

# By the People, For the People, Without the People?

The Emergence of (Anti)Political  
Sentiment in Western Democracies  
and in Israel

**Editor: Tamar S. Hermann**



THE ISRAEL  
DEMOCRACY  
INSTITUTE

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## Introduction

Tamar S. Hermann

There are social, political, economic, and cultural changes linked with the division and balance of power that occur in a society that are characterized by a rapid pace of events, mass gatherings in public spaces, and at times, even extensive bloodshed. These elements are often taken as conclusive evidence of these kinds of events being “revolutions.” Such, for example, was the nature of the French Revolution of 1789, the American Civil War that began in 1861, the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, and very likely, although it may still be too soon to be certain, the current upheavals sweeping the Arab world. By contrast, there are social, political, cultural, and economic changes that take place that may manifest no violent elements, no piled up bodies in public squares, and yet may well be even more substantive in their transformative nature. Their venues may be concealed, as they happen within the innermost sancta—and primarily in people’s hearts and minds—and they often mature slowly. Such are often only recognized as revolutionary in retrospect, if and when historians or other analysts elucidate the gap between power structures and behavioral patterns in society before the events occurred and the consequent structural, procedural, and intellectual realities thereafter. Some silent revolutionary changes aim

\* Translated by Zvi Ofer

\*\* I would like to thank Mr. Yuval Lebel for his assistance in editing the essays for this volume.

directly at changing the structure of the government and those who hold its reins, like the 1989 Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, whereas others succeeded in changing world and daily life orders without shocking or toppling the government structure from its very foundations. An outstanding example of this kind of change is the Industrial Revolution that lasted in Europe and North America from the mid-eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries and in many respects also the Feminist Revolution in the West that began in the 1960s. The development of multiculturalism may also be categorized as such a change.

The working hypothesis at the foundation of this discussion asserts that it is entirely possible, even likely that the democratic West may now be undergoing such a “silent revolution” that is likely to effect a fundamental change in the character of liberal democracies as we know them. This change, as yet unnamed, which, for our purposes, we will refer to as political *disenchantment*, is reflected in a pronounced shift in relations between citizens and government. As a direct consequence, broad sectors of the public in many democratic countries no longer perceive politics and politicians as objects of esteem—not to mention admiration—or as the epistemic authority from which the legitimacy of the elected government to make strategic policy decisions is derived, but rather relate to them with aversion, derision, and cynicism. In other words, even if most people do not take to the streets and demonstrate and even if they do not clash head on with the agents of government, many citizens effectively turn their backs on the elected government that is officially supposed to be “by the people and for the people” but in many respects remains without the people. To be sure, political dissatisfaction has been demonstrated in the past as well. It suffices to recall the well-known essay by Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (1849). There is, however, a vast difference between political opposition and aversion to politics—

the most outstanding feature of the gut feeling so many contemporary citizens share.

The momentous change taking place, to be examined below with its most significant manifestations, is liable to erode the pillars of representative democracy and largely undermine the possibility of stabilizing political leadership in the intermediate and long range. If so, it will also adversely affect the ability to formulate the policies necessary for coping with problems that are more complex than ever and with the unprecedented challenges that now face decision makers and the public in the more “affluent” part of the world, i.e., the Western democratic bloc.

In particular, the constant, unhampered, multichannel media coverage has made it extremely difficult to convince the public of the fitness of its leaders, their ability to rise above their own personal, party, and sectoral interests, their virtue, the equitability of resource allocation, and the relative advantage that they possess—or at least are supposed to possess—over “the wisdom of crowds.” Indeed, leaders of wholly democratic countries—such as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, US President Barack Obama, and the last few Israeli prime ministers as well—learned from their own experience, however popular they may be on election day, the trend turns downward thereafter and the impending fall is not only hard and painful but at times also very rapid. In today’s realities, with the multiplicity of testimonies, reports, and rumors, both true and imaginary, concerning the failures of the system and the weaknesses of its leaders, it is doubtful whether personalities such as Roosevelt, Churchill, Gandhi, De Gaulle, or Ben-Gurion would have been able to remain steadfast on the pedestals they were placed in their own time.

The change described above and its implications constituted the focus of an international workshop that took place at the Israel

Democracy Institute in Jerusalem in December 2008. The articles included in this collection deal with topics discussed at that workshop, representing various theoretical approaches, research methods, and points of view regarding the changing relations between citizens and the democratic political systems in which they live. The discussion in the workshop was divided into two principal parts: The first considered the changes discerned in Western democracies, their causes, configurations, and results, while the second focused on Israeli democracy, delineating the respective changes therein. The basic assumption was that although Israel possesses its own unique structures, dynamics, and characteristics, it too is undergoing processes similar to those experienced by liberal democracies in the west. Consequently, it is possible—and even desirable—to obtain deeper insights, applying a key analytical and conceptual tool developed in other contexts to the Israeli case as well.

## **Symptoms**

Disenchantment with politics manifests several major symptoms that can be summarized as citizens' loss of trust in and increasing criticism of the political system, its institutions, processes, and professional politicians. It thus occurs that in democratic countries grounded in the abstract concept of a "social contract" between citizens and government—by virtue of which citizens voluntarily forgo some of their personal autonomy and place their destiny in the hands of leaders, whom they believe to be committed to and capable of shaping and implementing policy that will serve the interests of all the public—both citizens' trust and the leadership's commitment to the public good are dissipating steadily. As demonstrated clearly in the annual Democracy Indexes of the Israel Democracy Institute, in Israel, as in many other liberal democracies, trust in decision makers is declining steadily, while objective and subjective indicators show

that political corruption is increasing. In other words, it appears that the basic difference between non-democratic and democratic regimes is narrowing, as measured in terms of government legitimacy: Even in wholly democratic countries, citizens are becoming less and less confident about the motivations of their elected officials and do not respect their representatives and public servants. Such disrespect, along with failure to recognize the professional epistemic authority of politicians and the value of accepted political structures and procedures, may also be intensified by the leveling of hierarchies typical of the postmodern intellectual climate that does not recognize the objective advantage of canonical institutions, functions, or texts. This dour political climate undercuts the esteem formerly granted almost automatically to politicians and statespersons, as well to established political frameworks, if only because they were elected to lead or defined as frameworks in which the orderly process of administering public life is supposed to take place.

Disenchantment with political “professionals” and the system as a whole is exacerbated by constant accusation and often conviction of politicians in many countries on charges of inappropriate activity and at times even actual corruption. Even if they do not violate the law, elected politicians and senior officials are frequently shown to be inattentive to their constituents and ineffective in their performance at best or manipulative and greedy at worst. In this context, we note that far-reaching changes have also taken place in the definition of political corruption, as detailed below. In other words, activities that were once not considered condemnable are now deemed unacceptable by the public and the justice system. Anxiety over corruption and its censure in the media and public discourse leads often to what the professional literature calls *moral panic*, i.e., a kind of mass attack—not necessarily backed by or based on any authentic assessment of

danger—on a person, institution, or social phenomenon perceived as an existential threat to the social order.

It is thus no wonder that politicians have become the whipping boys of cynical editorial pieces and learned analyses and targets for the verbal barbs of satires and stand-up comedy routines. Moreover, establishment political processes are perceived by the public as ineffective in translating voters' authentic aspirations and even as rigid and arbitrary, virtually fossilized and obsolete. Consequently, at a time when extra-establishment political activity at the civil society level is on the rise in all established democracies, the extent of citizen participation in establishment political processes is declining worldwide. The complex structure of the political system is also perceived—justifiably or otherwise—as troublesome, over bureaucratic, and profligate and the alienation that many citizens feel toward it has sharply increased over the years. This alienation is nourished considerably by processes of mass migration, which results in the fact that many people today live in countries without feeling any affinity to those countries' political heritages. Often, they are not fluent in the local language, even if they have acquired residence permits or citizenship. The result of this public climate is that:

[O]nce something of a *bon mot*, conjuring a series of broadly positive connotations—typically associating politics with public scrutiny and accountability—“politics” has increasingly become a dirty word. Indeed, to attribute “political” motives to an actor's conduct is now invariably to question that actor's honesty, integrity or capacity to deliver an outcome that reflects anything other than his or her material self-interest—often, all three simultaneously. (Hay 2007, 1)

In his 2007 cross-national study, *Why We Hate Politics*, Colin Hay identified a plethora of manifestations of this political disenchantment and differentiated between formal manifestations (voter turnout and party membership) and informal ones (defiant non-participation, mounting cynicism, decreased vertical political trust, and movement to extra-parliamentary civil participation modes). It is worth emphasizing that disenchantment does not imply disinterest in politics or political indifference. On the contrary, Hay offers data that suggests that people are not disengaging from politics but are instead channeling their efforts to venues outside of the political establishment. However, there is a fly in the ointment. Empirical studies carried out in many countries prove that there is no pure extra-governmental politics. Establishment-style politics succeeds in penetrating extraparliamentary politics by direct or indirect funding of budgets and through the forming of alliances with allies from among civil society.

A 1997 volume of articles edited by the Austrian scholar Andreas Schedler, entitled *The End of Politics—Explorations into Modern Antipolitics*, opens with the following statement, sustaining the argument that politics, in the conventional sense of the word, is no longer “in”:

We live in antipolitical times . . . antipolitical discourses are nothing new in Western political history, but today, in the late twentieth century, they have gained renewed prominence. They now form an important, at times even hegemonic element of the ideological universe. And in all probability they have still not reached the peak of their global career. (Schedler 1997, 1)

In Israel, disgust with anything “political” has led to a situation over

the past few years in which even people involved in political protest avow that their activities are “apolitical” as for example did the leaders of the 2011 “tent protest.” On the tactical level, they apparently seek, thereby, to increase the number of potential participants in the protest activities without encountering any ideological obstacles, but in a more essential sense, this development embodies yet another reflection of the common understanding that “political is bad.”

The specific causes and manifestations of such antipolitical sentiments and actions are the result of circumstances typical of each society and are thus varied. They do share one common feature, however, namely revulsion bordering on hatred of the system, a sensitive situation that is normally discerned only in autocratic and totalitarian regimes. The common wisdom is that democracies exhibit fairly high levels of citizen satisfaction and even contentment. However, in 1992, E. J. Dionne published a book entitled *Why Americans Hate Politics*, claiming that since the 1960s, the American liberal and conservative public has been presented with distorted opportunities for choice, preventing the framing of key issues in public discourse in a manner conducive to their resolution. Politics, according to Dionne, has thus failed in fulfilling its principal function of tending to practical and emotional social problems. Moreover, words have taken over the political process and cast actions aside; therefore, he argues, Americans hate politics.

Another reason that the Americans turned their back on politics was provided by Robert Putnam (2000) in his famous but highly contested essay “Bowling Alone.” Putnam determines that American civil society is breaking down as citizens become more disconnected from their families, neighbors, communities, and the republic itself. He argues that the organizations that gave life to American democracy are fraying. Thus, Americans are disengaging from political involvement, which includes decreasing voter turnout, public meeting attendance,

committee service, and political party work. Putnam also cites growing political distrust in the United States. Although accepting the possibility that this lack of trust could be attributed to the long litany of political tragedies and scandals since the 1960s, he maintains that this explanation was limited when viewed alongside other trends in civic engagement of a wider sort. By contrast, in *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices*, Russell Dalton (2004) dismisses the claims that such trends are a function of scandals, poor performance, and other government failures. His principal answer to the question “Why?” is that the change in public opinion against political establishments in advanced post-industrialized societies is generated by the successful social modernization of these nations. Politics in its familiar form is thus perceived once again as neither essential nor appropriate.

Carl Boggs’s (2007) seminal work sustains the argument that most Americans are increasingly alienated from a political system that is commonly viewed as corrupt, authoritarian, and simply irrelevant to the most important challenges of our time. Citing ever-declining voter participation, Boggs claims that Americans have retreated from political involvement out of justifiable feelings of disgust and pessimism, bemoaning the decline of American liberalism. He also links these trends with global corporate capitalism that dictates an “all consuming corporate agenda,” which, together with the mass media, have created what he perceives as the unholy alliance that dominates today’s American politics.

In his 2006 book *Why Politics Matters*, British scholar Gerry Stoker suggests that in his country—and most probably in other liberal democracies as well—politics is failing because politicians are repeatedly exposed as incompetent in dealing with the increasingly complicated problems facing them. Political disenchantment, he claims, reflects the emergence of a more critical citizenry and politics

is in trouble because more and more issues are moving beyond its control:

It is clear that in the eyes of many people politicians are not the best advertisement for politics. Politics is often viewed as a rather grubby and unpleasant feature of modern life. People who take up politics as a trade or a vocation tend to attract more derision than admiration. Politics is something you apologize for, rather than being proud about. (Stoker 2006, 114)

These negative images prevailing among the public are nourished by firsthand confrontations with various government agencies, reinforced by information obtained from the media: news and investigative journalism, the film industry, and publishing houses that create an unending stream of publications, well-based or otherwise, concerning politicians' failures, corruption, and systemic malfunctions. There is no doubt that many more words have been written and spoken and visually portrayed concerning corrupt or inept politicians than about those who do their job properly, represent their constituents, and make decisions wisely.

Furthermore, citizens now feel an increased sense of empowerment, originating in increased education, varied channels of information, and the opening of alternative paths of political participation. Many citizens now have the opportunity and means to express their positions, for example via Facebook and Twitter, and demand that they be taken into account by decision makers. When such demands are not met forthwith or are not voiced sufficiently in the increasing political polyphony, frustration and disappointment increase and politicians are perceived as deaf or inattentive to the voices reaching them—through various channels—from their respective constituencies.

It is important to note, however, that the severe criticism leveled at governments defined as democratic does not originate in substantive public rejection of democratic values and procedures themselves. On the contrary, numerous studies show that throughout the world, support of democracy as the preferred form of government is now on the rise. Today, everyone speaks of values such as freedom of organization, freedom of expression, guarding minority rights, freedom of religion and worship and the like, even if they often do so as lip service rather than out of authentic commitment.

### **The Essays in this Collection**

Comprehension of the changes that democratic political systems undergo demands a thorough grasp of their theoretical and functional infrastructures, as examined in this collection's opening essay by **Yaron Ezrahi**, "The Reality of Political Fictions: Democracy between Modernity and Postmodernity," which focuses on analysis of the democratic discourse. Ezrahi describes the tension between the (interpretive) concepts at the foundation of politics and the attempt to define and consolidate fundamental political facts. Politics, he determines, is a constant process of negotiating compromises that cannot be reduced to rational decision making. The average normative system is the basis for political system functioning, not philosophical logic or pure science. As an example of reliance on popular wisdom and discourse as the foundation of politics, he notes that French revolutionaries iconographically embodied the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen within the image of the Ten Commandments. Moreover, he claims, fictions also have a key role in political activity. For example, the concept of separation of powers: The ostensible separation between the political and judicial branches is, in his view, fictitious yet highly important in preventing arbitrary

use of the state's power and in creating a system of checks and balances that is essential to maintaining the government's democratic character. On the one hand, fictions must be rigid, constituting a kind of natural law that serves as the backbone of government. On the other hand, however, they also have to be open to constant interpretation, as otherwise they would silence the democratic process. In summary, the author presents de Tocqueville's assessment that a democratic society ought to be guided chiefly by "good sense and practical intelligence," concluding that unfortunately, this principle is not applicable in the contemporary Israeli context. Consequently, Ezrahi perceives a highly urgent need to develop an oxymoronic political dynamic stability, enabling the government in Israel to persevere and maintain the essence of democracy.

While Ezrahi deals with the content of discourse in democratic societies, **Astrid von Busekist**, in her essay "One Man, One Voice! One People, One Language?" addresses its linguistic aspects, claiming that the ability to speak a common language indeed does not necessarily reflect shared values, although it does intensify persuasive skills and a sense of belonging among citizens who share a language with their leaders. There are two competing conceptions regarding the link between language and democracy: The first is utilitarian, perceiving language as a tool and maintaining that in the multinational context, a *lingua franca* is required to ensure political participation, social mobility, and equal opportunity. The second bears cultural emphasis and highly values the variety in citizens' identities, of which different languages are a formative component. A citizen's free choice to use the language that best expresses his or her identity, von Busekist maintains, is a component of democracy of no less significance than equality, social mobility, or the existence of a common language. Nevertheless, empirical studies show that one of the variables that best explains political alienation is the lack of a common language.

Countries that are divided linguistically, such as Belgium, were found to be more vulnerable democracies. Proper democratic politics can apparently take place only if there is significant citizen participation, the achievement of which is facilitated by the relevant basic linguistic abilities. Europeans now realize that a common language is a necessary condition for maintaining the democratic character of the European Union, but they act inconsistently, encouraging use of English, on the one hand, but at the same time celebrating the diversity of languages. The result is a lack of clarity and increasing political tensions. Discussions concerning adoption of a common language cover several issues, including how to choose one language while according all due respect to the others, as well as the democratic process to be adopted for such decision making. The essay presents various solutions to questions concerning official European language policy, each of which is examined according to its projected share in preventing development of antipolitical sentiment and in rebuilding ties among citizens and between them and their representatives.

The function of language is most prominent in the media, of course. We have already noted their key role as a mediator (and even instigator) between citizens and the government. Nevertheless, as explained well in **John Lloyd's** essay "The Triple Crisis of Politics and the Media," the media are undergoing a severe earthquake that makes it difficult for them to do their job and perhaps even prevents them from performing it properly, intensifying friction between the public and its leaders. According to Lloyd, the media are experiencing three overlapping crises, of which the first and most obvious is the financial crunch because of the cutback in advertising budgets that primarily affects news transmission. As advertising declines, newspapers close and television news and current events shows on the commercial channels are scaled back in favor of lighter and more popular programming. Today, we see more clearly than ever

how dependent the notion of “public service journalism” is on private consumption, a decline in which is entailed a concomitant decline in the ability to maintain appropriate media.

A trust crisis prevails here as well. Like confidence in politicians, public trust in (printed and televised) coverage, especially of the news, is on the decline in many countries. This may be the result of news reports becoming less meticulous and more sensational, but it may also be due to increased public expectations. Moreover, it has been noted on more than one occasion that although they lead the call for accountability and transparency, the media may not always practice what they preach.

Finally, there is a crisis in relations between the media and democracy. On the one hand, public and government figures have a greater need for the media, but on the other, fearing for their political fate, they are also far more cautious in their interaction with them. The media, for their part, demand that politicians provide instant responses and positions regarding issues on the agenda. Because of the common perception that journalists distort their words and seek sensationalism, the media have difficulty obtaining reactions from senior public figures, with media and image advisors entering the picture instead, adding to the distance between journalists and politicians and increasing the likelihood of misunderstandings. The lack of continuity in media coverage and rapid disappearance of topics from the agenda are problematic as well. The resulting damage to the media’s role in maintaining normal democratic functioning is exacerbated by the newspaper owners’ profit motive, rendering restoration of the balance between the papers’ business objectives and their public function as “watchdogs of democracy” nearly impossible. The end of the newspaper era thus entailed a change in the democratic political system as well.

Mass immigration, intensified by globalization, imposes an additional burden on democracies struggling with the above problems. **Riva Kastoryano**'s contribution to this volume, "Citizenship, Civil Society, and Transnational Participation: Muslims in Europe," attempts to assess manifestations of the sense of belonging—citizenship, nationality, and identity—according to various levels of political participation within the political community and civil society, national or transnational, focusing on the case of France. In Europe, substantive discussion of the concept of citizenship now concentrates on political integration of immigrants in the nation states in which they reside and in European space as a whole. The immigrants' demand for recognition as equal citizens of their host countries is rather elementary, although it too entails introduction of a new equilibrium between community structures and national institutions and clarification of the connection between the political community as a source of political rights and legitimation and the cultural community as the principal source of identity. The situation worsens regarding political participation within the relatively new framework of the European Union and its supranational institutions, rendering the question of citizenship and its link with territoriality all the more critical, particularly in the case of immigrants. The new European political space allows for political activity across borders, as in the transnational communities that challenge the link between territory and citizenship/nationality. In France, as in many other European countries, recognition of the "other" relates primarily to Islam and the attendant apprehension. Supranational Islamic identity clashes with the doctrine of a nation with a unique cultural identity shared by all its citizens that bridges politically over all differences among them. Nevertheless, although the demand for recognition links the group with the state, the fluidity of European borders led immigrants to develop transnational networks—that connect their

respective countries of origin to the countries in which they reside and link immigrant communities in different countries—and to participate actively in these three spaces. These networks lead to a redefinition of the connection of territory, nation, and political space and challenge the nation state and territory-based political structures, thereby representing a new civic model that often clashes with the classic one, causing friction and increasing civil dissatisfaction among longtime residents and immigrants alike.

**Gerry Stoker**'s essay "Antipolitics in Britain: Dimension, Causes, and Responses," describes the antipolitics phenomenon in Britain, its characteristics, possible sources, and means of curtailing it. Stoker maintains that the public's negative attitude toward politics tends to appear in cyclic format, fanned by media coverage. The well-known study by Almond and Verba (1963) claimed that Great Britain of the 1950s was characterized by participating citizens with a high sense of belonging and political awareness, positing that a political culture of involvement creates stability. Stoker reexamines the findings and shows that, even in that decade, citizens' involvement and trust in politicians in Britain was not very high in terms of sense of belonging, ability to influence, esteem displayed toward institutional functioning, and political participation at various levels. Moreover, he noted that while gender gaps narrowed in the past generation, class gaps in fact widened. Young people and members of immigrant ethnic groups (that were virtually unrepresented in Almond and Verba's study) are repelled by participation. Antipolitics has become a *zeitgeist*, the causes for which may be discerned in various developments, such as political corruption and class exploitation, along with the deliberate delegation of decision making and implementation to extra-governmental bodies and of responsibility for handling political issues to anonymous international organizations. Politics has become a system of marketing campaigns, many of them negative and lacking

normative orientation. Thus, most citizens experience democracy only as observers and consequently feel a sense of distance and disappointment. Severance between citizen and politics in Britain is further exacerbated by the intensification of social individualism trends, the increasing complexity of the political system and its demand for specialization and professionalization, general application of “smart consumerism” to the political sphere, and cynicism that is often provoked by the media. Toward the end of his essay, Stoker attempts to determine what can be done to reverse the trend. In his estimation, there is a need for adherence to democratic procedure despite its flaws. The political elites should admit their mistakes, explain difficulties, and eschew slander. He concludes by stating that politics is a tool for dealing with conflict and mutual dependence. Consequently it cannot provide perfect solutions. We should propose methods of achieving direct citizen participation, while amending representative procedures to revive a political culture supportive of democracy.

Problems similar to those concerning the US, France, and Britain also weigh heavily on Italy, whose democracy is still scarred by the country’s Fascist heritage. **Pierangelo Isernia** and **Danilo Di Mauro** seek to reexamine long-standing research conclusions (or stereotypes) concerning the basic flaws of Italian democracy in their study “The Bumble-Bee is Still Flying: Italian Political Culture at 50.” Almond and Verba characterized the political system in Italy as based on parochial, family, and regional loyalty, claiming that the Italians are particularly low in national pride and tend not to take part in political activity. Above all, they display extended mistrust of the political system. Italian researchers proposed additional reasons for what they perceive as the problematic functioning of the Italian democracy, such as the unstable party structure and incomplete processes of modernization. In the literature, primarily the work

of researchers outside Italy, the results appear to sustain these arguments. Isernia and Di Mauro use the findings of empirical studies conducted by various scholars and institutions in Italy and elsewhere over the past few decades, reanalyzing findings concerning national identity and attitudes toward the political system and its institutions. Their conclusion is that Italian citizens identify with the state and feel pride in their being Italian no less and perhaps even more than do citizens of other nation states. Nevertheless, they apparently do tend to consider nationalism as self-evident and consequently do not accord prominence to this sense of belonging in surveys allowing for choice among affinity groups. The position of Italian citizens toward the political system and politicians is stable—more negative toward parties, political figures, and governmental systems and more positive toward the functioning of the economy, the military, and the media. Another interesting finding the authors cite indicates that the rate of citizen participation in elections in Italy is high and stable despite negative attitudes toward the system.

Many of these dilemmas affect Israel as well, impeding the functioning of its democracy. **Wolfgang Merkel**, in his essay “Embedded and Defective Democracies: Where Does Israel Stand?,” claims that Israeli democracy suffers from several basic flaws that exclude it from the family of embedded democracies and position it among the defective ones. The author opens his essay with the suggestion that the extent of a country’s democracy should not be based on the common key criterion of electoral democracy (as customarily applied in Freedom House reports) but rather according to the embeddedness of the democracy, according to several intrinsic and extrinsic variables. These intrinsic variables are (a) the holding of competitive, open and fair elections; (b) freedom of expression, of association, and a nongovernmental media system that enables free public discussion; (c) protection of citizens from arbitrary state

rule; (d) a system of checks and balances; (e) guaranteeing that the elected officials are indeed those who govern. The external variables are (a) financial gaps in society (the existence of which can adversely affect the essence of democracy); (b) a civil society (an active civil society can curb the state's over-involvement and serve as a space in which democracy is practiced, public discussion takes place, and preferences take shape); (c) the international environment in which the state is situated (which can be either supportive of democracy or not). According to Merkel, one may apply these variables to construct a system that includes embedded democracies—in which all conditions supporting democracy exist—and defective democracies in which said conditions are absent or apply only partially. Merkel describes four types of defective democracies: (a) *exclusive* democracy—that poses obstacles to the participation of certain groups of citizens; (b) *domain* democracy—in which certain groups, such as the military, possess veto power; (c) *illiberal* democracy—in which the rule of law is disrupted; and (d) *delegative* democracy—in which the legislature does not have control over the executive. Examining the case of Israeli democracy—that Freedom House calls the only free democracy in the Middle East—according to embedded democracy criteria, we find it is flawed in terms of civil rights and horizontal accountability (exclusive and lacking checks and balances), variables that Merkel believes to be stable over time, thus preserving the situation of defective democracy.

In his essay “Neo-Liberalism, Sovereignty, and the Crisis of Representation in Israel,” **Dani Filc** also points to a substantive flaw in Israeli democracy concerning representation, i.e., the extent to which the activity of elected officials indeed reflects the values, interests, and wishes of their constituents. He maintains that appropriate representation is critical to normal democratic functioning, as it translates popular sovereignty into terms of governance and legislation.

There are three chief formats for democratic representation: (a) the *Burkean* model, in which representation is carried out through a process of *deliberation* among representatives who serve the common good to the best of their judgment; (b) the *instructed delegate* model, in which representatives are the “ambassadors” of their constituents and act on the basis of unceasing deliberation with them; and (c) the *responsible party* model, in which parties function as ideological institutions. Each of these three formats has a substantive defect: The first system demands an elite with service awareness; “ambassadorial” representation is almost impossible to apply because of the size and variation of the modern democratic society; and parties have shifted from ideological foci to support-rallying organizations and now follow a market-oriented path. We also note the dominance of neo-liberal ideas in the political upper echelons of most long-term and new democracies, aggressively promoted by such institutions as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These concepts erode representation in several ways: They encourage delegation of authority to ostensibly professional bodies, contribute to the formation of technocratic elite that has no roots in the public at large, and bring about a situation in which state governments essentially turn into “relay stations” of global policy. The result, claims Filc, is a representation crisis, reflected in public avoidance of political participation, anti-establishment voting, membership in anti-establishment and revolutionary movements, and the rapid growth and decline of political parties. All these phenomena lead to a decline of public trust in the political establishment, focusing on three aspects of representation: the feeling that individuals and groups either have no representation at all or are represented inequitably; the sense that representatives are more loyal to those who recruited them to their service for money or other favors than to their constituents; and the estimation that establishment processes are defective from the outset. According to Filc, the representation crisis is especially severe in Israel

because of the overtly representative electoral system practiced and the relatively high interest in politics among Israeli citizens. Indeed, studies conducted in Israel indicate an extended decline in public trust in political institutions in general and in parties and politicians in particular. Moreover, significant sectors of Israeli society, such as immigrants from the former Soviet Union or Arabs, feel that they are not represented appropriately. These developments, coupled with the neo-liberal policies that wrested decision-making authority from the representative institutions in key spheres of activity such as pensions, credit, and foreign exchange rates, point to a serious representation crisis in Israel that is liable to wear down the democratic system's legitimacy.

As indicated, the conception that the political system is corrupt from its foundation is one of the most obvious causes of civil disenchantment with politics. **Yossi Shain** focuses on this common feeling in his study "The Roots and Implications of Discomfort," claiming it has only a partial foundation in reality. Modern democracy, he maintains, is based on a liberal ethical conceptual complex that encourages civil criticism yet mandates development of a procedural system that is virtually bound to disappoint the public. Loss of the aristocratic order's "virtues" plays a role as well. In Israeli democracy, one may identify several "traditions of corruption"—one linked with the shattering of the kibbutz ideal, another with the post-1967 occupation that many perceive as a corrupting influence, and another with the clash between ostensibly pure traditionalism and inferior modernity. The author reviews key events that intensified the popular feeling that all is corrupt, claiming that in research on political corruption, it is customary to differentiate between the corrupt resource allocation (giving jobs to cronies and the like) and diversion of public resources to the politicians' own pockets. While the second type is hard-core corruption according

to all standards, the first, at times, may be considered part of the normal goods distribution system in the democratic order. The author reviews the structural forms of civil service in democratic countries, differentiating between the European tradition of professional public administration independent of representatives and the American tradition of public administration nominated by elected officials. He states that during the pre-State period and the early years of independence, Israel developed a professional public administration, subject to the well-known constraints imposed by local tradition. In many respects (including research corroboration), this administration became more and more professional, but the public perceived it as politicized, an image promoted primarily by the judicial branch, headed by the Supreme Court, that considers the country's watchdogs (the Attorney General, the State Comptroller and to a certain extent also the media) to be the final barrier to total corruption of civil service. Israeli society, claims Shain, is based on high cohesion and on a "soft constitution," explaining the minimal respect accorded the government and those who head it and the exaggerated apprehension over disagreements. The situation is exacerbated by the erosion of the founding Zionist ethos and its replacement with a variety of paths, some of them mutually contradictory: Capitalistic individualism, religious separatism, provincial Levantinism, religious nationalism, privatized kibbutz communities, universalistic post-Zionism, and civil indifference. Integrity and compromise, Shain determines, usually cannot coexist. Consequently, it is only natural for professional politicians, who are always compelled to compromise, to be accused of a lack of integrity. The democratic order effectively encourages hypocrisy—compromises cloaked with apparent integrity. The author distinguishes a vicious circle in all that concerns political corruption: The public is nourished by the results of media surveys that measure

public opinion on political corruption, resulting in a sense of increasing corruption. Moreover, new surveys on the same subject reflect and intensify the opinions shaped by the previous ones.

**Yael Yishai** discusses the escape from (organized) politics that has been so characteristic of Israeli society over the past few years in her essay “Escape from Politics: The Case of Israel.” Escape from politics may be expressed as (a) indifference and failure to perform one’s civic duty (Israel voter turnout rate is in the lowest third among democracies and political party membership rates are very low as well—only 6% in 2006, for example); (b) voting for escapist or anti-party parties (Yishai places the Democratic Movement for Change (1977), the Center Party and Shinui (1999) and the Pensioners’ Party (2006) in this category, noting that since the establishment of the state, over 160 parties, most of them escapist or anti-party, did not pass the required threshold for election to the Knesset; in the 2009 elections, votes equivalent to 3.8 seats were lost because they were cast for such parties); (c) social activity in civil society; (d) challenging the political system head-on. The four types of escapism differ from one another in their attitude toward politics and each is deleterious in its own way. Indifference threatens the government’s legitimacy and ability to govern, escapist parties subvert the pillars of parliamentary politics, reliance on civil social organizations weakens government accountability by releasing the state from its basic obligations, and challenging the system head-on—and violating the political rules of the game—threatens the very existence of the state. Nevertheless, claims Yishai, a moderate measure of escapism is not necessarily bad and may even be essential to normal democratic functioning. Thus, the escapist parties guarantee a different kind of politics, and many also offer the public a platform for “cleaning the political stables.” Civil society’s handling of social affairs has a positive role in that it increases access to vital goods and services and intensifies social

solidarity. On more than one occasion, however, as Yishai shows, civic social organizations or the third sector, such as organizations that distribute food to the needy in Israel, do not act efficiently or distribute items rationally according to authentic needs. To maintain the level of escapism bearable, the state has to encourage and enable people to participate actively in political life, condemn corruption, and present a clear policy that will reduce the charm of anti-party parties, assume responsibility for supplying the basic needs of its citizens, and take legal and social steps against those who challenge the system to an extent that endangers the regime's stability. Such measures are likely to reduce the intensity of escape from politics to a level that Israel is capable of bearing as a democratic state.

In his essay, "The Israeli Third Sector: Patterns of Activity and Growth, 1980—2007," **Benjamin Gidron** maps out Israel's third sector, which Yael Yishai identified as a possible channel for the energies of rank and file citizens who are repelled by politics but want to be involved socially. He notes that the third sector has grown rapidly over the past few decades and a significant civil society is taking shape. Similar phenomena have been observed in other countries as well, influenced by processes of globalization and privatization. In the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the third sector in Israel accounted for more than a quarter of a million jobs and its financial scope had tripled since the early 1990s. Effectively, during the designated period, the third sector generated 11% of the GDP and provided about 12% of the country's employment. The most outstanding areas of third sector activity in Israel are health and education, which in the not too distant past were the exclusive responsibility of the state. About a quarter of the sector's organizations focus on providing various types of religious services. Funds, charitable projects, legal aid associations, environmental groups and other bodies comprise the remaining 25%. As Gidron

shows, however, the sector's independence is only an illusion. Actually, its financing relies on the central and local government as its principal source, with none of the prominent commercialization evident in other Western countries. In other words, Israel's third sector is umbilically linked to the established political system. During the past few decades, there has been rapid growth in the number of NGOs comprising the sector: In 2007, there were 45,000 registered NGOs, more than half of them active. It appears that the weaker population strata, peripheral groups, and excluded sectors stand out among those who establish such associations. According to Gidron, the sharp increase in third sector activity and the close ties between it and the established political system raise several critical questions concerning public attitudes to the political system and hence affect the future of democracy in Israel. For example, does Israeli society become more "civil" as a result of the third sector's growth?; and is the sector's growth a reflection of pluralism or of a high level of fragmentation in Israeli society?

**Kalman Neuman**, in his essay, "New Politics, No Politics, and Antipolitics: The Dilemma of the Religious Right in Israel" points to a clear correlation in Israel between religious and political identities, wherein most religious Jews are also right-wingers. The trauma of unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria in 2005 was, according to him, a decisive and formative moment for the religious right that raised questions regarding relations with the state and doubts concerning its own ability to act politically. The failure to halt the disengagement led to severe criticism of the internal leadership and ultimately to reorganization of the Council of Settlements of Judea and Samaria and appeals to replace the representatives of the religious right in the Knesset. The ostensible "betrayal" of their common objective by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, once the symbol of Israel's right wing, impelled the religious right to seek explanations.

One such explanation that sits well with the antipolitical atmosphere linked Sharon's behavior with an ongoing investigation in which he and his sons were accused of corruption. One claim then highly prevalent among the religious right determined that Sharon carried out the disengagement to gain the support of the judicial system and the media. Besides personal criticism of Sharon, radical developments began taking place in internal religious discourse, as evidenced particularly in the content of weekly flyers distributed in synagogues for the Sabbath. Sharon's "betrayal" was described as the failure of the secular right, that originates in a structural malfunction of secular Zionism and its lack of devotion to the Land of Israel after forgoing the values of Judaism. A new political ideology developed that emphasized the need to become a powerful representative force that would prevent territorial concessions in the future, although there were also those who went a step farther and aspired to replace the state leadership entirely with a religious leadership. This vision represented a kind of anti-antipolitics, as it generated a new political objective in response to dejection and helplessness following the failure of the struggle against disengagement. The idea of a religious leadership may be promoted through several political strategies: (1) founding a broad political party that unites all religious Zionists and appeals to the traditional as well; (2) joining political forces with the ultra-Orthodox; (3) taking over the leadership of the central party—the Likud. Furthermore, at the fringes of religious Zionism, the vision of hegemony is actually linked with the ideology of exit from legitimate political activity. This approach rejects cooperation with the political and legal system and aims at bringing about political change from without. Although this position is only upheld by a small minority at present, in case of withdrawal from the West Bank, in Neuman's estimation, it could be adopted by a considerable share of religious Zionists.

**David Ohana** shows in his essay “The Politics of Despair: The Case of Political Theology in Israel,” that from the outset, Zionism was accompanied by political theology, although various Jewish intellectuals warned repeatedly of the dangers that lurked in the encounter between the theological and the political, foreseeing the negative implications of messianism on the political sphere, the mingling of sacred and secular, and the unholy alliance between religion and its political expressions. After the establishment of the state, Zionism faced a problem: With the disappearance of religious authority, where would Zionism derive its legitimation? In this context, David Ben-Gurion and Rabbi A. I. Kook each represent a different variety of political theology that aimed at solving this problem. The former, a political leader, did not hesitate to appropriate the sacred and rally empty myths for the good of building the state, while the latter, a religious leader, summarily harnessed the secular and adopted Zionist pioneering for the purpose of mystical speculation about the coming of the Messiah. What is common to both is the elevation of the secular to the level of the sacred. Rabbi Kook’s transcendental religious messianism was based on the Creator and Ben-Gurion’s Promethean secular messianism on the sovereignty of man. Ben-Gurion attempted to nationalize the concept of Jewish messianism and shift it from religious faith to the secular sphere. Republicanism was a broad, comprehensive, and multifaceted secular ideology that had taken over religious myths and applied them to the state-building project. Religious intellectuals had already warned against Ben-Gurion’s messianic vision, fearing the radical implications of national secularism and the rise of “territorial” or “Canaanite” messianism. The territorial messianism of the Land of Israel Movement had only one principle—the link between the people and the land—an absolute that was to be fulfilled *in toto*. Liberation of the land replaced liberation of the people as the order of the day. This new “tribal

religion” rendered the place—the Land of Israel—sacred, the sole source of legitimation. But when the historic context of the Land of Israel clashed with the ideal of the Jewish National Home, it became necessary to choose between national independence in part of the Land of Israel or settlement in the entire Land of Israel. The majority of the Zionist movement chose the former. Disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and the incidents in Hebron in 2008 are stages in a sectoralization process among the settlers, who seek to become free of Israeli secular democracy. The murderous acts of Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir after the Oslo Accords are test cases for the politics of despair. It would be a mistake to view their deeds as limited goals. According to Ohana, they represent only the tip of the iceberg, expressing the Israeli religious right’s distaste for the political and cultural establishment, its hostility toward the putatively debilitating secular culture, and lack of trust in the laws of democracy. These acts are not ideological but rather the politics of despair: idealism that turned into nihilism and politics that became terror. Yigal Amir’s act of murder was more than a political protest: it was the culmination of cultural and political despair. Essentially, it was a dual murder, in which Rabin was assassinated not only as the representative of the Oslo Accords but also as the representative of secular and democratic Israeli culture. The radical right seeks to prove that the individual or minority has the power to change things through violence, through shock treatment. Such strategy is justified the moment cultural pessimism combines with political theology.

Rather than providing an academic analysis, **Ishai Menuchin** in his essay, “Ethical Slippery Slopes and ‘Easy’ Solutions for Social Responsibility,” presents a normative political *Weltanschauung*. People in democratic societies hold various opinions and possess various values that create different individual and social priorities. People are supposed to determine their own individual attitudes to

their deeds, to those of their colleagues, and to decisions and actions in which their society is involved. Public discussion helps each individual in society clarify how others judge realities and how they would choose to act. Values exist in a given society when their meaning is clear to all who participate therein, whether they agree with them or oppose them. Membership in society also has a moral significance and consequently includes commitment and responsibility. The democratic system of values is supposed to provide the individual with a kind of social/moral compass that helps in coping with complex social realities. Commitment to democratic values yields responsibility for society and its activities and only a secondary commitment to the governing institutions and their decisions. Members are responsible not only for themselves and their deeds but also for all activities of society and the deeds of the other members thereof. Moreover, individual commitment to the democratic character of his or her society is not limited to accepting majority decisions, voting in elections, expressing opinions, or obeying the law. Each individual in society has responsibility and commitment to rectify the deeds of that society. This “responsibility,” however, is a vague and politically biased concept. Customarily, it is those who do not obey establishment decisions who are called to account for their deeds, ignoring the responsibility of those who do obey the rules and cooperate. All members of society are responsible for overt injustice, even if someone else did the deed and they only stood on the sidelines. When individuals estimate that others are witnessing the same act, law, or command, they feel that the responsibility is not only their own, but divided among all witnesses. Many also assume that someone else will respond and that there is no authentic need to take any personal action. But responsibility is absolute regarding each of the witnesses. When an individual shrugs off moral responsibility for social decisions, that person essentially ignores a primary commitment to democratic values. There are several acceptable ways

for individuals to bypass democratic responsibility for the actions of their society: (1) conformist obedience, through which individuals exempt themselves from the need to seek out the true meaning of the law, consider the various alternatives, and cope with moral problems and social commitment; (2) avowing the complexity of the issue and appealing to authorities or commentators who help the individual avoid personal decisions; (3) “internal exile” in which individuals detach themselves from society and effectively evade commitment to values that demand opposition to its actions; (4) post facto assumption of responsibility—declaring *mea culpa*, expressing regret, asking for forgiveness, the “shoot first, cry later” phenomenon. Many times, says Menuhin, individuals know or feel that the laws or deeds their society carries out are immoral. Nevertheless, they participate therein and obey. Moral responsibility, however, is supposed to lead individuals to take a clear stand when there is overt incompatibility between the acts they witness and the democratic system of values they uphold. In such cases, people may find themselves in situations in which fulfillment of moral responsibility demands turning one’s back, condemning, and even resisting acts ostensibly committed with the authority and permission of the political system in which they live.

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## **The Reality of Political Fictions: Democracy between Modernity and Postmodernity**

Yaron Ezrahi

In contemporary democratic states, socially relevant knowledge appears too complex and underdetermined to effectively check arbitrary political power and power has become too diffused to guide and effectively regulate the production and uses of socially and politically relevant knowledge. The increasing commercialization of public services and functions and the shift of state powers to principal private actors in the market have been eroding the authority of both scientists and politicians to speak as collective nonpartisan voices respectively in the name of Science and the State. This fragmentation of the voices of knowledge and the public, this depletion of the authority to view policy issues from the synoptic or integrated perspectives of science and the state viewed respectively as wholes, is perhaps the most important cause of the reconfiguration of the relations of expert (including legal) and political authorities in our time. An increasingly wider recognition that Enlightenment visions of the role of knowledge and expertise in inducing political consensus, rationalizing the political, and improving the apolitical instrumentality of the state in the service of public goals, have been utopian, has prepared the way for more realistic appreciation of the problems that the relations between knowledge and politics raise (Ezrahi 1990). Contemporary historians, sociologists, anthropologists, legal scholars, and political scientists are now in a

much better position to recognize the persistent series of past and current systematic misunderstandings between members of the communities of knowledge and politics, the related discontinuities between their epistemologies, norms and practices, and their implications for future relations between knowledge and politics. Perhaps the most important insight that drives post-Enlightenment political thinking is that science cannot provide an escape route from politics and therefore agents of knowledge and politics must learn to cooperate in mutual respect for their diverse languages and perspectives. One of the main questions before us, considering the fragmentations, discontinuities, and constraints involved in bringing the two cultures together, is what can be done to enhance, under *current circumstances*, the production, regulation, and adaptation of expertise for social, constitutional, and policy choices.

Without getting into details, I would like to note first epistemological discontinuities between the ways scientists or other experts and lay officials and citizens respectively know things together. “Civil epistemology,” which consists, among other things, in what makes citizens accept claims of fact and what underlies lay distinctions between facts and fictions, is profoundly different from the criteria used by scientists (Ezrahi 1993; Jasanoff 2005). While partially valid, the persistent view that laymen are usually wrong and need the guidance of experts tends to ignore the role of such crucial building blocks of the political order as regulatory fictions. To illustrate, Thomas Hobbes insisted that regardless of whether people are or are not “equal by nature,” such “equality must be accepted”; otherwise “men that think themselves equal will not enter conditions of peace.”<sup>1</sup> As early as in fifth-century BCE Athens, the recognition

1 For an overview of the relations of science and politics, see Ezrahi 2001.

of the difference between philosophical and popular knowledge was expressed in the distinction between *episteme* and *doxa*. Ever since Plato, the attempts to replace *doxa* or civic epistemology or working popular political fictions as the frame of political discourse by philosophical or scientific *episteme* were inherently antidemocratic and therefore antipolitical. Their usual failure reflected the unwarranted belief that democratic politics, invented in the *Agora* of the ancient Athenian democracy as the continual lay negotiation of compromises between opposites and incommensurables, can be reduced to coherent, rationally guided choices and behaviors. By contrast to the logic of philosophical and scientific discourses within the contexts of popular knowledge, politics, and law, some fictions must enjoy the status of fixed reality in order to enable the working of particular sets of normative principles and pragmatic practices. Whereas the realization that fictions, or to use Vico's words, publicly "believable impossibilities," may be more consequential in the contexts of politics and the law than facts certified by experts was shared by thinkers such as Montaigne, Spinoza, Vico, Hume, and Rousseau, such insights, as professor Stephen Toulmin (1990) indicates, were effectively repressed by the overpowering vision of the Enlightenment.

Now in the post-Enlightenment condition, one is struck by the sense that Vico's observations that the history of politics and legal structures is the history of historically successful fictions could have been written yesterday by a postmodern thinker. Note for example his observations about the ancient Roman law:

Ancient Jurisprudence was thoroughly poetic. It imagined the real as unreal, the unreal as real, the living as dead, and (and in cases of pending) the dead as still alive. It introduced many empty masks without subjects, *iura imaginaria*, rights invented by the imagination. Its entire

reputation depended upon the invention of myths which could preserve the dignity of the laws and administer justice to the facts. Thus all the fictions of ancient jurisprudence were masked truths . . . in this way all Roman law was a serious poem acted out by the Romans in their forum. (Vico 1999 [1744], 1036–1037)

Unlike philosophical knowledge and political science as fields of systematic *propositional knowledge*, the business of political, constitutional and legal *wisdom* is not so much to explain or rationally justify but to guide what Vico so insightfully called the acting out—or the enactment of—the fictions which are necessary to the foundation and the regulation of the civic order. Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the fragility of the American democracy relates to the fact that “the government of the Union rests almost wholly on legal fictions. The Union is an ideal nation that exists so to speak only in the minds, and whose extent and bounds intelligence alone discovers” (1957 [1835], 127). But at the same time, Tocqueville argued that he “never admired the good sense and practical intelligence of the Americans more than in the manner by which they escape the innumerable difficulties to which their federal constitution gives rise” (*ibid.*, 156). Much practical wisdom was displayed also by the French revolutionaries when they chose to iconographically embody the secular Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen within the image of the Mosaic tablets, thus tapping deeply ingrained religious sensibilities in support of man-made or “natural laws.” Ernst Kantorowicz (1997) has famously provided another example for the role of political fictions in solving practical political and constitutional problems when he pointed out how the rituals of the European monarchies wisely and effectively enacted the fiction of the king’s two bodies.

I would like to turn now to discuss briefly the constraints on, and the politics of, the enactment of necessary democratic political and constitutional fictions such as the transparency of democratic power, the distinct boundaries between law and politics, and the separation of powers. I will then conclude with a few observations on the changing status of political fictions in the postmodern condition.

Political analysts are usually aware of the fact that the transparency of political power and especially the role of public information in rendering governmental power transparent in democracy is a worthy norm, which can be only marginally supported by the practice of “informing the public” and the very possibility of an “informed public.” And yet, freedom of information legislation is a politically effective gesture in support of rituals of holding the government accountable. This is largely because although government accountability is not sustained by actual transparency, it is sustainable by rituals aimed at articulating the commitment to render the government dependent on the public judgment, a commitment which is sometimes backed up by moments where some information is effectively used by critics to embarrass the government and demonstrate its—largely in principle—vulnerability. Underlying these observations is the realization, supported by massive research, that theatrical gestures or the “choreography” of transparency have developed into a high art of political stagecraft serving actual concealment, and that information disclosure and transmission are almost always tendentiously selective, largely ambiguous, and inherently open to contradictory interpretations.

Similarly, the necessary fiction of the dichotomy between law and politics is sustained by a myriad of rituals, language domains reflecting among other things the technicalization of legal language as a sign of the apolitical status of the judicial process, differential institutions and careers, willing suspensions of disbelief and even

the distinct uniforms of legal functionaries. All these cannot really conceal from experts the fact that the highly visible political character of the legislative process does not suddenly dissipate once the laws are passed by the legislature and disappear in the following stages where the laws are always subject to selective interpretation and execution. What actually happens in the wider context is a switch to a domain regulated by fictions of the apolitical! Despite this difference between perceptions and actual practice, the fiction of the separation between politics and the law is enormously important *regulatory* fiction, which allows society to develop mechanisms for at least partly making the uses of state powers no longer arbitrary. As a matter of fact, from a theoretical point of view legalizing power is a technique whereby politics sets limits to itself. Together with the uses of other experts by the state such as economists, statisticians, defense strategists, etc., also legal experts are means by which the modern state has sought to acquire legitimation and enhance its ability to control conflicts by processes of dividing and depoliticizing the exercise of some of its powers between different normative-functional domains.

This brings me to the super fiction of the separation of powers. Political and legal analysts have long been aware of the fact that what has been usually referred to as the “separation of powers” is more accurately represented as the institutional “division of labor in exercising shared powers.” There is, of course, a vast literature about the quasi-legislative powers of the state bureaucracy, the penetrations of the legislature to the domain of the executive branch, and the quasi-judicial powers used by the executive. Still, of course, the fiction of the separation of powers is capable of marshaling enough hard facts to maintain a measure of public credibility that allows the state to divide and allocate its powers to different domains thus allowing a

power play of checks and balances, which is congenial for enacting a constitutional democratic form of government.

So how is a society supposed to enact its necessary political fictions to deserve Tocqueville's admiration for its "good sense and practical intelligence"?

This, of course, is a difficult question whose answer would depend very much on circumstances of time and place. Nevertheless, I think I can argue that considering both the necessity of such political fictions for enacting the political order and their fragility, good sense and practical intelligence would be manifest in the ability to resist both the over-literalizing of such fictions as dogmas and their presentation as mere metaphors. Necessary fictions must be protected to have regulatory efficacy in guiding behavior and canalizing processes of political legitimation and deligitimation. But such necessary political and constitutional fictions must be flexible enough to allow the dynamic open-ended process of democratic politics to evolve without being arrested by political and legal dogmas. It is, of course, very hard to maintain the balance between these two poles. But the imaginaries and structures of a constitutional democracy must, on the one hand, allow for the creative politics by which a democracy continually examines and sometimes changes its own fundamental rules—adjusting to new circumstances—while, at the same time, preventing democratic politics from self-destructive transgressions.

The politics of necessary fictions requires, therefore, a balanced employment of the distinct strategies of *literalizing* and making figurative, or for present purposes, *figurativizing* political-legal fictions in the sense of treating them at times as incontestable givens or facts and at times as mere useful but pliable metaphors. In the current constitutional politics of Israel concerning the status of the Supreme Court, I think I can use these terms to discern two principal positions. On the one hand, there are the "literalists" who treat the separation

of powers as a dogma in order to severely limit the Supreme Court's powers of judicial review and what they call its illegitimate "judicial activism." This party is identified with the former Minister of Justice Professor Daniel Friedman and vehemently supported by the Israeli ultra-Orthodox religious parties as well as the religious and secular right. The opposing position is held by what I would like to call a group of "figurativists," such as former Chief Justice Aharon Barak, who do not construe the "separation of powers" literally but as a useful guiding metaphor that should allow limited transgressions to serve the protection of high liberal democratic principles as human and citizen rights against the abuses of government and facilitate selective court interventions in cases of unconstitutional legislation by an unrestrained majority. According to this position, no other state institution is better suited than the Supreme Court to serve this goal. Former Supreme Court Justice Dalia Dorner, who belongs to the figurativists' "party," has repeatedly insisted that the excessive powers falsely attributed by the literalists to the Supreme Court they seek to limit are more apparent than real. But it is precisely this unwarranted image of great powers that is more effective in deterring constitutional transgressions of government agencies than the actually meager powers of the court. To many Israeli jurists and political scientists, the most dangerous aspect of this debate is the popular appeal of the simplified slogan of the separation of powers pushed by dogmatic literalists to its extreme with the possible effects of thoroughgoing erosion of the fragile foundations of the authority of the Supreme Court. Literalizers have always had an advantage in appealing to the lay public because unlike figurativists like Dorner, they present such conflicts as simple clashes between self-evident principles or facts and their violations or distortions. Figurativists usually have a much greater difficulty in communicating to the lay public the complicated dualistic message that when it comes to

necessary fictions the apparent and the real are respectively limited but mutually supportive.

I would like to suggest that in the postmodern condition the rhetorical powers of the literalists and, therefore, their advantage over the figurativists in appealing to the public may be eroding across the board. This may be due to the widely recognized signs that due to the massive effects of the exposure to television and other deep sociocultural currents, postmodern publics have been increasingly losing their confidence in clearly distinguishing between facts and fictions. Put another way, the blurred boundaries between facts and fictions as well as a declining trust in claims of self-evident truths have been weakening the authority of literalizers to insist on incontestable givens (Latour 1999; Poovey 1998; Rorty 1989). This development raises the question of whether figurativism unchecked by literalism in the enactment or actualization of vital political and constitutional fictions can still allow for maintaining a balance between stability and flexibility in the democratic constitutional order. This question relates to the general issue of the effects of the popular spread of reflexivity and undecidability concerning the distinction between facts and fictions on the long-term ability of necessary fictions to regulate institutional and individual behaviors. Lawrence H. Tribe (1989) has suggested in a somewhat odd article entitled “The Curvature of Constitutional Space: What Lawyers Can Learn from Modern Physics” that lawyers like physicists should adopt a more plastic open-ended understanding of their basic theoretical entities or necessary fictions. Tribe is warning against treating constitutional principles or entities like the state as reified givens. This warning is most pertinent in a society like Israel that has not as yet moved confidently, like many western democracies, across the border line between modernity and postmodernity. In such a society, where the political and institutional culture of democracy

is underdeveloped, democratic legitimating powers tend to be granted largely and falsely to simple parliamentary majorities of elected representatives regardless of the contents of the decisions, their implications for the constitutional role of the opposition, as well as the rights of individuals and minorities. In such a context, the conservative literalists tend to assume the view that insofar as the judges of the Supreme Court are not elected, a strict application of the constitutional metaphor of the separation of powers would serve their purpose of diminishing its authority to declare parliamentary legislation that violates basic principles of freedom, equality, and rights as unconstitutional and, therefore, void. Because even in a most balanced and constitutionally proper democracy there is, as I indicated above, only a meager correspondence between central regulating fictions such as the separation of powers and political-constitutional practices, a politically powerful literalist version of such constitutional fictions, when it is backed up by populist rhetoric, is a prescription for the increasing erosion of the authority of the judicial branch. A healthy constitutional democracy must be able to work with what Vico called “masked truths” and exercise the ability to sometimes change its perception of the line separating the real from the unreal in politics and the law, without falling into the respective traps of extreme literalism or figurativism.

To conclude, as of this writing, Tocqueville’s conception of “good sense” and “practical intelligence” seems not yet applicable to the current constitutional debate in Israel. From a more general perspective, the collective talent for keeping necessary political and constitutional fictions both sufficiently flexible and stable is very much a matter of political culture shaped by both traditions and experience. In this country we are just beginning to develop these collective skills.

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## One Man, One Voice! One People, One Language?

Astrid von Busekist

And the Almighty came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

And the Almighty said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.” “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the Almighty scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Almighty confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Almighty scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth. (Genesis 11:1–9)

In language matters there are two understandings of democracy: For team A, a substantial democracy needs a *lingua franca* to ensure large political participation, upward mobility, and equality of opportunities. Team A is utilitarian and views language merely as a tool. Team B, in contrast, values diversity and considers language as culture: People should have access to a “full societal culture” (and a full set of opportunities) in their own language (Kymlicka 2001), or at least in the language of their choice. Equality and mobility are not achieved through a common language but through the citizens’ free choice to use their particular languages. In this essay I will discuss the virtue of each democratic genre in regard to participation, full citizenship, and fair representation.

Until recently, when social scientists looked at language, they focused almost exclusively on language *identity* (class or group identity) and language as an expression of a specific, unique culture, hence its intrinsic value regardless of its usefulness for communication. In line with Joshua Fishman's pioneering work (1972), scholars were committed to language diversity because language was valued as such. Nonetheless, they also knew that language diversity generally hinders efficient political administration and that one of the classical sequences of nation building has been language *rationalization*, i.e., the imposition of one official, national language (von Busekist 2006, 2009). Even postcolonial leaders have tried to adapt the wise principle of *cujus regio, ejus lingua*.<sup>1</sup>

Until not long ago, and despite the ubiquity of language conflicts, normative literature has not paid much attention to language, and even less to the linguistic dimension of democracy. Post-Rawlsian political theory has publicized a wide range of culture and identity related topics, but has barely considered language. Neither liberals nor communitarians have really addressed language equity. It was only in the 1990s that scholars in comparative politics (Laitin 1994, 2000)

- 1 [Whose realm, his language.] Language policy is an attempt to weigh on collective language choices by institutional means, to prescribe the public use of one (or more) language(s), to adopt language legislations (Laitin 2000). Historically, creating, rationalizing, or maintaining one language is the classical (European) sequence of language policy, mostly congruent with nation building in the nineteenth century. Official languages are not always national languages (one official language can coexist with a set of national languages); sub-state national communities or groups with a strong regional identity may challenge the official language and make new language claims. Official and national language policies are only efficient when there is a compulsory education system, a wide interest in learning and using the official/national language, and some kind of reward for doing so (professional, symbolic)—the latter is particularly true for national language policies.

and economics (Pool 1991b; Chiswick and Miller 1995; Grin 2004) began to look at language issues, generating sophisticated game theory models that, unfortunately, do not always apply to real world problems. The democrats among the social scientists, valuing deliberation and public debate and committed to freedom of choice, including the possibility of choosing the language we prefer to debate in, took a “deliberative turn” (Dryzec 1990), insisting on communication and deliberation rather than voting, but—until recently—somehow forgot to mention the precondition of a successful public debate: a common language. In recent years, shedding a new light on linguistic diversity (Kymlicka and Patten 2003) and linguistic justice (Van Parijs 2000a, 2003, 2004), in a system dominated by powerful global languages such as English, rapidly led to a wider discussion on the usefulness and/or the threats of a common language, a *lingua franca*, in the EU, in multilingual societies, and sometimes even on a global level.

One can link language claims to the theory and practice of democracy, to the citizens’ willingness to participate in political debate or engage in political action, in various manners. Our common purpose in this book is to understand citizen’s trust (politics) and distrust (antipolitics) of the political institutions and decision makers. My claim is that one of the variables that partially helps explain antipolitics, i.e., low levels of participation, auto-exclusion from the public sphere, protest vote, etc., is the lack of a common tool for sharing politically relevant matters: a common language (team A’s claim), in the sense of a common natural language (mother tongue), and metaphorically, in the sense of speaking the same language of values.

Here, I will look only at the former sense and try to show that linguistically divided states are more vulnerable democracies and that a healthy debating democracy needs at least one common tool of communication. Empirical evidence seems to support that claim: Linguistic barriers are potential political barriers, and language is

most easily used as a “natural divider,” sometimes even as an alibi to veil more substantial political disagreements on welfare, social justice, redistribution, and so forth.

One could of course reverse the claim and argue that acknowledgement of individual (or collective) claims to language diversity enhances the democratic quality of politics because the linguistic identity of every speaker or the linguistic boundaries of every community are fully and equally respected (team B’s claim). Kymlicka (2001) calls this natural form of participation “politics in the vernacular.” This argument has been well understood by multilingual federations—especially in the postcolonial era—to satisfy all linguistic parties (India, post-apartheid South Africa).

I will consider both sides in the following, draw on two examples, and refer to two different scales of citizen implication: the EU and Belgium. A common language as a necessary condition for a more substantial democracy has indeed been discussed within the European Union, inspired by what seems to be a linguistic *fait accompli*: hegemonic English. But the Europeans are contradictory. They encourage working knowledge in English, and to a lesser extent, in the classical EU and OECD languages (English plus French and German), but at the same time they celebrate language diversity. The Commission’s rule is “equal respect due to all cultures and languages.” The “European year of languages” (2001) has clearly illustrated the limits of sustainable diversity: The more languages one symbolically promotes, the more English is really spoken.

### **Large-scale and Small-scale Democracies**

I will assume that the EU is a *large-scale democracy* or a “regional democracy” and test whether a common language would reduce what is commonly called the democratic deficit of the European Union. I will use data from the *Eurobarometer* surveys, namely the two special

issues on language (2001, 2006) and consider the following questions: Do we need a common language for a healthy democracy? Would social mobility and employability be enhanced if everyone spoke the same language? Do we need a *lingua franca* to discuss global concerns (such as environmental issues, pandemic diseases, global warming, etc.)? Is a common language required to create a more substantial democracy (local, national, global)? Would a common language avoid brain drain (if it were English for instance?) If we chose a natural language, is it fair—and under what conditions—that everybody learn it? Or should we opt for an artificial language?

On a much smaller scale, *small-scale democracy* Belgium shows that linguistic barriers are also “participation barriers”: historically, not knowing a language, or not mastering it well enough was a strong disincentive and a strong motivation to join nationalistic movements. Today Belgium is a federation divided into three communities, each of which is a micro-democracy on its own; the political culture and the citizens’ allegiance are bounded by linguistic frontiers. There is very little inter-regional or inter-community communication between Flanders and Wallonia, and there is less and less political communication between the Region Brussels-Capital and the rest of the francophone region in the south of the country, as their agendas do not overlap.

The country’s other community is practically a foreign people. It is rather difficult for a political system to keep functioning satisfactorily with such mutual ignorance and hence such lack of mutual understanding of the two halves of the country. (Dewachter 1996, 136)

How did these transformations come about? How did Belgium shift from a constitutional, French-speaking monarchy to a federal state

with three official languages, three cultural communities, and three distinct administrative regions? How did Belgium shift from free individual language choice to constraining territorial unilingualism with two strong nationalisms facing each other and preventing democratic *vivre ensemble*, social justice, and interregional economic solidarity? Why did Belgium’s consociational nationalisms, which were Belgium’s long-time trademark, become aggressive ethno-cultural nationalisms rejecting peaceful negotiation and bargaining? The answer is: language.

