Israeli Sociology

A Journal for the Study of Society in Israel

Special Issue on the Sociology of Israel's Regime Crisis

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English Abstracts

The Regime Crisis in the Mirror of Constitutive Tensions in Israeli Society

Bifurcated Consciousness and the Defense of Colonial Democracy

Areej Sabbagh-Khoury

Abstract. The recent crisis in Israel surrounding the regime's overhaul is an important political moment for evaluating the entrenched structures of colonial supremacy. The demonstrations for Jewish democracy are the largest mobilization in the history of the State of Israel over the nature of the regime, a mobilization designed to reinstate a system of governance that most of the protesters have long agreed with—one based on the exclusion of the Palestinians and political and social control over them. This political moment brings to light the ways in which the settler colonial state established, since its inception, a social and political hierarchy based on a bifurcated consciousness among its Jewish citizens. The article is based on ongoing qualitative research that includes a systematic discourse analysis of political rhetoric, including news from the Israeli media and interpretations regarding the protest. In-depth interviews with Palestinian political activists and Palestinian activists in civil society organizations were also used, as well as ethnographic observations of the protest. A relational analysis that pays attention to the dialectical nature of political change in the settler colonial context reveals the nature of the interactions between Jewish settlers and the indigenous Palestinians, and the way it articulates permanently the political field in Israel.

Stripping Off Citizenship – the Two Faces of the Judicial Overhaul: The Colonial and the Authoritarian

Yael Berda

Abstract. This article delineates the relationship between the colonial control over Palestinians and the authoritarian overhaul, showing how Israel's activities against Palestinians in Israel/Palestine and the Judicial Reform against the institutions of

"rule of law' are two parts of the same regime change: colonial and authoritarian. The article tracks the colonial regime change as a sequence of changes in the institution of citizenship: from the Counter-Terrorism law and the Nation-state law, through the transfer of practices for surveillance and control of Palestinians to Jewish citizens, to the denaturalization of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the annexation of the West Bank. Citizenship is the intersection between the two facets of the regime change. The struggle for the liberal citizenship of Jews within Israel right as Palestinians are stripped off their citizenship underscores how Colonial Israel can thrive alongside liberal Israel through the rule of law that separates the two regimes. The attack on the liberal rule of law and the separation of powers renders the separation between the two regimes as impossible. Therefore, the authoritarian move to constrain the judiciary and hollow out its power is a way to fortify the gains of the colonial regime moves towards the stripping of Palestinians' citizenship.

The "Mizrahim", Social Crisis, and the Incarnations of the "Ethnic Problem" in Israeli Sociology

Sigal Nagar-Ron

Abstract. As the weeks go by and the social crisis deepens, the "Mizrahim" are signified as the main culprits of the current crisis. This essay seeks to understand why the current social crisis, which is a political struggle between a religious-nationalist elite and a secular-liberal elite, is painted in ethnic colors. The framework proposed in this essay explores the developing discourse on both sides of the political fence, as part of a long history of political use of Mizrahiness, while stressing the unique elements of the present. By examining three social agents – politicians, the media, and social scientists – I show how Mizrahiness plays a role in the negotiation over the image of the Israeli collective, its components, and their characteristics. The current discourse, according to which the "Mizrahim" support Israel becoming a non-democratic state due to their non-liberal worldview, is deeply rooted in the old Orientalist fear of the "the ethnic problem" which was manifested by leaders and social scientists during the formative years of the Israeli state. The current discourse contributes to the reproduction of the social boundaries between the alleged ethnic collectives, based on the same old orientalist conceptions.

Price Tag as Expression of Regime Crisis

Eitan Alimi

Abstract. The phenomenon known as "Price Tag" and the process along which it has evolved as a strategy of violent contention, adopted by growing publics and expressing the most severe crisis experienced by the Israeli democracy, stand at the heart of this article. Analysis of such ominous development is based on the political process approach to the study of social movements and contentious politics more broadly, and the study of engagement in political violence and processes of radicalization in particular. The analysis focuses on changes in patterns of interactions and relations between member organizations of the Settlement Movement, between the Movement and the political establishment, and between the Movement and Israeli security, before and primarily following the Disengagement Plan of 2005, to explain the process of cognitive and behavioral radicalization and its expansion. Several ramifications of the Price Tag phenomenon, key of which are threats to the stability of the Israeli liberal democracy and the present judicial revolution, are discussed in the conclusion, including possible ways to cope with these developments.

