

Introduction: Israel as a Social Laboratory

The State of Israel: A Threefold Historical Background

The establishment of the State of Israel was a historical turning point for the Jewish People, for the Land of Israel (Eretz Israel), as a territorial entity, and for the Yishuv,—the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine.

For nearly two millennia the Jews in the Diaspora had lacked a center of political authority and had been vulnerable to discrimination and persecution. Their plight eventually led to a search for a solution to what became known, in both Jewish and European Political discourse, as “the Jewish problem.” Various solutions were put forward,¹ among them Zionism—ideologically motivated Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel.²

The creation of the State of Israel had a major impact on the Land of Israel as a territorial entity. The partition of Palestine and the exodus of most of the Arabs from what become the State of Israel provided yet another chapter in the turbulent history of this small land, and resulted in a demographic and geographic upheaval that marked out the boundaries of a new “Israeli” collectivity.

It was in this arena of Jewish history that the Jews renewed their connection with the land as the Yishuv emerged in May 1948 as a fully-fledged political community. The social and political character of the Yishuv, a “state in the making” under the Mandate, enabled it to succeed in the armed struggle between Jews and Arabs, and facilitated the transition to statehood.³

During the first four decades of Israel's existence, wars and waves of immigration (aliyot) were the major signposts of its development. Apart from the War of Independence, the most important war was the Six Day War of 1967. This war brought about further changes in the state's territorial boundaries and demographic balance, and created a significant gap between Israeli sovereignty and military control.⁴

These three historical entities—the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and the Yishuv—had global significance. Both Zionism and Arab nationalism were stimulated by and modeled on modern European nationalism. The initial intercommunal conflict between Jews and Arabs in Eretz Israel was played out in a region divided into British and French spheres of influence. The emergence of Israel and its neighboring Arab states as autonomous protagonists in their own Middle Eastern conflict resulted from the processes of decolonization after the Second World War. Subsequently, the continuous involvement of the superpowers in the Arab-Israeli conflict derives from the centrality of the Middle East in the global balance of power, stemming from its strategic position and its vast oil reserves. Zionism sought to transform the Jewish people from a passive object of the historical process into an acting subject whose sovereign decisions would influence global developments. This goal has been realized with a vengeance, perhaps more than is warranted for Israel's own good.

These unique historical circumstances have also attracted the attention of social scientists seeking theoretical and comparative lessons from Israel's exceptional social development. Indeed, Israeli society is unique in many respects but its uniqueness is a consequence of a rare combination of features each of which is not necessarily exceptional as such. However, some of these features are more pronounced in Israeli society than in most other societies, thus entailing more significant consequences for its functioning as a collectivity. It is, therefore, the combined effect of marked features that singles out Israel as a case worth studying in macro-sociology and macro-politology. The enumeration of these features provide an appropriate point of departure for the analysis of Israel's social and political system.

Non-Congruence of Territory, Citizenship, and National-Ethnic Identity

Most Jews live outside the State of Israel, while within Israel there is a considerable non-Jewish minority of Palestinian Arabs. For the indi-

vidual, this creates a problem of identity; for society, that of defining its boundaries. While the establishment of the state resolved some of the issues of collective identity, it retained some of the contradictions of bicommunal Mandatory Palestine. In particular, the identity of the Israeli entity as a state and as an ethno-national community was not fully defined.⁵

"Palestinian citizenship" under the Mandate was described as "nothing but a legal formula devoid of moral meaning."⁶ The State of Israel, at least until 1967, was closer than Mandatory Palestine to the model of an integral nation-state insofar as it had a clear-cut Jewish majority (85-90 percent). Still, it had to contend with the problems raised by the symbolic meaning of citizenship as opposed to national-ethnic identity. This problem intensified as a result of the extension of Israeli control after 1967 to territories inhabited by hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs, who in the West Bank were Jordanian citizens, but in the Gaza Strip were stateless. Thus, the problem of collective boundaries and identity links up with the broader Arab-Israeli conflict: Any decision about the ultimate disposition of the territories conquered in 1967 also entails a decision about the definition of an Israeli collective identity and the ethno-political identity of the Palestinian Arabs.

Mandatory Palestine deviated from the ideal type of the nation-state in every conceivable way. First, the country was governed by a foreign power through direct rule, without any representation of the local population. Second, it was in effect a binational entity in which one of the components, the Jewish community, established its own semi-autonomous and legally-recognized network of institutions. Third, each of the communities in Mandatory Palestine maintained ethnic-national, religious, and language ties to groups beyond its borders. Each one of these deviations from the model involved problems of identity and definition of boundaries of the collectivity.⁷

The primary loyalty of both the Jewish and the Arab communities was to their own people. But neither of these communities had clearly defined boundaries. For the Jewish community, there was the issue of the degree of involvement of world Jewry in building a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, a role which was formally recognized by the Mandate given to Britain by the League of Nations.⁸

In the Arab community, the problem of identity was expressed in terms of the concepts of "*kawmiya*"—pan-Arab nationalist consciousness, as distinct from "*wataniya*"—particularistic national identity linked to specific Arab countries.⁹ In the Arab community under British

rule, different groups placed different emphases on the panArab and the Palestinian components of their collective identity.