**Figure 1** Map of EU languages

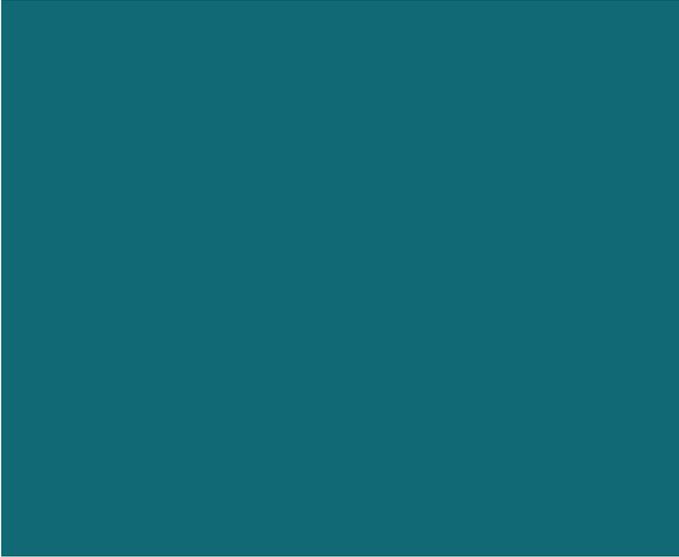


Source: [www.eurominority.eu/version/maps/map-european-languages.asp](http://www.eurominority.eu/version/maps/map-european-languages.asp)  
 Eurominority.eu - Mikael Bodlore-Penlaez - 2004

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**Figure 2** Map of Belgium's linguistic boundary

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Source: [www.ben-vautier.com/ethnisme/analyses/cartes/carte\\_belgique.html](http://www.ben-vautier.com/ethnisme/analyses/cartes/carte_belgique.html)

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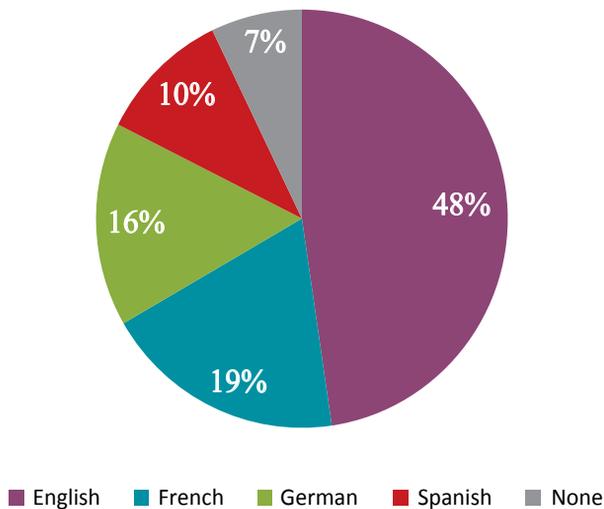
Going back and forth from the large to the small scale, looking at different initiatives to resolve language issues may help us to conceive coordinate language policies: a *summa divisio* between the divisive power of linguistic differences *and* the virtue of multilingualism.

### **Love of Language or Language Utility?**

There are two sociolinguistic truths: (a) learning a language is rewarded only if a sufficient number of other speakers engage in learning, but once a language reaches a tipping point, its spread is self-sufficient (Pool 1991a; Laitin 2000); (b) people learn languages upwards, from the smaller to the bigger language, from the economically dependent language to the economically independent language (de Swaan 2001).

That is why Zamenhof’s Esperanto has never become a widely spoken language: Esperanto has never reached its tipping point and accounts for less than 0.0005% speakers in the world (Piron 1989).<sup>2</sup> Esperanto lacks motivation, anticipated profit, and, above all, Esperanto cannot count on an institution, a nation-state to promote it. And that is why people choose to learn useful languages despite their love of a language. In Belgium, people learn French and English in Flanders, English and Spanish in Wallonia. In the EU English is the most widely spoken language.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 3** The most useful languages



Source: Author’s adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer 2006*.

- 2 Ludwik Lazar Zamenhof (1859, Bialystok–1917 Warsaw) wrote his *Lingvo Internacia de Doktore Esperanto* in 1887. He also wrote the first Yiddish grammar in 1889.
- 3 Three-quarters of interviewed Hungarians, for instance, declared they would love to learn Italian and French (74%) or Italian (72%), but together

In other words, we anticipate the probability of actually speaking the language we decide to learn, and we anticipate the benefit of our newly acquired competence: it is *probability-sensitive learning* (Van Parijs 2006). The anticipated profitability of language training is a strong incentive and accounts for our learning commitments. But the choice of learning one specific language also depends on the perceptions and the expectations concerning other speakers' choices: We would not learn a language we cannot share.

That leads to another feature of language learning/sharing: the *maximin* principle. Borrowed and adapted from Rawl's *Justice as Fairness* (2001),<sup>4</sup> it simply means that in situations in which communication efficiency trumps every other consideration (language beauty, expressiveness), we maximize minimal linguistic competence and hence minimize exclusion, and according to Laponce (1984), a Canadian scholar, with a real risk of "killing languages by niceness": Global languages such as English will always be preferred to "small" or "local" languages.

Two final distinctive features characterize languages. Languages are *networks* with positive externalities: Every new user/speaker enhances the benefit or the utility for all, and hence the value of the specific network or language, including global. Languages are non-

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these lovely languages account for less than five percent of the learning preferences (Hartkamp 2007). According to another sociolinguistic truth, all universal languages have at one point ceased to be universal. If our generation decides to adopt English as *lingua franca* and engages in public policies of language training that indeed spread English as the sole European common language, we oblige future generations, which will be unable to make the same linguistic choices we can. We might, in other words, create that tipping point ourselves.

- 4 "It tells us to identify the worst outcome of each available alternative and then to adopt the alternative whose worst outcome is better than the worst outcomes of all the other alternatives" (Rawls 2001, §28.1).

excludable *collective goods*. Languages are networks because there is a strategic interaction between users of languages. Languages are networks much like transport or communication networks. People commit to such networks because they expect a benefit from doing so, and they are loyal as long as the next best option is too expensive or too time consuming. Joining a network enhances the global utility of that specific network. This benefit and global value are well known to economists as “external network effects”: Every newcomer adds value to the whole. Languages are also public goods, they are even *hypercollective* goods because languages are networks of a special kind; they are free goods, “open societies.” Even if there is an entrance fee (the time spent learning a new language), they are not created or owned by anyone in particular, they are *non-excludable*. It is impossible to exclude anyone from enjoying a collective good. No one has a *veto* on the survival of a language: languages need a significant amount of speakers, but the defection of one or some does not jeopardize a language. The efforts of one individual, conversely, are not sufficient to guarantee language maintenance: no one can create or salvage a language on his own. And, most important: A collective good does not diminish in value as new users join in. The specificity of languages as collective goods is that their value actually *increases* with each added speaker (de Swaan 2001, 38 ff.). Scholars have even shown that a 1% increase of English-speakers increases by 3.6% the people attracted to English in non-English-speaking countries (the figures are 2.2% for French and 1.8% for German) (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004, 50).

### **One Demos, One Language?**

Let's start with the small scale. The debate about language is part of Belgium's political culture and memory; it is routine, and as such it

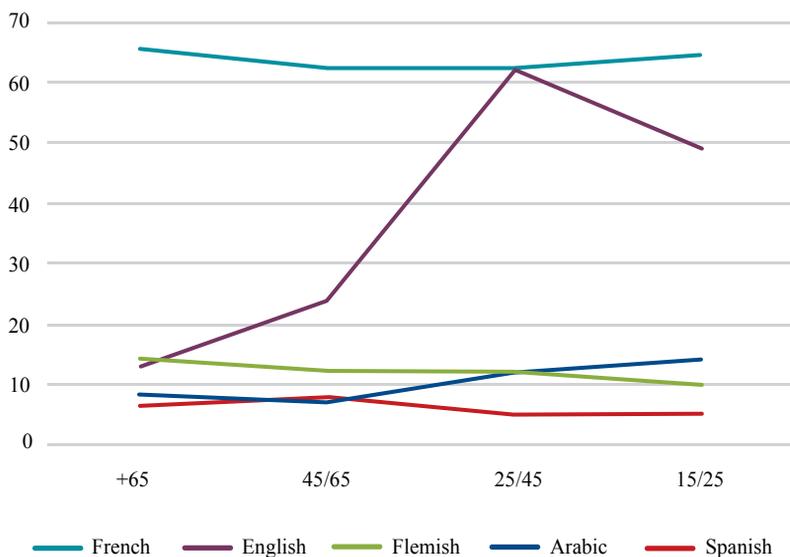
holds a great virtue: simplification. Citizens can immediately identify with the issue at stake, and politicians have an easy access to a well-embedded discourse. How did this come about?

Belgium was born in 1830 as a French-speaking constitutional monarchy, although more than half of the country (the Catholic north) spoke a variety of Flemish dialects without grammatical codification. The Flemish cultural-nationalist movement (like all other movements of the kind) rose in the mid nineteenth century, patriotic in its essence, never claiming secession or autonomy until the end of the twentieth century, and demanded equal recognition of Flemish culture and language. A unified Flemish language was created in the 1850s. After several political battles within the movement (between the Catholics and the liberals) and against the French speakers from Flanders (the *fransquillons*), official bilingualism was obtained in Flanders in 1898. This was the first move to territorialize language policy. The Walloon movement came into being later in the nineteenth century, mainly as a reaction to Flemish nationalism. Socialist, anticlerical, supported by strong unions, it feared economic backlash because part of public employment was now linked to linguistic competence in both languages, and the Flemings were far more bilingual than the Walloons for whom it had never been useful, neither economically nor socially, to learn Flemish.

The scene was set. The next step was official unilingualism in Flanders (1932) and the constitutional recognition of Flemish as second official language (1935). Brussels remained and remains officially bilingual, although only 10–15% of its inhabitants are Flemish natives. Walloons hold they have a civic view of nationhood and encourage minority rights, whereas Flemings are supposed to have an ethnic and exclusive conception of the nation twinned with a preference for majority rule. The democratic “genre” in Wallonia is unitarian and monolingual, the Flemish preference goes

with a bilingual democracy, accommodating linguistic territories and preferences. Two nations, one state, and an officially bilingual capital. Brussels has tried for at least half a century to foster distinct “*bruxellois*” citizenship with no real success. The capital is a cosmopolitan European, French-speaking city, which could almost exist as a *Stadtstaat*, without the Belgian state.

**Figure 4** Languages spoken in Brussels (2008)



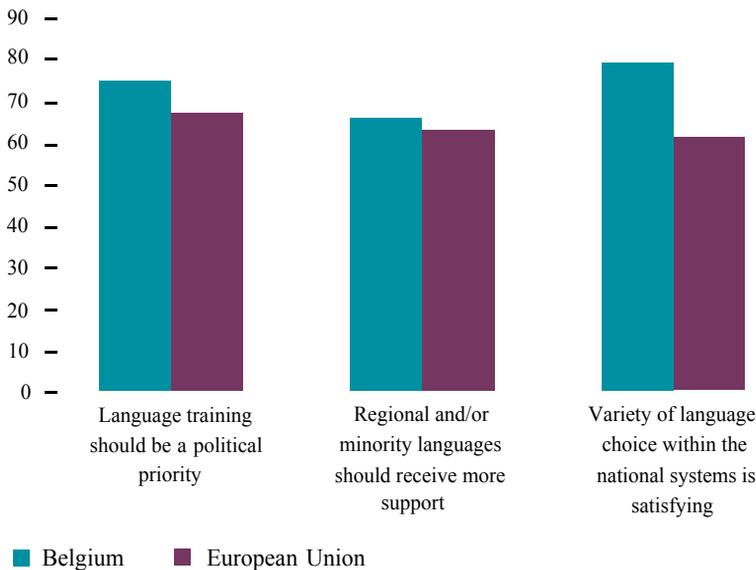
Source: Author’s adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer 2006*.

The *recognition* of language sovereignty was thus intrinsically linked to the recognition of a distinct specific and autonomous cultural community. Language *policy* and the legitimacy of a sovereign language rule progressively became the core of most political conflicts. Although linguistic demands were accepted as part of a

regular political negotiation and mostly resolved—at least from a legal standpoint—they did not lose any of their strength. On the contrary, linguistic quarrels organize the public sphere in Belgium to this day, and the distrust vis-à-vis the other community is such that Belgium has recently spent more than a year without a government: the mediator appointed by the king (Yves Leterme) being incapable of submitting an agreed-upon list of representatives.

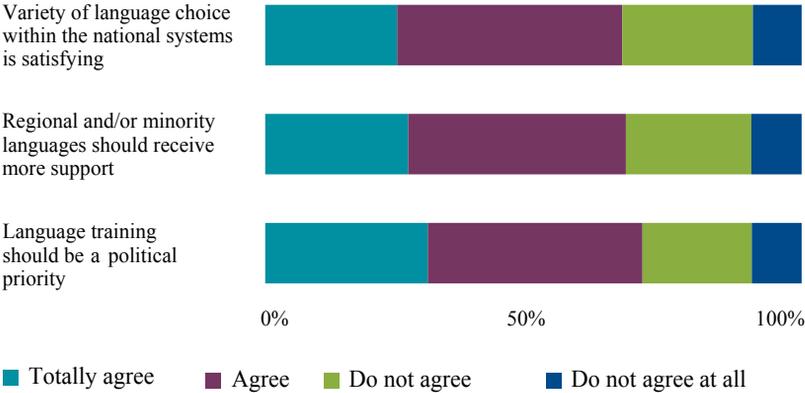
Paradoxically, the Belgians, who are apparently so poorly committed to their own state, are very fervent Europeans. Oddly enough, when interviewed, the Belgians are usually very strong advocates for equal respect to all languages. And Belgians score very highly on the language-competence scale. How are these elements linked?

**Figure 5** Language training Belgium/EU25



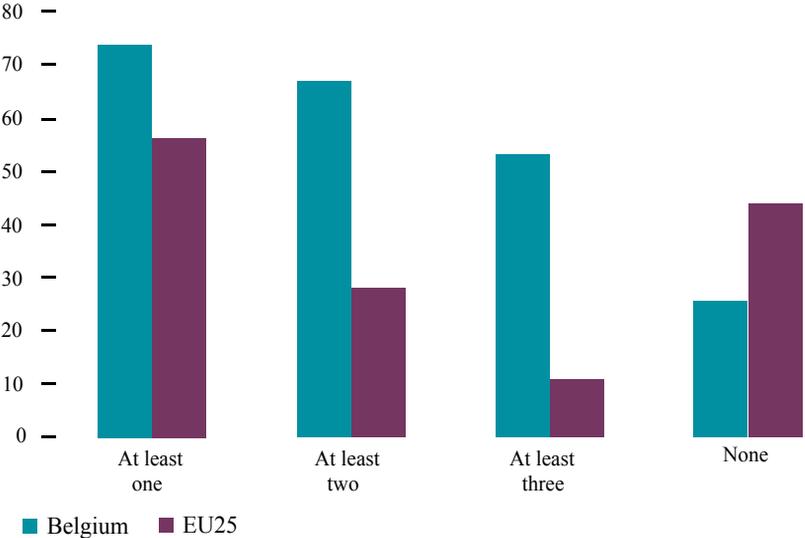
Source: Author’s adaptation of EU data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

**Figure 6** Variety and choice



Source: Author’s adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

**Figure 7** In how many languages are you able to converse fluently?



Source: Author’s adaptation of EU data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

Let's look at the large scale.

If we accept the idea that the EU is a large-scale democracy, a third wave democracy (Dahl and Tufte 1973) different in nature than “national” democracies, not only because of its size but also because of the modes of political participation and hence the proper way of organizing fair representation, we must admit that the overlapping electoral district “European Union” has a lot in common with our small-scale example Belgium. Reflecting on cosmopolitan democracy, David Held argues convincingly that:

National boundaries have traditionally demarcated the basis on which individuals are included and excluded from participation in decisions affecting their lives; but if many socio-economic processes, and the outcomes of decisions about them, stretch beyond national frontiers, then the implications of this are serious, not only for the categories of consent and legitimacy but for all the key ideas of democracy. At issue is the nature of constituency, the role of representation, and the proper form and scope of political participation.” (Archibugi, Held, and Kohler 1998, 22)

Politics can only be conducted if citizens are able to participate significantly in their polity as “insiders”: “[T]he logic of moral equality ... is best realized through democratic processes which bring insiders and outsiders together as transnational citizens with equal rights of participation” (Linklater 1998, 126). In my view, the state of “insiderness” depends on a variety of factors (trust, fairness, etc.), but also on a basic linguistic competence enabling participation. Language is one of these social resources that can either poison or cure like the Greek's *pharmakon*, venom and remedy at the same

time. Poison—because it is generally used as an exclusive identity device; cure—because it would suffice to retain one common language to communicate Europe-wide beyond national boundaries and communitarian tensions. Communitarian and or regionalistic tensions are formatted and determined by national, domestic politics and are not affected by large-scale politics. On the contrary, large-scale politics often soothe domestic tensions. In his *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), T. H. Marshall argued that the right to protection under the law is useless unless citizens could participate in the law-making process; the right of participation is inadequate unless citizens have access to the social resources that make it possible for them to experience what would otherwise remain merely a formal right. Language is such a social resource.

### **Overlapping Consensus, Cosmopolitan Democracy, and Language Policy**

[T]he very idea of consent through elections and the particular notion that the relevant constituencies of voluntary agreement are the communities of a bounded territory or a state, become problematic as soon as the issue of national, regional and global interconnectedness is considered and the nature of a so-called “relevant community” is contested. Whose consent is necessary and whose participation is justified in decisions concerning, for instance, AIDS or acid rain, or the use of non-renewable resources, or the management of transnational economic flows? What is the relevant constituency: national, regional or international? To whom do decision

makers have to justify their decisions? To whom should they be accountable? (Held 1995, 18)

The question of the proper district and the proper constituency is relevant to the large scale *and* the small scale. Belgium could probably be rescued by an overlapping electoral district that would oblige politicians to set a common agenda for both nations in the Belgian case, and for all European member states in the case of the EU. In principle such a common district exists in the EU, but we all know that European electoral debates are conducted within the nation-states and following domestic agendas. The French and the Dutch “no” to the European Constitution was to a large extent a “no” to domestic policy.

But extending the public sphere to the Belgian federal state, agreeing to discuss principles regardless of language and language communities, and achieving an overlapping consensus through an overlapping electoral district is possible only if citizens accept the idea of treating language as a private matter instead of a public issue, and if they accept that fairness, welfare, and so on are not bound by linguistic frontiers. It would indeed suffice if one-third of the electoral body were trans-regional, trans-communitarian, within a single federal electoral district, to oblige the linguistic wings of the main parties to share an explicit common program.

Let us now proceed the other way around. Instead of asking whether compromise could be achieved regardless of language (team A, language as a tool), let us assume that commitment to one’s language is a handicap such that no federal solution of the kind sketched above is possible (team B, language as intrinsic cultural value). Given that federal loyalty in Belgium is defined foremost in terms of linguistic loyalty, would it be possible to invent a new type of linguistic equity that satisfies all Belgians? Which solution would be the fairest one to

meet two contradictory and ultimately undecidable truths: language as a means of public communication, a tool, versus language as a substantive part of identity? In other words, is language truly a part of my specific identity (such as faith, for instance) that must be recognized as such (linguistic communitarianism<sup>5</sup>), or is language just a means to successfully interact, secondary and unimportant with regard to social justice (linguistic liberalism<sup>6</sup>). Liberal political regimes have to choose between very few institutional answers or

- 5 The problem with the identity model is that it blends different kinds of arguments, normative and historical. The *historical* argument (the language situation yesterday) is used to implement language justice today [in May, 2001]. Languages have disappeared in the course of history, but not all of them die a natural death; most languages have disappeared in the nation-building process and the periphery has been forced to adopt the linguistic norms of the center. Nations indeed eat up languages and gradually destroy vernaculars. We now have to either (a) actively protect the languages that have escaped oblivion; (b) apply restorative justice and positively discriminate speakers of languages that have suffered, or (c) revitalize dead or dying languages, by all means—even illiberal ones (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994).
- 6 Two kinds of arguments intertwine: the quest for democracy and justice as well as the quest for language equity. The language equity claim may be put as follows: If my language is part of my specific culture and defines me (as a citizen and as an individual), then it is fair to share the state territory according to that specific identity. At least regionally, I should be able to practice my own language. But the claim can be reversed: The recognition of a specific culture, and hence of a specific language divides the state territorially, but foremost divides the community of citizens and upsets the equality principle. Citizens in this case are equal only if they speak the same idiom. The justice claim may be put as follows: Is language just any means of political communication or communion? Is language the sign and the symptom of my very specific “encumbered” identity that must be recognized as such or is language merely a general tool to communicate widely? Does it matter which language I speak to have my liberty fully recognized?

public policies.<sup>7</sup> Both recognize linguistic liberty in the same way we recognize religious freedom, free speech, etc., but expel it from the public sphere. Liberty of language then belongs to the private sphere. Speak whatever you like in your homes, in your associations, and so on, the political sphere admits only one public language.

The other solution is to recognize language diversity by adapting the procedure and extending it to substantive minority rights. Philippe Van Parijs (2000b) suggests there are many scenarios but only one solution: territorial separation.<sup>8</sup> There can be no viable democracy

- 7 Either we state that minorities have the same rights as the majority—and we then need to shape a constitutional architecture to satisfy those rights—or we admit that the law of the majority has to prevail. Majority rule does not exclude fair representation of minorities; liberalism has solved that part of the problem, as our representatives, although elected by part of the social body, speak in the name of all. The normative question for the state is then: How can a neutral, liberal state protect vulnerable languages if it does not decide to confer a specific value to a minority language (or a majority language: Flemish in Belgium, French in Canada)? Protection of a minority language also means protection of its speakers and the cultural patrimony of the community. In other words, the “Kymlicka claim”: since some communities, languages, and so on, are more vulnerable than others, the state has to protect them.
- 8 He rejects Mill’s solution, i.e., generalized unilingualism, for three reasons: Linguistic diversity is also protection of cultural diversity (the consequentiality long-term argument); linguistic shift is unfair to speakers who have to bear the cost of learning a new language (the justice short-term argument); the pragmatic argument of course is that no one believes in this scenario any longer. While 60% of the native speakers are Flemish, they produce 70% of the GNP. He also rejects generalized bilingualism, because of the vulnerability of one language vis-à-vis the other in a soft version of bilingualism where people would be able to choose their language freely and because of its prohibitive cost for the people and the state. He then rejects non-territorial separation, i.e., the Austro-Marxist version of personal federalism in which communities have full autonomy on cultural

in a multilingual society and no generous redistribution in a small open economy. The more decentralized redistributive powers, the tighter the economic constraints on redistribution. To achieve both democracy and redistribution, one paradoxically has to strengthen linguistic significance of borders while weakening their socio-economic importance.<sup>9</sup> He therefore pleads for *territorial separation*, in other words regional unilingualism.<sup>10</sup> The practical side to this

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and linguistic matters as religious entities had in the Ottoman empire, for two reasons. First, because in a soft version, free membership probably benefits the stronger and economically more efficient communities and will lead to linguicide (parents will prefer to send their children to schools that are run in the socially more prestigious and economically more profitable language). Secondly, because our native language blessing is sheer luck. Our native tongue is not a matter of choice, but of luck or misfortune, and non-territorial separation may lead to apartheid.

- 9 For Ernest Gellner, nationalism can be defined as follows: social importance of cultural borders diminishes, political significance rises (Gellner 1983). The Van Parijs alternative is: linguistic importance of borders rises, while socio-economic significance diminishes (Van Parijs 2000a).
- 10 All states “speak,” issue laws, and administer, language therefore cannot be benignly neglected as can, for instance, religion. In monolingual settings, the public sphere is entirely ruled by one language; in multilingual states, mostly federations, legislators have a choice between two principles: *territoriality* and *personality*. The first and most widespread principle (Belgium, Switzerland, Cameroon in its simplest form) is based on territorial rights: It legally recognizes a red-speaking territory, on the basis of a majority of red-speaking individuals. Variants are territorialized individual rights (Catalonia, South Tyrol), sectoral policies for minorities (Australia, the United States, Germany, Hungary), and territorial bilingualism for minorities (Estonia, Bosnia, Pakistan). Territoriality is usually associated with administrative bilingualism (civil servants speak all or part of the official languages) to ensure state-wide communication; it provides language stability and language security

argument is evident: Belgium is already regionally unilingual. His main proposal regarding language is to “gently foster a common forum of discussion which will increasingly be in the emerging first universal *lingua franca*: English.”<sup>11</sup>

A 1999 survey among three age groups asked whether Belgians “Can [you] speak the other national language correctly?” The conclusions are disillusioning: In the Flemish mother tongue group, 15% of the individuals in age group 55 or older speak French; 31% in

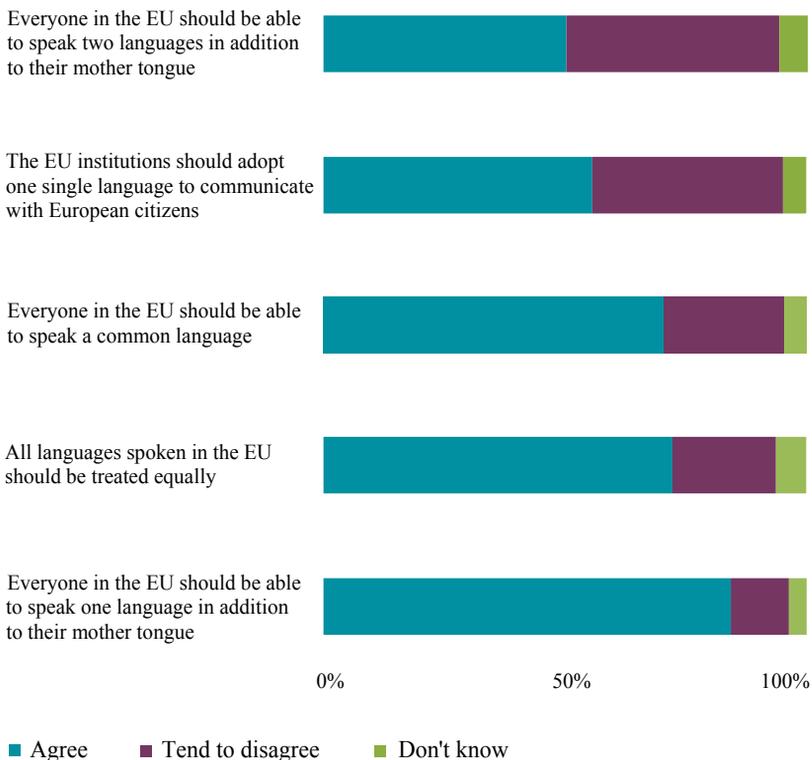
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(small languages are protected on their territory, relative language scales are relatively stable), but obliges all to speak the official language in its territory of reference. Territoriality generally leads to juxtaposed unilingualisms and may disrupt intercommunity communication as in Belgium. The personality principle on the other hand is best described by institutional multilingualism. The state acknowledges and recognizes individual language choices: Regardless of where I am in the territory, its administration has an obligation to answer in the language of my choice. Canada was ruled by this principle, but has abandoned it in part because of Quebec’s claim to protect French and the subsequent legislation (Bill 101, 1977) making French the sole official language in the province. Canada is a pioneer in language matters. When the government voted for the creation of a new province for the Canadian Eskimos, Nunavut indeed adopted Inuktitut as its official language.

- 11 In Belgium, redistribution was achieved at the federal level, but without adequate recognition of the consequences of having two separate democratic spaces. The task is to fairly accommodate this separation, while preserving the sustainability of global solidarity: (1) the protection of the linguistic integrity of Flanders and Wallonia (though not of Brussels); (2) a reform of (key sectors of) Belgium’s welfare state that combines a central collection of resources with capitation grants to the three regions, each in charge of the conception and management of its own health and education systems; (3) a reform of the electoral system that induces vote pooling across the linguistic border; (4) the gentle fostering of a common forum of discussion which will increasingly be in the emerging first universal *lingua franca*: English (Van Parijs 2004).

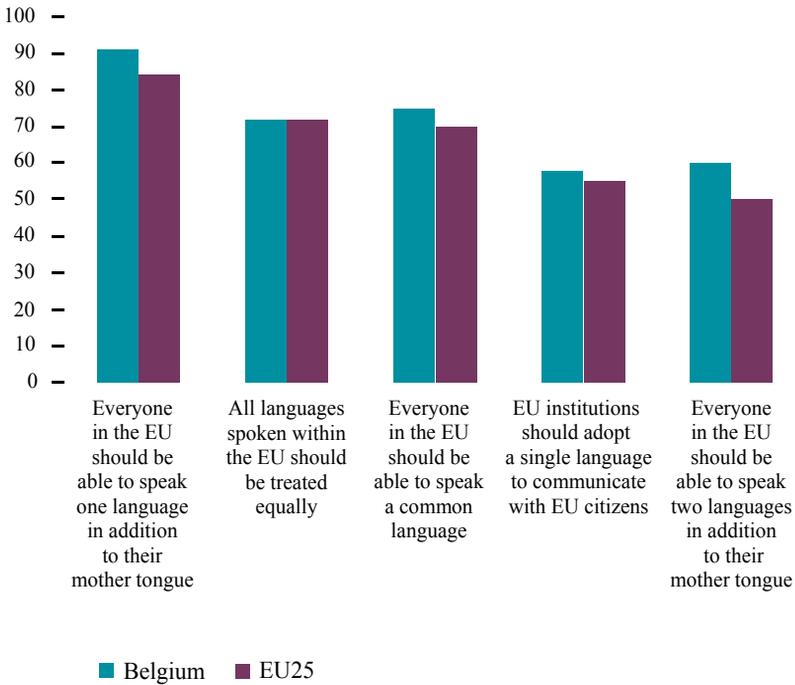
the age group 35–54; astonishingly 35% in the age group 14–34. Only 0.7% watch French TV. In the French mother tongue group, 19% of those age 55 or older group speak Flemish, 12% in the age group 35–54; and 4% in the age group 14–34. The percentage watching French TV is ridiculously low (Van Parijs 2000b).

**Figure 8** EU25 *Lingua Franca* (Eurobarometer 2006)



Source: Author’s adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer 2006*.

Figure 9 Comparison Belgium/EU25



Source: Author's adaptation of EU data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

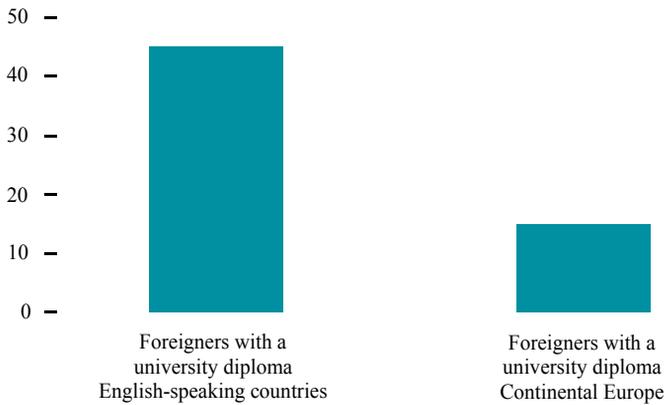
This common forum of discussion in one common language is under discussion on the large-scale side: the EU. The debate about the usefulness of a *lingua franca* comprises almost all the issues mentioned above. It is about identity, as we have to choose a single common language while respecting all the others. It is about deliberation and democratic procedure, as we have to commonly agree on a *lingua franca*; it would be unfair to choose a language without debating, especially if the choice is compelling once it has been made. It is about utility because the choice of a *lingua franca* is

outcome oriented: Global communication, employability, and social mobility are supposed to be enhanced by a common language, by English in particular, and brain drain would supposedly be avoided if Europe's common language (especially within research, academia, and business) were English.

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**Figure 10** Language zones and brain drain

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Of the brain drain, 75% > English-speaking countries (USA, Canada, UK, Australia)  
Source: Extrapolation from Ph. Van Parijs 2006.

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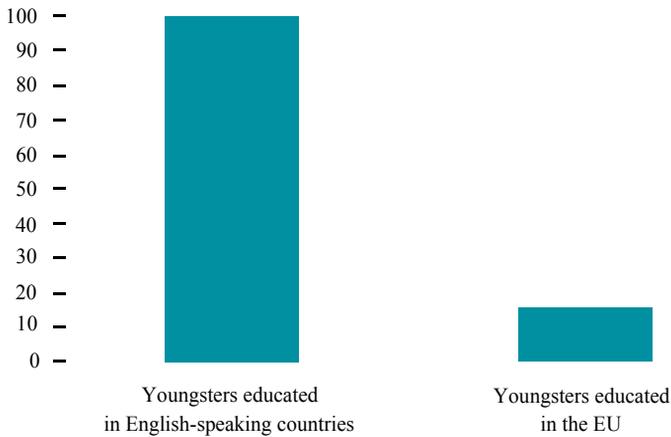
A few words about history, namely, about the difference between imperial languages and a new *lingua franca* for Europe. Imperial “common” languages such as Latin or French differ from modern national languages which are the result of rationalizing and homogenizing policies. Imperial languages or languages of diplomacy were not considered as identity markers, and diglossia was the rule. The center and the imperial or royal administrators spoke the high language, the vast majority spoke dialects, and the intermediary

powers were generally bilingual. Nation building and nationalism rationalized language communities around one single compelling national or official language to achieve nationwide literacy, employability, and communication (Gellner 1983; Laitin 2000).

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**Figure 11** Academia, language zones, brain drain

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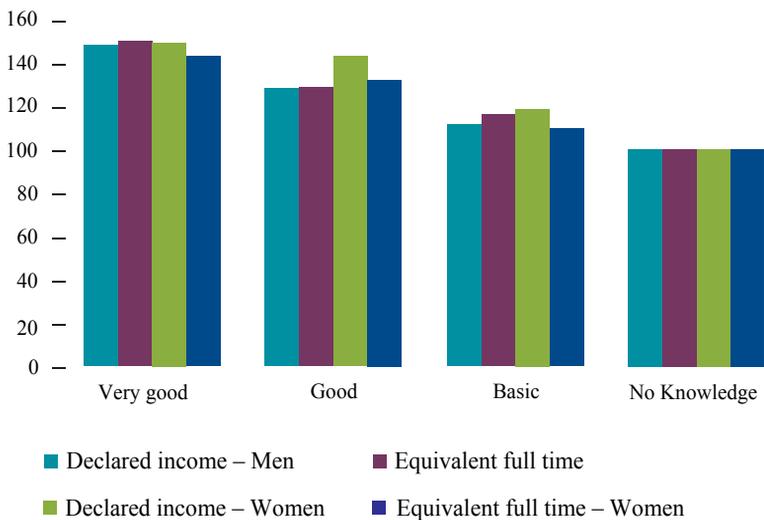
Source: Extrapolation from Ph. Van Parijs 2006.

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National policies were strongly linked to democratization, at least in Western Europe, and literacy was a means to wide integration. That sequence does not fundamentally differ from the present situation in Europe: The need for horizontal communication (much like the horizontal solidarity within the nation-state, as opposed to the vertical organization of societies in the ancient settings) may rest on the same type of common literacy as in the nineteenth-century nation building process. But, should the adoption of a *lingua franca* follow the national model (a process of rationalizing around one official

language), or do we have to invent something else? What are the benefits of a common language? Do the economic/democratic benefits of a common language exceed the costs (material and symbolic) of learning a new language? Is it morally justifiable that we all learn the same language? Are the citizens of Europe willing to participate more if they can all speak, write, and understand the language of European politics, if they are able to share the language of those who govern? Would a common language be the condition for a European demos?

**Figure 12** Income variance / English knowledge (Percent)



Men n=1141

Women n=803

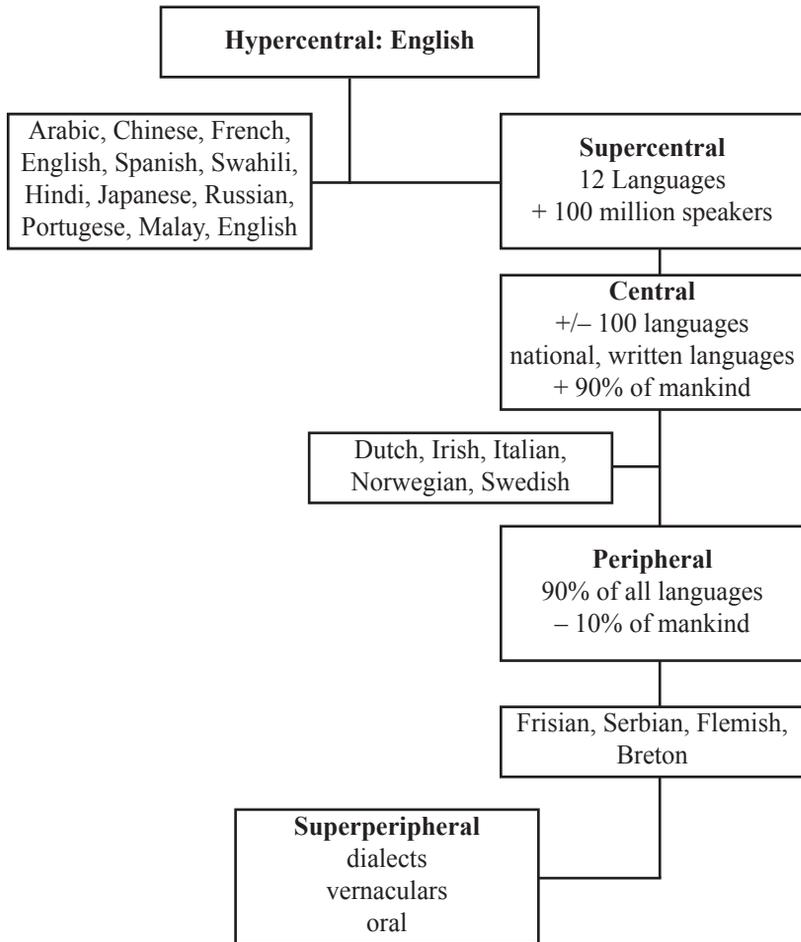
Value 100=no knowledge

Source: Extrapolation from Ph. Van Parijs 2006.

## Languages and Politics are Networks and Collective Goods

In his *Words of the World*, Abram de Swaan (2001) claims that an economic approach to languages, or at least an analogy between economic theory of collective goods and communication can help explain not only the *utility* and the *communicative value* of languages to speakers, but also the commitment to smaller and apparently less useful languages (via “collective cultural capital” accessible, for example, only through those specific languages), without having to rely on “identity” claims only while explaining linguistic preferences. Languages are *tools*; they are useful for connecting people. Certain languages enhance upward social mobility, link more people than others; some languages are more useful than others; and learning of some languages is more beneficial than others (de Swaan 2000). The world’s language constellation is a result of past or present power relations (linguistic normalization, rationalization, creation of official languages and killing dialects, etc.). A synoptic look at the world language system indeed shows a constellation, a hierarchical order, or a planetary system with a sun and its moons. A huge amount of languages (98%) is spoken by a very small percentage of mankind (10%): these are *peripheral* languages. They gravitate around about one hundred *central* languages (foremost national, written ones: “archive languages”), spoken by the vast majority of mankind. This second group is then connected—through its multilingual speakers—to a dozen *supercentral* languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, English, Spanish, Swahili, Hindi, Japanese, Russian, Portuguese, and Malay, all (except Swahili) spoken by more than a hundred million speakers. The hypercentral language that holds the entire system is English: “the centre of the twelve solar systems” (de Swaan 2001, 31).

**Figure 13** The world's language constellation



Source: Extrapolation from A. de Swaan 2001.

The next step is to look at individual speakers or groups of speakers, i.e., the combinations of micro-decisions to actually learn a language, practice a language, and maintain a language. The assumption here is that these decisions are not random. One can explain this through the above-mentioned characteristics of languages. The utility and the communication potential of one language are derived from the number of speakers, and namely, the multilingual speakers of one language or within one language repertoire. The advantage of this perspective in my sense is that it can account for language acquisition preferences, concerning “useful” languages, but it can also account for the desire for language maintenance (of vulnerable languages). But how are we to evaluate the economic or intellectual “value” of a language? In order to answer this heterodox question, de Swaan invents an indicator, the *Q-value*, to calculate the perceived value of a language within an overall constellation.

The *Q-value* of a language is calculated through its prevalence and its centrality within the overall language constellation. The prevalence purports to be the proportion of native speakers in a particular repertoire. Using blue for example, the group of blue speakers is connected to other groups and speakers through their multilingual speakers, i.e., those who speak blue but also yellow, red, or white, hence the proportion of speakers that can *directly* be connected in a given repertoire. Centrality indicates the number of connections, or multilingual speakers, that link the languages in this repertoire with all others, hence the proportion of *indirect* connections. Using red as a non-native language, all blue, white, and yellow speakers who speak red are connected with each other.

English, for instance, has a poor prevalence in Europe (there are fewer British than Germans or Polish), but a very high centrality: Many more Europeans speak English than any other language. Does this mean that English should officially be adopted as the European *lingua franca*?

People learn English because they anticipate European language dynamics, the European language constellation with English at the center of its planetary language system. “Anticipated probability and profitability” or “opportunity sensitive learning” (Van Parijs 2004) produces a wide consensus concerning language training in English.

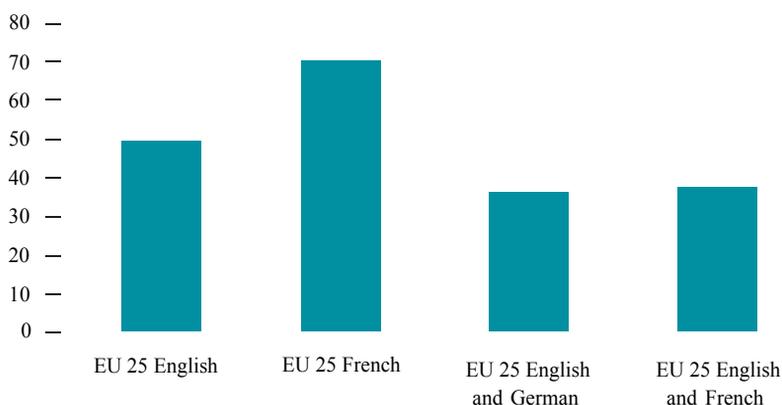
In short, the *Q-value* is a rough and ready measure for the communication value of a language in a given constellation. A simpler measure (straight figures for the number of speakers) would do no justice to the *dynamics* of the constellation.<sup>12</sup>

English is central, but would a European demos be able to function in English only?

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**Figure 14** Levels of exclusion

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Source: Extrapolated from Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004.

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12 The *Q-value* also purports to reconstruct the value that speakers themselves attribute to language, an evaluation that guides their choices of foreign languages to learn (de Swaan 2001, 39ff.). But it doesn't tell us whether language policies we ought to implement are fair.

## Exclusion by Language?

The answer is straightforward. The exclusion rates are far higher if English were the sole European language: 50% of the EU25 population would be excluded. The situation would be even worse if French or German were *linguae francae*: 71% of the Europeans would not be able to participate at all. The solution is a *common set of languages*.

But if it were a combination, results are rather surprising. The French/English hypothesis would be the fairest one in EU15 (maximum exclusion in Portugal with 59%); but in EU25 English/German excludes a little less (38%), but the compared exclusion rates within the member states are far higher for the English/French combination than for the English/German combination (75% in Hungary vs. 84% for English/French) (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004, 52ff.). The least exclusive combination is English/French/German: 19% in EU 15, 26% in EU 25, 35% in anticipation of EU28.

Reasonable, fair, and cheap, the three-language combination seems to be the best solution. Cheap—because all European legal texts already exist in these languages; the OECD functions in these languages and most of the international organizations (the UN among others) have adopted them as working languages. Cheap—because translation costs are 64 million Euros per year and per member state (Malta trumps all other member states with 980 Euros per citizen) (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh, and Weber 2004). Cheap—because the EU would avoid transportation costs (from Brussels to The Hague, Luxemburg, Strasbourg, etc.).

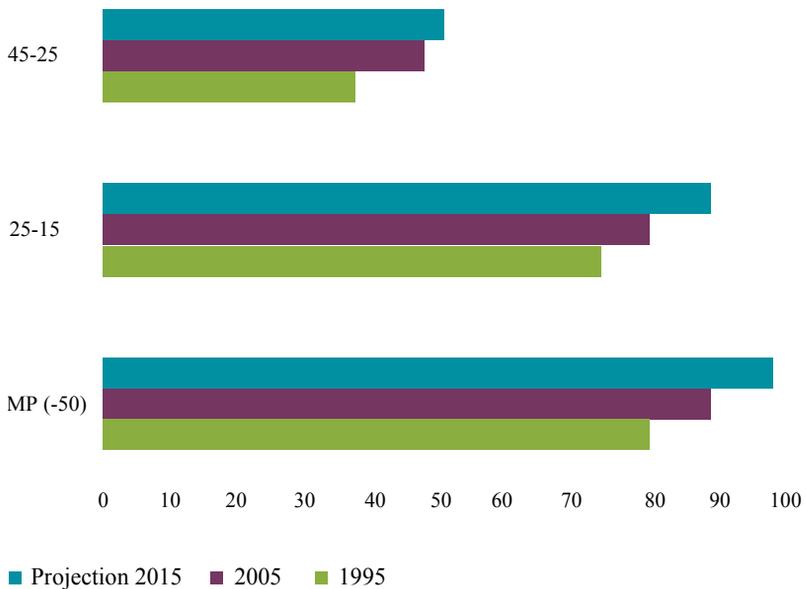
The question is: how? There are two ways of achieving this type of language coordination. The first and easiest one, and the most respectful one of national preferences, would be to offer the possibility

that member states invest the budget of European translation costs into language training (in the three classical languages). Within two generations, the language problem would be solved (Fidrmuc, Ginsburgh and Weber 2004).

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**Figure 15** English knowledge (by age groups, EU25)

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Source: Author's adaptation of data from *Eurobarometer* 2006.

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The other solution, a bit more complicated to achieve, would be to copy the “Indian system.”

In India, the postcolonial government has adopted a very flexible system, a 3 +/- 1 language constellation. There are two official languages, Hindi and English (3–1), the language of the member

state of the Indian federation ( $2 + 1 = 3$ ), and the protected minority language within the state, if any ( $3 + 1$ ).<sup>13</sup>

Let's try to adapt the Indian system to the EU. Native speakers other than English, French or German, learn English, French or German ( $1 + 3$ ). Native English, French or German speakers learn the two other ones ( $3 - 1$ ). This is obviously an unfair solution.

Is there another way? Native speakers other than English, French or German learn two out of three classical languages ( $1 + 2 = 3$ ) and native English, French or German speakers learn the two other classical languages ( $1 + 2 = 3$ ). Despite the numbers, the second solution is as unfair as the first solution because native English, French or German speakers would know the three classical languages, whereas the others would only know two of them.

### **Language Democracy, Language Equity**

The ideal match is the following: native speakers other than English, French or German, learn one classical and/or one extra-European language ( $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ ), and native English, French or German speakers learn one or two classical ones, or one classical and one extra-European language ( $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ ). What is the advantage of the latter solution? Aside from the fair numbers, this solution respects, at least to a certain extent, the individual's language choice and hence the "language training market" within Europe while at the same time satisfying the needs of a common set of known languages; it respects the dynamics of the language constellation (English is not a *fait accompli* anymore, English interacts dynamically with other languages); this solution shows that language coordination within the EU is possible;

13 David Laitin, 1997. "The Cultural Identities of a European State." *Politics and Society* 25/3: 277–302.

and, maybe most important, this solution maintains extra-European connections: Individuals may choose extra-European languages, and according to the sociolinguistic truths we mentioned above, will probably choose those languages which most fit the probability of speaking them and the anticipated added value of knowing them.

For Belgians (Figure 7) this system would not be a problem. English already is the best means of communication to bridge the gap between the two communities. Flemings still learn French (Walloons stopped learning Dutch after 1988 when the government decided to abolish compulsory learning of the other official language), the German-speaking community in the Eastern part of the country (Figure 2) would be satisfied, and Brussels would continue to be a multilingual capital (Figure 4). Together with an overlapping electoral district/body, this system might even be able to save the country from breaking up.

## Conclusion

I have tried to show, based on EU language data and on strong intuition, that a common set of languages could serve to foster a new type of transnational political debate encompassing all citizens, on the large (EU) and on the small scale (Belgium); such a common set of languages may eventually even counter antipolitics and build a new type of communion among citizens and between citizens and their representatives.

Who is right: team A or team B? What is the best democratic genre? The one that postulates that language is a tool or the one that insists on language identity? The “Indian solution” allows avoiding answering such a question. It is flexible enough to accommodate the language lovers and those convinced by the utility of learning specific languages (Figure 12). A common language is not necessarily a common language of values, but I believe that the implication of transnational citizenship can only be achieved if people can share languages with their leaders.

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## The Triple Crisis of Politics and the Media

John Lloyd

This symposium has in its first day been rich in the use of the word crisis. All of you, at least all who have spoken, have been in different degrees certain that Israeli politics is in crisis; and many of you have claimed that that crisis is present in all democratic states. The decreasing interest and engagement of citizens with politics, the much higher levels of distrust and cynicism, the reduced capacity of the state to fulfill the tasks demanded of it—all of these have featured in a narrative which, some of you have said, could mean a breakdown of states' order.

Journalism has its own narrative of despair; and though it has distinct features, it is, I believe, linked to the malaise of politics, and to the withdrawal of citizens in developed states from the way in which politics is both practiced and reported. The main components of our—journalists'—despair are:

- a) We are losing readers and viewers for news and current affairs;
- b) We are losing sufficient resources to do news, especially foreign news, properly;  
and, more to the point of this seminar—
- c) We are in a vexed and uneasy relationship with the political systems in our countries, marked by a discourse of a lack of trust.

The provision of news suffers from three overlapping crises. The first and most obvious is the financial crisis. In the short term, it shares that with most other sectors of the economy.

The financial crunch has caused advertising budgets to be slashed. Advertising budgets are the largest funder of news—thus news suffers. Newspapers, unable to raise capital and with their companies' stock prices plunging, are closing or thinning. Broadcast news and current affairs, which depends on advertising, are scaling back, dropping foreign news (and thus shutting foreign bureaus), and turning to lighter and more popular subjects. Though there are national differences, something of this kind is happening in every advanced democracy in the world.

But unlike other sectors, there is no expectation that news will recover when the economies do. Or at least—we should be clear on this—not the news *business*, as we have known it in newspapers for some 200 years, and in broadcasting for most of the period since the war.

Newspapers, once they had made the long transition from being political and polemical sheets into being commercial enterprises in the nineteenth century, married two distinct identities into one, both indispensable to the other.

In the first place, they carried news—of foreign affairs and domestic crime, of parliamentary triumphs and commercial failures. The content and style of the news increasingly varied according to the audience the proprietor and editor wished to attract; but common to it was that it was *new*, that is, it was a description of events that had happened if not the day before, then recently.

In the second place, they were the indispensable intermediaries of a burgeoning commercial and consumer world. Everywhere, newspapers were the vehicles of commerce for populations that were becoming mass consumers. As Judith Flanders (2006) writes in

her history of Victorian commerce, *Consuming Passions* “it was on the basis of . . . relentless advertising that newspapers achieved the financial stability that, in the nineteenth century, enabled expansion into ever-growing markets.” This stability was achieved for the most commercial of reasons: it produced the most public of outcomes.

That outcome was the provision of news at a price which was—more and more in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—well below the cost of producing it. Paul Starr (2009) has put it succinctly: “[F]rom the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century, many newspapers were politically subsidized directly by governments or through political parties. Then, as consumer markets expanded, newspapers increasingly sold not just news to readers, but also readers to advertisers. And the more advertisers they gained, the less they were dependent on any single one.”

The public service, which car companies, department stores, lonely hearts advertisements, and airlines have rendered through their search for readers’ attention, is now, in its classic form, diminishing, perhaps ending. At the very least, there is presently not a secure enough income from advertising to sustain the powerful newspaper institutions which every developed and wealthy state has taken for granted for generations. *The New York Times*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Le Monde*, *The Times*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Toronto Globe and Mail*, *El Pais*, *de Volkskrant*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *The Irish Times*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Politken*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Le Soir*—all of these have histories of influence and power, are part of the political and social struggles and trends of their countries and, in many cases, of the world. All, in different measures, are threatened with cutbacks, even disappearance.

As these great institutions fall into crisis, we see more clearly than we could in the good times how dependent were our notions of “public service journalism”—that is, reporting which covered issues

of politics, foreign affairs, social trends and culture in some depth and with some care and expertise—on private consumption. As that falls, and more seriously for newspapers as it seeks other more efficient ways to advertise its wares, so the ability to sustain such journalism is heavily compromised.

Commercial broadcasting is in the same position. For nearly six decades television, which has not been supported by the state in some way, has grown rich on a long advertising boom. Roy Thomson, the Canadian entrepreneur who owned commercial TV stations in Canada and the UK, once described his properties as “a license to print money”—and, with part of the limited electromagnetic spectrum allocated by the state and either a regional monopoly or limited competition coupled with huge audiences, this was a modest boast. Here, too, either because the state demanded it or the owners were public spirited or both, the big channels poured money into news and current affairs programs, with some—as the three main US networks—becoming world news media powers, commanding interviews with everyone who counted, from world leaders to terrorist commanders; influencing politics and politicians; setting cultural trends.

Now they too are shrunken. CBS, for long the acknowledged leader among US networks in news and current affairs, had 24 foreign bureaus: it now has six. Britain’s independent TV stations are ceasing to provide regional news, leaving it to the state-sponsored BBC. In France, the main private channel, TF1, has largely ceased to do serious news: its CEO, Patrick Le Lay, said in 2004, “Let’s be realistic: basically, TF1’s job is helping Coca Cola, for example, to sell its product. What we sell to Coca Cola is available human brain time. Nothing is more difficult than obtaining this availability. This is where permanent change is located. We must always look out for popular programs, follow trends, surf on tendencies, in a context in which information is speeding up, getting more diverse and trivialized.”

According to Markus Prior (2007), that period when most people would watch some news and current affairs most days—because there was little choice—has ended. Where a household, often with multiple TVs, can choose from 100 to 200 stations has meant that the audience for serious TV has dropped dramatically. At the same time, says Prior, a small portion of the audience watches more news and current affairs, surfing the cable news channels to garner as much information and as many views as possible. The result has been an information equivalent of the growing disparities in income—a much greater gap in knowledge than before between “news junkies” and “news dropouts.”

At present, there is no easy answer to this crisis, the effects of which is already being felt and will deepen in the course of 2009/2010. Advertisers—especially classified advertisers, on which local papers depended—are finding the Internet a better medium than newspapers. Whole classes of previously big advertisers—such as car companies—are now in acute difficulties. While TV will remain for the foreseeable future an attractive medium to advertisers, it will be more limited, and as Patrick Le Lay suggests, it will have to concentrate more of its time on “looking out for popular programs, following trends, surfing on tendencies.”

Second, the news media have a crisis of trust. According to the Edelman/Financial Times Trust Barometer for 2008/09, taken over 18 countries, trust in television news coverage dropped from 49% to 36%, and trust in newspaper articles fell from 47% to 34%, both over the previous year, 2007/08 (Edelman 2009, 12). An Ipsos-MORI poll from 2008 put journalists (in the UK) at the bottom of a list of 16 professions for trust, with only 19% of the public expressing trust in them; a YouGov poll (2008), also for the UK, showed trust in upmarket papers dropping from 65% in 2003 to 43% in 2008. Though British media score comparatively low in terms of trust, these falls

are consistent across other countries in Europe and North America. A report by the Media Standards Trust says that a large majority want more regulation of the news media by the state—in order both to stop intrusion and to secure greater accuracy (Dickson et al. 2009).

Why there should be this drop in the trust people are prepared to place in news media is less clear than the results. An obvious conclusion would be that they have become less trustworthy—more sensational, fuller of mistakes, less concerned to report the facts. There is some evidence for this: Tabloid papers (in which trust is lowest, even though circulation is highest) have tended to drop hard news in favor of more gossip, scandal, and celebrity features, as has some broadcast news. But other newspapers and TV news channels have taken greater care with accuracy.

A more likely explanation is that audiences have become more demanding and more discriminating and that they have lost, not so much their trust that newspapers are accurate but that they have the right to describe the world in the way they do. In a world in which almost all professions have had to become more accountable and transparent, news organizations—which lead the calls for accountability and transparency—have bucked the trend. Onora O’Neill, the Cambridge philosopher, said this about the media:

The media, in particular the print media—while deeply preoccupied with others’ untrustworthiness—have escaped demands for accountability (that is, apart from the financial disciplines set by company law and accounting practices). This is less true of the terrestrial broadcasting media, which are subject to legislation and regulation. . . . Newspaper editors and journalists are not held accountable in these ways. Outstanding reporting and accurate writing mingle with editing and

reporting that smears, sneers and jeers, names, shames, and blames. Some reporting “covers” (or should I say “uncovers”?) dementing amounts of trivia, some misrepresents, some denigrates, some teeters on the brink of defamation. In this curious world, commitments to trustworthy reporting are erratic: there is no shame in writing on matters beyond a reporter’s competence, in coining misleading headlines, in omitting matters of public interest or importance, or in recirculating others’ speculations as supposed “news.” Above all there is no requirement to make evidence accessible to reader. (O’Neill 2002)

It is, perhaps, once more a matter of choice. Where there are multiple sources of information, and the ability to check is readily available, the news media may suffer even if they have not grown more careless (indeed, even if they have grown more careful). But in one sense, it matters little what the cause is: the effect is that the news media are not regarded, for the most part, as a trusted way of seeing the world. Their financial decline is paralleled by a decline of esteem.

This adds up to a third crisis: that of the media and democracy. The decline of news sources, the shrinking of serious and analytical news, and the recoil of citizens from the news media as trusted guides has implications far beyond the industry itself. As the Reuters Institute’s report, *“What’s Happening to Our News”* put it:

[T]o varying degrees, news brands are therefore being “hollowed out”: the underlying civic function of news publishers—to gather information and inform society—is steadily being replaced by a softer, more lightweight model that is dependent on the personal views of a

relatively small coterie of heavy-weight commentators and celebrity journalists. Stories and news events are increasingly draped in a celebrity veil in order to capture the attention of the audience; frequently with the assistance of communications and public relations professionals. (Currah 2009, 130)

The decline of trust on the part of the public is mirrored by that on the part of politicians and other public figures. Politicians are becoming more guarded in their interaction with the media, which increasingly demands instant comment and opinion around those issues that do achieve space in the news agenda. Because of a tendency to distort and sensationalize, the news media as a whole are finding it harder to obtain public comments from senior figures. In many cases, a press officer now handles comments to the media, adding a further degree of distance between journalists and politicians, and increasing the chances of misunderstanding. Those who do speak directly to the news media carefully manage their message and profile—sometimes in ways that can obscure the debate or bypass known “ambush points.” This phenomenon varies in different countries: in some—as in Italy—the penalties for speaking freely to the media are light. But in all, the use of screens—in the form of press spokesmen and image consultants—between public figures and journalism is commonplace.

Peter Riddell, a former political columnist on *The Times* and chairman of the Hansard Society (a political education and research institute), told the Reuters Institute’s study that:

[N]owadays, MPs are more discriminating in who they talk to and also more Janus-faced. They often say what they don’t really think on TV, as they no longer have the option of not responding and mistakes are punished.

There is far more reluctance to float a tentative idea, which may have value in sparking wider debate, due to fears of being shot down or stigmatised. There is a real public policy loss as a result of the 24/7 culture. (Currah 2009, 136)

The economic dynamics of the news media favor the compression of political stories into a more audience-friendly package, which by necessity tends to detach questions and issues from the messiness of political debate and related policy research. The sensationalist tendencies of the news media do little to help the clarification or resolution of complex social and economic issues. A compounding issue is the remarkable lack of continuity in news coverage; a topic may get coverage one day, only to be sidelined from the agenda the next, with no further information easily available on its development. In theory, the Web has the capacity to address this issue. Coverage of public interest and otherwise marginal issues can now be continued and extended online, with links to related coverage and other publicly valuable data. However, both the news media and the political establishments everywhere are still some way from achieving that degree of visibility, interactivity, and transparency.

In a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 2006, John Carroll, the former editor of the *Los Angeles Times* (dismissed for refusing to make further cuts than those he had already made in editorial staff—cuts ordered by the new owners of the paper, the Chicago Tribune group—now bankrupt) said that journalism was now undergoing “a crisis of the soul.” He pointed his finger, especially, at newspaper owners who, he said, were increasingly private capital companies who had one criterion: making money. Thus newspapers which were seen to have no long-term future were “harvested” for high returns over a short time period. He deplored the

“shrinking of newspapers’ social purpose,” and said that “restoring the balance between financial performance and public duty is probably impossible under present ownership.” The job of journalists now was “to save journalism itself . . . to ensure the existence long into the future of a large, independent, principled, questioning, deep-digging cadre of journalists in America, regardless of what happens to our newspapers” (Carroll 2006).

In his *New Republic* article from 2009, the social scientist Paul Starr writes of newspapers (the same point could be adapted for broadcast news) that:

News coverage is not all that newspapers have given us. They have lent the public a powerful means of leverage over the state, and this leverage is now at risk. If we take seriously the notion of newspapers as a fourth estate or a fourth branch of government, the end of the age of newspapers implies a change in our political system itself. Newspapers have helped to control corrupt tendencies in both government and business. If we are to avoid a new era of corruption, we are going to have to summon that power in other ways. Our new technologies do not retire our old responsibilities. (Starr 2009)

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## **Citizenship, Civil Society, and Transnational Participation: Muslims in Europe**

Riva Kastoryano

Since the 1980s, the question of citizenship has become a major theme in social sciences and the focus of juridical, political, social, and cultural debates in all democratic societies. In Europe, citizenship has taken different shapes and definitions in rhetoric, ideology, and practice with regard to immigrants' incorporation into nation-states and their political participation beyond boundaries relating home and host country to a broad European space. Citizenship is also an issue for European construction itself. Within nation-states, citizenship has been expressed in different domains, extending its scope from the national community to the civil society, even though only "legal" citizenship allows full participation of individuals and groups in the political community. The claim for equal recognition as citizens underlying the political strategies of immigrants remains within the framework of the legitimacy of the state of residence and of legal citizenship. At the European level, a transnational participation of immigrants has been encouraged by the very nature of the European Union and its supranational institutions, and raises the question of citizenship and its link to territoriality.

- \* A shorter and slightly different version of this article appeared as "Citizenship, Nationhood and Non-Territoriality," *Political Science and Politics* 37/ 4 (2005): 693–696.

The question of citizenship is therefore at the core of negotiation of identities between states and immigrants (Kastoryano 2002). Through negotiations, the struggle for equality that citizenship entails is extended to different domains, often turning interest into identity. For states, it is a question of negotiating the means of inclusion of immigrants into the political community on the basis of a new equilibrium between community structures and national institutions. For individuals, citizenship becomes a principle of equality and a way to struggle against political, social, and cultural exclusion. It becomes a way to claim recognition as a “citizen,” through which the attachment and loyalty to both national community and to an ethnic community are expressed. Such an understanding of citizenship raises the question of the relevance of the triple link between citizenship, nationality, and identity, hence the link between political community and cultural community, the former as a source of rights and legitimacy and the latter as a source of identity. The separation of the three elements constituting the nation-state—citizenship, nationality, and identity—is reinforced by the political construction of Europe. As a matter of fact, political participation within the European Union multiplies membership and allegiances of individuals and groups and increases the ambiguity between citizenship and nationality, between rights and identity, and between politics and culture, with an emphasis on the fact that neither normatively nor empirically is there a contradiction between multilevel participation, multiple allegiances, and citizenship. At the European level, the construction of a new political space creates an opportunity for action beyond boundaries leading to transnational structures of representation and to new negotiations with states—home and host—and introduces a new understanding of membership beyond boundaries, and raises the question of territoriality with regard to the practice of citizenship and its relation to nationhood.

This article attempts to explore these complex articulations of belonging—citizenship, nationality, and identity—through different levels of political participation, within the political community and in the civil society, national and transnational, and questions the link between cultural and political belonging, between rights and identity, and the relevance of territoriality in relation to nationality and citizenship.

### **Citizenship, Nationality, and Identity**

The concepts of citizenship and nationality, two interdependent concepts within the framework of a nation-state, are defined above all by membership in a political community (Leca 1992). This membership takes shape through rights and duties that are embodied in the very concept of citizenship. Its implementation by law implies the integration or the incorporation of the “foreigner” into the national community with which he or she is supposed to share the same moral and political values. Moreover, he or she is supposed to adopt or even to “appropriate” historical references as a proof of belonging and loyalty to the founding principles of the nation, which according to Weber, is the only community born of modernity.

