Two Patterns of Modernization

An Analysis of the Ethnic Issue in Israel

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ABSTRACT: While acknowledging the decisive contribution of conflict sociology to our understanding of the (Jewish) ethnic issue in Israel, this article focuses on the actual political behavior of the Mizrahi population. Instead of developing radical social protest movements as might be expected, the Mizrahim have largely supported right-wing parties and policies. The article argues that in response to their exclusion from full membership in the Jewish-Israeli collective that the veteran Ashkenazim constructed, and from the material and symbolic goods that such membership entails, the Mizrahim have built a counter-collectivity. Using the cultural tool kit that they acquired in their experience of modernization in North Africa and the Middle East, the Mizrahim have created a (semi-) traditional ethno-religious Jewish collectivity from which they have excluded veteran left-wing Ashkenazim, accusing them of disloyalty and delegitimizing their Jewish identity.

KEYWORDS: Ashkenazim, conflict, Jewish-Israeli collective, Mizrahim, modernization, protest movements

There is no doubt that the introduction of conflict sociology into the analysis of ethnic (Jewish) relations in Israel has made a decisive contribution to the field. Of particular note is Swirski's (1981) class analysis, which shows how the same state and economic processes created both an Ashkenazi middle and upper class and a Mizrahi lower class. But class analysis is unable to offer a satisfactory explanation for the actual behavior of Mizrahi Jews from the mid-1970s onward. The expectation, based on such analysis, that Israeli Jews of Mizrahi origin would develop a radical social protest movement has not been borne out, to say the least. Nor has the attempt to label the rightist political behavior of Mizrahi Jews as a form of 'false consciousness' been particularly illuminating (Mizrachi 2011).

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In this article, I will present an alternative theoretical framework for analyzing ethnic relations that centers on the construction of the Jewish-Israeli collective. Contrary to the classic structuralist-functionalist analysis in Israel, which highlighted the 'Oriental' elements of Mizrahi culture (Ben-Rafael 1982), I wish to emphasize that what distinguished—and continues to distinguish—Mizrahi Jews from their Ashkenazi counterparts is their opposing approach to the construction of the Jewish-Israeli collective. The ethnic problem in its classic form, as it developed during the first 35 years of the state's existence, was tied to attempts by both Ashkenazim and Mizrahim to create, each in their own way, a Jewish-Israeli collective modeled exclusively on the established Ashkenazi society or the traditional Mizrahi society. In practical terms, this resulted in each ethnic group's efforts to exclude the other group by blocking access to both material and symbolic resources.

Origins of the Ethnic Problem in Israel: Differences in the Modernization Experience

The Modernization of Eastern European Jews

The roots of the dissimilar approaches of Ashkenazim and Mizrahim to the construction of the Jewish-Israeli collective lie in their different experiences of modernization. In developing this comparison, I have used the term 'modernization' to refer to (1) a continuum of several characteristics, from technical skills that enable a group to take part in a capitalist-technological economy to reorganizing the symbolic system in a more 'rational' manner; (2) adoption of social patterns that are ostensibly consistent with modern Western values, such as equality and broad-based political cooperation; and (3) the restructuring of collectives on a universal, civil basis.

Jewish modernization in Eastern Europe, as constructed by the elites of the Haskalah movement and Zionism, entailed a fundamental change in the nature of the Jewish collective. The traditional Jewish collective encompassed religious aspects, but it also included a key primordial dimension (Eisenstadt 1980). Accordingly, the essential ontological identity of the individual stemmed from being part of the Jewish people (Fischer 1993). Modernization for European Jews entailed either joining or creating national collectivities that had a universalist cast to them. Post-Enlightenment and post-revolutionary states in Western Europe, in principle, extended citizenship to members of various religions and ethnic groups, an approach that mirrored the inner meaning of the Jewish emancipation of 1791. This in turn rested upon the assumption that human beings all share the same

neutral and universal nature. In Eastern Europe, such states in the nineteenth century did not exist; they had to be imagined and created. European Zionism was a movement that attempted to create such a state.

However, according to this perspective, the individual is not a separate, independent atomic unit. The universal individual has common human needs that can be satisfied only as part of a collective. Thus, a satisfactory cultural life necessitates the existence of a national language and culture. Physical security is possible only through a normal national existence, while a healthy economy depends upon a sound occupational structure. In short, according to the Zionist vision (or the general national-liberal perspective), all people are alike, but they are necessarily organized into groups.[1]

The pathos of the 'Jewish question' stems from the fact that the collective—which can supply the universal needs of the individual in terms of physical security, a healthy economy, and a national culture—does not exist but must be created. The Jewish individual can achieve security and a reasonable economic and cultural life only by establishing a Jewish collective that is a complete and 'healthy' society living in its own land. Thus, although the identity of the Jewish individual is not rooted in the existence of a collective, and hence that individual is not ontologically privileged, in practice he or she (like all other individuals) has no existence outside the collective.

