State Building, State Autonomy, and the Identity of Society

The Case of the Israeli State[*]

This article has a twofold purpose. The first is to solve a puzzle that is posed by analyzing the Israeli sociopolitical system. The other is to propose an analytical parameter that might be added to the expanding theoretical field in the sociology of politics and historical sociology, namely, the state–civil society paradigm that brings the state back into sociology, positioning it against or alongside civil society.[1] The puzzle pertaining to the Israeli sociopolitical system arises from contradictory evidence concerning the strength of the Israeli state, its capacity to govern, and its ability to make decisions.

Puzzles

On the one hand, the Israeli state is classified as a strong state[2] with a tremendous capacity to mobilize its citizens (e.g., for wars), considerable law-

enforcement power that penetrates into almost every social formation and grouping of Jewish citizens, and an ability to maintain surveillance over the Israeli Arab population and noncitizens.[3] The state's ability to regulate is also evidenced by its high capacity to raise taxes.[4] On the other hand, the situation in Israel has been characterized as "trouble in Utopia" in a book of that title, a comprehensive look at Israel's sociopolitical system; as its authors, Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, put it, "the 'ungovernable' tendencies of the system reflect its overburdened condition which stems from [the state's] inability to meet contradictory political demands that are rooted in opposing fundamental ideological positions."[5] Their view implies that the autonomy of the Israeli state tends to be low, placing it at the mercy of rival groups that form what seems to be a civil society.[6]

This article's central argument is that the Israeli state continues to be a more powerful actor than any other societal formation, strata, or group in the collectivity. At the same time, it is less autonomous than certain groups and spheres, resulting from its dual identity, or what Hegel[7] calls a "historically produced sphere of ethical life," rooted in the identities of two rival civil societies (*bürgerliches gesellschaften*), one based on primordial ties and the other on civic orientations. To analyze this dynamic, the article provides a somewhat new approach to the Israeli collectivity and the general theory of the state, altering conventional and orthodox views that have dominated macrosociology, social history, political science, and historiography.[8]

Developing the argument involves introducing an additional dimension to the notion of the state that scholars of the state-society paradigm have neglected.[9] This additional dimension is the collective identity, or the unique fingerprint that distinguishes each state-society complex. Collective identities also tend to impose explicit and implicit rules of the game that establish the perceived degree of freedom permitted by the state as a power container.[10] As powerful and strong as it is, the state cannot be detached from the identities and mythic self-perceptions of the population composing the society, referring in this case to the population that considers itself to belong to the somewhat abstract term of Israel, which cuts across state, family, and civil institutions. We are also dealing with the notion of a nation-state—the term "nation" indicates a generalized kind of identity with some structural implications—wherein the identity of the Israeli state is primarily and ultimately a Jewish nation-state.[11] To understand the major developments of this state, its strengths and weaknesses, and its degree of

autonomy, we analyze the diverse meanings of the term "Jewish nation-state," together with the state's structural aspects.

By the term "state autonomy," I refer to the state's ability to prevent the unsolicited intervention of different segments of civil society and the imposition of particularistic definitions of the identity of the collectivity, by one or another segment of civil society. Any specific collective identity may determine the rules of the game and practices—the formal and constitutional as well the informal political culture—or of a certain distributive or coercive policy.[12] The social and political strength and salience of particularistic identities can be powerful enough to destroy states and recreate other strong ties and loyalties, as the dismantling of powerful multinational states, such the Soviet Union and Yugoslav Republic, demonstrate spectacularly. Particularistic groups associate themselves with ideologies that act as alternatives to the officially defined identity of the state. By contrast, with the term "state strength," designated as weak or strong, I refer to the state's ability to impose its own definition of identity on all segments of the society, in addition to its ability to enforce law and order, mobilize the population for war, and manage distributive and extractive fiscal policies.[13] Regarding the first part of the definition of the state, I adopt the traditional Weberian concept[14] that views the state as a corporate body with compulsory jurisdiction and a monopoly on the use of legitimate force over a territory and its population, which extends to all action that arises in the territory under the body's control. The state must have a continuous organizational structure, including at least military and police forces, a tax-collection and resource-redistribution apparatus (the state bureaucracy), a rule-making institution (parliamentary or not), a decision-making institution (rulers and their delegates), and a justice-making body (courts that act based on a written code). However, these traits constitute only one dimension of any state.

The second dimension, a state's collective identity, is what makes each state cognitively and culturally different from other states. The identity is the core that tends to persist when the government or even the state's regime changes.[15] It is not only a matter of convenience that each state has its own name, banner, symbols, and anthem. The puzzle of what makes the French state French and the Swiss state Swiss is much more fundamental. The collective identity determines not only the collectivity's geographical and societal boundaries,[16] basic credo, political culture, civic religion,[17] and civil society,[18] but also the rules of the game, stated or unstated—in short, the state's logic.

I understand a state's logic to mean the basic codes, traditions, rules, and practices that are unaffected by changes of government, administration, or regimes. The logics are imposed by geopolitical constraints rooted in the human and material resources that the state possesses—its identity and political culture—and are carried out mainly through the state's bureaucracy and other state agencies that represent their own and their class interests. Thus, the degree of change when a Tory government in the United Kingdom is replaced by a Labour government, or a Democratic administration in the United States gives way to a Republican one, is basically limited and restricted. Even after the Russian Empire became the Soviet Union and then returned back to the Russian state, some basic practices of the Russian state persisted and were even protected and amplified by the new regimes. This is not to say that the state's logic and the practices derived from the logic cannot change; however, the changes do not necessarily overlap with changes in government or regime. Some changes in regime are connected to previous changes in the state's logic, by and large influenced by the state's position as an actor in the international arena.

Origins of Israeli State and Society

It is generally assumed that the origins of the State of Israel are directly connected to the Zionist idea and its development as a social and political movement.[19] The Jewish state was created through several factors: political mobilization of persecuted Jews; encouragement of their immigration to Zion; and mobilization of the political support of the great powers, which created the political conditions needed to establish an integral Jewish society and polity on the soil of the so-called ancestral homeland. Although the Zionist idea and movement was needed to create a Jewish polity in Palestine, the British mandatory or colonial regime established after World War I was an equally important source of the Jewish state.[20] While the latter was intended to maintain and guarantee British interests in the Middle East, the British administration was also intended to lay the foundations for "the establishment in Palestine of a 'national home' for the Jewish people."[21]

Mandatory Palestine was a typical colonial state. Its residents—a Palestinian Arab majority and a growing Jewish minority—did not have the right to determine policies and could only exert influence through negotiating and bargaining with the colonial power, Great Britain, or through local agencies. Such efforts included the use of controlled and uncontrolled

violence or the threat to use it.[22] Like any other state, colonial Palestine maintained a regime of law and order through the mechanism of a local police force and other security agencies. The colonial state was also responsible for establishing a judicial system and passing laws that applied to the area within the colony's territorial boundaries; creating a modern bureaucracy; issuing coins and stamps, developing and implementing monetary and fiscal policies, and collecting systematic taxes;[23] funding typical state activities, such as road construction, telephone, telegraph, postal services, and radio broadcasting, through state revenues; providing education and health services; facilitating normal civilian life and minimal welfare; and granting concessions, including the rights to establish an electric company that rapidly electrified the country.