Jewishness as Hegemony and Resource: Israel's Changing Citizenship Structure and the Regime Crisis

Ofir Abu

Abstract. The public debate surrounding Israel's regime crisis has mainly focused on the attempt to overhaul the judicial system. While this is an important aspect of the debate, it does not touch upon the deeper roots of the current crisis: the reshaping of Israel's citizenship regime in recent years. In this essay, I argue that Israel's regime crisis reflects a struggle around the content and boundaries of Israeli citizenship. Drawing on Knesset protocols dealing with the issue of prayer arrangements in the Western Wall between 2013 and 2016, I show how ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) and national-religious politicians justify a citizenship regime in which Orthodox-religious Jews, considered by the state as "more Jewish",

enjoy collective rights espoused by the state, whereas non-Orthodox and secular Jews, considered "less Jewish", enjoy collective rights that stem merely from their membership within the Jewish people. These politicians push for a judicial overhaul in order to formalize and legalize this hierarchic citizenship regime.

Jewish Illiberalism – A Gendered Perspective

Michal Frenkel

Abstract. One aspect of the current regime crisis in Israel is a counter-gender revolution, advanced by men and for the benefit of men. Based on an analysis of the Israeli religious parties' positions on gender issues and their coalition agreements with the ruling party on these matters, the essay points to the similarities between the proposed transformations to the local gender regime and those advocated by the global illiberal movement. I present the attempt to attribute the curtailment of women and LGBTQ rights to Jewish religious motivations as reflecting a localized interpretation of a broader trend rooted in Christian religious thought, with the aim to mobilize extensive conservative support to consolidate political power. Specifically, I demonstrate that the proposed changes in the Israeli gender contract initiated by religious parties do not draw upon Jewish theology but instead employ religious rhetoric to justify the reconstruction of a traditional gendered division of labor undermining existing principles of gender equality and freedom.

The Part that Has No Part: A Post-Liberal Reading of the Current Crisis

Erica Weiss

Abstract. In this short article, I suggest that the problem posed by the judicial reforms is not insufficient liberalism, but rather that liberalism is not up to the task of fixing Israeli society because it is exclusionary and ethnocentric. Many people currently doubt that "Israel" can hold together as a concept in any meaningful way given the vastly different social visions of its citizens. The crisis must be addressed. But many simply want to cancel the reforms without addressing the

conditions that created them, which will be temporary, at best "buying" the opposition a couple of years by trying to sweep this major clash under the rug. Here I suggest that we should seek a more radical process of inclusion that actually gives everyone a seat at the table.

The Regime Crisis in the Mirror of the Hegemonic Struggle

Hegemony Struggles in Israel: A Short Gramscian Sociology

Uri Ram

Abstract. As a background for understanding the constitutional-regime crisis of 2023 in Israel, this essay offers a brief examination of the history of Israeli political culture from the 1920s until now, through a Gramscian analysis of four ethoses that have competed for hegemony in Israeli-Jewish politics: the pioneering ethos of the settlers of the labor movement from the period before the establishment of the state; the *mamlachtiyut ethos* (etatist ethos) of the early state period; the civilliberal ethos (or the post-Zionist ethos) that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s; and the ethnocentric religious-nationalist ethos (or the neo-Zionist ethos) that emerged recently. Each of these ethoses had to confront competing – residual, subversive or opposing ethoses – and those who managed to establish a hegemonic position contained components of other ethoses in a subordinate manner. But the internal conflict created by this has not subsided, and with the change of social and historical circumstances and the joining of new elements, a renewed hegemonic struggle has erupted.

The Constitutional Crisis as a Crisis of Hegemony: The Unresolved Struggle between the Exclusionary Populist Bloc and the Bourgeois Bloc

Dani Filc and Amit Avigur-Eshel

Abstract. In the present paper we argue that the current crisis created by the government's intention to put forward a significant reform of the juridical system and it's relation with the other branches of government is a multi-dimensional crisis. The first level of the crisis is the clash between an exclusionary populist vision of democracy and a liberal constitutional one. The second level is the crisis created by the lack of definition of the hegemonic struggle between two historical blocs advancing different models of society and expressing Israel's ethno-class stratification. The third and last level is represented by the implications of the juridical reform on Israel's growth model and on the mechanisms that legitimate it due to the fact that neither historical bloc, albeit the differences between the two, has an alternative to the current growth model.

Privileged, Not Hegemonic: Does the "Liberal Elite" Rule Israeli Society?