The partition of Mandatory Palestine and the exodus of most of the Arabs from the area under Jewish rule resulted in a clear-cut Jewish majority in the newly-established State of Israel. The status of the Arab minority remained ambiguous and its connection to the state could at best be expressed through citizenship, but certainly not in national-ethnic terms.

The establishment of the state added a new dimension to the identity of its Arab residents, who, in addition to being Arabs or Palestinians, became Israeli citizens. Israel's Declaration of Independence established the state as a "Jewish state in Eretz Israel," while upholding "full equality of social and political rights to all its citizens irrespective of religion, race or sex."¹⁰ However, for the Arab minority, the ethno-national and citizenship components of Israeli identity were never fully integrated. This is also reflected in their position in the social structure.

The nation-state is a modern concept implying a high degree of congruence and harmony between territory, citizenship and ethno-cultural community.¹¹ Reality often falls short of this ideal type which is sometimes even further eroded by the existence of ethnic diasporas.¹² Thus, in many cases, ethno-national identity is not coextensive with the legal definition of citizenship. In principle, however, the criteria for citizenship are formally defined and are unrelated to a person's attitudes toward a particular social entity or one's cultural traits. Criteria for ethnic or national membership are vaguer, and are based on primordial factors and/or cultural-historical consciousness.¹³ Although the boundaries of ethno-national membership are more difficult to define, in many cases such membership engenders a stronger sense of group solidarity than does citizenship.

In Israel, ethno-national criteria lie at the base of the system of national symbols that express the collectivity's normative commitment to the Jewish people and order the response to the problem of national security anchored in the Arab-Israeli conflict. On its establishment, the State of Israel took over the anthem and the flag from the Zionist movement and adopted the seven-branched candelabrum of Jewish religious tradition as the official symbol of the state,¹⁴ thereby expressing the link to the Jewish people as a historic cultural-national entity. The specific commitment to the Zionist conception that places the immigration and settlement of Jews in Eretz Israel at the center of the Jewish national revival is embodied in the law of Return. This unique

law grants privileges to Jews who wish to become Israelis, but confers no privileges on Jewish citizens as against non-Jewish citizens.¹⁵

At the level of citizenship, the rights of non-Jewish groups to celebrate their holidays and to cease work on their traditional days of rest are guaranteed by law. The adoption of the Arabic language as the second official language of the state is also of symbolic significance.

The most prominent application of ethno-national principles in the sphere of national security is the exemption of all Israeli Arabs (except for the Druze) from compulsory military service.¹⁶ The exemption of Israeli Arabs from the draft is not specified in law, but implemented through the discretionary powers vested in the Minister of Defense.¹⁷

In contrast, civil rights—the formal equality of all citizens before the law—are defined in terms of citizenship. This fundamental principle of democracy is enunciated in Israel's Declaration of Independence and further elaborated in legislation,¹⁸ as exemplified by universal suffrage in local and national elections even from 1949 to 1966 when most Israeli Arabs lived in areas under military government.

Primordial affiliation has a significant direct impact on public life in Israel through laws governing marriage, divorce, and personal status. These are linked to specific religious communities, but without granting preference to any particular community.¹⁹ As a result, while there is no separation of religion and state, neither is there a state religion.²⁰

The territorial component of identity and membership that within the armistice lines of 1949 had been clear-cut became blurred as a result of the Six Day War. After 1967, the population to be included within the territorial boundaries of the collectivity differed according to the criterion used—sovereignty or military control.²¹ Moreover, the terms used to define these areas (e.g., "liberated" vs. "occupied" territories) reflected ideological preferences with regard to their ultimate fate: Whether they should remain under ethnonational Jewish control and be formally incorporated into the State of Israel, or whether they should ultimately revert to Arab rule.

The range of affiliations or connections to the Israeli collectivity can be represented by the various patterns created by the elements of citizenship, ethnicity, and territory, some of which reveal only minimal congruence. Maximal congruence is found among Jews who live under Israeli sovereignty and hold only Israeli citizenship. Weaker congruence is found among Israeli emigrants, Diaspora Jews, Arab citizens of Israel, foreign citizens living in Israel, and Jewish permanent residents of Israel who are not citizens.

The post-1967 war events resulted in an extension as well as in an intensification of the problem. The annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories added a new dimension to the problem. There were now in areas under Israeli control several groups whose association with the Israeli collectivity involved legal and political issues: Arab citizens of Jordan and Syria residing in territories where Israeli law applies, such as Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and Israeli Jewish settlers residing in territories where Israeli law does not apply.