The British regime also supported both a cooperative marketing system for agricultural products and limited agrarian reform, mainly by encouraging the Palestinian Arab peasantry to redistribute their communal lands among households and registering them as private lands. In addition, it partially protected infant industries, loaned money directed for economic development, and extended credit for agricultural production. Passports and identity cards attesting to Palestinian citizenship were issued, and in only thirty years, the regime created not only a legal Palestinian identity and a limited notion of citizenship, but also a potential political identity for at least some of its Arab residents, who constituted the large majority of the population until the end of the colonial regime.[24] From this perspective, it was a strong state, attaining many of its objectives chiefly in the period up to 1936 until the start of the Arab Revolt.[25]

However, colonial Palestine was also a minimalist state. It intervened directly in only a limited number of areas, preferring to extend wide-ranging autonomy to the two major national communities, Arab and Jewish, under its territorial jurisdiction. Prima facie, following Taylor's definition,[26] both communal entities can be defined as civil societies in the maximalist meaning of the term: there were "free associations, not under tutelage of state power"; the communities as a whole could structure themselves, and in so doing, "significantly determine or affect the course of state policy." However, if we consider Hegel's idea that civil society is the societal space in between the family and the state, we see that both civil societies in the framework of colonial Palestine were much closer to family-like associations, based on primordial ties, than the rational secondary groups that civil-society theoreticians presume, implicitly or explicitly.

Before the creation of Mandatory Palestine and during its initial stage, the British and the Zionist movements operated according to two latent but jointly held assumptions, on the basis of which Great Britain agreed to take upon itself the mission of assisting in the establishment of a so-called Jewish national home. The first assumption was that by creating the necessary political preconditions, massive Jewish immigration—ranging into the hundreds of thousands, if not millions—would begin. This immigration presumed a radical change in the demographic and sociopolitical character of the territory, which would rapidly become an entity with a Jewish majority population. The second assumption was that the Arab population's resistance to the process of massive Jewish immigration would not be firm or organized, or alternatively, it would lack the political and organizational ability and skill to mold such resistance into effective political action.

Within a short period of time both of these assumptions were proved to be wrong. First, the Zionist movement's ability to recruit Jewish immigrants turned out to be limited, so that a fundamental and rapid demographic transformation of Palestine's Jewish population would not take place. Secondly, once Palestinian Arabs learned of the Balfour Declaration's content, they began to organize themselves for political protest and even active resistance, thereby sabotaging the British policy to bring about the creation of a "Jewish national home" and to turn the country's Arab majority into a minority within the context of a Jewish state.[27] Faced with strong Palestinian Arab opposition to Jewish mass immigration, as well as land transfers from Arab to Jewish control,[28] the Mandatory regime suffered from serious instability.[29] The resistance movement moved into high gear with the outbreak of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39.[30] Palestinian Arab demands centered on the issue of the transfer of powers and ultimately sovereignty to the national majority in Palestine. To attain this goal, Palestine's Arabs formulated interim demands: establishing a Legislative Council, elected democratically by the country's residents, that is, with an overwhelming Arab majority; terminating or at least severely restricting Jewish immigration; and enacting legislation that would prevent the transfer of land ownership from one community (the Arabs) to another (the Jews).[31]

When the British realized that their two basic assumptions were wrong, they adapted their policy to suit the reality. The principal objective of British policy in Palestine then became ensuring political stability in the area with the aim of continued control at a lower cost. In the wake of the Arab Revolt of 1936–39, and in view of the heavy economic and political burden

of quelling it, the idea of abandoning Palestine became an alternative option on the British agenda. However, the outbreak of World War II forced Britain to defer decisions about the future of the Mandate and Palestine. Eventually, once the British departed, the probable scenario would either be to transfer sovereignty to the hands of the national majority of the population—the Arabs of Palestine—or partitioning Palestine's territory, which was first proposed by the Palestine Royal Commission of 1937, better known as the Peel Commission.[32]Both the Palestinian Arab and Jewish communities, however, rejected partition as a viable option.

The Organized Jewish Community in Palestine
and the State in the Making

Starting in the mid-1920s, the Jewish political settler-immigrant community in Palestine was well aware of the strong possibility that, within a short period of time, sovereignty of the colonial state would pass into the hands of the territory's majority population, that is, its Arab residents. To prevent such an eventuality, the Jewish community had to establish a parallel framework to that of the colonial state; in other words, there was a need for a Jewish state in the making that could offer to the territory's Jewish residents most of the essential services provided by any state, such as defense, administrative machinery, education, welfare, health, and employment.[33] The state in the making could also mobilize the exclusive loyalty of the Jewish community's members without risking a head-on collision with the colonial state.

The colonial regime provided the Jewish immigrant-settler society with the security umbrella needed for the community to grow and develop despite the Arab majority's opposition, though the Jews were not always satisfied with the extent of British protection.[34] But for Palestine's Jewish community to exist as a political entity, it needed to accumulate institutionalized macropower, form an organized machinery of violence from the settler-immigrant society, and develop the ability to mobilize Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora for political support. Furthermore, the so-called organized *yishuv*—the Palestinian Jewish community—had to provide an immediate alternative to the colonial state, which was destined to disappear together with British rule. To create an entity with such considerable political potential, the Jewish community had to concentrate most of its institutions and strata within an autonomous state in the making. Thus, the boundaries

between state and society, or between the central political institutions and nonpolitical institutions, were completely blurred, and internal social control and surveillance intensified, by the political organizations and leadership of the Jewish community.

