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## Introduction

## 1

## The Psychopolitical Foundations of Ethnic Privileges in the Jewish State

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### Introduction

This book investigates the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian citizens, focusing on the dynamics of privileged Jewish citizenship in sharp contrast to the Palestinian citizens' underprivileged citizenship. The volume focuses on the pre-1967 borders (that is, Israel's borders before its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza) in order to problematize the concept of the Jewish state even without the 1967 occupation of what remained of mandatory Palestine. Such a focus, although confined territorially and demographically to these borders, cannot be completely dissociated from broader dynamics that have been evolving since 1967, and from the idea of the Jewish state as it emerged historically. But this focus can help elucidate in fundamental ways how Israel privileges Jewish citizens over non-Jewish citizens and how, in effect, it places Jews (whether citizens of Israel or not) in a superior position – politically, constitutionally, and otherwise – than its Palestinian citizens or, for that matter, any non-Jewish citizens. Consequently, this discussion can challenge the prevalent assumption that Israel in its pre-1967 borders is a democratic state, although the volume's direct focus is on the issues of ethnic privileging and superiority.

Jewish privileges and superiority, whether explicitly declared, implicitly assumed but openly practiced, or legally and procedurally disguised, are, in and of themselves, a worthy subject of examination in an ethnic state like Israel in order to enhance our understanding of ethnic nationalism dynamics<sup>1</sup> and ethnic policies in a state that is in actuality binational in both its demography and geography; at the end of 2015

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Van Evera (1994), and Gagnon (1994) for the role of various types of nationalism and in particular ethnic nationalism in causing conflict.

Israel's population of 8.4 million was 75% Jewish and between 17 and 21% Arab,<sup>2</sup> a binational demographic structure, although as discussed later, Arabs are not recognized as a national group by Israel.<sup>3</sup> It is also important for our understanding of settler colonialism, because the roots of the privileged Jewish citizenship and the underprivileged Arab citizenship should be traced to the settler-colonial project of establishing an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine and to how this project was conceived and operationalized, and how it is still unfolding as such in practice.

But in Israel's case, ethnic privilege and superiority is even more problematic, because Israel uses a single ethnic criterion (being Jewish or not) to privilege one group – whether they are citizens of Israel or citizens of any other country – over another group who are not only citizens but are also native to the land.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Israel considers itself to be a democratic state. But this postulated characterization of the state as both “Jewish and democratic,” which has become a fundamental pillar of Israel's self-identity and has been uncritically accepted in Western international politics, needs to be challenged and deconstructed.

<sup>2</sup> Provided by Israel Bureau of Statistics ([www.cbs.gov.il/publications15/yarhon0615/pdf/b1.pdf](http://www.cbs.gov.il/publications15/yarhon0615/pdf/b1.pdf)), Israel's total population includes the Jewish colonists in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and the Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem, most of whom do not hold Israeli citizenship (and also the Syrian Arabs in the occupied Golan Heights – about 25,000). Therefore the number of Arabs in Israel according to the Israel Bureau of Statistics is 1.75 million, constituting 21% of the population at the end of 2015. Without occupied East Jerusalem and the Occupied Syrian territories the percentage of Arabs drops to less than 18%, similar to their percentage in 1949. Despite opening its gates unconditionally to Jewish immigrants and closing it almost hermitically to Palestinians, the percentage of Palestinian *citizens* remained roughly the same over the years.

<sup>3</sup> For comparative purposes, according to 2011 census data ([www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm#a4](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm#a4)), Canadians of French ancestry constitute approximately 15% of the Canadian population. According to the *CIA World Factbook* ([www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html)), the Walloon minority constitute 31% of the total Belgian population. In Cyprus, according to 2011 census data from the Republic of Cyprus ([www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/732265957BAC953AC225798300406903?OpenDocument&sub=2&sel=1&e=&print](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/732265957BAC953AC225798300406903?OpenDocument&sub=2&sel=1&e=&print)) and Northern Cyprus ([www.devplan.org/Nufus-2011/nufus%20son\\_.pdf](http://www.devplan.org/Nufus-2011/nufus%20son_.pdf)), the Northern Turkish population constitutes about 26% of the total Cypriot population. In Sri Lanka, according to the 2012 census ([www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/FinalReport/Population/Table%20A3.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/FinalReport/Population/Table%20A3.pdf)), the Sri Lankan Tamil minority constitute about 11% of the population (about 75% of the population is Sinhalese; the remaining 14% are other minorities).

