DEMOCRACY, IDENTITY AND SECURITY IN ISRAEL’S ETHNIC DEMOCRACY: THE IDEATIONAL UNDERPINNINGS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

By

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Abstract

This work expands on the growing ideational institutionalist literature by proposing that institutional change and stability are influenced most substantially by changes to the underlying ideational network which link core societal ideas. These core ideas create the framework on which institutions are built and in which form they are fashioned. Changes to the ideational network lead to adaptive changes in institutions, but the difficulty in completely removing core ideas from these networks protects the institutions from substantial change. The theory is demonstrated using the case of the surprising stability of ethnic democracy in Israel in the wake of the substantial changes to the country’s economic and security realities. Small adaptive changes in the institution of ethnic democracy are traced back to changes in the balance between three core ideas: democracy, Jewish identity, and security. The overall stability of the institution, however, is linked to the enduring linkages of the three core ideas even as they experienced changes in their individual meanings.
Too many years the Israeli left also accepted the separation between Jews and Arabs. First by looking away, then through submission, and finally wholeheartedly, it adopted the racist world view that the Arabs are not part of the political game. That is why the left in Israel is also responsible for the fact that incitement against the Arabs has reached new heights.

We can no longer avoid this. The first message that must come out of this rally is this: There is no Jewish left and Arab left in Israel, there is only a Jewish-Arab left. And within this left wing there can be disagreement, but we no longer accept this separation.

In memory of Yizhak Rabin,
a soldier in the army of peace
Preface

For, how could you expect me not to feel uneasy about what that ancient lawgiver they call the public say when it sees me, after slumbering so many years in the silence of oblivion, coming out now with all my years upon my back, and with a book as dry as a rush, devoid of invention, meagre in style, poor in thoughts, wholly wanting in learning and wisdom, without quotations in the margin or annotations at the end, after the fashion of other books I see, which, though all fables and profanity, are so full of maxims from Aristotle, and Plato, and the whole herd of philosophers, that they fill the readers with amazement and convince them that the authors are men of learning, erudition, and eloquence.

From the Author’s Preface to Miguel de Cervantes’ Don Quixote

The research and writing of this study took place primarily between 2011 and 2014. During these years I have amassed a long list of quotes and anecdotes that, each in turn, appeared at the time to epitomise the road Israel has taken as it navigates between its conflicting commitments to Jewish identity and democracy. Progressively more candid, unabashed statements from leading politicians, bills and motions that sought to disenfranchise Israel’s Arab minority and limit free speech to Israel’s left-wing, all posed almost cartoonish representations of the trend that this study attempts to describe.
This work would never have been completed were it not for the values, beliefs, ideas, and curiosity instilled in me by my beloved parents from a young age. In a study of my own private ideational network, they would be the point of origin. But the ideas presented in this work were also deeply affected by what I have observed of political life in Israel throughout my life, and particularly during the formative years of this project.

I returned to Israel for my field work, after four years abroad, during the hopeful summer of 2011, when hundreds of thousands had taken to the streets to call for social justice, and public discourse took a long overdue reprieve from issues of security and terrorism to discuss the more “normal” politics of economic policy. But the core conflicts of Israeli society were never out of sight. Leaders of the movement were immediately labeled radical leftists and their links to pro-peace (or, as they were deemed by the right, “anti-Zionist”) groups were quickly traced and denounced. Those leaders themselves were acutely aware of the dangers of being identified as “Arab lovers” or generally associated with the left-wing side of the debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Attempts to include Israel’s Arab citizens in the protest were marginal and marginalized, and absurdly, signs bearing the names of political parties were banned from some of the rallies, due to their organizers’ wish to keep them “a-political”.

But the summer of 2011 ended and Israel was soon consumed again by security issues. A flare-up in Gaza in March 2012 and Operation Pillar of Defense in November bookended the failed attempt to re-engage the protest movement in the summer of 2012.

\footnote{That politics is normally primarily about the economy is something I did not fully grasp until I immigrated to Canada. For an Israeli growing up in the shade of the Lebanon War, the first Intifada, the Oslo peace process and its aftermath, thinking about economic policy has always been an afterthought – a luxury.}
By the time of the elections of 2013, the economic debate had all but evaporated, and Israel’s left made only paltry gains. Newcomer populist party Yesh Atid, originally setting as its goal to take care of civil and economic issues, ended up focusing much of its campaign on its promise for “equality of burden” – i.e. the drafting of ultra-orthodox (and possibly Arabs) to military and national service.

2011-2012 also saw a renewed barrage of anti-democratic legislation aimed against Israel’s Arab citizens and left-wing organizations, astride an unprecedented public attack against left wing organizations, most prominently the New Israel Fund. The attack was orchestrated by NGOs with strong links to right wing parties and specifically PM Netanyahu, and posed a threat to the very existence of many of Israel’s aid and advocacy organizations. For a part of this period I worked with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, and felt the palpable distress such organizations experienced as new bills were introduced to quell their freedom of speech and action.

Events kept on piling up. In the summer of 2014, three Jewish teenagers were abducted and, as was later found out, murdered in the West Bank. As Israel began its operation to retrieve the three teenagers, it also began attacking targets in Gaza, in response to rockets fired into Israel.² Through social media tens of thousands supported calls for revenge. Reports spread of marauding groups walking the streets of Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem seeking Arabs, and physical attacks took place in several cases. On July 2nd, one day after the funeral of the three teenagers, an Arab teenager from East Jerusalem was caught by a gang of Jews and burned alive. Violent demonstrations erupted in Arab towns

² The rockets were most likely fired in response to Israel’s assassination of a key Hamas activist several hours before the abduction.
and in East Jerusalem and met with force from Israeli police, although the events of October 2000, where 13 Israeli Arabs were killed by police gunfire, were not repeated. The public atmosphere had become poisonous. As violence in Gaza escalated, left-wing demonstrators and even those merely expressing their compassion for innocent Palestinians killed in the attacks, reported heretofore unknown levels of hostility and even physical violence. New groups and gangs began organizing with the express intention of hunting down and attacking left-wing supporters and several such attacks materialized, leading many on the left to avoid demonstrations against the war altogether.

It became commonplace to express desire for the death of leftists and Arabs alike, and many seemed to feel such exclamations were perfectly normative. One reporter wrote on his Facebook page of a woman who came up to him and asked to be interviewed because she had much to say. When asked what that was, she began wishing for a rocket to hit Tel-Aviv and kill hundreds of leftists “so that they will understand what residents of the south feel”. The woman identified herself as a school teacher.

Meanwhile, Israel’s Arab citizens were also threatened. In addition to physical attacks, they were also hurt economically. A call to boycott Arab Israeli businesses received resounding support and one poll found two thirds of Jews in Israel refused to shop in Arab stores.

Not all was lost, however. Israel’s police forces managed to contain the bubbling violence and despite claims by the gangs that law enforcement were on their side, the police protected left wing demonstrators and limited bloodshed. The government itself also held fast, although PM Netanyahu had to face increasingly vicious criticism from within his
coalition and even his own party. He dismissed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Security Danny Dannon after he publicly criticized Israel’s response for being too soft. Israel’s newly inaugurated president Reuven Rivlin, sworn in while violence was already raging, also took part in efforts to calm the flames within Israel.

However, an unprecedented punishment was leveled against Arab Member of Knesset (MK) Hanin Zo’abi who called on Hamas not to relent in its fight against the occupation, and new bills and motions were introduced to limit her freedom of speech. In response to complaints about individuals presumably supporting the Hamas or wishing for the death of Israeli soldiers, some businesses and universities publicly announced they would be monitoring their employees, faculty and students for extremist statements and would use disciplinary tools to deal with them.

Watching these spiraling events from the other side of the world, I saw and heard despair and fear I have never before seen in the beleaguered Israeli left. Even those who warned of the disintegration of Israeli democracy in the past were stunned by these events. Israel’s democracy, for the first time, seemed to be hanging by a thread.

Nonetheless, as I continued to write, I believed the majority of Israelis had still not lost their commitment to some idea of democracy, albeit often a very vague one. The unprecedented wave has ebbed, and public discourse in Israel resumed to what passes for normal. This latest period, like those before it, was not an inexorable march towards less and less equality. At the very end of 2015, for example, a government composed entirely of right-wing parties nevertheless approved an unprecedented budgetary commitment to invest in the Arab sector, hailed by leaders of Israel’s Arab citizens as a substantial step to
close the gap between Jews and Arabs in Israel. An optimist will believe the events of 2014 marked a turning point, the end of a process which began in the late 1990s, and Israel will begin the long pendulum swing back towards a more liberal democracy, even if still within the confines of Ethnic Democracy. I would certainly like to believe that.

Throughout these developments in Israeli politics and the progression of my own work, I have had the pleasure and the benefit of a great many friends and colleagues in both Israel and Canada with whom I could discuss ideas, thoughts and fears. Yet this work could not have been completed without the support, love, and occasional prodding of my beloved wife, Liana. My two sons, Carmel and Nevo, provided much needed diversions from the frustrations of academic writing. Petel, my cat, was a constant companion through numberless nights of writing.

I would like to thank the members of my cohort at the University of Toronto’s Political Science PhD program, and in particular Ethel Tungohan, Cliff van der Linden, Anne Staver, Kate Korycki, Melissa Levin, Josh Gordon, Charmaine Stanely, Alanna Krolikowski, Abe Nasirzadeh, Lama Mourad, Deb Thompson, Gabe Eidelman, Isabelle Cote, Izabela Stefalja, Jamie Levin, Jenn Hove, Jordan Guthrie, Kimberly Carter, Kristin Cavoukian, Marie-Eve Reny, Wayne Chu, Joelle Dumouchel, Wendy Hicks-Casey, Khalid Ahmed, Yin Ouyang, Nikola Milicic, Arjun Tremblay, Reuven Shlozberg, and Ozlem Aslan – all of whom served as sources of inspiration, information, and diversion at various times. My apologies to the many others that have no doubt slipped my failing memory as I composed this list.
My blog and Facebook page have proven an important tool for me to develop ideas and get responses and critiques of them. I am thankful to the various commenters there, many of whom I know by alias only, for their significant contribution to the development of this essay. Some of these individuals I have grown to call my friends, and they served not only as an excellent wall to bounce ideas off of, but also as my support network during the inevitable low points of dissertating: Nadav Peretz-Vaisvidovsky, Lior Gimel, Yael Peled, Nimrod Avissar, Nimrod Lin, Aryeh Amihai, Gadi Aleksandrovich, Shahar Even-Dar Mandel, Klil Ha-horesh Naori, Elad Raveh, Yossi Gurvitz, Ayelet Oz, Yair Wallach, Asaf Bartov, and Eran Bilinski, to name but a few. I would also like to thank the wonderful staff of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. I learned much from them and I am proud to call many of them my friends.

Many have given me support, comments and advice throughout the years, as this project took shape. Early drafts of some of the chapters were presented in a number of conferences and workshops, and I would like to thank Mark Blyth, Piki Ish-Shalom, Ronen Mandelkern and Ilana Shpaizman for their many helpful remarks on these drafts, which helped me refine the ideas presented here.

Through this project I found the joys of archival research. I have found a heretofore unknown passion in me for the thrill of discovery that accompanies what I always thought of as dull and boring work. But despite the many happy findings, archival work brings its own frustrations and hardships. This work could not have been written without the assistance, given courteously and enthusiastically, of the employees of Israel’s State Archive, the Labour Party Archive and the Jabotinsky Institute Archive. Their resourcefulness and hospitality have made researching this work a true pleasure.
I am indebted to the University of Toronto, the Ontario Government (through their Ontario Graduate Scholarship program) and the Canadian Friends of Peace Now for their financial assistance which has made this work possible.

Finally, I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Prof. Paul Kingston, and committee members Profs. Phil Triadafilopoulos and Lucan Way, for their comments and guidance that helped shape this work. Prof. David Cameron introduced me to the University of Toronto, helped me during my transition to Canada, and was always ready to help out a bewildered grad student. Prof. Randall Hansen guided me through the initial stages of forming my project and formulating my ideas. Prof. Tamir Shaeffer, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, was a mentor and constant source of encouragement and support throughout my academic career. I thank all of them from the bottom of my heart.

Of course, none of the people listed above can be held responsible for the ideas presented in this essay. As I argue in this work, ideas are a powerful and unpredictable force. I hope these ideas presented below will find a place within the reader’s ideational network, and help them make sense of our political world.

Dubi Kanengisser

Toronto, January 2016
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# Abbreviations

## Archives

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<td>ISA</td>
<td>Israel State Archives</td>
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<td>JA</td>
<td>Jabotinsky Archives</td>
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<td>LPA</td>
<td>Labour Party Archive</td>
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## Parties

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<tr>
<td>AMR</td>
<td>Arab Movement for Renewal</td>
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<td>DAP</td>
<td>Democratic Arab Party</td>
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<td>DFPE</td>
<td>Democratic Front for Peace and Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICP</td>
<td>Israeli Communist Party</td>
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<td>NDA</td>
<td>National Democratic Assembly</td>
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<td>NRP</td>
<td>National Religious Party</td>
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<td>PLP</td>
<td>Progressive List for Peace</td>
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<td>UAL</td>
<td>United Arab List</td>
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<td>UTJ</td>
<td>United Torah Judaism</td>
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## Other

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<td>CEC</td>
<td>Central Elections Committee</td>
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1: Introduction

Israeli society is undergoing a far-reaching transformation. This is not a trivial change, it is a transformation that will restructure our very identity as 'Israelis', and will have a profound impact on the way we understand ourselves and our national home; there is no escape from this change.

(President Reuven Rivlin, 15th Annual Herzliya Conference, June 7, 2015)

STABILITY, NOT RIGIDITY: AN OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

Why are institutions stable? Over the past several decades, several schools of thought have provided answers to this question. Earlier thought saw stability as an inherent characteristic of institutions, held together by strong forces that can only be broken down by severe shocks, while others argued that institutions are constantly changing and stability is more an artefact of our perspectives than an objective reality. Over the last two decades, however, answers have become more nuanced, and institutions have been reimagined as objects that produce overall stability within a context of small, gradual change – a view also taken by this work. Nevertheless, the way in which this stability-within-change is achieved is still fiercely debated.

This dissertation proposes that this process is facilitated through the mediation of ideas: ideas lend strength to institutions to withstand assaults by other forces, but are able to do so through internal processes of change that result in adaptations to the institutions.
These ideas also increase the likelihood that throughout these changes, the institutions remain within clear parameters that establish the institutional framework. The ideational network, as I shall refer to the overall structure of links and connections between ideas as they are used in a society, underlies institutions. Through its flexibility and ability to change, and through its interaction with institutions themselves and power structures within the society, the ideational network engenders the stability of the institutions themselves. If this ideational network were to solidify, the institutional structure will lose this stability and become more susceptible to exogenous shocks.