Knesset Israel, the quasi-governmental institution of the immigrant-settler community in Palestine, overlapped to a great extent not only with the leadership of the Zionist parties—after 1933, predominantly the Mapai party[35]—but also the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency, the local operational branch of the World Zionist Organization. Within this political complex was the Histadrut, or the General Labor Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine, the organization of which paralleled that of a state mechanism. In addition to the usual structure of the trade unions, the Histadrut included manufacturing plants and construction firms (such as Solel Boneh), marketing and purchasing cooperatives, an extensive bureaucracy, a comprehensive system of health and hospitalization services, a bank, an employment bureau, a newspaper and publishing company, a competitive and mass-oriented sports organization, and an entire subculture based on symbols—a red flag, anthems, ceremonies, parades, festivals, and holidays.[36]

Not all of the Jews in Palestine were part of the state in the making. For the local Orthodox Jewish community, including branches of Agudat Israel, the largest religious party in the Jewish world at the time, the colonial state was the sole recognized political authority.[37] The Zionist state in the making also excluded members of the Communist Party and to a certain extent some of those who belonged to the long-established Sephardic Jewish community, who were culturally and politically linked with the previous Ottoman Islamic regime. An issue that produced much controversy in the Jewish community of Palestine was the communal position of the Revisionist Zionist movement, which opposed the socialist-led coalition in the World Zionist Organization by arguing for a more assertive Zionist policy and a larger share of power, positions, and material resources. The municipalities were another highly crystallized and institutionalized portion of the Jewish community in Palestine. Even though they were not fully integrated into the state in the making, they held a central position in the polity mainly because they enjoyed the advantage of independent financial resources. The municipal councils, primarily those with a majority comprising the middle-class, nonsocialist, petite bourgeoisie, such as the municipalities of Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan, were autonomous to some extent from the British and the Jewish political center, and mediated between the colonial state and the organized Jewish community.

The very presence of these excluded groups indicates how clearly the boundaries of the state in the making were demarcated.

Although the organized Jewish community was not without its internal struggles and tensions, the community had evolved unique safety valves to prevent confrontations from intensifying. One mechanism was a coalition of benefactors who raised external capital through national funds, collected by various worldwide Zionist organizations and distributed by the local leadership. This was needed because the Zionist venture was a uniquely nonprofit and noneconomic settler movement that chose its target territory not with a view to wealthy and abundant land and natural and human resources, but instead at the behest of a nationalistic vision of utopia, driven by religious and primordial sentiments.[38]

The State

With its establishment in May 1948, in the course of what is referred to as the War of Independence for part of the territory originally included in the mandate, the State of Israel set two priority goals: to establish clear-cut boundary lines between state and society and to obtain an optimal level of autonomy for state institutions apart from other historical foci of power in society. In the pre-state era, the boundaries between these foci and the state in the making were blurred or, in some cases, nonexistent. The Israeli state established its boundaries gradually and systematically to avoid instability and the weakening of its own position in relation to the colonial power centers. At the same time, it was in the state's best interest to maintain its alliance with groups that could ultimately assist the state to penetrate new areas and peripheries.

The ability to extend state autonomy to and control new peripheries was crucial because Israel was rapidly turning into a country of mass immigration and the political and cultural assumptions of the different groups of new immigrants were strikingly different from those of the pre-1948 Jewish community in Palestine.[39] Additional groups incorporated into the state included about 150,000 Arabs who remained within the territory of the newly established state and the Jewish Orthodox non-Zionist groups, which de jure did not recognize the secular Jewish state.[40] At first glance, it would appear that the state succeeded in controlling the new peripheries and preserving the original distribution of power in society. Both the popular image of that early era in Israel's history and the findings of social science research studies

indicate that the state appeared to steer the process while also maintaining a high level of autonomy vis-à-vis other actual and potential foci of power.[41] Control was concentrated in Mapai, which shared power in a coalition with the Histadrut, the Workers' Society (Hevrat Ha'Ovdim, or Meshek Ovdim, the complex of labor union–owned companies),[42] and the Jewish Agency.[43] The power of these four partners appeared to be impregnable.

The leaders of the ruling coalition were members of a veteran elite group with certain salient sociological characteristics: they were all of East European (primarily Polish or Russian) origin and had arrived in Palestine in the second or third wave of Zionist immigration, between 1904 and 1917. Together with their children and with a number of individuals who had been co-opted into the elite group, the leaders constituted an oligarchy with an apparently undisputed and unassailable hegemony over Israeli society.[44] This hegemony was expressed in setting the rules of the game for cooperatives active in agriculture[45] and industry,[46] controlling and allocating state resources, and forming a new Hebrew culture, a hidden and explicit political agenda, as the military was used as a tool of control and Israelization.[47] To legitimate its dominant position, the oligarchy pointed to its successes, real or apparent, in a variety of areas: creating a society based on mass immigration and a common (Hebrew) language;[48] transforming the class structure that had been prevalent in Diaspora Jewry; developing the image of the Zionist pioneer, the *halutz*, and the native-born Palestinian (subsequently Israeli) Jew, the *sabra*, blurring the meaning of the Arab-indigenous population; gathering exiles into a melting-pot process; developing modern armed forces, comprised of skillful warriors; effectively handling the Palestinian Arab challenge; and succeeding on the battlefield in a hostile Arab environment.

To the above impressive accomplishments one must add what the leadership termed the "unprecedented success" of absorbing the waves of mass immigration during the 1950s while maintaining the basic contours of pre-1948 Zionist society, depicted as a unified and almost ideal, if not heroic, society.[49] The elite group also popularized the axiom that the oligarchy's values—Western, modern, egalitarian, achievement-oriented, and Zionist—must be accepted by other groups in Israeli society, even if such groups were not represented in the various power centers, and even if implementing these values was not always in the best interests of outsider, marginal, or marginalized groups. Included as outsiders were the elite cluster of old, established Sephardic families; Palestine's organized non-Zionist Jewish community, which predated the Zionist pioneers' arrival in the country; the

members of the pre-Zionist colonies (*moshavot*) founded in the late nineteenth century; most of the urban bourgeoisie; and members of non–East European immigrant groups, that is, immigrants from Central and West Europe, Yemen, and in the post-1948 period, Asia and North Africa.[50] The most completely marginalized group were the Arab citizens of the state.[51]

Among the first practical measures that the fledgling Jewish state undertook was to transfer rapidly most of the key personnel of the Jewish Agency, affiliated with the World Zionist Organization, to leadership roles within the state apparatus, and concurrently to separate the Jewish Agency and the state. In accord with the Status of the Jewish Agency Act, the state assigned to the Jewish Agency functions that were clearly defined and that were, in essence, marginal within the state.[52] In this manner, the state sought to secure its autonomy from both the World Zionist Organization and world Jewry. However, a more complex strategy was required to wrest independence from the institutions and subculture of the Workers' Society, which represented the interests not only of the Histadrut, but also of other organizations: Mapai and the remaining Histadrut-oriented political parties, as well as the pioneering Zionist rural settlement movements. When David Ben-Gurion established the ideology of state autonomy, coined statism or *mamlachtiut*, "kingdomship," in Hebrew—accompanied with some degree of militarism[53]—as both a rallying symbol and an immediate objective, he aimed to transfer control of key institutions from special-interest groups to the state. However, it was still not clear who would be ruling whom. Would the party (Mapai), with its dominant position in the labor union, utilize the powerful new instrument of the state to continue to control Israel's power positions? Or, conversely, would the party and the Workers' Society become the informal operational branch of the state?[54]

In line with the concept of state sovereignty, which became synonymous with the state's autonomy, both the pre-state paramilitary organizations, such as the Haganah and Palmach (affiliated to a fragment of the socialist party system, Mapam), and the rightist revisionists, Etzel and Lechi, were disbanded; 90 percent of the lands, key industries, and the school system were nationalized (or "statized"); as was control over the distribution of external resources, such as donations from world Jewry, reparations from Germany, and at a later stage, foreign aid and grants from the United States. Nonetheless, the struggle for control of Israel's society and economy that ensued between the state and the dominant party, Mapai, did not conclude decisively during the 1950s. There were three reasons that the tug-of-war continued.