One of the major features of this modernization that affected both Western European and American Jews was the relationship and even correlation between instrumental improvements (e.g., a better standard of living, technological environment, and type of employment) and changes in the collective's identity. In other words, the instrumental improvement in Jewish existence as part of the process of modernization was directly associated with the renunciation of the sense of uniqueness and preferential status of the Jewish collective.

Modernization of Jews from Islamic Countries

From the perspective of the Mizrahi population, modernization entailed profound changes in virtually every aspect of existence, but it did not necessitate a restructuring of the traditional collective. This synthesis between a traditional definition of the Jewish collective in Islamic lands (like that of the Muslim and Christian collectives), on the one hand, and sweeping changes in all spheres of life, on the other, gave rise to a process of modernization that was inconsistent and even paradoxical, as reflected in the thoughts and feelings of Mizrahi Jews.

The fact that a new type of Jewish collective was not built is, first and foremost, a result of the colonial nature of the modernization process in the Middle East and North Africa. Whereas social and political modernization

in Europe took the form of more or less coherent systems of ideas about the nature of humankind, society, and the state, along with efforts to implement or institutionalize these ideas, the Middle East was seen by the Great Powers of Europe as an arena for securing instrumental benefits. European institutions, if they were even established in the East, were created in a non-systematic way in response to specific situations and circumstances. Accordingly, a key aspect of the modernization process took different directions in Europe and in the colonial societies of the 'Orient' (i.e., the Middle East and North Africa).

In Europe, modernization was associated with the founding of universalistic nation-states, which the Jews wished to join or emulate in order to escape their social marginalization. By contrast, the colonialist societies of North Africa and the Middle East were particularist in the extreme. The very essence of these societies was the domination of local elements by the European caste. Of course, such particularism also characterized the Muslim societies that served as the object and context of European colonialism. In these societies, Jews as well as Christians were considered *dhimmi*s (protected persons), whose status was similar to that of slaves and women (Goldberg and Rosen 1982: 3–67; Lewis 1984). The social environment in the East, which maintained an approach of ethnic and religious particularism, thus did not prompt any drive among the Jews to formulate a new concept of the nature of their collective, and they remained a separate religious-ethnic group (cf. Eisenstadt 1988).

The above characteristics suggest that the changes in status of the Jews in the Middle East and North Africa were connected not to any coherent ideological movement, such as the Enlightenment or liberalism, but to an accidental coalescence of social and political forces (Ettinger 1986). It is not surprising, then, that these changes were fragmentary and inconsistent, with improvements accompanied in many places by a complementary process of regression. On the one hand, an alliance was created between the European colonizers and the Jews that bolstered the standing of the latter, as the colonial forces sought allies among the Christian and Jewish minorities in the Muslim world who would ease their entry and serve as sources of support in North Africa and the Middle East. In exchange for their cooperation, the Great Powers offered their allies social-economic positions and improved legal status, including, in some instances, citizenship,[2] while in other situations the Jews became the protégés of the Great Powers. In this way, native Jews and Christians were transformed from the inferior status of *dhimmi*s to a position that was second only to the standing of the European colonizers and the members of the administrative class in the colonies and was greater than that of most of the native-born Muslim population (Abitbol 1986a).

But this improvement came at a cost. The rise in socio-economic status of the Jews led to a radical new anti-Semitism on the part of both the local population and the European colonizers and officials. From the Muslim perspective, this increased status was seen as disturbing the cosmic order (Lewis 1986: 117–139). In addition to the Jew hatred that developed on religious grounds, nationality-based anti-Semitism also emerged. The Jews' identification with the European forces painted them, in local eyes, as collaborators with the foreign occupier (Abitbol 1988; Shinar 1980). As for the Europeans, anti-Semitism was prevalent in all circles since the fact that the Jews were allied with the European classes was seen as violating a cardinal principle of colonial order, that is, rigid separation between natives and Europeans and the subjugation of the former to the latter (Sivan 1979). For their part, the local Christians, who were competing with the Jews for the role of mediators between the Middle East and Europe, introduced European-style anti-Semitism to the area with accusations of 'blood libels' and the like (Barnai 1986: 234–237; Lewis 1984; Ma'oz 1982).