**Ideas and Change**

This work joins the growing literature on *ideational (or discursive) institutionalism*, which seeks to understand the relationship between ideational change and the development of institutions. But while such ideational explanations often focus on the manner in which ideas drive change in institutions, this work places an equal emphasis on the way they also limit and confine institutional change. At the most basic level, this notion is almost self-evident: if one is unable to think of a possible change, one cannot implement it. Ideas are a basic tool in the development of policies and reforms. However, this work seeks to make a stronger argument, that goes beyond the basic level of mere policy ideas, and considers the impact of higher level ideas: paradigms and public philosophies (Schmidt 2010; Mehta 2011). Ideas at this level encompass entire networks and direct the flow of ideational change at lower levels. This dissertation argues that the way these higher order ideas are defined, and how they relate to one another within an ideational network, sets the perimeter within which institutional change can occur.
In brief, the question at the heart of this dissertation is how do ideas enable institutions to adapt to changes, including changes in ideas themselves? The answer proposed is that the network formed by ideas and the links between them is inherently protected against shocks, and thus prevents institutional change by those means except in the most extreme cases. But it is also intrinsically protected from internal change. Short of catastrophic events (exogenous shocks, such as devastating defeat in war), only a certain type of communicative approach that attacks peripheral nodes in the network to slowly delink a core idea from its protective network can alter this perimeter and usher in substantial institutional change. Barring this strategy, internal processes of ideational change will result only in small-scale adaptive changes that will nevertheless preserve the existing framework and integrate new ideas into it or reject them completely. These concepts will be further unpacked in chapter 2.

**THE PUZZLE: ISRAEL’S STABLE ETHNIC DEMOCRACY**

In this work, the manner in which ideational change occurs in a political context, and how it confines and directs institutional change, will be investigated through a study of the development of the institution of ethnic democracy in the State of Israel. Ethnic democracy is the collection of laws, policies and customs that collectively ensure the exclusion of Israel’s Arab citizens from public life in any meaningful way within an otherwise democratic framework (Smooha 1997).

Over the decades this institution has taken many forms, from the coercive military regime over the Arab citizens that was established shortly after independence and lifted only in 1966, to more or less conspicuous means to deter independent political participation of Arab parties throughout the 1970s and 80s, to the unwritten rule
prohibiting Arab parties from joining coalitions once such parties emerged in the mid 1980s and exclude them from any effective part in decision-making. These changes were driven by many factors, both external and internal to the political machinery of the Israeli state. However, through all this change, the essential institution of ethnic democracy remained in place, never challenged in any consequential way. In Hall’s (1993) terms, these are second order changes, where the instruments of policy are altered, but the overall goals of policy remain the same. This stands in stark contrast to other ethnic democratic regimes which faced periods of significant instability and were forced to either transform into a liberal democracy (e.g., Ireland), or collapse to ethnically-fueled autocracy (e.g., Poland in the interwar period, Thailand) (Kanengisser 2014; Peled 2014; Haklai 2013). These “wholesale changes in policy” are what Hall (1993, 278-279) defined as “third order change”. Such changes never materialized in Israel.3

There can be many explanations to this situation. Curiously, those raised in public debates tend to revolve around the very core ideas that will be discussed below: Israel’s long standing commitment to democracy, bolstered by its alignment with the West and dependence on the US; the continuing security threat that restricts Israel’s ability to fully liberalize;4 and the historical background of antisemitism and persecution that acted as the very impetus for the creation of a state that will belong to the Jewish people, and still looms as a threat over the Jews. However, these explanations merely adopt the perspective

3 First order change occurs when the settings of existing instruments are adjusted to accommodate new information, but no new instruments are introduced (Hall 1993, 278).
4 For an intriguing discussion of the interplay of perceived security and the limits of democracy within the context of Israeli ethnic democracy, see Weinblum (2015).
generated by the ideational network within Israel. They take for a fact what is merely a specific interpretation of reality.

Furthermore, such explanations only work when explaining each change on its own. When observing the series of events across time and considering the specific timing of each change, they seem to falter. As discussed below, for example, given the lax security situation and the rise in power of the US towards a uni-polar international configuration, the 1980s should have been a time of substantial democratization within Israel. Instead, we find there the creation of a novel instrument to limit the political freedoms of the Arab minority. In contrast, the 1960s were a time of substantial duress, which culminated in the war of 1967 and soon after the war of 1973. Along with the economic hardships faced by the young state and the internal struggles within the dominant party, it may very well have been a time when other young democracies would have succumbed and fell. And yet it was during this time – at the very eve of the war that would transform the region – that Israel took some of the most significant steps towards liberalizing its relationship with the Arab minority.

Materialist explanations (e.g., Peled 2014) encounter similar difficulties (see below, chapter 6). In the early 1990s, for example, Israel stood to gain economically, and the Labour party stood to gain politically, from further liberalization. Yet such liberalization did not occur. Retrenchment was implemented almost immediately upon the Likud’s return to power, further emphasizing the potential benefits Labour could have obtained from liberalization. Indeed, following this failure, the Labour party began its slow decline into the status of a minor party.
Other ad-hoc explanations may focus on electoral or political power factors at any given point in time. Examples of these ad-hoc explanations are discussed throughout the empirical chapters of this dissertation. Again, however, these explanations seem to take the political situation at any point in time as a given, and neglect to explain how it was arrived at.

It is not my argument that these explanations have no validity at all. They are undoubtedly a part of the picture. However, they all seem to require an additional element - a background factor that can explain why choices were made when they were made, why certain appealing alternatives were passed off for what seems to be less ideals options. This work seeks to demonstrate how the structure of the ideational network at the core of the Israeli ethos, which defined and refined the ethnic-democratic compromise, acted as a force that prevented this institution from developing in ways that may have been favoured by other factors, and limited the policy options available to decision makers in particular times. Thus, these ideational structures, in concert with other more commonly cited forces, explain the timing of particular actions and the failure to act in seemingly rational ways at other junctures. In total, they explain the preservation of ethnic democracy in the face of external and internal pressures.

In summary, this dissertation seeks to explain the surprising resilience and stability of Israeli ethnic democracy, in the context of, and indeed through the flexibility of the system: the network of ideas that undergirds Israel’s ethnic democracy is able to adapt to new ideas that evolve in its environment by integrating them through small-scale (second order) changes in the institutions which nevertheless preserve the framework as a whole. This is possible
because new ideas are inevitably linked to existing ideas that are already part of the system, or that the system is already inoculated against.

**The Core Ideas: Democracy, Jewish Identity, and Security**

Three core high-order ideas stand at the centre of this interrogation of the processes of change. *Democracy* has been, from the very beginning of the Zionist movement, a crucial component of the Zionist self. It was key to the justification of the Zionist project and to its West-oriented strategy from its inception, despite its origins and powerbase in Eastern Europe and Russia; it was also a critical element in the successful rallying of Jews from various countries, backgrounds and worldviews within a unitary governing system that preceded and was the basis of Israel. *Jewish identity*, of course, has always been central to the Zionist project, but the attempt to conceptualize this identity as a secular national one, rather than a religious one, has had a substantial impact on the development of the Zionist movement and was at the heart of many of the central arguments within it (Walzer 2015). *Security* became central to the self-definition of Zionists soon after immigration to Palestine began to engender friction with the Palestinian population, although it has always featured centrally in Zionist thought – from Theodore Herzl’s contemplation of the implications of the Dreyfus affair for European Jews to pogroms and persecutions of Jews throughout Europe. The Holocaust, however, has overtaken all such events to become an eternal eclipse casting its shadow on Jewish life,\(^5\) and informing the very concept of security in the State of Israel from its inception.

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\(^5\) A Recent Pew survey of Jews in Israel and the United States found that remembrance of the Holocaust was the most commonly cited “essential part” of what being Jewish means to them in both groups, with 65% of Israeli Jews and 73% of American Jews selecting it (Lipka 2016).
These three ideas have been discussed in the literature extensively in the context of Israeli politics. However, as far as I could find, they have never been discussed all at once. The tension between democracy and Jewish identity has been discussed at length in numerous texts (e.g., Maoz 2011); and the dyad of democracy and security has also been explored extensively (e.g., Weinblum 2015); Dov Waxman (2006) discussed the role of identity in the development of Israel’s foreign policy. Yet, as this work will show, it is the interaction between all three ideas that allows them to balance each other out through time.

The three ideas interact and intertwine in public communications, as each one evolves and recombines with other ideas that are introduced into the ideational network through a variety of sources. The institution of ethnic democracy was built on the foundations constructed around these three ideas and a network of related and interconnected ideas that define and are defined by each of them. In as much as this network could withstand external pressures, the institution could survive exogenous shocks and internal powering unscathed. But when the contingent dynamics of ideational change shifted the balance between the three ideas, the results were adaptive institutional change that accommodated the new ideas within the existing framework. The stability of the overall framework, with none of the ideas completely losing its place within the network, prevented change from amounting to a replacement of ethnic democracy with an altogether different institution. Stability was facilitated through flexibility.

**The Historical Ideational Narrative**

The broad trajectory identified in this work begins with the decline in strength of security ideas in the decades following the establishment of the state, leading to an increased
prominence of democracy in institutional decision making in Israel as state-building took precedence over nation-building in the 1960s. However, during the 1980s, developments in ideas linking security and Jewish identity began an interaction between the two, setting them on course to become united in a single coherent network at the end of the 20th century. This new hybrid idea has substantially weakened the place of democracy within the network, leading to the recent retrenchment in the process of liberalization that could be observed throughout Israel’s first half-century. Nonetheless, throughout these processes, all three ideas were substantially intertwined. Even at its weakest, democracy still formed an important part of the self-identity of Israelis and was seen as vital to the Jewish identity of the state, as well as to its security – much as Israel’s Jewish identity was always a vital part of its democratic character in the eyes of the Israeli (Jewish) public.

The ideational changes described here are not divorced from other processes and forces outside the ideational sphere. Security could not have weakened as a core idea in the 1960s had Israel’s Arab population chosen to oppose the Israeli regime violently; and the drawing together of security and Jewish identity ideas was facilitated in part by the necessities of coalition-making and the material needs of the religious sector after the Likud’s rise to power. The ideational analysis does not attempt to supplant these explanations, but to broaden and strengthen them – to provide them with the causal mechanism that explains how they effected change, and explain the timing and direction of this change vis-à-vis the timing of these other factors.

This work interrogates these dynamics and provides evidence for the workings of ideational dynamics in the creation and prevention of institutional change. It shows how despite seemingly important developments, institutional change was constrained by this
ideational network, and how despite considerable forces pulling in other directions, the ideational network resisted change in its basic framework. Thus, institutional changes seem to be divorced from external forces in their timing. It is only through the prism of the ideational network that we can understand why changes occurred when they did and in the way they did.

**CASE SELECTION**

Most accounts of ideational change focus on economic policymaking. This is certainly a reasonable choice, given the centrality of political economy to the policymaking of most states. However, this issue suffers from a substantial limitation when seeking to test a theory of the impact ideas have on decision making, namely, the technical nature of these policies, which makes it easier to both obfuscate the true objectives of a proposed policy change, as well as disconnect the policy implementation from the policy debate (Schmidt 2002). This does not mean ideas do not have the same role among the policy agents as described here, only that the relevant communication is internal to the professional ranks and therefore less accessible for analysis. McNamara’s (1998) study of monetary policies in the EU, for example, emphasized the importance of ideas held by central bankers, and the relative insulation of their institutional positions. The more thorough record of communication within the political ranks means that decisions made and implemented more directly by them will provide a better view of these processes, and therefore enable us to better examine the theory put forward here.

We are therefore given the task of finding a policy area wherein three conditions

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6 Although a second large body of literature revolves around ideas in international relations.
apply: (a) it is substantive to the state as a whole, (b) it is largely decided and implemented by the political ranks rather than professional ranks, and (c) it has experienced some degree of discernible change and retrenchment over a period of time that cannot be attributed to obvious exogenous factors.

The case of Israel’s relationship with its Arab minority\(^7\) fulfils all three conditions. Established in the throes of war with the surrounding Arab states, Israel’s relationship with the newly-made Arab minority within it was tenuous from the very beginning, and fraught with suspicion. The combined socialist and militarist ethos espoused by the leadership, exacerbated by the financial difficulties faced by the nascent state, created a regime where liberal ideals were often restricted to oration, even concerning the Jewish majority. The Arab minority found itself under a strict military administration restricting its movements and its activities. But with the changing of the guard at the head of the ruling Mapai party starting in the mid-1960s, and with greater vigour with the rise to power of Likud in the late 1970s onwards, Israel experienced a process of liberalization. This process was felt primarily in the economic realm (Shafir and Peled 2000), but also through expansions of other personal freedoms such as freedom of movement and more limitations on the state’s authority. This liberalization was pursued by both Likud- and Labour-led (as well as national unity) governments, as the logic of liberalization expanded to more and more areas of life. Within the Arab minority this liberalization was also felt, albeit in a more

\(^7\) The proper label for the Arab minority in Israel is itself contested. Historically, aside from euphemisms such as “our cousins”, the term “minorities” (\(\text{bnei-mi’utim}\)) was common, and still retains its use in some contexts, such as certain types of news reports. The most common term among Jewish Israelis today is the paternalistic “Israel’s Arabs” (\(\text{arviyey yisrael}\)), which is slowly giving way to the more neutral Arab-Israelis (\(\text{arvim yisraelim}\)) or Arab citizens of Israel (\(\text{aravim ezrakhei yisrael}\), which will be used throughout this essay (alongside “the Arab minority in Israel”). Parts of the Arab minority advocate for use of the label “Palestinians”, either as “Palestinian Israelis” or “Palestinian citizens of Israel”. Others, however, view this label as politicized and radicalized and therefore reject it.
restrained and subdued manner.

Israel's delicate relationship with its Arab minority has always been central to its policy making, tapping into some of Israel's key normative issues – its Jewish identity, its democratic nature, and its perception of security threats. The abolition of martial law over Arab villages and towns was one of the earliest and most pronounced actions to begin the liberalization trend. Subsequently, Israel's Arab minority continued to enjoy a slowly increasing freedom for several decades. Yet, while economic liberalization continued and even accelerated in the latter years of the 1990s, the parallel process within the institutions governing the Arab minority has come to a halt and even entered a period of retrenchment.

Despite a multiplicity of significant events throughout Israel's history, including numerous wars, peace agreements and economic crises, none of these liberalizing policy steps, nor their retrenchment, can be clearly linked to any such exogenous shock. Furthermore, while several elements of political life within the Arab community have seen significant change over this period, the overall framework, defined by some as ethnic democracy, has not. As if pulled back by another force, the relationship structured by Israeli legal institutions with the state's Arab minority failed to achieve the kind of progress towards liberalization that other aspects of life in Israel have.

