to venture out into the world. It has thus lost much of its interest in maintaining the primacy of republican citizenship, with its emphasis on a strong state and on communal public-spiritedness. At the other end of the social ladder, non-citizen Palestinians have embarked upon civil resistance and launched the Intifada, reducing even further the economic benefits of the occupation. Attacked from the top and the bottom, the edifice of Israeli citizenship has began to unravel, making room for liberal reforms in all spheres of social life. It is this unraveling that has allowed, and even necessitated, the restructuring of Israel's relations with the Palestinians.

The colonial citizenship structure was undermined, then, from the bottom and the top—that is, by those who had nothing to lose and by those who had everything to gain by changing it, rather than by the groups placed in the middle—*mizrachi* Jews and citizen Palestinians. The *mizrachim*, who helped Likud to victory in 1977, had not been able to demand real improvement in their socioeconomic conditions following this victory, and citizen Palestinians had not launched their own Intifada, or joined that of their non-citizen brethren. While we cannot address this question adequately within the confines of this paper, we suggest that it is precisely the intermediate location of these two groups—that is, the fact that both had a lot to lose by rocking the boat—that prevented them from challenging the established order on their own.

Having presented our own conceptual framework, and the multiple conceptions of citizenship that make up Israel's citizenship discourse, we will examine how the specific content of these conceptions of citizenship were shaped by historical factors. A brief overview of the colonial and democratic strands of Israeli political culture will be followed by a more detailed demonstration of how the two of them together structured the citizenship practice of the four major ethnic groups in society. Subsequently, we will examine the dynamics that transformed the conceptions and practices of citizenship of two of these groups and the ways in which these changes opened the door to the peace process.

**STRATIFIED CITIZENSHIP IN A FRONTIER SOCIETY**

Conventional analyses of Israeli history have highlighted those characteristics of the Zionist settlement project that seem to demarcate it from other colonial encounters. This was done in order to present the Jewish return to Palestine as historically unique, and to avoid the embarrassment of describing it as a colonial settlement project (Kimmerling 1992, 450). However, Shafir's study of the formative period of
Zionist settlement in Palestine—1882–1914—showed that the Israeli experience does resemble that of some of the other European overseas colonial societies, such as Australia, the northern United States, South Africa, and Algeria. The experiences of all of those countries were shaped by the exclusionary practices of colonization and the resultant frontier struggles with already existing societies. Similarly, the type of colonial venture launched in Palestine by the Labor Zionist movement—a nationally homogeneous settlement colony—resulted in a struggle between Jews and Palestinians over the control of land and labor (Shafir 1989, 1996).

The political institutions and political culture of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in pre–1948 Palestine), which later served as foundations for the Israeli state, were shaped by the Jewish–Palestinian frontier struggle. The success of the Zionist project required that the Yishuv be constituted as an ethno-republican community, committed to a common moral purpose—the fulfillment of Zionism. Its civic virtue, chalutziyut (pioneering), was a composite of two virtuous qualities that corresponded to the two bases of legitimization invoked by the Zionist settlers: Jewish historical rights in Palestine and the redemptive activity of the pioneers, which consisted of physical labor, agricultural settlement, and military defense. Being a chalutz meant, therefore, being first and foremost a Jew, and then engaging in those redemptive activities. Thus, the foundation was laid for distinguishing between the civic virtue (or “desert”) not only of Jews and Arabs, but also of different groupings within the Jewish community, based on their presumed contributions to the project of Zionist redemption (Peled 1992).

The Yishuv was also a democratic republican community, in which individual rights and the procedural rules of democracy were widely respected. This was mandated by its semi-voluntary nature and the need to keep all Jewish social sectors within its bounds, for demographic and legitimational purposes. When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, a new citizenship discourse, mamlachtiyut, was invoked to legitimate the transition to statehood. This ethos emphasized the shift from sectoral interests to the general interest, from semi-voluntarism to binding obligation, from foreign rule to political sovereignty. Equal application of the law was of paramount importance if the state was to assert its authority over the various Jewish social sectors, which had enjoyed a large degree of autonomy in the Yishuv (Peled 1992).

As understood in the context of mamlachtiyut, the uniform rule of law did not entail a neutral, liberal state or a universal, liberal citizenship structure. The state was to continue to be committed to the values of chalutziyut and to demand such commitment from its citizens. Mamlachtiyut, then, was not meant to displace the pioneering mobilizing ethos or abandon the settlement project; quite the contrary, it was meant to endow them with the organizational and political resources of a sovereign state. Thus, under the legitimational guise of universal liberal citizenship, individuals and social groups continued to be treated by the state in accordance with their presumed contributions to the common good as defined by the Zionist project (Kimmerling 1985, 272; Horowitz & Lissak 1978, 189–95; Liebman & Don-Yehiya 1983, chap. 4; Cohen 1987, 201–59; Medding 1990, 134–77).

