CLASH OF IDENTITIES

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Explorations in Israeli and Palestinian Societies

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To my friend Joel S. Migdal

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PREFACE

I arrived at the Department of Sociology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as a freshman in 1962, ten years after I immigrated to Israel with my parents and a younger brother from Transylvania, Rumania. Before immigrating, my small family escaped Nazi headhunters by hiding and wandering in the Carpathian Mountains. Later, we endured the oppressive communist regime in Rumania. My parents' lengthy "absorption process" into what was then a very poor state brutalized them, but they never complained and never regretted coming to Israel. In spite of their difficulties, they sent both of their children to university and positioned them in the country's upper-middle class. My brother Adam and I gave meaning to their lives.

The Hebrew University was founded in 1925 as part of the Zionist nation-building program. During the 1960s, it was the only university in Israel, making its sociology department the only one in the country. It was established and headed by Martin Buber in the mid-1940s. Buber was a highly charismatic figure who developed an almost personal sociology, a mixture of philosophy, history, Jewish mysticism, and moral attitudes based on metaphysical dialogues. His most prominent young student was Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. According to Eisenstadt, Buber gave him his "basic intellectual perspective," but in time, he diverged intellectually with his mentor. It appears that Eisenstadt was determined to nurture research on Israeli society, but "the breaking point between Buber and Eisenstadt was due to the latter's opposition to scholarly academic work which was removed from the empirical reality of the so-called *Yishuv* [the pre-state Jewish polity in Palestine and in Israel]." In an attempt to present a more integrated and practical option, Eisenstadt developed a new tradition of empirical research that was

not customary at the time in the Hebrew University, abandoning work on the philosophical questions that occupied Buber and concentrating instead on the burning issues in Israeli society at that time. Even during his training, Eisenstadt felt a certain discomfort with Buber's strong emphasis on the German historical tradition. Despite his love of history, he told Buber that he wanted to learn "real sociology" and was interested in "more sociology" in his studies. In response, Buber gave him new reading assignments that represented the breadth of sociological writing at that time. Through this independent study, Eisenstadt continued to go beyond the heritage of his teacher and study American sociology, which was new for him, in-depth. Due to Martin Buber's reading assignments, Eisenstadt was exposed to the philosophy of Talcott Parsons, who was the leading representative of American sociology at that time.[1]

After a post-doctoral year at the London School of Economics, Eisenstadt was recalled to Jerusalem to reorganize the sociology program at Jerusalem. Soon, he not only completed this assignment, but became recognized as one of the world's most able and creative sociologists, especially following the publication of his book *The Political System of Empires* (1963), which was ranked with works by the founding fathers of modern sociology, such as Max Weber. Eisenstadt's formidable memory, the breadth and depth of his knowledge, and his extraordinary ability to integrate various subjects made him an excellent but very demanding teacher. His international fame also contributed to the reputation of the young department, which was reinforced by the interest of Western sociology in its almost unique topics of research—the kibbutz and other communal settlements and the role of the family within them, youth movements and the techniques of modernization and de- and re-socialization of Jewish immigrants from underdeveloped countries. Eisenstadt built a relatively strong and highly centralized department around his dominant personality and specific research and teaching agenda. The Jerusalemian School of Sociology, as it liked sometimes to regard itself, was not only overtly dominated by the structural-functionalist paradigm, but also served the Zionist ideology by mixing ideological presuppositions and terminologies with sociological ones, defining what a sociological *problemstellung* was and was not and deciding which research topics were taught and which terminology employed.

This was the department I encountered in 1962. Its strengths were apparent immediately, but it took me almost two decades to discover its limi-

tations. Retrospectively, these strengths and limitations were an inevitable part of that glorious period of building a new nation and a sociology—and later an anthropology—that was part of it. The department as a whole—most of the lecturers were just doctoral students—aspired enthusiastically to take part in this enterprise.

In addition to all this, I found sociology itself to be an extremely exciting ontological tool. I was like person "born again" into a new religion. It seemed that everything in the human world was interlinked, explainable, and had a purpose, or if not, was a kind of mutation that the self-regulatory homeostatic order would fix sooner or later.

After graduating with my bachelor's degree, I spent some years working mainly as a research assistant with a comparative modernization research team. In 1968, I was placed in charge of collecting materials on Uganda, the Ivory Coast, and Ghana. At first, African issues didn't interest me too much, but this was the job that the department offered me, and soon I found the questions of development and social change intriguing. As a bonus, I was permitted to use the collected material for my masters thesis and later for my doctoral dissertation. Within about eighteen months, I completed my thesis and had published two papers in prestigious journals, being already aware of the "publish or perish" rules of the game in academia. Following this, I prepared to continue on this path and to put together a doctoral thesis. It is perhaps relevant to mention here that before I graduated with my first degree, I had not considered an academic career; I saw myself as a writer and journalist. The gradual change in my personal identity and calling came as I discovered the brave new world of scientific research, its intellectual challenges, and potential for creativity.