Even the nationality of Jordanian citizens in Judea and Samaria and residents of the Gaza Strip is potentially problematic from the viewpoint of Israeli identity.²² As long as Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip have the status of occupied territories their populations are not participants in the Israeli identity. However, any change in the existing temporary status of the territories apart from the return to full Arab sovereignty, would raise the problem of the association between their population and Israel.

Lack of congruence between citizenship, ethnicity and territory is not unique to Israel: Very few countries approach the ideal-type of nation-state. However, Israel seems to be unusual in the range of patterns of partial congruence that it presents, involving a multiplicity of communities and diasporas, and vague definitions of religion, ethnicity, and territory.

Ideological Impetus

Prior to independence, the waves of immigration to Palestine were, for the most part, ideologically motivated. Indeed, ideological commitments fueled the separatist tendencies that made the Yishuv a quasi-autonomous society.²³ The revival of Hebrew as a living language which became the cultural common denominator in the Yishuv and in Israel, was inspired by ideology. After the establishment of the State of Israel, Zionist ideology continued to inform some of its fundamental political decisions, the most notable being the decision to facilitate and encourage mass Jewish immigration in the 1950s.²⁴ Despite the waning influence of ideology in more recent years, its impact is still keenly felt in many important political controversies such as conflict over the ultimate disposition of the territories conquered in the 1967 war.²⁵

Overall there remains constant tension between commitment to divergent ideological principles and the possibility of their realization

in a rapidly changing social reality. The dominant Zionist ideologies of pre-state colonization in Eretz Israel aspired to a just social order and therefore stressed the goal of social change—the subordination of current needs to future objectives, and preference for collective interests over those of the individual.²⁶ However, when the bearers of these dynamic ideological tendencies assumed control of the political structures of the state, the preservation of their rule became an end in itself. This, in turn, engendered conservative tendencies inimical to the striving for social change.²⁷

Political dominance was a source of material rewards, prestige, and power for members of the ruling elites. Responding to the demands of various groups to meet their immediate needs came at the expense of future-oriented commitments and bred acceptance of the status quo. The gap between ideals and reality was further widened by a political framework that made compromise between parties and movements the prime principle of political alliances.

The erosion of ideological commitment in Israeli society as a whole and within its various political and social movements has several aspects. First, it reflected an incomplete realization of ideology. This is characteristic of attempts to foster revolutionary and utopian ideological commitments under conditions of institutionalization and routinization, and is not peculiar to Zionism or to Israeli society.²⁸

In Israel, the absence of a sharp transition from a prerevolutionary to a post-revolutionary situation left a distinctive mark upon the problem of routinization and institutionalization. The social aspect of the Zionist revolution developed gradually with the shaping of a new social order from the waves of immigration. Likewise, the political climax of the Zionist revolution, the conclusion of the British Mandate and the establishment of the State of Israel, was not the beginning of a process of political institutionalization, but the culmination of institution-building that had started earlier.²⁹

A second aspect of the erosion of ideology in Israeli society stems from the tension generated by the influence of the general intellectual climate of the “end of ideology.” The pragmatic outlook of the new professional and technocratic elites that arose with the state was more compatible with the conception of the “decline of ideology” that marked Western societies in the 1950s and 1960s³⁰ than with the ideological prescriptions of the veteran movement elites.³¹ This gap between them resulted in compromises that at times meant adapting ideology to the need to get things done, or to merely paying lip service to ideology.

The third source of the erosion of ideology stems from the fact that Zionism, which sought to provide a broad basis of consensus in Israeli society, in practice offered only a limited common ground on such fundamental issues as the shape of the ideal social order, the place of religion in society and the response to the Arab-Jewish conflict. Author Amos Oz clearly grasped this problem when he wrote that "Zionism is a family name, not a proper name," with members of this "family" appearing as Labor Zionism, Religious Zionism, and so forth.³² Ideology thus became a divisive force in the political system and even a source of polarization, whose disintegrative potential could be blunted only through bargaining that entailed a compromise of principles.

Israeli society therefore provides an excellent example of the dual role of ideology in fostering social mobilization, on the one hand, and triggering political conflict, on the other.