Rami Kaplan and Eilon Tohar

Abstract. According to its proponents, the Israeli government's attempted judicial reform has been designed appropriately to check the informal, undemocratic control ("hegemony") of the secular-liberal "elite" over key economic, media, legal, and political institutions of Israeli society. In this paper, we critically assess this argument. First, we examine the position of the secular-liberal segment in the ethno-class structure of Israeli society. We find it to be economically and culturally privileged, thanks to the group's higher levels of education, professional dominance, and predominant Ashkenazi descent. However, we distinguish between privilege and hegemony, which requires a successful hegemonic project in order to materialize. A historical view suggests that the liberal hegemonic project gained momentum in the 1990s but has declined since 2001. An important factor in

the project's failure was the economic elite's lack of support, given that right-wing governments had offered preferable conditions for capital accumulation. Considering the neutrality of the affluent class, the dominance secular-liberal groups in the professions, including the Supreme Court, was insufficient to make it hegemonic. Hence the argument about the secular-liberals' "tyranny of the minority" is false, though the claim serves the rival and ascendant hegemonic project of Jewish superiority. Nonetheless, the resource inequalities in Israeli society facilitate the acceptance of the ideology of a "liberal tyranny", and remind us that the struggles for democracy and for equality are intertwined.

The Awakening of Ethno-Republicanism in Israel and its Battle against Ethno-Nationalism

Yuval Feinstein

Abstract. The efforts by the sixth Netanyahu government to weaken the Israeli Supreme Court and the emergence of the largest protest movement in the history of the country are extreme expressions of a profound disagreement among Jews in Israel regarding significant aspects of their collective national identity and the desired character of the nation-state. In this article, respondents to a survey conducted during the peak of the protest were sorted into five nationalism types, and differences in their attitudes about governmental policy and participation in protest activities were examined. High support rates for the policy were found among ethnoreligious nationalists and ultranationalists who carry an ethnonationalistic citizenship discourse. Resistance to governmental policy was prevalent among critical nationalists whose citizenship discourse is liberal, but their share in the population is relatively small. Within the opposition to the policy in general, and particularly among participants in the protest, the vast majority are ethno-republican or ethnocentric nationalists whose citizenship discourse is ethno-republican, which grants collective rights to Jews only, allocates resources according to a hierarchy of good citizenship, and does not consider the liberties and rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories. The possibility that the protest would lead to democratization depends on decoupling citizenship and rights from ethnicity and nationalism.

Demography as Destiny? Shifting Power Relations among Sectors in Israeli Society

Isaac Sasson and Yossi Harpaz

Abstract. Against the backdrop of the attempted judicial overhaul, tensions between different sectors in Israeli society are intensifying. In this paper, we revisit the seminal work of Baruch Kimmerling, who announced the end of secular Zionist hegemony and the emergence of succession struggles. Using a Weberian approach, we analyze recent shifts in demographic, economic, and political power relations among the five main sectors of Israeli society; secular, traditional and national-religious Jews, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and Arabs. We find that despite its political weakening, the secular sector maintains its position of leadership in terms of economic power and military recruitment rates. Together, these factors grant it structural power and provide a means of resisting the judicial overhaul. Conversely, the political power of the national-religious sector is increasing, while the political representation of the Arab and ultra-Orthodox sectors remains substantially unchanged. This finding casts doubt on the approach that we label demographic determinism, which assumes that population growth would translate directly into political power. Lastly, we propose that the struggle between the two forms of Israeli nationalism - secular-liberal and religious-particularistic - will be decided by the traditional sector, whose complex religious, ethnic, and class position places it in the middle between the two camps.

The Regime Crisis in the Mirror of the Protest Movement

Dystopian Politics in Israel, 1995-2023

Nissim Leon

Abstract. The 2023 Israeli protests are a major milestone in the transformation of dystopian thinking into an actual political agenda. This article offers some initial lines of thought toward the development of a sociology of meaning for the protest

movement, identifying the movement's origins in Israel's crisis of *mamlachtiyut* ("responsible etatism") and in the centrist camp's attempts to reestablish it. The article tries to reinterpret the political events of 2021-2022, with particular attention to the element of rage that marked the protest dynamic – rage that was a response to a shattered dream. It reflects the widespread fear that the rise of a rightwing government sparked among Israel's entrenched middle class, its political/legal establishment, its high-net-worth cadre, its senior executives, and its high-ranking retired military officers. In the protesters' view, the government is brutally unravelling the judicial status quo and driving the eruption of a major political rift. This rift also reflects the protest movement's ethnic boundaries and may, perhaps, be indicative of the movement's future.