First, most of those who occupied key positions in the state apparatus also held key positions in the party. Second, strata totally dependent on the state had not yet been created. Third, the labor union and traditional ruling party held sway over vital mechanisms of control and sociopolitical mobilization and penetrated the new peripheries, which the state could not readily dispense with in light of the waves of nonselective mass immigration.

The symbiosis created between state and party was also a convenient medium for enabling the Arab minority that had remained within the boundaries of the new state to be absorbed within Israeli society and the new economic structure, though such absorption was partial and did not let them compete in the labor market with the protected new Jewish immigrants.[55] Due to the symbiosis, the activities of this minority group could be monitored. Only through the four-way coalition of the state, the Jewish Agency, the party, and the Histadrut, and the cooperative frameworks established between these mechanisms, could a drastic change—that is, the possible chaos of destabilization—in Israeli society be prevented. In addition, both the coalition and the cooperative frameworks ensured the preservation of the pre-state distribution of power, even though the emergence of the new state inevitably posed certain threats to the legitimacy of the previous distributive system, entailing major demographic and cultural changes, a total redrawing of ethnic and national boundaries, and a dramatic alteration in the structure of interests.

Despite the threat, the establishment of the state and the concomitant absorption of a mass immigration that doubled the country's population in only three years initiated an accelerated process of social mobility within the veteran Jewish population, almost totally transforming Israeli society's class structure. In addition to increasing significantly both the power and bureaucratic structures of the state, the influx of immigrants led to an impressive upsurge in the number of citizens that depended directly on the state. The period saw the creation of large state and public bureaucracies that absorbed the overwhelming majority of veteran Jewish members of the collectivity. Thus, many of the collectivity's members became officials with the civilian or government security agencies—that is, civil defense, policing, or intelligence—or they became teachers, police officers, physicians, dentists, lawyers, accountants, academics, mass-media personnel, and career and noncommissioned officers in the Israeli armed forces. Many of these individuals became part of the country's social elite, but other became active economic entrepreneurs, subsidized by the state, who created a new

middle class.[56] This new middle class balanced the economic and political power bases of both the Workers Society and the bourgeoisie that was already in place when Israel proclaimed its independence. In contrast with the established bourgeoisie dating back to the pre-state period, however, the new entrepreneurial class, which lacked the necessary financial resources, was completely dependent on the state, and like the Worker's Society, required direct or indirect access to public funds or concessions.

The new immigrants, especially those from Middle Eastern countries and North Africa, were expected to become a part of the working class in rural and urban areas and to be absorbed by the labor market in agriculture, industry, and services. As the immigrants were isolated from the veteran community socially and geographically, they were provided with separate social services that further increased their isolation and dependence. Unlike the other actors in the game, the new immigrant class was powerless, to the extent of being unable to translate its adjustment difficulties into a mythology replete with heroic symbols, as happened for some of the previous waves of immigration.[57] Many of the early Zionist settlers had not only mythologized their struggle, but had gone one step further: They had managed to convert the Zionist pioneer myth into capital, status, and power by establishing multiple institutions and securing the leadership of those institutions.[58]

Social differentiation, gaps, diverse strata, and political subgroups began to form within the new immigrant population as part of the process of ecological and social isolation.[59] The division of the immigrant population into subgroups tended to take place along ethnic lines. The East Europeans usually distanced themselves from the Asians and North Africans in the pace and nature of their social mobility.[60] The state mobilized these newly formed strata in the immigrant population to carry out tasks assigned to them, and in this way, they balanced to the strata of the older, more established segments of the country's Jewish population and contributed significantly to growth in the state's autonomy and power. The ways that new immigrants were incorporated into Israeli society strengthened the symbiotic relationship between the party and the state.

Obviously, all of the above processes were neither planned nor consciously willed into reality, but rather were the outcome of the dynamics of control over various resources or the routes of access to these resources, through language, culture, skills, personal connections, and so forth. In other words, the processes resulted primarily from the inner logic involved

in the building of the Jewish nation-state and from the desire to enable the state to function autonomously, without becoming an agent for the interests of other groups. At the ideological level, the concept of Zionism was reduced to the task of building up a strong state,[61] while the other goals of Zionist ideology— welfare, quality of life—became secondary. It was felt that only the state could ensure both the security and the continued existence of the country's Jewish community in the face of the protracted conflict with a hostile environment.

As additional groups came into being in Israel, and as more established groups gradually accumulated power, the link between the state and the party began to weaken. The state was not trying to free itself from the Mapai's support; the party simply lost strength as it became progressively more difficult for the party to rally support among new immigrants. In time, Mapai turned into a financial burden, which the state shouldered.

The fading symbiosis between the state and the party exploded into open conflict with the so-called Lavon Affair (1960–61).[62] When David Ben-Gurion and his young lions were kept from the power centers, the state's strength and autonomy diminished in favor of the party. For a brief period, Mapai seemed to regain its hegemonic position, and Israel was perceived as a party-state that maintained a formal democracy with formal rights, such as the franchise, to the Jewish majority, while ignoring important citizen rights, especially those of minority and marginal groups.[63] Although Israelis voted in free elections and enjoyed certain freedoms, they could not remove the ruling party from its position of power because of the country's sociopolitical structure and the oligarchy's cultural hegemony. As far as the symbiosis between the party (which supported and was supported by the Worker's Society) and the state was concerned, the Mapai-Histadrut establishment partnership appeared to have regained dominance and the country's political situation looked increasingly similar to what had been current in the pre-1948 period, when the state, or rather the state in the making, was run by the party.[64]

In 1977, the situation changed dramatically. The process that began shortly after the 1967 war then reached its culmination, and the new middle class, which had abandoned the patronage of Mapai—in its new guise as Alignment, which included Mapam, a party to the left of Mapai—directed its support to a fledgling party, the Democratic Movement for Change.[65] When Mapai's archrival, Herut, in a joint electoral listing with the Liberal party and other small factions called Likud, formed the government in 1977,

the link between the state and Mapai was severed, and both the state and Mapai were weakened.