<sup>4</sup> Under Israel's Law of Return, some people who might not qualify as Jewish according to *Halachic* tradition can still be entitled to the same privileges if they are related to Jewish persons in specific ways (Laws of the State of Israel, 1970, vol. 24, Law of Return, Amendment no 2). Discussed in Rouhana 1997:51–52; Masri 2013:8; Lustick 1999: 422–443.

Many scholars now accept the premise that the Zionist project that aimed at establishing a Jewish state in Palestine is a settler-colonial project (for just a few examples, see Lloyd 2012; Mamdani 2015; Pappé 2012; Robinson 2013; Rouhana 2014; Sabbagh-Khoury 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015; Shihade 2011; Veracini 2010; and Wolfe 2006, 2012).<sup>5</sup> This project continues to unfold all over mandatory Palestine, including inside Israel itself (see Amara 2014; Amara, Abu-Saad, and Yiftachel 2013). Yet Israel granted citizenship to the Palestinians who survived the Palestinian ethnic cleansing of the war in 1948–1949 and who stayed within Israel – either in their towns and villages, or as internally displaced persons, expelled from their villages and towns, which were taken over completely by Israel and to which they were not allowed to return, even as citizens of the state<sup>6</sup> (Cohen 2000; Sabbagh-Khoury 2011). Indeed, the citizenship that Israel granted to the Palestinians who stayed within its borders – in the context of its efforts to be admitted to the UN in 1949<sup>7</sup> – obfuscated for many years the nature and extent of the ethnic privileges and settler-colonial hierarchical ethnic inequalities, whose roots are in the very idea of Zionism. Jewish ethnic privileges, as this volume demonstrates, extend to all areas of political, legal, constitutional, urban, and economic power structures. Yet mainstream voices in Israeli and Western academia rarely challenge Israel's self-identification as a democratic state or the paradoxical self-identification as "Jewish and democratic." Indeed, to contest such understanding in Israeli and Western academia is often an arduous task.

Some of the more critical Zionist voices might concede that vis-à-vis the Arab citizens, Israeli democracy is somewhat tenuous and demonstrates internal frictions that are expected in any democratic state (for example, Peleg and Waxman 2011). Zionist academic discourse in general recognizes some inequalities between Arabs and Jews within the state's political framework and acknowledges some systemic discrimination against Palestinian citizens, but still maintains the

<sup>5</sup> I argue that Zionism has additional features, including being a national movement. The implications of these additional features on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict are discussed in Rouhana (2014).

<sup>6</sup> Of the 900,000 Arabs who lived in Palestinian lands now constituting Israel prior to the Nakba, by 1949 only approximately 156,000 remained (see Rouhana 1997). It is worth noting that these figures include Israeli citizens within the "Little Triangle," Arab towns that were intended to be annexed to Jordan but were transferred to Israel under the Armistice Agreement between Jordan and Israel. Many of the Palestinians who remained were internally displaced, and were dubbed "present absentees" (see Cohen 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Israel was admitted to the UN in May 1949.