Israel as a New Society

Israel is a "new nation" in terms of its population as well as its institutions. The only common historical connection shared by members of Israeli society is to the cultural and communal traditions of a "people without a land."³³ This clearly sets Israel apart from most, if not all of the new nations that emerged after World War II. Israel does not represent a case of "an old society in a new nation,"³⁴ but rather of "a new society for an ancient people." The social structure of Israel is therefore not the culmination of historical processes stretching over generations, but the product of recent developments related mainly to the Zionist settlement endeavor. Israel thus differs from most developing countries whose traditional structures served as a source of constraints on modernization.³⁵

Nevertheless, Israeli society was not a tabula rasa: It is unique among developing countries in that the diverse social and cultural traditions influencing behavior and values were, for the most part, imported with the immigrants from their countries of origin. Even the common core of Jewish religious observance and belief was overlaid with local or regional variations in lifestyle and behavior.³⁶

Many of the immigrants had previously not been exposed to the far-reaching influence of the secularization that accompanied industrialization and political modernization in Europe and the New World. For the most part, Middle Eastern and North African immigrants were not directly affected by secularization, industrialization, and nationalism until they came to Israel.³⁷ Once there, they had to adapt to a

society whose institutions were shaped by elites inspired by these revolutionary processes and who sought to mode Israel as a modern nation-state.

The encounter between the relatively modern institutions and values of the Yishuv and the traditional ways of life of many of the immigrants did not take place on equal terms. The system into which these newcomers were "absorbed," as Israeli terminology put it, was clearly socially and politically dominant.³⁸ As a result, the immigrants' particularistic traditions had little impact on the development and consolidation of Israeli society that took place rather rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s. Unlike other developing countries in this crucial period, traditional forces hardly restrained modernization in Israel. The institutions of Israeli society could therefore develop synchronically without the troublesome lags that appeared elsewhere in the pace of development of the various spheres such as agriculture, industry, bureaucracy, the military, and the family.

However, when the bearers of traditional ways of life began to break out of their peripheral status in Israeli society and to demand a more central role, their particularistic values began to exert a greater influence on public life.³⁹ Education was especially influenced by this shift, as ultra-Orthodox approaches gained legitimacy and state financial support and as traditional religious influences penetrated the secular school system.⁴⁰ Some manifestations of particularistic religious expressions that were marginal in the 1950s, such as folk medicine and cults of pious religious figures, suddenly became popular.⁴¹

As in other Western countries, it became apparent in Israel too, that the traditional forces holding back modernization had a higher rate of survival than was thought possible when the foundations were laid for the modern nation-state.⁴² Thus Israel, despite the fact that it is a new society, has found that it cannot escape tensions between tradition and modernity, as traditionalist enclaves chip away at the cultural and political patterns that were dominant in the Yishuv and had shaped the emergent institutions of the State of Israel.

A Small Society

Israel is one of the smallest sovereign states in the world. Its population in 1985 came to about four and a quarter million, not including the Arabs in the occupied territories.⁴³ In area, Israel together with the occupied territories of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights comprise 7,391 square miles. The striking disproportion

between Israeli's small size and its international prominence is most apparent from the strategic perspective. Militarily, Israel is considered to be the most powerful state in the Middle East,⁴⁴ a region of central importance in international affairs, and one fraught with more regional military conflicts than any other since the Second World War.⁴⁵ Israel's combat-ready military prowess equals that of certain medium-size powers, and exceeds that of some considerably larger and wealthier states. Moreover, Israel is reported to have either nuclear weapons, or at least real nuclear potential, putting it in an exclusive category of states.⁴⁶

Israel's disproportionate international prominence is also linked to the concern for the Holy Land shared by Jews, Christians, and Moslems. Relations between the latter two faiths and the Jewish people are somewhat problematic. Christianity's ambivalence to the Jews has deep historical and theological roots, while the Moslem world sees Israel as an alien entity in the heart of a predominantly Moslem and Arab region.

The centrality of Israel for diaspora Jewry implicit in Israel's self-definition as a Jewish state, assumes wider significance from the fact that the largest Diaspora communities are located in the United States and the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ The prominence of Jews among the elites in Western countries further underlines Israel's importance.

These strategic and cultural factors have also influenced developments within Israel. A major consequence of the disproportion between Israel's size and its international prominence is the great diversity and intensity of its international ties, particularly its economic, political, and security dependence on the United States.⁴⁸ Israel's dependence on others has enabled it to mobilize resources for economic development and political support in its conflict with the Arabs.⁴⁹ The adaptation of Israel's institutional structure to the country's need for constant exposure to, and ties with, the outside world is manifest in the security and scientific spheres, as well as in culture and entertainment. Israel's disproportionately extensive and highly centralized bureaucracy owes part of its development to its role as an intermediary between Israel's institutions and citizens and various Jewish and other international organizations abroad.

Occasionally, the disproportion between Israel's size and its needs has added to the burdens of an already overburdened system. These burdens have not been borne equally: From the outset some sections of the population have been alienated from Israel's national tasks. For example, the manpower that can be mobilized for security needs does

not include Israel's Arab citizens and parts of the orthodox sector. This reduction of effective human resources further increases the disproportion between effective size and of population and overall state's capabilities.