During Likud's first decade in power, its bloc, consisting of Herut and its junior partners, failed to replace Mapai in an alternative system of linkage with the state. Rather, the state managed to utilize some of Likud's ability to reach socioeconomic strata that had previously been alienated from the state, increasing its base of support primarily among second- and third-generation Israelis of Mizrahi Jewish background.[66] Both the 1973 war and the 1982 war in Lebanon considerably damaged the image of the state as an efficient implementer of rationally formulated policies, diminishing the state's power and, to an extent, its very legitimacy compared with other groups. At the same time, however, this diminution of the state's power and legitimacy did not bring about the concomitant growth of a new dominant political party, social agency, or socioeconomic stratum rooted in civil society that could compete with the state in efficiency and strength to supply citizens' needs, or produce any alternative social order or fundamental changes in Israel's foreign or domestic policy.

The Palestinian uprising of 1987 and its spread into the Jewish territories, the need to absorb about 450,000 new Jewish immigrants from the former territories of the Soviet Union, the economic and social hardships that threaten the delicate fabric of Jewish society, recent changes in the world political system following the collapse of the Soviet superpower and the results of the first Gulf war, and the American pressure to link aid in the form of loan guarantees to the peace process have significantly changed the state's political calculus. These factors led to a change of government in 1992, another upheaval of the Labor (previously Mapai) party, which declared a change in national priorities. This was a code for accelerating the peace talks with the Arab states, accepting the principle of territories in exchange for peace (see Chapter Six), and creating bargaining terms under which Israel could grant autonomy and a degree of self-rule to the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. In fact, the autonomy proposed to the Palestinians does not change substantially the nature of Israeli dominance, and remains fully consistent with the original aims of the control system. Even in peacemaking, the Israeli state still relies on the traditional stance of negotiating from a position of strength, using a military-minded approach,[67] as was demonstrated by the expulsion of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas activists in December 1992.

From the State of Israel to the Israeli State—and Back?

The process of transition from a nation-state to a de facto binational state began immediately before the 1967 war. During that period, when it became apparent that the sociopolitical structure of Israel's Jewish society was changing, the country's first national unity government was established, and the Herut, whose ideals and institutions were traditionally stigmatized, were instead legitimized. Its members, who had always been considered outsiders, were allowed to become a part of the legitimate power system. Israel's spectacular victory in the 1967 war reinforced the image of the state as an effective actor. The state, and not the party, had reaped victory, created a sense of security, brought about a return to the Land of Israel's historic borders, and bolstered the nation's pride.[68]

A new factor gaining prominence on Israel's stratification map was the rapid buildup of its strength, was tied mainly to the state, rather than to the party. This was evidenced by the country's military-industrial complex, comprising the armed force and its elite of senior officers, officials in the foreign and defense ministries, the country's military industries and big businesses, private and public, such as the Histadrut enterprises, and cultural elite groups, which included members of the mass media.[69] Despite their Mapai roots, the components of the complex were essentially state-oriented. Some were operational arms of the state or part of the state's growing bureaucracy. Others were private economic entrepreneurs who derived their funding primarily from direct or indirect state subsidies, or received concessions or special benefits from the state. What is common to all of the individual and group members of the complex is their ultimate loyalty to the state, rather than to any specific interest group, including the party.

While the locus of power appeared to shift so gradually as to be almost indiscernible, in actual fact the shift was built into the situation and some elements of the initial political culture from the start. Since June 1967, the entire area of colonial Palestine, with slight additions if we take into account the Golan Heights, has been annexed de facto to Israel. This annexation did not come about because of a decision from any authority, but rather because no alternative decision was made, and because no individual group had the strength to make such a decision. From this period onward, Israel was transformed into a de facto binational Jewish-Arab state, in which all political

power—political rights, citizenship, human rights, access to resources, and the right to define the collective identity—has been concentrated on one side of the newly created entity. Such hegemonic control (keeping Gramsci[70] in mind), was in the possession of the Jewish state, and the situation marks the difference between a de jure and a de facto binational state. One component of this state, namely, the state's veteran (from 1948) Arab citizens, is accorded rights and access to material resources, but is absolutely never granted a share of the symbolic resources of domination.[71]

The identity of the state was constructed as Jewish by means of various symbols and codes,[72] such as its flag, national anthem,[73] construction of its history, official days of celebration and memorial, and calendar.[74] The right to belong to the Israeli state was extended to Jews all over the world, by definition included in the Israeli collectivity. On the other hand, for the Palestinian inhabitants of the state, human rights are restricted by being conditional on good behavior and loyalty to the state, and conferred in a selective manner.

An immediate reply might be that if not for external constraints, the state might have annexed these territories de jure as well. Such annexation could have been effective immediately after the 1967 war and on various subsequent occasions. With the rise of the rightist Likud Party to power in 1977, many people expected or were apprehensive about a formal declaration of annexation, which would have been consistent with the party's platform. However, it is not accidental that this annexation did not come about, even under the circumstances attendant to the formation of an extreme nationalist government. The state was neither able nor willing to declare annexation, nor could it enact a general law covering the territories conquered in 1967, because this would have opened a Pandora's box, giving rise to the demand for civic and political rights on the part of the Palestinian population of the territories, and to a more subtle and sophisticated struggle for the entire territory of historic Palestine. The management by legal means of a conflict over political and civic rights from within—in a state that defines itself as democratic—is much more complex and uncertain than the continuation of a power struggle, conducted by means of violence, in which the Jewish side enjoys a decisive advantage. It is no wonder, then, that a number of Palestinian intellectuals considered privately the idea of proposing to Israel a formal and complete annexation of the occupied territories,[75] given the absence of any tangible possibility of expelling masses of Palestinians from Israel's spheres of control. From

the point of view of state building, a de facto political annexation, accompanied by an autonomous settler movement, as has been going on since 1967, is the optimal solution. The status quo amounts to a more efficient and enabling form of annexation than any legalized, declared sort of annexation does.

Israel's polices have changed since the 1992 elections, but the results of the new policies from the perspective of state building are predictably familiar. Efforts were made to differentiate between occupied territories and administered peoples[76] by including in the autonomy offered to Palestinians only those located in densely populated areas, excluding the Jordan River valley, which was defined as a vital security zone, as well as East Jerusalem. The result would create two overpopulated Palestinian enclaves, each separated territorially from one another and from any other Arab-controlled space, forming a divided Palestinian autonomous entity—a reincarnation of the 1967–1992 state of affairs, in which the Israelis continued to control the entire area of colonial Palestine while refraining from building settlements in the most populated areas, but not in the other territorial spaces. However, the dynamics of the peace process, the need to support the mainstream Palestinian leadership in the face of the emerging Islamic fundamentalist movements, and the changing world order should force Israel toward a much more flexible policy.