Debates on citizenship and nationhood reveal precisely such expectations. They refer, therefore, to the formation of the nation-state, to the representation of its political traditions and its identity, no matter how this representation is expressed.<sup>1</sup> Reality, however,

1 Such perspective has contrasted French and German understanding of citizenship, considered as two republics with two different histories and each of them representing different political traditions. France is represented as the ideal type of a nation-state and perceives itself as universalistic because of its egalitarian principals based on “national assimilation” and is opposed to Germany, considered “exclusivist.” While French public discourse

is more complex. Obviously, representatives of the nation have explained, and to some extent justified, politics of citizenship in European countries. But lately, reality seems to have affected the course of history. The experience of immigration and settlement along with the claim of equality and recognition as citizens have changed both the understanding of and the laws on citizenship, by balancing the part of ancestry and birth, that is blood and soil, since almost all countries have become countries of immigration.<sup>2</sup> The legal status of citizenship based on birth or ascription crystallizes the representation of the nation-state, its founding principles, its values, and its ideology on which the national project has been built and in which the future generations and the “newcomers” are expected to believe.

Politics and rights of citizenship obviously have an influence on the strategies of the participation of immigrants. But the practice of citizenship goes beyond its legal definition. It stems from the political engagement of the individual and is applied to different domains and in different terms. It is expressed in terms of participation in the public space. Citizenship can therefore be practiced within a cultural, ethnic, or religious community as well as within the national community. Such multiple identifications and allegiances resulting from political participation raise the question of the belonging and

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emphasizes the elective and political understanding of the nation, the German nation is defined as a cultural and ethnic unity based on common descent as a sign of belonging. Such representations have found a basis on the laws of access to citizenship that have privileged *jus solis* in France and *jus sanguinis* in Germany. See Dumont 1991; Brubaker 1992.

- 2 Again, in reference to France and Germany, according to recent citizenship laws in France, a child born to foreign parents can become French at the age of 16, whereas in Germany, starting in January 2000, a child born in Germany is automatically German if one of the parents was born in Germany or has resided uninterruptedly for the last eight years.

loyalty of the individual to the national community. It becomes a source of “suspicion” for nation-states, a feeling that emerges in every discussion or public debate on citizenship and nationhood. As a matter of fact, since the 1980s, the scope of the debates on citizenship related to immigration has undoubtedly transmitted the apprehension of the political class and of public opinion to see citizenship depreciated or “desacralized,” based on the argument that the “immigrant” or “foreigner” expresses his or her attachment to the country of origin, and therefore to “primordial ties” with a transposed cultural and/or religious community instead of with the political community of the country of settlement. Based on such fears, immigration has been perceived as a challenge to nation-states and to the pair citizenship/nationality. But what is truly at stake are the limits of laws and their links with social reality. To what extent does legal citizenship constitute a solution to inclusion and equality?

Thus, citizenship, in practice and as discourse, is linked to the phenomenon of exclusion, to ways to counter social exclusion, and to the fostering of political inclusion. In the nineteenth century, citizenship was extended to different domains such as education, health, and welfare. Right after World War II, the British sociologist T. H. Marshall reconsidered citizenship in terms of social class, adding to its political and legal content a social approach to the concept of right and equality (Marshall 1964). According to Marshall, citizenship as social rights follows political rights. As far as immigrant populations in Europe are concerned their social rights precede their political rights.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, immigrants are settled into a “social citizenship” upon their arrival, at the same time as their integration into the labor market, with equal access to social rights

3 Y. Soysal (1994) notices the reverse phenomenon between social and political rights of immigrants in Western Europe.

and equal protection stemming from the Constitution with regard to Human Rights.

A normative approach to citizenship therefore extends its understanding and its expression in social and cultural domains to include them in the political. According to Kymlicka (2002, 328), the extension of citizenship to ethnic communities today is a way to integrate these communities into a common national community as was the case with the reconsideration of citizenship with regard to the participation of social class analyzed by Marshall. Conversely, actors devise strategies for participation according to legal citizenship applied in nation-states.

The concept of citizenship embodies values and action, “responsibility and civic virtues,” according to Kymlicka and Norman (1994). It cannot therefore be limited to a political status and rights related to a national identity. Citizenship is also an identity that is developed through direct or indirect participation, in the name of shared interests for individuals and groups, immigrants or not. It is expressed through the engagement of the individual for the common good.<sup>4</sup> Such an involvement can take place within a voluntary association recognized by public authorities, through community activities (local, or broader cultural, ethnic, religious), in short, through an engagement with civil society as well as with the political community. Citizenship is therefore participation in the public space, defined as a space of communication, of shared power, as well as a space of political socialization where the rules of the game are internalized and a political culture assimilated at the same time that solidarity is defined along the lines of various identities. Through politization, they assert themselves toward the state so as to

4 On citizenship as a subjective feeling of membership and citizenship as engagement, see Leca (1986).

gain recognition and negotiate an identity with the state in order to gain legitimacy and be represented within national institutions.

Since the 1980s, in many European countries the immigrant associations, supported by the European countries' governments—as long as their activities come within the framework of the so-called “integration policies”—have become loci of political socialization for immigrant populations. Within these associations, individuals of the same national, regional, ethnic or religious origin form a collective identity, distinguish frontiers, create new bonds, and finally learn the political behavior that positions them *vis-à-vis* the state.

Discourse alternates with action, and these community-oriented organizations appear increasingly as a refuge and at times even a sanctuary where culture, religion, the nation, and ethnic origins are interpreted and solidified in order to face the state and negotiate each of these elements with those in power. Such a “politicization” of identities finds legitimacy in an identity consciousness that is largely fueled by public debates and reinforced by local or national politicians and targeted government practices. This simple consciousness-raising of cultural differences is quickly transformed into political action when it is accompanied by demands that the state recognize these differences. Consequently, their creation is based on an obvious dual objective because it aims to develop a collective conscience and at the same time integrate the immigrant populations into state structures. Political participation therefore becomes the extension of community action; participation places the very concept of citizenship at the antipodes of exclusion, which highlights its social aspect while maintaining its political and legal aspects.

A citizenship that expresses itself in both community and national institutions runs against the traditional analysis of republican citizenship that blends political involvement and national sentiment, because citizenship is systematically attached to its structure, the

nation-state, where its identity-based and political aspects are confused. But actually, whether citizenship be political, judicial, social, or economic and its content identity-based, cultural, or legal, this combination boils down to a sense of loyalty directed at once toward the group, the community, civil society, and the state. It is through their interpenetration that the actors' strategies emerge.

Yet, citizenship as civic participation does not always theoretically preclude the expression of collective identities. All the more so since migrants who arrived in different European countries in the 1960s, and their descendants, publicly express their attachments to the country of origin, a linguistic, ethnic, or religious community, or a local community, as well as to a transnational community and the European Union. Their participation combines both the interests of an ethno-religious or cultural community and the political community. The principle of new ethnic identifications defined in religious or national terms from local to transnational becomes one of the stakes of citizenship open to negotiation.

Such an evolution brings to the fore a multiplicity of allegiances that all pluralistic democratic societies face. These have been crystallized around debates on dual citizenship, mainly in Germany. For the group, dual citizenship is founded on a logic that has two consequences: It transforms nationality into an identity rooted in the country of origin and it makes of citizenship an entitlement within the country of residence—identity vs. rights. In such a view, citizenship becomes simply a legal status, and nationality is merely defined along the religious, ethnic, or cultural lines that constitute the identity of the home country. In Germany for example, by demanding dual citizenship, Turks define citizenship as a judicial tool that gives them political representation and nationality as an ethnic identity. Dual citizenship flows, therefore, from a duality that appears, *a priori*, contradictory but is in fact complementary: the construction of a

minority status and the creation of a citizen's identity. Both emerge within the country of residence's institutions. How, then, can the relationship between citizenship and nationhood be defined? Is this a citizenship linked to the nation of the home country, thereby de-territorialized, or is it a citizenship related to an ethnic community seeking recognition not only within the national political community but on a European and international level, therefore de-nationalized and de-territorialized? Such a question suggests that ethnic communities become "transnational nations" deriving from the interaction between home and host countries and with a broader space of transnational participation.

### **Citizenship and Recognition**

The question of citizenship is even more important since it is intertwined with the issue of recognition (cf. Taylor 1992). The demand for recognition allows groups that claim a specific identity to emerge from the political sidelines and fully integrate the structures of the state. In this perspective, being recognized is seen as a battle for emancipation. But contrary to the emancipation of the Enlightenment, which separates religion from public life and the individual from his community so as to ensure that he or she identifies with the national community, the demand for recognition in this case is born of a desire to be part of a community with equal rights within the framework of the State.

Recognition policies are related somehow to differentiated group rights that are at the core of a "multicultural citizenship" elaborated by Kymlicka (1995) and confirm the separation of citizenship from identity. They reveal the multiplicity of belonging and the contradictions between the social reality that filters through the demand to be recognized and the political traditions imagined as the

founding principles of a unified nation-state. Recognition focuses, however, on a legitimate identity with regard to existing institutions. It becomes a basis for equal treatment of differences and their integration into the state structure. In France, as in many European countries, the recognition of difference specifically concerns Islam. Since the 1990s, the actions by local authorities toward Muslim populations in Europe have been guided by the “fear of Islam.” At the same time, debates over the issue of citizenship that seek to prove an “incompatibility” between a “republican citizenship” and a “differentiated citizenship,” put Islam, the religion of post-colonial immigrants in Europe, at the center of demands for its recognition in their country of settlement. The assertion of an Islamic identity, as well as the emergence of an ethnicity that crystallizes around certain means of political participation, is pitted against the doctrine of a single nation characterized by its cultural identity and the common identity of its citizens. This principle of unity claims to mask all cultural, regional, linguistic, and other differences in the public domain and responds to a legitimate recognition before the state.

In France, the mobilization of the political class around the controversy over students wearing the Islamic veil to school (first in 1989 and then in 1994) in the name of *laïcité*—French secularism—considered to be the pillar of social cohesion, led to making the Islamic religion the key to the collective identification of North African immigrants’ descent. The separation between Church and State grants institutional judicial status to the Catholic clergy, to the Protestants of the National Federation of Protestant Churches of France, as well as to Jews governed by the Consistory created by Napoleon. Such “recognition” is based on the argument of respect for the freedom of religion and the neutrality of the secular state. The place that should be given to Islam in France causes the old duality between religion and the State to resurface in public debate and poses

the question of the recognition of Islam on the same basis as the other religions, only a century later. Today, the recognition of Islam leads to a repositioning of the different religions in the public space that challenges the concept of republican secularism and its practices and at the same time the link between the State and religion in France.

In April 2003, the French Council for Muslim Worship (CFCM) was established to give institutional legitimacy to French Muslims. The establishment of the CFCM is also viewed by Muslims as a form of religious legitimacy (Sevaiste 2004). The process has been denounced as authoritarian, and the artificial and pragmatic nature of the procedure for choosing the official representative of Islam in France has been subject to criticism. Nevertheless the most important aspect is that such a structure now situates Islam, institutionally, on an equal footing with other religions in France as well as other countries in Europe such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Its creation is a way of orchestrating a shift from Islam in France to Islam of France, from a simple presence of Muslims and their practices visible in France to an Islam that is expressed and developed within national institutions, assuming its freedom from “foreign” influences, especially those of the homeland. In effect, the CFCM has brought into the open the tensions and power struggles among Muslims seeking representation, as well as the external influences that weighed on the choice of representatives.

The institutionalization of Islam is a response to a demand for recognition by the Muslim population. In this perspective, it leads to equal treatment of Islam with other religions before state institutions. Of course, this development raises a number of normative questions. In particular, there is the question of whether recognition can be limited to institutional representation when other institutions, such as schools, are not fulfilling their function of “assimilation” and the promotion of social, cultural, and religious equality. At the same time,

if religion appears as the main cleavage in European countries today, then perhaps its recognition can be seen as a path toward integration. This kind of “institutional assimilation” may be the only form of assimilation possible in countries that are, *de facto*, multicultural.

Thus, often, the claim for equality and justice for Muslims stems from the exclusion of religious associations from the process of resource distribution, while at the same time allowing religion to exist and to mobilize in civil society. The question of recognition of differences yields, therefore, an “institutional assimilation” of religious diversity. The objective is to give the same institutional basis to Islam, the same representative communal body as for other religions, for the purpose of integrating Islam into state institutions on the basis of equal representation along with other religions, to create a more genuinely inclusive public sphere by promoting common civic culture that all can have a sense of belonging to because they are indeed institutionally integrated, like the voluntary associations’ activities that combine community traditions and interest and the integration into the civil society. And it could encourage Muslims to identify with national institutions and thus help them break free of external political forces—their countries of origin and international Islamic organizations seeking to promote Islam in Europe. These forces weigh on the choices of individuals, families, and local communities in France as in other European countries.

### **Transnational Participation and Territoriality**

Even though the search for recognition relates the group to the state, the increasing fluidity of borders has led immigrants to develop transnational networks linking the country of origin to the country of residence and to participate actively in both spaces. In this view, dual citizenship stems from their political participation in both

political communities, which brings to light multiple membership and to some extent multiple loyalties: to the home country, to the country of residence, and to the transnational community itself. Dual citizenship becomes the institutional expression of and the basis for transnationalism.

Transnationalism relates importantly to European integration. Citizens of the European Union as well as residents participate in the European Union's politics through transnational networks combining identity—be it national, religious, or both—and interest. This is also due to the very nature of the European Union, where the logic of supranationality has given shape to a transnational civil society within which networks of solidarity (national, regional, religious, or professional) compete and interact, and cover the European space. The politicization of each of these networks has led to the formation of transnational, de-nationalized public space: where, thanks to the density of communications between actors from different traditions, the groups and individuals who are active in bringing about networks transcending boundaries and transnational communities can socialize politically, and where the same actors learn the trade of a new political culture that takes shape outside the nations and their institutions, creating a new political identification that is transnational.

Within the context of the European Union, a “transnational community” transcends the borders of the member states. Some networks arise from local initiatives in countries of immigration, others from the country of origin, and still others are encouraged by supranational institutions such as the European Parliament or the European Commission. The intervention by supranational institutions situates the transnational communities such as lobby groups that operate directly at the European level and define their activities as transnational (Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997).

Whether these networks emanate from local initiatives or whether they are encouraged by the countries of origin, international organizations, or supranational institutions, mainly the European Parliament, together they create a transnational space, where new solidarities and new forms of political participation are created, and the transnational community, characterized by its internal diversity—national, ethnic and linguistic—emerges. This diversity is “recentered” around norms and values diffused by European supranational institutions and through the process by which these same institutions give the diversity a legitimacy on the international stage, especially through an inclusive discourse developed by transnational activists founded on human rights, the fight against racism, or any other form of social, political, or cultural exclusion.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the identity of a transnational citizenship is expressed through the fight of transnational actors for equality and human rights, seeking at the same time a unified identity in search of legitimacy before supranational institutions.

The same diversity finds itself “recentered” around a common identity element, such as religion, particularly Islam, the religion of the majority of post-colonial immigration that has become the minority religion in Europe. Religion has always been the origin of the most

5 The fight against racism and exclusion was originally the official motivation of the European Parliament which, in 1986, had formed the Immigrants’ Forum. Dissolved in 2001, the Forum sought out “a place of expression for the non-community populations established in Europe, through which they could establish their claims and disseminate information from European authorities” (“Exception and Complimentarity in Europe,” 1994). According to the Forum’s attaché to the Commission of the European Community, the goal was to provide third-world country nationals “the same opportunities and the same rights as natives, thereby compensating for the absence of democracy.”

elaborate and institutionalized transnational networks For Steven Vertovec, religion is better adapted to the problem of transnationalism, since it acquires the indices of transformation in modes of religiosity, enabling it to follow the evolution of the importance of religion in the country of origin. Above all, a transnational community founded on religion is in essence a multiethnic community (Vertovec 2002), and is nonetheless the identity of the non-European minority in Europe. Moreover, religious communities have always been stimulated by secularization to organize themselves in pressure groups and take action in the domain of international relations, as demonstrated in treaties governing minorities from the 1648 treaties of Westphalia until the 1878 Berlin Conference, partially resumed by the League of Nations in the aftermath of World War I (cf. Preece 1998).

However, it is primarily with the case of Islam as a minority religion that communities are formed in Europe to legitimate their demands for recognition and to spawn pluralist politics (cf. Rudolf 1997, see introduction). In some cases, it is the countries of origin or international organizations that reactivate the religious loyalty of Muslim populations residing in different European countries. Their strategies seem contradictory, and at times even completely in conflict, insofar as the countries of origin aspire to a supranational recognition, and the international organizations seek to rise above the national cleavages of Muslims in Europe so as to create a single identification, that of being Muslim in Europe, and from there, the recognition of Islam by European institutions.

Such a “recentralized” transnational community in the European Union has been formulated by the activists as the 13<sup>th</sup> nation, or as the “13<sup>th</sup> population,” or the 13<sup>th</sup> state, in 1992, at the signing of the

Maastricht treaty, when the European Union counted 12 member-states.<sup>6</sup> Such a formulation suggests a feeling of collective belonging through transnationality and a will to consolidate their solidarity as a political community that transcends member-states. But the idea of the “13<sup>th</sup>” also points to the emergence of a “transnational community” on a European level, that is a community structured by individuals or groups settled in different national societies, sharing some common references—national, ethnic, religious, linguistic—and defining common identity and interest beyond boundaries.

Transnationalism and Europe raise the question of territoriality with regard to participation and citizenship (Berezin 2004; see introduction). First of all, transnational organizations create a space for political participation that goes beyond national territories. They re-map a “political community” that is Europe, albeit transnational and therefore de-territorialized and/or re-territorialized. From this perspective, territory becomes a broader, unbounded space, where nation-states and supranational institutions interact, and where transnational networks build bridges between national societies and Europe (Kastoryano 2004). As for citizenship, it implies, in the view

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6 In the early 1990s, more than 13 million “foreigners” (non-Europeans) were living legally in the 12 countries of the European Community. Sixty percent of the foreigners in France and 70% in Germany and in the Netherlands are citizens of countries outside the European Community. Of this group, France has absorbed most of the North Africans (820,000 Algerians, 516,000 Moroccans, 200,000 Tunisians), and Germany has taken the largest number of Turks (almost 2 million). In the Netherlands, the Turks (160,000) and the Moroccans (123,000) constitute most of the non-European immigrants, while Great Britain is characterized by the preponderance of groups from India (689,000), the West Indies (547,000), and Pakistan (406,000) (SOPEMI-OCDE); Eurostat 1999; INED 1997.

of the activists involved in building such a network, a part of the responsibility in the construction of a new “community of fate”<sup>7</sup> that is supposed to represent the European Union and is expressed by the “will to live together.”<sup>8</sup> Just as it was with the formation of a national political community, this implies the expression of their “will to live together” in a de facto multicultural (including residents with legal status) and democratic space (Kastoryano 1998).

The emergence of European space is linked to multiple and complex interactions between states and the collective identities expressed by immigrants or any other kind of interest group which strives to imprint its independence on the state. Transnational actors, such as leaders of volunteer associations, business persons, or activists, develop strategies beyond nation-states by expressing their solidarity through transnational networks based on a common identity or interest, and often both.

Political engagement on the European level leads to a citizenship that derives through action and mobilization beyond state boundaries. The question of European citizenship has led indeed to the elaboration of concepts such as post-national, cosmopolitan and/or transnational membership, and constitutional patriotism, all concepts that came along with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 that transformed the European Economic Community into a European Union. These concepts remain, however, normative. In legal terms, the Maastricht Treaty defined the status of citizenship as “citizenship of the Union.” According to article 8 of the treaty, “Citizen of the Union” is whoever holds the nationality of one of the member states. In principle, the “citizenship of the Union” requires the national citizenship of one of the member states.

7 In reference to Otto Bauer.

8 Inspired by E. Renan’s famous phrase in “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” (What is a nation?).

Thus the treaty maintains the link between citizenship and nationality as is the case of nation-states. But the practice of citizenship of the Union brings an extra-territorial aspect into play with regard to nation-states: again article 8 (8a–8d) of the Treaty of Maastricht gives the citizen of the Union the right to move, reside, and work freely in the territory of a member-state as well as the right to vote and run for office in local elections and in European Parliamentary elections based on residency, i.e., in the territory of a member-state of which he or she is not a citizen, but just resident. The extra-territoriality of the concept of citizenship is expressed by its practice, that is, political participation beyond territorially limited nation-states, therefore de-territorializing the national community or re-territorializing the European space. As Preuss (1998) has pointed out, territoriality becomes the basic means of citizenship in the Union.

Extra-territoriality is precisely what gives transnationalism its strength. Like dual citizenship, it institutionalizes multiple allegiances and dissociates citizenship from nationhood and territoriality. Within the European Union, this multiplicity of allegiances and spaces for political participation include the home country in the repertoire of citizenship. In fact, European citizenship, as a more global concept of membership than nation-states, introduces the allegiance of immigrants to their home country into the bargaining process in the same way that they express their allegiance to their state of residence and to the transnational community in which they are involved. The countries of origin participate in building a transnational community and encourage extra-territorial citizenship. For example, countries like Turkey, Morocco, and Pakistan, in relation to their émigrés settled in Europe, have changed their citizenship laws, introducing dual citizenship in their constitution in order to maintain emigrant loyalty by inducing them to maintain their original citizenship. Even though such processes can be sources of tensions between home and

host countries for countries that reject dual citizenship, the home country contributes openly to the construction of a “diaspora” and invests in designing a “diasporic identity” that would be expressed by the attachment of its citizens—former or current—to the homeland. Such an extra-territoriality is at the core of transnationalism. It keeps the legality of the citizenship of the country of origin, but only on its territory, its de-territorialization abroad becomes a resource for identity and mobilization for individuals and/or groups of immigrant descent. From this point of view, the nation is linked with the citizenry of the home country. At stake is the integration of the state (both states) into a global space (Ong 1999, more specifically chapter 8).

## **Conclusion**

Transnational communities are constructed around shared references and bring to the fore a feeling of belonging to a “deterritorialized political community,” with identity claims that are nourished by new expressions of nationalism. Together, they lead to a redefinition of the link between territory, nation, and political space, challenging the nation-state as well as a territorially defined political structure.

But transnationalism and an extra-territorial citizenship generate negotiations between transnational actors and states. For transnational actors, a transnational action becomes a political tool leading them to act from “outside.” For states, transnationalism is a way to include identity issues developed in a minority situation into their political strategy and “re-territorialize” them or themselves as “de-territorialized” actors so as to maintain the loyalty of transnational actors and of any nationalist expression beyond their political border. It becomes a way for states to integrate into the process of globalization.

Thus the paradox: Even if transnational logic and its expression of nationalism try to circumvent national politics and weaken the state, the state remains the driving force of the process of globalization. Despite its limited autonomy owing to normative pressures of supranational institutions, despite an increasing interdependence between the internal and external in political decisions, the state remains the main actor for negotiations defending its interests and its sovereignty within and outside of its borders. It remains the legal source for citizenship despite dual citizenship. But transnational communities and their “nationalization” have become an important source of identification, resistance, and mobilization, a source of power stemming from the mobility of individuals and groups in opposition to the immobility of states. Therefore, might not the de-territorialization of citizenship generate new tensions between states and communities, and more generally, new tensions in the international system?

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## **Antipolitics in Britain: Dimensions, Causes, and Responses**

Gerry Stoker

Popular political culture in Britain is deeply “anti” both politics and politicians. There has been for some time a ready market for the idea that all politicians lie and that none are to be trusted. As Colin Hay puts it, politics in today’s understanding is “synonymous with sleaze, corruption, and duplicity, greed, self-interest and self-importance, interference, inefficiency, and intransigence. It is, at best, a necessary evil, at worst an entirely malevolent force that needs to be kept in check” (Hay 2007, 153) Politicians are reviled by many of us as a distant “them” who are lying, self-interested cheats.

Our abhorrence of politics tends to feed on itself. Commenting on an earlier period of moral panic about political sleaze and wrongdoing in the early 1990s under a Conservative government, Roger Mortimore (1995, 31) notes that “an existing general disdain and distrust of politicians has made the public consciousness a fertile ground for sowing more specific suspicions.” In short, lack of trust begat a sense of sleaze, and Mortimore argues that a feedback loop driven by the media further undermined the confidence of the public in democratic politics as a result. The row over MPs’ expenses that broke out in spring 2009 in the UK shows the same process happening again. Freedom of Information requests reveal details of MPs that are then exposed in the media. None of the expense claims are strictly breaking the rules of the UK parliament but the interpretation of those rules brings politicians into disrepute, gives journalists great populist

copy, and undermines people's faith in politics still further. It is worth quoting one piece, out of many I could have chosen from, because it captures the mood in the UK as I write:

The Employment Minister . . . Mr. McNulty has been claiming expenses for a second house – nothing wrong with that when you are an MP – except that both houses are in London, one in Hammersmith about 25 minutes from the House of Commons, the other only eight miles away in his constituency of Harrow East, 40 minutes from Westminster by Tube. . . . The problem for many MPs is that they consider £63,291 a year a paltry amount for what they do (even with 18 weeks holiday a year). But because they can't vote themselves a pay increase, particularly when so many others are losing their jobs, they choose to abuse their allowances instead. . . . In November Hazel Blears, the Communities Secretary, gave a speech to the Hansard Society lamenting the “disengagement, cynicism and despair” of voters; she blamed political bloggers and the commentariat. But it's MPs such as Mr. McNulty who are the real culprits. (Thomson 2009)

To add insult to injury to the reputation of politics, a further row broke out in April 2009 about a political advisor to the prime minister seeking to offer stories to a potential website to launch untrue, scurrilous, and salacious attacks on leading opposition politicians and, it appears, their partners. The stories were seen by its proponents as a Left response to a range of Right-leaning websites that carry similar “gossipy,” unverified stories about Government ministers and officials. In fact, the website was never set up and the whole issue

only came out when it appears someone hacked into the emails of one of the conspirators and then gave the emails to one of the Right-leaning bloggers. Our politicians hardly need to be held to account in that they seem spectacularly adept at shooting themselves in the foot. You have to laugh because otherwise you would be crying.

The mood of antipolitics that has captured the popular zeitgeist has already begun to have serious consequences. Politicians have started to respond to this world of antipolitics in ways that are beginning to significantly undermine the UK's capacity for collective and democratic decision making. It is possible to observe three forms of depoliticization (Hay 2007). The first is when issues and decisions that were previously the subject of public scrutiny are placed in a public, yet non-government, sphere. The displacement of decision-making functions to quasi-independent bodies takes politics out of the reach of the ordinary tools of the citizen's political armory and justifies this shift by arguing that politicians are not to be trusted with certain types of decisions—a double blow to the practice of democratic politics. The second form of depoliticization is where issues that might have previously been seen as issues of the public realm are moved to that of private concerns to be driven by private choice. The message is be an active consumer not an active citizen: If you care about the environment make market choices to buy greener goods and services, and if you want better health care then look to the private sector to provide a solution. The third form of depoliticization is where issues are transferred from the realm of political deliberation and choice to the realm of fate and the disavowal of human agency. The forces unleashed by globalization are often depicted in this way. The loss of faith in politics means that alternative ways of legitimizing decisions, issues, and choices are being taken out of the open realm of democratic collective decision making.

To respond to this challenge, we need a greater understanding of what has really changed in our political culture. What do we mean when we say we have an antipolitics culture? In the UK we probably never especially liked doing politics or trusted politicians in the founding days of our mass democracy but what makes our situation different today is that our culture has created citizens who feel disempowered and who have lost faith in the capacity of government. We perhaps do not so much hate politics but rather have been encouraged to see it as an increasingly pointless activity. As we shall see, this sense that politics is pointless is most widely held among lower status groups in UK society. The first section of this paper establishes these arguments. The next section asks why these changes have occurred. The final section considers how we should respond.

### **The Decline in Our Civic Culture**

Almond and Verba's study of the civic culture of five nations became an instant classic. It compared Great Britain with the United States, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. Culture for these two American authors constituted the broad orientation of citizens toward their political system and their sense of citizenship, measured by way of attitudinal and behavioral data collected by the first academically-driven opinion survey conducted in Great Britain in 1959. What famously emerged in the study is a portrayal of a political Britain at ease with itself: citizens deferential and respectful of their leaders, but confident of their role and capacities and the responsiveness of government. Almond and Verba comment about politics in Great Britain:

The participant role is highly developed. Exposure to politics, interest, involvement, and a sense of competence are relatively high. There are norms supporting political activity, as well as emotional involvement in elections

and system affect. And attachment to the system is a balanced one: there is general system pride as well as satisfaction with specific governmental performance. (Almond and Verba 1963, 455)

British citizens were more deferential than their American counterparts but this aspect of their culture was balanced by an active and participative orientation toward politics: a blend of activity and passivity that according to Almond and Verba allowed a civic culture to develop.

Almond and Verba's positive findings about our political system were not considered surprising but more as a confirmation of what was already the common sense of the age among British political scientists. The book "produced little reaction as a study of Britain largely because it told most British academics little that they did not think that they knew" (Kavanagh 1980, 127). The two hundred or so political scientists of that era were perhaps a little bemused by the behavioral research methods of Almond and Verba but they recognized and agreed with the depiction of the British political culture. The Americans with their newfangled techniques provided quantitative evidence for their own views about the virtues of our system. As Kavanagh (1980, 127) goes on to point out, such was the acceptance of the data and the associated interpretation that "the findings of the 1959 survey were still being cited ten years later as though the situation had hardly changed."

The reception of the civic culture thesis began to change, however, in the 1970s. There were criticisms from academics about the theories underlying the work in that they sustained a very elitist understanding of democratic practice and a rather individualistic understanding of culture. There was also a growing amount of evidence that disenchantment with the political system in Britain was beginning to emerge and be detected by practitioners of political science. Almond

and Verba gave a fair hearing to many of the theoretical criticisms in *The Civic Culture Revisited* (Almond and Verba, 1980) as well as revising and refining their own original argument. In the same volume, Kavanagh (1980) captured the evidence of a changing mood among British citizens about their political system. The shift away from a supportive civic culture was not complete but there were clear signs of decay and growing disenchantment with the political system. As Kavanagh notes, after only two decades you might not expect to see a large-scale shift in culture. But a further three decades on, from our vantage point, it is possible to conclude that the civic world described by Almond and Verba has gone.

It is difficult to establish that claim of a lost world in a clear-cut manner because no one has directly replicated the Almond and Verba work at the beginning of the twenty-first century. But political scientists in Britain have produced enough data and analysis to make a comparison between the world of the 1950s and the world of the first decade of the twenty-first century relatively deliverable.

The first thing to establish in the analysis of civic culture is to point out that Almond and Verba did not find a “perfect” world of politically engaged, knowledgeable, and interested citizens. Here are some key findings from their 1959 survey (see Almond and Verba 1963, 89, 96, 116, 263):

- 32% claim “to never follow” accounts of political and governmental affairs
- 2 in 10 can name no party leader or any government ministry
- 3 in 10 “never” talk about politics with friends and acquaintances
- Only 2% claim civic-political activities as a preferred leisure activity
- And finally, a finding from the survey not reported by Almond and Verba is that 8 in 10 are doubtful of the promises made by candidates in elections (Kavanagh 1980, 145 n. 58)

It would be difficult to claim in the light of these findings that in the 1950s British citizens were political sophisticates. Knowledge of and interest in politics is arguably just about at the same levels at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The 2008 *Audit of Political Engagement* (Hansard Society 2008, 13) found about half the population claiming an interest in politics, with 2 in 10 claiming no interest at all. The findings on these issues have remained relatively consistent since the first Audit published in 2004. Again, on issues of knowledge about half the population in the 2008 Audit claimed that they knew nothing at all or not much about politics and here too the findings are fairly consistent stretching back to 2004 (Hansard Society 2008, 14).

The unreported finding from *The Civic Culture*, expressing citizens' doubts about the promises of politicians, indicates a level of cynicism about politicians in the 1950s that maybe was not fully captured by Almond and Verba. By the 1970s, Kavanagh (1980, 145–147) was able to offer findings that hint further at lack of trust in politicians. In the twenty-first century, lack of trust in politicians is a strong leitmotif. Politicians regularly rank among the lowest occupational groups in terms of the extent to which they are trusted. Low trust in politicians appears normal today not just in Britain but in most other advanced industrial democracies (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 37).

Some things clearly have changed since 1959. Twenty-first century citizens of Britain have less civic competence, less pride in the political system, less belief in the fairness and responsiveness of government compared to their counterparts in the 1950s. Almond and Verba (1963, 185) found in 1959 high levels of civic competence: 8 in 10 claimed they could do something about an unjust local regulation and 6 in 10 made the same claim about an unjust national regulation. In 2007, only two-fifths (38%) of respondents to the Citizenship Survey (Communities and Local Government 2007) felt they could influence

decisions in their local area, and one-fifth (20%) of people felt they could influence decisions affecting Great Britain. In 1959 nearly half the British survey spontaneously mentioned the system of government and political institutions as a matter of pride to Almond and Verba (1963, 102). Such a response is almost impossible to imagine today.

The 2008 *Audit of Political Engagement* (Hansard Society 2008, 22) found that only 2% of citizens felt the present system of governing Britain works extremely well and could not be improved. Two thirds were of the opinion that the system could be improved quite a lot or great deal. Almond and Verba (1963, 108–9) found that 8 in 10 expected to be treated equally by government bureaucracy if they raised an issue and 6 in 10 felt that governmental bureaucracy would give their point of view serious consideration. Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley (2004, 44–45) in their survey at the beginning of the twenty-first century found under 3 in 10 able to agree with the statement that “government generally treats people like me fairly.” They conclude: “it would seem that a very significant decline in public confidence in government has occurred” (Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley 2004, 44).

There is evidence of not just a shift in attitudes but also of major changes in behavior. Most obviously there has been a decline in turnout in national elections from roughly 8 in 10 to 6 in 10 voters. Party membership has also slumped. In the UK, 9% of all registered electors were party members in 1964 but by 1992 it was barely 2%, and it has remained at or below this level into the twenty-first century (Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002). The pattern of change in organizational memberships related to civic life would appear to be more complex. Comparing *The Civic Culture* data to other surveys and their 2001 Citizen Audit, Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley (2004, 102) conclude: “fewer people are now joining just a single group but there is an upward trend in the number of people belonging to two or more groups.” We are less inclined to join a political party but some of us are more inclined to engage with a wide range of single-issue organizations. In both

time periods it would appear that organizational memberships of campaigning groups are reported by only half the population.

A general pattern of decline in our civic culture has been established by comparing the findings of Almond and Verba's work with that of more recent studies by UK political scientists. There is a further feature of the portrait of change that is worth emphasizing, namely the shift in the pattern of social divides in that culture. Again difficulties in the way that Almond and Verba conducted their survey limit the certainty that surrounds what can be argued but it would appear that compared to 1959 there are now less gender differentials but greater social class differentials.

Almond and Verba (1963, 388) found that "men showed higher frequencies and higher intensities than women in practically all the indices of political orientation and activity that we employed." The 2008 *Audit of Political Engagement* (Hansard Society 2008, 14) found that while women were less likely than men to say they were interested in politics (58% against 45%) on other measures women were just as likely as men to engage as Table 1 shows. Almond and Verba (1963) found some class divides in the sense of civic competence and activism. For example, they found that 9 in 10 professionals felt they could do something about an unjust local regulation, while only 7 in 10 of the unskilled were of the same view. In general, across a range of tests of participation and civic competence provided by Almond and Verba, lower-status British groups scored higher than equivalent groups in other nations, including the United States. As Kavanagh (1980, 135) explains: "In Britain such long-established organizations as trade unions, cooperative societies, and the Labour party have made explicit appeals to the working class and mobilized them into comparatively high levels of political activity." The evidence presented in Table 2 derived from the 2008 *Audit of Political Engagement* suggests that the positive effect of these organizations in closing class differences in political participation may be on the wane. In 2007 citizens from professional and managerial

social groups were twice as likely as those from unskilled groups to vote or donate to a party or campaign and four times more likely to have engaged in three or more political activities.

There are other aspects of the social divisions that characterize engagement today. Young people are generally less likely to want to engage in formal politics, although it is difficult to tell from Almond and Verba's work whether that is a change from the 1950s. A range of ethnic minorities that were hardly a factor in *The Civic Culture* are now a vital part of our society, and their engagement in politics also creates a complex pattern of difference. For now we can simply confirm that the picture of confident citizens at ease with their democratic polity—which may have been slightly exaggerated in the account provided by Almond and Verba—is no more. We live in a culture where there is significant political disenchantment and where disengagement is particularly observable among lower status social groups and young people.

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**Table 1** Political Activism in 2007: Male and Female Compared

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Activity	% Male	% Female
Propensity to vote	52	55
Contacted elected representative in last two or three years	15	15
Donated to a political party	5	3
Donated to a charity or campaigning organization	39	36
Engaged in three or more political activities in last two or three years	11	13

Source: Developed by author from data in the *Audit of Political Engagement 5* (Hansard Society 2008).

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**Table 2: Political Activism in 2007: Social Classes Compared**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>% AB Social Class</b>	<b>% DE Social Class</b>
Propensity to vote	66	34
Contacted elected representative in last two or three years	16	10
Donated to a political party	7	2
Donated to a charity or campaigning organization	52	24
Engaged in three or more political activities in last two or three years	21	5

Note: The social class definitions are used by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. A and B social classes include those with professional and managerial jobs; D and E include semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and those living at the lowest levels of subsistence.

Source: Developed by author from data in the *Audit of Political Engagement 5* Hansard Society (2008).

## **Explaining the Rise of Antipolitics**

There has been a considerable amount of debate in the UK political science community about the factors that are driving the rise of political disenchantment. Hay (2007) thinks that our politicians are to blame, not so much because they are comprehensively sleazy or corrupt but more because they have lost faith in politics themselves. His underlying fear is that our low expectations of politics and politicians—fostered substantially by political elites themselves—have created a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The twist in the tail of Hay's explanation is that we hate politics because politicians have spent much of the last decades telling us that we should have low expectations of them. Our political masters have shot themselves in the foot by swallowing wholesale the economic analysis of politics, coated in a neoliberal framing of the limits and failings of the state. Their problem, which has become our problem, is that we have come to interpret politics as a game where all players are instrumental and self-interested. The economic analysis of politics has become manifest in the way that politics is presented and sold to us. Politicians compete not for our souls but for our stomachs: debating with us not values but rather who can give us the best deal. Politics has been reduced to competing marketing campaigns. As voters we are not asked to make a political choice about different political values or programs but rather decide whether one lot of politicians is more managerially competent than the next to deliver on its promises to provide a better life for us. "Judge me on my performance," the politicians demand. But the difficulty is that we have, with their encouragement, created a blame game that offers a thin and inadequate diet of politics. All aspiring politicians convince themselves they can deliver what people want, and every citizen wonders if this time they are going to get the real thing: a politician who keeps his promises. But all know that it will, every time and on every cycle, end in disappointment.

The actions and moves of politicians are constantly interpreted by the politicians and the media through a lens that emphasizes their instrumental, self-interested motivation. The blame game is conducted based on assumptions of instrumental rationality driving human action and, in particular, the practices of politics. The economic academic analysis of politics has infested the very practice of politics and undermined its capacity to engage people in collective endeavor. It has encouraged us to assume the worst and politicians and citizens

have taken its messages to heart. The gloomy atmosphere is reinforced by the hegemonic domination of neoliberal thinking that tells us to expect little but failure from the state, the public realm, and politics. Our best hope—we are told—lies in the introduction of market-like incentives to keep politics and public management on the straight and narrow as part of a strategy of depoliticization. The answer lies in less politics and more handing over of decisions to quangos (quasi non-governmental organizations) and consumerization of choice. In a difficult to control world it is the best we can hope for. This dismal offer is, as Hay points out, not surprisingly, rejected by many citizens who determine that if that is all that is on offer then why bother.

According to Meg Russell in her thoughtful pamphlet, we have failed to come to terms with mass democracy in our culture. She argues that “the ways that our political culture has adapted itself to modern life have, over time, conspired to erode faith in political rule” (2005, 4). The adversarial style of our politics has, when combined with the sense that politicians must permanently campaign, fed distrust. The culture of consumerism has led politicians to offer promises to the public on which they struggle to deliver effectively. Single-issue pressure groups add to the demands made on the political system to deliver without aiding any understanding of the need to balance competing demands. Citizens are given a constant message that suggests that politics is failing, and the cynical and simplistic approach of the modern media has also “played a key part in feeding all these problems” (Russell 2005, 5).

I would agree with much of that analysis and the analysis provided by Hay. The way that politics is practiced today leaves too great a gap between governors and governed. Most of us are judging politicians from afar and through a distorted lens. The sense of moral outrage that pervades our reaction to politics, I think, reflects the fact that in most mature democracies most people have little if any direct

involvement in politics. Most people experience politics as spectators and through the eyes and ears of the media. The result of this alienated disengagement is that many citizens are able to combine a substantial level of cynicism about politics with occasional outbursts of moral indignation as to its failings and frustrations.

In my *Why Politics Matters* (Stoker 2006), I argue that the emphasis on individual choice and consumerism in our societies has created a challenging environment for the collective decision-making characteristic of politics. My explanation of why people are disengaging focuses on four factors which reflect common organizational and structural characteristics of the position of mature democracies. These factors are: the rise of a more intense individualization, the increasing specialization that is being brought to many functions in our societies including politics, the increased complexity of the challenges faced, and a rising tide of cynicism fueled in part by the practices of the mass media. The impact of these four forces is considerable. The first means that people fail to appreciate the inherent collective characteristics of politics in an individualized world. The second suggests that politics is increasingly professionalized, leaving most of us in the position of being spectators rather than activists in any meaningful sense. Globalization and technological advances tend to make politics even more remote because the complexity of the challenges they create means political decision making appears to be beyond the control of everyday citizen activity. The fourth factor encourages a culture of hopeless fatalism about politics. Each is explored in more detail below.

Making decisions through markets relies on individuals choosing what suits them. The collective processes that are essential to steer politics and government struggle to deliver against the lionization of individual choice in our societies. Politics, if anything, attracts as much interest as before, but that interest has been infected by the impact of the increased prominence given to market-based consumerism and

more intense individualization in the culture of many democracies. As a form of collective decision making, politics is, even in a democracy, a centralized form of decision making compared to market-based alternatives. Democracy means that you can be involved in the decision, but what the decision is is not necessarily your choice yet you are expected to accept the decision.

Politics as a form of collective decision making relies on voice rather than the market mechanism of exit to enable you to make your views known. If you do not like something you see in a shop you can go elsewhere, but in politics the only way to get something is to use voice, and that carries far more costs than exit. But expressing your interest or opinion is only the start of a more general challenge in politics—that of communication. You have to not only make your views known, you also have to listen. Politics is not about individual choice; it is about collective debate. Within it communication is a difficult, time-consuming, and problematic business. Knowing what you want and knowing how to get it out of the political system are very testing and complex.

Politics often involves a stumbling search for solutions to particular problems. It is not the most edifying human experience. It is rarely an experience of self-actualization and more often an experience of accepting second-best. It works through a complex process of mutual adjustment as politicians, officials, and others directly involved in government attempt coping or manipulative modifications to their behavior in the hope of inducing the right response from others. The results tend to be messy, contingent, and inevitably create a mix of winners and losers.

So it turns out that a propensity to disappoint is an inherent feature of governance even in democratic societies. I think that a substantial part of the discontent with politics is because the discourse and practice of collective decision making sits very uncomfortably alongside the

discourse and practice of individual choice, self-expression, and market-based fulfillment of needs and wants. As a result, too many citizens fail to appreciate the inherent characteristics of the political process in democratic settings. Politics involves two of the hardest human skills: listening carefully to the opinions of others and their expressions of their interests, and maintaining a certain resilience when things do not go right the first time. Doing politics in our large complex societies is bound to create some frustration. Democracy cannot wish away that reality.

Now let's consider the impact of increased specialization. It's not just that we characterize and understand politics in a mistaken way but that there are problems and difficulties with the way we practice it as well. As we have seen, most citizens' engagement has a sporadic and mundane character. There is nothing wrong with such expressions of citizenship; they are just rather limited. Much engagement is directed toward something that brings personal benefit or perhaps provides an expressive statement about a person's sense of him or herself and his or her identity. These atomized forms of citizenship mean that people often have only a surface engagement with political issues and complexities. There is hope in the range and diversity of engagement in democracies, but there are concerns because of its uneven spread and shallow quality.

Most of the real politics is done in a space where we are spectators. It is the sphere of professionals where we are the amateurs. The cohesion brought by parties, the advocacy of special interests by the lobby, and the challenge and dissent offered through various forms of protest offer vital links in the democratic chain between governors and governed. But all are failing to engage citizens-at-large in politics. Activists are odd people, very much in a minority in our society. They do a lot of the work of politics for us and we should be grateful to them. But the way their organizations work is in part responsible for people's sense of alienation from politics.

As parties have lost membership, they have become reliant on professional campaigners and organizers and operate in a way that treats citizens as passive political observers who just need to be mobilized at election times to back the party (Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002). Citizen lobby organizations—such as Friends of the Earth—have large scale passive memberships, and they too rely on professional organizers and experts (Jordan and Maloney 1999). Members provide funding but the professional politicians in the lobby organizations decide what to campaign on. Citizens are a passive audience to be talked to about particular campaigns through the media and occasionally galvanized to send in letters or cards of support or join a public demonstration based often on rather simplistic messages. Citizens are offered little in terms of depth of analysis or understanding of the issues at stake by these organizations. Even more radical protest organizations tend to be professionalized in their style of behavior and their use of the media. The occasional engagement by a wider group of citizens in a protest “event” or rally is in danger of being more a lifestyle statement than a serious engagement with a political debate (De Jong, Shaw, and Stammers 2005).

Politics is about people deciding to take action, but what is the point if the world is so out of control and the challenges so complex that political forces cannot exercise influence over it (Gamble 2000)? In response to complex new challenges politics has had to move into arenas and modes of operating beyond the everyday capacities of citizens. Globalization has not ended the capacity for politics but it has pushed it into new and more remote settings. Governments at local and national levels can influence global trends but they do so out of the sight of most of their citizens. Technological change and the pressures of scientific development again create impacts that politics is only able to contain by moving decision making onto remote and expert terrains. An effective dialogue between science and democracy

has not been easy to create, as rows over GM (genetically modified) food, global warming, or cloning indicate. What is clear is that politics is in challenging and hard times and that as a result it has tended to be practiced in arenas remote from the everyday experiences of citizens.

Finally, as the culture of deference that dominated democratic politics in advanced industrial societies has declined, it appears to have been replaced by a culture of cynicism not just toward politics but toward many other institutions. The role of the media in promoting a culture of cynicism is worth examining. John Lloyd (2004) puts some of the blame on the poor reporting standards of the media, itself triggered by commercial pressures and the rise of multinational media groupings. There are several aspects of the argument to consider. First, there has been a “dumbing down” in news coverage, which means that people are less likely to understand underlying issues or complexities in respect of politics, and politics can often be seen to fail when what it is delivering is judged in a simplistic framework. Second, the fusing of news reporting and comment, which is a characteristic of modern media coverage of politics, probably feeds a culture where fact, opinion, and speculation merge into one another and which lends itself to a cynical take on political life. A third argument is that the media in some countries have actively spread a culture of contempt; and a fourth argument is that we have seen the emergence of a style of journalism that presents itself as the champion of the people and takes a strongly adversarial position to politicians, asking all the time why is this politician lying to me and you, the viewers and listeners. The first two arguments perhaps hold true across more countries. The last two arguments are much more difficult to establish but may hold for some countries—of which the UK would be a prime candidate.

## Can We Challenge Antipolitics?

Our disappointment with the performance of politicians is often accompanied by a general sense that if we cared to we could do better. People often find it difficult to think beyond their own experiences and therefore tend to judge political decisions according to their own interests and circumstances. Naïve aspirations and assumptions about politics often flow from these preconceptions. People can assume that most other people agree with them (or would if only the issue was explained to them properly) and that the ideal outcome is one that suits them in every detail. As noted, in politics the only way to get something is to use voice—express your concerns in concert with others—and that carries far more costs than the exit mechanism available to us in market transactions. People generally do not like making a lot of effort for little reward. Accordingly, off-loading responsibility on to others as we have seen is a very common coping mechanism in political exchanges. But expressing your interest or opinion is only the start of a more general challenge in politics. You have not only to make your views known, you also have to listen. Politics is not about individual choice; it is about collective decision.

The negative response to politics that many of us share is I think a very human reaction to the way politics works. As an intricate mechanism in our multifaceted and complex societies, politics exists because we do not agree with one another. Politics is about choosing between competing interests and views. It often demands incompatible allocations of limited resources. Crucially, because it is a collective form of decision making, once a choice has been made then that choice has to be imposed on us all. There is no point having a rule that vehicles on a road must stop when a traffic light turns red unless it is generally observed and enforced. Politics at the level of today's large-scale, interconnected, and diverse societies is on a

tough beat. Our collective will—which is what politics is supposed to express—is not easy to fathom or always comfortable to accept once it is decided upon.

We should not imagine that we can continue without politics. You might argue that politics persists only because humans make the wrong choices. If they followed the right path, set down by religion or some other moral guide, they would all choose the same thing and as a result politics would not be necessary. You might alternatively argue that politics operates only in societies that are structured so that people's interests are fundamentally opposed but that it might be possible to structure a society where people's interests were always aligned and as a result politics would not be required. The former argument has at various times been made by some religious and other moralizing opinion leaders. The latter is one used by some radicals and utopians of various hues. Neither is particularly convincing to me and neither can take much succor from the historical record to date. There is little to suggest that human beings or human societies are perfectible as implied by these contrasting understandings.

Given human society as it has been and as it might reasonably be expected to be in the future, we could argue that people will make judgments about what is right for themselves and for others and that there is no reason to assume that those judgments will be shared. Equally it is clear that as humans we need to find ways to act together, to engage in collective action, to resolve the problems and challenges of living together. It is an integral part of human nature to value the opportunity to be involved in decisions about issues that affect you. We will differ about what the outcomes could or should be but somehow in a democracy we need to sustain a commitment to the process and institutions of politics. We may not like its outcomes but we should be willing to support the complex expression of collective will that in our democracies politics is attempting to deliver.

Understanding the above is the dynamics of an effective democratic politics, which is the key. How could we create a political culture that rests on such insights? We could try to shift the culture of elite politics as a first step. Meg Russell (2005, 55–58) proposes a new political charter in which politicians are encouraged to be more honest about their mistakes. They would need to explain the hard choices that have to be made as well as the constraints faced by decision makers and be more generous to their opponents in not making exaggerated or unnecessary attacks and in campaigning responsibly and in a way that does not exploit citizens' distrust. She adds that media coverage and citizens' attitudes to politics will also need to change. But her optimism that such a new political culture could take hold needs to be tempered by a recognition that when activists do their politics they do so with a mix of motives from passion for a cause to self-interest. But, above all, they campaign, demonstrate, bargain, organize, and do the mundane work of filling out envelopes and making phone calls in order to win. There are no neutrals in politics and to ask activists to forgo potentially winning strategies may be asking for too much. For example, Gordon Brown's political opponents are unlikely to give up the sleaze attacks, allow him to show fallibility without sanction, or forgo the chance to argue they could avoid the hard choices he will be forced to make.

Many argue that there may be ways of re-engaging people in politics directly and this was a central theme that I developed in my call for a new politics for amateurs in *Why Politics Matters* (Stoker 2006). The "Make Poverty History" (MPH) protest in the summer of 2005 could be seen as exemplar of the new politics of engagement. It connected campaigning with formal representative politics in a powerful way and did so in a way that reached out to millions of people who were relative novices in the political process over an issue of high moral import. There are lessons that can be drawn from that campaign if we

are interested in a remoralizing of politics and restoring trust in the political process (McNeill 2006). The first is that hope sells rather than guilt. MPH convinced people that they could do something to make a difference to improve the lot of the world's poor. Second, it built very deliberately from the bottom up and then tried to link visionary leadership to that base, but the base was around the local school-gate, bus stops, places of work rather than the elite institutions of politics. Finally, its message was one of rehabilitation and renewal as converts to the cause were welcomed from all quarters and not derided for making a U-turn or because they were latecomers.

Not all politics can be packaged in the same way as the MPH campaign, but it stands out as a politics that successfully brought together the formal institutions of governance and the informal power of civil society. There are other examples from across the globe. Graham Smith (2009) shows how there has been innovation in forms of public engagement worldwide and offers the following categorization for these schemes: consultative, deliberative, co-governance, direct, and e-democracy schemes.

However, even if we did find ways of drawing in to a degree more citizens into decision making, the bulk of citizens would still remain observers rather than practitioners of political practice. Moreover, the big unknown is how these observers come to understand politics and whether they could develop a complex and nuanced understanding of its practices. Even if we convince citizens that politics is not all about politicians narrowly pursuing their self-interests in a cycle of ineffectual games, we still need them to understand that politics is an awkward and difficult process.

As Michael Walzer puts it, political decisions are inherently and permanently conflictual:

Very few political decisions are verdicts in the literal sense of that term. I don't mean that we can't sometimes insist that it is morally right and perhaps imperative to do X; but even people who agree on the necessity of doing X are likely to disagree about how to do it, or how soon, or at whose expense. . . . Permanent settlements in politics are rare in political life because we have no way of reaching a verdict on contested issues. (Walzer 2004, 103)

Politics as a result often requires messy compromises that are presented through “smoke and mirrors” to bridge conflicting interests and values. Deliberation and the open exchange of different ideas are part of politics but they do not capture the roundness of its practice. Politics is a sustained battle of interests and ideas and claims for influence, accountability, and scrutiny. It is an inherent reflection of our plurality and differences as human beings. Its nobility is in its capacity to enable us to manage our mutual interdependence, but its practice is often labored, dull and untidy, muddled and occasionally dirty.

All of the proposed strategies of reformers may help, but as Colin Hay helpfully suggests, we are slightly pitching in the dark. We do not know enough about the problem to know what the answer might be. As Hay (2007, 162) argues in terms of the silent majority we “know very little . . . about the cognitive process in and through which [they] come to attribute motivations to the behavior [they] witness, or how [they] come to develop and revise assumptions about human nature [they] project on to others. If politics depends ultimately on our capacity to trust one another . . . then there can be no more important questions for political analysts than these.”

We need a political culture that is able to live with and manage contradictory forces. Citizens should engage directly in politics and be

engaged by the mainstream representative political process. Yet even if that occurs they will differ about what the outcomes of democratic politics could or should be. So, somehow, we citizens need to be willing to support the multifaceted expression of collective will that we call politics even when the outcomes may not be to our liking.

## **Conclusion**

The tensions of our current political culture are often resolved by citizens opting out and condemning politics with a mix of cynicism and high moral fervor. Politics demands a better response than that and if we understood it more we would give it more leeway and scope. But citizens also need to be more directly involved in its processes. Politics is a human tool for dealing with conflicts and interdependence. We need to recognize its continuing capacity to enable us to live together in a complex world and learn to accept its lack of perfection.

Politics in a democratic context demands a complex moral universe. One that grants you the freedom to challenge authority, criticize all actors and actions, and cajole others to support your views, but at the same time demands from you a collective responsibility to uphold a system that may produce outcomes that you may strongly object to or find morally dubious or even repugnant. Cynicism mixed with moral outrage is our default response to a democratic politics. It is a caustic and disabling mix and its grip needs to be broken.

I am not about to argue that we all need to become new model active citizens. Democracy should be about providing opportunities to get involved and engaged in a whole range of institutions and decisions from neighborhood to the global. But it is important to recognize that for most people politics is not their first choice of activity. There are trade-offs between time spent on politics and the joys of private life. We should be cautious in our expectations about the extent and depth

of engagement that people want. In this light two reform strategies stand out: the need to offer viable ways for people to engage in politics directly and the need to make representative politics work better. Some form of representative politics is therefore likely to remain at the heart of everyday politics in mature democracies. The challenge rests on reconnecting representative politics to its participative roots and in so doing making it a more plausible and effective arena for resolving conflicts and choosing pathways to coordination.

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## **The Bumble-Bee is Still Flying: Italian Political Culture at 50**

Pierangelo Isernia and Danilo Di Mauro

Italian scholars and commentators often liken the Italian political system to a bumble-bee: an insect structurally unable to fly but apparently very effective in doing exactly this. Among the many legacies and constraints that would make the Italian political system theoretically unviable is its political culture. Despite the tumultuous and rapid pace of socioeconomic change Italy underwent in the last 50 years, the prevalent description of Italian political culture among analysts and commentators, both Italians and foreigners, still is one of political and cultural stagnation. The political culture has remained as static, backward, “*immobile*,” and impermeable to change as it was described in the early 1950s. How is it then that “the image of a backward Italy struggling (somehow) with modernity is a dominant representation of the country in the eyes of both Italian and foreign commentators” (Agnew 1997, 26)? Our effort in this paper is to turn the question upside down and ask to what extent is this prevailing image—and a few pages will be spent to describe it once again—an empirically adequate depiction of Italian political culture today? To what degree is the so-called familistic-parochial-localistic paradigm still valid, if it ever was, to capture the nature and characteristics of Italian political culture?

To do so, the paper is organized in three sections. In the next section, we briefly spell out the main characteristics of the familistic-parochial-localistic paradigm and the main challenges it has faced in

the last decade. We then discuss three of its characteristics—localism, (lack of) trust, and satisfaction with democracy—that usually place Italy in a league of its own as compared to other European countries. In the conclusions, we spell out some implications of these results for further analysis.

### **Italian Political Culture: Then and Now**

Concluding a vast comparative research survey in five different countries, including Italy, Almond and Verba synthesized their results on Italy as follows:

The picture of Italian political culture that has emerged from our data is one of relatively unrelieved political alienation and of social isolation and distrust. The Italians are particularly low in national pride, in moderate and open partisanship, in the acknowledgment of the obligation to take an active part in local community affairs, in the sense of competence to join with others in situations of political stress, in their choice of social forms of leisure-time activity and in their confidence in the social environment. (Almond and Verba 1989 [1963]: 308)

This sentence paralleled the one reached—using different research design and methods—at approximately the same time, by another American scholar, this time a political anthropologist, Edward Banfield (1958). Banfield, having spent nine months of his life, with his wife and children, in a small Southern Italian village, Chiaromonte, in Basilicata, found a community whose inhabitants were unwilling to cooperate for their common good, distrustful of

both public officials and their own fellow villagers, and anxious and fearful of life and the external environment. Banfield located the sources of these uncooperative, distrustful, and suspicious attitudes pervading Chiaromonte in the ethos pervading the village; an ethos he incisively dubbed “amoral familism.” An amoral familist is, according to Banfield (1958, 83), a person who behaves according to the following rule: “maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise.” From the implementation of such a rule of behavior several negative implications for social and political life follow: the inability to even be able to conceive the public interest as something relevant to a person individually; the lack of interest in public problems; the perceived lack of control of public officials (whose motivations are read to be purely selfish); the difficulty in overcoming the free riding problem; the systematic violation of the rule of law, if impunity is reasonable to be expected; corruption and the preference for authoritarian order. The nuclear family and its problems are the core concern of a typical Montegraneese.<sup>1</sup> The individual as such does not exist without the family. Anxiety is the psychological trait characteristic of the inhabitant of Montegrano, a chronic fear for the welfare of the family that at any moment can suddenly be destroyed. In such a nasty, brutal, and often also short life, the material interest of the family is paramount. People are continuously engaged in a zero-sum social game, nurtured by the structural mistrust toward those who do not belong to the nuclear family (even if they are close relatives).

A few years later, another American scholar, Robert N. Bellah (1974), argued that the prevalent “civil religion” in Italy was the “*basso continuo*,” a sort of pagan pre-Christian religiosity. This form

1 Montegrano was the fictitious name Banfield gave to the small village of Chiaromonte.

of religiosity meant loyalty to the family, to the clan, to the enlarged parental group, such as the Mafia, the gang, the small, sometimes deviant, group. This particularistic religion ethos permeates the life of the average Italian citizen much more than the full-fledged ideologies that compete for attention among Italian political elites. In an interesting comparison with Japan, China, France, and England, Bellah claimed that such a form of pagan religiosity was stronger in Italy and Japan than in China, England, or France.

Twenty years later, a fourth American scholar, Robert Putnam (1993), offered a “cultural” explanation of institutional performances of Italian regions along the same lines. Putnam traced the differential effectiveness of the Italian regions back to the different endowment of social capital available in those regions. The different political and economic paths experienced since the Middle Ages by the “*Comuni*” in the center and northern part of Italy on the one hand and the feudal empire and the Papal State in the south on the other are at the source of the differential stock of social capital in the Italian regions. Those regions which experienced a vibrant and effective democratic experience during the “Communal” age now have a larger social capital than those in which feudal rule and Papal autocracy repressed all attempts at the flowering of social and political democratic life.

What is interesting in glancing, admittedly in a cursory way, at this stream of studies and analyses dedicated by American scholars to Italy and its political culture since the early 1950s is both the paramount attention dedicated to the cultural factor as a source of explanation (for a critique of this overall approach see Jackman 1998 and Jackman and Miller 2004) and the univocal negative decline of this culture’s characteristics. Both aspects are interesting, as compared to the domestic debate on the nature and characteristics of the Italian political system. First, Italian scholars (with the partial exception of Tullio-Altan 1997 and Cartocci 1994, 2007) have usually neglected cultural

explanations of Italian political problems,<sup>2</sup> emphasizing institutional and systemic factors (e.g., Sartori, 1982) linked to the functioning of the Italian party system. Second, while Italy is considered a case of extremely dynamic socioeconomic modernization, it remains puzzling that in the face of all economic, political, and social changes undergone in Italy in these forty years, its political culture (or, at least, the description of it by foreign commentators) has remained the same, unaltered and unalterable by the passing of time. Fifty years after the publication of *Civic Culture* it is probably appropriate to ask again if the Italian “familistic-particularistic” political culture (Sciolla 1997) is still descriptively adequate and explanatorily effective.

We will focus our attention on three elements of this syndrome: political disaffection, lack of vertical and horizontal trust, and a strong localism. In Italy, satisfaction from the way the democratic system works is systematically lower than in other Western European countries and remarkably stable over time.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of those satisfied with democracy has never gone above 30% of the population and, contrary to other countries (e.g., the United States), has shown no downward trend. Almond and Verba were the first to point to the lower sense of civic competence among Italian respondents. They found that in Italy, only 24% of the interviewed had a high sense of subjective political competence as against 32% in (West) Germany, 34% in the United Kingdom, and 52% in the United States. Only Mexicans had a lower level of subjective political competence than the Italians. Similar surveys carried out by Barnes and Sani in 1968 and 1972, by the Political Action Study in 1975, by the Four Nations study in 1985, and in the ITANES electoral surveys in 1990 and 1996

2 As Sani (1989) has pointedly remarked, Almond and Verba’s book was never translated into Italian.

3 For a thorough review of data on Italy, see Segatti 2000.

largely confirm this pattern.<sup>4</sup> Segatti (2000), after a detailed analysis of all available trend data, concludes that the percentage of Italians who feel politically ineffective and perceive the political system as unresponsive has always been high and never below 45%.

A second important characteristic of the Italian political culture has been the pervasive lack of trust among citizens and toward political institutions. This sense of mistrust emerges very clearly from the anthropological study of Banfield, the considerations of Bellah, and the data of Almond and Verba. Italians do not trust their fellow countrymen, and sometimes, they trust foreigners *more* than their fellow citizens (Sniderman et al. 2000). Putnam (1993) reported that the sense of trust toward fellow citizens was related to the degree of civic-ness of a polity, but overall the level of trust is remarkably low in all subgroups (see Putnam 1993, table 4.15, p. 131).