In the next section, we examine how the four major ethnic categories that make up the basic skeleton of Israel’s citizenship structure were constructed by the contradictory effects of the colonial, frontier conception and the democratic, civic conception of citizenship, as mediated by the discourse of mamlachtiyut.
The Ashkenazi Elite

The “Pioneers”  The East European Jewish planters of the First Aliyah (immigration) (1882–1903) found in Palestine a large and relatively cheap indigenous Arab labor force. Palestinian Arab workers possessed some land, housing, and social services within their traditional economy, and sought in the Jewish settlements only seasonal work and supplementary income. In contrast, ashkenazi workers, who arrived during the Second Aliyah (1904–14), demanded year-round jobs, which were their only source of income, and were used to a higher standard of living. No more than 5 percent of them had ever worked in agriculture, nor were they particularly acquiescent. As a result, Jewish planters preferred employing Palestinian Arab workers to their own Jewish brethren (Shafir 1989).

Having tried and failed to adjust to the wage levels of Arab workers, the ashkenazi workers adopted, in 1905, a new strategy, the “conquest of labor”: “[A] necessary condition for the realization of Zionism,” they stated, “is the conquest of all occupations in Palestine by Jews.” The Hapoel Hatzair (Young Worker) party they established (an early precursor of the present Labor Party) was to assist in this project by articulating it in political and ideological terms. The Jewish workers succeeded only modestly in their exclusionary efforts, however, because there was no state apparatus yet to enforce their extra-market strategy (Shafir 1989).

This failure to conquer labor and establish a self-reproducing split labor market yielded, after a stormy period of inter-Zionist conflict and accommodation, a dual economy. A new economic sector, employing only Jews and under the control of the Labor Zionist movement, was formed, supported by two pillars: the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and the agricultural workers’ Histadrut (association). The aims of the JNF and the Histadrut were the removal of land and labor, respectively, from the market, closing them off to Palestinian Arabs. Thus, notwithstanding the celebrated universalism of Zionist pioneering, the newly founded Jewish economic sector was actually based on practices of exclusion.

This economic sector, with Labor Zionism’s most famous social innovation, the kibbutz, at its center, gradually developed into an economic empire encompassing, at its height, agricultural, industrial, construction, marketing, transportation, and financial concerns, as well as a whole network of social-service organizations. This conglomerate has operated under the aegis of the Histadrut, and as long as Labor was in power (1933–77), it enjoyed the support first of Zionist institutions and then of the state. At the same time, this economic infrastructure played a crucial role in maintaining the political and cultural hegemony of the Labor Zionist movement, thus ensuring the privileged position of a large segment of ashkenazi Jews. Their position was justified, ideologically, by interpreting the notion of “pioneering” in a sweeping fashion—as characterizing all individuals associated with the Labor Zionist movement, even those who had long since abandoned the settlements, and agricultural work in general, in favor of administrative or political functions (Shapiro 1976).

Orthodox Jews—The Privileges of Legitimation All national movements have had to rely on primordial cultural elements in order to mobilize their target populations for essentially modernizing aims. For Zionism, the need to rely on primordial
factors for legitimation and mobilization was particularly acute, as the only cultural attribute common to the Jewish nation for which it claimed to speak was Jewish religion. Thus, Zionism required at least the tacit approval of those universally recognized as the Jewish spokesmen—the orthodox rabbis. But, with the exception of a small national religious movement (now the National Religious Party), the rabbis were not rushing to give their approval. On the contrary, they became increasingly anti-Zionist as the secular aims of the movement became clearer to them.

The need for religious legitimation dictated, first, the choice of the movement’s target territory (in dispute until Herzl’s death in 1904) (Vital 1982, chaps. 9–10) and then the use of a whole array of religious Jewish symbols and other cultural constructs. Most importantly, state and religion have not been separated in Israel, which is defined in its constitution as a Jewish state. This makes the debate over “Who is Jew?” an important political issue. Over the years, the official definition of “Jew” has become progressively restrictive and more closely aligned with orthodox thinking.

A central manifestation of the status of Jewish religion is the cultural autonomy granted to orthodox Jews, allowing them not only to lead their own autonomous life but to control key aspects of the life of all Jews in the country. The highlights of this cultural autonomy have been:

**Education:** The State Education Law (1953) established two state school systems, one secular and one religious, the latter under the de facto control of the National Religious Party. In addition, an independent ultra-orthodox system was brought under state financing but without real state supervision. In 1957, in response to “widely felt . . . anxiety about Israeli youth’s possible estrangement from their Jewish heritage,” the Labor-headed government launched an intensive program of “Jewish-consciousness” instruction in the secular state system. The rationale for adopting the program, in the revealing words of Education Minister Zalman Aranne, was that knowledge of the Jewish tradition was essential “for the national education of the Hebrew nation.” The program, described by Aranne as “Jewish inoculation” has been intensified considerably since then (Zucker 1983, 134–42; Herman 1970, 35; Liebman & Don-Yehiya 1983, 170–77).