*From Diaspora Communities to an
Emerging National Center*

Israel's existence as a national center alongside Diaspora communities is not the result of migration from the homeland but the reverse. Modern Israel was created by ongoing immigration from the widely scattered Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

Israel perceives the Diaspora as its hinterland, a source of human, economic, political, and moral support. Least problematic is the one-way flow of funds, from the Diaspora to Israel, with the donor enjoying symbolic rewards or political gains in return. These funds have enabled Israel to finance the absorption of mass immigration, economic development, and defense. This capital inflow made it possible for Israel to invest in economic growth, respond to the demands of various pressure groups and at the same time increase the standard of living.⁵⁰ It also had a direct political impact in helping to block the emergence of pressures that might have threatened Israel's democratic-pluralistic character.

The political dimension of Israel-Diaspora relations is more problematic and, on occasion, is manifested in conflicts of interest between Israel and Diaspora communities.⁵¹ For example, since the 1970s there have been differences of opinion between Israel and the American Jewish community over the immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union. While Israel has sought to direct all the emigrants to Israel, even to the point of making this a condition of their right to leave the Soviet Union, the American Jewish communal leadership has supported freedom of choice and the provision of aid to all irrespective of their final destination.

Israel's sense of responsibility for Jewish communities living under non-democratic regimes has on occasion come into conflict with its wider diplomatic interests, as was the case with the military regime in Argentina. Likewise, Israel's ties with South Africa, justified in terms of the need to protect the interests of South African Jewry and its ties to Israel, have made it difficult to establish relations with many black African states.⁵² On another plane, Israel as a Jewish state was able to

represent the Jewish people in claiming reparations from Germany on the legal grounds that it had taken in hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors, and brought Nazi war criminals to trial.⁵³

The premises of Zionist ideology that negate the Diaspora's status as an autonomous source of Jewish values and its capacity to ensure Jewish existence, and that regard Israel as the national-cultural center of the Jewish people, create problems for the symbolic dimension of Israel-Diaspora relations. However, this issue has waned somewhat over the years with the weakening among Israeli leaders of their advocacy of the doctrine of the "negation of the Diaspora." A feeling of partnership and common destiny between Israel and the Diaspora emerged in the wake of the destruction of the European Jewry in the Holocaust. The course of events expanded the interaction between Israel and the Jewish communities not directly affected by the war, particularly the American Jewry. These ties, formerly maintained mainly by the Zionist organizations, have widened and deepened to encompass organizations previously identified as "non-Zionist." The "negation of the Diaspora" doctrine was further muted by the waning of utopian aspirations and concomitant "normalization," making Israel less attractive to idealistic Western Jewish intellectuals.⁵⁴

The symbolic and demographic dimensions of Israel-Diaspora relations are interrelated. Israel's lack of success in attracting significant immigration from the West has impaired its central symbolic role. Jews from Western countries who were free to come and live in Israel simply stayed away.⁵⁵ To make matters worse, a growing stream of Israeli emigrants began to head for the West, particularly to North America.

Emigration (*yeridah*, literally "going down"—the opposite of *aliyah* or "going up" to Israel) is more problematic for Israeli society than for other societies. Emigration, even more than a lack of immigration, is viewed as undermining the fundamental goals of Zionism, and is striking evidence of its failure.⁵⁶ In a besieged Israel, emigration comes close to being regarded as desertion from the front lines. The problem of emigration gained particular prominence in the 1970s and 1980s with the decline in immigration and the rise in the proportion of Israeli-born and educated persons among the emigrants. It peaked in the mid-1980s when the annual number of emigrants exceeded that of immigrants.⁵⁷

Following the drastic decline in the potential for immigration from the countries in Europe and the Middle East where Jewish communities are threatened, Israel began to gather in the remnants of far-flung Jewish communities which had been cut off from the Jewish mainstream for generations. The best-known examples here are those

communities whose members have a high degree of physical distinctiveness from other Jews, the Bene Israel from India and the Beta Israel or Falashas from Ethiopia.⁵⁸

Immigration to Israel of Jews from the Diaspora heightened the tensions surrounding the definition and boundaries of individual and collective Jewish identity that derive from attempting to apply traditional Jewish religious law in a non-traditional democratic society. The controversy known as "Who is a Jew?" came into public focus because of the employment, for the purposes of immigrant rights under the Law of Return and in other legislation, of criteria of Jewishness that did not strictly conform to traditional definitions. Amendments to the Law of Return defining Jewishness did not settle the controversy as they raised the question of the validity in Israel of non-Orthodox conversions to Judaism performed abroad.

Israel is not the only society made up of immigrants, nor is it the only country that maintains connections with an ethnically-related Diaspora overseas. Israel's uniqueness is in the interaction between these elements, and in the fact that Israel arose through immigration from its Diaspora communities and not the other way around.