The Jewish-Arab conflict drew my attention as I became politically aware during high school, but at that time, it was impossible to obtain any information or interpretation other than the official one. The only information available to me then that deviated from the hegemonic view was found in the fringe and selective publication *Haolam Hazeh,* a weekly edited by Uri Avnery, who had also written several books on the subject. My interest in the conflict considerably increased following the 1967 war and its consequences, but I did not yet see it in sociological terms. Within the department, issues concerning the Arabs of Israel were conceptually excluded from the syllabi of the Israeli Society courses and hardly mentioned in textbooks. The wars and the conflicts underlying them were also excluded from the sociology curriculum. To the extent that courses on these subjects existed, they were

almost always the responsibility of classical Arabist historians of the sort that Edward Said might call Orientalists.

In the middle of working on my doctoral dissertation on comparative agricultural modernization in sub-Saharan African states, I made what was probably the most important decision of my life. I made an appointment with Eisenstadt and implored him to switch my dissertation subject to a sociological analysis of the Jewish-Arab conflict. Eisenstadt unequivocally and promptly refused, arguing that the conflict was a political and not a sociological theme. I know that later Eisenstadt regretted his verdict about the non-sociological nature of research on the conflict and probably also his refusal to tutor me on the subject. But at the time, his refusal created an almost impossible dilemma for me: to give up and complete my initial project, or to find another tutor within the department—a senior staff member willing to advise me on this taboo subject, knowing that it was incompatible with Eisenstadt's decisive opinion about what was and was not sociology.

It was not easy to find a mentor for my problematic thesis in that small and homogenous department, especially because everybody knew that Eisenstadt rejected the theme. The other central person at the department, Joseph Ben-David, was openly hostile to my efforts to develop the sociology of the Jewish-Arab conflict at the department. This was still the formative period of Israel's sociology and anthropology, and there had only been a handful of doctorates awarded; thus, every dissertation that received approval was considered the beginning of a new field of expertise and teaching in Israeli sociology. After a frustrating period of attempting to get a tutor, a young member of the department, Moshe Lissak, who had just received his tenure, agreed to be my mentor. A decade later, he became my fiercest academic rival during the great but futile debate around the so-called new historians and critical sociologists. The dissertation was submitted in late 1974 and approved by my committee in the spring of 1975.

My undeclared rupture from Eisenstadt potentially jeopardized my career, but the break was never total. It was apparently the first time that a graduate student had challenged his authority, but later I came to understand that he appreciated my rebellious personality, and his professional integrity toward me was spotless. He followed my professional development from a distance and with some suspicion, offering the salt of criticism but also some encouragement. In the academic year of 1978, he helped me to participate in a seminar in Cambridge, Massachusetts, led by Samuel P. Huntington, called the Joint (Harvard-MIT) Seminar on Political Develop-

ment. During that year, I was provided with full office space and facilities at MIT's Center for International Studies.

The year in Cambridge was probably the most exciting and intellectually inspiring period of my professional life. The team's members were among the brightest young social scientists of the period: I met Theda Skocpol, Susan Berger, Jorge Dominguez, Ian Lustick, and Joel Migdal, who later became my close friend and research collaborator. The Harvard-MIT complex, with its courses, talks, conferences, libraries, and faculty clubs, offered me a unique opportunity to encounter a restless and intense intellectual environment that influenced my entire intellectual and professional orientation, and I was included in it only on the basis of being Shmuel N. Eisenstadt's student.

A few years after completing my belated post-doctoral year at MIT, I secured a publisher for my dissertation. For many years, I had tried to publish it without success; my senior colleagues at the Hebrew University explained to me, with a strain of pity, that because everybody who lived then in Israel knew precisely what happened, my work was not yet publishable, but perhaps would be in a hundred years or so. Others kindly advised me to find more interesting topics for research. However, I persisted, and finally found a publisher in the Institute of International Studies of the University of California at Berkeley. The book appeared in 1983 under the title *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics*. Being a "dry" and nonjudgmental professional text, it did not draw public attention and achieved limited circulation, but became well known and widely quoted by a small circle of experts.