**Family law:** Under the Ottoman millet system, and subsequently under the British Mandate, jurisdiction over family law (primarily marriage and divorce) was the purview of the various officially recognized religious communities of Palestine. This situation was written into the Israeli legal system, which granted rabbinical courts exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and divorce of Jews in Israel. (Similar laws were enacted with respect to the religious courts of non-Jewish communities.) The most important practical consequence of this law is that, by and large, civil marriage and the possibility of inter-religious marriage are not available to Israeli citizens (Abramov 1976, 179–98; Zucker 1983, 100–121).

**Military service:** Since statehood, military service, mandatory for both men and women, has been considered the most important “pioneering” activity. The law, however, exempts orthodox Jewish women from service and grants yeshiva students deferments to the end of their studies. These deferments, in reality de facto exemptions, were held in 1991 by 21,000 non-Zionist, ultra-orthodox (haredi) yeshiva students. In the same year, new deferments were issued to 6 percent of the cohort of draft-eligible men (Center for Jewish Pluralism 1992, 166; Ben 1995). Religious Zionist yeshiva students have been combining shortened military service—in their own separate units—with studies in special institutions called yeshivot hesder. These yeshivot have been hotbeds of radical Jewish nationalism and have
been major recruiting grounds for Gush Emunim. Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, is a graduate of one of these yeshivot.

Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful) emerged from within the younger generation of the National Religious Party in response to the first Israeli territorial withdrawals (in the Sinai and the Golan Heights) that came in the wake of the 1973 Arab–Israeli war. The purpose of this new movement was to launch an aggressive settlement drive in the West Bank for the explicit purpose of preventing future territorial concessions in that region (Lustick 1988). Although its justification for the continued occupation of the West Bank was religious and messianic, Gush Emunim took great pride in presenting itself, in the words of one of its leaders, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, as “the direct and legitimate offspring of the pioneers of Zionism” (Yediot Aharonot, 18 June 1976). As a settlement movement, Gush Emunim was supported by non-religious groups and individuals, as well, precisely because it successfully claimed the mantle of the virtuous republican community that works selflessly for the common good (Shafir 1984). The movement also received considerable financial, military, and political support from the state. Thus, 51 percent of the settlers are currently employed by state agencies, including (Jewish) local governments in the West Bank, compared with 33 percent of the population in Israel proper (Haaretz Weekly Magazine, 15 December 1995).

**Mizrachim as Quantity**

The dominant status of *ashkenazim* in Israeli society is usually explained by reference to their having been the earlier Jewish settlers in the country. Massive mizrachi immigration took place only after 1948, the argument goes, and by then the old-timer *ashkenazim*, and especially the organized agricultural workers among them, had laid the foundations for a new institutional edifice in which they occupied the commanding heights. According to this interpretation, chronology, without regard to social interests and conflicts, was directly transposed into history.

In actual fact, however, Jewish immigrants from Yemen arrived in Palestine at the same time as the founding fathers of the Second *Aliya*, and were expected to replace Palestinian workers in the Jewish-owned colonies (*moshavot*). Like their *ashkenazi* counterparts, the Yemenites also failed in this attempted “conquest of labor.” However, while the *ashkenazi* workers went on to make history by establishing cooperative and communal settlements, the Yemenites were relegated to the sidelines (Shafir 1989).

The different historical trajectories of the two communities reflected the superior organizational ability of the *ashkenazi* workers, which placed them in a better position to procure resources from the World Zionist Organization. The *ashkenazim* legitimated their demands, however, by drawing a distinction between themselves as “idealistic” and the Yemenites as “natural” workers. “Idealistic workers” were those who had forfeited the comforts of European urban life and the opportunity to immigrate to America, and chose to become agricultural workers in Palestine instead. “Natural workers,” on the other hand, were not, as the term implies, necessarily experienced agricultural workers, which most Yemenites were not. Rather, the term referred to “a person capable of performing hard work, living in uncomfortable
circumstances, somebody obedient who does not challenge the yoke of the employer, and above all—content with little” (Druyan 1981, 134; Shafir 1990). “Idealistic workers” were the stuff pioneers were made of, blazing the trail and setting moral standards for the community, whereas “natural workers” were to be foot soldiers in the Zionist campaign, adding “quantity” to the pioneers’ “qualitative” efforts.