virtues of Israeli democracy (Gavison 1999). This recognition, which is relatively new to Zionist discourse and which started mainly in the 1990s, is justified on different grounds, such as security and “defensive democracy” (Arian, Talmud, and Hermann 1988; Peleg and Waxman 2011; Pinkas 1993; Yakobson and Rubinstein 2003; Yehoshua 1981)<sup>8</sup>. Zionist academia even sought to find theoretical foundations for the claim that a state can be at once democratic and privilege one ethnic group over another – in effect granting one group explicit and constitutionally grounded superiority over another, by advancing the concept of “ethnic democracy” (Smootha 1997). Yet scholarship from outside the Zionist camp critiqued this model as self-contradictory and fundamentally nondemocratic (Bishara 2001, 2005; Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel 1998; Jamal 2002; Rouhana 1997, 2006); by applying critical examination of the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian citizens, critical scholarship has established that this citizenship lacks both meaning and substance. The Palestinian citizenship has been variously called hollow (Jamal 2007) and stateless (Molavi 2013), and the Palestinian citizens have been characterized as “citizens without citizenship” (Sultany 2003). I have argued elsewhere that the citizenship is not only hollow but suffers from continuing settler-colonial practices. The central claim here is that the substance of the Arabs’ citizenship rights are emptied not by simple discriminatory policies that can be remedied, but by the settler-colonial structure from which these policies are derived such as: their exclusion from the state’s definition of the “public good”; the state’s deliberate efforts to erase the Arabs’ history and culture, deny their collective identity; expropriating their resources – mainly land – and their treatment as enemies in cases of land ownership, and as unwanted in cases of immigration. These policies described extensively in the literature<sup>9</sup> and in this volume are not only compatible with a settler-colonial structure but are its predictable result. Yet, with democratic rights to vote and run for office, the Palestinian citizens do enjoy procedural citizenship rights, which, in turn, make it possible for Israel to claim that it is a democracy. Thus, while Palestinians in Israel are citizens they are also settler-colonial subjects who have been exposed since 1948 to devastating continuous settler-colonial policies that are still unfolding. Therefore, I conceive of

<sup>8</sup> See Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2015) for a critical approach.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Lustick (1980); Jiryis (1976); Molavi (2013); Rouhana (1997); Yiftachel (2006); Zureik (1979, 2015).

their relationship with Israel as one of settler-colonial citizenship (Rouhana 2015; Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2014). The extensive examination of Jewish ethnic privileges and ethnic policies this volume provides presents substantive evidence for this claim.

The inbuilt ethnic privileges and superiority as well as their psycho-political foundations challenge the claim that Palestinians' citizenship is simply constrained by some discriminatory practices or "tensions" emerging from Israel's two main self-identification poles of Jewish and democratic. Such claims have been examined extensively and the security considerations were shown, while in minor cases real, to be in reality an easy, pretextual justification for bestowing sweeping ethnic privileges and superiority to the Jews whether citizens of Israel or other countries' citizens (at the expense of the Arab citizens (see, for example, Rouhana 1997)). On the one hand, Israel confines the Palestinians' citizenship to boundaries of procedural democracy, within which their citizenship has limited meanings; on the other, it continues to apply settler-colonial policies outside these boundaries. Thus, with the democratic rights to vote and run for office, Palestinian citizens enjoy major procedural rights that Israel presents – to its citizens as well as to the world – as evidence to support its claim of being a democracy. But this procedural citizenship has not halted Israel's settler-colonial policies toward its non-Jewish minority. Thus Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury (2014), drawing from literature on settler colonialism (Veracini 2011; Wolfe 2006), show how Israel founded the blueprint of its settler-colonial policies during its first two decades. These policies are also well described by Bäuml in this volume. While the blueprints for ethnic privileges in practice started immediately with Israel's establishment, Ian Lustick argues in this volume that the foundations started much earlier, indeed with the idea of a Jewish state itself.

During a whole generation after it was established, Israel put the Arab population under a military regime and employed the following policies as described by Bäuml in this volume and by Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury (2014): taking over land and appropriating space; attempting to erase history and culture; making irreversible the demographic riddance it achieved in the ethnic cleansing it conducted in 1948–1949, continuing it, and later trying to extend it further by various means; installing strict limitations on political organization and repressing Palestinian freedom of expression, particularly of any sort of Arab nationalism; and establishing an unshakable tyranny of the Jewish majority supported by constitutional law – all of which were, and continue to be, vehemently

resisted by the Arab population. These policies characterize settler-colonial projects (Veracini 2011; Wolfe 2006). The outcome of this combined dynamic of underlying settler-colonial policies overlaid by the granting of citizenship constructed a particular, and perhaps unique, type of relationship between a settler-colonial state and a native population – a relationship that, as noted, has been defined as settler-colonial citizenship in which citizenship is a procedural shell within which settler-colonial policies are practiced (see Rouhana and Sabbagh Khoury 2014, Rouhana 2015).