The emergence of radical anti-Semitism was unquestionably part and parcel of the emancipation of the Jews of Europe as well, yet it did not lead to a perception of modernization itself as inherently contradictory. Jewish emancipation was associated with the formation of new universal collectives—the European nation-states—which were grounded on a universalistic perception of humankind, society, and the state. Anti-Semitism was seen, both by Jews and liberals, as no more than a by-product of an incomplete process of institutionalization of these universal modern collectives. The liberal doctrine of progress argued that reality would dictate the disappearance of anti-Semitism over time.

A similar sense of paradox was attached to socio-economic and cultural processes. The Jewish bourgeoisie in North Africa and the Middle East prospered by introducing the global capitalist economy to the Mediterranean Basin (Abitbol 1978; Rejwan 1985). But at the same time, the capitalist economy impoverished the traditional petite bourgeoisie of artisans, shopkeepers, and peddlers (Abitbol 1986c: 381–410), while the rapid growth of port cities led to problems of overpopulation and to social ills such as vagrancy and prostitution, which are associated with the collapse of traditional frameworks of family and community (Chouraqui 1973: 197–238; Schroeter 1984). Such phenomena also occurred in other centers, including London, Warsaw, and New York, at the turn of the twentieth century. However, a crucial difference obtained. In all those centers, membership in a new modern collective lay at the core of the process of modernization, whose accompanying negative developments were seen to represent, at most, undesired side effects. Moreover,

the breakdown of the community, and even the family, was viewed as a positive change, releasing individuals from old obligations and enabling them to join the new collective.

In contrast, the experience of modernity entailed a paradox for North African and Middle Eastern Jews. Many North African Jews enjoyed a rise in income and a higher standard of living and occupational class. But these improvements took place concurrent with a tragic breakdown of traditional social frameworks tied to the long-established definition of the collective, leaving a vacuum in its wake. Jews were not invited into—and did not even try to join—the new national collective with its different forms of organization.

While successful Westernized Jewish elites in Europe and the United States set up educational and welfare organizations in order to improve lower-class and 'backward' Jews (Graetz 1983), North African elites did not engage in this activity. In Europe, Westernized elites who had joined the new modern collectivities feared that the continued presence of such backward and 'unfit' Jews threatened their own integration. In North Africa, by contrast, even the elite Jewish classes did not attempt to integrate into the new collective as the 'backwardness' of the lower classes did not jeopardize their membership in the elites or the new identity that they sought to acquire.

The paradox was most pronounced in the cultural sphere. The effort to blend into the global market economy and join the European presence led to the promotion of modern secular educational patterns and cultural frameworks that weakened—either directly or indirectly—commitment to the traditional institutions and Halakhic lifestyle of the community (Bensimon-Donat 1977; Laskier 1983; Zenner 1982; Zohar 1988b). But despite the fact that, from this perspective, the instrumental improvement brought with it negative consequences, progress in the socio-economic and legal status of the Jews was also seen by the traditional world as being of great value (Tsimhoni 1988: 27), yielding a sense of contradiction (Mashash 1934; Perlov n.d.). This paradox was absent from the experience of European Jewry. For the Jews of Eastern Europe, a rejection of the traditional, primordial ethnic-religious framework was part of the establishment of a new universal, modern national collective in its stead.[3]

The Jews of North Africa and the Middle East initially sought to address the internal contradictions of their situation through partial attempts to adapt. Teachings hours for Hebrew and Torah instruction were added to the curriculum of the modern schools of the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle and other educational networks (Laskier 1983: 235–254), and the Jews tried to identify politically and culturally not with the local European colonizers, the anti-Semitic *pieds noirs*, but

with the mother country of France (Abitbol 1986b). The rabbis tended to permit activities that were normally considered halakhically questionable, or at least controversial, in order to avoid a rift between themselves and those in the community who had become modernized. They wished to preserve the unity of the traditional community without relinquishing the continued benefits of modernization in Jewish life (Mashash 1934; Perlov n.d.; Zohar 1988a, 1988b).

However, the weaknesses of these partial strategies were exposed when the pressures on these Jewish communities multiplied in the 1930s and 1940s with the rise of fascism in Italy, the occupation of France and establishment of the Vichy government, the persecution of Jews in World War II, and the emergence and success of the Arab national movements. On the one hand, it was demonstrated during World War II that even a connection with mother countries such as France and Italy was not enough to ensure the well-being of Jews (Abitbol 1986b: 168–184; De Felice 1985).[4] Yet, on the other, the alienation between the Jews and the surrounding Muslim population, which had increased during the colonial period, led to a situation where the Jews stood no chance of finding themselves a place in the independent nation-states following the end of the war (Abitbol 1988; Saadon 1989).