The subject was less focused on Zionist ideology than it was on the different techniques of land acquisition employed from the first wave of modern Jewish immigration to Palestine until the late 1960s and their relationship to other political doctrines. In the earlier stages of my research, I was shocked to discover that a major "purification" of the land of its Arab Palestinian inhabitants—the term "ethnic cleansing" was unknown during that period—was done during the 1948 war by Jewish military and paramilitary forces. During this research, relying solely on Israeli sources, I found that about 350 Arab villages were "abandoned" and their 3.25 million dunums of rural land confiscated; over time, the land became the property of the Israeli state or the Jewish National Fund.[2] I also found that Moshe Dayan, then the minister of agriculture, disclosed that about 700,000 Arabs who "left" the territories of the Jewish state had owned four million dunums of land.

I also found out that from 1882 to 1948, all of the Jewish companies and private individuals in Palestine, including the Jewish National Fund, an organ of the World Zionist Organization, had succeeded in buying only about 7 percent of the total land in British Palestine. All of the rest was taken by sword and nationalized during the 1948 war and after. Today, only about 7 percent of Israeli land is privately owned, about half of it by Israeli Arabs. Israel is the only democracy in the world that nationalized almost all of its land and prohibited even the leasing of most agricultural lands to non-Jews, a situation made possible by a complex framework of legal arrangements.

My book compared the internal structure of the Israeli polity with those of other immigrant settler societies, such as those in North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, Algeria, and white South Africa, and emphasized the similarities and differences in internal structure. Reversing the model of Frederic Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, the book explored the question of how the amount of available "free land," conceptualized as different degrees of "frontierity," was now considered a central variable that could determine many elements of a regime, including its ideology and political and economic practices. I found these characteristics to be instrumental in constructing at least a partial explanation for the highly centralized and collectivistic Israeli state system created during the first two decades of Israel's existence. The system owed its existence mainly to the monopoly that political institutions had over the land and its distribution to various societal segments. My next book, *Zionism and Economy* (1983), explored similar questions, but concentrated on the economic policies of Labor Zionism.

Later, I was engaged in a series of studies, empirical and theoretical, both on my own and with some colleagues—Dan Horowitz, Victor Azarya, and Moshe Lissak. I studied the impact of the military and wars on Israeli society. The major outcome of this series of studies was *The Interrupted System: Israeli Civilians in War and Routine Times* (1985), an analytical and empirical examination of the direct and indirect impact of wars on Israeli civilian society. It also produced several additional comprehensive papers, including "Patterns of Militarism in Israel," which appears as Chapter Six of the present volume.

Comparing the three works can be said to show the developments and changes in my professional approach. *The Interrupted System,* which presents and summarizes a series of quantitative and empirical research studies conducted during and after the 1973 war, asks how individuals, as well

as the civilian society as a whole, functioned in two different situations: during a protracted but highly routinized conflict and during active warfare. The foremost conclusion was that collectivity absorbed both phases into its routine institutional and value systems, thus minimizing the emotional cost of the conflict and the wars. This book perhaps represents the last remains of my functional education at the sociology department at Hebrew University.

During the 1990s, I revisited and revised my own and others' research in this field, reaching additional and varying conclusions. Adopting a less institutional and more culture-oriented and critical approach, I reinterpreted past findings with the support of new evidence. This led me to characterize the Israeli state as a special, but not unique, type of militaristic society. I found civilian militarism to be not only a basic cultural code, but also an organizational principle around which large segments of Israeli society are ordered. This type of militarism—compared, for example, with the classic praetorian type—is much more subtle and mainly a consequence of the intrusion of "military-mindedness" into civilian institutions and cultures. This led me to analyze the peace process from both sides in terms of the militaristic culture and the power game, in the 1997 paper "The Power-Oriented Settlement Bargaining between Israelis and Palestinians." In an additional paper, "Jurisdiction in an Immigrant-Settler Society: The Jewish and Democratic State," I analyzed the internal contradictions within the Israeli regime.

In the articles mentioned and others that followed, I raised doubts and concerns about the ability of the mainstream Israeli social sciences and historiography to free themselves of Zionist ideologies, the nation-building mindset, and their degree of Jewish ethnocentrism when dealing conceptually and theoretically with "the other" and "the conflict," within the social and conceptual boundaries of "Israeli society," however defined (see "Ideology, Sociology and Nation Building," *American Sociological Review* 1992, and "Academic Historians Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography," *History and Memory*, 1995). As long as my criticism of the conceptualization and research of Israeli society remained an internal controversy, matters remained calm. However, when I published it in the flagship journal of the American Sociological Association, a furor erupted. My Ph.D. mentor and later colleague, who previously prized my work, suddenly discovered its "anti-Zionist" nature and recruited many colleagues, including persons in the media, writers, and intellectuals, to debunk my intentions and

scholarship. Many other colleagues, however, supported my position and Eisenstadt himself remained quiet during the controversy. The entire debate was a part of a larger political, cultural, and very bitter argument about the past and roots of Israeli society and its interpretation, research, and teaching, as Laurence J. Silberstein examined and summarized in *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (1999), though he wrongly equated post-Zionism with postmodernism. In his book *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology* (1995), Uri Ram referred to my work, together with Gershon Shafir's book *Land, Labour and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (1980) as opening a new paradigm in Israeli sociology—"the colonization paradigm." For a while, my promotion process was slowed down, but not for long, as the Hebrew University proved its commitment to academic freedom and research. Retrospectively, the case can be seen in Thomas Khun's terms of paradigmatic and intergenerational conflict.