It has become obvious that the Jewish state could not provide equality to its Palestinian citizens, for to regard them as equal to Jewish citizens calls into question Zionism itself as the embodiment of an exclusive Jewish state in which Jews only are entitled to the fundamental privileges that are defining features of democratic citizenship. Indeed, the political program advanced by one Arab party under the leadership of Azmi Bishara (see Chapter 5 in this volume) and which advocated that Israel become a state with full equal citizenship for Arab and Jew – a “state for its citizens” – is considered by many Zionist academics and by Zionist political parties as a threatening program that undermines the very essence of Zionism and the state of Israel as a Jewish state. While theorizing about the settler-colonial citizenship is obviously cognizant of this inherent inequality – for equality is incompatible with settler colonialism and it highlights Jewish privileges – it has the additional advantage of explaining the continuation of these policies that the state has adopted toward its Arab citizens, and in some cases their intensification such as in the case of the Naqab (Nasasra 2012, Richter-Devroe, Abu Rabia-Queder, and Ratcliffe, 2014); this theorizing also facilitates tracing the epistemological and psychological infrastructure that generates attitudes of ethnic superiority conducive to the implementation of these policies by using violent, legal, or “democratic” means, as circumstances require. In addition to their tangible effects, these attitudes continually assault the dignity of the colonized. Fanon (1963), Lloyd (2012), and Said (2012), among many others, have cogently described the foundations of such attitudes and their multiple manifestations in colonial contexts. In order to assert exclusive sovereignty over the land of Palestine, the Zionist movement, and later the Israeli state as its embodiment, has depended on modes of knowledge production that continue to construct the Palestinian people as inferior, violent, or incapable of self-rule and sovereignty and, consequently implicitly or explicitly,

Jews as superior. This system of justification of the conquest and settlement of Palestine employed by Zionists has relied heavily upon negation of the native Palestinians, similar to other settler-colonial movements (Lloyd and Pulido 2010). This negation lends itself to pejorative views of the natives, views that are deeply embedded within the colonial project of Zionism. As Lloyd and Pulido (2010:801) remark, “Ideologically, the constant proclamation of the inferiority of the colonized serves to justify the fact that even the most mediocre of the colonizers occupy a position of structural superiority.” Israeli views about Arabs are inseparable from the colonial project because, as Wolfe (2006:388) has argued, “race is made in the targeting,” such that “so far as indigenous peoples are concerned, where they are is who they are, and not only by their own reckoning.” Thus, that Palestinians were seen as inferior and later on as violent is closely tied to their location, their belonging to the place, and their refusal to be dislocated from that place – and not to being Arabs as such. In this sense, Zionism has nothing against Palestinian Arabs except that they are the inhabitants of the land Zionism claims to belong exclusively to the Jewish people.

Instead of reviewing these attitudes or enumerating Israeli policies that derive from settler-colonial citizenship, the remainder of this chapter will provide what I call the psychopolitical infrastructure that makes the ability to privilege a Jew – citizen or not – over the native Arab citizens the natural derivative of the Jewish state idea as envisioned and practiced by Zionism.

### **The Psychopolitical Infrastructure of Privileging a Jew over an Arab in a Zionist State**

I define the psychopolitical infrastructure as the basic political notions that are fundamental for the political idea of the Jewish state vis-à-vis the native Palestinian population as it has been conceived and implemented by Zionism together with the political and psychological implications for Jews and Arabs in Israel. Three fundamental pillars summarize Israel’s psychopolitical infrastructure, which laid the groundwork for the sweeping political, urban, legal, educational, and economic policies toward Arab citizens as described in this volume and which I frame in a settler-colonial context – a context that necessarily privileges a Jew over an Arab and situates a Jew (citizen or not) in a superior position to an Arab citizen. These pillars are: exclusion of Arab citizens from the Jewish



state; exclusion from the homeland both as a physical and as symbolic space as a home; and denial of nationhood and national identity. The combination of the three pillars, I hope, will provide the basis for understanding the policies that are described in the various chapters of this volume.