The occupied territories that were included within the domain of Israeli control since 1967 do not amount to a conventional colony within Israel, as several scholars and thinkers have claimed.[77] A pure colony is a form of political, social, and territorial arrangement, which, despite the foreign control that is imposed upon it, is located outside the boundaries of the colonial state itself, and the state's relation toward it is essentially instrumental. The West Bank and Gaza Strip are an integral part of the building and expansion efforts of the territorial self-image of at least one of the versions of the collective identity of this immigrant-settler state.[78] In some cases, when a colony begins to be a heavy burden for the colonial power, the forces controlling the state begin to make cost-benefit calculations, and if these parties conclude that the business is not worth it, they leave the territory as fast as possible.[79] However, such parties will never concede control of a part perceived as integral to the state itself, even if maintaining control entails costs greater than any benefit that comes from possession; in this case, the price of maintaining the territory does not matter.[80]

The Dual Collective Identity of the State and Civil Societies

Israel possesses two souls that are in continuous tension but also complement each other. Israel defines itself as a Jewish nation-state that potentially belongs to the entire Jewish people. On one hand, this is a very broad definition of Israel's sociopolitical boundaries, which have expanded to contain large populations. Many of the state's symbolic owners are not even citizens, let alone residents, nor do they live within the boundaries of the state's jurisdiction. One may wonder how many of these extraterritorial potential citizens consider themselves to be symbolic owners at all. On the other hand, the definition also restricts Israel's boundaries by excluding both the non-Jewish citizens within the pre-1967 borders and the non-Jewish citizens of the occupied territories controlled by the community-state. This unique situation arises as a result of two factors: the state in the making's ideological sources and patterns of resource mobilization, and the impact of the waves of mass immigration during the early years of statehood. At the same time, Israel defines itself as a democratic state based on Western types of parliamentary and legislative authority, with participation in the state based on a universalistic liberal citizenship—meaning that all citizens, individually, are equal before the law and have equal citizen rights.[81]

This contradiction results from Zionism's defining itself as the national movement of the Jewish people, while having many and varied sources, from modern nationalism to liberalism to different nuances of socialism. One of its principal sources is the Jewish religion, mainly its nineteenth-century East European version. One can distinguish several ways in which religion influenced both Zionism and Israel. First, while the Jewish religion has always regarded Zion as the target territory of Jewish immigration and redemption, the Jewish people's return was designated only in the utopian messianic era. Zionism's decision to adopt this designation from the Jewish religion in its narrow meaning, or from Judaism as a civilization in its wider meaning, was made on ideological rather than political or material grounds. Zion or Palestine was not chosen for rational economic or political reasons, such as cheap, fertile land, abundant natural resources, political opportunities, or availability of native labor.

Second, Palestine lacked all or most of the factors that attracted immigrants to North and South America, North and South Africa, Australia, or New Zealand.[82] Because it required investments that were totally out of proportion to the expected profits, Zionism's choice of Palestine points to the

essentially messianic character of the movement, which had to base itself, at least initially, on highly selective immigration.

Third, many of the key symbols used by Zionism and subsequently the Israeli state were drawn from the storehouse of the Jewish religion. The language that Zionism adopted was Hebrew, the language of the sacred Old Testament, which had a strong theological content. The revival work was carried out by secular Jews who referred to these texts more as historical documents, though at same time, as myth or as folklore.[83]

Fourth, at a somewhat later stage in Zionism's history, the Jewish religion was the sole common denominator among immigrants from various sociocultural backgrounds. In addition, the Jewish religion, in a somewhat more generalized form that is carried also by secular Jews—a contradiction in terms because the Zionist revolution saw Jews as a nation, not a religion—provides a common external and mythical enemy, the Gentile's world, which is commonly suspected of harboring anti-Semitic intentions and plots rooted in a somewhat popular Judaism. According to the Jewish religion, one could divide humanity into two parts: the Jews and the others. This division assigned a deterministic character to the Arab-Jewish conflict, which was perceived as an eternal struggle for survival of the Jewish people, or at least a struggle that would be engaged in until the start of the messianic era.

Fifth, the Jewish religion, adopted by the secular state, was the sole criterion for determining the boundaries of Zionist society. No Israeli civic holiday is commonly celebrated by all of the country's citizens. Intended to be a civic festive occasion for everyone, Israel's Day of Independence is a bitter reminder to Palestinian Arabs of their political and social devastation (*al-Nakba*). All of Israel's other holidays and memorial days are of significance only to Jews. Memorial Day (for Israel's fallen soldiers) focuses on Jewish war dead, although Druze and Circassian war dead are also remembered.[84] Similarly, Holocaust Memorial Day is dedicated to the memory of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, mainly European Jews. Although aimed at both Jews and Arabs, May Day, which is primarily a class rather than a state holiday, is increasingly fading into the woodwork with the shift to the right of the Israeli center of political gravity, and with the recent collapse of Communist regimes in various parts of the world.

Sixth, as the Arab-Jewish conflict in general, and the Palestinian-Jewish conflict in particular, escalated in the last three decades, the legitimacy of a Jewish nation-state in the Middle East has become increasingly problematic.

With its rallying cry of historical rights to the land, the Jewish religion provides a great deal of legitimacy at the general cultural level and at the level of various religious subcultures that deny the existence of any legitimacy problem whatsoever. According to their ideologies, if the God of Israel promised the Land of Canaan to Abraham and his children, the question of Israel's right to exist is a nonissue. Previously occupying only marginal positions in Israel's political system, the representatives of the country's religious subcultures have begun to move closer to the center, both symbolically and in their position regarding other political power centers.

Other ideologies, primarily socialism in its various forms, secular nationalism, and liberalism, were major factors in developing Israeli identity, and to an extent, they neutralized the religious influence (see Chapter Four). When the country's political system was still in its formative phase, socialism provided asceticism, egalitarianism, and the drive to cooperative effort, primarily through the sociopolitical activism of the "here and now" approach. Nationalism supplied the political framework and the institutional tools for both the religious and socialist elements. Liberalism contributed its universal outlook, giving Israel's evolving culture a Western orientation, enabling the entire system to locate itself within the Western world-system, and ensured a continuing link between Israel and its principal competitor in the Jewish world, the North American Jewish community.[85] At the same time, the claims of liberalism enabled the newly created Jewish political entity to detach itself from its Arab environment and from Eastern Jewish immigrants.

Thus, within the Israeli identity, there was a tense but ongoing dialectic relationship between four components: religion (Judaism), socialism, nationalism, and liberalism. At the political and social levels, however, these four sources became sub-identities, around which various political and social subcultures and segments of civil society and political groups formed. These subcultures carried on a historic struggle among themselves for hegemony within the Israeli political culture. In the initial stages, the state in the making and its society primarily evolved under the control of socialist groups, although the collective identity included nationalist elements and reflected coalitions with groups that articulated universalist ideologies.