A third character of the Italian political culture is its “localism,” the paramount importance of local identification in defining the group to which each Italian refers when he thinks of himself as part of the body politic. According to some scholars, approximately 50% of the Italians feel they belong to subnational bodies (such as the Commune and the Region) and another fifth to supranational bodies, such as the “world” and “Europe” (Sciolla 1997, 52), while no more than 30% would identify themselves with the national community (for a contrary view see Diamanti and Segatti 1994). This makes Italy a country in which national identity is weak, pride for the country is dead calm, and willingness to sacrifice for the country is minimal.

In sum, the familistic-parochial (*localista*) syndrome is characterized by high political disaffection, low trust for both the

4 Problems of wording affect the comparability of questions over time. For a discussion of these problems, see Segatti 2000.

fellow countrymen and the political institutions, the prevalence of local sources of identifications, low pride for the country, and unwillingness to make sacrifices if required.

In the last decade, some of these conclusions have been challenged both theoretically and empirically. Even if not reversed yet, new empirical results offer a different perspective from which to observe comparatively Italian political culture. In the next section, we will present some survey data that might help to shed some further light on this issue.

### **Identity, Trust and Satisfaction in the Italian Political Culture**

This section discusses three characterizing aspects of Italian political culture: localism, lack of confidence, and dissatisfaction with politics. The discussion is organized as follows: We start by briefly reviewing the most recent literature on each of these factors; we then introduce some more recent survey results,<sup>5</sup> comparing them when possible with other existing data; and lastly, we discuss the extent to which the new available data confirm or contradict previous results.

- 5 In this section I present the data of the ASES survey, conducted in the fall of the year 2000 in Italy, as part of a comparative study in nine European and nine Far East Asian countries. The survey was carried out by DOXA (a partner of Gallup international) on October 7–23, 2000, with a proportional stratified sample, using regions and size of community as strata and, within each stratum selecting a set of sampling points. The completion rate was 42.5%. The sample size is 1,016 individuals. For some analyses seven persons interviewed belonging to other nationalities have been excluded.

## **A. Localism and National Identity**

National identity is quite a difficult concept to grasp and measure. For some, the problem resides in the fact that national identity is more appropriately described at the *collective* rather than at the individual level (e.g., Smith 1999). Other scholars, mostly social psychologists (e.g., Blank, Schmidt, and Westle 2000; Carey 2002; Lilli and Diehl 1999), disagree and offer different, sometimes quite complex ways of conceptualizing and operationalizing national identity. We strike a middle way between these two approaches. We use secondary analysis of available national sample survey data to explore one important dimension of the concept of national identity: the attachment to community. Territorial communities are a component of the individual self (Smith 1991, 4) and people may feel different degrees of attachment to different territorial entities. The discussion on the nature and combinations of these different territorial allegiances has been intense in both social psychology and political science. Basically, two models have been suggested: the nested model and the cross-cutting one. In the nested model, territorial attachments are layered along a continuum, in which attachment to a larger community implies attachment to smaller ones and the final and ultimate loyalty is to the “terminal community,” the highest territorial unit to which allegiance is felt. In a cross-cutting model, allegiance is distributed among different entities, without any implication that one loyalty is stronger or more important than others. Social psychology and political science, following the pluralist tenet, tend to impute to cross-cutting allegiances more peaceful and tolerant group relations than to nested ones (Herrmann, Risse, and Brewer 2000).

In Italy, the discussion on territorial attachment has focused mostly on the so-called local level (usually meant as the town-commune level), under the rubric of “localism.” Admittedly, localism is an ambiguous concept (Diamanti 1994, 1996), which has been used to stress the

paramount importance of territorial entities narrower than the state in the Italians' feelings of attachment. In other words, as the argument goes, in Italy either a greater proportion of people feel an attachment to local territorial entities as their "terminal community" or individuals attach a greater emotional significance to subnational territorial entities than to the national one. This argument has been developed with particular reference to the concept of "territorial subculture" (Galli 1966) and used to explain the success of the *Lega Nord* party in politicizing this level of attachment (Diamanti 1996) and the weak sense of national identity. National identity is challenged not only by a strong sense of local attachment, but also by internationalism, expressed in the forms of an enthusiastic Europeanism, to further undermine the weak Italian sense of allegiance to the nation as the terminal territorial community (Segatti 1995; Martinotti and Stefanizzi 1995).

We will address here three issues related to the sense of national identity: whether national identity is weak, how it evolves over time, and how it relates to other forms of attachment. In Italy, contrary to other countries or political cultures, no apparent tension between the national and the supranational exists; this is so precisely because the national identity is so weak. Let us review the available data to see what they tell us on this point.

Our first effort has been of data stocktaking. Table 1 presents all available questions we have been able to find on feelings of territorial attachments in Italy over the last forty years. This table offers a quite complex and multifaceted picture of the Italians' sense of territorial attachments. Questions about national identity and territorial attachments vary in format and wording as well as in the list of territorial entities among which to choose—and all these factors seem to affect the results. First, as to the wording, feelings of belonging are elicited in reference sometimes to a "community" and other times to the "country" (*patria*). The explicit reference to Italy or to country might have an effect, prompting a greater number of people to select it.

Second, the list of available entities among which the respondent must choose also can make a difference. In one survey (DB 1994) “town” was excluded from the list and in another (European Community Study 1971[ECS]) it was “world” that was absent. Excluding one or the other affects the overall distribution of responses. Third, the number of people mentioning the nation or any other territorial entities is also systematically affected by the format of the alternatives. When, as in the ECS of 1971, the ITANES study of 1990, and the two World Value Surveys (WVS), two possible responses are allowed, the amount of people mentioning the nation as an ecological unit of attachment increases. This is even more so when, as in a Likert-type question asked twice (in Eurobarometer 1991 and in the International Social Survey Program [ISSP] 1995), the respondents are called to express how close they feel to every item in the list. Enabling this possibility substantially raises the percentage of people choosing the country.

**Table 1** Sense of territorial attachments – Italy, various years (percent)

	ECS 1971			WVS-1981		
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	All	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	All
World	-	-		16	13	28
Europe	8	13	21	5	17	15
Italy	37	27	65	28	33	59
Region	9	20	29	11	19	32
Town	42	34	77	40	18	62
DK	4	7	4	-	-	
Total	100	100	197	100	100	
N	2,017	2,017	1,975	1,988	1,938	3,267

**Table 1 (continued)**

	1990 ITANES			WVS-1991		
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	All	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	All
World	11	10	22	18	11	29
Europe	3	13	16	4	11	22
Italy	36	30	67	25	36	60
Region	13	27	41	8	24	29
Town	35	15	51	45	18	57
DK	1	4	-		-	
Total	100	100	196	100	100	
N	1,500	1,500	2,922	1,275	1,218	3,267

Questions: ECS-1971: Q1a. Among the following geographic units, to which one do you feel you first belong? City, locality, “canton” where you live; department or province; region; country; Europe; other. ITANES 1990: Everybody thinks of himself as being part of a commune, region, or the country in which he/she lives. Do you feel to be mostly part of a city (e.g., Bolognese), region (e.g., Emiliano); Italian, European, or citizen of the world. What’s next? WVS 1981–1991: Which of these geographical groups would you say you belong to first of all? And the next? Locality or town where you live; State or region of country where you live; The US as a whole; North America; The world as a whole; Don’t know.

**Table 1 (continued)**

	Eb – 1991	DB – January 1994	DB – December 1994	DB-June 1995	ISSP 1995	
			Country	Community		
World	-	18	21	22	20	-
Europe	60	10	9	9	5	69
Italy	90	60	54	51	56	87
Region	87	10	10	7	9	80
Town	88	-	5	9	9	82
DK	-	2	0.5	1	1	
Total		100	100	100	100	
N	1,076	1,300	405	412	794	1,094

**Table 1 (continued)**

	DB – January 1996	DB – July 1996	DB – June 1997	SWG April 1999	CIRCaP June – November 1999	
					Country	Community
World	15	18	16	19	14	21
Europe	10	6	8	9	6	13
Italy	61	59	59	56	60	39
Region	6	9	9	7	9	15
Town	6	7	7	7	8	11
DK	2	1	1	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	804	816	1,000	1007	2,003	2,003

Questions: DB-December 1994 (split half): Do you feel mostly a citizen of. . . Italy, world, region in which you were born, Europe, your own town, other. Which of the following do you consider your country? Italy, world, region in which you were born, Europe, your own town, other. DB-January 1994: Which community do you feel to belong to . . . Italy, world, region in which you were born, Europe, your own town, other. DB-June 1995, January 1996, July 1996, June 1997, April 1999 Kosovo: Which of the following do you consider your country? Italy, world, region in which you were born, Europe, your own town, other. CIRCaP June-November 1999: Which community/country do you feel to belong to? Italy, world, region in which you were born, Europe, your own town, other. ISSP – 1995: How close do you feel to . . . neighborhood, city, county, country, continent. Eb-1991 (36). People may feel different degrees of attachment to their town or village, to their region, to their country, to the European Community; or to Europe [as a whole]. Please tell me how attached you feel to . . .?

Source: Authors' development of data from above referenced surveys.

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As to evolution over time, the data does not reveal any clear pattern across such a diverse set of questions. If any, the variability seems to reside more in the different wording, format, and number of responses than in any change over time. Looking at the set of four multiple response questions, asked respectively in 1971 (ECS), 1981 (WVS), 1990 (ITANES), and 1991 (WVS), attachment to the town appears to be declining, while attachment to other political entities shows no clear pattern. However, no such a trend is detectable from the other types of questions. Moreover, variability seems to affect certain territorial entities more than others. The amount of people selecting the nation as a primary (or secondary, when more than one choice is available) object of attachment goes from a minimum of 51% in the DB 1994 survey to a maximum of 90% in the Eurobarometer survey of 1991. On the other hand, the percentage choosing either subnational or supranational entities oscillates more widely up or down, depending

on the format and kind of question. As an example, the number of people mentioning the town as primary object of attachment goes from approximately 7% in several Difebarometer surveys<sup>6</sup> to 88% in the Eurobarometer survey of 1991.

In an attempt to clarify the role of these different sources of variation among the 16 questions on territorial attachments listed in Table 1, we used an OLS model, in which three groups of independent variables were regressed on the percentage of respondents mentioning the “country” as their primary territorial attachment: question format, wording, and time. First, the format of the question, being single, multiresponse, or a Likert-scale, seems to affect the proportion of people choosing one or the other alternative. In this case, the variation is not simply an artifact of the structure of the question to which the respondent is called to react, but also a possible consequence of the fact that people belong to different political entities at the same time, and these ties are not incompatible with one another. Second, wording also plays a role. The explicit reference to the country (or to Italy) and the presence or absence of the “world” and the “town” as an alternative affect the results. Third, there is the possibility, hard to detect by an “ocular test,” that time makes a difference. To explore the source of variations more systematically we coded all questions on these three sets of variables, as dummies.<sup>7</sup> As to the time variable,

6 Difebarometer is a series of surveys carried out in the 1990s by Archivio Disarmo and SWG-Trieste to examine public attitudes toward foreign and defense policy issues.

7 As an example, the ECS 1971 question “Among the following geographic units, to which one do you feel you belong to first? And second?” was coded 1 on the multiresponse variable (allowing for two possible answers); zero on the Likert scale; and 0 on the “Country” (because no explicit reference to “*patria*” or Italy was mentioned), World and Town (we reversed the coding for World and Town, setting 0 when the item was present and 1 when it was absent).

we set a counter starting with the year 1971, the first in which data are available, as 1. Table 2 shows the results of the regressed independent variables on the percentage of respondents choosing Italy as their main territorial attachment (dependent variable).

**Table 2** Determinants of attachment to country (OLS estimate, unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors)

	b	Std. Error
Constant	62.96	7.03***
“Country”	12.86	3.31**
Town	-15.01	5.16*
World	-3.09	8.18
Likert-format	40.43	8.19***
Multiresponse	17.05	5.30**
Year	0.006	0.417
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	0.887	4.13***
N	16	

\*\*\* p<0.001, \*\* p<0.01, \* p<0.05

Source: See Table 1 and coding procedures discussed in the text.

With a predicted average of 63% choosing the country as the preferred territorial reference—slightly higher than the actual average of 61%—the table reports the impact of three main sets of predictors. The first three variables make reference to the presence (in the case of the country) and the absence (in the case of the world or the town) of each of these words in the opening statement of each question. Of the three terms, lack of reference to town and explicit reference to country or to Italy has a significant impact on the percentage mentioning the country. On the other hand, the lack of reference to the world emerges as not

significant, once controlling for the other variables. Therefore, an explicit reference to the country or to Italy increases by about 12 points the percent of those who chose Italy as main community of belonging, vis-à-vis the more neutral “geographic unit” or “community.” Part of the variance is also due to the format of the question, whether it is a multiresponse or Likert question. In particular, asking the respondent to express how “attached” (Eurobarometer 1991) or “close” (ISSP 1995) a respondent feels himself to each community of a list of territorial entities increases the percentage of those feeling close or attached to the country by approximately 40 percentage points. This could be read as a consequence of the fact that people have multiple territorial identities and these questions allow the expression of these multiple attachments. Finally, time has no appreciable effect on attachment to the country. Once controlled for the type of question and the wording, the impact of time has no significant effect, confirming the first impression of no clear trend in attachment to the country. There has been no apparent trend in nationalization or denationalization of Italian identity between the 1970s and 1999.

These results indicate that people have multiple territorial identities, and this is reflected in the high number of respondents who feel attached to more than one territorial entity. Moreover, among these multiple identities, when they are allowed to be expressed (as in the Eurobarometer 1991 and in the ISSP 1995 survey), the nation is the one most frequently mentioned. When compelled to choose among different communities, however, people make their choices by reacting not only to the set of alternatives offered but also to the clarity of the “national” cue in the survey question banner. Confirming the largely “latent” nature of national identity, when the “national” territorial identity is not clearly primed into the respondent’s mind, people are less likely to choose it as their primary unity of attachment rather than other groups. The percentage of individuals who feel themselves

“national,” in other words, depends on the different clarity with which this kind of specific identity is noted in a question. This could be read as a manifestation of national identity being taken for granted rather than being weak (Breakwell 2004). National identity might be a pervasive but not salient form of identity that needs to be activated in order to be made relevant as a choice for the respondent. To back this statement up we will offer three further pieces of evidence.

In a survey carried out in two waves between June and November 1999 the following experiment was carried out. At the beginning of the survey, a question asked to which of a list of “communities” the respondent felt he/she belonged the most (only one choice was allowed). The list included Italy, Europe, the world, the town, and the region, and the order of items was randomly rotated. To this question, 39% chose Italy, while 12% the town, 14% Europe, 15% the region, and 21% the world. Later on in the same interview—after several questions related to national identity and European integration were asked—a second question asked quite straightforwardly which, on the same list of items, the respondent considered his country (*patria*). Again, the order of items was randomly rotated. This time, 60% mentioned Italy, 14% the world, 9% the region, 6% Europe, and 8% the town. If we assume that some people might have remembered the question, and therefore the pressure to be coherent was probably working against change,<sup>8</sup> this result shows that using the word *patria* and engaging the interviewees in a discussion on national identity issues increases the number of people able to recognize this territorial entity as the most appropriate terminal community by approximately 20 percentage points.

8 In the pre-test we explored how many of the interviewed actually remembered a similar question asked before in the interview. None of those interviewed remembered such a question. This is not surprising because the questionnaire was quite long and engaging.

A second corroborating piece of evidence results from a split-half question asked in December 1994 in another survey. Toward the end of a long telephone interview on questions related to defense and security issues, half of the sample was asked which of a list of entities the respondent considered his/her country and another half, randomly assigned, was asked if the respondent felt him/herself mainly a citizen of Italy, the world, Europe, his/her region, or the town. No significant difference appears between those who chose the country in the first formulation (54%) and those who chose it with the second formulation (51%). The term “citizen” probably evokes in the respondent a similar reaction to that of “country.”<sup>9</sup>

A third and last piece of evidence arises from the ASES survey of 2001. In that survey, the opening question of the interview asked, “Do you think of yourself as Italian or as belonging to another nationality?” Some 94% answered that they think of themselves as Italians and 0.7% (n=7) as belonging to another nationality (they were in fact of nationalities other than Italian); only 51 persons (5%) of the overall sample did not think of themselves as Italians. The next question then asked, “Overall, how important is it to you that you are Italian?” Of those who thought of themselves as Italians,<sup>10</sup> 93% deemed it “extremely” (51%) or “somewhat” (42%) important. In a context in which respondents are focused to think in terms of nationality, as the banner of the opening question helped to do,<sup>11</sup> Italians have no problem

9 Coding the half-sample question in which the word “citizen” is used as 1 in the dummy variable measuring whether a reference to the country is explicitly made increases both the explanatory model of our model and the influence of the “country” dummy from 12.86 to 19.31.

10 We excluded the seven respondents of foreign nationality.

11 The opening banner stated: “Many people think of themselves as being part of a particular nationality, for example, as French or American or Japanese or whatever.”

to recognize themselves as “nationals.” It is in this discursive context that we should also interpret the less intuitively interpretable answers to the open question asking, “Is there any other community or group that you feel part of?” To such a question, only 19 persons (2%) mentioned the neighborhood, 37 persons (4%) the region, 4 persons (0.4%) an ethnic group, and 26 (3%) religious affiliations; 89% flatly said that they “do not think of themselves as part of any other community or group.” This is quite a surprising result given what we have discussed before about localism. It is less so, however, if we interpret this result in the context of an interview’s structure that frames the exchange in “national” terms. Having framed the discussion around nationality as the main category of discourse since the very beginning, most of the people adapted their following consequent opinion and attitudes to this context, and, apparently, in so doing, they neglected references to other groups and communities.

These results challenge the idea that, in Italy, national identity is weak or even non-existent. Most of the people indeed feel some sense of attachment to Italy as a country and when this identity is made salient, they forcefully do so. Rather, Italian national identity is non-salient or “banal” (Billig 1997), and it needs to be made salient in order to evoke it. In that somehow odd situation that is the interview setting, the ability to recognize that a question is calling on to for expression of national attachment depends in part on the clarity of the stimulus. A further question, that admittedly we do not address here, is whether such a lack of saliency, which makes it hard for many respondents to recognize an ambiguous stimulus about group attachment as referring to national identity, is, in itself, evidence of support of a weaker national identity.

Italians not only have a sense of national identity, but that feeling coexists with other identities. Segatti (1995, 110) has already shown, using the 1990 ITANES survey, that most Italians have multiple

identities, among which the nation is central for the majority of the population. The ASES survey confirms these conclusions, as compared to European identity. The 2000 ASES questionnaire asked, “Some people also think of themselves as being part of a larger group that includes people from other countries, for example, as European, Asian, Chinese, Islamic, etc. How about you? Do you think of yourself in this way?”<sup>12</sup> Approximately two-thirds of the respondents (68%) answered that they thought of themselves as Europeans as well and one-third (31%) that they did not think of themselves as such.<sup>13</sup> Among the 68% who think of themselves as European, an overwhelming majority (87%) of them thought their supranational European identity was extremely (31%) or somewhat (56%) important. These results are in line with a systematic amount of evidence pointing to the willingness of the Italians to think of themselves as Europeans (see Ammendola and Isernia 2005; Martinotti and Stefanizzi 1995). To explore whether these two identities, national and European, overlap or clash, we cross-tabulated the importance attached by the respondents to these two dimensions of identity.<sup>14</sup> Table 3 reports the results ( $\chi^2 = 52.047$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Quite clearly, being Italian and feeling European do not work at cross-purposes for a majority of the Italians. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents think that *both* their national

- 12 Given the overall positive attitude toward Europe among the Italians, this is a weak test of the interaction among different territorial identities. A stronger one would be to set the national identity beside the local identity.
- 13 Only 10 persons (1%) answered they had other supranational identities.
- 14 We recoded those who answer that the national and European identities are important into two groups: those who think it is very or somewhat important and those who think that it is only a little important or not at all important. In this second group are also included those who answer these two questions by indicating that they do not think of themselves in this way.

and supranational identity are very or somewhat important. They are what Segatti (1995, 111) called the “post-national nationalists.” For them, the sense of national identity does not exclude loyalty to a supranational institution. The pure nationalists, those who deem their national identity important but not their European identity are one third of the sample (31%). Almost 90% of the interviewed belong to these two groups. Eight percent of the sample think that both sources of identity attachments are not important and only 4% (n=37) is purely Europeanist in thinking that only the European identity is important.

**Table 3** National and supranational identities  
(percent, number of cases in parentheses)

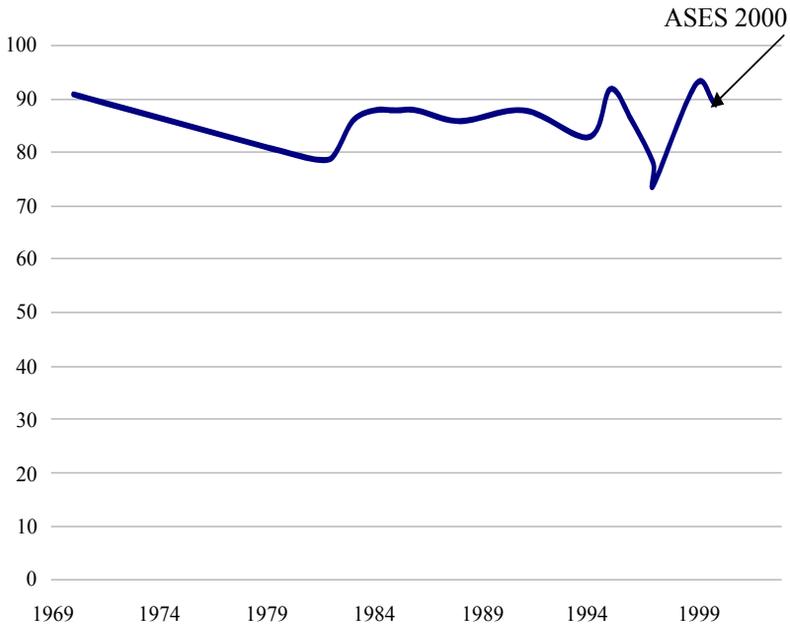
Importance supranational identity	Importance national identity		Total
	Not important	Important	
Not important	8% (85)	31% (313)	40 (398)
Important	4% (37)	57% (567)	60% (604)
Total	12% (122)	88% (880)	100% (1002)

Pearson’s  $\chi^2$  52.047, significant at the level 0.001.

Source: Authors’ development of data from the 2000 ASES Survey.

Italians are not only used to thinking of themselves as Italian, but they are quite proud of it as well. To the question “Overall, how proud are you to be Italian?” an overwhelming majority answers to be “very” or “somewhat” proud of being Italian. This trend has been quite stable since the early 1970s, as reported in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** Pride for the country (very or quite proud; percent)



Unless otherwise stated the question is: “How proud are you to be Italian? Very proud, quite proud, not very proud, not at all proud.” Those who do not answer are excluded; 1970: “We hear a lot of things about the United States of Europe. I am going to read a certain number of opinions and I would like you to tell me (for each of them) whether you agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree completely. I am proud to be an Italian. Agree completely, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, disagree completely”; 1995: “I am proud to be an Italian. Agree completely, agree somewhat, undecided, disagree somewhat, disagree completely.” The undecided category (5%) has been excluded.

Sources: Authors’ development of data from 1982–1997: Eurobarometer Mannheim Cumulative file 1970–97; 1981 and 1991: World Value Surveys; 1994–1996 and 1997: Difebarometer Survey; 1995: ISSP National Identity; 1999: CIRCaP Survey; 2000: ASES Survey; 2002: Selecta survey.

**Table 4** Pride of country among different identity groups (percent)

Pride in being Italian	Importance attached to national and European identity				Total
	Only national	Both	Only European	None	
Not proud	8	5	34	52	11
Proud	92	94	66	48	89
Total	100	100	100	100	100
(N)	(306)	(565)	(35)	(82)	(988)

Pearson's  $\chi^2$  179.851, significant at the level 0.001. Goodman and Kruskal  $\tau$ : 0.182

Source: Authors' development of data from the 2000 ASES Survey.

The general level of pride for the country coexists with a much lower level of pride for the way the political system and its institutions works (Diamanti and Segatti 1994; Segatti 2000; Battistelli and Bellucci 2000). Italians are proud of their country, but not of their political institutions, as the ASES data reported in Table 6 shows. Not surprisingly, Italians tend to be prouder of the "cultural" dimension of the country, (history, landscape, culture, art, etc.) than of the civic one (Battistelli and Bellucci 2000).

Table 5 shows that pride increases as we move from the way democracy works to Italian economic achievements and Italy's armed forces (an institution whose image has significantly improved in the last decade or so). Only 28% of the Italians are very or somewhat proud of the way the country's democracy works, and of its influence in the world; 30% are proud of the Italian welfare state and 44% of the Italian economy's achievements; 49% are proud of their armed forces.

Apart from this variation, on average, the level of pride for each of these “civic” aspects of the Italian political culture is well below that for the country as a whole. These results point to an image of public opinion highly dissatisfied with the working of the Italian political system. There is a moderate relationship between pride for the country and satisfaction “with politics in your society today.” ( $\chi^2= 69.630$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\gamma = -.54$ ,  $\tau\text{-}b = -.27$ ). Among those not proud of the country, 82% are not satisfied with politics in their society; while among those who are proud of the country, those not satisfied are 55%. However, comparatively, Italians are by far much less satisfied with politics than other Europeans. No more than 10% of the Italians are satisfied “with politics in your society today,” while 65% are not satisfied with it. This is the dimension to which we now turn.

**Table 5** Pride regarding different aspects of country (percent)

How proud are you of Italy in...	Very proud	Somewhat proud	Not so proud	Not proud at all	DK	Total
The way Italy’s democracy works	4	24	42	28	1	100
Italy’s political influence in the world	3	25	44	24	4	100
Italy’s social welfare system	3	27	42	27	1	100
Italy’s economic achievements	5	39	37	15	4	100
Italy’s armed forces	9	40	28	17	6	100

N=1009

Source: Authors’ development of data from the 2000 ASES Survey.

## **B. Confidence, Disaffection, and Political Participation**

Italy has been defined (Segatti 2000) as the case study *par excellence* of political disaffection. Since the beginning of survey research in Italy, it has been seen quite clearly that Italians feel detached, critical, and powerless vis-à-vis the political institutions. Disaffection toward politics has been not only systematically higher in Italy than in other countries, but also very stable over time. In Italy the *cri de douleur* about the decline in public confidence does not apply (Norris 1999; Pharr and Putnam 2000), because confidence was never high in the first place, irrespective of the sea-change in the social, economic, and political changes citizens have gone through in the last 40 years.

To make the puzzle even more elusive, attitudes toward politics and political institutions do not seem to relate to actual political behavior (contrary to what happens in other countries, such as the US, see Abramson and Aldrich 1982). For more than 40 years, Italy has seen a startling low level of political efficacy coexist with a record high level of voter turnout. We examine here two dimensions of this phenomenon: subjective political efficacy, a standard measure of the political competence of citizenship, and confidence in a wide set of institutions.

As to political efficacy, Table 6 presents the trend on four standard indicators of political efficacy. The general picture is unequivocal and the message it sends is clear and sharp. A great majority of Italians thought in the past, and still think now, that politics is so complicated that one cannot understand what is happening, that those running for national parliament immediately stop thinking about the public's interest and caring about what people think once they get elected, and that citizens have no say in what the government does. No trend is detectable in the data. If possible, the impression is that disaffection increases slightly over time (Segatti 2000).

**Table 6** Level of political dissatisfaction in different years  
(percent in agreement with sentences)

	1959	1968	1972	1975	1985	1990
Politics so complicated	65	80	85	83	79	89
(n)	(801)	(2001)	(1602)	(1384)	(2003)	(1486)
People no influence	84	-	-	73	-	78
(n)	(821)			(1304)		(1466)
Politicians lose touch	90	52	93	88	83	90
(n)	(814)	(2497)	(1614)	(1308)	(1989)	(1446)
Politicians don't care	-	67	77	81	81	83
(n)		(1831)	(1516)	(1329)	(1958)	(1474)
	1996	2000	2001	2004	2006	
Politics so complicated	-	74	88	85	81	
(n)		(1016)	(3163)	(1048)	(2005)	
People no influence	52	70	84	83	73	
(n)	(2416)	(1016)	(3136)	(1048)	(2005)	
Politicians lose touch	83	64	94	90	88	
(n)	(2430)	(1016)	(3119)	(1048)	(2005)	
Politicians don't care	-	69	88	-	90	
(n)		(1016)	(3135)		(2005)	

Sources for authors' development of data and question wording from:

**1959 Civic Culture:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Some people say that politics and government are so complicated that the average man cannot really understand what is going on. In general, do you agree or disagree with that. 2. “Lose touch”: All candidates sound good in their speeches but you can never tell what they will do after they are elected. 3. “No influence”: People like me don’t have any say about what the government does; **1968 Barnes and Sani:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that people like me can’t really understand what’s going on; 2. “Lose touch”: In general, the deputies we elect quickly lose contact with the people; 3. “Don’t care”: I don’t think the government worries much about what people like me think ; **1972 Barnes and Sani:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that people like me can’t really understand what’s going on; 2. “Lose touch”: Politicians talk a lot but accomplish little. 3. “Don’t care”: I don’t think the government worries much about what people like me think ; **1975 Political Action Study:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on. 2. “Lose touch”: Generally speaking, those we elect to [parliament] lose touch with the people pretty quickly. 3. “Don’t care”: I don’t think that public officials care much about what people like me think. 4. “No influence”: People like me have no say in what the government does; **1985 Four Nations Study:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Politics is so complicated that people like me can’t really understand what’s going on; 2. “Lose touch”: Those in power, always follow their personal interest; 3. “Don’t care”: Politicians do not worry much about what people like me think; **1990, 1996, 2001, 2004, 2006 ITANES:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Sometimes, politics is so complicated that people like me can’t really understand what’s going on; 2. “No influence”: People like me have no say in what the government does; 3. “Lose touch”: In general, people we elect to Parliament quickly lose contact with the people; 4. “Don’t care”: I don’t think the politicians/parties worry much about what people like me think; **2000 ASES:** 1. “Politics so complicated”: Politics and government are so complicated that sometimes I cannot understand what’s happening (Q201d); 2. “No influence”: People like me don’t have any say in what the government does (Q201c); 3. “Lose touch”: People who are elected to the national parliament stop thinking about the public’s interest immediately (Q201f). 4. “Don’t care”: I don’t think governmental officials care much what people like me think (Q201g).

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As to confidence in institutions, the ASES 2001 and ITANES 2006 surveys confirm the low level of confidence in several political institutions, with political parties always at the bottom of the list, with only 11% having a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in them in 2001 and 26% in 2006. Political leaders follow closely, with only 14% of the public trusting them. The main political institutions—the parliament, the government, the judiciary and bureaucracy—have the confidence of no more than one-fourth of the sample (with two exceptions, police, at 63%, and the armed forces, at 56% in 2001 and 77% in 2006). A slight majority of the Italians have confidence in the media and big business (but the latter declined to 37% in 2006).

The combination of lack of trust in the main political institutions and low level of subjective political efficacy contribute toward explaining why only 10% of the sample is satisfied “with politics in your society today.” And, of course, the two are closely related ( $r = 0.353$ ,  $p < .001$ ),<sup>15</sup> people who are highly dissatisfied also feel subjectively inefficient.

- 15 The correlation coefficient is computed on an index of political trust, based on the individual scores in the items related to political institutions and an index of subjective political efficacy, based on a summated rating index of the four variables presented in table 6. The index of political trust has a range from of 1 to 4, with mean 2.06 and median 2.12. The index of political dissatisfaction has a range from of 1 to 5 with mean 2.12 and median 2.

**Table 7a** Confidence in different national institutions – 2001 (percent)

How much confidence do you have in...	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not much	None at all	DK	Total
National parliament	3	22	42	30	3	100
Political parties	1	10	38	48	3	100
Italian government	2	23	39	33	3	100
Law and the courts	2	25	41	28	3	100
Main Italian political leaders	1	13	42	42	3	100
Police	10	53	24	10	3	100
Civil service	2	26	44	27	2	100
Military	10	46	24	14	5	100
Big business	11	50	23	11	4	100
Media	4	41	37	16	2	100

Source: Authors' development of data from ASES 2001; N=1009.

**Table 7b** Confidence in different national institutions (percent) – 2006

How much confidence do you have in...	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not much	None at all	DK	Total
National parliament	6	43	41	7	3	100
Political parties	2	24	56	16	2	100
President of the Republic	31	49	13	3	4	100
Law and the courts	11	47	32	7	3	100
Church	21	43	26	8	2	100
Police	26	54	17	2	1	100
Civil service	2	26	44	27	2	100
Military	20	57	18	3	2	100
Big business	4	33	44	9	10	100
Local government	7	44	35	12	2	100
Europe	9	53	30	4	4	100

Source: Authors' development of data from ITANES 2006.

From this viewpoint, the most recent data corroborate what commentators have written all along: Italians feel detached from the political system and its main political actors, confidence in public institutions is rare, and trust in parties and political leaders is almost nonexistent. Looking at the characteristics of those who are satisfied and dissatisfied with politics (tables 8 and 9), some patterns do emerge.

**Table 8** Confidence in public institutions by sociopolitical characteristics (percent)

	Level of confidence in political institutions*			Total
	Low	In-between	High	
<b>Gender</b>				
<b>Male</b>	37	30	33	100 (455)
<b>Female</b>	39	29	31	100 (420)
<b>Age</b>				
<b>18–29</b>	40	21	39	100 (191)
<b>30–44</b>	42	31	27	100 (303)
<b>45–64</b>	35	35	31	100 (271)
<b>65 and over</b>	34	30	35	100 (110)
<b>Education</b>				
<b>Elementary</b>	38	33	30	100 (141)
<b>Junior</b>	45	27	27	100 (233)
<b>High School</b>	38	31	31	100 (349)
<b>University</b>	29	29	42	100 (151)
<b>Left-Right</b>				
<b>Extreme left</b>	32	24	43	100 (99)
<b>Left</b>	25	33	41	100 (138)

**Table 8 (continued)**

	Level of confidence in political institutions*			Total
	Low	In-between	High	
<b>Center</b>	32	31	37	100 (224)
<b>Right</b>	42	28	30	100 (137)
<b>Extreme right</b>	49	31	19	100 (77)
<b>Party Preference</b>				
<b>Center-Right</b>	41	29	29	100 (264)
<b>Center-Left</b>	24	30	45	100 (239)
<b>Mass attendance</b>				
<b>Regularly</b>	34	31	36	100 (255)
<b>Occasionally</b>	35	31	34	100 (310)
<b>Never</b>	45	28	26	100 (310)
<b>Regions</b>				
<b>North-West</b>	34	28	37	100 (168)
<b>North-East</b>	26	32	42	100 (184)
<b>Center</b>	48	27	25	100 (199)
<b>South and Islands</b>	41	31	28	100 (324)

\* The index is computed from the question “How much confidence do you have in...” using the following items: national parliament, political parties, government, law and the courts, main political leaders, police, civil service and the military. The index was then recoded in three groups of approximately equal size.

Source: Authors’ development of data from ASES 2000 Survey.

Starting from political efficacy (Table 9), the ASES 2001 data show that belief in it is stronger among males, better educated citizens, and on the center-left of the political spectrum, while a lower sense of political efficacy is more frequent among the less educated, women, and on the center-right. Age has no clear linear impact: Mature adults, now between 45 and 64 years of age, are slightly more likely to feel themselves more efficacious politically than their younger and older age cohorts.

**Table 9** Subjective political efficacy by sociopolitical characteristics (percent)

	Level of subjective political efficacy*			Total
	Low	In-between	High	
<b>Gender</b>				
<b>Male</b>	37	33	29	100 (488)
<b>Female</b>	46	32	22	100 (484)
<b>Age</b>				
<b>18–29</b>	42	35	23	100 (217)
<b>30–44</b>	41	35	24	100 (344)
<b>45–64</b>	39	30	31	100 (295)
<b>65 and over</b>	52	28	20	100 (116)
<b>Education</b>				
<b>Elementary</b>	50	31	20	100 (153)
<b>Junior</b>	48	30	22	100 (267)
<b>High School</b>	40	35	25	100 (382)
<b>University</b>	28	34	37	100 (169)
<b>Left-Right</b>				
<b>Extreme left</b>	32	30	38	100 (104)
<b>Left</b>	30	42	28	100 (153)

**Table 9 (continued)**

	Level of subjective political efficacy*			Total
	Low	In-between	High	
<b>Center</b>	41	34	25	100 (248)
<b>Right</b>	35	36	29	100 (150)
<b>Extreme right</b>	48	31	21	100 (84)
<b>Party Preference</b>				
<b>Center-Right</b>	40	34	26	100 (284)
<b>Center-Left</b>	30	36	34	100 (257)
<b>Mass attendance</b>				
<b>Regularly</b>	40	36	24	100 (289)
<b>Occasionally</b>	39	33	28	100 (340)
<b>Never</b>	45	30	24	100 (343)
<b>Regions</b>				
<b>North-West</b>	38	30	32	100 (193)
<b>North-East</b>	42	29	28	100 (200)
<b>Center</b>	41	36	23	100 (221)
<b>South and Islands</b>	44	34	23	100 (358)

\* The index is computed from the four questions used in Table 5. The index was then recoded in three groups of approximately equal size.

Source: Authors' development of data from 2000 ASSES Survey.

The results are slightly different if we look at confidence in institutions. Here, even the few, and ultimately not dramatic, differences among the different socio-economic and political subgroups we found when examining political efficacy, almost fade away. Gender, a major factor differentiating those with registering low or high political efficacy, does not play any appreciable role and once again age has no clear

cut impact. Education seems to work in the expected direction, but its effect is clearly seen only among those with more than a high school degree. Party preferences and ideological leanings have a stronger impact than in the case of confidence. This is probably a consequence of the impact of party preferences on the judgment of the institutions and the ruling political parties. In fall 2000, the center-left coalition was in charge and trust in public institutions was higher among those who voted for this side or locate themselves at the center-left of the ideological spectrum. Also, Mass attendance plays a slightly greater role than in the case of political efficacy, with 45% of those who never attend Mass having a low level of confidence and 34% of those who attend regularly having a low level of confidence.

To what extent does this pervasive political disaffection and lack of confidence contribute toward explaining the propensity to take part in political activity, namely political participation? We have several measures of political participation in the ASES survey. A first standard measure of a traditional form of participation is voting. To the question “have you voted in national/local/European elections?” the respondents answered 88%, 87%, and 83% respectively that they had voted in almost all of them. Voting, at each of these three levels, is not related to political efficacy and only weakly to trust in political institutions. In fact, voting as a form of political participation stands in a class of its own among Italians, as is seen in Table 10 for which factor analysis was performed on a set of statements about political efficacy and competence, three of them related to voting behavior. This analysis shows that voting considerations in the Italians’ mind are orthogonal to the overall sense of political efficacy that each respondent subjectively feels. People’s voting behavior and the perception of the government’s responsiveness to citizens’ demands are quite distinct in peoples’ minds. The first factor, which captures the traditional measure of political efficacy, is more powerful in explaining the variation among variables than the second factor (33% of the total variance), but together they

still explain only half of the total inter-items variance. That voting is not necessarily related to influence—and therefore to the perception of government’s responsiveness to citizens—is also indirectly inferred by the low loading of the item that states “The way people vote is the main thing that decides how this country is run.” This seems to imply that voting attitudes are not related to the sense of being influential, but rather they are affected by a normative prescription that makes voting felt to be mandatory, irrespective of the impact on the political process each individual thinks he/she has through this individual act.

**Table 10** Dimensions of the subjective sense of political efficacy  
(Principal component analysis, factor scores)

How much do you agree or disagree with the statement. . .	Factor 1	Factor 2
I don’t think governmental officials care much what people like me think	0.779	
People who are elected to the National Parliament stop thinking about the public’s interest immediately	0.774	
There is widespread corruption among those who manage our national politics	0.709	
People like me don’t have any say in what the government does	0.634	
Politics and government are so complicated that sometimes I cannot understand what’s happening	0.597	
Citizens have a duty to vote in elections (polarity inverted)		0.850
Since so many other people vote in elections, it really doesn’t matter whether I vote or not		0.729
The way people vote is the main thing that decides how this country is run (polarity inverted)		0.395

Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization.

Source: Authors’ development of data from ASES 2000 Survey.

Slightly different—and stronger—are the relationships between both sense of political efficacy and trust and other forms of political participation. Table 11 shows the correlation among trust and disaffection with level of political participation.<sup>16</sup> Political participation is more strongly related with sense of political efficacy than with trust. In fact, 53% percent of those with a low sense of political efficacy have a low level of political participation, while only 16% of those with a high sense of political efficacy have a low level of participation. Similarly, among those with low trust, 43% have a minimal level of participation, while among those with high trust in political institutions 27% have a low level of participation. In line with previous research on this topic, in Italy and abroad, sense of political efficacy exerts an influence on the level of political participation; the perception that the individual makes a difference on political institutions prompts a person to be actively engaged in some sort of political activity. An important difference between trust and efficacy, which might explain why trust is less strongly related to participation, is what happens at the two extreme poles of the index of participation. Trust has no discriminating effect among them: 35% of those low on political trust and 38% of those with high trust are actively involved in political activities of different kinds. This result points out that trust—and the lack of it—works differently at the low and high pole of the level of involvement of political activity. At the low level, to have trust in institutions slightly increases the likelihood to participate. At the higher level of political participation, on the contrary, trust has no effect at all. Trust (or lack of it) do not motivate people to participate.

16 The index is built from the question that asks “Have you ever been involved in political activity” using the following items of political participation: sign a petition, contribute money to the campaign of a party or candidate, contact an elected politician about a personal problem, attend protest or march in demonstrations, contact an elected politician about a national issue, actively help a political party or candidate.

**Table 11** Pearson's correlations among dimensions of trust and disaffection and level of political participation

	Level of participation	Trust political institutions	Political efficacy
Level of political participation	-	0.138*	0.281*
Trust political institutions	-	-	0.343*
Political efficacy	-	-	-

\* Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' development of data from ASES 2000 Survey.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have examined three dimensions of political culture in which Italy has traditionally been marked as lacking or deficient in comparison to other European countries: sense of national attachment, trust in institutions, and disaffection with politics. Comparing the more recent data with the past, we have found continuities and differences in all three dimensions. National identity is the dimension in which a more striking difference is found with other analyses. Contrary to what has often been claimed, namely, that Italy exists even though Italians are still to be made, the sense of attachment to the country is not low or, in any meaningful sense, weak. In fact, sense of belonging to the country is a widespread feeling among an overwhelming majority of the population. These results, however, do not stem from a reversal in the trend of national attachment in Italy, but simply from a different way of looking at the same data. In fact, from what we can infer from the existing trend, there is no discernible over-time pattern

in levels of national attachment. What makes a real difference is the way national identity is discussed and framed in surveys. National identity is, as in several other countries, a “banal” identity, taken for granted and rarely activated. As such, it is not easily evoked in the survey context. Only in the presence of a clear stimulus, does national identity become salient and detectable.

Not much has changed, on the contrary, with the other two dimensions we have analyzed: disaffection and trust in institutions. The data from the first decade of the twenty-first century still show, as in the past, the coexistence of a low level of personal subjective efficacy and minimal confidence in political institutions with record-high levels of voting. The indictment, voiced over 50 years ago, that the Italian political culture is one of disaffection and distrust still seems to be with us.

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## Embedded and Defective Democracies: Where Does Israel Stand?

Wolfgang Merkel

The twentieth century saw an impressive advance in democracy worldwide. The third wave of democratization, which had started with the fall of the last rightist dictatorships in Western Europe (Portugal, Greece, Spain) in the mid-1970s, continued in Latin America during the 1980s, reached East Asia, swept over the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and even touched a few African countries, is without comparison in history. Especially from a long-term perspective, the third wave of democratization has left a more lasting political heritage for the twenty-first century than all the various types and ideologies of totalitarian rule. Therefore, the twentieth century was, mainly in its last quarter, the century of democracy. Freedom House (FH) numbers leave no doubt of this—at first glance.

Freedom House has become the preferred source of data on democratization used by journalists, publicists, essayists, and political scientists around the world since they provide on the Internet easily accessible data on countries worldwide and timelines for the democratic development of each country over the last three decades. The minimal requirement for a state to be listed as democratic by Freedom House is called *electoral democracy*. It is the basis for these successful statistics. This term, however, is unsatisfactory from both a theoretical as well as normative perspective. It is an even narrower understanding of democracy than Robert Dahl's polyarchy concept (1971) with its

institutional minima. *Electoral democracy* merely means that the election of the ruling elite is based on the formal universal right to vote, i.e., that elections are general, free, and regular. Freedom House does not take into consideration further thoughts about the meaningfulness of “democratic elections,” as demanded by Hadenius (1992).

The term *electoral democracy* is therefore theoretically incomplete and analytically not very useful. To be able to use it for conceptually meaningful, comparative research on democracies the term must be differentiated or replaced. Though relying on the Freedom House data (Karatnicky 1999; Diamond 2000), one can distinguish between *liberal*, *semi-liberal*, and *illiberal democracies*. Already this simple differentiation taints the picture of successful democratizations of the twentieth century.

**Table 1** Semi-liberal, illiberal, and liberal democracies as share of electoral democracy (2008)

<b>Electoral democracies</b>		<b>Liberal democracies</b>		<b>Semi-liberal democracies</b>		<b>Illiberal democracies</b>	
<i>Percent of political regimes</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent of electoral democracies</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent of electoral democracies</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent of electoral democracies</i>	<i>Total</i>
61.7	119	69.6	78	21.4	24	8.9	10

Source: Freedom House (2009).

These numbers show that a considerable percentage of the states Freedom House lists as *electoral democracies* are not liberal, constitutional democracies. In 2009, only 61.7% of all electoral

democracies can be called liberal. However, the differentiation into liberal, semi-liberal, and illiberal democracies is based on a theoretically unsophisticated measure of democracy. Karatnicky (1999, 95) and Diamond (2000, 95) simply use numerical thresholds of the *civil rights scale*, one of the two measurement scales used by Freedom House. Any regime scoring one or two points on this 7-point scale counts as a liberal democracy. A score of 2.5–3 counts as semi-liberal and everything below 3.5 counts as an illiberal democracy.<sup>1</sup> There is no reason to restrict the scores only to civil liberties, excluding political rights. Therefore, I will combine both scores but still use the thresholds outlined above. Of all political regimes in 193 sovereign countries, 119 (61.7%) can be considered by the FH data electoral, i.e., minimalist defined democracies. Out of these electoral democracies are 69.6% liberal democracies, i.e., working democracies based on a solid rule of law. According to Freedom House, Israel is among them. Of the others, 21.4% are semi-liberal and 8.9% are illiberal democratic regimes. Roughly one-third of all formal, electoral democracies are diminished subtypes, i.e., defective democracies. These defective democracies are rather not simply transitional regimes on the way toward consolidated democracies or full blown autocracies. However, this first glance is simply based on numerical definitions of regime types based on the FH data. Theoretically, the diminished subtypes are still underspecified. Contrary to Freedom House, we have a bulk

1 The 7-point regime scale spans from fully consolidated constitutional “liberal” democracies like Denmark (1) to absolutely closed totalitarian dictatorships like North Korea (7). It is not very convincing, however, that 5.5 (1.0–5.5) points on this scale are reserved for different types of democracies (liberal, semi-liberal, and illiberal) whereas the differentiation of authoritarian and totalitarian takes up only 1.5 points (5.5–7.0).

of purely theoretical literature on democratic theory which cannot easily be applied to comparative empirical research on real existing political regimes.

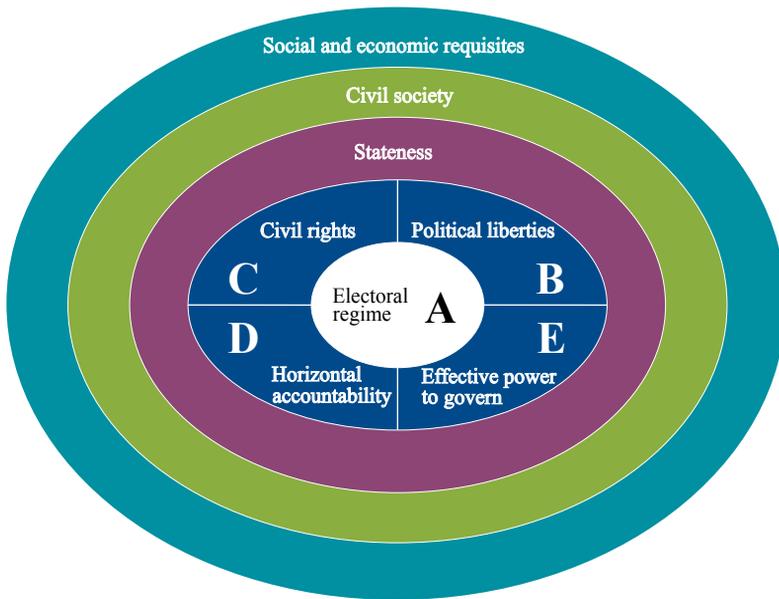
Yet, there is a third way between purely theoretical debate on democracy or single-country case studies and the statistical survey of all states worldwide for comparative research on democracy. Its point of departure, however, has to be a more meaningful concept of democracy with more demanding normative and analytical criteria than that of Freedom House. From a normative perspective, this concept also has to include both the necessary condition of free elections and those partial regimes of a political system, which guarantee that these elections are “meaningful” (Hadenius 1992) for democratic rule. Furthermore, it has to take into account whether vertical and horizontal accountability of the governing to the governed is secured between elections, and if democratic norms and institutions, which are defined later in this paper, are guaranteed. A functioning constitutional state based on the rule of law is an explicit part of this concept (Böckenförde 1991; Habermas 1992, 166ff., 199; Lauth 2001). What is needed is a mid-range root concept of democracy that can be applied in comparative research on democracies.

### **Embedded Democracy as Root Concept**

Modern democracies are complex structures of institutions. They have to cope with the structural conditions of modern rule, internally with complex societies and externally with a challenging environment. They have to develop certain structures to be able to fulfill various functions.

The concept of *embedded democracy*<sup>2</sup> follows the idea that stable constitutional democracies are embedded in two ways. Internally, the specific interdependence and independence of the different partial regimes of a democracy secure its normative and functional existence. Externally, these partial regimes are embedded in spheres of enabling conditions of democracy that protect it from outer as well as inner shocks and destabilizing tendencies.

**Figure 1** The concept of embedded democracy



- 2 The concept of *embedded democracy* was developed in the Research-Project “Defective Democracies,” by Wolfgang Merkel (Heidelberg/Berlin), Hans-Jürgen Puhle (Frankfurt a.M.), Aurel Croissant (Heidelberg), and Peter Thiery (Heidelberg). See, among others, Merkel, Puhle et al. (2003; 2005); Croissant and Merkel (2004).

## The Partial Regimes of a Democracy

An embedded, constitutional democracy consists of five partial regimes: a democratic electoral regime (A), political rights of participation (B), civil rights (C), horizontal accountability (D), and the guarantee that the effective power to govern lies in the hands of the democratically elected representatives (E). These five partial regimes show that our concept of democracy goes beyond the definitions put forth by Downs (1968), Huntington (1991), Przeworski (1991), and even Robert Dahl's concept of polyarchy (1971). Still, the concept is "realistic" in that it is based exclusively on the institutional architecture of a democracy and does not use *outputs* or *outcomes* as defining characteristics of a constitutional democracy. Our understanding of democracy therefore lies between the ones put forth by Joseph Schumpeter and Hermann Heller. A welfare state, fair distribution of economic goods, or even "social justice"<sup>3</sup> may be desired policy results of democratic processes of decision-making, but they are not its defining elements. A sufficient definition of democracy has to go beyond simple democratic electoralism because only the other four partial regimes guarantee that not only the procedural aspect but also the goals of democratic elections are secured. For democratic elections to be "meaningful," not only does the selection process of the governing elite have to be democratically fair, but there also has to be an institutional guarantee that the democratically elected representatives rule by democratic and constitutional principles between elections. At this point, the simple term *electoral democracy* turns out to be too narrow from

3 For a discussion of the problematic and construction of a modern understanding of justice, see Rawls (1971, 1991); Walzer (1998); Kersting (2000); and Sen (2000).

a normative and logical perspective.<sup>4</sup> It reduces democracy to the correct procedure of democratic elections, but it does not include sufficient institutional guarantees assuring that those elections are “meaningful,” i.e., that the democratically elected elites will rule according to constitutional principles of democracy.

### **A. The Electoral Regime**

In a democracy, the *electoral regime* has the function of making the access to public power positions in the state dependent on the results of open, competitive elections. The electoral regime has the central position among the five partial regimes of *embedded democracy* as it is the most obvious expression of the sovereignty of the people, participation of citizens, and equal weight of their individual preferences. Moreover, open pluralistic competition over central power positions is the distinguishing difference between democracy and autocracy. Equal political rights (partial regime B) are the minimal requirements for a democratic electoral regime (regular, free, general, equal, and fair elections) (Hadenius 1992). The two closely interconnected partial regimes mentioned, therefore, embody the essence of vertical accountability in a democracy (Merkel 1999).

Borrowing from Robert Dahl (1989, 221), a democratic electoral regime has four supporting elements: universal, active suffrage; universal, passive right to vote; free and fair elections; and elected representatives. Elections are a sanctioning mechanism that can—periodically—be used as processes of vertical accountability. They

4 Many critics who claim that our concept of embedded or defective democracy is normatively overstretched fail to recognize the logically forcing functional complementarity of the five partial regimes. We do not talk about a “perfect democracy,” as many insinuate, misinterpreting the semantic antonym (perfect is not the semantic-logic opposite of defect), but about a “functioning constitutional democracy.”

are fraught with consequences as access to and retention of power positions in the state are directly dependent on the preferences of the voter. The voters can therefore sanction elected representatives. However, this control is limited to the election of the governing elite and does not have any influence on how power is exercised between elections. At most, voters have continuing control in so far as a rational politician who wants to be reelected will conform his governing to the wishes of the voters. However, this does not guarantee democratic or constitutional governing, as many examples of young democracies of the third wave show (see Merkel, Puhle et al. 2003). A democratic electoral regime is therefore a necessary—but not sufficient—condition for democratic governing.

### **B. Political Rights**

Political rights of participation are preconditions for elections. They go beyond the right to vote. They complete the vertical dimension of democracy and make the public arena an independent political sphere of action where organizational and communicative power is developed. Here, collective formulation of opinions and demands determines and supports competition over positions of power. Political rights have the function of enabling democratic elections that are bound to the organized and unorganized pluralistic interests of complex societies. The institutional core of political rights is the right to political communication and organization, which are vital parts of a complete democratic regime (Dahl 1971, 1989). They are embodied in the unlimited validity of the right to freedom of speech and opinion and the right to association, demonstration, and petition. Besides the public media, private media must have considerable influence. The distribution as well as reception of information and news cannot be regulated by politically motivated restrictions. No political party following the procedures of a democratic constitution can be denied

the right to political organization and free speech. Citizens must have the opportunity to form interest groups freely and independently from the state and be able to act within those groups (Hadenius 1992, 51ff.).

These rights constitute an independent sphere of democracy and can therefore be regarded as the “backbone” of a distinct partial regime (Beetham 1994; Bollen 1993, 6ff.). It is of central importance that the institutionalized rights of freedom aim at the possibility of formulation, presentation, and equal consideration of citizens’ preferences (Dahl 1971, 2). The internal logic of political rights of communication and organization goes beyond a focus on political power in the stricter sense. In the public arena, social and communicative power must have the ability to organize in advance and without the formalized processes of the development of political opinion and demand (Habermas 1962, 1992). This kind of public arena allows the complete development of political and civil society, which again promotes the sensitivity of state institutions to the interests and preferences of society. From this point of view the two partial regimes A and B can only secure the functional logic of democratic elections when they are mutually connected. Together they promote responsive governing by supplementing the periodical control of elections with soft but steady public control between elections. Both partial regimes together, however, still cannot secure alone the constitutional democratic standards of responsive and responsible governing.

### **C. Civil Rights**

Partial regimes A and B have to be supplemented by civil rights. Even more than the institutionalization of mutual checks and balances, civil rights are central to the rule of law in an *embedded democracy*. In research on democracy, the term “rule of law” is often used in a non-uniform manner and without theoretical substantiation (Nino 1996, 2; Reitz 1997). To put it simply, the rule of law is the principle that the state is bound to the effective law and acts according to clearly

defined prerogatives. The rule of law, therefore, is understood as containment and limitation of the exercise of state power (Elster 1988, 2f.). Historically, this principle developed from growing control over monarchs. Here it is seen as a functionally necessary part of a democratic regime. The actual core of liberal rule of law lies in basic constitutional rights. These rights protect the individual against the state executive and against acts of the elected legislator which infringe on an individual's freedom. For this to be guaranteed, there need to be further aspects of the rule of law such as independent courts. Courts have to serve as an independent authority authorized to execute judicial review of legislative (surveillance of norms) and executive (surveillance of bureaucracy) acts. They function as constitutional custodians of the legislature and supervisors of executive conformity to law.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the rule of law is effective as a horizontal "strut" for the above-mentioned institutional minima of democratic elections and democratic participation.

As "negative" rights of freedom against the state, civil rights touch on questions about the reach of and claim to power. In a constitutional democracy these rights have to be put out of reach of majority decisions. Otherwise, majoritarian democracies could turn into despotism of the majority (Tocqueville 1985[1835]). The executive and legislative branches need barriers that prevent individuals, groups, or political opposition from being oppressed by a democratic (majority) decision. Civil rights, therefore, are a basic condition of the existence of the concept of citizenship (Linz and Stephan 1996, 10). Individual rights of protection grant legal protection of life, freedom, and property—the threefold meaning of Locke's term *property*—and protection against illegitimate arrest, exile, terror, torture, or forbidden intervention into personal life, by the side of the state and by the side

5 Claims Maus (1994, 298ff.) following Kant.

of private or anti-state forces and actors. Equal access to the law and equal treatment by the law are basic civil rights.<sup>6</sup> These civil rights tame majoritarian democratic cycles of power and thereby support—seemingly paradoxically—the democratization of democracy. This is another point the “electoralists” have not thought through sufficiently.<sup>7</sup> But even the interdependent and mutually supporting partial regimes of democratic elections (A), pluralistic free participation (B), and the guarantee of civil rights (C), cannot alone sufficiently constitute or support a constitutional democracy.

#### **D. Division of Powers and Horizontal Accountability**

The fourth partial regime of a constitutional democracy is division of powers and the resulting “horizontal accountability.” By horizontal accountability we understand in accordance with O’Donnell (1994, 61) that elected authorities are surveyed by a network of relatively autonomous institutions and can be pinned down to constitutionally defined, lawful action. The institutionalization of horizontal accountability between state powers closes a central gap of control in the basic democratic structure, which is not covered by the first three partial regimes.<sup>8</sup> Institutions of vertical accountability control the government only periodically through elections and referendum or “softly” through the public arena. Securing civil rights, guarantees barriers against

6 This also means that cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities are not prevented from practicing their culture, language, or religion and are not legally discriminated against.

7 These violations of civil rights can be found especially in young democracies (cf. Merkel, Puhle et al. 2003). How else other than “defective” should these democracies be named then?

8 This dimension is absent in the more recent research of Robert Dahl (1989). While in 1971 Dahl thought such control to be a necessary point among his eight institutional minima for the polyarchy concept, he drops it in 1989.

the state infringing on individual freedoms. However, civil rights do not offer further safety measures preventing self-perpetuation or abuse of power generated by polyarchy. Horizontal accountability of power concerns the structure of power. The term includes lawful government action that is checked by division of power between mutually interdependent and autonomous legislative, executive, and judiciary bodies. The guarantee of institutional horizontal autonomy in a constitutional state thereby does not imply that the three powers are strictly separated from each other. Horizontal autonomy rather means that the three bodies check each other reciprocally, without dominating or interfering with the functional sphere of another power.

Through horizontal accountability, responsiveness and the responsibility of government are not only secured periodically by elections but also permanently by constitutional powers mutually checking and balancing each other. The exercise of executive power is especially limited (Beetham and Boyle 1995, 66ff.). This requires an independent and functional judiciary that can review executive and legislative acts. The question of if or how far the division of power between the executive and the legislative is part of the rule of law and democracy is controversial. At least in the American and German tradition this is generally answered in the affirmative, although the emphasis has been shifted toward a functionally necessary fusion of powers. This can be seen most obviously in parliamentary systems, where the division of executive and legislative is to a large extent replaced by the dualism of government and opposition (Beyme 1999). In presidential systems, in which the executive and the legislative are each independently legitimized through elections, this separation is more obvious.

### **E. Effective Power to Govern**

The fifth and last partial regime stresses the necessity that the elected representatives be the ones actually governing. The criterion of

effective power to govern refers to a feature which can be considered self-evident in old democracies but cannot be taken for granted in new democracies (Schmitter and Karl 1991, 81; Collier and Levitsky 1997, 442ff.). This criterion prevents extra-constitutional actors which are not subject to democratic accountability, like the military or other powerful actors, from holding (final) decision-making power in certain policy fields. Specifically, this refers to so-called reserved policy domains, areas over which the government and parliament do not possess sufficient decision-making authority, as well as the specific problem of insufficient control over the military and police (Morlino 1998, 71ff.). It is crucial for the concept of *embedded democracy* that effective power to govern lies in the hands of democratically elected representatives. This becomes clear when examining the many young democracies in Latin America and East, South, and Southeast Asia, where the military still has autonomous policy domains in foreign and national security policy, which are incompatible with “meaningful” democratic elections.

Reserved political domains, however, have to be strictly separated from such political matters, which must be taken out of reach of (simple) democratic majority decisions through constitutional consent, whether to secure the continued existence of the democracy itself (e.g., constitutional court) or to provide certain organs with more autonomy (e.g., central bank). As demonstrated above, organs such as a constitutional court are legitimate parts of the institutional arrangement of a democracy. In the case of a central bank, however, the argument of principal revocation is valid. At present there is no observable tendency in established democracies to limit the autonomy of central banks again, as the example of the EU suggests. Still, such a withdrawal of authority is neither unthinkable nor beyond the reach of political processes and could not be prevented by the actors concerned. However, there is a clear difference in the power positions of veto powers, which often

have secured their prerogatives during the transition from authoritarian to democratic regimes and therefore gained privileges for themselves in an act of self-empowerment. These are not cases of democratic delegation of power and competences as it is in the case of a central bank or an office for the control and supervision of cartels, but it is instead the usurpation of power against democratic institutions.

Table 2 again shows the five partial regimes with their most important elements. In empirical analyses, these elements can be further differentiated into test criteria to analyze more precisely the condition of an existent democracy or compare specific democracies (Merkel, Puhle et al. 2003).

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**Table 2** Dimensions, partial regimes  
and criteria of embedded democracy

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**I. Dimension of vertical legitimacy and control**

A. Electoral regime

- (1) Elected officials
- (2) Inclusive suffrage
- (3.) Right to candidacy
- (4.) Correctly organized, free and fair elections

B. Political rights

- (5) Press freedom
- (6) Freedom of association

**II. Dimension of liberal constitutionalism and rule of law**

C. Civil rights

- (7) Individual liberties from violations of own rights by state/private agents
- (8) Equality before the law

D. Horizontal accountability

- (9) Horizontal separation of powers

**III. Dimension of effective agenda control**

E. Effective power to govern

- (10) Elected officials with the effective right to govern
-

## Internal Embeddedness

The partial regimes described can only function effectively in a democracy if they are mutually embedded. Mutual embeddedness means that some partial regimes support the functioning of another partial regime—for example the partial regimes B (political rights) and C (civil rights) support partial regime A (democratic election)—and at the same time some partial regimes make sure that a certain partial regime does not infringe on the functional spheres of another regime, for example the partial regimes C, D, and E. Functional and normative interdependence and independence characterize the “code of communication” (Luhmann 1984) between the five partial regimes. The balance between them is fragile and varies from democracy to democracy.