The next major step in advancing my work was to formulate a more coherent and developed sociohistorical conceptual framework of "the conflict," or, more appropriately, the whole spectrum of Jewish-Arab relations. This important step was rooted in my conclusion, mainly following Simmel and Coser, that a conflict—any conflict—is an integral social system, and to be fully analyzed and understood, information about all of the parties involved must be included. In other words, a more accurate picture of the "Jewish side" of the relationship must include the "Arab side" and "Palestinian side," analyzed with the same tools (see Chapter Eleven).

As mentioned above, the Arabs of Palestine were not previously incorporated into analysis or research on the Israeli state and society, conceptually or theoretically. Moreover, despite the abundance of monographs on Palestinian society, no comprehensive social or sociohistorical research on this collectivity existed. Thus, together with Joel Migdal, I undertook an extensive research study on the Palestinian society-building process from a sociohistorical perspective, both in terms of institution and identity formation. The initial version of the study—*Palestinians: The Making of a People* (1993)—comprised a case study of a stateless society divided into various internal segments and facing many hostile external and internal forces, among them Ottomans, Egyptians, Zionist colonization, colonial powers, the world market, and Arab and Islamic societies, states, and cultures. The book was founded on the basic assumptions of a refined world-system approach. Later, we developed our study into a more comprehensive volume, *The Palestinian People: A History* (2002).

Another aspect of my professional pursuits has been the study and development of my basic field of expertise, the sociology of politics. I developed a Hebrew-language textbook for the Israeli Open University, *Between State and Society: The Sociology of Politics* (1995), and served as guest editor of a special issue of *Current Sociology* that surveyed the state of the art of political sociology across much of the world.

In my book *The Rise and Decline of Israeliness*, I analyzed the changes that have occurred within the Israeli state and its collective identity in the past five decades. A summary of the revised Jewish social history in Palestine and Israel from 1882 to the present was published, in its entirety, in Hebrew, in a volume entitled *Immigrants, Settlers, and Natives* (2003).

Apart from my professional activities, I have functioned as a "public sociologist," deeply involved in Israeli public discourse both intellectually and politically, mainly as a regular freelance writer for the past three decades for various sections of the Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz,* from its literary and cultural supplements to its op-ed page. A polemical book I wrote in Hebrew, entitled *The End of Ashkenazi Hegemony,* made the bestseller list. Another book, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon's War against the Palestinians* (2001), was published in seven languages.

The present volume contains twelve essays and an epilogue on the Israeli and Palestinian societies and the interrelations among them. Although they have been published over a twenty-year period, they are unified by the common puzzles they tackle—sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly—of Jewish, Israeli, and Palestinian collective identities, as well as the clashes, tensions, and complementarities among them. From the start of my research in these topics, I preferred to approach the issues from the conceptual framework of collective identities instead of theories of nationalism, despite the vast quantity of literature in the latter field and its more central place in historical, philosophical, and social science discourse. Thus, although the essays examine Palestinian and Israeli nationalisms as well as theories about the construction of nationalism and nation states, they go beyond these questions to explore ethnic and religious identity in the context of nationalism. The book is by no means a historical account of Arab-Jewish relations, but a conceptual treatment of them from an interactional approach, based on a large body of historical facts and events. To provide the reader with a background of the analysis, the book contains a detailed linear chronology.

Rereading my earliest essays, I was amazed that though the local and global social world has changed dramatically over two decades, and social theories and terminologies have been forgotten and replaced by others, our basic social facts and problematics, as a set of interrelated problems, remains the same or has changed very little. That is why, apart from the wish to preserve the authenticity of the essays, I decided not to update, upgrade, or make any substantial changes except minor stylistic ones. I also avoided presenting the chapters in a clear chronological order; instead, I tried to build a loose thematic order, from more general to more specific, and to produce some hidden dialogue among the diverse essays while leaving it to readers to decipher these dialogues. From this point of view, each essay or chapter stands independently, but taken together, they form a coherent volume in which it is hoped that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

1. See Gad Yair and Noa Apeloig, "Israel and the Exile of Intellectual Caliber: Local Position and the Absence of Sociological Theory," *Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2006).

2. The *dunum* is the most common measure of land area in the Middle East. 4.5 dunums equals approximately one acre.

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