It is this discrepancy that requires explanation, and this dissertation's argument is that the explanation lies within the multiplicity of available ideational anchors - bound together within an overarching ideational network - which prevented significant movement towards liberalization or towards a fully illiberal state. By analyzing the changes through time to the networks of ideas within elite communications, I strive to show that key ideas in the policy development process towards the Arab minority were caught in the
current of three interacting ideational forces, preventing substantial movement in any one direction. When one idea achieved a relative dominance in the network, the weakened ideas successfully converged to exert more power and block change or reverse it.

Four events have been selected for study, each one represents a key period in the history of Israel’s relationship with its Arab minority: the removal of the military government from Arab populated areas in 1966, the passing of legislation limiting the freedom of parties to oppose Israel’s Jewish (and democratic) nature in 1985, the election of the Rabin government which for the first time in Israel’s history relied on the (external) support of Arab parties in 1992, and finally the October 2000 riots at the onset of the second Intifada where police forces used excessive force, killing 13 Arab protesters within the Green Line. These events do not necessarily define watershed moments or critical events, but rather serve as markers of policy change that will be traced back to ideational changes that preceded them. Furthermore, the four events are useful for comparison since all occurred under Labour (or unity) governments, thus reducing the strength of alternative explanations that varying policies were the result of the change in administration.

**METHODOLOGY**

For the purposes of this analysis, I have searched the Israel State Archive, the Israeli Labour Party Archive and the Jabotinsky Archive (which serves as the Archive for the Herut and Likud parties), and collected over 600 document totaling over 1,500 pages, including protocols, reports, letters and memos, produced by and for leaders from both parties in the years surrounding the events described above. Files searched were those whose titles mentioned the Arab minority, the specific events and institutions discussed in each period,
or the names of prominent Arab leaders in each period. In addition, protocols from cabinet, caucus, and party centre or secretariat from the period surrounding each of the discussed events, where available, were also scanned in their entirety for relevant debates. Documents selected for analysis were those that deal with the Arab minority or related issues and reflect on the authors' and speakers' views on the subject. Due to limited access to material pertaining to the events of 1992 and 2000, I supplemented archival material with media reports and secondary sources. Finally, to examine the events of 2000, in addition to numerous secondary sources on the event, I have analyzed media reports as well as the report produced by the Orr committee formed following the October 2000 riots, which conducted extensive interviews with relevant leaders at the time.

The texts were coded and analyzed to identify the perceived relationships among key ideas which are revealed within them. Texts were coded for reference to core ideas, and for meanings ascribed to those ideas (i.e., their links to other ideas). For example, a text segment that explicitly mentions the concept of “democracy” may be coded as describing democracy as equal rights, or as majority rule, or as posing a threat to security, to give but a few examples. Each text segment may be coded multiple times. Coding categories themselves were grouped based on the overall affect towards each of the core ideas (i.e., if they describe democracy, Jewish identity or security, or aspects of these ideas, as negative, positive, or neutral). Text segments were also labeled based on date, the identity of the author(s) or speaker(s) and their party affiliation.

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8 Cabinet protocols were only available up to 1962, in addition to several specific protocols surrounding the dissolution of the military government that were made available by special request.

9 Analysis was carried out using the Narralizer software package. This package was selected primarily for its robust support of Hebrew texts. All analysis was conducted in Hebrew, and selected excerpts were translated subsequently for use in this work.
Analysis tools were then used to draw links between different uses of each of the core ideas and analyze the changes these links have seen through the years. For example, an analysis may reveal a change over time in the affect expressed by a leader towards one of the core ideas; or a conflict within a party may be revealed and the lines separating its membership based on their views of certain ideas could be drawn, and compared to their views on other ideas. The empirical chapters of this dissertation are based primarily on this analysis.

**STRUCTURE OF THIS WORK**

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical and methodological discussion of the study of ideational change in the context of institutional change. It locates the work within the scholarly literature on ideational institutionalism and identifies the points of divergence of the present argument from previous work in the field, primarily in its application of networks as an analytic tool for the study of ideas. Chapter 2 further describes the methodology for interrogating the ideational dynamic that will be used throughout this dissertation.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of Israel’s ethnic democracy and the three key ideas that upheld it throughout the periods discussed here. It demonstrates how these ideas have existed within the Israeli ideational network since the state’s very inception, and indeed even prior to that, and how the ideas have interacted throughout the various time periods.

Chapters 4 through 7 deal, respectively, with each of the four periods presented above, and discuss in depth the dynamics of ideational and institutional stability and change during these periods. Chapter 4 discusses the abolition of the military government in 1966. It examines the different ideational positions held by Israel’s three first prime ministers, David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett, and Levy Eshkol, and how they informed the
alternatives each considered for the institutions governing Israel's relations with its Arab citizens. While the two key camps within Mapai at the time argued over questions of isolationism vs. integrationism, Sharett's unique point of view demonstrates how the definition of Jewish identity, which was mostly in the background of policy debates at the time, had an important impact on decision making, and slowed down liberalization.

In chapter 5 we turn to the 1985 amendment of the Basic Law: The Knesset to allow for the banning of parties from participating in elections if they reject Israel's definition as the state of the Jewish people, or as a democratic state. This chapter discusses the ideational innovations brought into the public ideational network by Meir Kahane and Muhammad Mi'ari, from both extremes of the political spectrum. Furthermore, it discusses how the amendment to the Basic Law attempted to blot out the marks they left on this network, and re-establish the ideational network as it stood before their arrival. Ultimately, however, this attempt failed: the mid-1980s set the stage for the creation of an ideational combination between the ideas of Jewish identity and security, which was posed as conflicting with the liberal interpretation of the idea of democracy, just as claimed by both Mi’ari and Kahane. The ideas that were introduced into the network at this time will be crucial in subsequent periods.

Chapter 6 focuses on the government Rabin formed in 1992. This government is unique because it was Israel's first minority government, which was dependent on the external support of the Communist and Arab parties for its longevity. However, the dictates of ethnic democracy prevented Rabin from inviting the Arab MKs to join his coalition officially. Despite Rabin's ability to effect change on an extremely large scale through the Oslo accords, he was ill-equipped to change Israel's ideational network wherein the link
between Jewish identity and democracy required full Jewish control over all matters of state. This ideational structure therefore saw a coalition with Arab representatives as an existential threat. While a portion of the Jewish public was able to accept a treaty with the Palestinians that ensured separation between the warring nations, they were not ready to accept their fellow Arab-Israeli citizens as fully equal in governing the Jewish state. This failure to change the ideational network to make it more receptive for ideas of conciliation ultimately undermined his great achievements and led to the period of retrenchment that followed.

Chapter 7 examines the period surrounding the October 2000 riots that accompanied the eruption of the second Intifada. Specifically, it examines how PM Ehud Barak responded to the quickly escalating events, and how, in the wake of the death of 13 Arabs citizens at the hands of the police during the rioting, he attempted to reconcile the Arab minority. The events discussed in chapter 7 do not present a turning point in Israel’s ideational and institutional history. When Ehud Barak rose to power in 1999 the process of retrenchment has already began. This chapter, however, serves to demonstrate once again the inability of the Labour party to effect ideational change even when such change is clearly in its most dire interest. Rather than reverse the process of retrenchment, Ehud Barak ultimately exacerbated it, and sealed the fate of the Labour party to become a minor party for more than a decade to follow.

Chapter 8 attempts to apply the findings from previous periods to explain the events that took place in Israel after Ehud Barak’s premiership. It reviews the events that took place in the years since, and includes some anecdotal evidence on the development of the three core ideas during this time. The chapter also ventures a prediction, based on the
ideational theory laid out in this dissertation, on what we might expect to happen to Israel in the foreseeable future, and what would need to happen for this trajectory to change substantially.

Finally, chapter 9 offers some conclusions from the historical narrative. It draws theoretical implications from this study of institutional and ideational change, and suggests directions of future research to apply and examine this theory in other settings.
2: How Ideas Change and How They Change Institutions

A growing body of literature which emerged from the field of New Institutionalism has been suggesting novel ways of applying the concept of ideas to the study of institutional change, arguing that ideas inhabit a unique position in relation to institutions. This position makes ideas ideal for endogenizing institutional change – thus replacing the previous reliance on exogenous shocks as instigators of change – without relenting on the inherent stability of institutions. However, this very same position creates an interdependence between ideas and institutions which has led some authors in the field to limit their role to that of a tool wielded by agents who set out to effect change. This view begs the question of the causes of such attempts, and implicitly positions ideas in two contradictory positions: one is as a tool in the hand of agents, but the other, not always explicitly discussed, is as the building blocks of agency itself.\(^1\)

In this chapter I shall put forward a theory of ideas which explicitly discusses this latter role, and shows how this expanded view of ideas can contribute to our understanding of their role in institutional change. I begin with a discussion of the lacunae within New Institutionalism which the ideational turn attempts to address. Then I examine the ways in which ideational institutionalists have responded to this problem, and identify the

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\(^{1}\) Hall and Taylor (1998, 962) describe ideas as “the building blocks of action”: “ideas of various sorts provide a set of structured elements from which the actors work and also the elements with which they work” (emphasis in original).
limitations of these responses. I then offer a theory of ideas based on the concept of “parallel constraint satisfaction networks”, and finally I apply this theory to explain the interaction between ideas and institutions and how the former supports or disrupts the latter’s stability. I then outline a methodology for the studying of the relationship between ideas and institutional change through the use of discourse analysis tools, which will be used throughout this dissertation. Finally, I discuss the rationale for the case selection in this work, and its relevance for testing the proposed theory.

**INSTITUTIONS AND CHANGE**

Scholars in the set of approaches known collectively as New Institutionalism define institutions as “formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy” (Hall and Taylor 1996, 938). They argue that these institutions can exert their own influence on the perceptions of individuals, autonomously from interests and other structural factors.\(^\text{11}\) In this formulation, ideas are seen as fluid, contingent and epiphenomenal, whereas institutions are sticky, with a substantial impact on political and social reality.\(^\text{12}\) It is the “sticky” and persistent nature of institutions (Kohli 2004, 19; Pierson 2004) which allows institutionalists to avoid the functionalist trap that has plagued behaviouralist accounts of political life, and introduced

\(^{11}\) This can be done in two ways, according to Hall and Taylor (1996, 939): in the “calculus” approach, institutions provide information that feeds into the calculations of individuals aimed at maximizing their benefit based on an existing set of interests. However, in the “cultural” approach, institutions directly influence the worldview of individuals, i.e., their ideas, which in turn transforms their identity and preferences. Institutions, they argue, “provide moral or cognitive templates for interpretation and action”. In other words, when an institution is created, it ‘crystallizes’ a set of ideas (elsewhere they argue that “a structure of ideas [is] embodied in the institutions of the polity” [Hall and Taylor 1998, 961]) which are then available (as “templates”) for individuals to shape their own worldview in a recursive process.

\(^{12}\) The stability of institutions, however, can be overstated. Not every creation of the state will necessarily have staying power, as career public servants may become impervious to the constant changes enacted by new administrations carried on the vagaries of electoral politics (Braithwaite, Makkai, and Braithwaite 2007, 147).
unintended consequences on a large scale. Institutions constrain and anchor individuals to a particular historical context, thus explaining different behaviour exhibited by what should be similar actors in similar conditions (Pierson 2004).

However, this contextualization, particularly within the framework of historical institutionalism (HI) that places an emphasis on 'lock-in,' positive feedback loops, and path dependency, comes at the expense of change, which was largely removed from the model (Howlett 2009). At times it seems that stability of institutions is merely assumed rather than explained. When historical institutionalists recognized change, they sought it in mechanisms taken from rational choice or sociological institutionalism, which largely undermined the premise of HI itself (Schmidt 2010, 10-11; Hall and Taylor 1998). As a result, some have levelled against New Institutionalists the criticism that “institutions explain everything until they explain nothing” (Thelen and Steinmo 1992, 15; Clemens and Cook 1999) – that politics in this vision is bifurcated into periods of ‘normal politics’ which are governed solely by institutions, and periods of ‘punctuation’ during which “normal social science methodology” no longer applies (Di Palma 1990, 34; Streeck and Thelen 2005). Dobry (2000) calls this the “heroic illusion”, wherein agency or rational choice is seen to wholly replace a deterministic structuralism during “critical conjunctures”.13

HI scholars recognized the validity of this critique, but some of their responses to it have only taken HI further back to its origins in structuralist theories. Thelen (1999), for example, claimed that understanding institutional change must come from insight into the means of reproducing institutional arrangements, yet she still saw exogenous shocks as

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13 See also Norval (2006). As Gazibo (2005, 161) notes, this move itself was an attempt to shift away from a deterministic reification of institutions that harkened back to the very structuralism New Institutionalists set out to critique.
necessary for change. Her argument, nevertheless, attempted to explain the variation in reactions to a particular shock by the characteristics of the mechanisms of institutional reproduction, in addition to characteristics of the institutions themselves. This widening of the scope of institutional analysis is by no means inconsequential, yet it still views institutions during times of ‘normal politics’ as in some essential sense unchanging, despite the continuous flux within them.

Yet why must we assume that only an exogenous shock leads to institutional change? If we agree that institutions are in constant motion internally, that "the reproduction of a legacy, in short, is a dynamic process" (Thelen 1999, 391), must these processes be either random noise or the teleological effects of ‘increasing returns’ and path dependence? Indeed, Thelen herself subsequently took part in developing a suite of tools for gradual transformation (Streeck and Thelen 2005). These tools, such as institutional layering, drift and conversion, show how mechanisms of 'lock-in' and path dependence can be subverted or circumvented to effect change that is transformative rather than disruptive. This suite of tools does a commendable job of explaining the ‘how’ of incremental transformative change without straying from the path of HI, but it is less successful in explaining the ‘why’. When Streeck and Thelen feel it necessary to introduce agency into the model, they turn again to either rational choice or sociological institutionalism to explain why these processes might happen.14 Thus, other than an allusion to grand structural changes in the environment within which the institution

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14 In their introduction Streeck and Thelen themselves recognize normative debate as important in a single remark – “[t]he redirection of institutional resources that we associate with conversion may occur through political contestation over what functions and purposes an existing institution should serve” (2005a, 26, emphasis added) – but do not pursue this line of argument further.
operates, an emphasis is placed on changing power relations, opportunistic interest serving, and strategic actors.