This distinction between “quality” and “quantity” was meant to bridge the gap between the pioneers’ claim to be a dedicated, exclusive vanguard deserving of special privileges, and the need to draw the Jewish masses to Palestine. This proved to be of crucial importance in the 1950s and 1960s, when the pioneers, now occupying all dominant positions in society, had to deal with a massive influx of mizrachi immigrants. Thus, as Jews immigrating under the Law of Return, mizrachi immigrants were granted all civil and political rights. At the same time, however, they were socially marginalized: sent to settle in border areas and in towns deserted by Palestinians in 1948, to beef up the military, and to provide unskilled labor for the country’s industrialization drive (Smooha 1978; Hasson 1981; Bernstein & Swirski 1982; Swirski 1984).

The “ethnic gap” that resulted between ashkenazim and mizrachiim has persisted to this day, and in some respects has even widened. The only social-mobility study ever conducted in Israel, in 1974, found a grossly disproportionate representation of mizrachi males in skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor, as well as in service occupations and in agriculture. Moreover, the greatest dissimilarity in occupational distribution was found among the youngest age cohort. Similar disparities were found between the two groups’ educational attainments, particularly in post–secondary education (Kraus & Hodge 1990, 66, 68). Changes that have taken place in the last twenty years, primarily as a result of the entry of non-citizen Palestinian workers into the Israeli labor market, have not changed significantly the relative standing of the two Jewish ethnic groups (Schmelz, Dellapergola, & Avner 1991, 109–12; Smooha 1993; Haberfeld & Cohen 1995).

Second-Class-Citizen Palestinians

Of the 150,000 Palestinians who had remained in the territory of the State of Israel at the conclusion of the 1948 war, about 60,000 were granted immediate Israeli citizenship. The rest were allowed to apply for it. Until 1966, however, they were ruled by a military administration, “which imposed severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and economic opportunities, and placed them under surveillance and military law” (Medding 1990, 25). The military administration aroused considerable opposition among some Jewish Israelis because it violated the Palestinians’ citizenship rights and among others because it was seen as an electoral instrument in the hands of the ruling Labor Party, which repeatedly garnered the largest share of the Palestinian vote. In response to this pressure and to labor shortages that developed in the (Jewish) labor market, many of the restrictive regulations of the military administration were relaxed in the early 1960s. Its formal abolition, however, came only in December 1966 (Jiryis 1976, 31–55; Lustick 1980; Shalev 1992).

Since the abolition of the military administration, Palestinian citizens have enjoyed political rights on an individual, liberal basis. They have been excluded, how-
ever, from political citizenship in the republican sense—that is, from participating in attending to the common good of society. This exclusion was formalized in 1985 in an amendment to the law governing elections to the Knesset, which stated:

A list of candidates shall not participate in elections to the Knesset if its goals, explicitly or implicitly, or its actions include one of the following:

1. Negation of the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people;
2. Negation of the democratic character of the state;
3. Incitement of racism.

In a series of administrative and judicial decisions interpreting this law, two important principles regarding the citizenship status of the Palestinian citizens have been promulgated. First, the demand to declare Israel a state of its citizens was pronounced illegitimate, because it implied assigning equal status to Jews and Arabs within the state. Second, the demand to deprive Israel's Palestinian citizens, as opposed to the non-citizens living in the occupied territories, of their citizenship rights was made equally unacceptable. These two principles together have reaffirmed the status of Israel's Palestinian citizens as possessing individual liberal rights but forbidden to advance a collective vision of the common good of society that would be incompatible with the Zionist vision (Peled 1992).

As for social rights, these have been tied in Israel, in truly republican manner, to the performance of military service. As most Palestinian citizens are not called up (by administrative practice rather than by law), this exemption has been used to justify the abridgment of their social rights (Kretzmer 1990, 98–107). Moreover, the possibility of instituting some form of alternative national service for Palestinians (which has been done in the case of religious Jewish women) has not been seriously considered by the state. This omission is highly emblematic of the Palestinians’ exclusion from attending to the common good, and signifies the fact that the state still treats them as part of the frontier. The last point is further buttressed by the routine violation in practice of the Palestinian citizens’ right to own property, especially land.

As land is the key resource at stake in frontier conflicts, most Palestinian-owned land within the State of Israel has been expropriated and turned over to national (Jewish) ownership. Palestinian citizens are discriminated against in access to state-administered lands, which make up 90 percent of all land in the country (20% of this land, mostly agricultural, is officially owned by the JNF and is prohibited by law from being leased to non-Jews) (Kretzmer 1990, 49–69). Furthermore, until recently the planning authorities rarely approved zoning plans for Arab towns and villages; neither did they allow the expansion of existing structures. This, in effect, forced Palestinian citizens to resort to illegal construction, which was constantly subject to the threat of demolition. (Haaretz Weekly Magazine, 7 December 1990; Yiftachel 1992; Zureik, Moughrabi, & Sacco 1993).