For these reasons, the Jews sought more global solutions. Zionism came onto the scene as a possible response to the internal contradictions of their status. As part of an independent state, the Jews could enjoy the improved legal and political standing offered by the modern era without the risk of confronting the hostility of their surroundings.[5] No less important, as part of an autonomous national framework, they could take part in the technological culture and global market economy granted by modernity without jeopardizing their unique Jewish identity. Zionism, as both a modern and Jewish movement, could bridge the gaps that emerged within the community between rebellious elements and the broader classes (Tsur 1988). Zionism appeared, then, to be a type of passageway through which it would be possible to maintain a semi-traditional collective in a modern world.[6]

Of course, the migration of these Jews to Israel stemmed from additional factors: inability to maintain Jewish existence in the Arab states that had just been granted independence (Saadon 1989) and the need of the Zionist institutions for manpower reserves as a result of the destruction of European Jewry (Abitbol 1986b; Smooha 1986). But the Mizrahi Jews themselves attached a deeper meaning to their migration. The majority did not see it strictly as a technical solution to the problem of persecution; rather, they viewed it as a way to escape the inherent contradictions of their situation.[7]

Encounter between the Jewish Collectives

The Mizrahi Jews arrived in Israel with their lives organized in the same semi-traditional patterns described above. As a result, they were barred from full membership in the Jewish-Israeli collective and from access to local resources. Three key points stand out in the veteran Israeli attitude toward the Mizrahi immigrants as expressed by the political elite, sociologists, and press: (1) lack of cultural or social creativity;[8] (2) traditional Jewish occupations that were not considered productive; and (3) technological backwardness (see Lissak 1987; Segev 1986: 155–187; Swirski 1981: 50–56).

In effect, these points reflect the reaction of a society that had undergone an Eastern European modernization process to the colonial modernization experience of the Mizrahi Jews. The latter were seen as lacking creativity since their modernization had not entailed a change in the Jewish collective. In addition, since Mizrahim had not gone through the changes generated by the Haskalah and Zionism, they had not become 'producers'—that is, they had not become engaged in 'productive' occupations and thus were not the standard-bearers of the pioneering enterprise. Mizrahi Jews did not see their personal salvation narrative as bound up in any way with a restructuring of the collective. Moreover, because of the close connection between technological-instrumental progress and changes in the definition of the collective that characterized the modernization model of Eastern European Jewry, Mizrahi Jews were seen as 'primitives' in a pre-technological stage.

In reality, the coastal cities of North Africa, as well as the Balkan lands (including Turkey) and the urban centers of Syria and Iraq, were no more marginal in relation to the capitalist-technological center of the West than were Romania or Poland. What is more, many of the new Mizrahi immigrants were endowed with the necessary skills for the nascent Israeli economy, which was in the midst of integrating into the global capitalist marketplace. But despite these material, 'objective' facts, and as a direct result of the tensions between these two different models of Jewish modernization, an entire population of North African and Middle Eastern origin was seen as lagging behind and labeled 'backward'.[9]

Mizrahi Jews, who had not mastered the narrative of classical secular Zionism, which was the basis for social solidarity among long-time residents, did not enjoy full membership in the emerging Israeli collective. Exploited as cheap, movable labor, they were not granted any representation in the institutions that were dominating the economy and the government.[10] The data assembled by Inbar and Adler (1977) bolster this claim. Jews from North Africa with a similar background ended up in occupations with a higher socio-economic status in France than

in Israel. A more convincing argument than simple familiarity with the language and the institutional and organizational bodies is the fact that France was more pluralistic than Israel of the 1950s. In addition, since France was not a Jewish state, the Mizrahi lifestyle and internal Jewish trends offered no particular reason for excluding the Jewish migrants from French society.

Given their exclusion from full membership in the veteran Israeli collective and from access to its resources, Mizrahi Jews responded with an attempt to impose on the collective their version of the Jewish state—one that would enable Jews to flourish as a traditional ethnic-religious group within the modern world. They tried to build a Jewish-Israeli collective that would reflect their narrative and the alternative legitimacy that it conferred, in which Jewish society and the State of Israel served the desire to advance, preserve, and strengthen the traditional ethnic-religious collective in the modern world. Membership in such a collective would be based on a sense of fundamental connection and loyalty to the primordial group. Mizrahim would be included as full members, leading to the displacement of a sizable portion of the veteran population, who shared a universalist worldview. The Mizrahim developed a practice of excluding the veteran population from the collective by means of a politics of delegitimization, which reached its height in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Under this approach, the ethnocentric Herut party—and subsequently the Likud party—were marked not simply as parties whose policies it was possible to identify with, but as bodies that represented the sole legitimate national collective. In the most aggressive manifestation, right-wing Mizrahi Jews argued that the veteran population, or their political-symbolic representatives (the Labor Party and Peace Now movement),[11] were disloyal to the Jewish people as defined in traditional, ethno-religious terms.[12]