We see democracy, therefore, as a complex of partial regimes.<sup>9</sup> The different partial regimes are arranged in such a way that they provide the potentially conflicting sources of power in a democratic system with consistent rules. This consistency has to guarantee the functional interdependence as well as the independence of the partial regimes to enable legitimate as well as effective governing subject to both vertical and horizontal accountability. Democracy can be disaggregated into its five partial regimes. These, however, are mutually connected. The functional logic of each partial regime is

9 We owe this term to Philippe Schmitter (1997, 243) who introduced the concept of partial regimes for the differentiation of various types of democracies. In our understanding, however, these partial regimes refer to the basic parameters of power, which have to be regulated in any democracy. Functionally this concept rather follows the system-theoretical ideas of Luhmann, who describes the ecological communication of partial regimes with interdependence and independence strictly or loosely coupled.

preserved by this embeddedness, but at the same time a partial regime is hindered from infringing on other partial regimes. The dominant position of one of the regimes is made more difficult, thereby easing the tension between the principles of political equality, freedom, and control. It is the mutual embeddedness of the different institutions of democracy in a network of institutional partial regimes which guarantees a functioning and resilient democracy.

This differentiation into partial regimes shows clearly that normatively the concept of embedded democracy goes beyond an electoral democracy. The subdivision into partial regimes has a considerable analytical advantage. First, it enables a precise determination of the location of defects within a democracy. Second, aggregate defects within a democracy can be recognized in a comparative study of countries. Third, it allows for the systematic analysis of how defects in one partial regime infect other partial regimes, thereby slowly undermining that country's democratic functioning and leading to a slinking autocratization, despite periodical pluralistic elections.

## **External Embeddedness**

Every democracy as a whole is embedded in an environment that is surrounding, enabling, and stabilizing the democratic regime. Damage to this environment often results in defects and destabilization of the democracy itself. The rings in which a democracy is externally embedded are conditions of possibility and impossibility, which raise or lower the quality of a constitutional democracy, but are not defining components of the democratic regime itself. The most important of these externally embedding rings are socioeconomic context, civil society, and international integration (cf. Figure 1).

### A. The Socioeconomic Context

Lipset concisely formulated the *locus classicus* of the correlation between the socioeconomic development of a society and its capability to sustain a democracy: “The more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy” (Lipset 1959; 1981, 31). In the last 40 years the connection between economic development and the capability to sustain democracy has been tested over and over again. It has proven extraordinarily stable (comp. among others: Cutright 1963; Dahl 1971; Vanhanen 1984, 1989; Lipset 1993; Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Welzel 2002). Even though the roughness of the measuring indicators (GDP per capita; electoral democracies) has rightly been criticized from time to time, the importance of a well-developed and prospering economy for the consolidation of a democracy is undisputed. Two qualifying arguments, however, seem appropriate. A well-developed and prospering economy is not the *condition sine qua non* for a democracy, nor is it possible to use economic development to predict thresholds (Przeworski and Limongi 1997) and economic transition zones (Huntington 1991) for the capability or irreversibility of democratization. Furthermore, Lipset’s dictum “*the more well-to-do . . .*” cannot automatically be extended “upwards” as the conditional clause suggests. In the year 2003, the prosperous US under George W. Bush is neither more democratic and more sensible regarding the rule of law than in 1976 under Jimmy Carter, nor can its democracy today (GDP/capita 2001: \$36,000) attest to a higher quality than the Finnish democracy (GDP/capita 2001: \$26,000).<sup>10</sup> Within the OECD world Lipset’s causal relation loses its meaning.

10 Violations of the rule of law and human rights violations by the US following September 11 rather indicate the opposite.

Another connection should be mentioned here: inequality. If unequal distribution of economic resources does not only lead to a striking gap between incomes and wealth, but also pushes a consistent part of the population below the poverty line, it has effects on a democracy. This does not only apply to countries in the economic take-off stage and countries in the third world whose poor population parts Guillermo O'Donnell (1998) has perceptively diagnosed as *low intensity citizenship*. It also applies to the richest democracy, namely the United States, where the percentage of the population living in poverty during the 1990s lies at 18% (Merkel 2001). This means that for almost a fifth of US citizens, chances for political participation are massively reduced, merely on intellectual grounds.<sup>11</sup> O'Donnell's argument of low intensity citizenship applies here in the same way as Hermann Heller's (1971[1928]) theoretical democracy explanations, which stress the need for a sufficiently homogenous material basis among citizens to enable equal participation opportunities in the democratic process. Only when citizens are secured and educated by means of a sufficiently egalitarian social and economic status, will they be able to form independent opinions as *citoyens*. The principle of political equality is inevitably connected to the principle of democracy. This principle is violated when extreme socioeconomic inequality undermines real political equality. Many indicators regarding political participation and actual equality before the courts show that poverty as an extreme form of inequality puts the poor at a

11 American research on democracy close to Freedom House neglects the connection between poverty and low intensity citizenship. So Germany has been scolded or even downgraded for surveying a dubious quasi-religious sect like Scientology with its intelligence service, whereas totally ignored is the fact that almost 20% of US citizens (predominantly Afro-Americans) are disadvantaged in the exercise of their civil and political rights through poverty.

disadvantage in the exercise of their civil and political rights. In this regard, and only in this regard, political arguments on distribution have a meaning for the political quality of a democracy.

Summing up, a developed economy, prevention of extreme poverty, pluralization of the social structure, and even distribution of the material and cognitive resources of society create a shield for democracy and in most cases enhance the quality of a democratic political unit with regard to rule of law and participation. Inversely, the lack of a well-developed economy or abrupt downward economic change endangers the stability and quality of a constitutional democracy.

## **B. Civil Society**

The conviction that a well-developed civil society strengthens democracy has a long tradition. It is based on important arguments developed by philosophers such as John Locke, Montesquieu, and Alexis Tocqueville as well as by Ralf Dahrendorf and Jürgen Habermas of today. The four most important arguments are briefly outlined below.

### *Protection from Arbitrary State Rule: The Lockean Function*

The liberal tradition, which has its origins in the work of John Locke, mainly stresses the importance of an independent societal sphere vis-à-vis the state. Locke, and later on even more strongly Adam Smith, conceives of society as a sphere beyond the political space. Vested with natural rights, people form a community in which social life can flourish. In the best case this pre- or apolitical sphere is secured and fostered by the state, but it should never be lead by state authority (Taylor 1993, 130). From this perspective, the central tasks of civil society are the protection of individual autonomy, the development of individual natural rights, and the protection of individual property. Civil society, therefore, has mainly the function of securing negative

rights of freedom, i.e., protecting individual freedom from state intervention. Civil society is the protective space of the individual from the state (see also Held, 1996).

*The Balance between State Authority and Civil Society: The Montesquieuian Function*

Montesquieu dissolves the sharp contrast between state and society. In his complex model of separation of powers and mutually regulating powers, he discusses the balance between central political authority and societal networks of “*corps intermédiaires*.” “Rule of law” and checking powers have to limit and contain the strong (monarchic) central government. Montesquieu, however, argues that law loses its power to rule when it is no longer supported by independent, legally protected bodies. These “*corps intermédiaires*” are “amphibian” bodies existing within and outside of the political structure and thereby linking the societal and state spheres together (Montesquieu 1838, 280 ff.). Montesquieu relies on institutions and organizations and does not primarily trust in “virtues,” as did the philosophers of the ancient polis or postmodern communitarians.

*School of Democracy: The Tocquevilleian Function*

Tocqueville (1985[1935]) stresses the thought of “free associations” as an important guarantee of a free community. For him, civil-societal associations are “schools of democracy” where citizens practice democratic thinking and civil behavior and become used to it on a daily basis. For these associations to truly be places of self-government they cannot be too large, but have to be numerous. They should exist on all levels of the political system, as freedom and democracy at the national level will be in danger if local associations dwindle. Civil associations serve to establish and embody civil virtues such as tolerance, mutual acceptance, honesty, reliability, trust, and civil courage. Thereby, they accumulate *social capital*, without which,

the American democracy researcher Robert Putnam (1993, 163) would formulate 150 years later, democracies can neither emerge nor consolidate themselves in the long term. Seen from a Tocquevilleian point of view, civil society puts normative and participatory potential at a democracy's disposal. This serves as an immunization of freedom against the authoritarian temptations of the state and limits the tyrannical ambitions of societal majorities.

*The Public and Criticism: The Habermasian Function*

Civil society expands the sphere of interest articulation and aggregation by establishing "pre-institutional" pluralistic interest mediation, argues Jürgen Habermas. Here especially, interests that are disadvantaged and difficult to organize have the possibility of acting in an open public area. Through self-determined forms of participation these interests should influence the agendas of politics beyond political power and business interests. For any truly democratic formulation of opinions in interest groups, parties, and parliaments "rely on the supply of informal public opinion" which can only "form outside of the structures of a non-power driven political public" (Habermas 1992, 374). Spontaneously created organizations and movements form the core of this civil society. They "find, absorb, condense and pass on" public problems "to the political public like an amplifier" (ibid., 443).

The four aspects of civil society named above protect the individual from the arbitrary use of state power (Locke), support the rule of law and the balance of powers (Montesquieu), educate citizens and recruit political elites (Tocqueville), and institutionalize the public sphere as a medium of democratic self-reflection (Habermas). If civil society fulfills these functions, it generates and enables checks of power, responsibility, societal inclusion, tolerance, fairness, trust, cooperation, and often also efficient implementation of accepted

political programs. Civil society, thereby, not only enhances the democratization, pacification, and self-organization of society, but also controls, democratizes, and provides support for the state and makes it more effective. In a strict sense, civil society does not belong to the defining core of a constitutional democracy. It is outside of this core and therefore can be regarded as externally embedding it. The functions civil society carries out, however, have considerable implications for the sustainability effect of democratic constitutional institutions.

### **C. International and Regional Integration**

Integration into international—and especially regional—economic or politically democratic organizations has considerable implications for the stability and quality of a democracy. However, military alliances or foreign-policy security structures, like NATO, cannot develop the same democratic effect even if they are dominated by democratic states. The examples of Portugal (until 1974) or Turkey show that authoritarian states or defective democracies violating civil and human rights can survive in such alliances since their inner structure is subordinate to the particular purpose of foreign-policy security.

The denser, more consolidated and more resilient this external embeddedness of democracy is, the less vulnerable the internal partial regimes are toward external threats. The more densely interdependence between the partial regimes is institutionalized, the stronger the cooperation between the actors of these regimes. And the higher the acceptance and respect towards mutual independence, the more democratic is the whole regime. The inverse is true, too: The weaker the external embeddedness and the lower the mutual respect and cooperation between the actors of the partial regimes, the closer the regime is to a defective democracy.

## **Defective Democracies: Types, Defects, Causes**

If one of the partial regimes of an *embedded democracy* is damaged in such a way that it changes the entire logic of a constitutional democracy, one can no longer speak of an intact embedded democracy. Depending on which of the partial regimes of an embedded democracy is damaged, we are then dealing with a certain type of defective democracy. From this perspective, defective democracies are democracies in which the partial regimes are no longer mutually embedded and the logic of a constitutional democracy is disrupted.

Defective democracies are not necessarily transitional regimes developing into democratic or autocratic regimes to regain a systemic equilibrium. Depending on their political power and social, economic, and cultural embeddedness, they can establish themselves for a longer time. This is the case when specific defects are supported by political power, socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts and develop within a mutually supportive coexistence of environment and partial regimes. On the eastern edge of Eastern Europe, in East Asia, but also in Latin America, many of these (defective) democracies have now been established (Merkel, Puhle et al. 2003).

### **Types of Defective Democracy**

We distinguish between four types of defective democracies: exclusive democracy, domain democracy, illiberal democracy, and delegative democracy (ibid.):

*Exclusive democracy:* Sovereignty of the people is the basic concept of democracy and has to be guaranteed by universal electoral rights and their fair execution. This is not the case if one or more segments of all adult citizens are excluded from the civil right of universal suffrage.

*Domain democracy:* If “veto powers”—such as the military, guerillas, militia, entrepreneurs, landlords, or multi-national corporations—take certain political domains out of the hands of democratically elected representatives. The creation of such political domains can occur by constitutional and extra-constitutional means. Although the latter has to be seen as a more severe damage to a constitutional democracy, the former also represents a type of defective democracy. Domain democracy is a regionally specific type occurring in Latin America and Southeast Asia, where the military often takes over a political (veto) role. Domain democracies are rare in Eastern Europe or Central Asia.

*Illiberal democracy:* In intact democracies, legitimate representatives are bound to constitutional principles. In an illiberal democracy, with its incomplete and damaged constitutional state, executive and legislative control of the state is limited by the judiciary. Additionally, constitutional norms have little binding impact on government actions and individual civil rights are either partially suspended or not yet established. In illiberal democracies, the principle of the rule of law is damaged, affecting the actual core of liberal self-understanding, i.e., the equal freedom of all individuals. This is the most common type of “defective democracy,” and it can be found all over the world.

*Delegative democracy:* In a delegative democracy, the legislature and the judiciary have only limited control over the executive. Actions of government are seldom committed to constitutional norms. The checks and balances that functioning democracies need to maintain a balanced political representation, are undermined. Governments usually led by charismatic presidents, circumvent parliament, influence the judiciary, damage the principle of legality, undermine

checks and balances, and shift the equilibrium of the balance of power unilaterally to favor the (president's) executive.<sup>12</sup>

### **Causes for Defective Democracies**

Our research (Merkel, Puhle et al. 2003; Croissant and Merkel 2004) has shown that no single outstanding factor can be singled out as the primary cause for the formation of grave defects in young democracies. Rather, specific combinations of causes that shape special opportunities for certain actors to usurp power, suspend constitutional norms, or circumvent checks limiting power are responsible. Here is not the place to present the specific connection between structural opportunities and the action of actors, which is particular to every country. Instead, one hypothesis for each of the most important groups of causes will summarize the findings of our research. We take into account the path of modernization, the level of modernization, economic trends, social capital and civil society, state- and nation-building, the type of authoritarian predecessor regime, transitional modus, political institutions, and the international context.

*Path of modernization:* The probability for the occurrence of a defective democracy rises if the socioeconomic modernization of a country proceeds along a semi-modern path producing acute imbalances of power and if the property-owning classes regard democracy as a threat to their economic and political interests.<sup>13</sup>

*Level of modernization:* The probability of the emergence of a defective democracy is higher the lower the socio-economic level of development and the more unequal the distribution of societal

12 This understanding of the term “delegative democracy” is close to the definition used by O’Donnell (1994).

13 Our research confirms this thesis by Moore (1969) and Rueschemeyer et al. (1992).

resources in a society. An asymmetrical distribution of economic, cultural, and intellectual resources promotes acute inequality of political resources of action and power among political actors. It further complicates the enforcement of constitutional and democratic standards against the rational self-interest of the powerful as well as endangering marginalized groups' loyalty to the regime, even after democratic institutions are formally established.<sup>14</sup>

*Economic trend:* Economic crises offer situational incentives to institutionalize defects in an unconsolidated democracy. This is often the “hour” of special emergency legislation and decrees in presidential and semi-presidential systems.<sup>15</sup> Governing by decree is often expanded beyond its constitutional limits and stays in place after the acute state of emergency.

*Social capital:* The occurrence of defective democracies is closely related to the type and extent of historically accumulated social capital in a society. An emergence of (ethnically) exclusive and illiberal democracies is more probable if social capital is accumulated along ethnical and religious lines. The “Tocquevilleian version” of social capital, however, works against exclusive or illiberal tendencies.

*Civil society:* A lack of interpersonal trust in a society makes the formation of a well-institutionalized system of political parties, interest groups, and associations in civil society more difficult. Without these institutions, important intermediary pillars for the

14 This hypothesis is based on empirical evidence and confirms Lipset's “Social Requisites for Democracy” (1959/1981) and Vanhanen's (1989) hypothesis regarding the connection between the dispersion of power resources and chances of democratization.

15 This supports the thesis that parliamentary systems of government *ceteris paribus* are more favorable for the consolidation of young democracies than presidential or semi-presidential systems (Linz 1990; Lijphart 1992; Stepan and Skach 1993; Merkel 2010).

exercise of political rights and the protection of civil rights are absent. In such a context charismatic and popular justifications for defective democratic patterns of decision-making are a promising alternative to gain public support.

The more civil society is organized along ethnic cleavages, the more it contributes to the intensification of political polarization. This makes the acceptance or enforcement of the limitation of the political rights of minorities in multi-ethnic or multi-religious societies easier. Ethnically mobilized civil societies often reveal the “dark side” of civic mobilization against other communities.

*State- and nation-building:* Conditions for the development of a liberal democracy without grave defects are especially unfavorable if unsolved identity or stateness crises in the political community burden the transformation. Efforts to secede or discrimination against minorities will damage the indispensable civil rights to freedom and political rights of participation.

*Type of authoritarian predecessor regime:* The longer totalitarian, post-totalitarian, sultanistic, or neo-patrimonial regimes have been institutionalized in a country and had the chance to influence the political culture of society, the more probable are defects in the subsequent democracy. Such societies tend to reward circumvention of checks and balances and application of “delegative” ruling practices with electoral rewards.

*Transitional modus:* The more inclusive the elite settlement directly after the system change, the more relevant actors will accept and protect the new democratic rules of the game. The more elites follow the new democratic institutions, the faster broad popular support legitimizing the system will grow. Therefore, negotiated transitions better avoid severe democratic defects than system changes steered from above or forced from below.

*Political institutions:* The more “informal” authoritarian inheritance (e.g., clientilism, patrimonialism, corruption) shapes patterns of interaction between elites and the population at large, the more difficult it is for the new “formal” institutions to be validated and standardized. Informal institutions threaten to crack the functional code of formal, democratically legitimized institutions, deforming and displacing them. In essential domains of decision-making, democracy can then only function according to non-legitimized, informal institutions and rules which contradict the principles of a democratic state based on the rule of law. These defects of the formal democratic institutions are supported by highly habitualized behavioral patterns in society, such as clientilism, patronage, and corruption.

*International and regional context:* If regional mechanisms (e.g., EU, European Council) securing liberal-democratic institutions are weak or absent, governments have a broader range of options to violate the rules of these institutions because the opportunity costs for such actions are considerably reduced.

In the following, I will apply the concept of embedded and defective democracies to the case of Israel. It is only a first glance at the state of democracy in Israel, which certainly requires deeper investigation.

### **Israel: Embedded or Defective Democracy?**

If one follows Freedom House, Polity, or the Democracy Barometer, Israel is the only liberal democracy in the region of North Africa and the Middle East. Israel was rated by FH in political rights with the best score 1 and in civil rights 1.5, i.e., clearly as a “free” and democratic country. All the other 18 countries in the region are rightfully qualified as “partially free” or “not free.” It has to

be considered a tremendous achievement that Israel developed and maintained the only viable democracy in the region since 1948. The external political world of secular and religious autocracies within the same (enlarged) “region” demonstrate the dramatic differences between Israel and the Arab-Muslim countries. This is still true after the Arab Spring. Although the dictators of three countries were ousted in 2011, they (Tunisia, and particularly Egypt and Libya) are far from being liberal democracies, and probably won’t be for many years.

The achievement is the more astonishing as Israel has to cope with at least two conditions which are seen by democratic theory and empirical research as eminently adverse to sustainable democracies: First, the extreme religious, ethnical, and socioeconomic heterogeneity of the Israeli society. According to John Stuart Mill (1861) and Robert Dahl (1971), it is difficult to sustain democracies in ethnically deeply divided societies. Second, Israel has to live in “bad neighborhoods,” since it is surrounded by deeply autocratic regimes. Moreover, most of these autocratically governed countries are declared enemies of Israel, some of them even aiming to eliminate the state of Israel from the map. Three major wars launched by Arab dictatorships against democratic Israel prove the seriousness of those hostile declarations. However, the hostility by Arab autocracies probably causes ambiguous impacts on the democratic character of Israel’s political regime. On the one side, it gives the military, secret services, and the executive an enormous and, therefore, problematic weight vis-à-vis the legislature. But on the other side the hostile external environment may moderate the internal conflict of deep multiethnic and socioeconomic cleavages in Israel’s society. As such, the resilience of Israel’s democracy must be considered a clearly deviant case among the sustainable democracies. Of course the high level of economic modernization

and education speak for the sustainability of Israel's democracy as the sheer fact does the democracy in Israel has survived for more than six decades.

Israel's democracy survived, but it is an "embedded democracy" on par with the UK, France, Scandinavia, or the USA? Let us give an initial answer by using FH data. For three years now FH has also been publishing subscores behind the aggregate scores of political rights and civil rights. These subscores are related to the following spheres of democracy: electoral process (A), political pluralism and participation (B), functioning of government (C), freedom of expression (D), associational and organizational rights (E), rule of law (F), and personal autonomy and individual rights (G). Democracies such as most of the Scandinavian states or some of the (old) European Union countries reach the highest scores in all these dimensions of democracy. Finland as a case in point achieves in all these seven subcategories the optimum of 100% of the scores.<sup>16</sup> Now I am attributing these subcategories to the five partial regimes of the root concept "embedded democracy" in order to systematize the strength and weaknesses of Israel within a coherent model of democracy. The attribution from FH to the partial regimes can be done according to the theoretical description of their properties as follows and shows for Israel the following results:

16 I am using percentage here, because Freedom House attributes to some categories a maximum of 16 points and to some 12 points. If one transforms these different maximums into percentage (each maximum gets 100%), they can be better compared.

**Table 3** Israel's quality of democracy, 2006-2010

<b>Freedom House</b>	<b>Embedded democracy</b>	<b>Israel 2006-2010 (percent)</b>
Electoral process (A)	Electoral regime	100
Political pluralism and participation (B) Associational and organizational rights (E)	Political liberties	90
Freedom of expression (D) Personal autonomy and individual rights (G)	Civil rights	75
Rule of law (F)	Horizontal accountability	69
Functioning of government (C)	Effective power to govern	83

The calculations of the quality of democracy were based on the subscores behind the aggregate scores of political rights and civil rights of the Freedom House. The subscores were grouped to match the root concept of “embedded democracy.” The scores are expressed in percentages; calculations are based on the maximal score for individual category. The maximum score equals 100%.

Source: Freedom House (2010) Freedom in the World Aggregate and Subcategory Scores Internet: [www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=276](http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=276) accessed January 7, 2012

Regarding the freedom and fairness of election, Israel achieves the optimum of 100%. This is not only due to the free and fair character of the elections, but also to the high degree of electoral competition. With respect to political liberties the country scored still an impressive 90%. Both partial regimes are most closely connected and can be considered as working democratically very well. Also, the functioning of government reached 83% between 2006 and 2010, which is a

considerable achievement for a country which has had to live for three decades with grand coalitions or complex multiparty coalitions. But the problems in Israel's democracy begin with the guarantee of civil rights (75%) and horizontal accountability plus rule of law (69%). Both partial regimes are functionally highly dependent. If one regime does not work, it affects the working of the other. If a democracy performs relatively badly in partial regimes closely associated with two of the three core principles of democracy, namely *freedom* and *control*, the logic of the democratic game is severely disturbed. In addition, those citizens who are particularly negatively affected by the insufficient guarantee of civil rights through a defective rule of law are concentrated among the Muslim-Arab populations. The unequal distribution of these negative defects along ethnic and religious cleavages violates the third core principle of democracy, *equality*, too. All three core principles of democracy are impaired within the political regime of Israel. I therefore would no longer call Israel a consolidated liberal, but a defective democracy. We know from empirical research on democracies in almost all regions of the world, that defective horizontal accountability and rule of law tend to infect all the other partial regimes of democracy. They also tend to be rather resilient against democratic cures, if they are deeply engrained into the institutions of the political system and the habits and minds of the elites and the population. Israel's polity and society are confronted with exactly this risk.

Let us control the FH figures by the data of the newly established Democracy Barometer.<sup>17</sup>

17 The three core principles of democracy standing behind the five partial regimes are freedom, equality, and control (cf. Bühlmann, Merkel, and Weßels 2008). The aggregated Democracy Index contains 100 single indicators. For the index and all data from 1990 to 2007, see [www.democracybarometer.org](http://www.democracybarometer.org).

**Table 4** Israel's quality of democracy 1990-2007

<b>Democracy Barometer</b>	<b>Embedded Democracy</b>	<b>Israel 1990-2007</b>	<b>30 best democracies* 1990-2007</b>
Aggregated Democracy Index	Quality of Democracy	42,58	64,34
Competition	Elections	80.29	64,37
Participation, Representation	Political rights	52.81	59,33
Individual Liberties, Rule of Law, Public Sphere	Civil rights	44,72	60,56
Mutual Constraints	Horizontal accountability	33,27	55,01
Governmental Capability	Effective power to govern	47,89	76,34

The calculations of the quality of democracy were based on the scale developed for Democracy Barometer. The indicator scores were regrouped to match the root concept of “embedded democracy.” The scores are expressed in average values for each concept across the entire time span of the available data. The scores range between 0 and 100.

\* The 30 best democracies were selected by the combined measure of FH and Polity during the years 1995-2005. The scores are calculated by the indicators of the Democracy Barometer. For the indicators and measurement rules, see [www.democracybarometer.org](http://www.democracybarometer.org).

Source: Democracy Barometer (2007) Democracy Barometer Data standardised indicators Internet: [www.democracybarometer.org/Data/DB%20Data\\_1990-2007\\_standardised.xls](http://www.democracybarometer.org/Data/DB%20Data_1990-2007_standardised.xls) accessed January 12, 2012

The comparison of the aggregated democracy index of Israel with the average of the same index for the 30 best performing democracies in the world indicates a clear difference.

Israel's overall quality of democracy score figures distinctly below the average of the 30 best democracies. The observation becomes even more convincing if one looks into the broken up, partial regimes of democracy. The degree of electoral competition is much higher in Israel compared to an average score of the 30 best democracies, but in all other four partial regimes Israel performs worse than the combined average score of the 30 best democracies. This is particularly true with regard to the partial regimes of civil rights, horizontal accountability, but also to the governing capability of Israel's executive. While the evaluation of the last variable differs from the FH—they evaluate the governmental capability visibly better (cf. Table 4) than the Democracy Barometer - the deficits and defects observed in the realm of civil rights and horizontal accountability are assessed equally severely. To conclude, the results of Table 5: together with a different set of data and a different mode to measure the quality of democracy reveal the partial illiberal character of Israel's democracy.

Sammy Smooha (2002) aptly calls Israel an “archetype” of an “ethnic democracy.” Since the low scores of civil rights are not due to a general grossly violation of the citizens' rights, but due to a clear ethnical discrimination of the Israeli Arabs. Smooha (2002: 216) names four reasons for it: There is no constitution or bill of rights which provides the Arab citizens with an independent legal base to protect their civil rights; the emergency laws discriminate particularly the Arab Israeli citizens; the Jewish-Zionist character of the Israeli state degrades Arab citizens culturally; and last but not least, the majoritarian opinion of Jewish citizens prefer their own preferential treatment vis-à-vis the Arab fellow citizens. This majoritarian opinion spills over into the programs of Israel's major parties and influences

their campaigning strategy in the electoral arena, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of the ethnically motivated discrimination of the Arab part of Israel's population.

Moreover, Rosenhek and Shalev (2000) demonstrate that it is mainly the Arab citizens who are on the losing side of the major socioeconomic cleavages. The social exclusion and the civic-political discrimination are mutually reinforcing and therefore tend to perpetuate the second-class citizenry of the Israeli Arabs. As long as they have systematically lower life chances (Sen) and are discriminated against by the political regime and the societal majority, they will be disloyal to Israel's democracy. As long as they are disloyal, they will be discriminated against by its "own" democratic regime, and it can be patriotically justified by their identification with Israel's fiercest enemies. The vicious circle is certainly not easy to break as long as this fundamental cleavage between Arab and Jewish citizens in Israel is reinforced by the hostile regional environment of the neighbouring Arab regimes, no matter whether (highly) defective democracies or outright dictatorship will be emerging there.

## Conclusion

The above discussion on embedded and defective democracies shows a variety of things. It is analytically not sufficient to understand the term *electoral democracy* as synonymous with democracy. Democratic elections alone, though, do not make a political regime a liberal democracy. If this would be the case Israel would be a "100%" democracy on par with Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland. If the complementary support of the four other partial regimes (political liberties, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and effective power to govern) is missing, important functions indispensable for the self-government of a political community are absent and free elections

risk the loss of their democratic meaningfulness. “Electoralists” underestimate especially the importance of rule of law and horizontal accountability for a democracy. But exactly these core elements are defective in the current political system of Israel.

Defective democracies are by no means necessarily transitional regimes gravitating either to liberal democratic or fully autocratic regimes. They are able to form stable links to their environment and are seen by considerable parts of the elites and the population as adequate solutions to the extreme accumulation of social and political problems.

Israel’s democracy can rely on a highly developed economy. However, the ethnic, religious and social cleavages within its society are deep and cumulative. Among the privileged Jewish citizenry of the Israeli population these cleavages do not seem to endanger the fundamental loyalty versus state and democratic regime. But the deep split between the Arab and Jewish parts of Israel’s citizens jeopardizes the necessary minimum of the common political belongingness seriously. The *de facto* and sometimes *de jure* discrimination of the Arab citizens by the “Jewish state” and the fact that they claim loyalty not to “their” country but to Israel’s harshest enemies complicates the functioning of democracy, which has to rely on a solid political community (Easton 1965). Nevertheless, Israel is the only democracy in the whole region surrounded by rigid autocratic or problematic transitional regimes. This is an admirable achievement. But as long as the Jewish political elites and the Jewish population are not prepared to overcome the ethno-religious discrimination of a considerable part of their citizens, Israel will remain a “defective, illiberal, and semi-exclusive democracy.”

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## Neo-Liberalism, Sovereignty, and the Crisis of Representation in Israel

Dani Filc

The pervasive discontent with politics, parties, and parliament in Israel can be characterized as a crisis of representation. In political science literature we can find several explanations for the emergence of a crisis of representation. As Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton (2000, 6) claim, “[t]he collapse in citizen engagement with political parties is as close to a universal generalization as one can find in political science.” In the present paper I want to propose that the crisis of representation in Israel stems from a feeling that actual politics betray the democratic promise and the idea of popular sovereignty which, *pace* Schumpeter, underlies representative democracies.

The democratic promise is based on two central assumptions: the essential equality of the members of the political community concerning political participation; and the idea of popular sovereignty, which, as concisely put by Abraham Lincoln, is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. The present paper will discuss the relationship between the weakening of the notion of popular sovereignty and the crisis of representation.

The concept *popular sovereignty* is far from simple, and it involves unsolvable contradictions. The most central one is the contradiction between the notion of sovereignty as the rule of the one, as the necessary unity of the act of governing—between the idea of the sovereign people as a collective subject with boundaries clear enough to allow for its identification as “the people”—and the fact

that the people is constituted by a myriad of concrete individuals. This is seeing the people as the many, the monster of thousands of heads that cannot have a common will since it is constantly changing (Canovan 2005). Representation is one of the ways to solve this contradiction. As Hanna Pitkin (1967) stated, representation makes present something that is not present literally or in fact. The people as a myriad of concrete individuals become the people as a single collective subject through the process of representation.

Hobbes (1985[1651]) expressed this clearly when he stated, “A multitude of men are made one person when they are by one man, or one person, represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular. For it is the *unity* of the representer, not the unity of the represented, that maketh the person one.” Thus, the process of representation makes present the unified people even though it does not exist as a unity in reality. Representation is not only the passive reflection of a pre-political collectivity, but the process in and by which the many concrete individuals become the sovereign people.

When the mechanisms of political representation are not able to re-present the people as a unity, when the process of representation does not re-present popular sovereignty, when political equality is betrayed, when there is a significant gap between the actual ways of the political system and the democratic promise, we face a crisis of representation. In the following, I will discuss briefly the concept of democratic representation, then the character of the crisis of representation, and finally the forms this crisis takes in Israel.

## **Representation**

The claim that popular sovereignty is re-presented means that popular sovereignty is doubly mediated. Firstly, because we recognize that

the people does not exist as a pre-political unity. The people is never identical to itself and is composed of different social groups and divided by conflicts of interests. Secondly, because Lincoln's dictum notwithstanding, the people does not govern by itself but through its representatives. Understanding representation in this way means that representation is a complex, mediated process that is not limited to the electoral act or to the kind of relationship between voters and their elected representatives. It cannot be reduced to responsiveness, authorization, legitimation, or accountability (Eulau and Karps, 1977). I propose to understand representation as the translation/reconstruction of popular sovereignty into acts of government and legislation. This act of reconstruction is not simple mirroring, but in a way we may say that—since there is no pre-political people—the act of representation constitutes both the representative and the represented (the people). Nadia Urbinati (2006, 37) makes a similar claim when she states that “[p]olitical representation transforms and expands politics insofar as it does not simply allow the social to be translated into the political, but also facilitates the formation of political groups and identities.”

If the people does not exist as a pre-political unity, then the two principles that Carl Schmitt claims can form the political content of a constitution—identity and representation—are not two opposite concepts (as Schmitt claimed) but part of the same process. Identitarian democracy is not the unmediated expression of the people's will, but a different way of representation. The concept of identity assumes that the people “may be capable of acting politically by the mere fact of its immediate existence—by virtue of a powerful and conscious similarity. . . . It is then politically unified and has real power by virtue of its direct identity with itself” (quoted in Manin 1997, 151). But if we consider that there is no “natural,” pre-political similarity that grounds the people's “direct identity with itself,” if “we

the people” is always a result of the political process, then identity always includes a process of representation. If the people does not exist as a pre-political given, then representation is inherent to the political process since, as Schmitt himself claimed, if “the political unity of the people as such can never be present in its real identity [it] must therefore always be represented by particular persons” (quoted in Manin 1997, 151–152). The body of the people becomes unified only through its representatives, and in this case the representative is “external to the people, independent from them and cannot be bound by their will (152).”<sup>1</sup>

Urbinati is right in claiming that the modern political representative does *not* substitute for an absent sovereign in passing laws. Precisely because he is *not* a substitute for an absent sovereign (the people), he needs to be constantly recreated and dynamically linked to society in order to pass laws (Urbinati 2006, 20). This constant process of recreating participation is what representative democracy is about. The metonymic role that the representative plays, in which he is the part that substitutes the whole, is a complex one. The representative is not the part that replaces a pre-existing whole, but a part that constitutes the whole as such through the act of representation. The unity of the sovereign people both grounds and is a result of the process of representation.

The relation between the people and its representatives is a complex one since representatives are never truly external and independent from the people, and the unified identity of the latter is never fixed and final—its boundaries change through time. Thus, what we have is

1 We may think of a process by which the constitution of the people as a collective subject is not the result of political representation as it takes place in liberal democracies, but is the result of shared struggles for common claims, as proposed by Ernesto Laclau (2005) in his book on populism.

a double moment of mediation by which the people is always already represented by representatives that are never completely external or independent of the people's will.

Political representation has three main forms. The first one, the form to which Schmitt referred when discussing representation as external to the people, is the Burkean form of representation. For Burke representation meant that "Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; but . . . a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole" (Burke 1774). The Burkean representation is not a mediated process, but is embodied in the Parliament as the body of representatives. For Burke, the representative may unify the whole because representatives are guided by the ethics of the *aristoi*, who place the common good before their own interests; and because the nation is a pre-existent given, whose existence pre-dates the political process.

The other two forms of representation are representation by an instructed delegate and the "responsible party" form. The "instructed delegate" model of representation is an approach to democracy in which elected officials follow the expressed wishes of their constituents. In contrast to trustee representation, in this model representatives "set aside their own expertise, information, and judgments." The instructed delegate is a representative who automatically mirrors the will of the majority of the representative's constituents. As against the Burkean model, the representative has no autonomy but is merely the voice of the represented.

Within this conception of representation the people exists in one of two forms: either as a pre-political given that instructs its representatives, or as a subject constituted through the deliberations that create the mandate. In either case the people is not constituted

by the process of representation as such. Representation derives from the previous constitution of the represented as a collective subject. The relation constituting representation takes place between a people already given, and the elected representatives. The Burkean form and the “instructed delegate form” correspond to what Urbinati denominates juridical theory of representation, in which representation is a private contract of commission (granting “license to perform an action by some person or persons who must possess the right to perform the given action themselves”) by two different and independent entities (Urbinati 2006, 21). Delegation with binding instructions and alienation with unbounded trust (Burke) are the two extreme poles of this model.

In the “responsible party” model “it is political parties, not individual legislators, that are the primary vehicles that articulate citizens policy beliefs and convert them into public policies” (Adams 2001, 3). The responsible party form is an example of a constant mediation and relationship between the people and their representatives. The responsible party mode of representation considers that representation is based upon political parties as collectives. In this model, collective subjects are constantly recreating themselves through the process of representation. This model requires three presuppositions: that there are policy divergences among the different parties, that parties have policy stability, and that there is policy voting on the part of the electorate. This model does not assume that the people pre-exists the representation process, but in a way, it is created as a collective by the mediations of its claims through the party system.

In contemporary democracies, all three models of representation are problematic. Burkean representation is not possible since the democratization of society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries makes impossible the uncritical acceptance of autonomous elite of *aristoi* that embodies the representation of the nation as a

whole. Moreover, contemporary societies are complex and the plurality of cleavages (class, ethnic, gender, national) makes impossible the claim that there exists a “general reason of the whole.” The “instructed delegate” model is difficult because of the size of political communities and the problems of building an “ideal speech situation” in which all the representatives may deliberate and contribute to the elaboration of a common, single wish. Finally, the “responsible party” model is problematic because of the crisis of the “mass party” and its replacement by political parties that function as public relations organizations. When political leaders and parties sell themselves and their parties to the public as any entrepreneur sells his or her products, they cannot claim that the party “articulate[s] citizens’ policy beliefs and convert[s] them into public policies” (Adams 2001, 3). As a result, contemporary democracies face a crisis of representation.

### **Crisis of Representation**

We have a crisis of representation when the presuppositions of democratic representation do not work, when we have a break between the two terms: democracy and representation, when the state institutions supposed to represent democracy (as both political equality and popular sovereignty) are not perceived as doing so.

In certain historical moments, the crisis of representation may lead to a violent break with the legal order (a new constituent moment), or to the “active and creative presence [of the] citizens” that disclose and denounce the political distance between the “real” and the “legal” nation, but do not reclaim the decision-making power (Urbainati 2006, 27–28). Nowadays, however, the crisis of representation takes the form of “disaffection.” Mainwaring (2006) defines a crisis of representation as “[t]he widespread dissatisfaction with the quality

and vehicles of democratic representation.” It is a situation where “patterns of representation are unstable” and citizens consider that the political system does not represent them.

Such a crisis expresses itself in citizens’ attitudes and behaviors. A significant number of citizens are dissatisfied with the institutional channels of representation (whether political parties, representative state institutions or the electoral system). The behavioral indicators of a crisis of representation are actions by citizens rejecting existing mechanisms of democratic representation—for example, withdrawing from electoral participation, voting for new parties (especially antiestablishment ones), voting for political outsiders, turning to anti-system popular mobilization efforts, or joining revolutionary struggles (Mainwaring 2006).

Since political parties are the main institution that mediate representation in contemporary democracies, high electoral volatility—an indicator of voters’ dissatisfaction with parties—is an indicator of a crisis of representation.<sup>2</sup> Persistent high electoral volatility means that people do not feel that the existing political system represents them. The rapid rise—and demise—of new parties, absenteeism, and voting for anti-establishment parties, or for political outsiders, are also signs of a crisis of representation (Mainwaring 2006).

Today, the crisis of representation is pervasive in most wealthy countries. In the United States, for example, trust in government in 1998 was only 39%. The number of American citizens who agreed with the claim that “the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves” grew from 29% in 1964 to 63% in 1998. In the same year, two-thirds of Americans agreed with the

2 Electoral volatility measures the net share of votes that shifts from one party to another from one election to the next.

statement, “Most elected officials don’t care what people like me think,” while only a third agreed to it in 1960 (Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000).

Those expressing “a great deal” of confidence in the executive branch fell from 42% in 1966 to only 12% in 1997, and equivalent trust in Congress fell from 42% in 1966 to 11% in 1997. Almost every year since 1966, the Harris Poll has presented a set of five statements to national samples of Americans to measure their political alienation: (1) “The people running the country don’t really care what happens to you.” (2) “Most people with power try to take advantage of people like yourself.” (3) “You’re left out of things going on around you.” (4) “The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” (5) “What you think doesn’t count very much anymore.” By almost any measure, political alienation has soared over the last three decades (Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000).

Data from Western European countries show a similar process. Less than 50% of the British public thought in 1987 that the national government or local councils “could be trusted to serve the public interest” (Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000). During the 1990s the picture got even worse. Confidence in the House of Commons went down by half between 1985 and 1995. In Germany, the percentage of citizens who said they trusted their Bundestag deputy to represent their interests declined from 55% in 1978 to 34% in 1992 (Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000). Pharr and her collaborators conclude that “the decline in political support has been especially apparent in three areas: disillusionment with politicians, with political parties, and with political institutions” (13).

A crisis of representation may originate with each of the three elements of the representation process: the represented, the mediating institutions, and the political system (parliament, state institutions). This means in the first case, the transformation of the political

community, for example, the inclusion of groups previously not represented or under-represented; in the second case, the corruption or atrophy of the mediating institutions (in our case political parties); in the third case, state deficiencies that make the process of representation inefficient,<sup>3</sup> (for the latter, see Mainwaring 2006).

In his analysis of the crisis of representation in Latin America, Mainwaring (2006), borrowing from Putnam, Pharr, and Dalton (2000, 25), argues that there is a decline in “the *capacity* of political agents to act on behalf of citizens’ interests and desires.” In his opinion, the main reasons explaining the lack of ability of national governments to implement the policies they were elected to put into practice are globalization and the neo-liberal dismantling of the state. Globalization “creates a growing incongruence between the scope of territorial units and the issues raised by interdependence, reducing the output effectiveness of democratic nation-states” (ibid.). Neo-liberalism weakens the state and, through privatization and technocracy, limits the scope of possible policies and the scope of democratic control on state institutions.

### **Neo-liberalism and Crisis of Representation**

Neo-liberal globalization changes the relationship between territory, state, and political community. Whether we adopt the claim that the national state loses its power to local or supranational levels, or the claim that a main characteristic of the process of neo-liberal

- 3 We should ask ourselves if the second element is not always secondary to the other two. For example, the entrance of the working class and other popular classes into the political space provoked the crisis of the Burkean model of representation and the emergence of the mass party. In this sense, the actual crisis of the state to express popular sovereignty may mean that we need to reformulate the mechanisms of mediation.

globalization is the constitution of a transnational state (Robinson 2001), we come to the conclusion that the state is changing. There is a profound transformation of the modern, Westphalian, national state, which provided the ground for the idea of popular sovereignty. In a process of economic and political integration, regional blocs dominated by the three great powers (the US, the European Union, and Japan) have emerged, while industrial and finance capital have been concentrated and centralized in powerful transnational groups (Costilla, Alvarez, and Perez 2000).

Neo-liberalism has limited the options for individual states to determine their social and economic policies. Though intrastate relations of forces were of fundamental importance for the successful application of neo-liberal reforms, international institutions have played a central role in determining the policies of individual states. Between 1978 and 1992 more than 70 countries undertook 566 stabilization and structural adjustment programs imposed by the IMF and the World Bank (Robinson 2001).

Among the consequences of neo-liberal policies was the transfer of power from program-oriented ministries (social services, education, labor, health) to the Ministry of Finance; and from elected functionaries to “professional” institutions such as the Central Bank. The World Bank was explicitly clear on the need to reform the state. As they put in one of their reports, reform should begin “with a few critical enclaves [that] typically include the ministry of finance, the central bank, and the tax collection agency . . .” (quoted in Robinson 2001). This transfer of power voided the very idea of popular sovereignty of much of its meaning, since areas so important as the monetary and the exchange rate policies were not controlled by representatives of the people’s will. Moreover, social policies were subordinated to the demands of the international markets more than to the citizens’ needs. This lack of democratic control was not an undesired side effect of the

independence of the central banks or the subordination of program-oriented ministries to the Ministry of Finance; it was one of neo-liberal policies' main goals. As Robinson claims, "[t]he movement toward Central Bank independence has the purpose of insulating the commanding heights of national state policymaking from any public control or accountability, and also of insulating these organs of the state that tie each national economy to the global economy from other organs of the national state that could come under public pressure." The World Bank explicitly stated the need to insulate the main state economic institutions from democratic pressures and control, weakening the effectiveness of the representation process. Robinson quotes a document stating that "[restructuring these organs] can mostly be achieved through executive order . . . [and should] establish effective macroeconomic management by insulated technocratic elite." The transfer of macroeconomic decision making to technocratic elites in isolated state enclaves and to the financial market, according to Robinson, "bypass[es] the formal channels of government and other social institutions subject to popular influence."

As a consequence of the process of neo-liberal globalization, national governments become part of a transnational state apparatus, and they function more as transmission belts of this apparatus than as representatives of their electors. Democratic institutions lose power to the market. As Costilla, Alvarez, and Perez (2000) claim, "many basic political questions are not placed on the agenda for public discussion . . . because it is assumed that they belong to another sphere of decision making, that of the relationship between the individual and the market."

Decisions on macroeconomical policy (which include decisions on social policy, since, as we saw, the social area is subordinated to macroeconomic considerations) are in the hands of the monetary authority, guided by—as euphemistically put by

Freeman (2002)—“benign technical expertise rather than electoral manipulation.” As a result, legislatures and other representative institutions are of limited value as “channels for the expression of popular sovereignty over monetary policy” (Chander 2005).

The power of international institutions (whether supra-state, as the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO; or market institutions, such as the international firms that assess and rank the financial risk of the different countries) becomes stronger than the “people’s will.” As Anupam Chander (2005) put it, “[t]he people of a democracy must be mercifully soothed when they find themselves ruled by the six men and one woman of the Appellate Body of the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO.” In discussing the subordination of the national state to the global financial institutions, David Held (1989) pointed out that the IMF can bring about a cut in the public expenditure of a great many countries, as well as the devaluation of their currencies, the elimination of programs of public health, education, and housing. The processes related to neo-liberal globalization, in sum, limit the capacity of the state “to act on behalf of citizens’ interests and desires” (Putnam, Pharr, and Dalton 2000), thus eroding the principle of democratic representation.

### **The Israeli Case**

In Israel, from the pre-state years until the early 1990s, the main form of representation was the “responsible party” model. The political system was party-centered and state-centered. The main political parties were “mass parties,” party institutions were central in the articulation of policies and programs. Party affiliation was fundamental not only to the collective identity, but also to individual identity, so much so that party crises were the cause of family and community crises (as in the split of *Ahdut Haavoda*, or when Moshe Sneh and his supporters were expelled from *Mapam*).

In Israel, too, the neo-liberal transformations that took place during the last 25 years have resulted in the weakening of the state as an agent of socioeconomic policies and the weakening of the party system as a mediator of democratic representation.

As with many other countries, Israel today faces a crisis of representation. The development of this crisis of representation in Israel is of special interest for two reasons. First, the celerity of the changes that transformed a society in which, as claimed above, parties were central not only to social organization and the political system, but also to collective and individual identities, to a society where parties lost the citizens' confidence and are seen as institutions that betray the popular will. Secondly, because of the fact that a crisis of representation developed in a country with a parliamentary political system, proportional representation, and a relatively low threshold—conditions that offer a wide gamut of political options and are supposed to better reflect the needs and interests of the different social groups, and thus prevent representation crises.

When discussing the actual crisis of representation in Israel, it should be noted that this crisis must not be interpreted as the result of a loss of interest in politics as such, or indifference toward the fate of the political community. On the contrary, in international terms, Israelis are very much interested in politics. Asher Arian et al., in a 2006 report, stated that:

Israelis are extremely interested in politics, talk about politics, and are much more knowledgeable about it than in the past. . . . Israel is a country that creates and consumes news. 73% of the respondents in the Democracy Survey 2006 reported an interest in politics, 82% reported that they stay informed about politics

daily or several times a week through television, radio, and the press, and 67% discuss political issues with their friends and their families. These rates are higher than those found in any other country we considered. (Arian et al. 2006, 11).

However, though very aware of the importance of the political sphere, only 27% believe that they can influence government policy (Arian et al. 2006, 34), and only 17% agree that politicians keep their promises after they are elected (ibid., 79). This lack of trust in the political system is a relatively new phenomenon, since “the level of trust Israeli citizens have in politicians has significantly decreased in the past few years” (ibid., 11). Nowadays, “[O]nly 17% of those surveyed agree or absolutely agree that elected politicians try to achieve what they had promised prior to being elected. 25% agree or absolutely agree that Knesset members care about what the general public thinks (21% are not sure). Only 22% of the public trust political parties, less than they trust any public institution in Israel (33% trust the Knesset, 44% trust the media, 68% trust the Supreme Court, and 79% trust the IDF)” (*The 2006 Israeli Democracy Index*).

*The 2006 Israeli Democracy Index* depicts all the elements that characterize a crisis of representation: “[d]eclining voter turnout, decreasing identification with the parties, high volatility, an increasing tendency among voters to vote for the party opposed to the one they have identified in the past . . . a fragmentation of the political party system . . . the disappearance of veteran parties, the swift rise and fall of new parties, and the entry of new parties into the political system” (Arian et al. 2006, 52). The voter turnout, which in Israel was quite high (average turnout 1949–2006: 78.6%), reached an all-time low 63.2% in the 2006 elections, and only increased

slightly in 2009. Electoral volatility is also increasing, from 14% in 1984 to 37.5% in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of confidence in the “responsible party” model as an effective form of representation is striking. Trust in political parties reached an all time low of 22%, and the tendency is clearly a downward one. There was also an impressive drop in party membership, from 18% in 1969 to 6.5% in 2006. As part of the same process, we witness an upward trend in disassociation of parties: 68% in 2006 said that they do not support a specific party (Arian et al. 2006).

Mistrust of politicians is pervasive and also expresses the crisis of the “responsible party” model as a mechanism able to express the popular will. Sixty-two percent of the Israelis believe that politicians do not take into account the view of the ordinary citizen (39% in 1969), and only 17% agree with the statement, “The politicians we elect try to keep the promises they made in the election campaign” (Arian et al. 2006).

All these figures are symptomatic of a crisis of representation. In Israel we can find reasons for this crisis at each of the three levels discussed in the third section. On the first level, that of the represented, the transformation in the character of the political community contributes to explain the crisis of representation. The mass immigration from the former Soviet Union challenges the limits and definition of the political community.<sup>5</sup> Besides, the political consciousness of Israeli Arabs has changed during the last

4 The great increase in the number of seats achieved by the Likud (from 12 to 27), the growth of Lieberman’s party and the weakening of the Labor party and Meretz, all point towards the conclusion that electoral volatility is still high.

5 The figures of the Israeli Democracy Index show that immigrants from the former Soviet Union are the most alienated from the political and party systems (Arian et al. 2006).

two decades, and they see themselves as lacking real representation and increasingly demand inclusion in the political system as full citizens.

Concerning the second, that of the mediating institutions, we can clearly understand from the figures quoted above that the political party is not able to fulfill its task as mediator in the process of representation (Ram 2006, 2008). The transformations of Israeli society and of the political parties produced a crisis in the “responsible party” model. The political parties tried, unsuccessfully, to cope with the popular mistrust. In this sense, changes such as the adoption of primary elections by the major parties were a—failed—attempt to combine the “responsible party” model with the juridical model of representation.

As to the third level, that of the representatives, the neo-liberal turn means that the state and the political system are not capable of fulfilling the promise embedded in the idea of popular sovereignty. In the following, I will discuss this last aspect in more detail in order to sustain the claim enunciated in the introduction, that the actual crisis of representation stems from the perception that today the political system betrays the promise of popular sovereignty.

As we saw in the previous section, neo-liberal reforms restricted the capacity of the state to translate the people’s claims into policy. The liberalization and deregulation of financial markets weakened the government’s ability and autonomy to plan and put forward social and economic policies. Until the reform of the financial sector, the state was responsible for most of the credit, through the subsidy of the loans given by the banking system to “qualified firms” (Yehoshua and Yefet 1996, 598). Thus, the government had broad powers to determine the cost and the goals of credit. The government was responsible not only for the fiscal policy, but also for the monetary and exchange rate policies. As a consequence of the reform, special bonds for pension funds and insurance companies and development credits granted directly by the

state were eliminated. Firms were allowed to collect funds by issuing bonds or through the Stock Exchange. Funds that were previously invested in government bonds were freed for investment in firms. The financial reform also brought a relaxation of governmental control and supervision of banking activity and of investment. The Bank of Israel became autonomous and its monetary policy was no longer subjected to the government's decisions. The currency rate policy was modified, and instead of daily governmental intervention to establish the exchange rate, the latter is now established by the markets. As the Bank of Israel states, "since 1996 the Bank of Israel does not intervene systematically in the foreign currency market" (Bank of Israel 1999, 190). Foreign trade was deregulated, and subsidies for exports and protective taxes were eliminated. The broad privatization of public companies also limited the government's hold on the economy. In sum, the neo-liberal economic reforms within a general context of global neo-liberalization hinder the ability of the political system to put forward autonomous policies that reflect the interests and beliefs of the citizens.

Moreover, the partial recommodification of welfare services limited even more the state's ability to represent—through its policies—the citizens' claims. This is especially so concerning the pension system. By diverting pension savings to the financial markets and partially privatizing the pension system, the 2003 reform freed the state from responsibility for old-age pensions and deprived it of resources with which to finance public policies. The transference of responsibility and funds from the public system to the market represents a further constraint on the power of the state to represent the popular will. The lowering of personal income and firms' gains taxes diminished the resources the state has for financing social services, making it more difficult to translate citizens' demands into concrete policies.

In sum, the neo-liberalization of Israeli society contributed to the crisis of representation in three main ways: The first, insofar as it weakened the state, diminished the possibility for it to influence

society, and removed significant areas from democratic control, thus damaging the very possibility of representing the citizens' interests and goals. The second, the neo-liberal ideology depoliticized economic and social policies. If policies are considered as technical—and not political—issues, then representation lacks any real significance and the idea of popular sovereignty becomes an empty slogan. If economic policies are considered as independent of political agency and the same economic model is adopted by almost the entire political spectrum (as was the case for Israel, where all the main political parties adopted slightly different versions of the neo-liberal creed), we lack one of the three pre-conditions that enable the functioning of the “responsible party” model.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, in a globalized post-Fordist world, the power of transnational institutions and markets severely limits the state's capacity to implement policies that are in the interest of and fulfill the needs of the population. In an exacerbation of Shumpeterian democracy, popular sovereignty is reduced not even to the choice between elites, but to the ratification of policies promoted by the transnational elites.<sup>7</sup>

To reiterate, the neo-liberalization of Israeli society and its insertion into the neo-liberal global model have undermined the very essence of the idea of popular sovereignty. The crisis of representation is a consequence of the voiding of the concept of popular sovereignty. Whether this crisis is sustainable (or solvable) in the long run, or whether the crisis of representation will develop into a legitimization crisis remain open questions.

6 The failure of the Oslo process and the pervasive public feeling that there are no real alternatives for the resolution of the conflict, only “conflict management,” adds to the lack of policy differences between the different parties.

7 Joseph Shumpeter considered that popular sovereignty was limited to the people's voting which of the existing elites should rule.

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## The Roots and Implications of Discomfort

Yossi Shain

Public discomfort in Israel is often rooted in the difference between the grand promise and expectation that the Jewish State would become an “ethical entity”—a beacon of social justice and political morality for Jews and non-Jews, as perceived by its founding fathers and described by romantic philosophers and theologians after its establishment in 1948 and especially after the Six-Day War in 1967—and the awakening to the troublesome realities of “normalcy,” the market economy, lack of consensus and ideals and the apparent deterioration of standards of honesty and integrity. To a great extent, this discomfort originates in the extensive changes in social, economic, and political priorities. Israel has begun to feel more certain of its military and economic invincibility and has become an integral part of the democratic, pluralistic, affluent West with its post-material values of self-fulfillment, its amorphous role models, and their equally nebulous moral authority.

The Yom Kippur War was a watershed for the Israeli culture of self-admonition, yielding severe, venomous criticism of politics and the armed forces. During the 1970s, the discomfort and self-admonition culture established themselves as dominant elements in society. Israelis became particularly bitter and petulant, incessantly denouncing politics and politicians while shifting rapidly between

\* Translated by Zvi Ofer.

criticism of functional failure and condemnation of personal ethics and morals. Many Israelis complain of the decline of ethics in public life and politics, demanding greater power and presence for civil society and governmental agencies charged with supervising political functionaries and demanding rectification of their malfeasance.

At times, Israeli self-admonition culture is expressed in loud, open, outspoken conflict with the establishment and the political leadership, nurtured by particularly cynical media that disparage and deride politicians, and especially by the “corruption discourse” that has largely replaced raging disputes over key ideological issues.

Certainly many people in the world challenge the legitimacy of the Israeli state, including, of course, the morality of its very existence, and both domestic and foreign aspersions cast on Israel’s moral leadership have become more strident and threatening over the past few years. The country’s moral status as a Jewish and democratic state is questioned repeatedly because of its ostensible inability to achieve balance between its security needs and the civil freedoms and human rights of its citizens and residents. Worldwide criticism of Israel does not focus solely on core state issues; at times, it also includes damning statements taken from the language of corruption. It is not only the enemies of Israel who point to political corruption as yet another manifestation of the country’s moral flaws; even its supporters may express amazement and concern over the Israeli media’s constant stream of reports and critical pieces concerning political corruption.

As it experiences inordinately difficult political challenges and complex moral dilemmas, the Israeli public—often incited by scandal-craving media and encouraged by active, demanding, and especially invasive control and investigation systems with a deep sense of mission—has apparently increased its interest in the numerous crimes and ethical missteps of its elected officials. Consequently,

many Israelis claim that their confidence in democracy is steadily declining. Israel's extended state of war, possibly surpassing those experienced by all other democracies, renders the question of political leadership and moral authority particularly significant. Many Israelis believe that a moral personality, a sound reputation and a track record, particularly in wartime, is essential for leadership (Vital 2008). Furthermore, Israeli discomfort with political corruption is closely linked with broader issues concerning the cultural and moral nature of the political and social systems, several of which are described below.

### **Israeli Democracy in the Age of Capitalism**

No one denies that post-Six-Day War economic prosperity engendered a dramatic shift that transformed Israel from a government-controlled, agriculture-based state economy to a Western consumer society exhibiting market economics and a rapidly rising standard of living. This development propelled individualistic morality—that sanctifies “the good life”—to the forefront and accorded legitimacy to rising inequality. From the 1980s on, Israel underwent a rapid process of liberalization and receptivity to foreign cultures and global media, leading to a radical change in standard of living, lifestyle, job distribution and—above all—value priorities in virtually all aspects of life. The result was a moral cacophony that has difficulty shaping consensus on values and ethics in politics and public life. In such situations, judicialization and the test of criminal law have become key factors in assessing public morality.

As Israel joined the global economy, rapid abandonment of traditional industries and transition to science-based industries encouraged individualistic and even hedonistic values and cast a pall on the collective and egalitarian ethos of the early years of the state

(Ben Porat 2008). The decline in collective values is also a direct consequence of the state's consolidation and especially the broad processes of democratization that it underwent as mass immigration changed the demographic face of society. Furthermore, democratic growth and normalization eroded the status and dominant culture of the founding elite and helped expand the political system and render it more accessible. This process empowered new forces in society and reduced the distance between elected officials and their constituents. At the same time, the lack of dominant successors to the heroic founding generation and transition to a more open political system naturally led to social, moral, and cultural pluralism that shifted the morality burden from the old political leadership to other spheres and new elites in a more variegated Israeli society. The dominant elites in Israel of the 1950s and 1960s, that included the ruling political party (Mapai/Labor), the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the kibbutzim, the Histadrut (trade union) and labor leaders, were replaced in time not only by new political factors but also by major forces in civil society, civil service, the media, the judicial sphere, prominent figures in the economic sphere, and the wealthy.

As in other Western affluent societies, nurtured by values originating in the commercial media, many of Israel's more recent cultural heroes are "celebrities," "winners," or the fabulously rich, whom many perceive as role models. Nevertheless, as a collective, it appears that many Israelis are still seeking egalitarian values and ethical role models and view wealth among political functionaries with suspicion. Some will say that in Israeli culture, the game is always zero-sum: "If the other guy is rich, chances are it's at my expense." In reality, even though the Israeli economy and society are developing free market trends, much of the public, the media and the intellectual strata continue to pay lip service to the culture of austerity and the egalitarian ethics of the first years of the state—as if some

moral authority still remained—and demand that political leaders and public servants display a less flamboyant and ostentatious lifestyle. Consequently, in late 2009, when a proposed law called for exposing Knesset members' assets, legislators vied to present themselves as poorest in resources and property, calling on their colleagues to emulate them in an act ostensibly attesting to proper democratic “transparency” and political “purity.” The obvious conclusion was that any elected official who amassed assets and perhaps acquired wealth will almost automatically be tarnished with suspicions of corruption and dishonesty (Zarhiya 2009).

Religious Zionists—who are among the last remaining ideological groups in Israeli society to reject secular values and criticize mainstream hedonism—and many non-religious Israelis as well, including residents of cooperative/collective agricultural villages, describe the individualization of society and worship of the fleshpots as a sign that the pioneer spirit is flagging and the values of Judaism have been lost, resulting in moral weakness and bankruptcy. Some say that the deterioration crisis affecting the political system is part of the overall disintegration of society, claiming that Israelis have lost their common moral foundation. There are even prophets of doom who bemoan the failed melting pot or the disappearing tribal campfire. Parallel to its secular elites and morality, Israel also has religious Zionist and Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) communities with their own independent spheres of morality, establishment elites, and role models. Many religious Zionists and even some Haredim experience normative duality and are planted firmly in both worlds: that of Jewish religious law and secular. Nevertheless, there are some who claim, as Yedidia Stern wrote, that the initial inclination among the religious and non-religious alike is “no longer a search for common ground, compromise or reconciliation, but a quest for achievement, extracting the truth, sharpening differences and

denouncing flaws,” a trend that encourages “a puritanical arena for deciding the *Kulturkampf*,” channeled into the language of corruption (Stern 2002, 202, 221).

### **“Occupation Corrupts”**

The *Kulturkampf* in Israel between religious Zionists (and some of the Haredi groups) and secular leftists and centrists is channeled into the language of corruption not only regarding ethical leadership and democracy issues but also the essence of sovereignty and identity, especially concerning the occupation (of land conquered in the Six-Day War). While the religious Zionist right considers itself a moral leader in the battle against corruption in Israel’s democratic-liberal system and considers its commitment to settlement in Judea and Samaria to be a manifestation of pioneering Judaism, groups on the left and in the center of the Israeli political map often consider the Judea and Samaria settlement enterprise to be the core of corruption in Israeli society. The dispute over the corruption that the occupation causes, especially the slogan “Occupation corrupts,” became a key element in Israeli left-wing discourse. The Israeli left believes that the occupation has corrupted the values of the individual, the economy and the political system, claiming that Israelis have become inured to the suffering of another people and have turned into hedonist colonialists who lack social sensitivity—not only toward the Palestinians but also toward foreign workers. They are said to have adopted a violent culture in their daily lives that they acquired and intensified in the process of oppressing the Palestinians.