This comes as somewhat of a contradiction to their initial definition of institutions as characterized most importantly by the fact that “actors are expected to conform to [them]” (Streeck and Thelen 2005, 10; emphasis in original). If legitimacy plays such a critical role in the very concept of institutions, which well it should, then legitimacy cannot simply be cast aside when that is expedient (Cox 2001, 471). If we are to view institutions as ideational constructs with power over society, ideas must exert considerable influence on actors. Ideas, then, are what lends legitimacy to the institutions they are embodied in. As a result, alternative ideas must be the driving force behind actors seeking to change institutions, for only they may strip existing institutions of their legitimacy (Torfing 1999). In other words, adopting a new idea must precede the action of changing institutions. Furthermore, these ideas must also be presented to other actors in a way that will be appealing to them for a coalition to be formed capable of undermining existing institutions (Crawford 2002; Rothstein 1998, 141; Krebs and Jackson 2007; Jackson 1993). Ideas, to sum up, must be taken seriously.

**IDEAS AND CHANGE**

The “ideational turn” (Blyth 1997) within New Institutionalism sees ideas as influencing institutions indirectly by *shaping* the actors’ perception of their interests (Blyth 2003; Carstensen 2011a). A definition of ideas has proven elusive, but they can be defined broadly by their central property: ideas are products of human thought that can be *effectively communicated*. Ideas can be a representation of something external to the human mind, such as tanks or buildings, but they don’t have to be. Ideas can be communicated in
various ways – through language, art, etc., although language is the only means of communicating ideas without first “translating” them back into physical objects or manifestations.\footnote{Language requires its own physical manifestations such as sounds or written letters, but these are arbitrary – there is nothing dog-like in the word “dog”, but we will have to have something dog-like in a drawing or a tune depicting a dog for the communication to be successful.} Finally, not all products of human thought are ideas. Emotions, for example, cannot be communicated as such. Only the idea of an emotion can be communicated, but one can only approximate the actual feeling one is describing so much by resorting to various means of expression. Communicating some products of thought which include emotional or psychological meanings relies extensively on the pre-existence of these emotions with the target of the communication, and cannot hope to actually generate them by themselves.\footnote{Nonetheless, emotions have been shown to be crucial for the successful dissemination of ideas (Berger and Milkman 2012). They act as vehicles for ideas, and aid them in attaching to new hosts.} In contrast, an idea can be generated in full through communication even if it did not exist as such in the target, in the same way that a dictionary defines words by using other words, without expectation that the reader will have known the meaning of the defined word in advance.

Of course, not all ideas may influence political life. Those that do can include definitions of different issues on the agenda, information or postulations about how the world and other actors work, but also moral arguments about good and bad, right and wrong – ideas that define the very identity of the actor (Hall and Taylor 1998, 961). Some scholars see ideas as uniquely positioned to explain the behaviour of individuals and the policy-results of institutions. Max Weber famously saw them as the “switchmen of history”, whereas John Maynard Keynes observed that “the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.” (cited in Weir 1992, 188).
Ideas enjoy a unique position at the very border between the internal and the external of institutions (Greif and Laitin 2004). While continuously embroiled in institutional processes and influenced by them, ideas are also constantly involved in and influenced by an external “stream” of academic and popular communications which mutate and recombine them in novel ways, creating political space for policy entrepreneurs to promote previously unlikely or even unthinkable policies (Kingdon 1984; Ikenberry 1993).

The constant stream of innovation in ideas serves as a source of randomness to the otherwise static mechanism of reproduction through “isomorphism” (Thelen 1999; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Carstensen 2011a). Yet the evolution of ideas itself is not random, for the innovations that take purchase with decision-makers are selected by how well they fit into or expand on existing frames of reference (Chatterjee 1986; Bevir 1999; Schmidt 2002). The ‘why’ of intended institutional change must be phrased in terms that resonate with potential allies (Laclau and Mouffe 2001), and which correspond to an identifiable and compelling interpretation of external reality. In other words, they must fit into the existing ideational network shared by individuals in a society.

Structural explanations, therefore, must first show that policy-makers were aware of the structural factors when decisions were made, and that all potential alternative ideas were already considered and rejected. That is, we must assume a perfect, methodical, omniscient decision maker, rather than one who “muddles through” (Lindblom 1959) the process of policy making. For otherwise, if our decision maker is not perfect, then a structural explanation must necessitate either structures that generate their own policies sans intervening mechanisms, or individuals who are somehow able to intuitively act on their own interests without the necessary information to calculate what they are.
Awareness of the particular structural context and the perception of this context as justification for particular actions depend on the availability of ideas to prompt them. Stability, therefore, is dependent equally on the lack of ideas that will challenge it, as it is on the lack of structural changes to derail it. Like a cartoon character running off a cliff, policies that have become dysfunctional because of their structural context will continue undisturbed until the idea that they must fall is introduced.

This has led some to view ideational change as limited to radical “third order change” on the scale of a paradigmatic shift. Ideational change, for these scholars, is only significant at times when existing ideas are weakened by external factors, opening the way for new ideas to enter the fray and gain power. Once the paradigmatic shift takes place and new ideas are crystalized into institutions, they assume once more their place in the background of policy change (P. A. Hall 1993; Blyth 2002). However, this perspective merely shifts the problems inherent in accounts of institutional change to the realm of ideas: ideas in this framework, like institutions, explain only stability, whereas change is chalked up to “heroic” agency – agency that is completely unconstrained by any factor – and is therefore beyond explanation (Dobry 2000). Ideas are tools to be wielded by autonomous agents in a battle over the shape of institutions to come (Blyth 2002, 39; Carstensen 2011a). They exert autonomous influence only once they are successfully embodied in institutions.

Such a view is at odds with our experience of the world both at the societal and individual levels. That ideas are institutionalized does not mean they become singularly ubiquitous: competing ideas continue exerting influence and changing outside of the state even if they did not crystalize into institutions (Schmidt 2002; Carstensen 2011b). Ideas
which are completely new and without precedent are rare, and indeed, will find it difficult to find purchase in the minds of women and men if they cannot comprehend them through some analogy or metaphor to existing formulations (Denzau and North 1994; Jacobs 2009). Furthermore, the metaphor of “crystallizing” itself is misleading, in that it implies the ideas that were institutionalized cease changing. But an institution is more like a static snapshot of an idea at a certain point in time. That it exists does not preclude the idea itself from continuing to evolve and recombine with other ideas outside the institution, as well as exerting new influences on the institutions. The process of institutional change through “drift” is based in part on this dynamic (Streeck and Thelen 2005).

What makes ideas a powerful variable is their ability to account for both change and stability (Lieberman 2002; Blyth 2003). The study of ideas, therefore, is the study of a process: how ideas become popular and then prominent, how they influence specific policies (e.g., Béland 2007), how they become embedded into institutions and preferences to exert a long-lasting influence even after the original impetus for embracing them has disappeared (Cox 2001; Hanson 2010), but also how they interact with competing ideas in various situations and how they themselves change with time (Carstensen 2011b; Eleveld, 2015). In other words, how ideas evolve and propagate.

For this reason, the methodologies employed by ideational analysts are at times lacking. For instance, Berman (1998, 34) defines her methodology of process tracing as “reconstructing actors’ motivations, as well as their definitions and evaluations of situations”. However, to fully understand the effects of ideas, we must also place an emphasis on the way these definitions interact and influence one another, and how particular manifestations of an ideational network trap oppositional forces and prevent
them from coming up with equally convincing counterarguments. So long as agency in the selection of ideas remains wholly in the individuals themselves, this selection remains dependent on external factors, and ideas cannot attain the role of independent forces. In this case, the causal link between the ideas chosen and the actions taken points from the latter to the former: ideas are merely “propaganda”, and are there to support predetermined actions. Ideas, in this formulation, are a show put up for the masses to assuage them, and have no real role in shaping the political game itself.

Yet the particular power of ideational explanations, and the reason that they must be considered to fully understand the political game, is that they can explain how the power-balance between social forces in a society changes without requiring any objective change. They explain how the very preferences of actors can change. Ultimately, they explain why agents may decide to change sides in a conflict for no evident external reason. To do that, ideational explanations must deal with the propagation of ideas while temporarily abstracting agency out of the model.

The result is a process which explains, in a recursive process, not only how but also why and when slow, incremental change leads to substantial long term differences in institutions even without environmental changes. Shifting the focus from ideas as established, static factors, to the way in which ideas themselves change, and how this process of change interacts with processes of institutional change, promises to provide us with new analytical tools inaccessible when we limit ourselves only to the products of ideas.
THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS

Ideas themselves, as noted above, are constructed recursively out of other ideas, in the same way that a dictionary is constructed of words that, inevitably, end up forming self-referential loops. This creates a network, wherein each idea both defines and is defined by other ideas linked to it, through both positive (i.e., A is B, or A is like B) and negative (i.e., A is not B, or A is unlike B) links. This structure is referred to here as the ideational network. This network is what Saussure (1983) saw as the fundamental relational nature of language. However, while structuralists such as Saussure saw this as a closed system, post-structuralist theory introduced power and political intervention to open up the system and link it back to the social (Panizza and Miorelli 2012). Feminist scholars, for example, have studied the manner in which the label “woman” is linked with a series of other labels (“weak”, “emotional”, “simple”), which are in turn each associated with the others to multiply the negative ascription they reflect on the label of “woman” (Hansen 2006). Even presumably positive traits become associated with negative meanings – “beautiful,” for example, becomes associated with “frail”. So strong are these associations, that speakers of languages where inanimate objects are assigned genders are prone to ascribe the associated labels of each gender to objects arbitrarily assigned it (Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips 2003).

Nonetheless, conflicts may often arise when ideas linked in such manner contradict each other (e.g., if A⇒B but C⇒!B then A and C cannot co-exist). So long as the chain linking the two contradicting ideas is long enough, the conflict may not come to the

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17 For a recent account on the post-structuralist contribution to ideationalist thinking on institutional change that echoes many of the ideas presented here, see Eleveld (2015).

18 Or, in the more common post-structuralist terminology, “categories”.
fore. But if the two are brought close together, whether by accident or intentionally, an internal conflict arises which may trigger change in the composition of one’s ideational network (Mackie 2006).

It is the multiplicity of available configurations of networks, then, that serves as a crucial resource for political agents in creating institutional transformation (Clemens and Cook 1999; Carstensen 2011a). In delineating their program for a “new radical left”, for example, Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]) offer that the emphasis for post-Marxists must be shifted away from essentialized class identities towards discursively generated identities that produce not merely novel alliances between the working class and potential allies, but new inclusive conceptualizations of group and class that transform society and hegemony altogether. Such a change necessarily cannot happen abruptly: ideational networks cannot be attacked full on, but must be slowly chipped away at in a round-about way, introducing new ideas first as marginal components of existing ideas, then slowly increasing their role within the ideational network until they can finally supplant originally core ideas (Mackie 2006).

However, this practical instruction contradicts a basic characteristic of ideas. For if ideas are themselves the tools by which we understand the world and ourselves, our interests and preferences and the logical routes that could lead us to achieve them, then ideas are the building blocks of agency. To understand ideas is to understand why agents do what they do.¹⁹ In other words, agents cannot develop ideas to serve their purposes. The development of ideas creates their own agents. Naturally, this does not mean that ideas

¹⁹ “Agents ... need ideas to give them purpose and meaning for politics” (John 1999, 42). A similar role was proposed by Berman (1998, 29): “ideas determine the goals toward which actors strive... Therefore... preferences are endogenous.”
develop independently of human thought. Rather, it means that when one sets out to try and understand something about the world, one cannot set the target in advance, but merely select the starting point and discover where one’s thoughts lead them. This meandering is limited and guided by existing ideas, including one’s perception of the world and the existing institutions within it. It is only once an idea germinates that strategies for its dissemination can be developed, and agency returns to the fore to implement them. Such strategies must envision how the new idea can be worked into the ideational network through linkages with existing ideas and by delinking competing ideas. Put simply, these strategies must find a way to convince others to adopt the new idea. Understanding how institutions change, therefore, requires us to understand how minds change.

**Parallel Constraint Satisfaction Networks**

Ideas are interdependent. They are interconnected in what Mackie (2006) called a “parallel constraint satisfaction network”, in which each idea is a node, and the connections between them provide redundant reinforcement to the different nodes. An attack on a single node, no matter how forceful and effective, is liable to be interpreted at the same time as an attack on connected nodes, which will weaken the original attack and preserve the attacked idea intact. The parallel constraints of the total of all the ideas linked to a target link must be satisfied to allow a new idea to forge a new link with it. This, according to Mackie (2006) is the reason we rarely observe individuals change their minds during an argument. This is also the underlying mechanism behind Kuhn’s paradigmatic stability: a paradigm is not merely a single idea, but rather a set of interconnected and interdependent ideas. If enough links within the network are conceded, effects will be felt on all other ideas in the network. Therefore, the entire structure must fall at once – hence a paradigm shift. However,
because networks are based on redundancy, several links can be disabled temporarily without toppling the entire structure.

Ideas, therefore, are under the influence of two factors: the variability of meanings, and the stabilizing force of networks. Effective external attacks on ideas will come in the form of other ideas that alter the network in a way that weakens connections with the attacked ideas. That is why direct attacks on an idea rarely work, but “flanking” ideas by weakening their supporting network proves most effective (Mackie 2006).

**HOW IDEAS CHANGE INSTITUTIONS**

Thinking of institutions in this framework allows us to think of them as snapshots of networks of ideas which are firmly embedded in broader ideational networks, making their destabilization less likely. Institutions are defined here as almost physical manifestations of networks of ideas – their defining characteristic is that they were lifted out of the realm of the relatively fluid ideas and brought into the physical world – they are put into writing as rules and regulations that must be referred to whenever their subject matter is at hand. They have become *status quo*. Institutions do not evolve; not in the sense of biological evolution, as in self-motivated and quasi-random change. Institutions are *changed intentionally* by agents. While by the definitions employed here ideas cannot intentionally be changed by agents (since they precede agency), institutions are those products of ideas that *must* be actively changed.\(^\text{20}\) Rules must be repealed or amended, public policies must be reformed.

\(^{20}\) Although processes such as drift (Streeck and Thelen 2005) could create a change in the *meaning* of the institution, this is not a result of change in the institution itself, but in its relative position within the ideational and institutional network, as ideas change and new institutions are created around it (as in the strategy of
At the same time, institutions are still part of the ideational network (Schmidt 2008). They are “internal to the actors, serving both as structures that constrain actors and as constructs created and changed by those actors” (Schmidt 2008, 314). Just like ideas which represent physical objects are subject to change when these objects change, so do institutions that are the manifestation of ideas in the political world wield this same power over the ideas that gave birth to them. Margaret Weir (1992, 189), for example, describes a process of “bounded innovation”, wherein “some ideas become increasingly unlikely to influence policy,” partially because of the influence of institutions on the directions in which they can develop.