The expropriation of most Palestinian-owned land eliminated much of the Palestinians’ subsistence agriculture and redirected the rest toward cash-crop production for the Jewish market. No significant Palestinian industry or modern financial or commercial sectors are in existence, and, consequently, half of the Palestinian labor force needs to seek employment in the Jewish sector. The lack of Palestinian trade unions, and the representation of citizen Palestinian workers (only since 1959)
by the Jewish-dominated Histadrut, also make it difficult to protect their social rights. Thus, while the expansion of the Israeli economy had raised the overall standard of living of the Palestinian citizens, it has also widened the gap between them and Israeli Jews. For example, the disposable income of an average Jewish family was 28 percent higher in 1992–93 than that of a Palestinian family, and the disposable income per person was 60 percent higher in 1986–87 (Haaretz, 27 January 1994; Yediot Aharonot, 2 May 1988). As a result, whereas 20 percent of all Israeli children currently live under the poverty line, the figure for (citizen) Palestinian children is 50 percent (Faris 1993, 28; Zureik et al. 1993).

Still, the liberal political rights enjoyed by the citizen Palestinians have allowed them to organize politically and work for the improvement of their position within the space created by the liberal citizenship discourse. Thus, in 1965 they began to shift their electoral support from the Labor Party and its Arab affiliates to the Communist Party and later to distinctively Palestinian parties, as well. They have also created several countrywide Palestinian political organizations and forced the state to accord them de facto, if not de jure, recognition (Peled 1992). This increased political efficacy, coupled with the rough equality that developed between the two major Jewish political blocs, increased the bargaining power of political parties that represent citizen Palestinians (Lustick 1990).

In 1990, the Labor Party tried, and failed, to form a governing coalition that would include these Palestinian-supported parties. In 1992, however, Labor succeeded in forming a minority government whose existence depended (and still depends) on the support of five members of the Knesset who belong to “Arab” parties. These five legislators are not included in the governing parliamentary coalition, and therefore do not hold any cabinet positions. Their “outside” support has been crucial, however, to the peace process and has also resulted in certain improvements in the citizen Palestinians’ social rights, as expressed in a narrowing of the gap in budgetary allocations between Jewish and Palestinian individuals and institutions. These developments demonstrate Marshall’s argument that, in a liberal citizenship framework, one type of rights tends to support another. Still, in terms of our analysis, barring a major transformation of Israel’s political culture, citizen Palestinians are not likely to be able to cross the threshold separating the liberal citizenship status from the republican. In fact, one of the major arguments heard against the legitimacy of the peace process, and of the government that is pursuing it, is that they both depend on the support of Palestinian political parties.

Non-Citizen Palestinians

The Palestinian Arab population in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip that was effectively, but not legally, incorporated into Israel in 1967 lived for twenty-seven years under military occupation and possessed no effective civil, political, or social rights. By virtue of being occupied, Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories were neither citizens nor members of Israeli society. They functioned merely as Israel’s metics: a cheap and flexible labor supply and captive consumers and taxpayers (Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein 1987).

According to the international law of “belligerent occupation,” Israel’s military authorities were required to enforce the legal system that existed prior to the occu-
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The Occupied Territories were ruled by a military government whose commanders were authorized to replace previous civilian laws with military decrees. The legal system, moreover, was openly split. Whereas Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories were subject to military law, Israeli settlers in these territories continued to be subject to Israeli civil law, even for violations committed in the Occupied Territories. In short, the particularistic aspect of the Israeli legal system—applying two sets of laws to two different populations residing in the same territory and ruled by the same government—reached its high (or low) point in the West Bank and Gaza (Benvenisti 1990; B'tselem 1989, 1994; Amit-Kohn et al. 1993).

Since 1967, about two-thirds of the land in the West Bank has been declared "state land," and much of it has been allocated for Jewish settlement. Most of the water resources in that area have also been diverted for Jewish use in the West Bank itself and in Israel. The economy of the West Bank, and even more so of the Gaza Strip, have become dependent on the wages of Palestinian laborers working in Israel (Razin & Sadka 1993, 71–79). Because these workers have been barred from organizing themselves in any way, and because they have received only the most pro forma protection from the state, their wages and working conditions have been very poor. Palestinian workers have also been considered a security risk, especially since the outbreak of the Intifada, which made their working conditions even worse and subjected them to all manner of arbitrary and humiliating search-and-seizure practices. Since the Gulf War, and especially since the Oslo agreement, Israel has sought to prevent Palestinians from working in Israel and has imported tens of thousands of workers from abroad to replace them. This policy has resulted in severe economic difficulties in the Occupied Territories—especially in Gaza, which has been under virtual blockade since the institution of Palestinian autonomy there.