A Party to a Protracted Conflict

Israeli society functions under conditions of protracted external conflict. This conflict has two aspects: The first aspect concerns the national defense posture required in order to meet the strategic threat of all-out war waged by the regular armies of Arab countries and the immediate threats associated with the pursuit of security vis a vis acts of terror and border clashes (defined as "current security"). To meet this dual challenge, Israel has developed various mechanisms requiring the mobilization of considerable resources for national security. To mobilize the manpower necessary to overcome the sharp demographic imbalance between Israel and its potential enemies, Israel has developed a system of military service based on a small professional nucleus, supplemented by men and women doing their three and two years, respectively, of conscript service, and a reserve combat-ready force of men serving until the age of 55.⁵⁹ The economic burden imposed by the conflict requires the allocation of a defense budget which is among the highest in the world per capita, (covered partly by taxes and partly by American aid).⁶⁰ In addition, Israel has also developed the largest military-industrial complex in the world in relation to population and

GNP.⁶¹ The threats posed by current security problems have made a considerable impact on Israeli society. Israel was induced to introduce restrictions on civil rights such as the military government imposed in Arab areas until 1966 and take measures such as the emergency regulations that permit administrative detention and limitations on freedom of movement within Israel or in leaving the country.

The second aspect of the conflict is rooted in the political-ideological challenge to Israeli society posed by the confrontation between Zionism, the Jewish national movement, and the Palestinian Arab national movement supported by the entire Arab world.

From this challenge stem the problems of delineating the territorial limits on Zionist ideological aspirations, protecting Israel's international legitimacy, and regulating Arab-Jewish relations within the state of Israel proper as well as in the territories occupied in 1967.

With regard to the first aspect of Israel's involvement in a protracted external conflict, there is a firm consensus, at least within the Jewish population, that this conflict poses a potential threat to Israel's very existence. This accounts for the willingness to accept a high level of mobilization of resources for national defense and the acceptance of the burden imposed by the sacrifices demanded by frequent wars. This also accounts for the legitimacy accorded in Israel to limited military actions initiated during periods of "neither war nor peace" such as reprisal raids or the bombings of the Iraqi atomic reactor in Baghdad and the PLO headquarters in Tunis.

On the other hand, the question of Israel's response to the political-ideological challenge posed by the Arab-Israeli conflict has aroused considerable controversy. This controversy has several foci. The first concerns the recognition of Palestinian national rights, and the need to reach a compromise on this issue. Does the Jewish people have an exclusive right to "the Land of Israel," or is this a confrontation between two national movements, each with its own subjective conceptions of rights? Second, what is more important from the perspective of Zionist aspirations, the territorial integrity of Eretz Israel or assuring the overwhelmingly Jewish character of the population of the State of Israel? The positions taken on these two issues lead to differing conceptions of the nature of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Is this primarily a conflict between states, as it was perceived during the period between the signing of the cease-fire agreements in 1949 and the Six Day War of 1967,⁶² or is it primarily a conflict between national communities, as it was perceived during the period of the Yishuv and as perceived by the proponents of Greater Israel since 1967? Living

with the awareness of an external threat is not unique to Israel, but the sense of acuteness of the threat and its persistence is a characteristic of Israeli society. In these circumstances the conflict is perceived not only as a threat to Israel's existence, but also as a danger that can impinge on everyday life through acts of terror or by the possibility of another round of all-out war that could break out at any time.

Democracy under Pressure

Israel is a democratic society subject to severe pressures due to demographic changes, a protracted external conflict, and deep social and political cleavages. What sets Israel apart from the vast majority of the new states established after World War II is that it has maintained a multi-party democratic regime during its entire existence. Israel also differs from most democratic states in the range and magnitude of the pressures exerted on its political system resulting from a rare combination of rapid demographic expansion through immigration during its early years, a prolonged external conflict marked by several major wars, and a multiplicity of deep social and political cleavages.

The massive defense demands and the needs which arose from mass immigration have required the allocation of extensive resources to collective tasks placing Israel's democratic system under heavy cross-pressures. These collective burdens are augmented by the particularistic demands of groups, a common characteristic of democratic societies. Defense, immigrant absorption, and social welfare thus compete for the same reservoir of resources. Moreover, many of the newcomers who arrived during the mass immigration had no previous experience with democratic society, and were not acquainted with the dominant political culture of the Yishuv that had shaped the institutions and rules of the game in the new state.