Furthermore, through their prominent place as the “template” of thought, institutions continuously generate agents that must be actively convinced of the need to change the institutions. This property of institutions endows them with a powerful place within the ideational network, as ideas must mold themselves around such institutions until such time as they are able to generate the action of agents necessary to effect change. However, since other ideas are at the same time changing to fit the institutional landscape, they could also strengthen those very structures. As with other ideas, then, a successful attack will rarely begin with a head-on charge on the core of the institution, but rather with peripheral attacks that will undermine it (Mackie 2006).

The key to institutions’ ability to outlive their function – to not be changed by the agents controlling them even though that could be deemed “objectively” in those agents’

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21 Consider, for example, how the idea of a “phone” has changed over the past two decades or so.
interest – is not only in the institutions per se, then, but also in the ideas and mental frameworks these institutions are embedded in, and the interplay between internal and external processes.

This interplay could lead to dynamics of “positive feedback”, where institutions engage in an arms race with societal trends which threaten them, trying to outrun them by strengthening elements within the institutions themselves. This strategy, however, soon runs into external limitations from the institutional environment. Positive feedback pushes the system forward, and may very well lead it to a tipping point which leads to substantial systemic change (Wendt 2003).\(^{22}\) Positive feedback must therefore refer not to the system as a whole, but to particular elements of institutions which are easily amended – those elements to whose change Hall (1993) referred as first and second order of change. The accumulation of more and more patches onto institutions in this manner, as Hall argued, may very well lead to their demise as they crumble under the weight of their own contradictions.

The interplay of internal and external factors may also lead to more gradual, “sideways” adaptation, where institutions (or rather, the policy-makers tending to them) respond to challenges by partially incorporating them into the institutions.\(^{23}\) This

\(^{22}\) The biological evolutionary analogy is helpful: stags face evolutionary pressures to develop ever-larger antlers, as these signify virility to females. This is a positive feedback system, since as the larger antler-size becomes common, pressure renews to grow even larger antlers. However, the feasibility of carrying the weight of the antlers and the negative impact large antlers have on survival chances acts as a check on unbridled antler growth – i.e., a negative feedback system. Note that such scenarios, like all arms-race scenarios, do not entail a system of increasing returns, but rather one where not moving forward effectively equals regressing.

\(^{23}\) Elections, and the party system in general, can be seen as a somewhat outdated method for sampling ideas prevalent within the public. The on-going crisis in party legitimacy, voter turnout and perceptions of a “democratic deficit” in many democracies may have much to do with the replacement of these mechanisms with what are perceived as more advanced method of polling, public opinion measurement and fine-tuned dissemination of ideas to the public that have developed over the past century.
eventuality is the result of an ideational process wherein skilled users of communication generate desired results by triggering those ideas that are closer to such results and relying on the social desirability of consistency to negate the influence of those ideas that point in other directions.

This process of framing, of setting the contours of the debate, thus limiting the ability of one side of it to participate in it effectively (de Goede 1996; Krebs and Jackson 2007), is key to the destabilizing of an ideational network and of institutions. “Opposing arguments are easy to mount. Changing the terms of an argument is exceedingly difficult, since the dominant definition of the problem acquires, by repetition, and by weight and credibility of those who propose or subscribe it, the warrant of ‘common sense’” (S. Hall 1982, 81). In other words, parallel constraint satisfaction networks are difficult to disrupt. It is this difficulty that makes it necessary for ideas to foster new links across previous divides, and to migrate from one context to another in search of welcoming networks that would enable them to propagate effectively, if they are to survive.

Ideas are constantly developed in contexts completely foreign to the institution to which they will eventually be applied. Some ideas are developed within the context of one institution, and then extended to apply to others near it in a process of “cognitive unlocking” (Wong 2003). Therien (2002), for example, shows how ideational shifts in domestic political economy have a crucial impact on behaviour of states in the international arena. Other arenas for idea development include academia and the public sphere. They are even developed outside of a particular society altogether and imported through travel, global communications, trade and other means of diffusion (O’Loughlin et
al. 1998). This “primordial soup” of ideas (Kingdon 1984) provides fodder for both institutional reproduction mechanisms and political challengers.

**How Ideas Preserve Institutions**

As argued above, necessitating change by defined actors is an inherent character of institutions. It is what makes them institutions. It is what makes them attractive as a tool, but it is not what they are for. Their purpose is to add predictability to a system; to serve as clear landmarks that behaviour can be fashioned around. However, not everything that adds predictability to the system is an institution.

Norms, for example, are ideas, not institutions. They evolve of their own volition, and over time, not suddenly and by fiat. Conversely, unless codified, norms cannot outlive their usefulness: once their supporting ideational network degrades, they either change or disappear altogether. Institutions, on the other hand, can survive as empty husks on the ideational plains for decades if not centuries, until the political power to formally change them is accumulated. Dead letter, legislation that is neither upheld nor repealed, is such an institution that has been emptied out of meaning, but the political will to formally revoke it is not yet available, because to do so would mean to formally challenge ideas that are still linked to it.\(^\text{24}\) Dead letter remains as a looming threat – able to resuscitate and be infused with new meaning far more easily than the formation of new institutions altogether (see, e.g., Prober 1990), and affecting the surrounding ideational landscape, although by lesser and lesser degrees as time goes by – until it is finally taken out of the books. But repealing dead letter has ideational repercussions far beyond the mere letter of the law, thus making a change to it unpalatable so long as the network surrounding the law is strong enough.

\(^{24}\) In a common law system, for the court to declare a law dead letter is itself a formal revocation of it.
The stability of institutions, therefore, is explained through a spiral logic: they are stable because they are difficult to change, and they are difficult to change because of other institutions which stipulate the rules to changing them. Ultimately, however, the chain of formal institutions must be anchored at every point in the ideational network, for once the law loses its legitimacy in the eyes of those whose job it is to uphold it, the entire structure collapses. As ideas supporting the legitimacy of an institution change, this illegitimacy may spread to those institutions supporting this institution. Thus ideas may corrode and undermine the internal stabilizing mechanisms of institutions.

But institutions can also become encased in a protective layer of ideas which form around them, further increasing their stability – institutions become habit, resistant even to powerful practical external pressures (Martínez et al. 2016). It is this layer of ideas and identities (and the interests that they engender) which many historical institutionalists turned to when stability was problematized (Thelen 1999; P. A. Hall 1993; Weir 1992). Institutions, in this view, continuously reproduce themselves by articulating around themselves identities which then come to view the institution as a shared interest. This view, however, places the institution as the active party and the ideas and identities as products of it, whereas I argue that the reverse is true: the institutions are passive within this process, serving merely as an environmental barrier that ideas attach to and grow around. The passivity of institutions in this formulation is why institutions often have unintended results, and why they are prone to being taken over by the identities created around them and reinterpreted to achieve goals unimagined by their designers. Institutions that are not appealing from the start for ideas to rally around will not last long enough to have any substantial impact.
Destabilization of institutions, then, is a process that can be followed by close observation of the development of ideas and the links that are forged or destroyed between them. The apparent stability of an institution may very well hide a flurry of activity inside it as ideas are introduced into and removed from the network that underlies it. This activity may lead to radical change, if it undermines the institution as a whole, but it may bring about more moderate change, as new ideas find a stable perch within the network and a new equilibrium is achieved for the time being.

Such change is often done in stealth: as new ideas find purchase in an existing network they will rapidly become “obvious”, as if they were always there. The most successful ones will become so ubiquitous that we will scarcely be able to imagine a world without them. The nation, human rights, the sovereignty of the people – these fairly recent ideas, underlying some of our most important global institutions, have attained the status of “natural” in our thinking. Even when they are demonstrably socially constructed, most people will object to a denial of their primordial nature and even those who accept it will have difficulty structuring arguments without resorting to them. Changes within them must therefore also be presented as continuity. Stability appears to be the rule simply because our memory of the past keeps changing as well. To discern change, we must observe ideas themselves more carefully.

**STUDYING THE IDEATIONAL NETWORK**

The nebulous nature of ideas is an important asset for discursive actors (or, rather, for ideas seeking to infiltrate and spread in the ideational network), as it allows for the coexistence of conflicting ideas. This dormant conflict can be roused to provide support for an idea that is challenged by others. For example, communication may be used to reshape
problem definitions and make policy solutions more palatable by appealing to existing norms and delinking them from other segments of the common public philosophy. Margaret Thatcher did this when she promoted monetarist policies by linking them with individualism, thrift and hard work – all honoured as virtues within British society – and, implicitly, weakening rival ideas of Neo-Keynesianism by linking them with the obverse vices of dependence, wastefulness and laziness (Schmidt 2002, 215).

I propose a methodology that follows and explains such changes and their influence on institutions. This methodology draws from discourse analysis to construct an image of the ideational networks at a given point in time, and then trace long-term causal processes by observing and recording changes to the linkages within the network. As in other process tracing methods, the actual actions may not be observable to the student, and must therefore be surmised through a logical process by consistently applying the theorized causal mechanism to explain and understand the observed changes in the ideational network.

**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Discourse theory seeks to discover the rules that govern the production of meaning in a certain context (Howarth 1998). It tries to uncover that which is *not* said, which serves as a constant background and context for meanings being constructed within texts. This essay follows Laclau and Mouffe (2001) in viewing discourse as primarily constructed through logics of equivalence (the construction of parallel sets of equivalences that creates two mutually exclusive and opposite sides, e.g. men and women, black and white) and logics of
difference (the creation of sub-groups which break up equivalences) (Howarth 1998).25

The primary tools for the construction of such discourses are linking and differentiation (Hansen 2006).

Differentiation, or “negative links” are those links which indicate a relationship of contrast, i.e., a logic of equivalence. Lene Hansen (2006) gives the example of the differentiation of “man” from “woman” which is then supported by a series of auxiliary links and differentiations: “man” is also “logical” while “woman” is “emotional”, “man” is “complex” while “woman” is “simple” etc. The concurrent act of linking and differentiation is critical here in providing each individual label its positive or negative ascription. “Emotional” needn’t be a negative ascription, but by its juxtaposition with other “female traits”, it gains this label. Once it is constructed as negative, however, it may be used as proof of negativity to other related traits, and even of the original signifier (“woman are weak because they are emotional”).26

Delineating the borders of the social group in which an ideational network is prevalent is a crucial step in identifying the ideational network itself. Ideational networks by their nature aim to be hegemonic, that is, to define the entire society within which they operate. A successful network of ideas will determine not only the construction of meaning

25 It is important to remember that both logics are works of discursive construction, and therefore, in a sense, imaginary. The sub-group generated by the logic of difference is no more real than the broad dichotomous group generated by the logic of equivalence. For example, the individual ethnic groups identified by Apartheid South Africa are no more “real” than the group identity of “blacks” espoused by the ANC (Norval 1996).

26 In this example, of course, the characteristic “weak” is itself applied, as differentiated from “strong”, to prove the negative connotation of “woman”, and is supported by the label “emotional”, whose negativity comes to it originally from its association with femaleness. Thus we can see the construction of a parallel constraint satisfaction network: a direct attack on an individual node is curtailed by other nodes, which will in turn be protected by the attacked node when they are under attack. Attempts to undo these linkages are also common, such as those that argue that emotional connections lend strength, and therefore women, who are still portrayed as emotional, are actually strong. Attacks such as this target one node of the network by delinking it from its supporting network, rather than attempting to attack the whole construct at once.
by those who developed it, but also define the self-identity of those on whom it was imposed, even as they attempt to resist the implications of this network in terms of power distribution (Norval 1996).

However, no ideational network is ever wholly self-contained and isolated. ‘Floating signifiers’ plague every network and undermine its stability. Floating signifiers are those elements of an ideational network which have a different meaning in other networks available to actors within a social group (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002).

This could happen within the context of direct conflict, as in the case of Apartheid South Africa, where the signifier “black” was contested to mean either a particular ethnic group, or a vast label articulating all the groups oppressed by the regime (Norval 1996). But it could also happen in more benign settings, where seemingly unrelated fields of thought come up with conflicting meanings for the same term. So long as the two meanings are not posed one against the other, the two networks can coexist within the same group (or individual). Once confronted with one another, friction is generated and must be addressed in some way.

Due to the inherent openness of any ideational system, floating signifiers will shift meanings routinely as the ideational network adjusts to new attacks by alternative systems of meaning. That is, their meaning will become fuzzier, and different statements will make use of different specific meanings. The broader the social group delineated for study, the larger and more common such shifts can be expected to be, as more alternative ideational networks become available to the members of the group as a whole. This emphasizes ideational networks as an emergent property, not one that can be studied through
“microfoundations”\textsuperscript{27} or at the level of exceedingly small groups.

Delineating an excessively limited social group, therefore, may leave some meanings devoid of context and inaccessible to the observer. On the other hand, delineating an excessively large social group runs the risk of encompassing groups whose ideational networks never engage directly, which entails that the meanings that each ascribes to the floating signifiers are not actually accessible to members of the other. To identify an appropriately “ideationally autarkic” social group we must show that the following applies to its members to a significant (though not full) degree: the majority of communications of each member is with other members of the group, or mediated through other members of the group (e.g., a local television channel may broadcast shows from outside the group, but the choice of which shows are broadcast is made by members of the group); the primary social circles (work, family, school) of a large majority of the members of the group are primarily within the group; the group does not encompass significantly large groups which themselves form ideationally autarkic groups. Clearly, processes of globalization and local compartmentalization make achieving these criteria progressively more tenuous. Nonetheless, for the majority of the world’s population there is still at least one identity group which can be delineated as “ideationally autarkic”, namely the society of their nation-state.\textsuperscript{28}

Nonetheless, once the ideationally autarkic group on which to focus is delineated,

\textsuperscript{27} Jacobs (2009) attempts such a study, but without access to discourse as an interpersonal process, the explanation of ideational change (as opposed to ideational stability) becomes far less convincing.

\textsuperscript{28} National minorities, however, may not belong to any ideationally autarkic identity group. Palestinians citizens of Israel, for example, do not control many of their primary media outlets, and some primary social circles (e.g., schools). On the other hand, links between the Palestinian and Jewish populations of Israel are limited, thus preventing the formation of a broader “pan-Israeli” autarkic identity. That is why the Arab citizens of Israel may be defined as “liminal” or “hybrid” in their identity, and maintaining their cultural segregation is important for the safeguarding of Jewish identity (Eyal 2005, 136–140)
smaller discursive groups can be delineated which are not claimed to be isolated from others within the broader group, but rather engage in intensive communication on a particular set of issues, even while the broader society might be largely unaware of it (e.g., the civil servants within the ministry of health are likely to engage in intensive communication on public health issues)\(^29\) (Schmidt 2008). Selecting such smaller groups is necessary for practicality’s sake, so long as one keeps in mind that the process is constantly under considerable influence by ideational forces external to the group which may very well not show up explicitly in available materials (e.g., academic communication on public health might influence said civil servants, as may political upheavals not directly linked to the ministry itself).