Democracy or Rebellion: On Meaning Work and the Construction of a Crisis

Ori Schwarz

Abstract. What has turned bills on issues as dull as judge selection procedures into a cause for constitutional crisis, unprecedented protest, and an erosion of the legitimacy of the Israeli government? The fact that the government bills eventually turned into a dramatic event, a rupture in time, is far from trivial. This achievement resulted from three meaning-work moves of the protest movement: Associating the concrete bills with the sacred abstract value of "democracy"; conceptualizing democracy in binary terms and the government bills as crossing the boundary between democracy and dictatorship; and associating the abstract notion of dictatorship with various dystopias. The democracy-dictatorship boundary crossing narrative fostered an unprecedented protest. Yet, since democracy is a polysemic concept, this narrative has exposed the protest to criticism, highlighting the democratic deficit of the protest (and of the republican citizenship discourse it utilized) in terms of alternative conceptualizations of democracy (adopted by the government). Furthermore, this binary construction alienated groups that find it difficult to see contemporary Israel as a full democracy. Thus, the meaning work that contributed to the protest's success also undermined it by limiting its demographics, fixing its conservatism, and even bolstering the justification mechanisms of the populist right.

Who is the Real *Mamlachti*: Moderate Message and Radical Practices in the Protest against the Regime Crisis

Yifat Gutman

Abstract. Examining the discourse of the anti-regime protest reveals that the organizers of the "liberal camp" proposed both recognition and a rejuvenated, national identity to the dominant groups (descendants of the founding elite), as well as to women and LGBTO groups. This identity emphasizes the economy and military service in a republican manner, civil rights for Jews and freedom from religious coercion in a liberal way, and the preference of Jews and inequality to non-Jews in a Zionist fashion. Yet the longstanding message was circulated using state symbols and statist practices on the one hand, and practices that were perceived as radically anti-establishment on the other hand - particularly refusal of veterans to serve in the military reserve force and bereaved families' protest during Memorial Day ceremonies. These findings arise from analyzing the protest "headquarters" use of cultural resources like symbols and rituals, narration of the past, and memory practices. The moderate message and statist practices enabled the use of radical methods that were "qualified"/made eligible by protesters who took part in the military and economic establishment and lent their status and public legitimacy to the struggle. However, as doubts about the motivations behind government actions rise, the protest's anti-establishment practices and its opening of the general signifier "democracy" to public debate may lead to ideological radicalization and to an expansion of its claims for equality.

Between Kaplan and Hawara: The Regime Breakdown and the Role of the Military Society in Defending Democracy

Lev Grinberg

Abstract. Why is it the army that stands up against the coup d'état in Israel? And why do the protesting citizens ignore the military rule of the Palestinians? The article analyzes the interests of the army in preserving the distinction between its'

sovereign rule in the Occupied Territories, and the democratic regime within the 1967 borders. It also reveals the existence of a "military society", which mobilizes the protest movement to protect the interests of the IDF. The article shows how the pogrom in Hawara expressed the army's loss of control over the zealot settlers, and expanded the protests against the government, including threats of refusal, despite the fact that the event itself was marginalized and forgotten. The analysis of the sequence of events that halted the legislative overhaul in March suggests a close connection between the protests and the demonstrators' awareness of the dangers to the existent regime if the government succeeds in erasing the 1967 border. The concept of a military society is presented here as a political, contingent, and dynamic concept aiming to explain the mechanism of democratic influence of the military on Israeli politics. Also, the awakening of civil society is described as a dynamic and contingent political phenomenon, which indeed grows in the shadow of the dominant security discourse, but is expected to face civil challenges in the future, including the need to expand the issues of the struggle and to include groups currently excluded, including the Palestinians.

Living by Comparison: The Israeli Political Crisis as Seen by Putin's Russian New Immigrants

Julia Lerner and Varvara Preter

Abstract. How do recent immigrants from Russia perceive the political shift in Israel and do they take part in protest actions? In this article, we present initial insights from research on a phenomenon that we refer to as "living in comparison." We show how middle-class immigrants who left the authoritarian regime of Vladimir Putin encounter oppressive dimensions of life in Israel. Having immigrated under the Law of Return to their ethno-national homeland, most of these newcomers perceive Israel as a free and democratic country and an alternative to the dictatorship in their home country. For the most part, they ignore the Israeli occupation and are unaware of the deep social tensions within Israeli society. However, the proximity between the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the political regime shift in Israel is sharpening these immigrants' interpretive lens and civil political consciousness. We reveal a dynamic of comparison that

the immigrants conduct between social processes and personal experiences in their native and host countries. The article demonstrates how the experience of immigration and strangeness prompts a process of critical self-positioning in the political space of the new society.