Persistent involvement in an external conflict poses dangers to a democracy beyond the need to allocate large amounts of resources to security. Constant awareness of the external threat have helped push the military and defense establishment into a position of centrality, in terms of the share of the population directly and indirectly involved in the defense effort and the special status of the defense establishment in shaping national policy in spheres other than those concerned directly with security. Such a permeation of civilian spheres by defense activity and considerations poses a danger of what Harold Lasswell called a "garrison state," or a government controlled by "experts in violence."⁶³

Even if such danger is averted, as it has been in Israel, and such a regime does not emerge, the security sphere may, nevertheless, become preponderantly influential, even without direct control, through manipulation of the civilian decision-making system. To guard against this, the patterns of civilian control of the military characteristic of democratic regimes at peace are insufficient; Israel needed special formal and informal arrangements to balance democracy and national security.⁶⁴ Thus is developed a unique model of political-military relationships, that of "a nation in arms." The partial militarization of the civilian sphere—caused by the role-expansion of the military—is balanced by a partial "civilianization" of the defense sphere, arising particularly from its penetration by an extensive system of army reserve duty, and the linking of civilian and military elites in common social networks.⁶⁵

The capacity of Israeli democracy to withstand economic, political, and military pressures has depended, to a large extent, on social solidarity and a broad political consensus, no easy task in a society riven, since its inception, by salient national, ethnic, religious, socio-economic, and ideological cleavages. These five sources of cleavage have weakened social solidarity by generating internal conflicts, some of which are intensified by being mutually reinforcing, as in the cases of the ethnic and socio-economic cleavages, and the religious and ideological cleavages. The fundamental national cleavage between Jew and Arab maintains constant potential for intense conflict.

Social conflicts and the frustrations of marginal groups have impeded the functioning of Israeli democracy to the point of exposing it to the danger of "ungovernability,"⁶⁶ making it difficult for the system to mobilize material resources and collective normative commitments. Varied mechanisms have been employed to cope with these conflicts. The conflict arising from the overlap of ethnic resentment and socio-economic inequality has been dealt with by allocating material resources through the public welfare and educational systems. This provided a minimal standard of living for the lowest strata and slowed growth of inequality that would have resulted from the free play of market forces without bringing about any basic change in social stratification.⁶⁷

The severe conflict potential of the secular-religious cleavage has been dealt with by accepting the principle of sub-cultural autonomy for both the modern Orthodox and the ultra-Orthodox camps. Similar to European "consociationalism," the system of "sub-cultural autonomy" granted group access to state resources.⁶⁸ This has been utilized

in particular to create and maintain a state religious school system for the modern Orthodox, and independent school system for the ultra-Orthodox and other religious educational institutions for children, youths, and adults. The particularistic needs of the religious communities have also been met by the exemption of religious women and yeshiva students from military service.⁶⁹

The ideological cleavages have been handled mainly by bargaining and compromise:⁷⁰ cooperation between political parties in government coalitions; deferring the resolution of divisive fundamental questions such as that of the constitution in the 1950s, and of the ultimate status of the administered territories since 1967; and the adoption of ambiguous or vague legal definitions in various laws, as occurred in the case of "Who is a Jew?"

The Jewish-Arab cleavage and conflict has been handled mainly by the development of mechanisms for the control and manipulation of Israeli Arabs, the most direct of which was military government. After its abolition in 1966, control mechanisms became more subtle resting mainly on the internal security services. Mechanisms of direct control were again resorted to after 1967 with the establishment of military government in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.⁷¹

The Israeli political system is not the only democratic polity that has encountered difficulties in functioning while having to balance the effects of internal and external pressures. But it may be exceptional among democracies in the variety of sources of conflict in the system and in the intensity of tensions with which the system has had to cope.

The Conceptual Framework and Major Issues

The characteristics of Israeli society and the course of its development from ideological movement to community and from community to state, has attracted the attention of historians and social scientists. This interest accounts, in part, for the large number of studies on Israel—out of all proportion to its physical dimensions and population size. This also explains the use, on occasion, of the term "social laboratory" to describe Israeli society or the society of the Yishuv that preceded it.⁷²

This phrase, which appears both in ideological tracts and academic treatises, and which is metaphorical in any case, should nevertheless be subject to certain qualifications. Experiments in a laboratory are controlled and directed while social innovations are regarded as experiments only in retrospect. Nevertheless, this metaphor is apt in

several respects. The complexity and intensiveness of Israeli society has turned it into an attractive field of research for social scientists. Moreover, Israel is still characterized by a concentration of varied social phenomena in a small space, and by a large number of events stimulating social change within relatively short spans of time. Israel's small dimensions permit these phenomena to be studied without excessive investment of research efforts or resources. Indeed, the more a society resembles a community, the easier it is, at least from a communications perspective, to study it using a quasi-anthropological approach based upon participant observation. This is especially true for the social networks of the elites which occupy the social and political center. These may be studied with the aid of "tacit knowledge" in addition to the usual kinds of data, whether archival or statistical.