**Process Tracing**

While discourse analysis points us in the direction of the methodology required to analyse ideational change, its tools are too blunt to discern such delicate processes. Their reliance on texts – preserved utterances – means that the majority of the process remains hidden from the observer of the ideational network, particularly when studying historical periods. Discourse analysis can only produce a “snapshot” of the ideational network at a given time, with a fairly low temporal resolution, and one is left with comparative statics. However, since our focus is on processes of change (or their failure) in the ideational network, a simple series of “snapshots” cannot suffice. To follow the development of ideas through time, we must employ tools of process tracing. “Process tracing of mechanisms of thinking and action is an unavoidable method for ideational argument” (Parsons 2011, 135 but see also his caveats there) as a useful means for following processes across time. We must

\(^{29}\) Sadly, though, they don’t always do so.
follow the changes in the links and differentiations that characterize a specific idea through time, and deduce from the changes we see and those we cannot see what was the causal process that brings us from point A to point B.

Process tracing is particularly suitable for this function because it focuses on causal mechanisms: on the series of events that must lead from the observed events we hypothesize as “causes” to the observed end condition we hypothesize as resulting from said causes. In Jack Goldstone’s words, “to identify the process, one must perform the difficult cognitive feat of figuring out which aspects of the initial conditions observed, in conjunction with which simple principles of the many that may be at work, would have combined to generate the observed sequence of events” (cited in George and Bennett 2005, 206). This emphasizes the importance of theory for the use of process tracing as a method. For, while often utilized to explain single cases without seeking to offer a more universally applicable mechanism or systemic explanation, in a manner similar to the work of the historian, the significant contribution of process tracing is as a tool for developing and testing theories (Beach and Pedersen 2013).

Bennett (2010) describes process tracing as akin to solving a murder mystery – one posits a hypothesis which generates a number of conditions. One must then design a series of tests that the evidence must pass in order to rule out the impossible until, as Sherlock Holmes put it, what is left, no matter how improbable, must be the truth. He distinguishes four tests one might devise: Straw in the Wind which could strengthen or weaken our hypothesis, but not prove or disprove it entirely; a Hoop which a hypothesis must “jump through” to remain possible, while failing it eliminates it completely; Smoking Gun which proves a hypothesis, but failing it does not eliminate it; and Doubly Decisive, which both
confirms a hypothesis and eliminates all others, while failing it eliminates the hypothesis (Bennett 2010, 210–211).

Doubly decisive tests, unfortunately, are rare. The onus of most applications of process tracing is on building a complex hypothesis that leads the entire way from the variables we are able to measure initially through to the result, showing that this process as a whole is likely to be a sufficient one to achieve the result, and then showing it is probable that this chain of events actually took place. As a methodology, then, process-tracing exchanges the relative certainty of a probability explanation of statistical analysis with a level of uncertainty in a deterministic explanation.

This further implies that the “Holmesian” description, wherein alternative explanations are ruled out until only one hypothesis remains, is utopian. If we discard parsimony as a requirement for our explanations (which we are likely to do in a non-theory-oriented study), then one can always come up with additional alternative explanations that cannot be disqualified (Parsons 2011; Beach and Pedersen 2013). The notion that one can come up with all the possible “suspects” and then proceed to eliminate them one by one, again, becomes unreasonable when attempting to explain historical processes.

Instead, through the use of process tracing, we seek merely to show the possibility that a theoretically-derived explanation can be applied to a relevant case, thus corroborating our theory, and, preferably, to show that competing theories are less likely. This is particularly true for causal processes where multiple causal variables interact in producing the ultimate result. By establishing, through theoretical deduction, an extensive
and complex hypothesis, and then seeking out evidence for its veracity within our observations, we can test our theories (Beach and Pedersen 2013).30

**Applying the Ideational Methodology to Israel’s Ethnic Democracy**

A methodology for the study of ideas and their influence on institutional change must combine the above elements into a coherent whole. First, we must establish through tools of discourse analysis the ideational network in which changes took place. Through a careful analysis of texts produced by a group identified as sufficiently ideationally autarkic in the months and years preceding the event, the network of ideas is mapped and floating signifiers can be identified, along with their multiple meanings. The focus of this exercise is identifying chains of equivalences and ideational attempts of subverting them by shifting the meanings of certain signifiers by linking them with opposing or new signifiers. Our goal should be to identify the innovative ideational contribution by those seeking to change institutions, which seek to ‘shed a new light’ on an issue, either by problematizing a previously unproblematized condition, or by reframing an existing agreed upon problem (see also, Weir 1992).

To succeed, novel ideas must find traction among those who, combined, have sufficient power resources to effect change. Identifying a new idea is therefore merely the first step. Next, we must also show how a new idea is incorporated into different ideational schemas – what are the results of these recombinations, and what are the “sacrifices” that must be made to bring aboard new sub-groups within the society as a whole. As the logics of equivalence and difference reshape social coalitions, ideas themselves must adapt or be

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30 Special care should be taken in applying this process to not reformulate the thesis as evidence is collected. Doing so is will inevitably lead to overfitting and replacing theory with mere narrative description.
cast out. Analyzing the relations within newly formed coalitions, which are particularly precarious so long as identities have not gelled into institutional arrangements, is an important step in analyzing the process of institutional change.

It should then be possible to show that it is only once one chain of equivalence completely displaces the other, that drastic (third order) institutional change can occur. Conversely, so long as existing chains of equivalence are preserved in the ideational network, even if new ideas are successfully introduced into it, they will be accommodated by the network through minor (second order) institutional change, but that adaptive change will be limited. Moreover, even seemingly small changes in the instruments of policy which will nevertheless carry it outside the perimeter of the policy framework – will, as it were, change the overall goal of the policy (and therefore constitute third order changes) – will not be feasible, because they will be rejected by the ideational network.

Nevertheless, adaptive changes could accumulate over long periods of time and result in substantial institutional innovation (Blyth et al. 2011): even if the opposing coalition succeeds in effecting some level of retrenchment, this retrenchment will have to be phrased in a manner which takes into consideration the new ideas introduced and embedded into the ideational network. This model is therefore particularly useful for those cases where, contrary to the predictions of path dependence theories, change was followed by retrenchment, without at any time encountering clear exogenous shocks which could be said to instigate a critical juncture.

Having shown how ideas limit institutional change, it is then possible to show how changes in the ideational network drive and direct institutional change within those limits. What at first appears to be a set path along which progression is made, is revealed to be a
constantly changing field, with some ideas drawing closer together or farther apart, or stronger or weaker in their overall influence.

To achieve this in this dissertation, I will prove, first, that there was (second order) change in the institutional arrangement of ethnic democracy in Israel; second, that this change was not uni-directional, neither in its specific progression (e.g., linear) nor in its general trend (e.g., dialectic): ethnic democracy in Israel has seen periods of liberalization and periods of retrenchment, and these cannot be traced to exogenous shocks; third, that despite this change, the institutional arrangement remained within a clearly identifiable perimeter (i.e., that some possible solutions have been removed from the discussion): despite substantial forces acting to alter ethnic democracy, it has remained identifiable within clear parameters throughout the history of Israel, and was never substantially under threat; and finally, that this perimeter can only be delineated through a set of defining ideas which are neither fully mutually constitutive nor fully mutually independent: notions of identity, democracy and security are intertwined, each contributing different aspects to ethnic democracy at different times, while also substantively interdependent in their definition. Ethnic democracy, in sum, cannot be explained by reference to a single ethos or idea. Its stability is dependent on the fluid balance held between a number of independent ideas. It must be shown, then, that institutional change is explained through all three core ideas at all times, and that changes in the balance of ideational power precede changes in the balance of political power, and, therefore, changes in institutions.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The model presented here does not seek to replace previous models as an alternative explanation of institutional change. Rather, it wishes to offer a novel perspective on the
interplay of ideas and institutions which could serve as a useful analytical tool to scholars studying such episodes, complementing existing models. Thinking of ideas as the building blocks of agency has several benefits that will help us understand particular cases of institutional change, as well as institutional stagnation: 1. By removing “heroic agency” as a possible explanation, we are forced to consider the causal mechanisms which link ideational change to institutional change: How new institutions are inevitably linked to the ideational network that surrounded the institutions that preceded them is brought to the fore; 2. The formation of coalitions, and therefore power itself, is problematized and its explanation becomes central to the explanation of institutional change as a whole; 3. Finally, by articulating a causal mechanism leading from ideas to identity to power to institutions (and back from institutions to all three), we clarify the roles institutions play and how they can influence political reality – and what they cannot be expected to do or explain.
3: Israel and Its Arab Minority, an Ideational and Institutional Overview

WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

- The Declaration of Independence, Israel, 1948

The word “Arab” appears but once throughout the thousand-odd words long declaration of independence read by David Ben-Gurion on May 14th, 1948. While there are other allusions in the text to “all its [Israel’s] inhabitants”, “irrespective of religion [or] race” and “neighbouring states and their peoples”, it is perhaps telling that it is in this paragraph lamenting the violence against the Jewish inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael, that the authors of Israel’s founding text chose to mention the Arab people by name. This short paragraph – a single sentence – encapsulates the ideational network surrounding Israel’s relationship with its Arab minority that will remain virtually unchanged for decades to come.

The fate of Israel’s Arab minority since the formation of the State of Israel has been defined by the three key ideas which frame this paragraph: Jewish identity, democracy and security. This chapter will provide an overview of the development of these three ideas throughout Israel’s history, and the manner in which it interacted with the institution of ethnic democracy, which governs Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. This will serve as a framework for the following four chapters that will delve in depth into each of four significant political events in the development of Israel’s ethnic democracy.

**THE JEWISH IDENTITY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

The “we” of the declaration of independence is decidedly limited to members of the Jewish people alone, and even extends far beyond the inhabitants of the Land of Israel, to the Zionist movement throughout the world. The founders of the State of Israel did not even consider allowing some of their (admittedly few) Arab allies to join in signing the declaration, thus creating at least a semblance of inclusivity.

Every identity is defined not only by who is included within it, but also by who is excluded from it. In this case, it is made abundantly clear that the Arab inhabitants of Palestine are excluded from the new identity. While the declaration of independence calls on the Jewish people to converge on the state of Israel, and promises to allow any Jew to immigrate (“make Aliya”) to the new state,\(^\text{32}\) the Arab inhabitants of the land are only

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\(^{32}\) A promise which was promptly fulfilled with the Law of Return (1950). It should also be noted that the declaration also draws a distinct line between the Jewish people as a whole and the Hebrew settlement (*Yishuv*) which forms the state of Israel. While earlier drafts of the Declaration made no such distinction, it was the politicians (most notably Moshe Sharett, who will go on to be Israel’s second prime minister) who introduced the term “the Hebrew settlement” and expunged all but one reference to the “Jewish state” which were in abundance throughout the early drafts. It is this draft, also, which introduced the reference to the violent attack on the Jews in Israel in the same paragraph that calls on the Arab inhabitants to take part in the building of the state as equal citizens, demonstrating once more the discursive balancing act that takes place at
promised to have equal citizenship and representation, without the possibility of assimilation of the two identities.

As these words were spoken, however, the Jewish militias, soon to become the Israel Defense Forces, were actively driving out Arabs residing within Israel, and the government was soon to begin implementing policies to prevent the return of exiled Palestinians and deport many of those who were internally displaced (Morris 1987; Robinson 2005). Nor was the promise of full and equal citizenship to those Arabs inhabitants who were granted citizenship honoured, as Israel imposed a control regime over its Arab citizens which was formally abolished only in 1966, and informally continued long afterwards through various mechanisms (Lustick 1980, and see chapter 4 below).

Nonetheless, throughout its first decades Israel avoided defining itself as a “Jewish State” through legislation, or explaining what that might mean. In 1952 Israel formalized the role of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the Jewish Agency (JA), but there too the link between the state and the national organization was explained only by exclaiming that the State of Israel was a creation of the People of Israel. In fact, this law, along with the Covenant signed between the Government of Israel and the WZO/JA in 1954, entrusted nation-building roles which normally would be the purview of the state to the Zionist organizations – roles such as promoting Jewish identity and affinity to Israel among the diaspora, with the intent of encouraging aliyah (Jewish immigration to Israel); educational roles both among the diaspora and within Israel itself; assistance to recent immigrants, all times (Shachar 2002).

33 The declaration of independence itself never received official status in Israel, and the 1st Knesset’s failure to draft a constitution left Israel with a series of disjointed “Basic Laws” which dealt primarily with the technicalities of statecraft (Jacobsohn 2004).
both financially and socially (i.e., integration); agricultural settlement in Israel;\textsuperscript{34} and others (Sheffer and Roth-Toledano 2006). Most notably, immigration and naturalization themselves were not handled by Israeli government organs: a Jew who wishes to immigrate to Israel turns \textit{not} to the Israeli embassy in his country of residence, but rather to the Jewish Agency (the \textit{Sokhnut}), an independent civil society agency that predates the State of Israel and purports to represent the Jewish people throughout the world.\textsuperscript{35} The entire process of \textit{Aliyah} (immigration of Jews to Israel) is carried out by the Jewish Agency, including determining eligibility\textsuperscript{36} and arranging for the required documentation. Until the 1970s, even “absorption” (immigrant integration) was mainly in the hands of the international Jewish organizations. After the formation of the Ministry of \textit{Aliya} Absorption in 1968, these responsibilities were gradually transferred to the government, although the Agency remains involved in the absorption process through financial and educational assistance. The distinction between the state and the Zionist organizations allows the latter to act in manners which are distinctly discriminatory. Similarly, the Jewish National Fund is able to limit access to land to Jews only, while the state insulates itself from claims of discrimination.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} For tax reasons, the Jewish Agency does not deal with settlement of the occupied territories. This is therefore the sole role which is unique to the WZO (Sheffer and Roth-Toledano 2006, 104).

\textsuperscript{35} Recently the JA began cooperation with Nefesh b’Nefesh, an independent Jewish organization which operates in North America and the UK, which took over some of the responsibilities of the JA, although not the eligibility process (Rettig Gur 2008).

\textsuperscript{36} It should further be noted that eligibility itself is based on religio-ethnic characteristics, i.e., one is eligible to immigrate to Israel if he or she is a Jew, or if one of his or her parents or grandparents were Jewish. Since any conversion to Judaism done outside of Israel is recognized by the Jewish Agency, in effect the State of Israel, or even the Jewish Agency, has little to no control over the identity of eligible immigrants – normally a core privilege of nation-states.