The political dominance of the socialist, nationalist, and liberal ingredients of the collective identity led to a weakening of Zionism's religious foundations and encouraged many to promulgate the idea of a secular Zionist society in Palestine. In 1948 the gates opened, and waves of nonselective mass immigration began to arrive, bringing with them a considerable num-

ber of immigrants who came to Israel mainly for traditional or religious reasons. This period saw the formation of new potential power foci and societal groups, who were inclined to define the Jewish community in the Holy Land in more religious terms, and in terms of sacred history. Combined with nationalism, these new groups entered the political and social spheres by establishing alliances according to their religious-national orientations. The alliances were essentially a protest against the Mapai–Histadrut–Jewish Agency complex that had kept the traditional religious immigrants on the sidelines of society, far from the sources of power, from access to material resources, and even from the establishment's central symbols.

The Territorial Dimension and the Struggle for Hegemony

Before 1967, the Zionist movement had managed to build up a Jewish political entity on the territorial margins of the Promised Land of Zion, namely, the coastal plain, which biblical mythology suggested belonged primarily to the Philistines. Because of the structure of the local Palestinian society, Jewish immigrants could not reach the central hilly areas excepting the region around Jerusalem, which constituted the historical and mythical territory of the biblical kingdoms of Judea and Israel.[86] The development of the State of Israel alongside the sanctified territory of the Promised Land, but not inside the core territory, helped the Zionist sociopolitical system to create a secular society and protect the state's autonomy from pressure by religious and nationalist groups. With the capture of the West Bank and its redefinition as Judea and Samaria, the situation changed dramatically. The encounter between the sacred and the mundane provided several advantages to groups that could exchange holiness for participation in the system, and these advantages continued to increase within the context of the community-state.

Before the 1967 war, elitist religious groups had been relegated to the periphery of the political and cultural system, even though the source of these groups was identical to that of the country's middle and state-oriented classes. Once the West Bank was under Israeli control, these groups began to move within the system toward the symbolic center, and at the same time, to gather political strength, converting their closeness to holiness into political power. There was also an increase in the prestige and power of the Likud party, the successor of the right-wing Revisionist Zionism and later the Herut party, which knew how to establish attractive alliances

with traditional and religious groups and best use overt or covert protest based on Jewish ethnic and religious codes. All of the groups allied with Herut had one common grievance: They had been marginalized by the establishment, which was perceived as class-oriented, socialist, and secular. The Herut-led coalition produced, on the one hand, groups of settlers determined to expand the state's territorial control into the occupied territories, and on the other hand, pressure groups demanding that the state change its basis from a class and socialist orientation to a more religious one. It should be noted that the coalition resulted from the convergence of several struggles—class, ethnic, political, and religious—and was not the outcome simply of a struggle among ideologies and political cultures.

The transformation of the State of Israel into the Land of Israel (see Chapter Four) as the cultural and religious encoding for the new Israeli state[87] did not only transform the nation-state into a binational entity, but also clearly signaled that the power relations within the Israeli Jewish community had changed. The origins of several elite groups that pushed immediately after the 1967 war to redefine the collectivity's boundaries and its basic identity, founding the Land of Israel Movement, were from the mainstream secular activist segments of labor and socialist Zionism.[88] Only when the elites of the old regime were weakened by the 1973 war did the political and symbolic struggle to implement the Land of Israel ideology pass to the national-religious and secular-nationalist elite groups, who then transformed the struggle into an internal struggle over the hegemonic rule of the collectivity.

The state also established a new coalition with new strata, as the inner logic of the state—in terms of both the identity and structural dimensions—necessitated the evolution of a binational situation, defined permanently as temporary. To enable the Jewish state to continue defining itself as a Jewish nation-state, the Israeli state maintains control of these territories without annexing them. At the same time, the state carries out several important activities within the captured territories, controlling land transactions, monitoring how water resources are utilized, and introducing settlers from preferred population groups within the dominant society. The Palestinian residents of the occupied territories constitute both a labor and a consumer market for Israel, concomitantly with the establishment of a dual market alongside the national origins.[89] According to the relevant statistics, the profits to the state and to various socioeconomic groups within the state from controlling the territories exceeded the costs up to the end of 1987.

The State under Pressure

Because of the binational situation, two subcultures have crystallized within the dominant Jewish society to challenge the continuation of the status quo in the occupied territories. Each of the subcultures has its own institutions and set of motives for demanding an end to the binational situation. One subculture wishes to annex the territories; its ultimate goal, sometimes overt, sometimes covert, is to create conditions suitable for transferring all or most of the local Palestinian Arab population to lands outside of the Land of Israel, and to resettle Jews in their place. This subculture only partially reflects the state logic at a given time when faced with the complementary state logic of a voluntary reduction in state control of resources, such as land, natural resources, water sources, markets for products created by dominating another people, and cheap labor, so long as the perceived costs of maintaining control of the territories remain within tolerable limits.

Even if the Israel case does not fit precisely the colonial paradigm, some of the processes are familiar from colonial regimes, such as that France in Algeria and that of England in Ireland. This ultimately produces a situation in which the settlers, who are subsidized and supported by the state and serve as its local agents, force the state to act against its own inner logic and best interests. Thus, the state is forced, either formally or informally, to annex the colony as part of its ongoing state-building efforts, or to continue possession, even when the costs of doing so exceed the benefits, and even when such action threatens the very existence of the mother country.[90] Even when the costs are high, continuing control is generally justified by a mixed bag of pragmatic and security-related rationales and ideological or religious concepts that touch on the very nature of the mother state's collective identity.

Another partial aspect of the Jewish state's inner logic is represented by the second subculture, the basic assumptions of which form a worldview that is more or less antithetical to the orientations of its opponent culture. These assumptions include the idea that peacefully resolving the conflicts between Jews and Arabs, and Jews and Palestinians, is possible though not easily accomplished. The solutions depend, among other things, on the political behavior of Israel. Another assumption is that the Arab-Jewish and Palestinian-Jewish conflicts are not different in nature from other negotiable disputes, and have little in common with the persecution of Jewish people in the past. Third, peace is one of the most desirable collective goals

because its achievement is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for attaining other goals, such as a more egalitarian society, economic growth, immigrant absorption, improved welfare, and technological, scientific, cultural, and artistic progress. Fourth, both civil society and state have a civic basis, and membership is based on citizenship; it is not necessarily a relation of non-particularist attributes, such as religious, ethnic, or racial affiliations. Fifth, citizenship is conditional, as it depends on fulfilling mutual obligations. The state must provide its citizens with internal security, law and order, protection from external threats, well being, and all generally accepted civil and human rights. Citizens are obliged mainly to obey the state's laws, perform military duties if needed, and pay reasonable taxes. Sixth, the existence of the state and membership in the collectivity are not ultimate values, but functions of the quality of life that the state offers its citizens. And finally, Israel is supposed to be a part of Western civilization; as an accepted member in this club, it assures a wide measure of multiculturalism and social pluralism.