The first signs of this attempt to build an alternative collective, and the accompanying exclusion of the non-Mizrahi public, became apparent shortly after the major waves of immigration to Israel. Antonovsky's study from the early 1960s showed that Herut enjoyed greater support among North African Jews, other Mizrahim, and Israelis born to parents of North African origin than among the general population (see Herzog 1984). This trend increased steadily throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1969, for the first time, a higher proportion of Mizrahim than Ashkenazim voted for the right-wing alliance Gahal, and in 1973 a majority of Mizrahi voters chose Likud. The construction of an alternative collective and the policy of delegitimization were especially prominent in the elections of 1977, 1981, and 1984. Not only did Mizrahi Jews vote overwhelmingly in favor of the Likud (by a 2:1 ratio compared with Labor voters in 1981),[13] but the

formation of such a collective was becoming more and more explicit at the symbolic level. The Likud successfully adopted campaign rhetoric in which supporters of the party were openly presented as part of the legitimate collective ('the nationalist camp'). At the same time, Mizrahi supporters of the Likud employed derogatory political rhetoric in which the Labor Party, the Peace Now movement, and Shimon Peres (who was personally attacked several times during these campaigns) were portrayed as Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) members, Communists, or other 'enemies of Israel'.

The rise in Mizrahi support for the Likud in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the correlation between greater support and younger voters were both tied to the fact that only now did the Mizrahi ballot start to be a floating vote. This mobility, most scholars would agree (see Peres and Shemer 1984; Shamir and Arian 1982), can be attributed to (1) the transfer of control over resources from the Labor Party to the state; (2) the lessening of the dependence of native-born Israelis on public services; and (3) and the increased size and greater physical mobility of the population of eligible voters. All of these factors significantly diminished the ability to control voter behavior, particularly on the part of the Labor Party. Not only did the Mizrahi voter population become more changeable during this period, but also Mizrahi Jews began to climb the socio-economic ladder to the middle deciles. As Eisenstadt (1984) shows, those Mizrahim who were becoming upwardly mobile attached great importance to their exclusion from the mainstream of the collective. The resentment of these classes was one of the primary factors feeding the formation of a Mizrahi alternative collective.

As noted by many commentators (e.g., Herzog 1984), the Likud was not in fact a classical ethnic party because it was concerned with problems of building the overall Jewish-Israeli collective. Other Jews could, of course, also be partners in this undertaking, and there was obviously a large Ashkenazi constituency in the Likud, not only in the party leadership, but also among the voters, in particular among the religious population. Yet the Likud was an ethnic party in the sense that Mizrahi Jews found in it opportunities for the establishment of an alternative Jewish collective—opportunities that they still find.

As soon as Mizrahi voters were given the ability to express themselves, they chose a clearly traditional ethnocentric path. However, I do not wish to argue that this behavior was a direct and immanent consequence of their Mizrahi experience or 'mentality'. My premise is that they made use of the means available to them—drawn from historical experience and from their symbolic and conceptual repertoire—to respond to being excluded from full membership in the collective, denied access to the most

fundamental means of production, and exploited. They utilized these means to build a counter-argument for their own exclusive membership in the national collective, with its attendant privileges and benefits.

It should be noted that the practice of building a counter-collective was not limited to the political party context or election campaigns. The insults, invective, and even violent attacks against Peace Now and similar organizations were also acts that shaped the boundaries of the legitimate collective. The Mizrahi opponents of Peace Now did not claim that the movement's approach was misguided or even dangerous, as was argued by the established radical right—the Ha'Tehiya party and Gush Emunim settlers' movement. Rather, they claimed that Peace Now was an organization of traitors who were "stabbing the country in the back" and in fact were a front for the PLO. The apex of this antagonism was the 1984 murder of Emil Grunzweig, an Israeli teacher and activist associated with Peace Now.

The Mizrahi experience of modernization constituted an important resource that was fully exploited, but it was not the sole component in constructing the counter-collective. Among other factors, the transformation of the Israeli-Arab conflict from a conflict between states to one between the Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian communities also played a role.