\textsuperscript{37} That this was, in practice, what the State has used its relationship with the JA to achieve, was also argued by the Supreme Court in its Qa’adan ruling, which forbids the state from continuing this practice (H.C. 6698/95, Qa’adan v. Israel Land Administration, 54(1) P.D. 258 (2000) (Isr.); Peled 2014, 123).
But the purported autonomy of the Zionist organizations should be seen as doubtful given the strong ties between them and the state. These ties do not only subordinate the organizations to the state, but also make it easier for these organizations to limit the access of competing civil society organizations to necessary government and private funding and policy-making (Sheffer and Roth-Toledano 2006). The result is a “weak civil society”, where government interests take over the voices normally promoted by civil societies in democratic states, while allowing the state to adhere to strict liberal democratic requirements of equal citizenship and avoid formalizing its identity in law or official state policies.

It could be argued, then, that Israel refrained from defining its Jewish identity to avoid the tension between the newly established “global human rights regime” (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Benhabib 2007) and the needs of national identity – a tension identified in the 1960s by Carl Friedriech:

in this very period, when the idea of a nation-state has become questionable in the West and its accompanying set of ideas, known as nationalism, has started to erode, [...] the same idea has become a world-wide goal of peoples freeing themselves of colonial rule, and nationalism has been transformed into an ‘ideology’ almost total in scope.” (Friedrich 1963, 30)

But Israel’s silence on its Jewish nature could also be explained by arguing that it did not need explaining: that Israel was a Jewish state was obvious to all and challenged by none, and that its Jewish nature is to be understood as a national character and not as a religious one was similarly commonsensical, at least in the view of the dominant Mapai party and the broader labour movement in Israel (Walzer 2015). The two explanations,
however, agree on one key point: that the Jewishness of the State of Israel was *abstracted out* of communications relaying the ideational network. Whether by conspiracy or not, Israel’s Jewish nature was left undefined, thus serving as an uninstitutionalized floating signifier. As such, it was constantly surrounded by an assortment of sometimes contradictory ideas defining it and being defined by it. Hebrew, Zionist, Israeli, Sabra, *Can’anite*, alongside Jewish, all served as descriptors of the identity that united Jews in Israel and both tied them and set them apart from diaspora Jews. The minimal formal communication of these ideas prevented a clarification of the ideational network, and multiple institutional arrangements arose through the efforts of groups with conflicting ideas on what this Jewish identity is – in the education system, in segregated settlements and neighbourhoods, in military service, and elsewhere.

Institutionalizing the national identity of the state finally came as a response to challenges to it that threatened to exceed an acceptable parameter, and include non-Jewish groups in the formation of identity. These threats first arose in the 1970s and 80s, a period deemed by some as the “post-Zionist era” (Almog 2004; Cohen 1995). As will be discussed at greater length below (chapter 5), in 1985 the Knesset enacted clause 7a of the Basic Law: The Knesset, which determines grounds for ineligibility of parties running for elections on the grounds of their opposition to Israel as the land of the Jewish people, opposition to Israel as a democratic state, or racism. Subsequently, in 1992’s Basic Law: Human Dignity and Freedom and Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation – the basis of Israel’s so-called

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38 Cana’anism was originally a derogatory term given to the “Young Hebrews”, who saw the formation of a new nation in Israel, completely separate from the Jewish people – in fact, discarding completely the notion of a Jewish national identity. While never officially accepted by any of the movement, the term stuck, perhaps as a simple way of discerning between their radical identity ideas and the more conservative notions of a Hebrew people that was intimately linked to the Jewish people as a whole.
“constitutional revolution” – both included a preamble stating the law is enacted to enshrine the values of Israel as a “Jewish and democratic state”.

This format, “Jewish and democratic”, was later used in an amendment of clause 7a of the Basic Law: the Knesset (2002), and has stood at the centre of public debate on the identity of Israel (see, e.g. Maoz 2011). This public debate revolved to a significant degree around the very question of what it means to be a “Jewish” state. Again, as before, that Israel is and ought to be Jewish was a basic assumption of the vast majority of those participating in the debate – indeed, a necessary qualification to be admitted to the debate, since clause 7a prevented those aspiring for political representation from voicing any view opposing it.

Unlike earlier decades, however, the communication around this idea was explicit, due to two unrelated developments. First, Israel now faced a clear and united “other”: the growing Palestinian consciousness, and the threat posed by some of its organizations’ commitment to armed struggle for the destruction of Israel and its replacement by a Palestinian state that will not recognize the rights of Jews who did not reside within it “until the beginning of the Zionist invasion” (“The Palestinian National Charter” 1968). While this violence rarely erupted within Israel proper, the nationalization of Israel’s Arab minority was nonetheless evident, as a new, “upright” generation replaced those who were deemed “the bowed generation” (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2002). These new leaders of the Arab Israelis no longer accepted their place as an afterthought when “the Israeli public”
was being considered, and demanded to be included within a more inclusive state identity. This demand was ultimately manifested in the call for a “state of all its citizens.”

Second, what David Ben-Gurion envisioned as an everlasting Zionist revolution was beginning to wind down, as the sheer normality of the Jewish state in the eyes of a generation for whom it was an undisputed fact, made the collectivist commitments adhered to by earlier generations seem unnecessary. At the same time the world around Israel was taken by a storm of liberalization and individualism, Israelis, too, aspired to put themselves ahead of their obligations to society as a whole (Shafir and Peled 2000; Almog 2004), and agricultural proletarian ideals promoted by the Labour movement were more boldly and powerfully challenged by a growing and proud urban middle class. The identity of society in Israel was no longer as clear cut as it has been at independence, and as a result leaving Jewishness as a floating signifier became less tenable. This process interacted with the rise of new elites, those not drawn from the socialist, Ashkenazi (Jews of European origins) and secular leadership of the new state. Newly politicized cleavages pitted Ashkenazi against Sepharadic Jews (of Middle-Eastern and North African origins), seculars against religious against ultra-orthodox, to form a far more polarized political landscape which resulted in a stalemate in the 1980s. As I’ll discuss below (chapters 6 and 7), this set of crosscutting cleavages and the political stalemate prompted the development of a new logic of equivalence, or the re-aligning of the ideational network in the 1990s which played a

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39 The ideational process that lead to these developments is a fascinating topic in itself, but is beyond the scope of this work. For an in depth discussion of these processes within the Arab minority in Israel, see Haklai (2011).

40 The change began with the rise to power of the Likud government, although economic liberalization steps only really picked up during Menachem Begin’s 2nd term, beginning in 1981.
central part in the retrenchment of liberalization of the relationship between the state and its Arab minority in the late 1990s and into the 21st century.

Nevertheless, the 1992 Basic Laws quite explicitly used the idea of “Jewish and democratic” to qualify the state’s Jewishness, rather than its democratic nature. It was to be interpreted as “Jewish, but democratic”. After all, both laws enshrined liberal rights – freedom of occupation and a more vague right to dignity – which are essential parts of a liberal democratic regime, yet are in no way necessarily Jewish in nature. Nor are they, of course, necessarily in contradiction with Judaic law. It is exactly the vagueness of Judaic law and the multiplicity of possible interpretations that the bills sought to utilize, by clearly anchoring Israel’s Jewish identity in one of its more liberal facets. In other words, the bills sought to forge a new link between liberal values that were already associated with democracy, on the one hand, and the idea of Jewish identity on the other. Subsequently, however, the phrase was decontextualized and used to justify limitations on democracy in acts like the amended section 7a of the Basic Law: The Knesset. It was then that this interpretation was reversed into “first Jewish, then democratic”. This provides an example of the way in which the vagueness of institutional tools attempting to bridge

41 During the 1985 parliamentary debates on the amendment of the Basic Law: The Knesset (discussed further in chapter 5), MK Shulamit Aloni said “you want a Jewish state, but democratic. The two elements are divided into two paragraphs, which supports the argument of a person who says that there can be a Jewish state that is not democratic. In this perspective, these are two different things” (Weinblum 2015, 48). The subsequent phrasing adopted in 1992 presumably corrected this. Notably, the initiator of the Basic Law, MK Amnon Rubinstein, was a member of Shinui, a party that joined Aloni’s Ratz to form the left wing Meretz at the same time the bill was passed, in March 1992.

42 Benjamin Netanyahu, while he was Minister of Treasury in 2003, gave a speech at the Herzlia Conference where he said: “In the declaration of independence we determined that we are forming a Jewish and democratic state. First Jewish, then democratic... First we must ensure the Jewish majority in the State of Israel. I say this as a liberal, as a democrat, and as a Jewish and Zionist patriot” (Netanyahu 2003). It might be noted that, as described above, the declaration of independence determined no such thing. Furthermore, see chapter 6 below for a discussion of the concept of Jewish Majority and its entrance into the Israel’s ideational network.
across ideas may be relatively manipulated to achieve other ideational goals given that these goals remain within the parameters of the institutional framework.

**DEMOCRACY**

The declaration of independence expressly promises the Arab inhabitants of Israel a “full and equal citizenship” as well as “due representation” in the state’s institutions. Elsewhere, it lists those rights that will be granted to all “irrespective of religion, race or sex”. These include “freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture”, and the protection of the holy places, and it promises the state will “be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations”. It does not, however, define Israel as a democracy. This is no accident, as the word was introduced to an earlier draft of the declaration and intentionally struck from it (Shachar 2002).

Nonetheless, that Israel is and should be a democracy was equally obvious to the vast majority of the participants in debates on the state’s identity. As in the case of Jewish identity, what this meant was never clearly defined.

The theoretical literature on democracy generally follows one of three classic definitions of democratic regimes. The first was offered by Schumpeter (1994 [1943]), who gave a minimalist definition: democracy is the system wherein leaders must engage in a competitive struggle over votes to hold power. This minimal definition is often termed “electoral democracy”, and requires nothing in the way of a meaningful selection (as long

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43 With the possible exception of certain ultra-orthodox circles, who saw, and to some extent still see a secular Jewish state as an affront to God.
as some alternatives, however similar, are provided) nor any freedom of expression or of organization. It is strictly institutional and formal.

On the other extreme, Dahl (1970) defined democracy as an unachievable ideal, wherein “every person ... has a full and equal opportunity to participate in all decisions and in all the processes of influence, persuasion, and discussion that bear on every decision” (p. 67) (or, elsewhere, as a system which is “completely or almost completely responsive to all its citizens” [Dahl 1971, 2]). Dahl readily recognizes that this is not a practical system for any but the smallest of groups, and hence cannot be posed as a realistic target for actual states or other large organizations, but rather should be seen as an ideal whose approximation should be the goal of a democratizing organization. He therefore supplemented this definition with one that acknowledges the criteria of competence and economy. This third definition of democracy therefore aims to be both a normative model for states to aspire to, and a practical regime type that those states can hope to achieve through reasonable means. This definition required a state to achieve a series of requirements: 1. Freedom to form and join organizations; 2. Freedom of expression; 3. Right to vote; 4. Eligibility for public office; 5. Right of political leaders to compete for support; 6. Alternative sources of information; 7. Free and fair elections; and 8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference (Dahl 1971, 3).

Dahl calls this regime type polyarchy, but it may be more descriptively called a “minimally perfect democracy”. This term reflects the duality of these definitions, as both
setting a very high standard for attainment of the title “democracy”, but also leaves room for further improvement and approximation of the full “ideal democracy”.44

Authors who follow Dahl’s definition habitually acknowledge his “ideal” definition, but largely ignore it as they operationalize the minimally perfect democracy. Coppedge and Reinicke (1990) for example, constructed an influential measurement scale of polyarchy, but when describing the concept of polyarchy, they argue that this concept is a dimension, unlike democracy. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the scale they constructed is unable to distinguish between the many democracies that achieve the highest level of polyarchy it measures. Since polyarchy is conceptualized as a dimension running from non-polyarchy to full polyarchy, that anything beyond polyarchy cannot be distinguished is inherent to the project.

But polyarchy cannot be understood as conceptually separate from democracy. It is, rather, the point on the dimension of democracy where systems achieve a minimal level of perfection that makes them qualitatively different from other, non-democratic regimes. In fact, for Dahl, one of the advantages of distinguishing polyarchy from democracy is exactly that “one can begin to discuss intelligibly whether one polyarchy may not be more ‘democratic’ than another, a way of thinking about ‘democracy’ that opens up a whole new line of possibilities. For alas, the language of political theory will trap you into thinking in either-or terms” (1970, 78).

44 Puhle, Diamandouros, and Gunther (1996) see Dahl’s polyarchy as a merely procedural formulation, and argue it is comparable to Linz’s (2000 [1975], 58) classification wherein a regime is a democracy “when it allows for the free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information and communication, for the purpose of free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by nonviolent means their claim to rule . . . without excluding any effective political office from that competition or prohibiting any members of the political community from expressing their preference.”
Coppedge and Reinicke (1990) suggest that their scale may be complemented by “polyarchy plus” scales, through the addition of new variables or additional articulation of existing ones. This is exactly what Moller and Skaaning (2010) did when, in their own scale of democratic regimes, they placed polyarchy as the second most advanced form of democracy, after “liberal democracy”.