The contention that occupation corrupts deeply penetrated broader political discourse, even at the center of the political map and in part of the Israeli right wing, in which some claimed that the left had abandoned its national loyalty by denying Israel’s harsh security

realities, tending to sacrifice the good of the state and the people on the altar of alleged human rights for the Palestinians.<sup>1</sup>

In the dispute between religious Zionist and conservative circles on the one hand and left-wing bodies on the other, the former maintain that true destruction is not caused by the occupation but by adoption of the ethical-social approaches and cultural norms of corrupt, affluent society. According to Rabbi Elisha Aviner, these norms turn minor needs—whose fulfillment is not essential to our existence—into a *sine qua non*, whereas conquest and redemption of the land is the formula for restoration of “the true moral commitment of the Jewish People to its land” (Aviner 2007).

### **Excess Democracy**

Liberal democracies tend to reject over time the rule of the old elites and “wise men” when formulating policies and making decisions, and demand increases for the participation and self-expression of individuals, interest groups and—during the past few decades—identity groups as well. This situation leads to discrepancies between expectations and realities, as well as to some confusion regarding outstanding figures, particularly politicians. During times of crisis and emergency, there is a natural tendency to yearn for strong leaders, but such feelings pass rapidly, making way for the natural democratic dynamics of “normal times,” that aim at stripping leaders of their halos and auras of mystery and presenting them as mere politicians. This tendency is reinforced in cultures without remnants of a clear

1 Naomi Hazan, currently president of the New Israel Fund’s International Board, was accused recently by right-wing factors of according a seal of approval to the left’s betrayal of the homeland under the guise of activism in civil society.

social hierarchy, in which authority and authoritative institutions are less respected. At times, when social norms are vague and flexible, the boundaries of law and discipline become blurred and lax, possibly deteriorating into a truly chaotic state (Leibowitz 2008).

Israel is a country with a cultural tendency to challenge, undermine, or shatter former foregone conclusions concerning virtually every sphere of human activity. This attitude nurtures a more extensive lack of discipline and scorn for institutions and authorities in the public sphere, along with manifestations of disrespect that some perceive as encouragement of illicit behavior. The close and at times aggressive contact that public servants and elected officials maintain with the Israeli public and the informal ties formed among people are familiar to all Israelis and even to many tourists.

Such unmediated ties obviously encourage close relations between politicians and their constituents that have intensified significantly since the 1970s, as the status of politicians within parties became more and more dependent on the party members who elect their representatives. The empowerment of party voters and the increasing dependence on external financing gradually dulled the public halo of political aristocracy and even paved the way for the introduction of shady figures into the system, as “good people” were deterred by the humiliation that primary elections entail.

### **The Money-Power Nexus and the Structure of the System**

Expansion of the public discourse that recognizes relations between the wealthy classes and government officials as a threatening moral scourge is a key characteristic of the discomfort and the conceptualization of corruption that prevail in many democratic

countries. Since the 1990s, emphasis in the corruption rhetoric has shifted from criticism of the concentration of resources and economic power by the state and by party and public institutions to criticism of corruption originating in the concentration of resources among a few rich moguls.

Naturally politicians want to promote ideologies and interests as well as fight for the benefit of their supporters who elected them to their positions and whose votes they seek for future reelection. The political-moral dilemma of Israel concerns the extent to which cronies and constituents can buy influence with money and to which political activity on their behalf is conducted at the expense of overall public interests, possibly affecting these interests adversely or even undermining the very foundations of the democratic system itself.

In Israel, expansion of the political corruption concept to cover various types of political gain intensified criminal court involvement and thereby nurtured public discourse of uncertain delineation. Just as *mediated corruption* is a controversial term in academic and public discussion in the United States, it is often difficult to evaluate the extent to which Israeli politics (including the connections between elected officials and business persons, deals, appointments and interests that are part of its ethos) is capable of passing the tests posed by both ethical considerations and criminal law. Many scholars involved in assessing the boundaries of political corruption focus on value judgment rather than empirical scientific criteria.

### **The Leadership Crisis and the Moral Hierarchy**

The perceived “leadership crisis” in Israel engenders a feeling that “you can’t count on anyone.” Furthermore, description of democratic politics as an activity that requires expert professionals (technocrats) and is shaped by an institutional structure, regulations, and rational

rules tends to reduce the value of ideologies and the importance of elected officials, thus eroding the concept of political leadership. The administrative approach which describes politics as “an unglamorous, mundane business, working out its allocations in bits and pieces everywhere,” contrasts with the deep and virtually instinctive insight shared by most people, declaring that politics is not just procedures and administrative gloom but one of the high points of human activity: “A significant, momentous order of social business, involving major actors and taking place at the very center of society” (Poggi 1978, 3). Such insight, however, appears to be overshadowed and obscured by routine challenges that accord priority to socioeconomic issues over major political decisions.

Discomfort with the political leadership is imprinted deeply in Israeli society and culture. Political cultures in democracies differ from one another in terms of internal order, discipline, and respect for the chain of authority and rule. If cultures are ranked according to social boundaries and respect for hierarchies, Israel will find itself well toward the bottom of the scale. Israelis are known (or perhaps notorious) for their rough-edged directness, aggressiveness, and domineering nature.

Obviously, in some strange way, the problematic characteristics of Israelis are always combined with such likable features as creativity, warmth, family ties, loyalty, a special kind of friendliness, powerful empathy for others, and sincere hospitality. Although many people lament the lack of more rigid social boundaries, Israeli realities are often praised even by its most outspoken critics, who emphasize nonetheless that the country maintains a vibrant democratic society conducive to lively and open discussion of all kinds of difficult issues and in which citizens feel close to their elected officials.

## **Multiculturalism**

One difficult question facing culturally divided societies such as Israel's concerns the presence or absence of widely accepted common values and standards of social morality and personal and political ethics. Democracies with broad subculture spectra (multicultural societies) generally exhibit a dominant culture that shapes social consensus. This culture is manifested not only as a mandatory hegemonic factor but also as a culture perceived as appropriate by most citizens, such that it enables the country's democratic institutions to provide sufficiently extensive self-expression to cultural subgroups without compelling them to lose their identity.

The call for unification of national-Jewish values, based on Zionism as a vision and act of fulfillment, rejected the notion of unbridgeable cultural relativism in Judaism. The coalitionary system of political parties sought to express these values and constitute a procedural framework through which conflicts originating in the multiplicity of cultures might be resolved. By contrast, however, one may also claim that it is impossible to bridge over moral conventions among the different groups constituting Israeli society and certainly unrealistic to find ethical standards acceptable to all components of the country's social and political sub-groups.

Assessment of options for common ground in Israeli politics and society requires recognition that the public vision of civil virtues that characterized the formative years of the state has been replaced gradually by divisive, multifaceted cultural and ethical realities. Two trends should be examined: (1) whether and how cultural and social groups in the Jewish population have assimilated commitment to the public good, and (2) what is the centrality of these commitments relative to the dominant principles and obligations of the early years of the state.

In a nutshell, the Israeli collective ethos (that is fundamentally Jewish) of the formative period has apparently been replaced gradually by:

1. Western secular and capitalistic approaches of the “live and let live” genre.
2. Jewish separatist sectarianism with a right-wing religious orientation, linked primarily with Haredi sectors in Jerusalem and a considerable share of Shas (an ethnic religious party) supporters.
3. Provincialism, including people far removed from the Western cultural ethos, often called the “ugly Israelis.”
4. Religious Zionists (many of them belonging to the “Orange Camp,” so called because of the color that symbolized the settlers and their supporters in the protest against disengagement from Gaza in 2005). A sizable share of this group claim that they are the true heirs of the Zionist pioneers.
5. Remnants of the secular center that once typified residents of collective/cooperative agricultural villages. Members of this group maintained the agricultural roots of the pioneer era, now strongly combined with a capitalistic market, well demonstrated by the dramatic changes in the Kibbutz Movement.<sup>2</sup>

2 For many years, the kibbutz had been recognized and even revered throughout the world as Israel’s most innovative social/moral experiment. Until 1977, leaders of the Kibbutz Movement played a central role in Israeli politics, but the crisis of kibbutz debts during the 1980s, the massive aid that the kibbutzim received from public funds, the mass departure of young people from kibbutz life, and above all the transformation of the kibbutz into a semi-capitalistic entity constitute a most dramatic example of the change in values and norms of collectivism in Israeli culture. See Ben Rafael 1997.

6. Left-wing and post-Zionist principles that adhere to universal human values and reject so-called narrow Jewish-Israeli commitment. Many Israelis perceive members of this marginal but highly outspoken camp as traitors.

Each of these groups has its own special reasons for preaching political rebuke, rendering the language of corruption elastic, all-inclusive, and multifaceted.

### **Blaming the System**

Some inconsistency is evident in the behavior of Israeli citizens and their incisive moral judgment of the politicians for whom they voted and from whom they are quick to dissociate themselves. Prof. Ira Sharkansky (2007), who examined corruption discourse in the 2006 elections, noted that despite the severe criticism and unbridled language of corruption expressed by the Israeli media and public, behind the curtain at the polls, most Israeli voters are not seriously troubled by what national reformers call “corruption.” Uri Avnery (2006) expressed surprise that although public opinion polls show that the Israeli public has lost its faith in politicians, people never admit that they are to blame for voting them in. His response states, “That would be an unpleasant admission. What they say is: It’s not our fault. So who is to blame? The ‘system,’ of course.” Critics of the repeated demand for structural changes in the Israeli governmental system include people who claim that the source of corruption is not in the intimate ties between plutocrats and politicians, nor even in the decline of society’s collective ethos, but rather “in the structure of the system itself, in Israel’s unique democratic system . . . [that bears] direct and comprehensive responsibility for the corruption of public life in Israel, hence the need to assess its damages and consider its replacement before it is too late” (Asael 2008).

Since the early years of the state, Israelis have been engaged in a heated debate over the need for a constitution and electoral reform. Over the past few decades, discussions have regularly included terms taken from the war on corruption. The failure of electoral reform calling for direct election of the prime minister, as practiced during the 1990s, constitutes a clear example of the manner in which public protest, accompanied by anti-corruption rhetoric, is liable to have serious but entirely unintended consequences.<sup>3</sup> The direct election experiment turned out to be an alarming failure that severely distressed the political system. Less than a decade after the 1992 Direct Election Law was passed, the Knesset decided to readopt the original system, which is similarly far from satisfactory, especially to people who blame it for all the political and ethical ills of the system as a whole.

Comprehensive comparative studies conducted over the past ten years examined the influence of democratic government and electoral systems on the extent of political corruption and discovered weak correlations between extent of corruption and nature of elections. Several researchers note that the transition from proportional to majority representation has a marginal effect on the ethical and moral patterns of politicians' behavior, rejecting the claim that personal elections render elected legislators "more sensitive" to their constituents than those placed in office according to closed party lists (Persson,

- 3 The Israeli public, anxious over the bargaining and negotiating in the Knesset, took to the streets in their tens of thousands, repeating the slogan "Corrupt ones! We're sick of you!" The movement, led by a well-organized group of researchers and activists, eventually impelled the Knesset to adopt a constitutional change, without considering the situations the change was purported to address. Yitzhak Rabin's well known rebuke of Shimon Peres (his despised Labor Party colleague at the time) for initiating the "dirty trick" in the Knesset, belongs to the anti-corruption pantheon of Israeli politics. Direct election of the prime minister was enacted in 1992 and first implemented in 1996, then in 1999 and 2001 and was subsequently canceled.

Tabellini, and Trebbi 2003). By contrast, other studies found certain correlations attesting that proportional elections are more sensitive to corrupt acts of favor-seeking than majority elections, although the researchers admit that their results are far from conclusive. The most outstanding observation noted by senior American scholars who reviewed data pertaining to most democratic countries showed that presidential systems are more sensitive to political corruption than proportional parliamentary systems like Israel's. At times, absolute win-lose presidential elections may be more conducive to the crossing of ethical and criminal boundaries than multi-party and coalitionary electoral processes (Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman 2005).

### **“Know Before Whom Thou Art Destined to Render an Accounting”**

Many scholars reject the theory that links the type of government with the problematic ethics they discern within the political system. A few claim that the breakdown in governance is not institutional but is the result of the particular political culture and the personalities who make up the political system. In other words, Israel has to undergo a “public cleansing” process and redesign its political culture, with thorough attention to unethical behavior and political corruption (Zubida and Mekelberg 2008). Accusing the political system, type of regime, or political culture of malfeasance intensifies the increasing demand for accountability. One popular Israeli view maintains that public servants in Israel have no clear conception of reward and punishment or of accountability.<sup>4</sup> That the very term accountability has no proper

4 Some even lament Israeli indifference and compassion that gives politicians a second and third chance even when they fail again and again (see Kampf 2007).

translation into Hebrew ostensibly attests to conceptual, cultural, and behavioral malfunctions. The public does not demand that its leaders render an accounting of their deeds before the elections and thus misses the mark regarding several of democracy's most important objectives. In some democratic countries, the mechanism of public shame and apprehension over failure at the polls due to inclusion of undesirable personalities suffices to weed them out of the candidates' lists and to bar their inclusion in governing institutions. Israel should place greater emphasis on accountability, as it will reinforce democracy to a considerable extent. According to this theory, it is reasonable to assume that once the public is more aware of the principle of accountability, it will demand that it be practiced in everyday political party activity.

Many critics claim that Israeli politicians are "glued to their seats" and will not resign, unlike their counterparts in other democracies, despite serious flaws in policymaking and personal ethics. Thus, the judicial arena "remains the only way to punish those who in other places would be punished by public opinion."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, a comparative examination of the democratic world reveals that the resignation rate due to assumption of responsibility in the top political and bureaucratic echelons is no less than that of many other democratic countries in which the concept of accountability is ostensibly well rooted and familiar. Numerous senior Israeli politicians, including prime ministers and major cabinet ministers, have taken responsibility and resigned after policy failure, public criticism, ideological or value disagreements and/or exposure of personal ethical shortcomings. Golda Meir, it should be recalled, was cleared by the Agranat Commission, which examined the events

5 Cited by Kampf (2007, 91 n. 96). For a discussion of this issue, see Arieli-Horowitz (2006b, 5-7).

leading to the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. Although neither Meir nor then Defense Minister Moshe Dayan were held personally accountable, she assumed public and moral responsibility for the failures of that war, even after having won another mandate from the public in elections that took place immediately thereafter. A short time after the battles died down, Justice Minister Ya'akov Shimshon Shapira demanded Dayan's resignation. When his demand was not met, Shapira resigned from the cabinet on October 30, 1973, thereby clearly manifesting the concept of accountability. Yitzhak Rabin resigned after his wife Leah's dollar account in the United States was discovered. Menachem Begin, who was only mildly censured by the Kahan Commission over incidents at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon, resigned as prime minister on August 30, 1983, despite repeated calls by his fellow coalition members to continue his leadership. It is widely believed that the loss of soldiers in Lebanon and the protests in front of his house hastened Begin's resignation, which he announced by saying "I cannot go on." Ariel Sharon was compelled to resign as defense minister because of what happened at Sabra and Shatila but effectively forced his presence on Begin as a minor minister in his cabinet. The above review, although only partial, clearly indicates that ministerial responsibility is an integral part of Israeli political life.

Criticism and suspicions directed toward politicians obviously give rise to populist demands that policymaking not be entrusted to "corrupt officials" and that direct public influence on democracy be increased. Some maintain that the "moral bankruptcy" of politicians demands reinforcement of moral gatekeepers. Such claims empowered the numerous critical factors then gathering strength in Israel, repeatedly contending that they represent morality, ethics and judicial and economic rationality, as opposed to "corrupt politics." These elements include the courts and prosecutors, the

State Comptroller's Office, key bureaucratic bodies and civil protest movements, including sound governance organizations, assisted by investigative journalism that purports to represent "public interest," "the public's right to know," "the national interest," and "quality democracy." Their protests, both direct and indirect, oppose the modern form of representative democracy that is ostensibly led by politicians who lack the backbone of integrity. At times, these critics seek to acquire authority ordinarily reserved for the political system (Arieli-Horowitz 2006b, 4–6).

Israeli parliamentary democracy has several major advantages, although it also embodies numerous difficulties and is not without its critics. One common complaint about parliamentary politics concerns the large number of parties vying for coalitionary power within the framework of a "soft constitution," encouraging a culture and behavioral patterns that hardly earn respect for the political hierarchy (Linz 1990, 84–91). We are familiar with the popular expressions of revulsion regarding coalitionary negotiations or the epithets hurled at Knesset members who "desert" their parties (e.g., "Coalition—a rotten mission," "chair brokers," "they won't give up their chauffeurs and Volvos" and of course, "Corrupt ones, we're sick of you!"), all of them constituting an integral part of political corruption dialogue in Israel. Criticism of Israeli parliamentary democracy tends to blur the boundaries between personal ethical misconduct and the kind of questionable political activity that evokes disgust with the system.

In Israel, corruption discourse is always interwoven with broader moral arguments, including those concerning the essence of the Israeli-Jewish polity, market economy, and class issues, behavior during wartime, the occupation, attitudes toward the Palestinians in the administered territories—and all these issues as they apply to Israel's war on terrorism. The rhetoric of the war on corruption is applied also

to questions of religion and state, the status of military service, family morals, and above all, the function of the “rule of law.”

### **Undermining of Values and Agents of the New Morality**

In the late 1960s, pundits noted that the Israeli soul is divided between the desire for self-fulfillment and commitment to the civil-pioneering virtue of defending and nurturing the collective. This dilemma, wrote Amos Elon, evoked a “moral vertigo” among many young people. Some began wondering whether the existential threats to Israel and the sociopolitical vision that guided the idealistic founders of the state were keeping them from living in the present. This tension, which increased during the 1970s, was expressed in the political struggle and public discourse concerning four interrelated core issues affecting Israeli society: Peace, the future of the occupied territories, the Jewish majority, and the democratic quality of governance. Ideological debate and public and political discussion of these issues has undergone many changes over the past few decades, but definition of the “order of priorities” continues to constitute a considerable share of the “essence of Israeli politics” (J. Shamir and M. Shamir 2000, 3; Arian 2005, 425).

Many Israelis, who tend to think of themselves as exceptional, will be surprised to find out that their concern over “loss of values” and especially their apprehension about the low level of political behavior and the decline in quality of political leadership is shared by many citizens of both long-time and newer democratic countries, who also tend to lament the waning of civil-national commitment, solidarity, and family values. People in nearly all democratic societies complain about contemporary ills, including erosion of the family unit, loss of discipline among the younger generation, a decline in

respect for elders and for authority, erosion of ethical standards among professionals and public servants, increasing violence, unrestrained media, drugs and alcohol, egoism, greed, and of course, political corruption. All these phenomena belong to a virtually permanent list of social pathologies in Western democratic discourse (see Himmelfarb 2000). In this era of “new values,” morality agents and purists (from within and without public systems) act out of deep and usually authentic concern, condemning the moral failures of society. Agents of morality tend to seek out issues that threaten the well-being and mores of society, exaggerating their severity as they provoke moral panic—a by-product of the ailments of our times.

### **Post-Material Society**

As free market expansion led to growth and economic well-being, as well as greater physical security (despite the broadening of social-economic gaps), many citizens of affluent societies adopted new priorities and values that social scientists call *post-material*. Findings gathered for the World Values Survey since the 1960s indicate that post-material values express an extended change in priorities and world views, especially among the second generation after World War II: From traditional communalism and concern for security and survival to increasing attention to self-expression. Sociologists tend to describe these developments as an integral part of modernization and as a nearly linear developmental process in which the image of the individual and his or her desires rise on the scale of priorities as other family, civic and community values decline. In time, this process leads to a decline in civil trust of ruling and political systems whose missions naturally diminish in scope when economic and personal security appear to be assured (Inglehart 2000). Scholars examining value systems in affluent societies emphasize that they

manifest “widespread feelings of social mistrust, citizens turning away from prime institutions and political authorities, and engaging less in informal interactions are seen as indicators of the decline of the traditional civic ethic.” They also report erosion in the ability of the traditional political parties to rally the masses to political activity, a lessening of traditional ideological polarization between left and right (that prevailed until the 1980s), a “yellowing” of public life and preference of mediagenic politicians over the lackluster older variety. All these developments combine in a trend toward “adoption of new political values” that emphasizes “self-expression, post-materialism, gender equality, environmentalism, feminism and ecologism.”<sup>6</sup> Research assessing the value priorities of Israelis in light of these theories and in comparison to findings from other countries determined that Israel is at the center of the value map in terms of its citizens’ assimilation of post-material values (Yuchtman-Ya’ar 2003).

Many citizens of modern affluent societies (including Israelis) speak of politics cynically and derisively and suspect politicians of dishonesty and a lack of integrity. At the same time, they also recognize, perhaps intuitively, that only politics and politicians can guarantee the physical and economic security that are basic and necessary conditions for post-material life. Hence they expect major accomplishments from their politicians during difficult times, such as the recent global economic crisis.

In Israel, existential questions that demand political responses arise daily, rendering dependence on politics and politicians especially necessary and intensive. Sociologist Ephraim Ya’ar found that *security culture* often leads Israelis to regress from emphasis on post-material values of self-fulfillment to adherence to basic

6 For a detailed discussion of the change in political values, see Halman (2007), from which the preceding quotations were taken.

survival values. Political scientist Stuart A. Cohen wrote that this return to survival values, which inspires Israelis to rally en masse and act patriotically in times of war and crisis, repeatedly contradicts researchers (including those whose perception of reality originates in their feelings) who announce the end of the era of Israeli heroism and offer gloomy predictions about post-modern and post-Zionist norms taking over the life of the nation (Cohen 2008, 60–61). These findings facilitate understanding of the Israeli political system, particularly regarding the public's attitude toward politicians. On the one hand, public discourse on the decline of values in Israeli politics and the quest for “spirituality” are an integral part of the trend characterizing affluent Western societies, but on the other, such discourse affects and is affected by local realities including assessment of global post-material realities, as well as such Israel-specific issues as extended public debate over security, national borders, and control of the occupied territories.

### **Alternative Agents of Morality**

The search for a unifying core and role models is a significant component of the quest for identity in a pluralistic society. In “normal” democratic realities, in which there is no overt, universally accepted moral leadership, “moral entrepreneurs” emerge. They often attempt to instill values and outlooks and to introduce moral behavioral codes, thereby seeking to accumulate power and status in the public arena and in public discourse. These agents of morality often act by stirring up “moral panic,” defined by sociologists as a political and social device to rally the masses, strike echoes and attack rivals, identifiable according to five key criteria:

1. *Threats*: Rising public concern over the behavior of a group that adversely affects the public good, as expressed in public opinion polls, editorial comments, legislative change proposals, and the rise of protest movements.
2. Increasing *hostility* toward the group whose behavior is perceived as harmful and damaging to values, the public interest, and at times the social structure itself. There is a tendency to differentiate between this group and those who seek “good.”
3. Broad *consensus* regarding the threatening phenomenon and the need to handle it seriously and immediately.
4. *Disproportion*: The term “moral panic” includes an intrinsic assumption that public perception of the threatening phenomenon’s scope and the number of people who perpetrate it is exaggerated and that people tend to see the suggestion of a threat as the threat itself. Those who spread panic try to prove the threat’s severity using problematic “scientific” indicators that nearly always lack foundation and validity.
5. *Volatility*: The issues that fuel moral panics change, causing their intensity to fluctuate. Some such issues, however, become part of the routine and the measures taken to address them become institutionalized, thus fueling the panic itself (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2009, 33–39).

In the early 1980s, sociologist Nachman Ben-Yehuda, a pioneer of worldwide academic discussion of moral panic, identified the increasing Israeli tendency in this direction as part of a decline in identification with the public and with collective values and a concomitant strengthening of liberalism. The formula is clear: More democracy leads to more moral confusion that leads to more panic.

As indicated, the decline in status and weakening of the old political elites and their moral monopolies yielded new agents of

morality that battle for control of the public space and discourse in the name of democracy and the public good. These moral agents tend to use the rhetoric of corruption to condemn politics and politicians. They exist in the justice system, civil society, and the media, and are part of established political bodies. In wartime and the presence of existential threats, they generally remain silent, although for no longer than a very brief period of time, noted Ben-Yehuda.

### **The Hubris of Self-Righteous Officials**

Emphasis on normal politics, or as political scientist David Easton (1953) put it, “politics as allocation,” perceives the legal-rational bureaucracy as superior, thereby effectively diminishing the significance of political players and increasing that of appointed government officials, who at times (without the public realizing it) turn into bureaucrats who assume the function of policymakers.<sup>7</sup> The bureaucratic outlook is quintessentially technocratic, characterized by an apolitical and even antipolitical spirit. C. Wright Mills (1967, 88) noted that liberal-practical agents of bureaucratic morality tend to describe politics and politicians in such suspicious terms as “pathological” or “corrupt.” For example, in May 2009, Ram Belinkov, budget director at Israel’s Finance Ministry, resigned in protest over a budget deal between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other players in the Israeli economic arena that bypassed the Ministry’s recommendations (i.e., those of appointed officials). Before his resignation, Belinkov was overheard complaining to Attorney General Menahem Mazuz that the budget process “simply can’t be run this way. Can I allow that

7 Max Weber is perhaps the greatest critic of bureaucrats as policymakers; the ensuing analysis is influenced by his writings.

in the agreement with the Histadrut they will demand to separate the fictitious invoices, when we are trying to fight the crime world, because they want to buy [Histadrut Chair] Ofer Eini?" Concerning Ehud Olmert, he added: "Prime ministers have been sent home for less than that. This is bribery" (Weisman et al. 2009). These remarks, recorded by a TV reporter's microphone, were repeated in all news broadcasts as a reflection of corruption in politics. But even more than attesting to corruption, this affair demonstrates that Israel, like many other democracies, has a broad spectrum of players, individuals and institutions that lay claim to the crown of rationality and morality to counter the lack thereof among "politicians." Expressions of this type are often uttered during disagreements over allocation of public funds. In Israel, finance ministry officials have the power to dictate moral priorities regarding social services, education, religion and even security. This power does not derive exclusively from their official function as economic experts but also from the implicit (and at times even explicit) claim that while technocrats are entirely loyal to the public treasury and public needs, politicians tend intuitively towards waste and haste because of purely personal-political interests or even corruption.

In his classic analysis of bureaucracy, Max Weber (1978, 1422–1423) warns society against arrogant technocrats, calling them officials with powerful personal drive and egos, who gain publicity as they spew incisive criticism of corrupt politics and politicians, presenting themselves as extraordinarily bold and righteous public servants who always act according to objective public interests.

In Israel, the clearest example—that may well fit Weber's description best of all—is the case of former Accountant General Yaron Zelicha, who became a well known public figure because of his highly publicized war on corruption against Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Thanks to Zelicha's key position in Israel's economic system,

his words gained massive exposure and his harsh accusations rendered him a true celebrity and leading figure among corruption fighters in Israel. Many of Zelicha's colleagues in the Israeli bureaucratic system considered his behavior to be mere arrogance for purposes of self-promotion and publicity. In an unprecedented measure, top Finance Ministry officials expressed their reservations about the damage Zelicha caused and his refusal to resign on conclusion of his term because "We have no other Ministry of Finance. We're all living in a world [governed by] term of office: 3–4 years is a reasonable time period for service and no one is holding on for dear life," said Ministry Director-General Yarom Ariav.<sup>8</sup>

In January 2010, State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss published a scathing report on the deviant conduct of Yaron Zelicha when he served as accountant-general, including problems involving false reports about an additional job he held when he was working as a civil servant.<sup>9</sup> This report led to criticism of corruption fighters' "false purism."

### **Agents of Morality in Civil Society (Domestic and International)**

The concept of *civil society* has become a significant part of political discourse in democracies and a common expression throughout the world, especially because of the energetic activity of civil movements against Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the subsequent democratization and liberalization of those countries.

8 *ynet*, September, 6, 2007. [Hebrew]

9 Zelicha's Celebration, *Globes*, January 13-14, 2010. [Hebrew]

Organization in civil society is generally identified as the “third side” (or “third sector”) of democracy, differentiated from political/party organization and activity derived from the administrative echelons of the state.<sup>10</sup> While politics is characterized by power struggles among parties and political elites and the economic arena by commercial and financial forces and private enterprise, civil society, at least in theory, comprises volunteer forces that promote civil and social matters without seeking financial profit or political power [alone].<sup>11</sup>

The multiplicity of organizations active in civil society is considered a reflection of vibrant democratic activity, providing a civil system of checks and balances against the power of the state and the politicians. Civil organizations are perceived as bodies that encourage participation and supervision of other systems; they nurture a democratic culture of tolerance and negotiation, serve as rallying points for establishment of pressure and interest groups among peripheral sectors, and function as channels of communication for transmission of messages from citizens to the central government. Activists in civil society are considered a viable cadre for political and public leadership.

Political thinkers also note that civil society differs from the political and economic arenas because it lacks internal division between dominant elites and “the masses.” The prevailing claim is that

10 Some even separate it theoretically from organization on a purely economic basis (the “fourth side”).

11 Somewhere between civil society and the economic and political arenas, political scientists also identify workers’ organizations (such as the Histadrut) and organized, institutionalized economic interest groups (such as the Industrialists’ Association). At times, there is some overlap among these three spheres, all of which, of course, exist within the framework of the sovereign state. (See Howard 2003.)

in civil society, members exert control through their organizations, whereas in politics and economics, the elites dictate both policy and values.

Although the activity of civil movements and volunteer organizations that criticize politics and politicians and serve as the watchdogs of democracy is nearly always perceived as something that strengthens the elected democratic establishment of the state, studies show that such activity may also have a negative and possibly destructive effect, particularly in time of crisis, in which presenting the authorities as weak and politicians as hollow and lacking legitimacy endangers political stability, impedes the democratic process itself, and adversely affects decision making and implementation of the policies of public officials. In Israel, volunteer bodies that present themselves as civil social agents and are perceived as such, may act according to an overtly political platform and even serve as covert political branches of the bodies, right-wing and left-wing alike, that finance them (often from overseas), weakening and even destroying the politicians' positions and personal status.

Over the past few years, many NGO's were established in Israel, including think tanks and civil organizations focusing on rectifying the ethical "failures" of Israeli democracy and on the struggle against political corruption. These bodies acquired decision-making influence covering a range of issues extending beyond their declared areas of activity. In time, they gained the status of new moral elites, especially in the legal sphere.

Organizations fighting corruption make extensive use of the media, the State Comptroller's Office and the legal system—that is open to petitions on behalf of the public—to expose ethical misconduct and political corruption, demanding that the legal norms applying to errant public officials be rendered more stringent. As indicated, fighting political corruption through the courts raises

some pointed questions regarding the difference between the *ethical threshold* representing ideal behavior suiting politicians and the *legal threshold*, below which activity is subject to criminal charges. Some corruption-fighting public petitioners representing civil social organizations call for congruence of the two thresholds, so that acts situated below the ethical threshold, now perceived as “inappropriate” only, will be considered illegal, leading to invalidation of the errant politicians through criminal sanctions imposed by the courts and attaching disgrace to unethical acts that deviate from norms of sound behavior.

Israel’s corruption-fighting civil social bodies, like those of other countries, often succeed in alarming the political system by forming ties with the legal and law enforcement systems and the media, as well as with international bodies, that have rendered political corruption an important global issue since the 1990s. Israel, too, maintains branches of Transparency International (TI) that is largely responsible for transforming the worldwide war on political corruption into what Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth (2000) called “the imperialism of virtue.” TI, that is active throughout the world, has succeeded in turning normal governance and the scourge of corruption into key elements of international legitimation discourse. Similarly, its Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is presented as a scientific yardstick that condemns or approves of regimes that seek international assistance (see Navot 2008, 144–145). The international struggle and the CPI indeed assisted in the campaign to discredit cumbersome governing systems, primarily in the Third World, but the Index itself has become the object of denunciation in many democracies, particularly in Eastern Europe, where many have begun to question the rhetoric of the war on corruption and its destructive implications for the development of politics and new democratic institutions. Critics of the international war on corruption claim that the language of corruption constitutes lip

service to justify excessive involvement of civil social agencies and international organizations, adversely affecting national sovereignty and democratic processes. The language of corruption and the incitement campaigns against politicians were also condemned for according questionable justification to an extreme neo-liberal economic policy that demands removal of barriers and “corrupt” political supervision in favor of a free market. Researchers claim that accusations of corruption against politics and politicians proved to be exaggerated and often without foundation and have even helped foster a populist antipolitical atmosphere that enabled international economic powers and questionable and antidemocratic factors to take control of public resources and morality discourse.

In Israel as in other democracies, the party newspapers and some committed press gradually lost their splendor and were defined as “propaganda” and an overt reflection of antidemocracy, even though key newspapers and magazines today still adopt ideological positions clearly identified with specific platforms and political figures. In terms of principle, contemporary journalists are ethically committed to their profession and to “the public’s right to know.”<sup>12</sup> The media’s function as a watchdog of democracy has been replaced by an increasing tendency to seek sensations, belittle politicians, spread

12 The Public Committee on Press Laws, headed by Justice Haim Zadok, defined four functions of the press in a democratic society: Exercising the public’s right to know, exercising freedom of expression, providing commentary, and offering criticism. The last item concerns investigative journalism, stipulating that “investigative reporting is capable of professional and responsible revelation of facts that at least ostensibly raise questions concerning the soundness of conduct of a significant functionary or a body with great public power . . . In such cases, publication is likely to motivate the lesson-learning process . . . Thus the free press plays a role as a mechanism of social criticism.”

cynicism regarding their motivations and present them as corrupt, egoistic and manipulative people who are contemptuous of the public interest (Schudson 2008).

Throughout the democratic world, issues that were once the province of yellow journalism have gradually become an integral part of mainstream media. In England, for example, political scandals that were once covered only in local tabloids began to penetrate the front pages of key newspapers and leading television channels such as the BBC and ITN News, undermining public trust in politics and politicians (Schudson 2008). Researchers in Eastern European countries that only recently went over to democratic regimes report that corruption discourse in the media constitutes another channel for expression of (inevitable) disappointment with awakening from the heroic struggle against communism to the realities of democracy that cannot always meet the public's high expectations. As many people forget that democracy cannot cure all ills contracted under the old authoritarian regime and that elected officials and the democratic process itself are sometimes limited in their handling of issues requiring governmental efficiency and distributive justice, these weaknesses metamorphosed into media slogans against the new corruption, thereby polluting the democratic political area and serving the interests of new authoritarian forces. A similar phenomenon may be discerned in Israel. Renowned media expert John Lloyd of Oxford University, who writes a column for the *Financial Times*, said that he feels the Israeli media overdo their contempt for politics, which still functions rather impressively despite all its flaws.<sup>13</sup>

13 Remarks at the concluding discussion of an international workshop entitled *Anti-Politics: Citizens, Politics and the Political Profession*, held at the Israel Democracy Institute in Jerusalem on December 19, 2008.

As noted earlier concerning TI corruption surveys, one significant reflection of the problematics facing the public when determining key issues on the public agenda is the flood of surveys, indexes, and public opinion polls cited repeatedly in the media. They purport to provide the Israeli public and its decision makers with the most important issues as ranked by the people polled, but actually serve as rating boosters for the media or their suppliers. This phenomenon becomes particularly outstanding in the case of surveys dealing with political corruption, an issue often presented as the key threat to Israeli democracy. In fact, the surveys provide the sensation necessary for research institutions and especially for the media in their competition for “hot” headlines. The results ostensibly constitute an authentic reflection of the situation in the country, even though, in the best case, they are only an expression of changing public feelings evoked by reports disseminated in the same media.

Israel has recently witnessed a vast increase in the number of pollsters and research institutes (some academic and some private) measuring political corruption and in the number of consumers of surveys for advancement of social issues, political positions, and of course, economic interests. To justify its existence, the war on corruption industry has to continue dramatizing the country’s acute situation.

Finally, it should be recalled that over the past few years, the Israeli media consumer has become an economic consumer who acquired such quantitative terms such as “indexes” and “factors,” supplying the illusion that one may quantify politics in the same way as one does economic data. The language of corruption in Israel has thus turned into a negotiable stock of known value at any given date and time.

## **Law Enforcement and Judicial Authorities**

The function and status of the judicial and law enforcement authorities and the courts as agents of morality (gatekeepers) in society constitute a most pressing and controversial issue for democratic society in general and Israeli society in particular. Debate over the relationship between the judicial system and morality in the country has heated up over the past few years, especially because of the increasing tension between the political sphere and the state prosecutor and Supreme Court. The dispute concerns relations between procedural and essential democracy, i.e., the function of the courts when the democratic procedure is allegedly distorted or when judges claim that the output of the democratic process adversely affects the liberal values that ensure the spirit and essence of democracy.

Virtually no one disagrees that the Israeli courts engage in judicial activism. Over the past few decades, they have assumed a central role in the ideological-moral leadership of society as a “defender of liberal values.” The courts also expanded their involvement in the political sphere “in the narrow or aggressive sense, i.e., in decisions that aspire toward dividing political positions of power and political resources (through appointments, budgets and coalitionary agreements) and not necessarily to achieve an ideological goal. “The Court was able to increase its activity as protector of governmental integrity by exercising controversial judicial control and adopting amorphous yardsticks of “reasonability” and “proportionality” (Barak-Erez 1999).

The Supreme Court assumed a prominent place in public discourse as the pioneer of Israeli human and civil rights liberalism and has even gained international recognition, due in no small measure to the status and rulings of Supreme Court President (Emeritus) Justice Aharon Barak. During the three decades in which he served on the Supreme

Court, including eleven years as president, the Court gradually took the place of traditional institutions, such as the kibbutz and the IDF, as the symbol of Israeli values. The Supreme Court's involvement in shaping Israeli values, especially in matters of human and civil rights, in Israel and beyond the Green Line, increased markedly following the enactment of two Basic Laws: The Freedom of Occupation Law and the Human Dignity Law that the Knesset passed in 1992 and that Justice Barak called a "constitutional revolution." Judicial activism also intensified after petitioners were allowed to appeal to the highest instances without having petitioned lower courts first and without requiring proof of possible personal or palpable damage.

Over the past decade, relations and balances of power between the judicial system and politicians (the Knesset and the Cabinet) became more conflictual and hostile than is commonly accepted in other countries. One key element of this dispute concerns public ethics and the status of the cabinet and Knesset in the courts. Many people claim that the courts tend to perceive politicians as morally flawed and consequently in need of particularly energetic gatekeepers. The rivalry between the Court and key political and intellectual figures in Israel reached new peaks of vulgarity during Ehud Olmert's term as prime minister, when former Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann, the sharpest critic of judicial activism, was accused of "destroying the system of the rule of law" and Supreme Court justices and their supporters were called "the rule of law gang." Aharon Barak claimed that Friedmann was trying "to castrate and belittle" the Court through "legislation that bypasses democracy." Friedmann condemned the courts and their judges (including retired ones) for their elitist approach to democratic procedure and their overly intense involvement in politics and in shaping Israeli morality. He claimed that the judges, who present themselves as the ultimate defenders of the values of democracy, adopt an anti-democratic approach that

impedes the functioning and public status of elected officials in the Israeli political system. Friedmann also maintained that Supreme Court Justices express monolithic thought and believe that they always offer better solutions than the legislature.

The struggle between Israel's legal authorities and political system over authority and power is thus a major and well-publicized issue that is closely intertwined with the struggle over boundaries of language of corruption control.

Judicial supervision and activism may express the ethical preferences of the judges and courts, who are opposed to the output of the political system. In many cases, however, such activism is a direct consequence of "problematic" democratic systems that choose, for various reasons, not to make decisions on controversial issues, leaving the "hot potatoes" at the court's doorstep. Serving as a political adjudicator for issues such as identity, legitimacy, and security, as well as distributive justice issues, has forced many courts into public debates that they tried to avoid. Similarly, numerous democracies display an increasing demand for extraparliamentary investigative bodies to examine policies and decision-making failures. Such are nearly always staffed by judges cast into the eye of the political storm with the power to determine political fate and adjudicate issues of policy, morality, and ethics.

Anthony King (2007, 136, 138) notes that in England the introduction of judges to extraparliamentary investigative committees that engage in political criticism and the frequent appearance of active and retired judges in the media have adversely affected the aura of neutrality, the power of "judicial distance," and above all, the status of the British courts and their judges.

Criticism of judicial activism in Israel is no longer the sole province of political right-wingers, the religious and the ultra-Orthodox, who perceive the Court as adhering to the ideological-political agenda of

the non-religious and the Israeli left, which have lost their power in the electoral arena. In time, reactions to “ideological” judicial activism were also voiced by liberals at the center of the political map and even by key jurists and intellectuals who are sharply critical of the Court’s involvement in purely political-moral issues, including overt matters of security and economics.

### **From Law to Codes of Ethics**

It is widely claimed that Israel’s boundaries concerning matters of poor judgment and violation of trust are porous and amorphous. Consequently, it would be advisable for the political system to adopt clearer ethical principles to avoid being dragged into criminal cases. The greater the criticism of the Court’s involvement in controversial political issues, the more intense is the debate concerning the link between ethical and criminal thresholds in Israel. In this context, Prof. Suzie Navot maintains that “judicialization” leads to judging actions according to whether they are legal or illegal, not whether they are appropriate or not (Navot 2009, 148).

Israeli politicians, who are becoming more and more wary that their inappropriate actions will be translated into criminal terms, ostensibly prefer to apply a code of ethics to themselves. In a comparative study of the effect of instituting codes of ethics and submission of transparency reports in parliaments throughout the democratic world, Denis Saint-Martin shows that these tools have become weapons in the hands of political rivals and accelerate creation of social supervision systems staffed by new gatekeepers, who accumulate power at the politicians’ expense. All these developments impel elected officials to behave defensively and unimaginatively on matters of policy and decision making. Above all, extension of the ethical violations debate provides fuel for a more

aggressive investigative press whose reports bear a cynical tone and whose civil criticism of politics is more incisive than ever.

Promotion of ethical behavior has not led to any real improvements in the political systems of the advanced democratic world, nor has it bettered the status and image of elected politicians as perceived by the public. On the contrary, such activities have given rise to bureaucratic systems that nurture the language of corruption and intensify disgust with politicians while creating an increased demand for supervision, additional codes and even intensified criminal law enforcement. Various studies found that democratic systems have achieved “ethical saturation” and that the demand for increased exposure of elected officials has become part of the political process itself without guaranteeing integrity or increasingly efficient parliamentary work and governance (Susser and Goldberg (2005; Saint-Martin 2006).

### **Escapists, Nationalists and Populists**

Since the late 1970s, secular-bourgeois groups in Israel have been organizing in new political entities, which political scientists Bernard Susser and Giora Goldberg call “escapist parties.” These political bodies began operation as social movements calling for a change in the system of government and aspiring toward the incorruptibility of politics. Like “new politics” populism in other Western countries, Susser and Goldberg note, Israeli escapist politics is saturated with the rhetoric of corruption, covering up the absence of real solutions to the difficult issues that face the country (Susser and Goldberg 2005). Escapist parties appeal to educated people in the middle and upper middle classes and are headed by “clean” leaders from outside the political system, including people from the academic world, the media, and at times, former military officers. These candidates tend to promise voters that they will not be tempted by the delights of ruling

power, noting that they are not committed to ideological blocs but primarily to clean government and an unrelenting war on political corruption.

Especially prominent were the populist campaigns against Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his successor Ehud Olmert. During the disengagement from Gaza (2005) and the Second Lebanon War (2006), right-wing critics, especially settlers and their supporters in the Knesset, accused both Sharon and Olmert of endangering the national well-being of Israel in an attempt to divert public attention from the corruption scandals looming over their heads, claiming that the corrupt policies of the two prime ministers, which bordered on “treason,” constituted a direct continuation of their personal greed. Sharon was attacked severely by Knesset members and both right-wing and left-wing activists, who joined forces (each group for its own reasons, of course) in condemning Sharon as the most corrupt politician in Israel’s history. Effectively, these moralistic voices from the right and left repeated their incisive attacks against corruption and the weakness of the country’s political leadership, leading Israelis to the clear conclusion that the objects of this invective were “failed leaders who lack both the moral courage and the strategic wisdom to defend the country” (Glick 2008).

Such populism is common among the Israeli right, which opposes evacuation of settlements and agreements with the Palestinians. The left, by contrast, used the populist language of corruption as an expression of political purism, contrasting with the political pragmatism that was viewed as false, corrupt, and too quick to grant a seal of approval to suspicious money-power ties. War on corruption campaigns often entails incisive criticism of Zionism in general and the “corrupting Occupation” and its attendant mistreatment of Palestinians in particular.

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## Escape from Politics: The Case of Israel

Yael Yishai

“Politics in Israel has become the greatest strategic threat to Israel’s future” (Shavit 2008)

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle thought of civic life as the highest expression of humanity. Aristotle assumed that those who attempted to escape politics were displaying ignorance and were almost less than human. Man, claimed the philosopher, is a “political animal.” Yet escape from politics has become ubiquitous in the contemporary world. Defining “politics” in the way referred to here is no easy task, as there are many different meanings and understandings of its connotation. Here “politics” is referred to as a conventional form of *participation* in public democratic life. Escape from politics is not manifested in what people think, or how they feel, but in what they *do*, that is in their actions or inactions regarding civic life.

Escapists can resort to one of the following four options: first, they can be indifferent and careless in regard to their civic duties. They can remain secluded from the political world concentrating instead on their private affairs and personal well-being. When they choose this option they tend to keep away from the ballot, remain indifferent to political parties, and refrain from raising a public voice. They decline to attend protest demonstrations and keep silent on public affairs. Second, citizens may take part in political life by casting a ballot, but their mode of activity reveals

their disenchantment with, or at least reservations concerning, politics. Voting for escapist, or “anti-party” parties (Schedler 1996), is typical of this type of escape. Third, escape from politics may be achieved by confining activity to civil society. By virtue of its “civil” disposition, civil society is part of the political milieu. Activity performed on a voluntary basis, however, can provide a haven for escapists by allowing them to disengage from the political world. According to some commentators (Foley and Edwards 1997), civil society can provide a route for escape by resorting to non-political means in confronting social problems. When charity substitutes righteousness, the road for flight from politics is clear. The fourth option provides a channel of escape via challenge. When challenging the political order, individuals are engaged in “uncivil” and antipolitical behavior (Berman 1997). Challenging the political order is a form of escape because it rejects the democratic rules of the game and because it threatens the political order.

The four brands of escapists vary in their regard to politics. Apathetic citizens choose a course of *less* politics, partisan citizens selecting the channel of escapist parties demonstrate *different* politics, civil citizens opt for *non*-politics and the challengers resort to *more* politics, albeit in a destructive manner. Each type of escape may be detrimental to democracy. Apathy threatens legitimacy. The absence of active support for government jeopardizes its capacity to govern. Even regimes that approach totalitarian control over their societies feel the need to convince the outside world that they have mass support. Escapist partisanship undermines the proper conduct of parliamentary politics as a portion of the legislature is irrelevant, or even detrimental, to the conduct of its affairs. Reliance on charity can reduce government’s accountability and public commitment by relieving the state of its fundamental duties. Finally, by breaking the

rules of the political game, challenge may threaten the very existence of the state. Some measure of escapism, however, is not all negative. It has been suggested that a certain level of apathy is required for democracy to survive because the alternative of full participation in political life is an unrealizable goal whose attempt would lead only to chaos and political disintegration (Green 2004). Scholars have warned against over-participation contributing to the emergence of mass society (Kornhauser 1972). Supporting escapist parties allows citizens to remain within the bounds of conventional politics and express their political preferences. Likewise, civil society, particularly organizations engaged in providing charity, are essential in taking care of the vulnerable, whose access to available resources is often limited. Challenge, particularly when it is violent, is obviously not helpful to democracy, but an acquiescent public, unwilling or unable to raise a voice is also disadvantageous. Whether escapism performs a negative, or alternatively, a positive role in democracy appears to depend on both volume and contents. The more channels of escape used by individuals and the deeper and more entrenched the escape, the graver the danger to democracy. Democracy can bear some measure of escape, particularly when ephemeral and episodic, but it can be overwhelmed by its accumulation.

Israel provides a good case study for testing the four forms of escapism. Indicators of voter turnout, party affiliation, and protests reveal a growing sense of apathy. Escapist parties have become ubiquitous in Israeli democracy. Reliance on the third sector to solve social problems has increased in recent years. NGOs not only supplement politics but actually substitute for authoritative allocation of essential goods, such as shelter and food. Challenge to the rule of law is manifested by political violence and disobedience, motivated by anti-democratic ideology. The simultaneous presence of the four

forms of escape may not be accidental. Apathy serves as a fertile soil for challenge, flourishing when the state is not sufficiently powerful to encounter intransigence. Disenchantment with politics motivates people to support non-political parties. Weak states yield power to civic associations motivated by biased and often inequitable interests. They also prompt challengers to disobey the law and reject political authority. This combination should alert all those concerned about Israel's democracy. The following discussion delves into the four forms of escapism from politics in Israel and their implications for democracy.

### **Escape via Apathy**

Disengagement from politics can take various forms. Apathetic citizens immerse themselves in work, leisure time activities, and family life. They are not interested in the political world and have no knowledge about its whereabouts. This is not the case in Israel. Data reveal a high rate of interest in politics. In fact, Israel stands first among democratic nations in the interest its citizens show in political affairs with 70% reporting they do have an interest (Arian et al. 2007, 59). Israelis also ranked first among the studied countries in stating that they follow politics discussed in the mass media and in discussing politics with friends (Arian et al. 2007, 60). No decline has been identified in this respect over the years (Arian et al. 2007, 61). Yet three indicators show that Israel is experiencing a participation crisis, both leading to and reflecting apathy: in voter turnout, party affiliation, and participation in protest demonstrations. Compared to the past, Israelis turn out in lower numbers to vote in general and local elections, they display comparatively less commitment to political parties, and are not inclined to attend protest demonstrations.

Elections are critical junctures where individuals take stock of their various political attitudes and preferences, and transform them into a single vote choice. One of the parties' primary tasks in a democracy is vote structuring, which is successfully achieved when they efficiently mobilize voters to cast their ballot. Comparative data reveal that turnout in elections has generally decreased across the advanced industrial democracies, especially over the last decade (Dalton et al. 2005). Various reasons were found to account for this trend. Foremost, the political system has been failing to provide the stimuli necessary to encourage people to vote. The resulting lack of public trust in the traditional party and parliamentary political system contributed to large-scale abstention. The expansion of the "new politics" agenda also removes individuals in affluent societies from mainstream politics (Inglehart 1990). The shift is most noticeable among younger age cohorts whose apathy to conventional politics has been widely documented (Henn et al. 2005). Individualization and de-ideologization of public life also removed people from the ballot. The convergence of elite values and a diminution of articulated differences among them inhibit voting. Finally, most people assume that they cannot influence policy in meaningful ways. Lacking the institutional mechanisms to intervene effectively, they lose the incentive to participate. All these factors are evident, although to a varying degree, on the Israeli scene.

Records drawn from the Inter-Parliamentary Union regarding voter turnout in 36 countries in the last elections before data were compiled show that Israel scored in the lowest third of the scale, between Canada and Ireland (Arian et al. 2007, 55). Furthermore, a temporal analysis reveals a significant drop in voter turnout in Israel during the same period. In the first elections (1949) Israelis flocked the ballots, with an 86.9% vote. Citizens were motivated to participate in the electoral process by enthusiasm for the recently acquired sovereignty and the

wish to grant legitimacy to the new state. During the first 20 years of statehood, until the elections for the seventh Knesset (1969), the average turnout was over 80%. During the following three decades (until 1999), voter turnout somewhat declined to 78.8%. Since 2000, a substantial decrease in electoral participation is evident. In the 2003 (the 16<sup>th</sup>) Knesset elections, turnout was low—67.8%. In the elections for the 17<sup>th</sup> Knesset, in March 2006, the rate of vote reached a record low of 63.5%. In the elections for the 18<sup>th</sup> Knesset (held in February 2009) voter turnout slightly increased to 65.2% but remained relatively low. These data reveal a consistent trend of indifference to, and alienation from, parliamentary elections. As abstention is divided across parties, it also represents a tendency of dissociation not from a specific political party but from the entire party spectrum.

Findings relating to party affiliation are no more encouraging. Skepticism is corroborated by voluminous literature indicating a growing disenchantment with parties among Western democracies. Parties are often seen as both the institution most susceptible to corruption and the least trusted by the public (van Beizen 2008). A significant decline in both membership in and identification with political parties has been widely noticed. Has Israel escaped this fate? The answer is largely negative. As elsewhere, there is a considerable decline in political parties' popularity, seen in three manifestations: public trust, party membership, and party identification. Data presented here are derived mainly from the annual *Israeli Democracy Index* based on surveys conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute (Arian et al. 2007) and supplemented by a survey carried out by the author in March 2009 (respondents, n = 556; hereafter, survey).

Political parties enjoy the least trust among political institutions. In 2004, 32% of the respondents stated that they trust parties to a large or to some degree; in 2006, 22% did so and in 2008, a record low of

15% trusted parties. Some 40% of the respondents stated that they have no trust at all in political parties. Segmentation of distrust shows it is more prevalent among the ultra-Orthodox and among those with lower educational attainments. As a result of slackening in the image of political parties, membership has declined from a height of 18% in 1969 to 16% in 1973, to 10% in 1981, to 8% in 1988 and to only 6% in 2006 (Arian et al. 2007, 81). According to the survey, only 7.4% stated they are active in a political party, even though an electoral campaign is expected to spur partisan engagement. In the past, party membership was designed to facilitate loyalty and to create a disciplined cadre of activists. It was also geared to providing members with welfare and other social benefits. In Israel, individuals are attracted to (some) parties in order to influence the selection of leadership, but they shy away from membership once the process is concluded (Rahat and Hazan 2006).

Attachment to political parties was also examined by tabulating closeness to a particular political party. Data reveal an ongoing trend of decline in the number of people who state that they are close to a particular party, suggesting a weakening of the party structure in general and not only specific parties. In 1996, 64% of the respondents stated that they see themselves as close to a particular party. Ten years later only 54% of the respondents reported on “closeness.” When asked how close they feel to the party of their choice, fewer than a quarter of the respondents (24%) reported that they are “very close,” compared to 37% in 1996 (Arian et al. 2007, 85).

That Israeli citizens are not enthusiastic about participation in politics is revealed also by another indicator—participation in protest demonstrations. Across the globe, from South Korea to Canada, from the United States to Germany, citizens of democracies rally around a social or ideological flag, calling for change of policy or leadership. In

Israel protests are not a common phenomenon. In the past, researchers documented wide-scale political protest (Wolsfeld 1988; Lehman-Wilzig 1990). More recent data (from 2001) show that the number of demonstrators in Israel is low compared to other democracies.<sup>1</sup> Worth noting is that 2001, the year data were gathered, was a stormy one with increasing economic distress and the ongoing Palestinian intifada. Yet Israelis did not take to the streets. Comparative data (presented in Table 1) clearly show the low frequency with which Israelis demonstrate. Not only do they decline to use this form of political participation, but they also do not consider it a viable option in the future. Nearly half the respondents do not plan on demonstrating in the future, compared to Sweden, for example, where over half the respondents are positive about future participation, and only 12% reject such an option ([www.worldvaluesurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluesurvey.org) (2006) ). Only in Portugal, not yet having recovered full democratic capacities, are the figures regarding street demonstrations lower than in Israel. Even there the proportion of those intending to demonstrate in the future is higher than in Israel (38.9% and 31.0%, respectively). Rate of participation in protest demonstrations did not increase with time. In the 2009 survey 86.7% of the respondents stated they had not taken part in such an event during the preceding year preceding it. Less than 1% (0.7) reported they do so often.

1 This assertion is less accurate as Israeli waged mass protests in the summer of 2011, joining their counterparts in other western societies. Although street demonstrations have subsided protest persist, manifest mainly in Facebook activity. It remains to be seen whether the 2011 campaign indicates a change of mood and a shift from apathy to involved and active citizenship.

**Table 1** Demonstrations in Israel and in selected European countries (percent)

State	Demonstrated in the past	Likely to demonstrate in the future	Certainly will not demonstrate in the future
Greece	47.6	38.2	14.2
France	39.7	33.6	26.4
Belgium	35.8	30.6	33.7
Sweden	35.3	52.7	12.0
Italy	34.8	39.4	25.9
Germany	34.1	38.3	27.7
Holland	31.3	36.8	31.9
Denmark	29.3	39.3	31.4
Spain	26.3	41.3	32.3
Norway	26.1	52.4	21.5
<i>Israel</i>	<i>24.6</i>	<i>31.0</i>	<i>44.4</i>
Portugal	14.8	38.9	46.2

Source: Authors' development of data from [www.worldvaluesurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluesurvey.org) (2006)

To sum up, data presented above show a great deal of disengagement from politics in contemporary Israel. Escape from politics, in the sense discussed here, appears to be both comprehensive and profound. If this trend persists, legitimacy of the political system could be under threat.

### **Escape from Politics: The Partisan Channel**

Partisan politics and escapism ostensibly are mutually exclusive. Partisanship is the hub of politics. Those involved should be impervious to escapism. Yet, the party arena provides escapist with two main options: escapist parties and anti-establishment parties.

Although sharing some properties, the two types of parties are distinctively different.

Escapist parties, noted Susser and Goldberg (2005), promise a clean break from past politics and tend to be ideologically diffused. Lacking a rigid ideological basis, the leadership of escapist parties is likely to be a mixed bag of individuals with little ideological coherence. The fact that they tend to be drawn from a varied background, often from all corners of the ideological spectrum (which, in Israel, is focused on the future borders of the state), further limits their unity. It is typical for an escapist party to offer the public a platform of “cleaning up the mess” of deceptive and immoral politics or to focus on narrow issues, such as the legalization of marijuana or guarding the interests of taxi drivers. By virtue of their limited goals, these parties were also termed “niche parties” or “new parties” or “minor parties” (Adams et al. 2006; Krouwel and Lucardie 2008). Escapist parties tend to be short-lived. They generate zeal and enthusiasm, but they fail to establish a solid organizational basis. Mood fluctuations among the public also thwart their longevity. Many escapist parties are interest groups in disguise (Yishai 1994). They emerge from civil society, but owing to circumstances such as a new grievance or constituency available for mobilization they join the electoral competition. Voters for escapist parties are not really interested in “politics” but rather in securing private and narrow advantages. However, escapist parties’ attraction is not confined to those having a direct stake; it is often expanded to protestors whose vote conveys disillusionment with traditional politics. Escapist parties enable individuals to use the ballot as a mechanism for both protest and escape at the same time.

A second type of escape is via anti-establishment or anti-party parties. Anti-party parties are simply “anti: anti-establishment, anti-

elite, anti-state, anti-politics, anti-anything outside their campaigns” (Schedler 1996, 292). They are perceived as acting outside the party system, although they are themselves part of it. Some of them, particularly right-wing parties, describe themselves as victims of exclusion and use exceptionally aggressive tones in their messages. Others suffice with presenting an anti-establishment novelty. They can be thought of as “a voice against politics in general” (Belanger 2004, 1057). Rejection of politics, however, does not necessarily result in abstention but occasionally in support of parties whose rhetoric and mode of organization display rebuff of ordinary politics.

The two types of escape were visible in Israel’s partisan arena. Among the more salient escapist parties are the Democratic Movement for Change (*Dash*) (1977 elections), the Center Party (1999 elections), *Shinui* (Change) (1999 elections, with a genealogy going back to 1977), and the Retirees party (2006 elections). All these parties gained a substantial number of Knesset mandates. Yet, these parties were no more than a knot of people who coincidentally found themselves thrown together without a political platform or political savvy. Their ideology was blurred, they had no clear history of development, their leadership was drawn from both sides of the political spectrum presenting itself as belonging to the political center, they had weak political organization, they laid emphasis on the quality of their leaders, and they offered the gospel of purity. All these parties had a brief time span and did not pass the test of time. That these parties often offered a form of escape is clearly evident from the case of the Retirees Party (2006), for whom, according to commentators (Susser 2007) many young people cast a ballot as a form of protest. The fact that many young voters cast a ballot for an issue normally beyond their ken revealed a form of escape. The Retiree’s Party was described in a *Haaretz* editorial of April 30, 2008

as “one more repellent and frustrating episode in the history of Israeli politics.”

All parties described above attracted sufficient support enabling them to obtain Knesset representation. A more serious form of escape is to be found in those niche parties failing to pass the threshold needed to gain a Knesset seat. Since the elections to the first Knesset there have been 161 such parties, promoting a variety of goals, such as those of taxi drivers, divorced men, and tax resisters, to name just a few. In the 2009 elections niche parties reached a record high of 21 (as in 1981). These comprised, among others, two green parties, two parties demanding the legalization of marijuana, a party of the young, of the old, and of those demanding to curb the banks' power. One party was committed to the eradication of organized crime and another to the separation of state and religion. All these parties failed to obtain a mandate but their cumulative power was quite significant. In 2009 they attracted the support of more than a hundred thousand individuals (that is, about 3.8 Knesset mandates). The survey revealed that 5.1 of the respondents voted for parties that did not pass the threshold for gaining a seat. In the previous elections (2006) the number of those casting a ballot for niche parties was even higher, with some 200,000 citizens choosing to escape by voting for parties whose chance to pass the threshold was nil. The fact that no such party has ever succeeded in securing a mandate does not prevent the advocates of narrow issues to invest energy and scarce resources in running an electoral list. Against rational electoral calculation, voters persistently cast a ballot, not to secure representation but to engage in electoral activity in order to escape politics.

Although to a lesser extent, anti-party parties were also present on the Israeli scene. Israel's character as a Jewish and democratic state is a perennial source of constant anti-establishment agitation.

The majority of religious parties would prefer Israel to be a Jewish state while forgoing its democratic principles, and most Arab parties would rather see Israel as a democratic state while relinquishing its Jewish attributes. The overwhelming majority of Israeli parties act within a delicate balance recognizing both the Jewish character of the State of Israel and its democratic commitments. Yet, anti-party parties tainted with racism and bigotry, dismissing “politics” as an instrument for settling disputes, emerged on the partisan scene. The most conspicuous of these was *Kach*—an ultra-right party. *Kach* alleged that the deportation of Arabs was the only feasible course toward a genuine resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It survived only in one Knesset (1984–1988) before it was banned and removed from the political scene. The demise of *Kach* was followed by its splinter—*Kahana Hai*, which, too, was disqualified by the Central Election Committee on account of its racism and anti-Arab stances. Other hate parties have been more successful in integrating into mainstream politics. In the 2009 elections the offspring of *Kach* were integrated into the newly formed party—The National Unity. Although right wing parties are not “anti” in all respects mentioned above, their rejection of the fundamental principles on which the Israeli democracy is established justifies their categorization as anti-establishment parties.

Resort to partisan channels of escape can be attributed to specific circumstances such as awaked identity or the inattention of establishment parties to a fledgling political issue. But there are also reasons grounded in Israel’s political institutions and culture. The favorable institutional framework based on extreme proportional electoral system as well as the funding provided by the state to new parties coupled with an entrenched tradition of political fragmentation sustained escapism via the partisan channel.

## **Escape via Charity**

Charity demonstrates the apolitical face of civil society. It plays a positive social role by extending access to useful goods and services, but it is detrimental to politics. Charity tends to pay no heed to fundamental and deep-rooted problems of injustice associated with distribution of wealth in society. It is, furthermore, imbued with commercial considerations lacking public visibility and accountability in what has been described as “philanthrocapitalism” (Edwards 2008). Charity channels constructive civic energy, but good intentions do not always yield positive results. Israel is visibly moving toward adoption of philanthrocapitalism.