The psychopolitical infrastructure of Israel as a Jewish state, which makes so natural the implementation of the privileges of a Jew over Arab described in many of the following chapters, is inherent to Zionism.<sup>10</sup> This foundational infrastructure precedes Israel's establishment and has its roots in the Zionist idea itself.

### *The Exclusive State of the Jewish People*

Much has been written about the meaning of the Jewish state for the Palestinian people in general and for the Palestinian citizens in Israel in particular (Bishara 2005; Ghanim 2014; Khalidi 2011; Rouhana 1997); therefore, I will not expand on the particular policies derived from a Zionist state or on its institutional and constitutional implications. My main point in this section will be to demonstrate how a Jewish state, which in effect means a Zionist state, constitutes a fundamental psychopolitical pillar from which ethnic privileges become naturally derived and based on which a differential system of citizenship is established. (See also Bishara in this volume.)

The procedural citizenship, including the democratic rights to vote and run for office, should not obscure the fact that the Palestinian citizens are excluded not only from meaningful citizenship in which they become full participants in defining the public good in (what is theoretically) their state, not even their own public good, but also from the most fundamental prerequisite of citizenship – that of having the state claim them as its own citizens rather than excluding them by defining itself as the state of the Jewish people *only* (see Rouhana 1997 for the Knesset debate of this particular issue). Critical scholars have examined at some length the extent to which this exclusion renders their citizenship, as mentioned earlier, meaningless, hollow, or, as I argue, settler-colonial in nature. Yet it is important to underscore that for official and public Israel to emphasize in public discourse, constitutional law, institutional

<sup>10</sup> In fact, this infrastructure might be inherent to the particular settler-colonial model that Zionism embodies and which was fully inflicted upon the Palestinian citizens since 1948, because they became citizens in the state guided by Zionism.

structure, and public policy that it is the state of the Jewish people, and by disowning its own Arab citizens in the deepest sense (even while allowing for procedural democracy), Israel lays down the foundations of one fundamental pillar of the psychopolitical structure of Jewish ethnic privileging that permeates all significant tangible and intangible advantages that citizens derive from their relationship with their state.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore this pillar, with the other two described subsequently, constructs and nourishes the hegemonic consciousness that pervades Jewish society that Jewish privileges are natural in Israel and should be taken for granted by the Jewish citizens. Therefore, when Palestinian citizens seek equality – which by definition requires ending Jewish privileges by advocating that Israel become a state for all its citizens – this demand becomes a source of conflict, as described earlier, not only with the state and its institutions, but with a majority of the Jewish citizens.

The dual process of psychologically disclaiming its Arab citizens and politically excluding them from meaningful citizenship while actively seeking to recruit Jews who are citizens of other countries to become Israeli citizens, claim them as fully its own, and grant them privileges over its own Arab citizens only because they are Jewish is perhaps the strongest psychopolitical indication of the state's historical, current, and future rejection of the Palestinian citizens. At the same time, it is a fundamental manifestation of the meaning of Jewish state from which the way for privileging Jew over Arab becomes a matter of naturally implementing this psychopolitical guiding pillar. This implementation takes the forms of privileging Jew over Arab in the broad range of policies, practices, laws, and the politics of claiming and disclaiming who is part of “we the people” in Israel.

This is partly, why it is wrong, to conceive of the fundamental inequality between Arab and Jew in Israel as a matter of discrimination that often comes with minority status and that, as in some other democratic states, can be fought by trying to change specific discriminatory policies. The inequality that the privileging reflects is rooted in the very sense of exclusive entitlement to the state and to the homeland that emanates from the Zionist ideology itself. And therefore, it is this ideology that should be the final goal of change for the Arab citizens if they ever hope to reach a state of equality.

<sup>11</sup> For arguments related to constitutional law, see Gavison (1999), Kretzmer (1990), and Masri (2015).