THE POLITICS OF LIBERALIZATION AND DECOLONIZATION

As our survey of citizenship conceptions and practices has demonstrated, this fragmented citizenship structure resulted from, was facilitated by, and depended on a highly intrusive but formally democratic state that was engaged in intensive mobilization and control of societal resources. Over the years, however—especially since the 1980s—this structure began to unravel from the bottom and the top simultaneously.

At the bottom, the least privileged group, non-citizen Palestinians, rose up in the Intifada, their first effective act of resistance since 1967. The Intifada revealed a break in Israel's colonial citizenship structure at precisely the point where the gap between its universalist pretensions and its exclusionary practices was widest.

At the top, members of the veteran ashkenazi elite have gradually come to realize that the colonial citizenship discourse and its corresponding social institutions,
which were crucial to Israel’s state- and nation-building and provided the Labor movement with much of its identity, glory, and privileges, is no longer necessary and may have even become a hindrance to their economic interests. It was this colonial citizenship discourse, however, that had justified the delegitimation of the Palestinians’ national rights. The gradual decline of this discourse and its replacement by a civil, more liberal discourse has had the effect, when combined with the Intifada, of moving the Israeli state to moderate its opposition to Palestinian nationalism and its determination to hold on to the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Intifada, which broke out in December 1987, succeeded because it was able to strain the resources of the state, materially and morally, precisely at the time when the state’s mobilization capacity was being undermined by economic and social liberalization. Economically, the Intifada affected Israeli society within the pre-1967 borders in five ways: It caused an increase in military expenditures; it reduced Israeli exports to the Occupied Territories; it reduced the importation of labor from the Occupied Territories; it reduced tax revenues from these territories; and it affected Israel’s volume of tourism. The overall economic effect of these changes is hard to determine, because the Israeli economy had gone into recession already in the middle of 1987. Still, it is estimated that Israel lost about 2–2.5 percent of its gross domestic product (or about 1 billion U.S. dollars) in 1988–89 due to the Intifada, most of it in 1988. After 1989, the Israeli economy adjusted to the new situation and entered a period of economic growth. This was due, primarily, to massive immigration from the former Soviet Union and a no-less-massive infusion of foreign funds designed to help the country “absorb” this immigration (Razin & Sadka 1993; Rosen 1991; Tessler 1991).

The political effects of the Intifada have been longer lasting. The uprising resurrected the Green Line (pre-1967 border) in the consciousness of most Israelis and brought, to an almost complete halt, travel by Israeli Jews, other than settlers, in the Occupied Territories. This highlighted the failure of the efforts, led since 1977 by Likud governments, to establish the inseparability of the West Bank and Gaza from Israel as a hegemonic notion in Israeli political culture. As personal security for Jews deteriorated on both sides of the Green Line, the argument that holding on to the Occupied Territories was essential to Israel’s security also lost much of its force (Tessler 1991; Lustick 1993).

Morally, the brutally oppressive methods used by Israel’s security forces to suppress the Intifada forced the Israeli public to face, in a way it never had to do before, the discrepancy between the two systems of law prevailing on both sides of the Green Line. This resulted, among other things, in a small but expanding movement among soldiers—primarily reservists—who refused to serve in the Occupied Territories (Lissak 1990, 25, 33). Other reservists were complaining loudly about the increased burden of active service caused by the uprising. In addition, the amount of time devoted to training, by both regular and reserve army units, suffered serious cutbacks, leading military experts to predict a decline in military preparedness.

Thus, “the intifada appears to have further highlighted the ‘curse’ inherent in the occupation of the territories whereas, early on, the ‘blessing’ aspects were more evident” (Shamir & Shamir 1993, 71–72). As a result, public support for maintaining the status quo in the Occupied Territories declined from about 40 percent in 1987
to about 25 percent at the end of 1989. Similarly, the percentage of Israeli Jews refusing to relinquish control over the West Bank and Gaza declined from more than 50 percent in 1987 to about 40 percent at the end of 1990, whereas the number of those willing to do so grew from about 30 percent to more than 50 percent during the same period (Shamir & Shamir 1993, 5–12). Agreement to the establishment of a Palestinian state and to negotiations with the PLO have also widened since the beginning of the Intifada, from 20 to 30 percent and from 40 to 60 percent, respectively (Shamir & Shamir 1993, 73; Tessler 1991, 75; Arian 1995).

The Intifada alone could not defeat Israel militarily or cripple its economy. However, coming as it did at a time when economic and political liberalization was increasingly viewed by the Israeli elite as conducive to its interests, it added considerable force to the argument that the traditional, colonial citizenship discourse should be discarded in favor of a new, civil discourse.