Despite the similarity between the Ashkenazi and Mizrahi tactics—the Ashkenazim built a collective from which the Mizrahim were excluded, after which the Mizrahim acted in a comparable manner—the symmetry is not complete. The Ashkenazim managed to secure for themselves, and themselves alone, key political, administrative, and economic positions, whereas the success of the Mizrahim in the 1970s and 1980s was primarily symbolic. Although it translated into genuine political representation and power, and to a certain extent even led to a redistribution of wealth and other material resources, Mizrahi representation in key economic and administrative positions was still low relative to their proportion of the population. Putting aside certain concrete factors—such as the fact that the Ashkenazim already held key positions and that the leadership of the Likud remained primarily Ashkenazi in the 1980s—I believe that the principles that each group chose for itself as the basis of its self-definition played a role in this situation. The Ashkenazim defined themselves and the collective that they constructed as 'modern', an adjective that could confer legitimacy to their claims to administrative, economic, and technological positions. The Mizrahim, by contrast, defined the collective first and foremost as 'Jewish'. While this definition held undeniable symbolic power and could grant legitimacy to certain political roles, it was less effective with regard to administrative, economic, and technological roles and positions.

Conflict as Strategy in Israel's Ethnic Struggle after the Zionist Revolution

Why did the Mizrahim choose this strategy of conflict through the construction of a counter-collective? Why did they not opt for the path of radical social protest? In the early 1970s, this indeed seemed to be the most reasonable course of action. This period saw the founding of the Israeli Black Panther movement, whose vocal protests rocked the political establishment. But despite the initial promise of this option, it never matured into a broad-based, mass movement. Although successors of the Black Panthers, such as the Neighborhood Activists group and the Ohalim (Tents) movement of Yamin Suissa, continued to crop up here and there, they never progressed beyond the social and political margins.

The answer to these questions lies in the fact that protest movements rest upon legitimation (or justification) regimes (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), for instance, arguments and claims that offer reasons and criteria for the allocation of goods. The reasons can be of various types: "I am entitled to rights or assets because I am a citizen" or "because the law grants me this right" or "because it is the prevailing custom," and so on. These arguments reflect the explicit or official rules whereby collectives and their socio-political centers distribute symbolic and material goods. Due to their very nature, protest movements rely on argumentative frameworks that they legitimate and reinforce. The American civil rights movement rested upon the explicit American commitment to equality. Its reinforcement of this value thus opened the way for other groups such as women and gays to demand equal rights and treatment.

Any Mizrahi movement that would choose to engage in radical social protest would find itself, like other movements of this type, within a legitimation regime that argues for the distribution of goods on the basis of universal rights and justice. It therefore would have validated this tradition and even reinforced it. The secular Ashkenazi Zionist narrative was also based on this tradition of universal rights and justice. Moreover, the exclusion and exploitation of Mizrahim was legitimated by labeling them as a backward population who had never shared these universal assumptions. Had the Mizrahi protest movement based itself on concepts of universal social justice, this would have meant, in effect, that it accepted and even affirmed the rules of Ashkenazi discourse and the Ashkenazim's inherent power relations. If the Mizrahim had established a protest movement on the basis of these familiar trends, they would have essentially been validating the selfsame discourse that legitimized their exploitation and exclusion from full partnership in the collective. They would have found themselves playing by the Ashkenazi rules, thereby

reaffirming their own lesser status vis-à-vis the Ashkenazim, who would have continued to look down on them.

The Mizrahim were much more successful when they deconstructed Ashkenazi discourse and developed an alternative discourse of their own that allowed them to occupy the higher ground. David Magen, Meir Sheetrit, even David Levy, and, today, Miri Regev were and are seen as prouder, more authentic representatives of Mizrahim than the social activists described above. To the chagrin of those engaged in social protest, the Mizrahim's refusal to frame their discourse using the terminology of radical social protest prevented the creation of a joint political front of 'the downtrodden' (Mizrahim and Palestinians alike). On the contrary, the formation of a traditional, particularist Jewish-Israeli collective encouraged militant anti-Arab policies.

New Protest Movements within the Mizrahi Counter-Collective

Just as protest movements can emerge from universalist systems, they can also grow out of particularist systems and traditions. Together with creating a counter-collectivity, the Mizrahi Likud supporters also created a legitimation regime. It states that membership in, and loyalty to, the traditional ethno-religious Jewish collective earns one access to material and symbolic goods. This legitimation regime initiated a new political dynamic that included an important component of protest as new political bodies, representing new populations, made use of these arguments and claims.

In 1984, and especially in the 1988 elections, the Kach, Shas, and Agudat Yisrael-Chabad[14] parties represented such protest movements, as reflected by the success they achieved in Israel's periphery. These parties represented the more marginalized strata of the population (i.e., the bottom 30 percent), which consisted almost solely of Mizrahim—residents of the 'new cities', the development towns, and the poorer urban neighborhoods. Unlike the Mizrahi middle class, these Mizrahim did not obtain increased access to the country's material resources with the accession of the Likud to power. The protest parties emphasized in various ways that merely belonging to the primordial Jewish collective guaranteed full membership status in Israeli society and that the Mizrahim deserved all the privileges of full members, such as a livelihood, physical security, and so forth. In the 1988 election (and more recently), parties of this type scored significant electoral success at the expense of the Likud,[15] which was perceived as serving the interests of upwardly mobile, middle-class Mizrahim (Cohen and Leon 2008, 2011).