The subculture described above basically perceives the world system, especially the Western world and North America, as a friendly reference culture. Yet, as most sectors of Israel's political economy seem to be more like those of developing nations, the culture favors the intervention of forces from the outside world to assure the economic, political, and cultural improvement of Israeli society as the subculture defines it. The world system is perceived as a potential ally in the subculture's struggle to gain more influence in Israeli society.

Each of the subcultures adopts its own methods for recruiting state support for its cause, and believes that the rationale for support lies in the state's own value system. In doing so, each subculture provides an authentic but partial gloss of Israel's collective identity as a Jewish nation-state, ignoring the fact that a significant portion of the state's identity, symbols, and decisions regarding areas targeted for Zionist settlement can be traced to Jewish ethnic religion. That said, both subcultures believe in Israel's exclusive Jewish communal identity, and both are determined to ensure that Israel will not become a multinational state in formal terms, although it is a multinational state in fact. All of the other reasons cited for returning to the status quo ante of the nation-state—preserving democratic values and public morality—are not part of exclusively political considerations, but rather are concerned with the nature and procedures of the state's regime. The reasons a subculture gives for its position can be considered of

a purely political nature only when they are directly related to the possible weakening or demise of the state.

At the same time, it cannot be argued that a state's policies will always be determined on the basis of its unique political logic. If changes are evident in the state's cost-benefit balance or in the group's interests on which the statist logic is based, state policies will be altered accordingly. The alteration might even be based on the values represented by one of the two opposing subcultures, based on an alternative definition of identity—as seen, at least on the rhetorical level, in the changes in the priorities of the state following the temporary return of the Labor party to power in 1992. However, policy change does not always occur, even when the circumstances justify it, nor is there any guarantee that the state always adopts a pragmatic policy enabling it to adapt to new circumstances. Like any organization, the state can be the cause of its own weakening in terms of overall position, surveillance ability, or resource mobilization, or even the cause of its own destruction. We have the example of the ruin of the Christian Marionette polity in Lebanon, which was unable to resist the temptation to expand into areas populated by Muslims and Druze, alongside the more recent examples from the Balkans and the former Soviet state.

There are two diametrically opposed ways of reasoning in Israel, each of them derived from an alternative definition of collective identity. Although each of these lines of reasoning represents only one aspect of the state's logic, it is very convenient for the state to have the two existing side by side, as from the perspective of statist logic, they complement and balance each other. When it appears that the opposed sides are deadlocked and that decisions cannot be made even in the matter of resolving internal conflict, the state assumes a position of strength. as the political logic apparently contains, in a dialectical manner, both lines of opposite reasoning, perception, and construction of the sociopolitical reality.

However, in the present situation facing Israel, the amount of stateness is somewhat diminished. The reason for the diminishing effect is that the state has extended its control over a population that is relatively large in proportion to the size of the Israeli population, and which completely rejects the idea of being a part of that state. Furthermore, the population presently under control does not accept the legitimacy of Israeli authority, producing a vacuum of legitimacy in the territorial dimension of the state. Moreover, between 1967 and 1992, the autonomy of the state was continuously diminished, in the face of ideological groups that stressed the primordial Jewish

state identity. In addition to producing a profound ideological crisis within the Israeli public, the situation calls into question the authority and efficiency of the Israeli regime in general. The crisis, however, stems primarily from the fact that Israel is a strong state, capable of maintaining the status quo, rather than from any apparent weakness on Israel's part in the areas of making and implementing decisions and resolving internal conflicts.

The state institutionalizes conflicts not because it cannot solve them, but rather because it finds that the conflicts are conveniently suited to its own purposes. When a state institutionalizes conflicts that are not beyond its capacity for resolution, its power is augmented and the other competing agencies on the sociopolitical map are neutralized. The 1992 election was seen as an opportunity for the state-related societal groups again to increase the autonomy of the state vis-à-vis groups associated with primordial parts of its identity. But in fact, the expected slowing down in the process of the state's expansion into Palestinian spaces by freezing settlement efforts, and the reversal of the process of integrating the occupied territories into Israel, was not really implemented—exemplifying the continuous decline of the state's autonomy.

Conclusions

This paper introduced two additional dimensions into the state-society paradigm. The first is the state identity, and the second the state logic, which determines the perceived uniqueness of every state and provides an additional linkage as well as a source of strain and tension between state and society. The notion of state logic made possible a conceptual difference between the state and government, and the possibility of positioning the state against the government. The identities determine considerable parts of the social boundaries of the state and its civil society, as well as the basic assumptions of the rules of the game and the political culture. The autonomy of a state is supposed to be more vulnerable and permeable in the face of ideological interest groups and other societal formations that carry as a banner alternative definitions of state and society, especially identities with primordial connotations, symbols, and discourses. However, the state can also manipulate the different groups that represent alternative identities, or emphasize different parts of the identity.

Within this approach to the Israeli state and its society, I have tried to present, in broad terms, an alternative conceptual context for understanding

and analyzing their histories as well as the current domestic sociopolitical changes in the country. Israel is presented as emerging from an immigrant-settler society, institutionally built on the remains of the British colonial state, and adopting a civic and secular collective identity, based on selective ingredients of the Jewish religion. The religious components of the state's identity strengthened with the victory in the 1967 war and the capture of the core territories of the Zionist ideology, reducing the state's autonomy.

Also, including about 1.8 million Palestinians into the Israeli control system transformed the country into a de facto binational state, offering a serious contradiction to the growth of its Jewish nation-state identity. The Israeli state, despite a certain diminishing of its autonomy, remains the determining actor in the Israeli political system, rather than civil society. Thus, all other actors compete with each other for the state's favors, on ma-terial and ideological grounds. We noted a previous reduction in the state's autonomy against groups with ideologies based on Israel's Jewish ethno-centric and primordial national identity, but at the present time, the state is increasing its autonomy, which in turn strengthens societal strata that represent and adhere to the more universalistic ingredients of its collective identity. The oscillation between universalist and particularist tendencies will continue, depending on which one contributes a higher payoff for the state, which is by no means a closed system. In an unstable world system, these changes can be rooted also in remote exogenous factors, or in the immediate political environment. The disintegration of the Soviet Union suddenly led to Israel incorporating into the system about 500,000 new immigrants—today, more than 1 million—another critical mass that should change the internal distribution of power and the state logic. At the same time, changes in the balance of power in Jewish-Arab relations can be a trigger for state-logic change.