Over the years, Israel's economic development, funded to a very large extent by externally generated resources, has weakened the state's and Histadrut's control of the economy in favor of private business interests (Shalev 1992). This sectoral shift has manifested itself in policy changes that began as early as the late 1960s and have gradually intensified over the last two decades. Among these changes were “substantial privatization, the institution of a stable exchange rate, reduced capital subsidies and increasing governmental resistance to ‘bailouts,’ and cuts in the defense budget and budget deficit” (Shalev 1993). Similar changes, allowing market forces to play a greater role in the labor market and providing foreign goods and investments easier access to the Israeli market, have also been effected (Razin & Sadka 1993).

These economic changes have enabled the Israeli economy to take advantage of the globalization processes that have occurred in the world economy since the 1980s (Ben-Shahar 1995). They have thus affected the personal fortunes of the younger members of the veteran ashkenazi elite. The second generation of leaders of the Labor Zionist movement (such as Rabin and Shimon Peres) made their careers in the various public bureaucracies; the third generation, those who have come of age after 1967, however, have been drawn to the private sector. At the same time, increased economic opportunities have opened up new venues of mobility outside the labor movement for individuals from other social strata. The members of this new economic elite have been the principal champions of economic liberalization and of the integration of Israel's economy with the world market through the reduction of tariff and administrative barriers. They have also come to see the institutional edifice created by the Labor movement around the Histadrut—and the welfare state in general—as a hindrance rather than a boon to their well-being.

Because members of this new elite feel confident enough to compete in the open market, domestically and internationally, they are no longer concerned with being protected within this market; rather, they want to expand it as much as possible. While the Israeli–Arab conflict destabilized the region, however, Israel was ignored by multinational companies and remained outside the international investment circuit. Not surprisingly, prominent Israeli business leaders, as well as academic economists, were among the most vocal catalysts and supporters of the breakthrough in Israeli–Palestinian relations.
At the Jerusalem Business Conference, held one week before the crucial 1992 national elections, Dov Lautman, president of the Israeli Manufacturers’ Association, issued his first open statement linking the then-deadlocked Madrid peace talks to economic issues. In his words, the major obstacle to foreign investment in the Israeli economy was regional instability, and only a combination of an appropriate economic policy and progress in the peace talks could make Israel attractive to foreign investors (Haaretz, 17 June 1992). In January 1993, Lautman promised that a breakthrough in the peace talks in the coming year would bring about a tremendous turning point in the fortunes of the Israeli economy in general, and of Israeli industry in particular, by 1994 (Haaretz, 1 January 1993). Eli Horwitz, a past president of the same body, and Danny Gilemerman, president of the Israeli Chamber of Commerce, were among the other vocal business supporters of the peace process. Benny Gaon, the chief executive officer of Koor, the largest Israeli conglomerate, was among the first to seek business with the Palestinians, and with the Arab world in general. The hotel industry, which had known ups and downs due to the instability of the region, was particularly thrilled with the prospects of peace.

Although these business leaders represent different sectors of the economy, they are all known for their vigorous support of the creation of conditions for export-oriented growth and trade liberalization. The success of the peace process so far has strengthened their hand in seeking to limit the influence of the inward-looking industrialists, farmers, and merchants who expect to suffer the adverse economic effects of open trade that would result from Israel’s accommodation with the Arab world. Thus the “selling” of the peace accords by Israeli political leaders was achieved not only by promising an end to the Intifada and security for the Israeli public, but even more emphatically by presenting peace as a key to unprecedented prosperity (cf. Globes, November 1993).

The liberal economic values of the Israeli business community are naturally more consonant with a liberal conception of citizenship than with the ethno-republican conception of pioneering civic virtue. Thus, these business leaders have been promoting liberal reforms not only in the economy, but also in civil rights, the electoral system, health care, education, mass communications, and other areas of social life. Moreover, working through Peace Now, an extra-parliamentary mass movement and the most significant Jewish political force advocating peace with the Palestinians, established and aspiring members of this elite provided the main opposition to Likud’s efforts to legitimize the de facto annexation of the Occupied Territories and its 1982 invasion of Lebanon (see Lustick 1993).

Electorally, the new elite has expressed itself primarily through two political parties: the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) and Meretz. The DMC appeared on the scene on the eve of the 1977 general elections with a platform calling for increased efficiency and honesty in government and for the relaxation of state control over the economy and other areas of public activity, such as culture and mass communications. In the 1977 elections, this party drew fifteen Knesset seats away from Labor, enabling Likud to take power. Since then, the DMC has disintegrated, and most of its voters have either returned to Labor or joined Meretz, which is currently Labor’s main coalition partner.