During the 1990s Israel’s economy experienced a significant boom, partly as a result of investment attracted by the Oslo Accords of 1993 setting up the Palestinian Authority and fuelled by a vibrant high-tech computer industry. But in the wake of the global economic downturn, and particularly since the beginning of the second Palestinian intifada, Israel’s economic and social infrastructure has begun to deteriorate. Economic recovery, launched by Prime Minister Netanyahu, entailed shrinking of public budgets and major restrictions on subsidies and allowances. Drastic cuts were introduced in income and child allowance in the attempt to reduce government spending. The continuing damage done to the social security system by the government, the erosion of the value of benefits and more stringent conditions for receiving those benefits, have contributed to the ascension of poverty rates and to a widening gap between the rich and the poor (Doron 2006). The Israeli economy grew at an amazing pace but growth was not divided evenly among the population as certain parts became richer while others lagged behind. The Bank of Israel reported (2007) that social distress in Israel has reached a high level. Poverty among individuals, as measured by the relative index

customarily used in Israel, was in 2006 24.4%. The high incidence of poverty over the years makes it difficult for the weaker sections of the population to maintain a reasonable standard of living and reduces their level of consumption.

Level of consumption relates mainly to food. It has been reported that over 400,000 families in Israel, that is some 22% of the population, suffer from “nutritional insecurity,” a euphemistic term for hunger. This is a very high rate by international standards. Data compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture in the US reported in 2007 that 10.9% of the population suffers from nutritional insecurity (Nord et al. 2007). People who lack nutrition security are not necessarily starving, but are in distress. They eat smaller portions, skip meals, and, in extreme cases, do not eat for a whole day. Nearly a quarter of Israelis are forced to make choices between food and other expenses such as mortgage, rent, medicine, heating, and electricity. About half choose to get along with less food (Sinai and Leiden n.d.). Nutritional insecurity is divided unequally among sectors of the population. It is most common among single mothers (39%), among Arabs (36%) and among new immigrants (26%). Some one-fifth of the families subject to nutritional insecurity are elderly; about half of the Jewish families whose major source of income is derived from state allowances (Committee Report 2008) also suffer from nutritional insecurity. The proportion of these groups in the general population is far lower.

The American solution for nutritional insecurity is food stamps provided by the state. In Europe the tight social welfare network ensures that no one lacks food. In Israel, nutritional assistance is provided almost exclusively by charity associations, dispensing food baskets and fresh produce, handing out prepared meals and managing soup kitchens (Levinson 2005). Some of these associations are as old as the state, but since the 1990s there has been a striking growth in

the number and volume of their activity. The budget for distributing food is derived overwhelmingly from private donations, in Israel and abroad. In a survey of nutrition associations, whose number in 2005 was 146, it was revealed that only a scant 4% receive government funding, and 8% are assisted by the municipalities. A substantial proportion (40%) receive donations from Israelis only and nearly half (47%)—from the Jewish community abroad. Headlines such as “Hunger in Israel” or “Save the Israelis from the Shame of Hunger” were posted in the internet as a means to garner resources for charity associations.

As noted above, on the face of it charity is a blessing, portraying a sense of solidarity and communality among fellow citizens. It is the culmination of social capital, serving as cement bonding people and erecting bridges to diminish social differentiation. The fly in this ointment, however, is that nutrition associations are not evenly distributed among social sectors and within various parts of the country. Of the 146 food associations 77.4% operate in the big cities (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and those in the center), with only the 22.6% remaining active in the periphery. But it is the periphery of the country where poverty is most conspicuous. The number of associations per 100,000 in the northern part of the country is only 0.87 and in the Negev—1.75. The respective figures for Jerusalem and Tel Aviv are 4.67 and 2.49 (Levinson, 2005). These data reveal that the population in dire need of nutritional assistance, such as Negev dwellers who were found to experience a high rate of nutritional insecurity, are not included among those enjoying the benefits of charity. Likewise, only two associations distribute food among the Arab population, where in 2007 unemployment reached a record high of 10.9%, compared to 6.8% among the Jews (Statistical Abstract 2008, table 12.1). Furthermore, relying solely, or even

overwhelmingly, on private funds is a risky endeavor. At the time of writing, the world is undergoing a severe economic crisis, jeopardizing the flow of donations and threatening to reduce the scope of charity. Donors, furthermore, have priorities other than nutrition. Substituting state commitment by civil voluntary activity could wreak havoc in the social fabric. Food distribution is amateur, not based on the survey of needs, and public supervision is limited. Only a quarter of food associations are checked by the Ministry of Health (Sinai 2005). Period of assistance for individuals is unlimited and entitlement is hardly checked. There is no supervision on food quality and safety. Associations are often eager to enhance the scope of their activity in order to attract further donations. The activity of nutrition associations was likened to a “honey trap” (*Haaretz*, editorial, October, 15, 2008), thwarting the elimination of hunger.

Despite the fact that Israel has historically been a welfare state, the slashing of transfer payments and the tightening of recipient criteria motivated escape from politics. Reports issued by the National Insurance Institute, by the Bank of Israel and private research centers show that many families are struggling to keep their heads above water but the government chose to ignore its commitment to provide citizens with means for existence and chose to throw the poor to the mercy of charitable associations. Sticking to the principle of liberalization, care of the needy was transferred to the voluntary sector. Citizens, on their part, opted to associate with big business, and to provide charity instead of taking political action demanding that the state fulfill its elementary obligation toward individuals in distress. Resort to charity did not exhibit only the state’s retreat from commitment to justice and welfare, but also the inclination of (benevolent) citizens to find solutions outside the realm of conventional politics.

## **Escape via Challenge**

The role of civil society in democracy has been subject to controversy. A leading criticism waged against civil society emphasized its conflictual and violent aspects (Foley and Edwards 1998). Berman (1997) for example, has demonstrated the role public associations played in the downfall of the Weimar Republic and the concomitant rise of the Nazi regime. This criticism led to classification of parts of society as “uncivil” (Booth and Richard 1998). Uncivil society includes associations of a challenging nature. Challenging groups, referred to here are not clandestine organizations, such as Bader Meinhoff in Germany or the Red Army in Japan; neither do they choose other social groups as their target of activity, such as the Ku Klux Klan in the United States or the extreme right squads in Europe, preaching, and often acting, against immigrants. Needless to say, challenge groups are not composed of criminal offenders operating violently against individual citizens. Rather, challengers target their activity at the state, its leaders, and authority. They contest the law but they remain within the political system, choosing to act from the inside. Violence, when used, is not spontaneous or random but is carefully designed as a political strategy. The moral justification for the use of violence lies in the presumed deviation of the incumbent regime from what is perceived as the democratic rules of the game of which challengers regard themselves as true guardians. The principle of free speech is often used to justify mild cases of violence performed to promote an idea to which the challenge group adheres and for which it attempts to secure popular support.

In order for a challenge to emerge, mature, solidify, and threaten democracy four conditions ought to be met: a presence of grievance, a radical ideology, sustained by unyielding commitment, and atrocious deeds (Peleg 1997). All these components were

identified in the challenge presented by right-wing extremists to Israeli democracy. Hawkish zealots were not the only perpetrators of violence in the history of the state. Ultra-religious groups challenged the rule of law and confronted secular people in their attempt to compel religious norms, and Arab citizens defied their economic and political deprivation by committing violent demonstrations. But the most profound threat to Israeli democracy emerged from what is considered to be the rift between the “right” and the “left,” that is, between the proponents of Greater Israel and those advocating territorial compromise.

The roots of this ideological cleavage date back to the pre-independence era, but in the formative years of the state the tension subsided and challenge was dormant (Sprinzak 1998, 1999). The resurgence of the deep rift occurred in the wake of the Six-Day War when the right-wing extremists cast serious doubt on the government’s legitimacy and launched a campaign of delegitimation against incumbent leadership (Pedahzur 2002). *Gush Emunim* was the harbinger of challenge, continuing through the 1980s and particularly during the 1990s in defiance of the peace process and the Oslo agreements. The culmination of this process was the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, but challenge did not stop there. The adamant opposition to the dismantling of settlements in the Gaza Strip and illegal settlements as well as the occasional use of violence against those advocating territorial compromise were typical of the challenge activity which has gone on, unremittingly from the mid 1970s to the present. This challenge, based on grievance, sustained by deep commitment, structured on profound ideology, resulting in atrocious activities, has turned it into a serious hazard to democracy.

Grievance had been cultivated on a fertile soil. The carriers of challenge were strangers in their own land. They were mostly

outsiders, not belonging to the mainstream of Israeli society. They did not dry the swamps, did not fight in the legendary pre-state army (Palmach), and were hardly involved in the struggle for independence (Yishai 1987). They remained marginal and excluded from mainstream society. Their social grievance was sustained by a profound ideology. Challengers held strong ideological convictions regarding the type of state they wished to live in. Their state was Jewish more than democratic. According to their view, with the “liberation” of Judea, Samaria and Gaza from foreign control, Israel was undergoing a process of redemption. It was the zealots’ mission to precipitate this process and to fulfill the Divine promise, guaranteeing the Jewish people possession of the country as a whole. Commitment to this ideology was sustained by a tightly knit social network. Members of right-wing groups have had a secluded and unique way of life. Since the mid-1970s networking among the settlers of the occupied territories became deeper and more inclusive. Members of right-wing challengers either lived in settlements mushrooming in the occupied lands or were socially and ideologically associated with them. The line separating mainstream Israel and Eretz Israel was not only ideological but actually physical. Solidarity and social cohesion solidified commitment among members sharing a lifestyle, a vision, and mundane target: to challenge incumbent governments and fulfill the missionary goal.

The combination of grievance, deep conviction, and commitment galvanized atrocious activity. As noted earlier, challengers are not criminal offenders. But they are encouraged “to be steadfast and to stake everything, because the goal is ultimate . . . and no compromises are admissible” (Peleg 1997, 233). This attitude cleared the way to act in defiance of the rules of democratic game. Challengers defamed every aspect of the regime’s legitimacy, presenting an alternative which, in their view, exposed the true values on which the state was

founded. Their status as the true guardians of truth warranted means, which could be interpreted as illegal, but were justified in the eyes of God. Militants used illegal measures to establish settlements; they physically attacked soldiers when their access to sacred sites had been barred; they adamantly protested any move toward conciliation with the Arabs and the disengagement from the Gaza strip. They were involved in violent clashes with security forces attempting to evict unauthorized settlements in the West Bank.

Challenge takes two to tangle. It exists only if the state, even halfheartedly, allows individuals to violate the word and letter of the law. Insisting that every violation, be it ideological or criminal, is an offense cuts short challenge. Perpetrators of challenge should be approached as wrongdoers, irrespective of the ideological character of their message. This was not the case in Israel, where the state was reluctant to react. It tacitly endorsed the notion that suppressing challenge was tantamount to an “anti democratic attempt to silence different voices” (see <http://jtf.org/index.php>). Challenge could not have flourished without the state’s endorsement of this approach. It is the uncivil parts of society that unravel during challenge, which has become a common scene in Israeli politics.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence uncovered in this paper indicates a volume and form of escape from politics that pose serious threat to Israeli democracy. In some respects, instead of being a symbol of democratic citizenship, politics became a term of opprobrium, an activity to be avoided, or even shunned. The minimum for the exercise of citizenship in a representative democracy is casting a ballot but, as was shown above, turnout is declining progressively (though not systematically) as is affiliation with political parties. Some scholars suggest that

partisanship is substituted by other forms of civil activity and that people tend to resort to direct action instead of attending party meetings. But data show that this type of participation is also low in Israel compared to other industrialized democracies. Israelis accept bad decrees as a heavenly stroke, reluctant to raise a loud voice to rectify the situation. The only protest in town is about academic tuition, and the “Big Brother” is at the center of public discourse. Data show that nearly 70% of the adult population in Israel use Internet (98% among youngsters aged 12–14), a proportion which places Israel fifth among surveyed countries. Only 22%, however, stated that using the Internet gives them more political clout. This places Israel in the fourth place from the bottom, lower even than China and Hungary (*Haaretz*, November 24, 2008). To a question presented to the respondents in the survey (2009), 62.9% stated they are apathetic to politics to large or some extent. The reasons for apathy are grounded both in culture and in the institutional make up. Israel was described as a non-participatory democracy, where casting a ballot constitutes a symbolic activity rather than a channel for grassroots political engagement (Ben Eliezer 1993). The absence of direct linkage between citizens and their elected representatives, individualization of society, and low efficacy (only 19.8% stated in the survey they, and their friends, can influence government policy to some or great extent) also augment escape. Many Israelis, however, grew up in a country where partisanship is a virtue if not a requisite. Hence, escape recurrently takes place in the support of “non-political” parties. Admittedly, these are short lived, and the impact of many among them on the political scene is nil, but the wish to escape is glaring. Voting for such parties allows Israelis to remain inside the conventional political structure and to defect at one and the same time.

A third form of escape is via charity. Those regarding civil society as the crest of liberal democracy will find it difficult to assume that

charity is a version of anti-politics. Rather, it is widely perceived as a fertile soil for the flourishing of democratic politics. But the fact of the matter is that well-meaning people and associations that mediate between the needy and the establishment contribute their share to the dismantling of the welfare state. “The more efficient they become” noted a journalist, “the faster the demolition will occur” (Golan 2008). Despite their admirable energy, enthusiasm, and genuine intent, philanthropists risk misfiring when it comes to complex and deep-rooted problems of injustice. In the case of nutrition security, civil society has been a form of escape from politics, resulting in the circumvention of the state. One could argue persuasively that it is not citizens who break away from politics but rather it is the state that flees from its commitment. But the process is mutual. Civil society, when engaged in providing charity, propelled by the business community, willingly monopolizes the food provision service. Absent from the scene are infuriated protests of either poor people or of those speaking on their behalf for more equity and justice. Worth noting is that in a national survey 92% of the Jewish population stated that philanthropy supplements the activities of the government but is not a substitute for them (Schmid and Rudich 2008).

The final form of escape is via challenge. Violent protests against detested politicians or policy are occasionally evident on the public scene of Western democracies, followed by legal recriminations against those violating the law. These, however, are infrequent and sporadic. In Israel challenge is part of routine politics. Challengers escape “normal” democratic channels of deliberation and representation and resort to semi-legal or even illegal activities to confront the state and its authority. Armed with historical memories, patriotic messages, and animated adherents, they defy the very existence of state authority. The reasons for the state’s ongoing tolerance of challenge are beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that a combination of fear (civil

war!), political considerations of coalition making or maintenance, and entrenched sentiments regarding the historic cradle of the Jewish people forestall adamant action to suppress challenge and nip it in its bud.

All of the above tells us that Israeli democracy is in deep trouble. Remedies are simple and easy to take: they could start with politics, that is, the state. The state should encourage and enable individuals to actively participate in social and political life (Tamir 1998). A good example for this approach is derived from California, where citizens were offered, via e-mail, channels to participate and encouragement to do so ([www.sos.ca.gov](http://www.sos.ca.gov)). The elimination, by legal means, of corruption from the partisan arena and the elaboration of more articulate policies, may lower the attraction of anti-party parties. The state should take responsibility for providing basic needs, because its commitment to equality, an essential condition for liberty, can hardly be disputed. Finally, challenge should be taken seriously and dealt with by adequate legal and social means. These measures may lead to reduction in the intensity and volume of escape, to an extent tolerated by any democratic state.

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## **The Israeli Third Sector: Patterns of Activity and Growth, 1980–2007**

Benjamin Gidron

Those observing Israeli society during the last two or three decades are undoubtedly impressed by the development of the third or nonprofit sector,<sup>1</sup> which has taken on numerous, diverse roles and has, consequently, assumed a central place in the public discourse. In the past, the third sector provided services complementing or, at times, replacing public services. Currently, in addition to these traditional roles (that have also undergone significant transformations), these organizations have assumed the role of developing civil society through the representation of diverse groups and populations, transforming and innovating social processes and the involvement of these groups in policy-making processes, and thus creating social change. These organizations also provide the framework for civic involvement in the form of philanthropy and volunteerism—phenomena that are also currently emerging in society. Third sector organizations are fulfilling all these roles in diverse areas of activity ranging from education

\* All data in the paper are based on publications and analyses of the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictr)

1 The third sector is loosely defined as the sector of organizations that are neither commercial/ business, which exist in order to reap economic profits from their endeavor, nor public, which were formed by a law or regulation. In Israel that sector of organizations contains three legal entities: associations, nonprofit companies, and trusts.

and welfare to environmental planning, international aid, and traffic accident prevention.

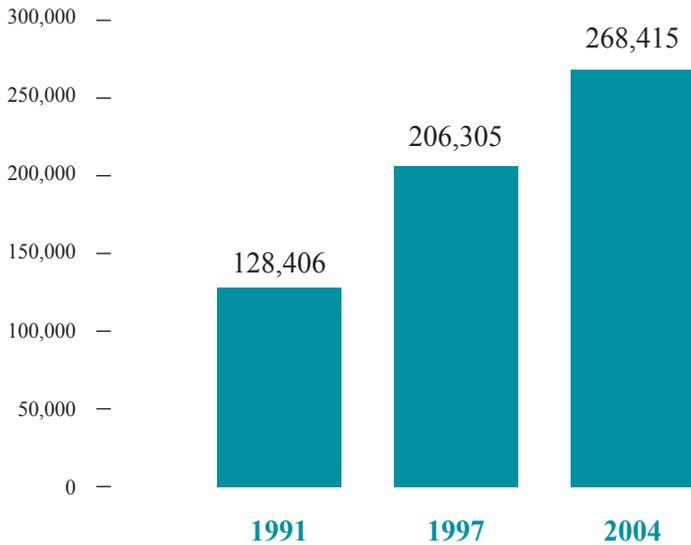
The expansion and development of the third sector is not a uniquely Israeli phenomenon; this process is occurring in various forms throughout the world. Globalization processes and privatization of public services, the weakening of governments and increased awareness on the part of certain groups and populations regarding the potential benefits of self-organizing—all contribute to the third sector's growth. These factors have transformed that sector into an important actor in the economy, society, and polity.

The paper will present data on the contours of Israel's third sector and its development in both roles—providing public or semi-public services and developing civil society—and discuss their meaning.

### **Economic Size and Characteristics of the Third Sector**

The first five tables present the economic dimensions of the third sector in Israel and its development during 1991–2004. Figure 1 presents the salaried workforce (excluding volunteers). In 2004, the third sector's employment figures reached 365,000 employees who fulfill the equivalent of 268,000 full-time positions. For comparative purposes, during the same year the number of people employed in Israeli industry, stood at 386,000 persons. Figure 1 demonstrates that the scope of third sector full-time jobs rose at a rate of 109% in the 13 years since 1991. In comparison, during that same period the population in Israel rose by 36% and the number of salaried employees rose by 62%.

**Figure 1** Third sector salaried employment (FTE\* positions), 1991–2004



\* Full time equivalent

Source: Author's development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/icttr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/icttr)

Accordingly, there was a pronounced growth in the total expenditures of the third sector, a measure that reflects its economic activity, in general. In 1991, the expenditures for all third sector organizations stood at slightly more than 30 billion NIS (in 2008 prices), in 1997 the third sector's expenditures totaled 62 billion NIS, and in 2004 they were more than 80 billion NIS (Table 1). The third sector's economic growth rate during the entire period surpassed that of the economy in general, even though, when compared to the early 1990s, the third sector's growth rate between 1997 and 2004 had somewhat slowed.

The third sector is a major player in the economy as it commands 11% of the GDP and employs 17.5% of the workforce. The third sector's part is especially pronounced when we examine specific areas of activity. The third sector's part in the national expenditures for health, for example, stood at 56% in 2004, showing a slow but continuous increase since the early 1990s. Similar dynamics are reflected in the data demonstrating the division of the national expenditures for education. In this case the third sector's part stood at 40% of the total in 2004 (Figure 2).

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**Table 1** Third sector expenditures, 1991–2004

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Total Expenditures

(in thousands of NIS, 2008 prices)

1991 – 30,323

1997 – 62,161

2004 – 80,006

Rate of GDP (2004) – 11%

Rate of Workforce (2004) – 17.5%

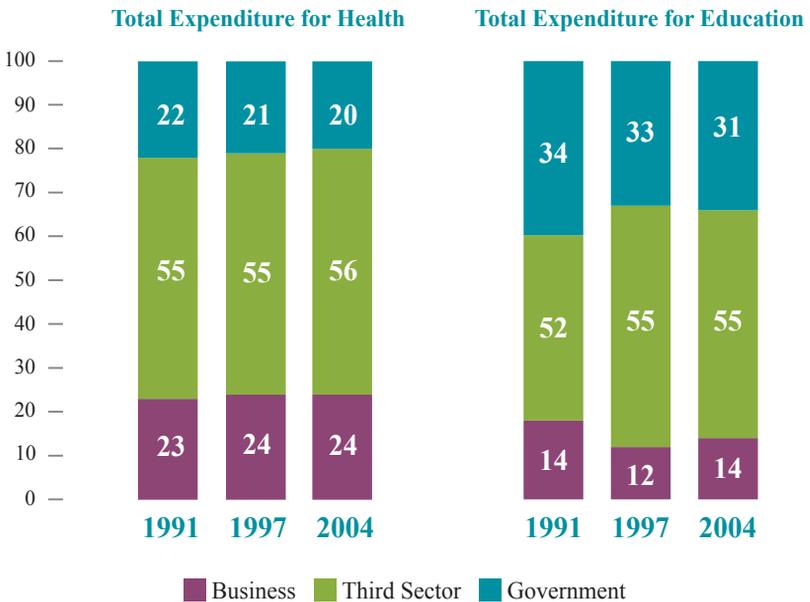
Source: Author's development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictr)

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The analysis of the third sector economic activity by fields of activity accentuates the central place of the fields that focus on provision of services (health, education, welfare), which is significantly larger than all other areas. Provision of services in these fields is commonly viewed as part of the welfare state system. In fact, three areas of activity particularly stand out in the distribution of the third sector's occupation and expenditures—education and research, health, and welfare, which make up more than 80% of the third sector's economic activities in Israel

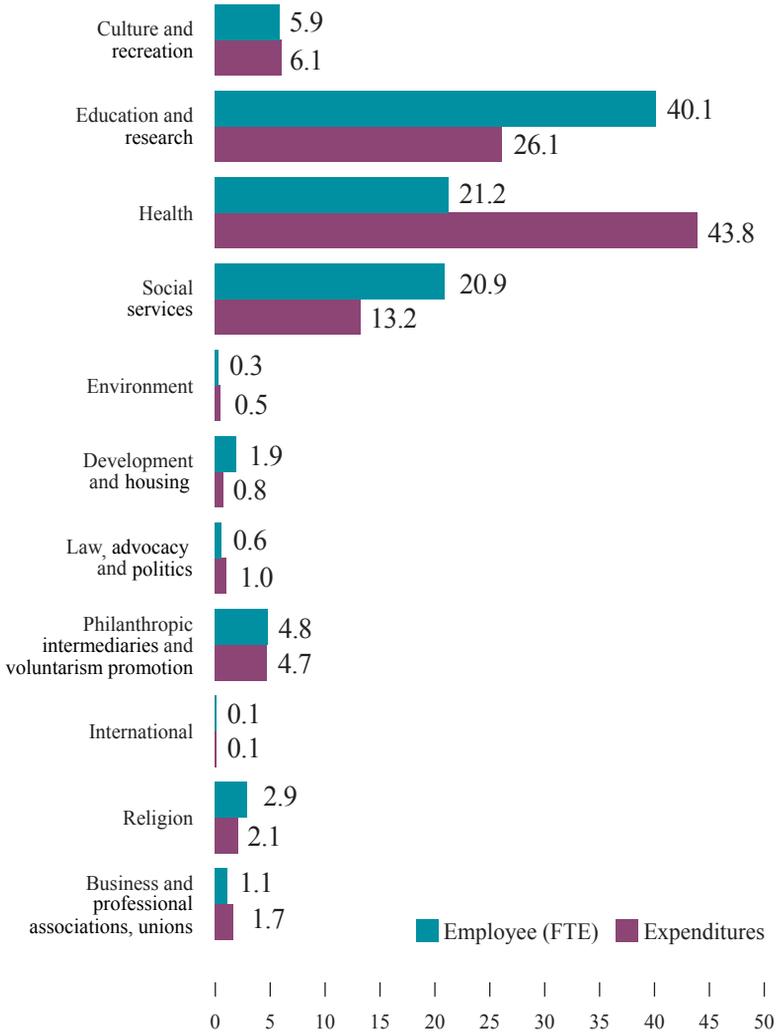
(Figure 3). A number of very large organizations are active in these fields such as the health maintenance organizations (*Kupot Holim*), hospitals, universities and colleges, and large welfare organizations such as *Matav*. Furthermore, in these fields, as will be demonstrated below, substantial government funding is involved, deriving from agreements relating to the mixed welfare system characteristic in Israel since its inception and the recent privatization processes. Accordingly, these services are practically considered an integral part of the welfare state; some are even defined as such by law, e.g., The National Health Insurance Law, The Nursing Care Law, The Council for Higher Education Law.

**Figure 2** Total expenditures for health and education by sector, 1991–2004 (percent)



Source: Author’s development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ict](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ict)

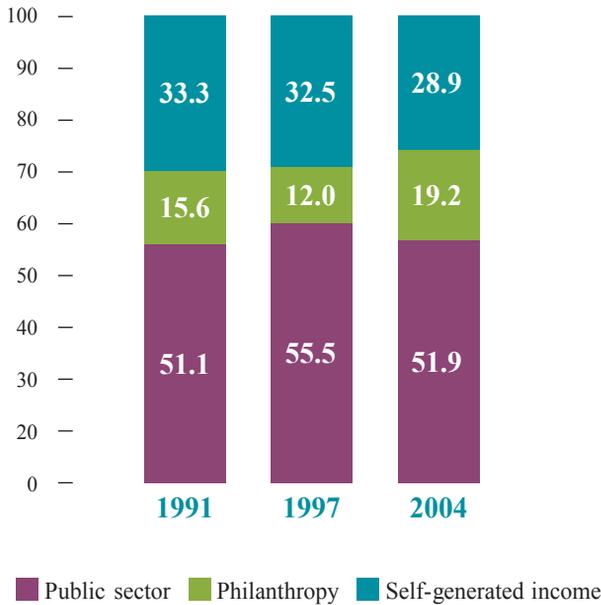
**Figure 3** Structure of third sector by field of activity – expenditures and employment, 2004



Source: Author’s development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictsr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictsr)

Third sector organizations' funding derives from diverse sources—government ministries, local authorities, government corporations, membership dues, payment for services or products, commercial initiatives, donations from individuals and corporations, foreign sources, and more. These diverse sources are traditionally divided into three general categories—income derived from the public purse—national and local levels; self-generated income—from sales of services and products and other independent sources; and income from philanthropy, which includes foundation grants. Income from the government includes transfers of various types, including legislated ones (such as the transfer of HMOs according to the National Health Insurance Law), contracts to provide specific services and other forms of financial assistance.

Figure 4 shows that government funding consistently comprises more than half of the third sector's income. The growth of government funding in the sector's income during the first period was offset during the second period and the 2004 rate is similar to that of 1991. The data also demonstrate that in contrast to many developed countries, there is no commercialization trend of the Israeli third sector, and reliance on the sale of services and other independent sources of income is gradually decreasing. Thus, the funding source that reacts to the fluctuations in government financing is donations, and we see that its part in the 2004 third sector budget has clearly increased in comparison to the past. Whereas the scope of donations from households comprise a small part of the sector's revenues from philanthropy, the increase in philanthropic revenues derives from organizational donations such as foundations and businesses, large private donations, and international donations. The 2004 data show that overseas transfers to third sector organizations totaled 5.1 billion NIS, comprising 6.3% of the total income and one third of the philanthropy-based income.

**Figure 4** Third Sector Sources of Income, 1991–2004

Source: Author's development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictr)

To summarize this part, the economic data clearly show a very large third sector, commanding a sizable share of the economy but focusing primarily on service provision functions in the traditional areas of health and education and, to a lesser degree, welfare. This pattern of third sector activity has to do with the historical development of those services, which, during the pre-State era were provided by what we would term today “third sector” organizations. While the policy during the first years after Israel’s independence was one of “statism” and attempts were made to nationalize sectoral services,

the implementation of this policy was successful only to a degree. In some cases (primary health, vocational education, ultra-Orthodox education, higher education), there was resistance to abolishing the previous structures and these systems practically retained their previous status. Throughout the years these organizations developed close relationships with the State, which entailed funding from the public purse, and gradually they became providers of the public services within their domain. In certain respects, in their internal functioning, they resemble public agencies.

The economic growth of the sector during the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century is primarily explained by the policy of privatization of public services that was adopted by the Israeli government. That policy transferred the function of delivery of the services to the nonprofit and business sectors, whereas the public sector retained the function of funding and supervision.

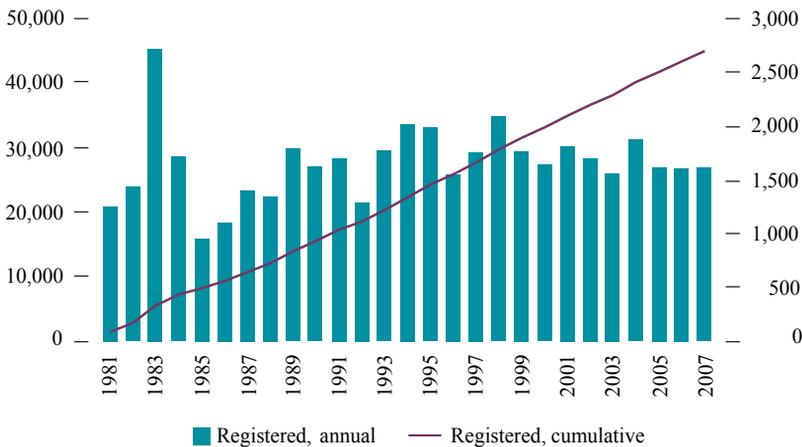
### **The Associational Aspect of the Third Sector: Developing Civil Society**

While the economic data on the third sector present important dimensions on its characteristics, it does not tell the whole story. Third sector organizations usually start off as associations, created voluntarily by citizens who express their collective interests by such acts. Thus, following the patterns of association of the Israeli citizenry over several decades can tell us something about issues of interest and concern, populations that are active in creating associations more than others, etc.

Reliable data about the registration of third sector organizations is available from 1981, the year in which the Law of Associations (1980) came into effect and the Associations' Registrar commenced his activities in registering organizations. Between 1982 and 1984, there was a notable increase in the registration of associations, which

may be explained by the requirement that organizations previously registered as Ottoman Societies reregister as associations according to the new law. During the second half of the 1980s the number of new third sector associations registered in Israel steadily increased until the number of newly registered associations per year stood at approximately 1,600–1,700. In other words, approximately seven new organizations were registered every day of the Registrar’s working days. From 1980 until the end of 2007, 44,846 third sector organizations were registered in Israel. Of these, at the end of 2007, there were 27,115 *active* associations (registered associations that were not declared to have disbanded by themselves, the registrar, or the court). The trend line in Figure 5 demonstrates that the registration rate remained steady and there is no evidence of any ebbing indicative of possible change with regard to this trend.

**Figure 5** Registration of third sector organizations, 1981–2007



Source: Author’s development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictr)

The distribution of third sector organizations is not divided equally among the different societal groups or geographic regions. Figure 6 presents the socio-economic distribution of registered NPOs. The data is divided among three categories of communities. The Statistical Bureau clusters all communities in Israel into 10 categories by a series of socio-economic indicators, from the lowest (1) to the highest (10).

Figure 6 indicates that 18% of organizations registered in 2007 were established in communities rated in clusters 1–3 (in which 15% of the Israeli population lives in 31% of the communities in Israel), 20% of the organizations were established in communities classified as clusters 8–10 (17% of the population resides in 15% of the communities), and the remainder were established in communities classified as clusters 4–7. The trend revealed in these data comparing 2007 to 1997 and 1987 is clear and demonstrates that the place of the weaker communities as “hosting” third sector organizations in Israel has increased. This may be attributed to the government policy of privatization of services and the increased activity of NPOs in weaker communities. It may also be attributed to the increased awareness by lower socio-economic groups of the potential benefits of organizing.

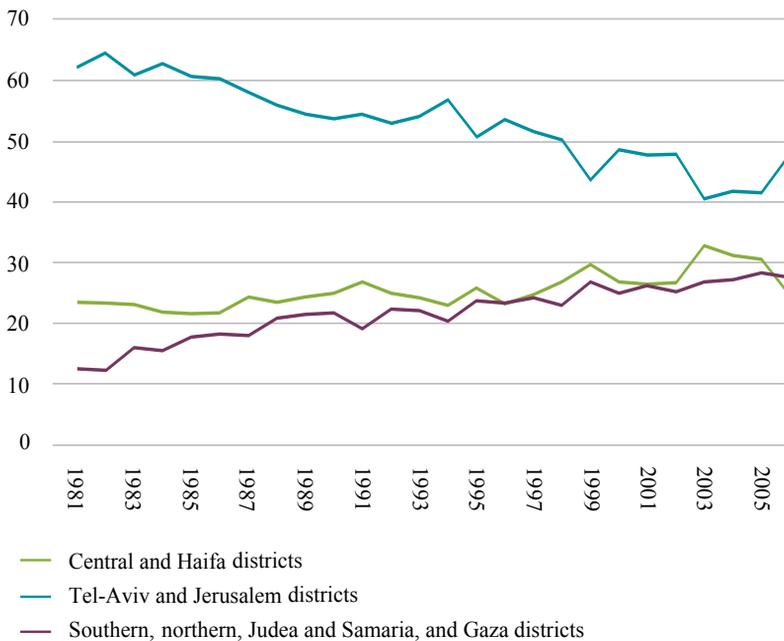
**Figure 6** Socio-economic analysis of registered third sector organizations, by clusters of municipalities, 1987-2007 (percent)



Source: Author's development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictsr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictsr)

An additional inequality regarding the division of third sector organizations in Israel involves the spatial distribution of the organizations registered each year, in particular with relation to the nation's center and the periphery. Figure 7 shows that the rate of registration of organizations in the periphery (the southern and northern districts) is slowly rising and nearly doubled during the past 20 years. On the other hand, the rates of registration of organizations in the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem districts have been decreasing, and since 2002 they have been halved in comparison to their rates in the early 1980s.

**Figure 7** Spatial analysis of registered third sector organizations (by region; percent)



Source: Author’s development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ict](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ict)

Another difference between groups in Israel is along the national divide, specifically between the Jewish and the Arab populations. Table 2 shows that the rate of organizations identified as Jewish<sup>2</sup>

- 2 The categorization is based on the idea that some organizations are clearly established by a Jewish group and serve Jews, such as synagogues, ultra-Orthodox educational institutions, etc. The same holds true for Arab organizations. Obviously there are organizations that cannot be categorized that way as they serve all populations; however, some organizations have bridging goals and those we termed “bi-national.”

within the general registry is gradually decreasing, whereas the rate of organizations categorized as Arab or those which may be identified as bi-national is on the rise. In the beginning of the 1980s, a mere one of every 20 registered organizations in Israel was Arab or bi-national. In 2007, one of every eight newly registered organizations was Arab or bi-national. Nonetheless, since the 1990s the growth rate of organizations established by or on behalf of the Arab minority has slowed down. In fact, the growth rate of organizations representing those minorities was fastest at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This period coincides with the first intifada and the rapid growth may be explained by a national awakening of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Yet, despite the growth of the number of Arab third sector organizations, their numbers remain relatively low when compared to the rate of this population within the general Israeli population. One explanation for this finding involves demographics: Third sector organizing tends to characterize the middle and upper classes rather than society's lower socio-economic stratum. In Israel, the socio-economic status of its Palestinian citizens is generally lower than that of the Jewish population. A second explanation focuses on culture—third sector organizing is less common among traditional societies. A third explanation focuses on the political realm—the relatively low rate of third sector organizations among the Palestinian citizens of Israel may be also explained by their suspicions toward Israeli institutions.

**Table 2** Patterns of registration by national identity, 1982–2007

Year	Jewish	Arab	Dual	Total	Total registered
1982	95.3%	4.4%	0.3%	100%	
	1,043	48	3	1,094	2,861
1997	90.8%	8.6%	0.6%	100%	
	13,827	1,312	83	15,250	27,511
2007	87.5%	11.5%	0.9%	100%	
	20,933	2,759	199	23,961	44,846

Source: Author's development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictr)

### **Third Sector Organizations' Fields of Activity**

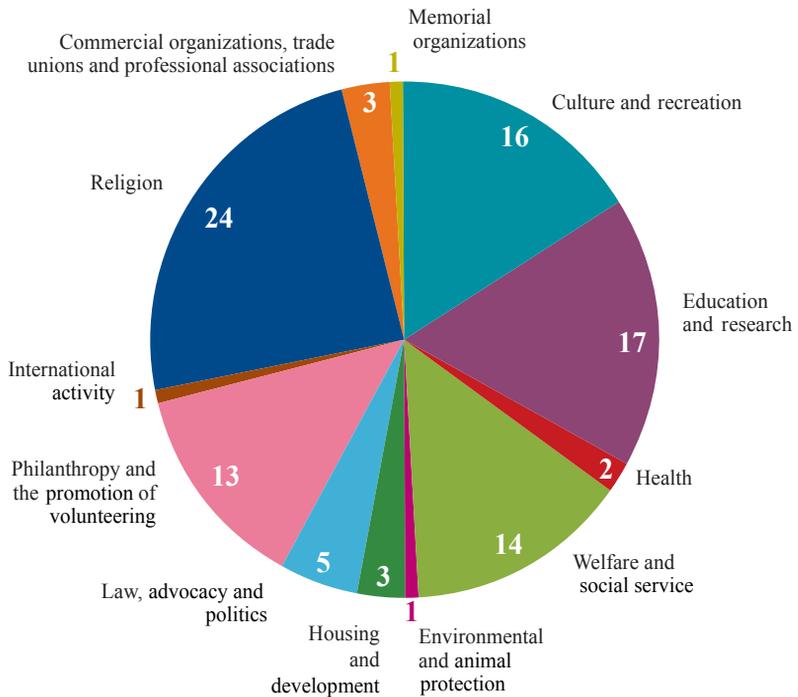
What do third sector organizations actually do? An analysis of the organizations according to their fields of activities (each organization was categorized in one of 12 possible fields of activity in accordance with their main goals) points to the fact that the majority of third sector organizations in Israel deal with issues pertaining to the traditional areas of voluntary organizations: health, education, welfare and various social services. Half of the active organizations in 2007 worked in education, health, welfare, culture, and recreation (Figure 8). An important finding has to do with the small proportion of organizations in the health field; it is particularly interesting as compared to the very significant size the health field has in the economic map of the third sector. It is clearly a case of a small number of very large organizations.

One particularly outstanding field of activity is religion. This area includes organizations providing religious services (synagogues, mosques, and churches), ritual baths, burial associations, and religious cultural organizations. In 2007, one in four active organizations in Israel functioned in the area of religion. It should be noted that these data do not include the ultra-Orthodox educational system that are classified under educational organizations. Neither do they include ultra-Orthodox charitable organizations or Muslim charitable organizations which are classified as welfare organizations. If all these organizations not currently classified as religious organizations were to be included in the category of religious organizations, the numbers would be dramatically greater. In other words, religion is a major undercurrent in a major proportion of the third sector organizations.

The category of philanthropy should also be mentioned. This category includes primarily foundations but there are also other organizations that function in the area of volunteerism and philanthropy. Most foundations assist individuals, including the awarding of scholarships or organizations that collect funds related to the medical treatment of a specific person. Some foundations support one organization (for instance, friends of a specific hospital or university) and only a minority of foundations assists diverse organizations and those foundations may be considered significant channels of third sector funding.

Other areas such as the organizations engaged in advocacy or the environment command only a fraction of the total picture but are on the rise.

**Figure 8** Registered organizations by area of activity, 2007



Source: Author's development of data from the Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research at Ben Gurion University of the Negev: [www.bgu.ac.il/ictr](http://www.bgu.ac.il/ictr)

In summary of this section, it is clear that Israeli civil society, as indicated by the scope and diversity of the associations established by Israelis is thriving. It is clearly influenced by traditional patterns

of association along the synagogue, religious education, and welfare systems. At the same time it also includes advocacy and professional organizations who engage in work along different aspects of society deemed important to their initiators and thus create social change and innovation in society. By and large this is a new pattern of activity in Israel, which formed associations in previous decades around political parties and/or ideological entities.

## **Conclusion**

The paper presented data on the Israeli third sector's two major roles: (1) provision of services that complement the welfare state, many of them with funding by the state; (2) provision of a framework for the development of civil society: engaging in creating voluntary associations that represent collective identities or working toward social and political change and innovation. It also presented data on the evolution and development of these roles throughout the past two to three decades.

Regarding the first role, the mixed welfare system Israel had from its inception received a major boost in the direction of further reliance on the third sector by the policy of privatization of public services enacted in the 1990s. Thus we witness more government contracts to NPOs, practically delegating to the third sector delivery of functions in specific areas once provided by public agencies.

As for the second role, the "associational revolution" we have witnessed since the early 1980s has had a major impact on society. Groups that have been in the margins found new powers to express their interests and bring them to public awareness by collective organizing, and thereby creating new frameworks for agenda setting and policy decision making. At the same time this coincided with a decline in the importance of the political parties, especially the

ideological ones. The data also demonstrate that such associations are not created uniformly in society and that in reality some groups have more resources than others to create and sustain them. It is indicative, however, of the weaker groups in society gradually learning the lesson, and their share in the map of the third sector associations is growing.

The development of the third sector as a unique entity is still in its infancy, and it is not yet possible to form binding conclusions on its impact on the society, the economy, and the polity in Israel. The following are three issues that are likely to interest policy makers and researchers studying the sector within the Israeli society in the next decade or two.

Is Israeli society a more “civil” society as a result of the development of a more pluralistic structure (expressed by the thousands of associations)? Do Israeli citizens believe more in the democratic process? Are they more tolerant to others’ views and attitudes?

Is the fact that Israelis are establishing more associations to express their collective interests a uniting or dividing force in society? Are these groups pursuing their own interests and disregarding the overall structure of which they are a part, or are they more ready now to extend their hand to others, now that their interests have been recognized?

What are the new roles for the third sector in the next decade as the new realities of protracted conflict and economic slump persist?

## **New Politics, No Politics, and Antipolitics: The Dilemma of the Religious Right in Israel**

Kalman Neuman

Different explanations have been offered for the widespread phenomenon of disillusionment, disengagement, and escape from politics in general or from involvement in formal political activity in particular. These include an aversion or disinterest in the political sphere altogether as a result of a change in sense of public and civic duty, a rejection of politicians as self-serving at best or corrupt at worse, or as a result of the convergence of the policies of political parties, who offer little to choose between them (Hay 2007, 56).

How do these phenomena impact on the behavior of political parties? One result is the attraction to short-lived “non-political” parties that try to benefit from the disgust from established politics. The success of the Retirees’ party in the 2006 Israeli elections was an example of this trend (Susser 2007); it was expected that in the 2009 Israeli election parties focusing on environmental issues would benefit from such antipolitics. Established parties also tried to capitalize on such perceived tendencies. They try to attract new faces, untainted with the stain of being “politicians.”<sup>1</sup>

\* At the conference in December 2008, Israel was entering an election campaign that culminated on February 10, 2009. I have tried to include events leading up to the election in an epilogue to this paper.

1 For example, in the recent Israeli elections the head of the left-wing Meretz party, Haim Oron, said that his party wants to attract votes from

What is the relative importance of the different factors? To the extent that escape from politics is caused by policy convergence that leads to the Tweedledee-Tweedledum perception that “they are all the same,” a party that offers (as Barry Goldwater did in the US elections in 1964) “a voice, not an echo” may be less affected. A party with a committed voter base and a clear ideology is less vulnerable to desertion and escape. Lower turnout in the population at large will allow greater representation of groups who are not turned off and can be mobilized to vote. In addition, the atmosphere of antipolitics and the “corruption eruption” may itself allow such a group to position itself as the “antipolitical party.”

In that context, I wish to examine the different options open to the religious right in Israel in the present political situation. This is a study of a group within the Israeli political scene and the interface of its political ideologies with the phenomena of escape and anti-politics. Despite the relatively small size of the religious Zionist sector in the Israeli population, it is worth examining due to the proportional nature of the Israeli electoral system and the unique ideological ferment of this group.

The 2009 elections confronted the leadership of the religious right with dilemmas that caused them to consider alternatives to “politics as usual.” I will attempt to describe the dilemmas and analyze the alternatives.

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the “party of the despaired” and “the party of the indifferent.” In that interest the Meretz list was augmented by a number of people who had not previously engaged in political activity, most visibly by newscaster Nitzan Horowitz, in the hope that this combination would add clout to the list. At the end of the day, these expectations did not materialize, for reasons that will be touched on the epilogue.

As has been shown in numerous studies, self-definition of left or right in Israel is determined by the attitude to the territories and peace—those who see themselves as “left” are both more optimistic about the chances for peace and more willing to make territorial concessions in order to achieve it (Shamir and Arian 1994; Hermann and Ya’ar-Yuchtman 1998, 65). As Yuchtman-Ya’ar and Peres (2000, 67) describe the predominance of the question in Israeli politics:

Individual leaders and entire political camps are defined; engage and disengage; rise and fall; and ultimately, leave their imprint in the collective memory in accordance with their station on the continuum between partitioning greater Israel between the two peoples who inhabit it (doves) and keeping all or most of it under Jewish-Israeli control (hawks).

This divergence closely correlates with the religious divisions within Israeli society.

Israelis often speak of a fourfold division of Israeli Jews into secular, traditional, religious, and Haredi (once known as “ultra-Orthodox”). The third group is also referred to as “Religious Zionist” or “National Religious” (*dati-leumi*) as opposed to the Haredi community, which is non-Zionist or anti-Zionist.<sup>2</sup> In the 2008 Guttman study 10% of the Jewish population (about 8% of the total Israeli population) defined itself as “religious” (Ventura and Philippov 2008).

There is a clear correlation between identification as secular or as religious and political identification.

2 Jews who identify themselves as Reform or Conservative with regard to their religiosity are not statistically significant and do not play a role as groups in Israeli politics.

[T]he religiosity-secularism dimension is the most important factor in determining the positions of the public regarding the Oslo process, as well as other aspects of the peace process. Religiosity, it appears, is more influential in the area than socio-demographic factors such as education, ethnic background, age, gender, income etc.

The polls of the peace project show consistently that the religious-secular dimension is the most important factor in determining the positions of the public regarding the peace process. This element is more influential than factors such as education, land of origin, age, gender, income etc. (Hermann and Ya'ar-Yuchtman 1998, 63)

This rift continues to influence Israeli politics. Regarding Israeli society as a whole, it is thought that there has been a convergence of public opinion into the center—an acceptance of some version of the two-state solution merged with skepticism about the chances of reaching a final status agreement with the Palestinians. For example, *the War and Peace Index* of April 2008 (Yaar and Hermann 2008) showed that 70% of Israeli Jews support the two-state solution while only about 26% believe that negotiations with the Palestinians will lead in the coming years to peace.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, a different survey from March 2008 found 82% of those who define themselves as religious against the establishment of a Palestinian state (Dor-Shav 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising

3 See Waxman (2008) who describes this convergence. His conclusions may have to be rethought in light of the 2009 elections which were interpreted by some as a rejection of the two-state solution. However, see the March 2009 War and Peace index (Yaar and Hermann 2009) in which 56% of the Jewish population say that the government should work toward such a solution.

that religious voters vote overwhelmingly for right-wing parties—mostly for the Likud, the National Religious Party (NRP), and the National Union (*Ha-Ihud Ha-Leumi*)—while only some 15% of the religious sector votes for center-left or left-wing parties—Kadima, Labor (which in recent elections included the dovish religious party Meimad) or Meretz (see Cohen 2007, 340).

Of course, the Israeli right is not of one cloth. There is a pragmatic right, which emphasizes security considerations and distrust of Arab intentions, but is willing to consider limited concessions and is afraid of jeopardizing relations with the United States.

Within the religious right, however, there is an ideologically committed group, which is absolutely opposed to any withdrawals. They see any evacuation of settlements as absolutely proscribed for religious reasons. This ideological hard core is perhaps a numerical minority within the community, but the influential Religious Zionist rabbinic and educational leadership overwhelmingly supports its positions. In addition, the numbers of Religious Zionists in settlements over the Green Line, and their social networking with their counterparts within Israel, amplify the commitment of the community to the settlement project.

The rigid ideological aspect of the opposition to withdrawal dictates the political positions of the Israeli religious right. Analogous to the religious right in the United States, in which the issue of abortion is dominant, the Israeli religious right ultimately evaluates all political phenomena by this one criterion. An example of this is the list of endorsed candidates for local office circulated by one right-wing group, which included only those who opposed the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip, despite the irrelevance of the disengagement to municipal issues (Eyadat 2008). A political issue is thus a central focus of the religious identity of many Religious

Zionists, and therefore a disengagement from the political sphere is inconceivable.

In fact, the trauma of the disengagement from Gaza (which the ideologues of the religious right insist as referring to as “the expulsion”), which displaced thousands of Religious Zionist settlers from their homes, was a decisive moment for the religious right. It raised both theological and ideological questions about the relationship with the state,<sup>4</sup> while challenging its political strategy. Indeed, the watershed event generated doubts as to the very utility of their political activity. Ariel Sharon’s decision to initiate and carry out this plan pitted them against a leader who they had idolized for a generation. When the time came for implementation of the withdrawal, the parliamentary representatives of the religious right (in the NRP and the National Union party) were unable to stop Sharon, while most of the MKs of Sharon’s own Likud party did not rebel against his leadership. After the failure of parliamentary action, the attempt of the religious right to foil the withdrawal through direct action failed. In the southern village of Kfar Maimon, there was a direct face-off of thousands of religious demonstrators with the army. At the crucial moment, the extra-parliamentary leadership of the settler movement shied away from a direct confrontation—leaving them open to subsequent criticism that they stabbed the movement in the back.

On whom was this failure to be blamed? As mentioned, there was widespread criticism of the leaders of the settler movement leading ultimately to a change and reorganization of the leadership of the *Yesha* council, which represents the mainstream of the settler movement.

4 This is a complex question, beyond the scope of this paper.

There were also calls for a change of the political representatives of the religious right in the Knesset.

On a deeper level, however, there was a more profound soul-searching. The fact that the icon of the secular right had betrayed their cause required explanations. These were basically of two types, not entirely independent of each other.

One, congruent with the atmosphere of antipolitics and ascription of base motives to all politicians, connected Sharon's volte-face with the ongoing investigations of suspected corruption by him and his sons. This explanation assumed that the legal and media establishments would soft-pedal Sharon's alleged crimes if he would rise to their expectations on the Palestinian issue. One media pundit (in no way identified with the religious right) referred to the protective media attitude to Sharon as an *etrog*, the citron used in religious ritual which must be protected at all costs lest it be blemished (Zach 2005; *The Seventh Eye* 2008). One vocal MK of the religious right (Zvi Hendel of the National Union) quipped that "the depth of the withdrawal is equivalent to the depth of the investigation."<sup>5</sup> This, of course, was all the more plausible given the general disgust with politics.

However, beyond the *ad hominem* criticism, there was a more radical stocktaking that took place in the internal conversation within the religious community. This spirited ideological discourse was not carried out in the mass media and only to some extent on the Web. It was manifest to a great extent in synagogue literature distributed every Sabbath in hundreds of synagogues in Israel.<sup>6</sup> These leaflets

5 These allegations have since been repeated by former Chief of Staff Ya'alon (2008).

6 There have been a number of studies of different aspects of this literature. I especially wish to thank Dr. Yoel Finkelman who was kind enough to send me a copy of his paper "It's A Small, Small World: Secular Zionism

comprise religious teachings, advice on personal matters (such as marital problems or child rearing) as well as political and ideological opinion. This is a unique medium targeted at the Religious Zionist community and is avidly read by a captive audience. There are many of such pamphlets, the majority of them manifesting a definite right-wing orientation.<sup>7</sup> I will try to focus on ideological trends that are reflected in these brochures. It may be the case that these writings do not represent the feelings of the “silent majority” of the religious community,<sup>8</sup> but they definitely articulate a significant trend among the rabbinic and educational leadership.

In many of them, as well as in other media of the religious right (such as the periodicals *Makor Rishon*, *Nekuda*, and *B'Sheva*), the “betrayal” of Sharon and of the Likud as a whole was described as a failure of the secular right as such. Support (or acquiescence) for the “expulsion” was seen as a result of a structural disability of secular Zionism, and the lack of devotion to the Land of Israel as a result of a lack of identification with traditional Jewish values. This diagnosis would seem to encourage withdrawal from traditional political activity, after its futility had been demonstrated. Yet, it seems that there was no drop in the high voting numbers of the Religious Zionist public.<sup>9</sup> Instead, an ideology developed which tried to replace “politics as usual” with a new agenda.

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as Reflected in a Contemporary Religious-Zionist *Parashat HaShavua* Pamphlet,” delivered at the March 2009 Orthodox Forum. A recent study of one aspect of this synagogue literature is Bar-Tal et al. (2010).

7 To the best of my knowledge, only one such pamphlet, entitled appropriately *Shabbat Shalom*, and published by the dovish religious movement *Netivot Shalom-Oz Veshalom*, represents a left-of-center orientation.

8 This was the claim of Cohen and Cohen (2005) regarding descriptions of the traumatic effect of the disengagement.

9 See Cohen 2009, 6.

The trauma of the disengagement accelerated the appearance of an ideology that had begun to be articulated in previous years. Since the establishment of Israel in 1948 (and in the politics of the Zionist Movement which preceded the State), Religious Zionists (and especially the dominant Religious Zionist party, the NRP) have almost always been junior partners in coalitions, whether during the hegemony of the Labor party or (since 1977) under the Likud. In the first period, that of the “historic covenant,” Religious Zionists refrained from taking a major role in determining national policy and concentrated on establishing and perpetuating the arrangements regarding religion and state known as the “status quo.” The second period has been characterized by a demand to be more influential in major affairs of state, especially in the context of the debate on the territories, while being part of the “national camp” led by the Likud. As a result of the disengagement, some questioned this strategy and emphasized the need for the Religious Zionist representation to be strong enough to foil any possible concessions granted by the leadership of the right. These called for a union of parties to the right of the Likud who would be able to influence any right-wing coalition. However, some leaders of the community went beyond this. The latest development, accelerated since the disengagement, is their aspiration not just to share in leadership, but rather to replace the country’s leadership. This call stems from the conviction that only Religious Zionism has the faith and commitment to the Land of Israel and to Jewish values necessary to lead the state and that ultimately any regime run by secular Jews will be unable to sustain the true Zionist vision.<sup>10</sup>

10 The harbinger of this trend may have been Efi Eitam, a charismatic army officer who entered politics and was elected, for a short time, as the head of the National Religious Party. In an interview with *Haaretz* journalist Ari Shavit (March 22, 2002), he shared his belief that he had a calling to be the leader of the Jewish people.

I noticed the eruption of this rhetoric when visiting the demonstrators against the disengagement at Kfar Maimon.<sup>11</sup> The intense conviction of the demonstrators that they represent the true will of the Jewish people and their powerlessness in stopping the withdrawal brought about a call for a new political strategy.

In the wake of the disengagement, Rabbi Elyakim Levanon, the popular head of a yeshiva and the rabbi of the West Bank settlement of Elon Moreh, published a booklet, distributed widely in synagogues, calling for the Religious Zionist community to “assume responsibility” for the state as a whole (Levanon n.d.). He explains that the project of secular Zionism has failed and that only religious Jews have the commitment to preserve the very existence as well as the Jewish character of the State of Israel, while the secular-liberal force, which controls the media and the judicial system, wishes to be part of a “New Middle East” which will reject any Jewish uniqueness. Those like Levanon who speak of a need for religious leadership do not generally present a detailed plan for implementation (beyond an absolute rejection of any withdrawal from the territories and a call for emphasizing “Jewish” values instead of universal ones), but they are convinced that solutions to all problems can be found within the Jewish tradition.

This theme calling for religious hegemony is prominent in many of the synagogue pamphlets. For example, a popular pamphlet published interviews with three candidates for the leadership of a unified Religious Zionist party (that represented parties representing some 7% of the vote). A number of the questions that were addressed to the candidates dealt with their aspirations to become prime minister,

11 Neuman 2005.

no less, as though this was a realistic goal (Identical Question 2008, interviews with MKs Elon and Ariel).

The vision of religious leadership of the country is a response to those who have despaired of influencing the political system. In a nutshell, it is “anti-antipolitics” because it offers a remedy to the apathy and impotence caused by the failure to stop the withdrawal from Gaza, by mobilizing the believers around a new political goal. They are energized by the increasing visibility of Religious Zionists in various national endeavors, especially in the officer corps of the IDF.

Obviously, the vision of hegemony is problematic for a group that is no more than 12% of the population.<sup>12</sup> How can it be presented as a plausible political prospect?

One response is the claim that the potential electorate of religious parties is much greater than it seems, and that in fact the religious community is not really a minority. For example, data published by the Israel Democracy Institute was presented in the media in a way that gave the impression that the secular community is a small minority. This, in turn, was presented in a synagogue leaflet in a way that suggested the possibility of religious hegemony.<sup>13</sup> In addition, there are those who foresee change of the demographic reality. A common claim is that the larger family size of Religious Zionists (and their lower numbers of emigration) will eventually bring about change in

12 See Cohen (2009) who says that the maximum potential of the Religious Zionist public is 15 MKs out of 120. Ya’akov Katz, head of the National Union, described the electoral power of the Religious Zionist community as 12–14 mandates. Baruch 2009.

13 Nachshoni 2007; Nachshoni 2008; “*Tradition of Israel*,” 2007. As a result of these publications, the IDI published a paper clarifying the results of the Guttman Institute surveys and emphasizing that keeping some Jewish traditions does not preclude self-definition as “secular” or “not religious.” See Ventura and Philippov 2008.

the relative size—and influence—of the community. Another hope is based on attempts, more common in recent years, of Religious Zionists to engage in proselytizing (previously prevalent among the Haredi community) intended to bring non-observant Jews to religious observance. Although there are a number of visible examples of such phenomena, they are certainly not significant numerically to the extent of strengthening the political force of Religious Zionism.<sup>14</sup>

Given the small size of the Religious Zionist community, what political strategies can be presented to make the idea of religious leadership seem plausible? A number of these are evident in the synagogue literature.<sup>15</sup>

One possibility is the establishment of a broad “Jewish-Traditional” party. This strategy would try to unite all Religious Zionists but also to reach out to Traditional Jews. This was one of the ideas behind the attempt (which ultimately failed) to create a unified party, which, it was hoped, could position itself as a serious alternative to the major parties. In this way it could maximize the influence of Religious

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14 See Sheleg 2003; Laks n.d.; Zvik 2009. Some of the synagogue brochures, noticeably *Mimayanei Hayeshua* and *Rosh Yehudi* see themselves as part of a new “movement of return” and feature stories of Jews who have recently joined the ranks of the observant.

It should be noted that there is an interesting phenomenon of blurring of borders between “religious” and “non-religious,” reflecting postmodern liquidity of identity. One example of this is the penetration of religious texts and themes into Israeli popular music, and the attraction of some noted celebrities to Jewish tradition, while parts of the “religious” community adopt much of the lifestyle of the secular group. The political implications of such blurring are not clear.

15 Rabbi Shlomo Aviner (2008), the rabbi of the settlement Bet El and one of the most prolific rabbis of the religious right, analyzed the political options, preferring himself a broad-based “Traditional” party focusing on social issues.

Zionist ideology (Cohen 2011). Some of the proponents of this proposal claimed that it would focus on “education first” and include in its list of candidates people who are not religiously observant (as opposed to the historic policy of the NRP). This would be an attempt to woo such Traditional Jews, supporters of Likud (or of Shas, which is ostensibly a Haredi party but which attracts many Traditional voters) or even lovers of the Land of Israel who are not observant but respect religion (Shilo 2008).<sup>16</sup> Such a new alignment would require a much more inclusionary mindset and a policy change regarding questions such as religious coercion, pluralism, and tolerance, akin to the transformation of Catholic parties in Europe to post-World War II Christian Democracy.

Another strategy to achieve hegemony would suggest political partnership with the Haredim. Such a union existed in the first Knesset (elected in 1949) when the United Religious Front (*Hazit Datit Meuchedet*) composed of all the religious and Haredi parties was represented by 18 MKs. At the time, the Religious Zionists had two-thirds of the representation. In recent elections the total number of MKs from the two Haredi lists (Shas and *Yahdut Hatorah*–United Torah Judaism) reaches close to 20, around twice the number of Religious Zionist MKs (counting those from all parties). There are periodic calls to create a united religious political force and have the Religious Zionist and the non-Zionist Haredi parties join forces.<sup>17</sup>

16 Some 30% of Israeli Jews identify themselves as “Traditional” (Ventura and Philopov 2008). The Traditional sector of Israeli society has been largely ignored by scholars and has only recently been the object of serious study. See Yadgar and Liebman 2006; Buzaglo 2009.

17 See for example Wolpe 2008; Hendel (2005), who says that that unifying all the religious parties will lead eventually to a religious candidate for prime minister; Wasserman (2008), who says that it is important not to forget the lesson of the expulsion from Gush Katif for “only when we hold the reins

Given the proportional strength, such a union would require that the Zionists accept the sectarian concerns of the Haredim, who in turn would support the settlement project and oppose withdrawal.

A fervent proponent of this option is Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, who thinks that it would dovetail with popular disgust from the political elite:

It is no secret that if the religious public would unite—it could lead the country. The NRP would concede to the Haredi public in matters of Shabbat or sexual modesty<sup>18</sup> and the Haredi community would concede to the Zionist one regarding the Land of Israel [i.e., the territories and settlements – K.N.] . . . many Traditional Jews could join this union. They have no one to vote for. They have had enough of all the corruption and “envelopes.”<sup>19</sup> They are searching for clean leadership, leadership with values, true leadership. (Eliyahu 2008b)

This strategy seems to be popular among certain Religious Zionist rabbis, although it might be difficult to sell to the rank-and-file, who are often resentful at many aspects of Haredi behavior, such as the

of power, will we be able to change the path where we are presently being led; Eliyahu 2008a (the author is the rabbi of the city of Safed and the son of former Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu). He explains the arithmetic involved (such a union would be the largest party and would be able to dictate terms to other parties; Eliyahu 2008c).

18 I assume that this means that the modern Orthodox would have to submit to strict Haredi demands regarding Sabbath observance in the public sphere and would be willing to limit women’s participation in public affairs.

19 This was a euphemism for the accusation against former Prime Minister Olmert that he had been passed envelopes with large amounts of cash from an American fund-raiser.

wholesale exemption of Haredi yeshiva students from army service. An example of the problems of such an alignment was the recent Jerusalem mayoral election, when many of the leaders of the religious right (most of who live in settlements far from Jerusalem) called on Religious Zionist voters to support the Haredi candidate (who was described as an ally of the settlers). Despite this attempt, Nir Barkat, who is not religiously observant, won the election with significant support from Religious Zionist voters fearful of ultra-Orthodox domination of the city.