Conclusions

The preceding discussion was intended to demonstrate that ethnic tensions in Israel are closely related to the character of Israel as a Jewish state. From the outset, the establishment of an Israeli collective by the veteran Ashkenazi population was supposed to be a much-needed source of salvation and welfare for the Jewish population. And from the beginning, the Mizrahi population was excluded for failing to meet the criteria of a 'healthy' existence. Because of their historical experience and the negative attitudes toward them on the part of the veteran Ashkenazi population, the Mizrahim strove to create an alternative Jewish-Israeli society based on a traditional vision of a Jewish collective.

One of the more surprising pieces of data that has surfaced in recent years is the persistence of ethnic identity. According to the *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2014*,[16] approximately 75 percent of the population was born in Israel. Under such circumstances, it would be reasonable to expect that ethnic identity would gradually fade away and become less relevant. Nevertheless, in a survey administered by the Israel Democracy Institute in 2009, 40 percent of the Jewish population self-identified as Ashkenazim and 48 percent self-identified as Mizrahim (Arian and Keissar-Sugarmen 2011: 24). A good part of both populations are Jews born in Israel. The persistence of ethnic self-identification after almost 70 years of Israeli history means that Jewish ethnicity in Israel is something deep and abiding. Ethnic identity in Israel is not "easy and intermittent" (Gans 1979: 8), and only to a limited extent is it optionally assumed when it adds interest or status (cf. Waters 1996). Among white ethnics in America, over 90 percent of all marriages are between members of different ethnic groups, resulting in a situation of multiple ethnic identities. In Israel, only 25 percent of marriages are ethnically exogamous.

Together with this attitude toward ethnic identity, the politics of exclusion and delegitimization continues. This was evident in the aftermath of the recent election in 2015. Representatives of the established, mainly Ashkenazi elites, such as the author and painter Yair Garboz, referred back to old stereotypes and castigated the Likud voters, of whom the Mizrahim are a very visible and major component, for being irrational, magical, and 'primitive'. Conversely, those on the right have accused not only the Israeli left but also Supreme Court justices and President Reuven Rivlin of being in league with the enemy. There is some measure of association of the Mizrahim with this delegitimizing discourse. Some of its most visible and audible spokespeople, such as Minister of Culture Miri Regev and the MKs Yaron Mazuz and Oren Hazan, are of clear and public Mizrahi origin. Mizrahim have also continued to vote overwhelmingly for the Likud and other right-wing parties, especially the Yahad party.

Thus, a major component of continuing ethnic identity seems to be the differential construction of the Jewish-Israeli collective. Many Mizrahi Jews continue to relate to this collectivity as a primordial, traditional ethnic collectivity to which one must be loyal, while a significant number of Ashkenazim continue to construct it as a civic, universal nation-state. According to a 2014 survey undertaken by the Israel Democracy Institute, Ashkenazim are divided more or less equally among left, right, and center political identifications (29 percent left, 34 percent right, 37 percent center), while Mizrahim have a clear rightist orientation (18 percent left, 61 percent right, 21 percent center) (IDI 2014).

A particular development worthy of attention is that the growing right-wing delegitimizing discourse seems increasingly divorced from ethnicity. Today, its leading practitioners—Motti Yogev of the Jewish Home party and Yariv Levin and Zeev Elkin of the Likud—are Ashkenazim. Extra-parliamentary practitioners such as Ran Baratz and Ronen Shuval are also Ashkenazim. This shift may indicate that the Mizrahi population in Israel is now more secure in its membership in mainstream Israeli society and thus less dependent upon the politics of exclusion and delegitimization.