The Regime Crisis in the Mirror of Education, Labor Market, and Military

The End of Israeli State (*Mamlachti*) Education? The Sources of the Current Crises, Risks and Opportunities

Yariv Feniger

Abstract. State (*Mamlachti*) education in Israel has faced many challenges since its establishment in 1953. Still, it seems that today it is facing a crisis that for the first time threatens its very existence, in light of the recent coalition agreements that effectively cancel basic principles on which it is founded. This article presents the dangers inherent in these agreements for the future of public education in Israel and links them to long-term processes that have shaped it over the years. A brief historical discussion of the law that established state education and the developments of education policy since its enactment, reveals considerable gaps between the declarative level and the actual manifestations of the law. The last part of the article presents the opportunities the current crisis provides for a more egalitarian and pluralistic public education in Israel.

Gender Inequality in the Labor Market and the Judicial Overhaul in Israel: A Pessimistic View of the Future

Efrat Herzberg-Druker

Abstract. In Israel the government's proposed judicial overhaul has triggered acrimonious public debate. Numerous scholars claim that if the Knesset completes the suggested legislation changes, the consequences for Israeli society in general, and gender inequality in particular, may be dire. In this paper, I review the possible consequences of these changes on gender inequality in the labor market. I present an updated description of gender inequality in the Israeli labor market by employing a quantitative analysis of CBS expenditure surveys for 2012-2019. Drawing on theoretical explanations of the persistence of gender inequalities in the labor market, I explain how the judicial overhaul will exacerbate these existing inequalities with a particular focus on the relationship between the private sphere and gender inequality in the labor market, and women's representation in the labor market.

The Crisis of the Policing Army: How the Infrastructure for the Autonomous Operation of the Army in the West Bank was Created

Yagil Levy

Abstract. One of the reforms that the Israeli right-wing regime promotes is a change to the authority structure that oversees the policing army in the West Bank, granting it greater autonomy. Arguably, this agenda leverages an existing infrastructure built on the gradual creation of two armies within the IDF following the second Intifada, whereby a separate policing army has emerged in the West Bank alongside the IDF, the "official" army. It relies on standing forces and local militias and maintains blurred boundaries with the local settlers. The separation between this policing force and the official army enables it to function as a "gray

arm" of the state in order to annex Area C. Its social composition, which draws largely on lower-class and religious groups, increases the troops' inclination towards autonomous action. The right-wing regime's agenda is to expand and institutionalize this previously-created separation between the armies.

Israeli Sociology

Founded in 1998, Israeli Sociology is published in Hebrew twice a year. The journal serves as a platform for local research that maintains a dialogue with sociological scholarship around the world. The journal invites manuscripts from a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, in line with the heterogeneity of the discipline, as well as review essays and research notes, all subject to a peer review process. The journal also includes an extensive book-review section that offers a widerange view of the Israeli social science scene. Israeli Sociology was founded by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel-Aviv University and is supported by the Institute for Social Research (established by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University), by the David Horowitz Institute for Social and Economic Research and by the Israeli Sociological Society.

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Book Review Editor: **Ramez Eid** Editorial Assistant: **Dana Shay**

Instructions for Authors:

- Israeli Sociology invites submissions of manuscripts, from a variety of methodologies and with distinct theoretical and empirical contributions to Israeli sociology in particular and to sociology in general.
- Israeli Sociology will consider publishing only manuscripts that have not been published and are not under review elsewhere, in any language.
- The journal uses an anonymous peer review process.
- Manuscripts should include a cover page with the title of the manuscript in Hebrew and English, authors' name in Hebrew and English, address, phone number, e-mail address, and their academic or professional affiliation.
- Submissions should not exceed 9,000 words in length, including footnotes and bibliography and should include a 150-word abstract in Hebrew and English detailing the research question, method, findings and contribution.
- Manuscripts will be submitted in Word, font David, size 12, double space.
- Tables and graphs should be attached in the body of the manuscript where they should appear, and in an editable format. Pictures that appear in the body of the manuscript should also be attached in a separate image format.
- For manuscripts accepted for publication, it is the authors' responsibility to add internal links to in-text references, and to write the bibliography according to the APA rules, with full names of the authors of the sources.
- Manuscripts must be written in Hebrew. Manuscripts in English will only be
 accepted in exceptional cases. If the manuscript is accepted for publication, the
 authors must then submit a version in Hebrew.
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