Together with Chug Mashov (Feedback Circle), the important neo-liberal, pro-peace wing of the Labor Party, Meretz has become the main champion of privatiza-
tion and economic liberalization, as well as of the peace process. In the Histadrut general elections of May 1994, this peace-and-privatization bloc headed by former Labor Minister of Public Health Hayim Ramon won 46 percent of the vote. Thus, the Histadrut was captured by its bitterest enemies and has since shed all of its productive assets, as well as its all-important health-care system. This process is likely to bring about a major realignment of the Israeli party system through the crystallization of two political blocs: a neo-liberal peace-and-privatization bloc, and a traditional Zionist bloc that advocates the retention of the welfare state and much of the Occupied Territories.

As amply demonstrated by historical experience, economic liberalization, as long as it occurs under conditions of relative prosperity, is best served by parallel political liberalization. In the Israeli context, this meant the closure of the frontier and universalization of the citizenship structure. A necessary prerequisite for this process was the removal of the most glaring inconsistency within this citizenship structure by emancipating the non-citizen Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories. Thus, a recent book, in which two leading Israeli economists generally bemoan the slow pace of privatization, concludes: "There cannot be a better companion to 'aliya in boosting long-lasting growth and economic prosperity than genuine peace in the Middle East" (Razin & Sadka 1993, 225; Ben-Shahar 1995).

CONCLUSION

By employing a set of framework decisions different than the one employed hitherto by students of Israeli society, we have sought to provide a reinterpretation of Israeli history and of the character of Israel's political culture and institutions. Unlike the conventional analysis, which came to view Israel as an "overburdened polity" incapable of bold policy initiatives, we have pointed out how Israel's changing character from a frontier to a civil society has made drastic departures such as the peace treaty with Egypt and the Oslo agreement possible.

At the heart of our analysis was the claim that, as a democratic frontier society, the Israeli polity has operated under two partially contradictory imperatives: the exclusionary imperative of settlement and nation-building and the universalist imperative of democratic state-building. As a result, a fragmented, hierarchical citizenship structure was constructed through which the various ascriptive groups within the Israeli control system were differentially incorporated in the society. This citizenship structure enabled the society to sustain the tension between exclusion and universalism as long as the mobilizational capacity of the state was high and resistance on the part of the lowest placed ascriptive group—non-citizen Palestinians—was low.

In recent years, both of these conditions have been changing. The mobilization capacity of the state has been weakening as a result of liberalizing pressures in the economy, and non-citizen Palestinians have launched a national uprising in the Occupied Territories. The confluence of these developments has made the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza untenable, and has led the Israeli state to reassess and drastically moderate its opposition to Palestinian nationalism.

As the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin on 4 November 1995 has demonstrated, however, the new policy adopted by the state is not unopposed by powerful...
forces in society. Until the assassination, these forces enjoyed the support of about 50 percent of the Jewish public, and by a similar percentage of Jewish members of the Knesset. Therefore, the government’s ability to proceed with the peace process depended, and still depends, on the support of five members who represent a Palestinian constituency. Since the assassination, public support for the peace process has increased, although it may decline again as the trauma of this event wears off (Haaretz, 5 December 1995).

While most of the opposition to the peace process is general and diffuse, and seems to resign itself to each stage as a fait accompli, the hard core composed mostly of settlers and their religious Zionist backers would go to almost any length to stop and even reverse the process. Their vehement opposition stems from a mixture of ideological and instrumental concerns but, most importantly, from their fear of losing their elevated status as a virtuous republican community—as the true heirs to the legacy of the Labor Zionist pioneers. In this hard core are rabbis who have issued religious injunctions against relinquishing Israeli control over any part of the Land of Israel and who have called on religious soldiers to refuse orders to evacuate settlements (which the government has not yet decided to do) and military bases. It is in these circles that the issue of applying the religious categories of rodef (persecutor) and mosser (collaborator), which are punishable by death, to the Rabin government and to the prime minister personally was openly discussed. In anti-government rallies organized by Likud and other mainstream right-wing parties, members of this hard-core opposition displayed signs calling Rabin a traitor and showing him in Nazi uniforms, without being seriously challenged by the organizers.

However, Rabin’s assassination, by far the most traumatic event in Israel’s political history, has not succeeded in derailing or even delaying the peace process or in destabilizing the government. This is a clear indication that Rabin’s policy of accommodation indeed reflected a profound transformation in the society rather than a passing political contingency.

NOTES

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1Baruch Kimmerling (1989) has termed this entity the Israeli “control system.”

2The question of Israel’s development toward a civil society in the latter, broader sense is still open and contentious; see Peled and Ophir (forthcoming).

3As well as the different positions of males versus females and secular versus religiously orthodox Jews. Of these two cleavage lines, only the latter will be discussed in this paper.

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