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NOTES

1. My thanks to Elihu Katz for this formulation.
2. This was true for all Jews of Algeria, a minority of the Jews of Tunis after 1914, and the Jews of Libya and Egypt.
3. This difference in the circumstances of modernization explains the divergent attitudes of the religious establishments in Europe and in the Islamic countries toward the process. The Mizrahi rabbis' openness toward compromise, and their willingness to do so, was tied to the fact that modernization in the Muslim lands did not involve a fundamental change in the definition of the collective. For the most part, modernization tended to benefit Mizrahi Jews at the material and instrumental levels, and therefore the rabbis did not demonstrate strong opposition. In Europe, however, it was clear to the rabbis that modernization entailed an essential, radical change in the definition of the Jewish collective. For this reason, they launched an all-out ideological war against modernization from the outset. Because of the close connection between a change in the definition of the collective and other aspects of modernization, the European religious leaders also found themselves (to varying degrees) negating aspects of modernization that had no religious or spiritual significance. This trend manifested itself in extreme ways. Prior to World War II, for example, Belzer Hasidic leaders rejected the use of electricity in their Beit Midrash (Katz 1973; Piekarz 1990: 97–121).
4. This awakening can be seen in the work of the Tunisian-Jewish writer Albert Memmi in the context of personal experience (see Levy 1980).
5. Especially in the 1930s and 1940s, some of the younger Jews in North Africa and Iraq came up with another, very original solution to their situation. They continued to conceive of society in these countries as consisting of a mosaic of separate particularist groups. Thus, they concentrated on the internal modernization of the Jewish community. At the same time, they wished to turn to an external and powerful 'third party' to guarantee civic equality among the various groups. This third party consisted of either the colonial powers of Britain and France in North Africa or the Soviet Union in Iraq. This solution also turned out to be unsuccessful (see Fischer 2002).
6. As Tsur (1988: 129) puts it: "The chances of the national solution winning widespread support among the local population stemmed primarily from the fact that it combined an orientation toward the society of origin with modernity, innovation, and the beginnings of hope for power and a decent life." Regarding the approach of Rabbi Eliyahu Hazan, the rabbi of Tripoli, Tobi (1988: 183) writes: "The return to the Land of Israel will restore to Jews their sense of uniqueness and national pride amid the desire to obtain a modern secular education, which is a vital necessity."
7. This assertion relates to the meaning of their *aliyah* and not to its proximate cause or motivation. While Jews did flock to Israel against the backdrop of national tensions with the Arab nations that were gaining independence, a similar motive characterized most of the waves of *aliyah* from Europe, where the circumstances involved a total breakdown of life, coupled with pogroms

and hunger in the wake of World War I (Third Aliyah) or persecution and economic discrimination (Fourth Aliyah). But there is no question that for these immigrants, the significance of building a Jewish collective in the Land of Israel went far beyond mere instrumental benefits.

8. A notable reference to this characterization can be found in David Ben-Gurion's famous statement: "The Divine Presence has deserted them [the Mizrahi Jews]" (see Lissak 1987: 133).
9. The findings of Yaakov Nahon (1987: 29–33) regarding the academic achievements of the first- and second-generation immigrants from Egypt and Iraq are particularly instructive in this regard. In the generation of the 'fathers', there is a strong correspondence between the level of education of men from these countries and those of the same generation from Romania and Poland. That is to say, Jews from these lands who were educated in their country of origin showed similar achievements that cut across geographic borders. By contrast, in the generation of the 'sons'—that is, the children of the immigrants from these countries, who were educated in Israel—there was a sizable disparity in academic achievement. The children of immigrants from Romania and Poland fit the Ashkenazi norm, whereas the achievements of second-generation Iraqi and Egyptian immigrants were closer to those of Jews from Yemen, Morocco, and Iran, which were much lower. The 'backward' label apparently spread even to groups of Mizrahi Jews who had acquired a European-style education in their native countries.
10. For a detailed discussion about the Mizrahim's lack of representation in the economy and the government, see Swirski (1981: 12–50).
11. The reference here and throughout the text is to the Labor Party in its previous incarnation as the Alignment (1969–1991).
12. This interpretation was substantiated by Israelis' self-reports on their values and identity. Based on an extremely comprehensive opinion poll conducted in 1985 (Shye 1987), it emerged that Mizrahi Jews tended to see their Jewish identity in traditional terms and were inclined to support the Likud and Kach parties.
13. Herzog (1984), Peres and Shemer (1984), and Shamir and Arian (1982) have all reached the same conclusion, namely, that Mizrahi Jews vote for the Likud because they identify with the party's traditional and hawkish tendencies. Peres and Shemer also cite an interest to escape the watchful eye of 'the establishment', while Shamir and Arian speak of an overall Mizrahi component that does not lend itself to statistical reduction. All of these studies are fragmentary in nature and do not draw a connection between voting patterns and other aspects of the phenomenology of election campaigns.
14. The Agudat Yisrael-Chabad party was known officially as Yahadut Hatorah Ha'me'uhedet-Agudat Yisrael in 1988.
15. One recent example is Eli Yishai's Yahad party, which in 2015 received almost 3.25 percent of the vote.
16. See http://147.237.248.50/reader/shnaton/shnatone_new.htm?CYear=2014&Vol=65&CSubject=19.

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