The special characteristics of Israeli society do not only lend themselves to a variety of research methods but also facilitate the formulation of central questions that are relevant to the macro-sociological and macro-political study of society as a distinct collectivity. These characteristics, as we recall, are that Israel is a small and new society; that it arose out of an ideological movement that stimulated migration from a Diaspora to an emerging national center; that it maintains a weak congruence between territory, citizenship, and ethnic-national identity; that its functioning is influenced by its involvement in a protracted external conflict; and that its democracy operates under the pressure of tensions generated by social ideological cleavages and by an imbalance between collective goals and available resources. These characteristics define the major problems of Israeli society, and provide our point of departure for examining the events and processes which have shaped it. A major question worthy of examination in the context of Israeli society is the degree of social cohesion and functional efficacy of a national collectivity whose boundaries are ambiguously defined and whose social and political institutions are overburdened with tasks and crosspressures. A number of topics derive from this question all of which merit thorough attention.

The first topic concerns the integrative and disintegrative processes operating in Israeli society under conditions of social and political pluralism which is rooted in multiple social cleavages laden with tensions. These processes are also related to the structure of elites and their role in shaping the consciousness of both social group affiliations and the national collective identity. This issue is discussed in chapter 2.

The second topic deals with the role of ideology and the characteristics of political culture in Israeli society. Ideology and political culture influence the commitments and loyalties of the various groups in Israeli society. These commitments and loyalties focus on the Israeli collectivity as such and also on particularistic entities such as national or ethnic communities, classes, ideological movements, and political parties. Chapter 3 deals with ideology as a both unifying and dividing factor in a political culture shaped by the genesis of Israeli society as an ideological movement.

The third topic deals with the rules of the game facilitating the fulfillment of the political system's functions of resource mobilization and conflict regulation. The rules of the game determine the extent to which Israel as a democratic polity is governable; or, in other words, the extent to which the over-burdened political institutions can deal with external pressures and internal conflicts without losing their ability to function. These matters are dealt with in chapter 4.

The fourth topic deals with Israel's involvement in a protracted external conflict, its strategic response to this threat to its security and the influence of this response on Israeli society as a democracy. Chapter 5 focuses on these security-related issues.

The impact of the transition from the Yishuv to the state, social and ideological cleavages, political culture, patterns of conflict regulation, and the involvement in a protracted conflict on the social cohesion of the Israeli collectivity and on the functional capacity of its institutions are examined in chapter 6. This chapter, which summarizes the arguments in the book examines not only past developments but also the major trends apparent at the end of Israel's fourth decade. Since the latter developments are still in flux, this chapter also discusses several alternative paths for Israeli society that could emerge from these trends.

These issues and questions may be examined in two ways that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They may be dealt with in the manner of those historians who examine events and processes as unique phenomena. They may also be dealt with by social scientists who define, describe, and analyze basic structures and processes in the light of theoretical issues. This approach requires analytical concepts to help bridge the gap between the historical treatment of unique phenomena and the generalizing and comparative tendencies of social science. Hence the reliance on conceptual frameworks to introduce order into this type of inquiry. These frameworks do not, as such, constitute comprehensive theories that enable the researcher to

predict or even to provide a complete explanation for social phenomena. However, conceptual frameworks are usually anchored in theoretical approaches whose underlying assumptions do not have to be made explicit as long as a particular conceptual framework serves only as a set of coordinates for mapping social phenomena.

Center and Periphery

The selection of a conceptual framework for the purpose of analyzing a particular society is naturally influenced by the unique characteristics of that society. Thus, for example, a conceptual framework that assumes an identity between the boundaries of a collectivity and the boundaries of a sovereign state would not be appropriate for analyzing the transition between the Yishuv and the State of Israel, nor for analyzing the boundary problems of Israeli society after the Six Day War of 1967 which created a gap between the boundaries of political sovereignty and physical control.⁷³ The approach that views the boundaries of a society as co-extensive with the boundaries of a nationstate, employed in many macro-political studies, would be appropriate for Israel during the period of 1949 to 1967 but, even then, only with serious qualifications. In order to study the changes that have occurred in Israeli society, we require a conceptual framework that permits a flexible definition of the boundaries of a given social system for various analytical purposes. For example, there may be groups with a partial attachment to a society placing them outside society according to one definition of its boundaries and inside it according to another definition.⁷⁴ In other words, we require a conceptual framework based not on rigid criteria for societal boundaries such as citizenship or territory, but rather based on the flexible notion of differential attachments of various groups to a society.

The concepts of center and periphery, taken from the model used by Edward Shils to analyze the development of new societies, meet this requirement.⁷⁵ These concepts permit the researcher to examine various groups' relations to the collectivity of the Yishuv and to the Israeli collectivity, since the concept of "center" entails political, institutional, and normative-cultural dimensions. The "center of society" is not necessarily co-extensive with the government of a given state since the center's sphere of attraction is not necessarily contained in the formal definition of governmental authority over a given population or territory. Moreover, the concept of center implies that the government is not necessarily viewed as the sole center of