A third possibility for Religious Zionists to achieve leadership is to effect a takeover (some would say, a hostile takeover) of a major party. The Likud is obviously the party of choice for those hoping to achieve a leadership position. This is the strategy of Moshe Feiglin and his group, *Manhigut Yehudit* (Jewish Leadership). Feiglin is radically critical of secular Zionism and the liberal values of the Israeli elites and believes that “faithful” Jews who will be guided by “authentic Jewish values” must replace the present political establishment. He recognizes the convergence of all other political forces (even the religious parties) that have agreed to play according to the rules set by the secular elites. Feiglin hopes to register his supporters as Likud members, ultimately electing him as leader of the party. This is the way to bring about “the revolution of the faithful,” the title of a book by one of the former leaders of Jewish Leadership.<sup>20</sup>

These three are all political strategies, albeit presenting new alternatives to politics as usual. Finally, on the margins of the Religious Zionist community and especially among the second generation of the settler movement who have set up their own

20 Karpel 2003; Inbari 2007. In the elections for leadership of the Likud in August 2007, Feiglin won close to a quarter of the vote.

outposts—the so-called *noar ha 'gvaot* (“hilltop youth”)—the vision of hegemony is associated with an ideology of exit from legitimate political activity. The ideologue—or more exactly, the theologian—of this trend is Rabbi Yitzhak Ginzburgh, who achieved notoriety after the publishing of his essay extolling the massacre carried out by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron in 1994 (Fischer 2005). The American-born Ginzburgh, whose synthesis of Kabbala and psychology with “New Age” elements finds many adherents, is not himself a Zionist (he is a follower of the Lubavitch-Habad movement) but many of his followers are disenchanting nationalists. Ginzburgh rejects working within the political system because, in his kabbalistic nomenclature, the judicial and media establishments are “husks (*kelipot*) surrounding the fruit,” which have to be “broken” before the true Jewish state will emerge (Ginzburgh 2005; Ginzburgh 2006). Any cooperation with the political and legal system permeated by liberal and universal values is contaminating. As disciples of Ginzburgh explain, religious Jews have to stop being content with being the “interior decorators” of the state constructed by others, but should be those who will build an entirely new alternative edifice (Ofen and Ofen 2006).

An example of such antipolitics may be found in an interview in the weekly magazine *B'Sheva* with Rabbi Gadi Ben-Zimra, an educator in a women's high school in the settlement of Ma'ale Levona:

[I]n the previous election I voted after profound soul-searching. But today I think that it is wrong to put all the eggs in the political basket. “Jewish Leadership” believes in replacing the driver of the bus in order to prevent it from falling off a cliff. . . . But I have a problem with

the bus itself. Democracy is a culture with personal and spiritual depth. Any right-wing leader has to take into account that the form of the bus influences the driver. . . . My proposal is to act outside of the political system and to form alternatives (Rotberg 2008).

This position is not a withdrawal from politics as such, but a vision of achieving political change by working outside the political system. This stance is presently that of a small minority, but may become more attractive if working within the system fails to prevent a trauma even greater than the disengagement. A major withdrawal from the West Bank/Judea and Samaria may result in alienation of large segments of the Religious Zionist community from Israeli society and its political system in particular.

### **Epilogue – “Something old, something new, something borrowed . . .”**

The election campaign of 2009 was overshadowed by Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, which put all political activity on hold and muted the rhetoric of antipolitics. Instead of political corruption being a central campaign issue, the leadership qualities of the candidates for prime minister were prominent. That was at least one explanation for the failure of the two “green” parties to pass the threshold of 2% as well as the dismal performance of Meretz (down to 3 Knesset seats from 5), despite its attempt to include “non-political” candidates.

The political options open to the religious right played themselves out in the months preceding the February 2009 elections. A number of initiatives brought about an attempt to create a new Religious Zionist party, which would replace the NRP and the splinters of the National

Union Party.<sup>21</sup> The idea to have the list of candidates of the new party determined by a council of prominent Religious Zionists who were not involved in politics (and were themselves committed not to run in the current elections) reflects the dissatisfaction from the traditional parties and an attempt to engage in “new politics.”

However, it was clear that the different strategies would create tensions. As the leader of the NRP wrote (again, in a synagogue leaflet) the united party would not present an agenda “with the political (i.e., territories and settlements) issue in front and educational questions at the tail. A change is required: a new agenda with education in front together with a struggle for the Jewish identity of the state and social values.” This would seem to suggest a transformation into a “Jewish Democratic” party, which would be a significant part of the right but not an alternative to it.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the more radical element was apprehensive that a united party would follow a pragmatic line and ignore the centrality of the question of the territories.<sup>23</sup> To a large extent, the difference was between those who preferred the “old politics” of emphasizing community interests (such as education), while expanding the potential base and those who preferred a “new politics,” present an alternative leadership and taking a radical stance regarding the territories.

21 The NRP and National Union (itself composed of three splinter parties) had run on a joint list in the 2006 elections, but the difficulties arising from the existence of four distinct parties within one Knesset faction engendered calls for unity. Those calling for the creation of a new unified party thought that such a novelty would mobilize support for the party beyond its constituent parts. See Cohen 2010.

22 Orlev 2008. See “Identical Question” 2008, where Orlev envisions 15–17 MKs as a goal for the united party.

23 See “Open Letter” 2008.

Ultimately, the attempt to create a united Religious Zionist party failed and two parties of the religious right emerged:<sup>24</sup> The Jewish Home (*Ha-Bayit ha-Yehudi*) party (in effect, the successor to the NRP) and a newly constituted National Union, which included new elements, more radical politically and more inclusive toward Haredim,<sup>25</sup> but clearly unable to reach out to traditional and secular constituencies.<sup>26</sup>

What did this do to the ideal of religious hegemony? The inability to unite in one party underscored how remote the vision of national leadership was. Instead of competing as a major force in Israeli politics (the leaders of the abortive union saw a showing as the third largest party as a reasonable goal), both parties found themselves fighting to pass the 2% threshold, and the rhetoric of national leadership disappeared. The choices were between the old politics of pragmatism and accommodation on one hand (represented by the Jewish Home) and radical politics which might enjoy ideological purity but might find itself as nothing more than a protest movement (the National Union). The election results were disappointing. The Jewish Home won 2.9% of the vote and the National Union 3.3%, (Central Election Committee 2009); both parties were not major

24 The dovish *Meimad* party ran together with the Green Movement, downplayed religious issues (emphasizing environmental questions), and did not pass the 2% threshold.

25 As a result, the National Union list did not include women, in order to attract Haredi votes (who see women's participation in public office as inappropriate) and was successful in a number of Haredi strongholds such as Kfar Habad or Beitar.

26 The National Union list contained a candidate who does not define himself as religious (Professor Aryeh Eldad representing the *Hatikva* [The Hope] party) but after the election the National Union leader admitted that the prospects for secular support of his party are extremely limited (Baruch 2009).

players in the coalition negotiations, and the vision of Religious Zionism presenting a plausible alternative for the leadership of Israel was shown to be a daydream. One of the rabbis of the more radical wing (Cohen 2008) was willing to admit that all that could be hoped for is “a small party which will hold fast to the Torah and its teachers, and will fight without compromise for all parts of the holy land, which even if it will be out of the government for a temporary period . . . [eventually] with God’s help it will win an absolute victory.”

On the other hand, the elections showed that a large proportion of Religious Zionist voters rejected both parties that nominally represent their community and voted for other parties, noticeably the Likud.<sup>27</sup> If this trend continues and brings large numbers of Religious Zionists to join the Likud as members, this may indicate a new phase of their political participation, one not representing “antipolitics,” but quintessential use of political power: the attempt to influence (rather than co-opt) the Likud by strengthening its more traditional elements and its right wing. This may also bring about the end of sectorial national religious parties. This would have far-reaching influence not only within the Religious Zionist camp but on Israeli politics in general.<sup>28</sup>

27 MK Katz (in Baruch 2009) speaks of the religious voters electing 6–7 Likud MKs, making up half of the religious vote, while Cohen (2010) thinks that the numbers are closer to five MKs, about a third of the religious vote.

28 While revising this paper for publication in July 2011, the considerable influence of the religious right on the Likud Knesset faction was noted by two journalists in *Yediot Aharonot*. See Nahum Barnea, “The Right Marker,” *Yediot Aharonot*: Sabbath Supplement July 15, 2011, 3 and Sima Kadmon, “The Wise Men of the Boycott,” *ibid.*, 4.

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## **The Politics of Political Despair: The Case of Political Theology in Israel**

David Ohana

### **“The Politics of God”**

There is no such thing as political theology. There are only political theologies in different national societies. In Zionism, the national movement of the Jewish people in the modern age, there have been four main phases of political theology (Ohana, 2009a). The first phase appeared with the writings, speeches, and confessions of many of the founders and initial supporters of Zionism, who saw it as a secular and universal form of Messianism, similar to romantic national movements in Europe. The second phase arose in Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, when Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hacohen Kook (1865–1935), chief rabbi of Palestine, developed a messianic political theology that in a dialectical manner mobilized socialist secularism for the purpose of establishing a renewed Jewish independence. The third phase arose in 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel, the “Third Temple” which religious thinkers (and David Ben-Gurion) described as “the first flowering of our redemption.” The fourth phase appeared in 1967 after the Six-Day War with the conquest of Greater Israel, with the messianic euphoria that greeted the reunion of the theological with the military, and the avant-garde activities of the Gush Emunim movement that followed.

Jewish intellectuals discussed these developments from the earliest days of Zionism, and Israeli intellectuals discussed them from

the beginnings of Jewish settlement in Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century. They warned of the dangers lurking in the minefield in which the theological and the political came together, or in the words of Jan Assmann explaining the concept of political theology, in the “ever-changing relationships between political community and religious order, in short, between power [or authority: *Herrschaft*] and salvation [*Heil*]” (Assmann 2000,15).

In order to understand the different approaches of the intellectual groups that discussed the political theologies of Zionism and Israelism, I have followed the lead of the educationalist Akiva Ernst Simon (1899–1988) with his distinction between “Catholic” Judaism embracing all areas of life and “Protestant” Judaism which separates sacred and profane. Among the “Catholics” were Jewish thinkers like Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), Martin Buber (1878–1965), and obviously Rabbi Kook, who were strongly attracted to the messianic phenomenon, although they warned of its consequences in the sphere of practical politics. Buber and Scholem were ambivalent about political theology as early as the 1920s, first in Europe and later in Palestine. Among the “Protestants” were Akiva Ernst Simon, the cultural critic Baruch Kurtzweil (1907–1972), and the scientist and philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994). These were Orthodox Jewish thinkers who warned against mixing the sacred with the profane. A third group comprised secular thinkers like the historians J. L. Talmon, Yehoshua Arieli, and Uriel Tal and the philosopher Natan Rotenstreich, who made a difference between Pope and Caesar, the kingdom of heaven and everyday politics. They were hostile to an unholy synthesis of religion, the realization of its metaphysical hopes in the present and its manifestations in contemporary politics. But there was also a secular intellectual, such as Israel Eldad (1910–1996), who combined the messianic and the secular. These various

outlooks among secular and religious thinkers prove that there are only variants of political theology.

The concept of political theology is an old one which made its appearance with Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BCE), but the modern discourse on the subject only began with the appearance of Carl Schmitt's *Politische Theologie* (Political Theology) (Schmitt 1985, 1996; Balakrishnan 2000) and Walter Benjamin's early articles (Benjamin 1978, 312–13). Eminent thinkers like Leo Strauss, Ernst Cassirer, Ernst Bloch, Karl Löwith, Erich Voeglin, Hans Jonas, Ernst Kantorowicz, Jacob Taubes, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben engaged in a fascinating discussion of the subject, and in so doing cast a new light on major political events of the modern age.<sup>1</sup>

In 1919–1920, Schmitt participated in a seminar held by Max Weber in Munich, and later contributed to the *Festschrift* of the great sociologist together with the Freiburg philosopher of law Ernst Kantorowicz. The article became the basis of Schmitt's famous book *Politische Theologie*, in which he abandoned neo-Kantian concepts of "supreme law" and "righteousness" in favor of modern Hobbesian formulas. He claimed that a legal theory has to relate to contemporary social and political conditions and that the "concrete situation," as he called it, took precedence over abstract constructions. Schmitt's thesis was that the modern secular constitutional state had lost its theological foundations. The strengthening of the state comes about through a strengthening of theology, and political theology is a challenge to the Enlightenment and an attempt to overcome the crisis of liberalism by finding a substitute for the political order. In Schmitt's opinion, political liberalism failed to take into account exceptional situations

1 Among the important works on political theology, see Strauss 1975; Cassirer 1979; Bloch 1959; Löwith 1958; Voeglin 1952; Jonas 1984, 1996; Kantorowicz 1957; Taubes 1993; Derrida 1995; Agamben 1998.

of danger and war that lie outside the normal legislative framework. Thus, one must ask, in what situations is the existence of the state endangered as a result of political or economic crisis? Who is the ruler in a state of chaos? The ruling power is no longer to be found in norms, in the people, or in legislation but in a person or group capable of achieving a situation of *Entscheidung* and setting up a dictatorship. The danger reflects the crisis of legitimacy of modernity resulting from secularization, as we can see for example from the works of Hans Blumenberg (1987) and Jürgen Habermas (1983). This was also the problem of Zionism when it arose and of the State of Israel when it was established. What would provide a new legitimization after the disappearance of religious authority?

Was the secular Messianism—“that apocalyptic path,” as Scholem (1971, 78-141) called it—a vision of political philosophers or a political theology? Does the statement by the historian Mark Lilla (2007a, 2007b), “we find it incomprehensible that theological ideas still stir up messianic passions, leaving societies in ruins,” stand on solid ground? These shifting interrelationships between the theological and the political had concerned German and French thinkers who were steeped in twentieth-century political-religious thought. In Protestant tradition, the criticism of the split between theology and politics was the result of wrestling with the historical heritage of this division, and especially with that of the “two realms” in Augustine’s teachings and the medieval idea of the “two swords” (first formulated by Pope Gelasius [492–496]).

Humanist scholars of religion like Scholem, Simon, and Martin Buber, were close to the theological-political tradition. They were concerned that modern society in its secularism had lost all sense of the relationship between the sacred and the profane, between morality, religion, and practical life. Uriel Tal (1984) has observed: “Modern man’s sense of moral responsibility is based on the believing man’s

imperatives on the one hand and on the hope of a redemption which will come about in this world, in society, in the state, on the other.” Walter Benjamin, for his part, considered the dialectical affinity between the secular, political hope of liberation and the religious and messianic hope of redemption. Tal (1979) described the challenge posed by theology as follows: “On the one hand it requires one to take up a position with regard to political and social affairs, and on the other hand, because its authority is metaphysical and thus absolute, there is a danger that adopting such a position will sanctify politics. Religion is liable to encroach on politics and politics is liable to encroach on religion.”

David Ben-Gurion, on the one hand and Rabbi Kook on the other are good examples of different varieties of political theology. In some ways, they were on opposite sides of the fence. The former, a political leader, did not hesitate to appropriate the sacred, mobilize hallowed myths, and harness them to the task of building the state; the latter, a religious mentor, did not hesitate to appropriate the profane, mobilize Zionist pioneers, and harness them to mystical speculations concerning the coming of the Messiah. Each had an essentially different starting point from the other, but the common denominator between them was the raising of the profane to the level of the sacred: the plowman became a sacred vessel of Judaism and a central element in the process of redemption. For a short while there was a kind of meeting between these two opposite outlooks, but from that time onward their paths again divided. Rabbi Kook turned toward transcendental Messianism which relied on the Ruler of the Universe, and Ben-Gurion turned toward Promethean Messianism which relied on the sovereignty of man. In both cases, there was a definite fusion between the world of the sacred and the world of the profane, and both men had a clear political theology, but Ben-Gurion was the most extreme expression of secular Messianism and worked for a politicization of the theological, while

Rabbi Kook was the most extreme expression of religious Messianism and worked for a theologization of politics (Ohana 2003, 2008c).

The messianic idea, with its promises and dangers, has nourished social and national movements throughout history, but, as Scholem (1959) has observed: “Despite the many studies that have been made of the Messianic idea, there is still room for a more penetrating analysis of the reasons for the special vitality of this vision in the history of the Jewish religion.”

The Prayer for the Peace of the State, in which the State of Israel is described as “the first flowering of our redemption,” was written by S.Y. Agnon (1888–1970), the Israeli Nobel Laureate in Literature, at the request of the chief rabbi at the time, Rabbi Isaac Herzog. This association of the ancient Jewish yearning with the modern Jewish national movement was not, however, limited to prayers. The political-theological discourse passed beyond the sphere of religious belief and took place concurrently with the secular discourse, and both of them were lively debates on the significance of the new Israeli *mamlachtiyut* (Israeli republicanism) and its affinity to the religious tradition in general and the messianic tradition in particular.

The story-behind-the-scenes of the metamorphoses of the expression *Tsur Israel* (“The Rock of Israel”) in the Scroll of Independence is a fascinating one. Three weeks before the State was declared, Pinhas Rosen, head of the Judicial Council and the first minister of justice, asked the young jurist Mordechai Beham to make a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence. The lawyer, who had no experience of national legislation or of drafting national declarations, went to consult the Conservative rabbi Dr. Shalom Zvi Davidowitz, a translator of Shakespeare and a commentator of Maimonides. Law professor Yoram Shahar (2002), who investigated the genealogy of the declaration, related:

The meeting of the two produced the most religious formulation to be found in any of the drafts. The right of the Jewish people to the land, it proclaimed, derived from the divine promise to the Fathers of the Nation. But after that, the further away Beham went from Davidowitz, the more the declaration took on a secularist coloring. The divine promise was toned down owing to historical, political and moral considerations. . . . The only remaining reference to divine intervention was the expression “Rock of Israel.” (Shahar 2002)

The “Rock of Israel” was the Israeli-Jewish version of the concept “Divine Providence” to be found in the American Declaration of Independence. After many changes and recasting, Ben-Gurion took over the formulation: he and Moshe Sharett (1894–1965), the minister for foreign affairs, Aaron Zisling (1901–1964) of the leftist party Mapam, and Rabbi Judah Leib Hacoheh Fishman Maimon (1875–1962) (Shahar 2002). Zisling asked for the expression to be taken out of the declaration, and Maimon wanted to say, “The Rock of Israel and its Redeemer.” In the end, Ben-Gurion left the expression as it was. For the secularists, it symbolized the historical-cultural continuity of the Jewish people, and for the religious it referred to the Holy One, Blessed be He. From the moment the State was founded, there was an accelerated struggle over the significance of political theology within Israeli republicanism, or *mamlachtiyut*: hence the attempt to impose the political on the theological, and hence the political principle trying to bear-hug the theological.

In founding the state, Ben-Gurion had made the most significant attempt at nationalizing the Jewish messianic concept. Zionism was a historical experiment in nationalizing religious concepts and metamorphosing them into the secular sphere. Ben-Gurion brought

the matter to its ultimate conclusion in his attempt to nationalize the Bible and Messianism. *Mamlachtiyut*, Ben-Gurion's act of nationalization in many spheres of life, was a broad, comprehensive, and multifaceted secular ideology which took hold of religious myths and harnessed them to a project of statehood.

In the middle, between Rabbi Kook and Ben-Gurion, were the religious and secular intellectuals who were repelled by the political theologies of both these giants. The religious intellectuals saw the theo-political detonator which the messianic idea was likely to become. They preceded the secular intellectuals and warned at an early stage against Ben-Gurion's messianic vision because this challenge had been imposed on them even earlier when they were exposed to the explosive interlacing of worlds in the political theology of Rabbi Kook. They had been there before: they felt that Ben-Gurion was playing with fire, and the fact that this did not frighten him did not make it any less dangerous.

At the beginning of the period of *mamlachtiyut*, three essays appeared by Orthodox intellectuals concerning the danger of mixing the theological and the political. The three articles were published in successive years. They were Akiva Ernst Simon's "Are We still Jews?" (1951) (Simon 1953, 357–65); Baruch Kurzweil's "The Nature and Origins of the 'Young Hebrew' ('Canaanite') Movement" (1952) (Kurzweil 1948), and Yeshayahu Leibowitz's "After Kibiyeh" (1953) (Leibowitz 1976, 229–34). In all three articles, religious thinkers warned against the bear hug in which the new Israeli nationalism held the sacred tongue; they warned of the radical effects of the Israeli national secularism which extended even to Canaanism and thus expressed the fear of a rise of a "territorial" or "Canaanite" Messianism.

## **“Canaanite Messianism”**

“Canaanism” and “Messianism” are, on the face of it, opposites. “Canaanism” is a national, geo-cultural ideology in which a certain piece of land defines the collective identity of its inhabitants; “Messianism” is a religious belief that at the end of history “all human contradictions will be resolved.” “Canaanism” is a secular concept based on a nativistic myth; “Messianism” is founded on non-human and ahistorical laws. “Canaanism” embodies the physical basis, the place; “Messianism” represents the metaphysical basis, “the Place” (i.e., God). “Canaanism” promoted Hebraism as a territorial nationalism, while “Messianism” laid emphasis on the universality of the Jewish religion. However, the rise of Gush Emunim after the Yom Kippur War in 1973 introduced a new type of political theology that could be called “Canaanite Messianism” (Ohana 2008b; Feige 2009).<sup>2</sup>

In Rabbi Kook, Simon saw a mixture of “concrete Messianism,” as he called it, and an original approach to the relationship between the sacred and the profane. Zionism, in Rabbi Kook’s religious philosophy, restored the equilibrium between the sacred and the profane. Simon’s attitude toward a messianic political theology could thus be summarized as follows: give the next world the Messiah and give this world the expectation of a Messiah.

The Kabbalah scholar Rivka Schatz (1990), one of the intellectuals who have supported Gush Emunim, thought that the messianic phenomenon is “greater than can be understood with the tools of scholarship we possess. . . . Rather than a principle that can be described, it is a language through which hidden desires are revealed, it is the ultimate depth, it is the sanctuary of awe and

2 For a new study of Gush Emunim, see: M. Feige (2009).

hope where the dreams are stored which are not revealed in history. . . .” In other words, Messianism is a language that reveals the “ultimate depth” of humanity, and it is something greater than those who create it or those that use it. This concept is a retreat from the Promethean Messianism of Zionism, which depends on the freewill of sovereign human beings, and a return to non-human structures, to transcendental Messianism. Baruch Kurzweil at an early stage criticized this phenomenon of a return to transcendental systems greater than man or than man’s capacity to explain them.

In his expression “the structure of the archetype,” Kurzweil, a product of European culture, was referring to the transcendental school of thought, which interpreted history in terms of deterministic, non-human forms. One of its theorists was Ludwig Klages, who developed an anti-rational approach focused on the conscious creation of myths and the belief that reality itself, and not its representations, consists of “symbols” or “expressions.” The worldview of Oswald Spengler was characterized by this interpretation of reality as a symbol: in his opinion, the significance of morphological forms is that forms rule over life by means of symbols and metaphors; it is they that create the social reality and not human beings with free will. This aesthetic and metaphysical approach to history includes George Sorel’s “myth,” Klages’s “aura,” Spengler’s “morphology,” Ernst Jünger’s “Gestalt,” and mythical non-human concepts of the post-modernist era such as Claude Lévi-Strauss’s “structure” and Michel Foucault’s “episteme” (Ohana 2000).

The messianic myth as a non-human structure was in Kurzweil’s opinion also likely to lead to a negation of human decisions and actions. He disliked the idea that human actions are directed by mythical constructs, that a “system,” a “structure,” an “arché,” an “episteme” should have priority over man and condition his actions in history. The messianic myth that Kurzweil warned against represented

a moral and cultural relativism in which values changed in accordance with historical circumstances. The messianic end justifies the means. Kurzweil was critical of post-modernist relativism whose paradoxical possible result could be an affirmation of fundamentalism. The transcendental messianic language cast aside the Promethean messianic heritage which was based on the sovereignty of man; critical observation was abandoned for a passionate defense of the irrational, the mythical, mystery. Kurzweil's intention, similar to the interpretive enterprise of the Jewish philosophy scholar Yehezkel Kaufman with regard to the Bible, was to eradicate myth. The danger was not an intellectual but a concrete one: playing with concepts of sparks and husks in the realm of politics could lead to a nihilistic theology.

But it was not only the religious intellectuals that warned about a political theology infiltrating the State of Israel and threatening to grow into a "territorial Messianism." The secular historians Yehoshua Arieli, J. L. Talmon, and Uriel Tal also saw the connection between the post-Six-Day War political theology and a Canaanite Messianism (Ohana 2008a).

Yehoshua Arieli warned against the territorial Messianism of the Greater Land of Israel movement, which combined the Revisionist ideology with messianic religiosity of the Rabbi Kook variety. To this school of thought, one principle—the affinity of the people to the land—became an absolute demand requiring full realization. The duty of redeeming the land had replaced the duty of redeeming the people. According to Arieli (2003), an old-new aspect of Judaism was revealed once more as a result of the 1967 war. It seemed as though events had shown the hand of Providence. Judaism appropriated for itself the physical side of Zionism and the biblical promise of settlement and became a "tribal" religion. Nationalism was sanctified by religion and religion was sanctified by nationalism. In this "tribal religion" a new people was created, different from the Jewry outside

Israel, which lived according to the norms of Halakhah and modern life.

Arieli thought that, together with the fetishistic messianic vision, there had developed among the adherents of the Greater Land of Israel movement a Canaanite attitude to the land. Everything connected with the land of Israel—nature, the physical space, the seasons of the year, customs and memories—had been raised to the level of sanctity. The original Zionist approach had been the superimposition of the Jewish people's desire for national independence and the people's distress as a minority scattered among the nations of the world. The new integralist approach sanctified the place as the sole source of legitimacy. Only when the historical attachment to the land of Israel contended with the ideal of a national home was there a need to choose between national territorial independence in part of the land of Israel and an attachment to the whole of the land of Israel. The majority in the Zionist movement continued to prefer national independence to an attachment to the whole Land of Israel, and thus the order of priorities was fixed.

In his analysis of Jewish Messianism, Uriel Tal (1979) discerned two different schools of thought: the political-messianic school of thought that saw present-day historical phenomena as a realization of mystical realities, and the school of thought that held that in social and political matters one should act with caution and self-restraint as God alone is an absolute authority and one should therefore avoid intervening in his name. Both schools of thought accepted Halakhah as normative and as a binding authority. The adherents of the political-messianic school of thought claim that the only difference between the messianic period and other periods is that in the former the Jews are once again free from subjection to foreign rule. In this period, redemption has begun, and it will eventually be realized on a worldwide scale. This claim brings symbols down to the level of

reality: that is to say, a stone or a plot of land is not *a symbol* of something sacred but is in itself sacred.

The peace talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians and the possibility of evacuating the settlements in Judea and Samaria made Israel Harel (1999)—one of the settler leaders and a father to a member of the “Hilltop youth” (the term commonly used for young right-wing settlers in Judea and Samaria) who had some clear notions on the state of Israel—write in his article “Unlike the Crusaders”:

Baath secular circles and other Islamic groups have foretold for some time that our fate will be similar to that of the crusaders. Judging by the strength and fortitude we have demonstrated in recent years, our spirit and behavior, the comparison is unfair to the crusaders. They at least succeeded in persevering in the intolerably difficult conditions of deprivation, isolation and insecurity of the Middle Ages for some two hundred years. (Harel 1999)

Is Harel suggesting that the descent from the settlers’ messianic vision of redemption to the nadir of defeatism is something so disastrous that the Israelis may be compared to the crusaders? Is this what the scientist, philosopher, and the most radical of the Israeli intellectuals, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, meant, when he foretold that the first *yordim* (descenders) from the country would be the settlers in the territories? Harel aims to what I have aimed in this article: the escape from politics through political theology leads at the end of the day to the politics of political despair.

## “The Black Brigades”

“The politics of cultural despair,” the expression of the historian Fritz Stern (1961), is aimed at (German) intellectuals who uttered a cultural protest: “as moralists and as the guardians of what they thought was an ancient tradition, they attacked the progress of modernity—the growing power of liberalism and secularism.” They revolted against Western civilization and warned against the loss of faith, of unity, of “values.” This pessimist ideology has many variants but the common denominator is the despair of the universal, objective, and general sphere in politics. There are many faces to the escape from the *political*. Since Aristotle’s and Plato’s *virtue* (or the general good) via Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *general will* to Jurgen Habermas’ *public sphere*, politics always was directed to the whole society—to the universal and not to the particular, to the objective and not to the subjective, to the general and not to the private.

The events of Hebron in 2008 and the disengagement from the Gaza strip in 2005 are stages in the process of the sectoralization of the settlers who wish to break loose from Israel’s secular democracy. The murderous acts of Baruch Goldstein and Yigal Amir after the Oslo agreements in 1993 can be seen as case studies in the politics of political despair.

In November 2008, several hundred youths violently collided with the police and the IDF surrounding the “House of Contention” in Hebron. This violent episode can be seen as another interaction in which the formal agents of the Israeli state confront the settlers in the occupied territories. As before, in past evacuation from Gush Katif in Gaza and northern Samaria in 2005 (“the disengagement”), official representatives, entrusted with the protection of the same people whom they confronted, were referred to as Nazis. In the days following the Hebron episode a confrontation occurred between the

settlers and the local Palestinian population during which their cars and houses were set on fire and many of them were injured.

In an interview, held a few days after the evacuation of the “House of Contention” in Hebron, Gadi, a 16-year-old teenager and a member of the “Hilltop Youth” said:

The state is trying to destroy our existence here. We make it hard for them to breathe, get in the way of their expulsion edicts. What does talking help? It’s just more blah-blah. The more incidents and disturbances we initiate here—against the soldiers and against the Palestinians—the more we can exact from them a high price for the very thought of evacuating this house that connects Kiryat Arba with the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and the better our chances will be of stopping it.

What connection do I have to this country? Why do I have to pray for it or be happy here? Why do I have to respect its symbols? Or its policemen? Or its soldiers? Or its laws? Does it respect me? (Shragai 2008)

“I know that the families who have already been living here for a year and a half don’t like our behavior. They didn’t like us at Neveh Dekalim either,” he continued, referring to the town in Gush Katif, Gaza, evacuated under Israel’s unilateral disengagement plan proposed by the former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that removed all Israelis from the Gaza Strip in August 2005. “The result” he continued, “was a disaster, destruction. Now no one can sidetrack me and my friends. We have no love for the Arabs. We have no love for the IDF. We have no love for this state. All they understand is force” (Shragai 2008). Gadi is not shocked when Muslim gravestones are vandalized

in the cemetery behind the House of Contention, nor does he care that Palestinian civilians are hurt and army property destroyed.

Last Independence Day Gadi had a serious clash with his father and mother, after they hung the flag from their house and went to the synagogue to recite “Hallel,” the prayer of thanksgiving. He has given up on Israel today: “This country is carrying out a transfer of its people. It is planning to do a transfer here in Hebron and from the entire area of Judea and Samaria. . . . The morals of the state of Israel are the morals of Gentiles in Western culture.” When he was asked about the future elections in Israel he answered: “Nothing will come out of this Knesset” (Shragai 2008).

The same politics of political desperation resonates in the words of Yehuda, an 18-year-old radical activist who lives in Kiryat Arba and also took part in the violent clashes in Hebron:

No one really controls us. Those from the [Yesha settlers] council, who claim they are our leaders, are haunted by fear and, in general, they shouldn't be dealing with struggles. They, as heads of councils, are dependent on the government after all. And after their failure in Gush Katif, why should anyone listen to them?

We are the ones with Jewish morals, with the values of the Torah. The morals of the State of Israel are the morals of Gentiles, of Western culture. They are false and sick morals. They are upset about the suffering of an Arab, but not about the suffering of a Jew or about the humiliation of Jewish honor. You behave here not as the landlords in an independent state, but as if you were still in the Diaspora, small and frightened. (Shragai 2008)

A decade earlier we had witnessed a precedence of the politics of political despair. There was something stupefying about the arrogance of the group surrounding Yigal Amir and about the pilgrims to the grave of Baruch Goldstein. It was a mistake to see the actions of Amir and Goldstein—the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the murder of 29 Palestinians while they prayed in the Machpelah cave in Hebron—as limited objectives, the attainment of which was their final purpose. These objectives were only the tip of the iceberg of the wider manifestation of revulsion at the political and cultural establishment as such, animosity towards decadent secular culture, contempt for the hedonistic consumer society, and distrust of democratic rules. The total alienation of these people from contemporary Israeli society resembles that of the students and intellectuals of the Baader-Meinhof group in Germany or the Red Brigades in Italy in the early 1970s. By setting fire to department stores, hijacking airplanes, robbing banks, blowing up public institutions, and murdering important figures, they hoped to shake up the affluent German society and to create a provocation that would cause hysteria among the complacent Germans. Behind all this lay a deep despair (Aust and Bell 2009).

The basic assumption of Ulrike Meinhof, the theoretician of violence, that “one has to challenge the fascism in society in order that it should be made visible to all,” led to an affirmation of nihilism, since, in her words, “One cannot change the world by firing a gun; one can only destroy it.” The same applies to Goldstein, Amir, and some of the radical settlers of Hebron—one cannot change the secular and the democratic nature of the state of Israel. Ulrike Meinhof’s distorted interpretation of Marxism resembled Goldstein’s and Amir’s interpretation of Judaism: the common denominator was voiding the content of its original significance, the abrogation of values, the failure to distinguish between means and ends, and seeing the reality of conflict as all that mattered. Thus, their actions are revealed not as

an ideological phenomenon but as a politics of cultural despair: their idealism became nihilism and their politics became terror.<sup>3</sup>

Political nihilism arises where faith in politics and ideology have been lost. Baruch Marzel, one of the leaders of Hebron settlers, gave a good account of the process of radicalization of his friend Goldstein: “He despaired of politics in the country.” The ideological despair of Goldstein caused him to perform a nihilistic act with a political message, as if to say, “I don’t believe in democratic processes, rational persuasion, or decisions by the majority.” His murderous act was intended to awaken the dormant Israeli consciousness after the Oslo Agreements.

Goldstein, and later, Yigal Amir’s group, conformed to the model of political theology put forward by Carl Schmitt (1989). Schmitt saw politics as a continual confrontation between “enemies” and “friends,” a belligerency that cannot be resolved. Schmitt’s political theology is mutually contradictory. Schmitt thought that sovereignty did not reside in the people or the law, but with the person or group able to take a decision and set up a dictatorship. The modern constitutional state had been stripped of its theological assets. Political theology is thus an attempt to overcome the crisis of liberalism by finding a replacement for the political order. Schmitt wanted to recreate the Gordian knot that held together theology and the state, because he held that the weakening of the central government and the breakdown of authority derived from the crisis of secularism.

Schmitt’s disciple from Kiryat Arba thought that the confrontation between Jews and Arabs was eternal, ahistorical. “The Arabs,” said Goldstein, “are like a plague. They are a sickness that infects us.” In an interview that he gave to the journalist Tom Roberts nine days

3 For a further discussion see Ohana (2009b).

before the massacre, he declared that “the Israeli army sins against the Jewish people in preventing us from taking vengeance on the Arabs. We have to expel them.” In the mythicization of his image that took place on account of the place (the Machpelah Cave) and the time (Purim), the homicidal doctor was seen as a mythical sacrifice that hastened the redemption, a Jew “murdered for the sanctification of God,” as was written on his grave.

The climax of political nihilism in Israel was the three shots of Yigal Amir’s revolver. In his testimony to the Shamgar Commission, which investigated the circumstances that lead to the murder of Rabin, Amir claimed that only after he had despaired of legitimate political activity did he decide to murder Rabin. His political actions in the settlement Efrat and in the weekends organized by the students in the territories had no effect on the inhabitants of Israel, “the people sitting on the fleshpots.” He saw the students as “materialistic people who were only interested in a degree and a career.” This was a personal admission that the murder of Rabin was more than an act of political protest: it was the culmination of cultural and political despair. In this respect, the murder of Rabin was also a dual murder. He was murdered once as the representative of the Oslo Agreements and once as the representative of Israeli secular and democratic culture (Peri 2000).

Amir participated in the demonstrations of “Zu Artzenu,” a group led by Moshe Feiglin that used aggressive and violent tactics in their protest against the Oslo accords. Although Feiglin was a Knesset candidate on behalf of the Likud party, he still believes in taking initiatives in order to construct the third temple and to establish in Israel a messianic political culture. He suggests transfer of the Palestinians if they will not accept Jewish sovereignty. Motti Cappel (2003), the author of the book, *The Faith Revolution: The Fall of Zionism and the Rise of the Faith Alternative* and the ideologue of the “Jewish leadership,”

Feiglin's political faction within the Likud party, predicts that when the crisis of Zionism will reach its climax, Feiglin will be there.

The rightist radical group and the "Hilltop youth" are test cases for the limits of tolerance in Israeli democracy. They seek to prove that individuals or militant minorities have the power to change the course of events through a violent existential act, through shock treatment. They wish to destroy the tolerance, illusory in their opinion, of bourgeois society, which they see as "repressive tolerance."

When it seems that all possible paths of deliverance are blocked, violence raises its head and presumes to awaken the sleeping. All that is required is to pull the trigger of a revolver. Combined with an absolute political imperative, this is a recipe for disaster. As soon as cultural pessimism is combined with political theology, the justification is created for a strategy of violence: terror wishes to impose its own agenda.

In the post-modern era, transcendental Messianism has come back into our lives through the front door. It is active in the world of the post-Enlightenment: that is to say, in the world after the attempt to raise man to the level of God. Fundamentalism has internalized the Promethean initiative in order to increase its strength. In the pre-modern era, men waited with longing for the appearance of God, but they waited patiently and passively; in the modern era, they took their fate into their own hands and obliterated the traces of God; in the post-modern era they have lost their humility and want God to be summoned up immediately. This era has armed fundamentalism with the Promethean self-consciousness and the power of technology and the media. This reversal can take place if the secular is sanctified: only the secular can bring God closer. Fundamentalism has re-connected transcendental Messianism with Promethean Messianism; the theological has once again been joined to the political. Will the Zionist Prometheus return the fire to the gods?

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## **Ethical Slippery Slopes and “Easy” Solutions for Social Responsibility**

Ishai Menuchin

The first time it was reported that our friends were being butchered, there was a cry of horror. Then a hundred were butchered. But when a thousand were butchered and there was no end to the butchery, a blanket of silence spread.

When evil-doing comes like falling rain, nobody calls out “stop!”

When crimes begin to pile up they become invisible.  
When sufferings become unendurable the cries are no longer heard. The cries, too, fall like rain in summer.

Bertolt Brecht

“When Evil-Doing Comes Like Falling Rain”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Social Dimension of Values**

Individuals are part of a community that gives meaning to their values and rules (or standards of practice). The common shared meaning of each value is derived from its role in the community discourse in the public sphere and from the mode in which it is used by the

\* Translated by Karen Gold.  
Excerpted from Bertolt Brecht, 1976 [1935]. “When Evil-Doing Comes Like Falling Rain,” trans. John Willett, in *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913-1956*, New York: Methuen.

community members. However, often different people analyze and interpret reality in different and even contradictory ways and vary in their social points of view, their values and the way they morally evaluate activity and personal and social decisions. These factors are significant in establishing spheres of personal and social priorities.

People in democratic societies hold different values and social views that help create a space of varied individual and societal priorities for acting on these positions. Where there is free, unfettered public debate, this diversity of opinion and judgment enriches the perspectives of all involved. A adds new information to B; B might expose the argument's weak points to C; C may correct the errors of D; and D—exemplifying how information travels through the public space in ongoing cycles—endeavors to teach something to A.<sup>2</sup> Thus for example, A might have characterized a certain law as “just,” but after being exposed to new information or a different position, now sees this same law as “unjust.” Likewise, B might have deemed a certain act “inappropriate,” but in light of societal debate or an updated assessment of the benefit or harm entailed in the act, now sees it as “appropriate.”

Every individual should determine without coercion—by means of the knowledge and positions to which one is exposed in open, public debate—one's attitude toward one's own actions and decisions,

- 2 A different perspective was provided by the RaN, R. Nissim ben Reuven Girondi, who argued that there is no perfect individual and that perfection exists only in the community. According to Zeev Harvey (2005, 226–227), the RaN held that “no human individual is perfect . . . the vices of one are different from those of another, and sometimes even their opposite. When human beings are together in a community, their vices neutralize one another, and cancel each other out. Thus, the community as a whole is perfect, although composed of imperfect parts. . . . The virtuousness of the community is thus dependent on the presence of all different kinds of conflicting opinions.”

those of one’s colleagues, and those of the society in which one resides. Moreover, in addition to the necessity of applying personal judgment to every act or decision of society, public discourse helps every individual in society verify how others judge reality and how they choose to act.<sup>3</sup>

Every individual is part of a community, which gives meaning to the values that he or she espouses as well as guidelines for the implementation of those values. The shared meaning of each value to the members of the community stems from the role of that value in the discourse of that society, and the way in which the members of the community apply it. Basic values cannot exist in a given society without members who promote—or oppose—them. In other words, values exist in a given society when their meaning is clear to members of that society, whether they agree or disagree over the practical expression of this meaning.

In general, examining the nature of relations between the individual and society leads us to the conclusion that participation in society means sharing a certain perspective, which includes a common moral

3 We often wish to know that we have done the right thing. Thomas Nagel (1997, 110) argued that the manner in which the individual assesses his options is not only “first-personal,” as the assessment must be such that other individuals can also judge what is right and wrong in specific cases. Moreover, the other individuals must be able to consider and justify their decision. Yoram Dinstein (1980) stated that “the desire to justify the actions of the individual and society, that is, to confer on them the ‘stamp of justice,’ is a feature of human civilization since the dawn of its existence.” Among the examples that Dinstein brings of the desire to justify society’s actions are the legal arguments of Franciscus de Victoria, who justified the Spanish wars against the Native American Indians in that the latter harmed “the basic freedoms of the Spanish . . . to move freely in the New World, to trade with the Indians, and to convert them to Christianity” (28).

foundation and various commitments. Michael Walzer (1970, 5) has stated that “commitments to principles are usually also commitments to other men, from whom or with whom the principles have been learned and by whom they are enforced.” It is a commitment of sorts to a collective worldview, loyalty to its values, and involvement in it. Patrick Devlin (1998 [1959], 132) argued this view from a broader perspective.

This membership in a society brings with it a complex set of feelings of belonging, solidarity, and loyalty to society, its members, and its values. But in addition to defining the meaning of values, and to setting the guidelines for their implementation, participation (that is, membership) in society carries moral meaning and thus also entails both commitment and responsibility.

One of the ways in which the individual is supposed to act on his membership in society is by expressing his commitment to the common values shared by him and his fellow members. In democratic societies, such a commitment—to a collective worldview, to values, to involvement—includes a responsibility to guide one’s own actions and those of society as a whole in accordance with democratic values, and not solely on the basis of other value systems that may exist in society, such as nationalist or faith-based values. In the view of Cornel West (1999, 10), “the roots of democracy are fundamentally grounded in mutual respect, personal responsibility, and social accountability.” In other words, an individual who considers a certain law or action of society, identifies an inconsistency between it and a particular democratic value, and acts in accordance with this personal assessment, is upholding a basic social obligation. Participation in democratic activity as well as opposition to undemocratic laws and actions are both an expression of that individual’s commitment to the fundamental values shared by him and his fellow members of society.

The democratic value system is intended to provide the individual with a social-moral “compass” that aids him in dealing with a complex social reality. At times, the commitment to the society in which the individual grew up is mistakenly perceived—or deliberately presented—as an obligation of loyalty to the institutions of the state and to all the choices made by the accepted social decision-making systems.

The question of commitment to democratic values frequently comes up for discussion precisely at those times when there is a dissonance between the primary commitment to the set of basic democratic values and those actions or decisions seen as emanating from a commitment to society and its governing institutions. Often, decisions and actions that appear, or are presented, as stemming from a commitment to values or to society in fact originate in a perceived commitment to government institutions, the law,<sup>4</sup> or other actors.<sup>5</sup> It is important to recall that the basic commitment of all members of a democratic society is to democratic values, even if this sense of obligation is often mistakenly translated into a commitment to government institutions or to other members of society. From this commitment to democratic values comes the responsibility for society

- 4 Norberto Bobbio (2003, 14). Shlomo Avineri wrote (1986): “In a democratic situation, the minority has only one path open to it: to attempt—using the tools of democracy, while complying with the law—to alter the law, to turn itself from a minority into a majority via the ballot box or the creation of alternative political coalitions. And in the meantime—grinding its teeth but with no other democratic option—to obey the law.”
- 5 Yehuda Meltzer (1985, 157) wrote to the members of Peace Now who took part in the First Lebanon War: “You went because you got a call-up notice, and behind that notice stands a force that you could not resist: Not the state . . . but the force because of which you always answer the call to duty: comrades . . . what every normal reserve soldier understands and feels: that what lies behind the notice is not a state but comrades.”

and its actions, and only secondarily, the obligation to the institutions of government established by society, and to their decisions.

A classic example of presenting commitment to an institution as commitment to democracy is the way that society perceives those who refuse—or call for others to refuse—to take part in a war that they see as unjust.<sup>6</sup>

## Democratic Partnership

In societies in general, and democratic societies in particular, we expect members to take responsibility not only for themselves and their actions but also for the actions of society as a whole and of their fellow members. On the one hand, this responsibility is seen as deriving from the internalization of democratic values that grant importance to other members of society and to their actions as individuals and as a collective; but on the other hand, this responsibility is perceived as stemming from the collective—from the ties that have developed between individuals, the internalization of a sense of belonging to the

- 6 Wars of choice—that are not for purposes of defense and are not wars of necessity—are classic examples of this type of clash between government decisions and individual value systems; hence, we can learn from them about the way in which basic commitments are expressed. Thus, for example, in the “Declaration of Conscience Against the War in Vietnam” (1969 [1965], 160–161), organizations and individuals not only declared their “conscientious refusal to cooperate with the United States government in the prosecution of the war” but also encouraged refusal to serve in the American armed forces and issued a call to refrain from taking part in the military industry on universal moral grounds. Encouragement for conscientious objection was based on the disparity between the humanist values espoused by the signatories and the actions being carried out by their government. So too, the “Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority” (1969 [1965], 162–164).

group, the sense of security that the group provides its members, and the individual’s identification with the group.

The individual’s commitment to democratic values, and his responsibility for the democratic conduct of his society, are not confined to accepting the decisions of the majority, voting in elections, expressing an opinion from time to time, or obeying the law. This commitment should also include sharing daily responsibility for the actions of other members of society as well as all decisions and actions of that society. Democratic responsibility means that, in addition to the legislature, the government, or other source of power, the responsibility for actions carried out under their authority also falls upon those who directly or indirectly obey them as well as those who only “close their eyes” to the actions or their consequences. Even if it were others who acted contrary to a democratic value, each individual in a democratic society must oppose such actions by virtue of his membership in society and his commitment to these values.

Commitment and willingness to take part in actions decided upon in a socially acceptable manner, and unwillingness to participate in social actions that run counter to democratic values, are rooted in the primary obligation to these values—a commitment that carries with it responsibility on the part of every individual for the actions of the society in which he resides. In fact, this responsibility generally falls on every individual in a society by virtue of his or her membership in that society; it is the responsibility of the individual to the democratic collective of which he or she is a member.<sup>7</sup> Of course, it is often difficult to accurately judge the democratic status of a society’s

7 Different authors recognize different potential sources of authority for the binding status of social values. These sources span the spectrum from a personal, binding source of authority that obligates the individual who shares its values, to an external source of authority that is similarly binding on the individual.

actions and decisions. For this reason, I will be focusing in particular on those actions and decisions of society that stand in stark contrast to the democratic system of values.

### **Personal Responsibility**

Agnes Heller (2005, 21) noted that “There are many different characterizations and quasi-definitions of the decent person, but all of them indicate the same essence: responsibility.” This refers to the individual’s taking responsibility for his own actions, those of other members of society, and those of society as a whole. But responsibility is a vague and “slippery” concept in public discourse. David Miller (2001) examined the notion of responsibility, dividing it into four categories: causal responsibility, moral responsibility, remedial responsibility, and communitarian responsibility. With regard to causal responsibility, participants in social discourse generally see individuals as responsible for the consequences of their actions. Thus, for example, an individual who throws a stone that shatters a window is responsible for breaking the window; an individual who avoids taking a medication that he needs is responsible for his state of health; and an individual whose reckless driving causes an accident is responsible for that accident.

Moral responsibility relates to those who could have prevented or corrected the faulty situation. For example, the throwing of the stone or the car accident, and did not do so. An individual does not bear causal responsibility for his society’s deeds in which he did not take part, but he is morally responsible for societal conduct.

Miller (2001) also examined the category of remedial responsibility in cases where there is no institutional mechanism that holds a certain individual responsible; no causal factor identified with the situation that needs to be remedied; more than one agent whose

actions can be considered as causing the situation; or one agent who is causally responsible for the situation but whose actions are viewed by us as legitimate.

The central problem in assigning responsibility is that the search is generally focused on the past: “The question it asks is always ‘Who is responsible for bringing this bad situation about?’ and never, for instance, ‘Who is best placed to put it right?’” (Miller 2001, 460). For example, when those who are causally responsible for polluting a particular environment, or for driving into a pedestrian, are not known, government bodies such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in the first case, or the National Insurance Institute, in the second, are expected to clean up the environment or financially support the injured party until he has been restored to health. The principle of “capacity to rectify” determines remedial responsibility by the ability to remedy the situation, ignoring the question of factual cause or moral culpability.

Miller also proposes a principle of community responsibility in a broader sense:

[W]hen people are linked together by such ties, whether arising from shared activities and commitments, common identities, common histories, or other such sources, they also (justifiably) see themselves as having special responsibility to one another, responsibilities that are greater than those they have towards humanity at large; and this in particular imposes special responsibilities towards any member of the relevant community who is harmed or in need. (Miller 2001, 462)

Combining this principle of community responsibility with the moral principle by which the individual carries ethical responsibility and commitment to democratic values, coupled with the ability of

the individual to redress infringement of rights as a partner in the decision-making process in a democratic society, it follows that every individual in a society has a responsibility and an obligation to, when needed, “repair” the actions of his society.

Added to the above are causal and moral responsibility if the individual took part in an unacceptable action. Obviously, there may be diminished responsibility where there are mitigating circumstances—lack of knowledge, inability to act, etc.—that did not make it possible to take full moral responsibility. The causal responsibility of the individual for his own actions is not the same as his causal responsibility for the actions performed by another. An individual who is witness to a murder is causally responsible only if he had the ability to prevent the killing and did not do so; but his causal responsibility for the murder is not the same as that of the killer.

By contrast, his moral responsibility is not contingent on the outcome: Whether or not the victim died, the individual’s moral responsibility rests on whether he intervened to prevent the act. So too, the citizen who witnesses racist conduct on the part of his society. Such an individual bears full moral responsibility for his intervention or non-intervention to prevent the implementation of racist decisions, in addition to remedial and community responsibility—as do all other citizens who are witness to this behavior. He is responsible for racist conduct even if his causal responsibility for racist actions is different than that of a member of the establishment who carries them out in practice.<sup>8</sup>

8 As Yigal Elam so aptly stated (1991, 60), part of the problem is of course that “legal judgment is armed with sharp teeth, means of enforcement, and exemplary punishment, whereas moral judgment has no teeth at all.”

Responsibility, however, is a vague and politically biased concept in the public realm. It is actually those who do disobey institutional decisions whom we tend to hold accountable for their actions, to accuse of conduct unbecoming or dangerous to society, or to subject to discussions of their responsibility or lack thereof, all the while ignoring the responsibility of those who comply and cooperate. Those who obey, who cooperate, who sit on the fence—hesitating, apologizing, circulating petitions, “shooting and crying”—those who wait for others to right wrongs, are all personally responsible, and must account for their choices and their actions.

All citizens, obedient and disobedient, should be accountable for their decisions and conduct. They are individually responsible for their own judgments and acts. They are morally, remedially and communitarianally responsible even when another legislator, another commander, or another obedient citizen did the wrong thing and they just stood by. Their responsibility for injustice is total, even if another legislator, another commander, another follower of orders committed the action and they were only a bystander. Over 2,000 years ago, in 44 BCE, Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote:

There are, on the other hand, two kinds of injustice—the one, on the part of those who inflict wrong, the other on the part of those who, when they can, do not shield from wrong those upon whom it is being inflicted. For he who, under the influence of anger or some other passion, wrongfully assaults another seems, as it were, to be laying violent hands upon a comrade; but he who does not prevent or oppose wrong, if he can, is just as guilty of wrong as if he deserted his parents or his friends or his country. (Cicero 1913 [44 BCE])

Among the cases of injustice that changed the face of social psychology was the murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964, committed at night near her apartment in New York City. Because she resisted, the murder lasted roughly half an hour. During this time, some 40 neighbors heard her screams; but not only did they not come to her aid, they did not even call the police to summon assistance or to report what was happening. The murder, and the knowledge that so many people were witness to it, sparked a far-ranging debate on the reasons that led the witnesses to refrain from taking any action.<sup>9</sup> Even if the situation was not sufficiently clear, and may have been open to multiple interpretations, and even if the abundance of possible interpretations might have led each of the neighbors to check what the others were doing in response to the incident, the diffusion of responsibility still stands out in this instance.

When an individual believes that others are witness to the same act, law, or order, he feels that the responsibility is not only his but is in fact shared by all the individuals associated with, or witness to, the act or law. Even when they are required to take a stand and perform an action, many individuals assume that someone else will respond and act, and that there is thus no real need for they themselves to take action.

Alan Carter (1998, 40) describes the hypothetical case of a person who sees a child drowning, discussing the question of that person's responsibility to save the child: If there were some people at the edge of the water who witnessed the event and could have saved the child, did this lessen his responsibility to save the child? If we start with the assumption that when an individual is witness to an injustice he must take responsibility and aid the victims, the question arises of whether, when additional individuals witness these actions, the responsibility is shared by all of them; for example, a third of the responsibility if three

9 For additional details, see Atkinson, Atkinson, and Hilgard (1983, 566–568).

spectators are present, and a tenth if there are ten witnesses. Carter argues that the responsibility is total with regard to each of the witnesses. In fact, if we posit the division of responsibility according to the number of spectators, witnesses, or participants, the argument becomes absurd. Thus for example, the greater the number of witnesses to a murder, the lesser the moral responsibility of the uninvolved spectator; or the more soldiers who take part in shooting civilians, the lesser the causal responsibility of the individual soldier for the shooting.

Our individual moral, remedial, and communitarian responsibility as citizens of a democratic society for the way that our society operates should be identical to that of our fellow members of society. The individual in a democratic society is expected to take full personal causal, remedial, moral, and communitarian responsibility for his actions—and moral, remedial and communitarian responsibility for the actions of other members of society, even if he was not a causal participant in these actions. When the individual absolves himself of moral responsibility for society’s decisions—for example, by diffusion of responsibility based on the presence of multiple participants in, or witnesses, to a decision—he is in effect ignoring his obligation to consider, decide, and act, and his responsibility for the actions of the society to which he belongs. This denial of personal obligation quickly exacerbates the dangers of the “slippery slope” of individual ethical decisions, and upsets the moral compass of society, whose task is to aid its members in charting their course in a complex moral world.

### **“Easy” Solutions and Their “Complex” Personal and Societal Weight**

Compounding the diffusion of responsibility are other accepted ways of circumventing individual responsibility for the actions of society and the commitment to democratic values. The easiest and

most popular solution to the tension between laws and values, and between specific laws, is total or near-total conformist obedience.<sup>10</sup> Conformist obedience as a behavior pattern frees the individual from decisions and conflicts, ostensibly allowing him to renounce all responsibility for his actions. In this way, he absolves himself of the need to pursue the true meaning of the law in the specific context in which it is applied, to grapple with different possibilities, or to deal with ethical problems and obligations to society.

Not every incident or activity that requires personal judgment allows for examination of the individual's decision and his response to the event. But where the incident clearly violates the democratic system of values, conformist obedience is not acceptable. When a new law is passed that divides up public property (for example, placing control over a sizeable portion of state lands in the hands of a particular ethnic group); when an order is issued (for instance, to take part in targeted killings); when an individual is witness to an act of injustice (for example, inequity in the distribution of resources to injured children from various ethnic groups), as long as the injustice does not raise a large black flag,<sup>11</sup> or spark significant opposition, the

10 Hannah Arendt (1994 [1963]), in her report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, wrote: "The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (276)—yet they nonetheless followed orders and took part in genocide and in crimes against humanity.

11 Thus for example, the justices of Israel's Supreme Court (HCJ 425/89: 730–731) asked in astonishment of soldiers who followed orders to break the arms and legs of Palestinians as a collective punishment against their village: "Is it at all possible to speak of 'ambiguity' and 'vagueness' when the matter in question is an order to remove people from their homes, to bind and gag them, to strike them with clubs in order to break their arms and legs? What ambiguity can there be regarding a manifestly illegal order

“easiest” and most common social solution is obedience. The rules of disobedience, by contrast, are extremely vague.<sup>12</sup>

Another popular solution is to rely on the complexity of the matter in question and to appeal to sources of authority or trustworthy interpreters, such as the legislature, the courts, rabbis, leaders, or commanders, who help the individual to avoid a personal decision. The individual who chooses such a solution is actually making a clear decision, though it may appear as if he is refraining from doing so. He is deciding in favor of the actions committed in the name of, or per the decision of, the leader, the legislature, the commander, or the rabbi. Avoiding a personal decision constitutes a waiving of the right and the obligation to decide; it is akin to granting the power and the right to another, or to the government apparatus, to decide in place of the individual. In the words of Hannah Arendt:

[W]e have become very much accustomed by modern psychology and sociology, not to speak of modern bureaucracy, to explaining away the responsibility of the doer for his deed in terms of this or that kind of determinism... Israeli law, in theory and practice, like the jurisdiction of other countries cannot but admit that the fact of “superior orders,” even when their unlawfulness is “manifest,” can severely disturb the normal working of a man’s conscience. (Arendt 1994 [1963], 289–290, 294)

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of this type, which, in the words of the Military Advocate General, has ‘a black flag hanging over it,’ and which it is obligatory to disobey?”

- 12 “Illegality that pierces the eye and inflames the heart ...” is a poetic example of this type of ambiguity (Military Court MC 3/57, Chief Military Prosecutor v. Major Shmuel Malinki et al.).

As noted by Yigal Elam:

Those who carry out orders are never blind tools in the hands of their leaders. It is convenient for them to believe this or to present it this way, solely to avoid responsibility for acts of omission or commission in which they were involved and which they executed with great initiative and resourcefulness ... [In effect,] the leadership wins prizes not for playing a genuinely responsible role but for its willingness to absolve the people of responsibility. (Elam 1991, 179–180)

A third popular solution is what we will call “internal exile.” This refers not to emigration, i.e., relocation to a different country, but to the individual’s “exiling” of himself from the society in which he lives. In practice, it means refraining from taking responsibility for the actions of others and of society, and from commitment to democratic values—in effect, declaring that we have severed our ties with society, “keeping our hands clean” with regard to negative things in which the majority of society takes part, and avoiding commitment to values that demand opposition to such acts. This “internal exile” consists of various levels of estrangement from society, from actual disassociation from the activity and from fellow members of society to private awareness of this internal exile-by-choice.

A fourth “easy” solution is to take responsibility after the fact: beating one’s breast, expressing remorse, asking for forgiveness, and so on in an endless cycle—the so-called “shooting and crying” phenomenon. Itamar Pitowsky (1990, 186) described this state of mind as participating in an act that is morally wrong and then taking credit for being aware of it and experiencing pangs of conscience.

The one who shoots and cries “basks in his remorse, even exploiting it for personal gain. He believes that the torment itself is a virtue that confers some sort of moral credit on the individual.”

In many instances, despite the diffusion of responsibility and these “easy” solutions, the individual has clear knowledge and/or an intuitive moral sense that the laws or actions of his society are wrong. Despite this, he takes part in these acts and obeys these laws, edicts, and orders that should not be obeyed, as a result of moral weakness, a weakness of the will.

Membership in society brings with it a complex mix of allegiances, conflicting loyalties, desire to conform, and aversion to going against other members of society, to swimming against the current. At the time of the Kafr Qassem massacre (1956), members of the Border Police reacted in different ways to the battalion commander’s order to shoot to kill those who violated curfew. There were those who intentionally disobeyed the order,<sup>13</sup> those who attempted to avoid carrying it out without openly disobeying it, those who tried to follow it without killing anyone, and those who obeyed the order without question. According to Ruvik Rosenthal’s account (2000, 22), First Lieutenant Aryeh Menashes was asked by the court how he explained the fact that after he had asked questions (during the briefing prior to the curfew) about women, children, and people returning from work, he did not continue questioning despite his grave concerns about a potential disaster. His response was, “The people who were in the room at that meeting began looking scornfully at me—what do you mean, asking

13 The company commander, Yehuda Frankenthal stated, “There is the commander’s order and the dictates of one’s conscience . . . I understood the order, but I acted according to the dictates of my conscience” (cited by Ruvik Rosenthal [2000, 39]).

all these questions. They simply sneered. Because of the snickering, I didn't ask anymore. It's possible I was embarrassed."<sup>14</sup>

According to Agnes Heller:

Dostoyevsky once said that every person is responsible for every other. If everyone acted accordingly, there would be paradise on Earth at once. To assume absolute responsibility is to promise salvation itself. The opposite of absolute responsibility is to assume no responsibility at all: to make no promises. Both absolute responsibility and the total absence of responsibility are extreme cases, beyond the possibilities of the human condition. (Heller 2005, 21)

Where, then, does responsibility end? Is there a limit to personal responsibility?

Moshe Greenberg (2006) went back to the Jewish sources to consider these questions. The Talmudic sages discussed the question of why a punishment was decreed against Amasa and Avner—two distinguished commanders of King Saul who refused to follow his

14 Another case in point is the story of Major Rami Kaplan, who participated in reserve duty in the Gaza Strip during the second intifada (2001). Kaplan recounted that one day, the division commander came to his unit and briefed the soldiers on the IDF's new guidelines: "At this point, I tried to tell him that, as I understood it, he wasn't briefing us on the guidelines for opening fire but on how to get through an investigation by the Military Advocate General. 'No, what are you talking about?' he dismissed me. Given the atmosphere in the room, Kaplan did not continue with his questions or comments since he believed that if he said anything else he would be criticized as defeatist, an extreme leftist, a bleeding heart, an Arab lover. He was only surprised that he didn't notice any similar discomfort among the rest of the participants in the briefing" (*Haaretz*, weekend supplement, April 27, 2001).

order and refrained from taking part in the killing of the priests of Nov, who had helped David in his flight from Saul. The answer given by the sages was that they were punished because they only refrained from obeying Saul’s order to kill the priests—but did not prevent others from killing them. The fact that they did not participate in the killing, and kept their own hands free of blood did not help Avner and Amasa; they were expected to take a stand and actively prevent the killing of the priests. The neighbors of Kitty Genovese likewise refrained from taking action: they did not spill her blood with their own hands, yet by not coming to her aid nor attempting to summon help, they bore moral, communal, and perhaps even causal and “non-remedial,” responsibility for her death.<sup>15</sup>

Moral responsibility that is not “weak-willed”—that does not take refuge in obedience, the complexity of an issue, the shifting of responsibility to others, or internal exile—should ideally cause the individual to take a clear stand when there is a blatant disparity between actions, laws, and orders that he witnesses and the democratic system of values that he espouses. Every individual is expected to act in such a way as to lessen the inconsistency between his democratic stance or intuitive moral sense and an action, law, or order that contradicts them. Despite the fact that the preceding discussion of

15 A clear example drawn from Israeli law is the Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the events at Sabra and Shatila. Avigdor Feldman (1985, 79) noted that the commission broadened the “circle of responsibility to include so-called ‘indirect responsibility,’ that is, placing responsibility not only on those who carried out prohibited actions but also on those who were capable of preventing these actions and did not do so.” Another notable example of Israeli jurisprudence is the conviction of Margalit Har-Shefi for not preventing the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, since she knew of Yigal Amir’s intentions but did not prevent him from acting on them and did not notify the authorities about them (see for example: *Haaretz*, July 19, 2001).

“easy” solutions and “weakness of the will” shows that theoretically the progression from knowledge to action should be an obvious one, the imbalance between the real and the ideal is often not pronounced enough to cause individuals to do the right thing.

In his analysis of the concept of heroism, Yeshayahu Leibowitz (2006, 121) wrote that heroism “is always bound up with the struggle between a conscious moral decision that the individual chooses to make, and an innate, subconscious, even involuntary, instinct. . . . [It is] dedication to a value that does not ‘contribute’ anything to a person (in the objective sense) but rather demands something of him.” Sadly, it seems that, too often, one has to be a hero to be a responsible, democratic citizen.

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