Conceived fully as a dimension stretching from non-democracy to ideal democracy, it is clear that both the “minimal democracy” and the “minimally perfect democracy” are points along this dimension with different normative consequences. Obviously, Israel espoused all the staples of electoral democracy, including importing to the new state the pioneering proportional electoral system used by the Jewish settlement’s legislative organ before independence (Sheffer 1996). Israel also quickly enshrined in its Basic Laws the institutions of a parliamentary democratic regime, including free elections and an independent court, but it failed to commit to any of the basic liberal rights that are normally attributed to such regimes. The protection of these rights became a key role of the Supreme Court which has time and again turned to the rights expressed within the declaration of independence, as well as the constitutions of other democracies, to guide its rulings (Jacobsohn 2004). However, it is also clear that Israel could not achieve the status of “minimally perfect democracy” in its first few decades: the military government over the Arab residents, whose abolition will be discussed below in chapter 4, was created for the express purpose of preventing the Arab minority from organizing, expressing itself freely, and effectively competing in elections. Even after its abolition, it would be difficult to argue that these requirements were met by the Israeli regime which continued repressing Arab political engagement through covert means.
Early on in its history, Israel developed and adopted a model of “defensive democracy”, indirectly based on the “militant democracy” model developed by Loewenstein in the interwar period (Loewenstein 1937a; Loewenstein 1937b) and more directly modeled on the German *wehr-hafte Demokratie* model (Pedahzur 2002). The key actor in the development of this concept was Justice Yoel Zussman, who first introduced it in the seminal *Yardor* ruling. This case was an appeal by the Socialists Party against the Central Electoral Committee’s (CEC) decision to disqualify it from running in the elections. The CEC’s decision was based on the fact that many of the candidates of the party were previously members of the Al-Ard movement, which was ruled illegal due to its opposition to the existence of Israel. The party argued that the CEC had no authority to disqualify parties on substantive grounds, but only on technical grounds. The judges presiding over the appeal, however, disagreed. Chief Justice Agranat and Justice Zussman both argued in their ruling, citing the Federal Republic of Germany’s constitution, that the state has the right to protect itself from those who try to destroy it by any means necessary, even if those means are not stipulated in law. In other words, the court argued for the existence of an informal institution. Zussman recounts the example of a party which is running on the sole premise that once allowed in the Knesset, it will kill other members of Knesset. Must the CEC allow such a party to run and become an accomplice in its crime, he asks? In his conclusion, he states

> As noted by my esteemed colleague, Justice Cohen, the German constitutional court, when discussing the questions of the legality of a party, spoke of a “militant democracy” which does not open its gates to acts of

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45 EA 1/65 Yardor v. Chairman of the Central Elections Committee for the Sixth Knesset (1965).
subversion in the guise of legitimate parliamentary activities. Personally, for Israel, I will be satisfied with a “defensive democracy” and tools to protect the existence of the state are at hand, even if we have not found them enumerated in the elections law. *(Yardor)*

But Zussman’s “defensive democracy” is hardly a weaker version of “militant democracy” as he would have the reader believe in this passage. Quite the contrary is true – for both he and Agranat made a subtle yet critical transposition in the definition of militant democracy. If militant democracy is a democracy using non-democratic tools to protect the democratic regime itself, Zussman’s defensive democracy is a democratic *nation-state* using non-democratic tools to protect *its national identity.* There is, of course, a difference between the nation-state as an organization dedicated to the service of a particular identity group, and the democratic regime which it might employ. Militant democracy is dedicated to the protection of the latter, as it takes it as possible – even likely – that through the use of psychological trickery, a majority of the public could be convinced to support the destruction of democracy and its replacement by fascism, as indeed happened (Loewenstein 1937a). Some of its long-term strategies to achieve this goal are specifically designed to address such psychological issues (Loewenstein 1937a; Pedahzur 2004). But Zussman’s defensive democracy is dedicated to the protection of Israel not as a democracy, but as the nation-state of the Jews – as an ethnic democracy. Al-Ard’s goal, even as argued by the state before the court, was not to replace Israel’s democracy with a non-democratic regime, but to replace Israel’s Jewish identity with a Palestinian one, while preserving, they claimed, the democratic regime, and even liberalizing it. It is absurd to believe that, through

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46 A similar argument is proposed by Weinblum (2015, 43).
psychological trickery, Al-Ard or any other organization could deceive a large proportion of
the citizens of Israel to support the replacement of Israel’s Jewish identity with another; for
by that very act they will indeed *change* the identity of that population, and to defend
Israel’s identity by legislative force then would mean to oppose the sincere identity and will
of the majority of the population and attempt to impose on them one which they have
rejected. Zussman’s defensive democracy, then, is not activated only where there is a clear
and present danger to the state, but even when the danger is only symbolic (Peled 1993).

This transposition is shared by Agranat, who writes:

> It has not escaped me that the political science teaches that in a democratic
> state the sovereign is the people itself: that democracy is first and foremost a
> regime of agreement, that the democratic process is therefore a process of
> selecting the shared goals of the people and the means of their achievement
> through deliberation and a free exchange of opinions ... These things
> presumably necessitate the view that one must not limit a group of people –
> for the sole reason that it supports opposition to the existence of the state –
> from presenting itself for elections to the Knesset ... However, this view has a
> conclusive answer, which was the answer given by Justice Vitkon ... who
> said: “... no *free regime* will lend its hand and its acknowledgement to a
> movement that undermines that very regime” (Yardor, emphasis added).

Again, from a discussion on the necessity of protecting democracy from those who
seek to replace it with a non-democratic regime, Justice Agranat shifts to a protection of the
state’s right to defend its identity from those who seek to change it – at the very same time
that he is saying that a change of identity is a privilege of the sovereign people in a democratic state.

That this nuanced transposition occurred received further evidence from a ruling given two decades later, in the first Neiman case following the disqualification of Kach,\textsuperscript{47} when Justice Ben-Porat explicitly argued that the Yardor ruling did not argue that the CEC has the right to disqualify a party that wishes to undermine democracy “since this question was never posed before them”.\textsuperscript{48} We find, then, that the seminal text that defined Israel's “defensive democracy” was not about defending democracy at all, but about defending Israel's Jewish identity.

It is important here that the term used is defensive \textit{democracy}, as this term links the idea of democracy itself to the preservation of the nation. It weakens the place of other, liberal links attached to democracy in the ideational network, and thus weakens the idea of democracy itself in relation to Jewish identity. Indeed, the concept has entered the Israeli ideational network and attained the status of common knowledge. It is even taught in the education system as one of the characteristics of democracy (e.g. Eden, Ashkenazi, and Alpherson 2001, which served as the main textbook for high-school level civics education for over a decade). The transposition made by Zussman, meanwhile, has been expanded subsequently to more explicitly include threats against the values of the state as legitimate cause of “defensive actions” as well (Horowitz and Lissak 1989), thus demonstrating the process of slow ideational change over time: first the idea was institutionalized within the system, and subsequently, it could linked with new concepts which may have been

\textsuperscript{47} EA 2/84 Neiman vs. the Central Elections Committee for the 11\textsuperscript{th} Knesset (1984).

\textsuperscript{48} See below, chapter 5.
unpalatable under the previous configuration. The concept also featured prominently in
the debates surrounding the legislation of clause 7a of Basic Law: the Knesset, and the
clause itself is often cited as a key mechanism of Israel’s defensive democracy. Thus, for
example, while discussing the pros and cons of defensive democracy as a means for a
democracy to protect its regime, Eden, Ashkenazi and Alpherson (2001) cite clause 7a
without so much as a mention of how this clause exceeds that limited definition and
espouses instead the expanded definition given it by Zussman.

Democracy as an idea, then, entered the Israeli ideational network as much as a tool,
as it did as a value. Specifically, it was a value when implemented within the Jewish
community, and a tool when applied to the population as a whole. It was valuable for
maintaining Jewish unity in the pre-state era, and it was important for the image Israel
wished to inculcate within the western bloc it aimed to join. But its deeper principles were
often lost on the founding generation, whose roots were in Eastern European nationalist
circles, not Western liberal ones (Smooha 2002, 490). Indeed, the Sabra leadership that
stood at the forefront of the military arms of the Yishuv and subsequently were excluded
from political leadership positions for over a decade following independence, failed to
develop any coherent view on democracy whatsoever – they were not anti-democratic, but
they also failed to comprehend both the value and the weaknesses of democratic
institutions (Shapiro 1984). This vague attitude towards democracy when applied to the
population as a whole was carried on into the 1970s and 80s, when democratic values were
put in direct contrast with Israel’s Jewish identity by Kahane. While the resolution of that
crisis lay in denying any tension between the two, a more democratically minded
generation already identified the dangers that lay ahead and attempted to pre-empt them
by enshrining liberal democratic values as preponderant to Jewish identity. But this was
too little, too late. By failing to provide an attractive national identity that incorporated democratic values and appeals to a growing portion of Israeli society, the ideational field was left to those who gave a particularistic Jewish identity a more prominent place in the self-identification of the nation, and successfully linked it to ideas of security.

Nevertheless, the process of liberalization that began in the 1960s can be argued to have gained Israel, by the mid-1980s, the status of a minimally perfect democracy, and despite the retrenchment that has taken place since, Israel is still arguably within the boundaries of this definition.\(^49\)

Finally, the idea of “racism” is important to understand Israelis’ conception of democracy. Due to the central role of anti-Semitism in the ethos of Israeli society, racism is perceived by many as anathema to the ideals of Zionism.\(^50\) This, however, does not lead to the rejection of discrimination of non-Jews per se, but rather to rejection of such discrimination as indicative of racism (Herzog, Leikin, and Sharon 2008). The idea itself went through a trajectory which combines the trajectories of the two above ideas. It was virtually non-existent in the first decades of Israel. Racism was generally equated with anti-Semitism and the notion of a racist Jew was almost paradoxical. When the term was used at all in public debate, it was to describe the Arab hatred of Jews as irrational and primordial, never to describe the enmity of Jews to Arabs. In the 1980s, along with the rise of explicit Jewish identity ideas and liberal democratic values, racism as an idea also became

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\(^{49}\) But see Yiftachel (2006) for an opposing assessment of Israel’s attainment of a similar definition of democracy. It must also be noted that this discussion largely ignores the large disenfranchised Palestinian population under Israeli control in the occupied territories.

\(^{50}\) The normative rejection of racism, of course, is also true of most democratic nations today, but the memory of the Holocaust gives this rejection a uniquely particularistic flavour in Israel. Additionally, it should be noted that normative rejection of discrimination is not necessarily true for parts of the religious public, who view the superiority of Jews over the “goyim” (gentiles) as ordained by God.
commonplace in the ideational network. It was used by both left- and right-wing leaders, and most often ascribed to Meir Kahane. It was thus used as a means for the right to distance themselves from Kahane’s more extreme brand of particularism, and at the same time place themselves on the side of democracy, indicating its continued strength within the network, and the short-term damage Kanahe was doing to the idea of Jewish identity. Racism was the third grounds for disqualification from running in the elections set in clause 7a of the Basic Law: The Knesset, explicitly designed to remove Kahane from future elections rosters. However, as democracy began to take a back seat to Jewish identity within the public ideational network, the idea of racism – the tool democracy wielded to rein in nationalist ideas – also began to lose its place (Herzog, Leikin, and Sharon 2008). Discrimination against Arabs is still acknowledged, but it is always carefully phrased in terms of potential threats to security on the one hand (Weinblum 2015), or, ironically, in republican terms of military service (i.e., that the Arab citizens do not share the burden of military service, and can therefore not share in the benefits of full equal rights either), on the other (Peled 1993).

51 In Hebrew “nationalist” can be translated in two ways: “leumi”, which is a positive sense of national identity – the Likud identifies itself as a “nationalist party”, i.e. mifgaga leumit; and “leumani”, which is a negative, extreme and violent form of nationalism. The very existence of the two terms, of course, was a result of the need to justify the promotion of nationalist pride among a population still reeling from the ravages of German nationalism. The two terms enable the creation of a logic of equivalence that pits Jewish nationalism against Nazi nationalism, and allows the former to dissociate itself from the latter.

52 Recently the concept of “Apartheid” also entered the ideational network, possibly through the international Palestinian ideational network, although it is applied within the Israeli network to the Occupied Territories only. In fact, the equal treatment of Arab citizens of Israel is sometimes used by advocates of Israel as proof that Israel is not an Apartheid-style regime (see, e.g. Goldstone 2011; Gerstenfeld 2013). It is interesting to note that, as in the case of racism, much of the apologetics on the issue deal with the fine details of the original phenomenon the concept described, and showing why Israel is not an exact replica of that phenomenon, rather than addressing the abstract significance thereof.

53 Sometimes as “the demographic threat” – see the passage from Netanyahu’s speech, supra note 13.
SECURITY

As the paragraph from the Declaration of Independence quoted earlier points out, Israel was formed in the midst of ferocious violence between the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine. This violence was preceded by a long period of tension punctuated by bursts of fighting and atrocities, which have quashed any attempts at building trust between the two sides and cultivated a perception of mythical animosity within the younger generations who grew up in this atmosphere (Eyal 2005). It was hardly surprising, then, that the security of the state and its Jewish population was of paramount importance during its formative years of institution building. On May 19, 1948, within a week of the declaration of independence, the Provisional Council declared a state of emergency, based on the authority granted to the government in the Law and Administration Ordinance, which also left in its place most of the draconian laws enforced by the British during their mandate on Palestine; most importantly for us, it did not repeal the majority of the Defense (Emergency) Regulations instated in 1945, which gave the government sweeping authorities over the freedoms and rights of any inhabitant (Mizock 2001). It is these regulations that gave the government the authority to instate martial law over the entire territory (putatively, over the Arab citizens effectively) in 1950.

While objections to the regulations were regularly voiced in the Knesset from both left and right, they were never repealed, although they were amended several times. Menachem Begin and his Herut party objected to the regulations on the grounds that they were not passed by the Israeli sovereign but rather by a foreign occupier, and demanded a new law be passed by the Knesset reaffirming these authorities. He did not, however, oppose the content of the regulations on principal, although Herut did often complain that the government was taking liberties with these authorities for partisan purposes. On the
left, in both Mapam (The United Workers Party) and ICP (the Israeli Communist Party), the opposition to the regulations had more to do with the discriminatory manner in which they were applied than their legal basis. The disagreement between the two parts of the opposition allowed Mapai to play them against one another and prevent any new legislation from passing. The state of emergency itself was rarely challenged, and has been ratified periodically by the Knesset even since.

Despite continued tensions at the border, hostilities quickly settled into a status quo of small scale attacks across the border. Within the elder leadership of Mapai, security was seen as the expertise of Ben-Gurion, who also enjoyed the revering support of the younger, Sabra generation. Security issues were a weakness of the remainder of the party leadership, and as their political clout increased and they began to nudge Ben-Gurion out of his domineering place in the party, they also strove to decrease the importance of security in the national agenda – a job made easier by the increasing public disenchantment, particularly within the bureaucratic elite, with the socialist economic policies enacted by Ben-Gurion (Shapiro 1984).

When Ben-Gurion was replaced by Levi Eshkol in 1963, the move to further devalue security concerns within Israel was further strengthened, leading to the abolition of military rule in 1966, and a general strengthening of the relative value of rule of law over security considerations (Hofnung 1996, 296). Yet belligerent pressures from the “Mapai youth” – now well into their forties and rapidly replacing the pre-state era leadership – continued with regards to foreign policy. In 1967, with Israel’s neighbours amassing forces at the borders, Eshkol gave in to a plan of a surprise attack. This plan proved a staggering success, as Israel’s opponents succumbed within six days, and Israel found the territories
under its control have quadrupled, to include the Sinai peninsula, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and West Bank.54

The victory was followed by a period of euphoria and a sense of invincibility that enveloped the Jewish Israeli population. The accompanying economic boom that followed the war added to the sense of security of many Israelis, and the ever present sense of danger rescinded. This euphoria, however, was shattered with the concerted attack on Israel on Yom Kippur of 1973. While Israel’s forces ultimately succeeded in pushing back the attack, the failure of the leadership to foresee it despite clear signs – what has been since called “the conception” that the Arab states will never dare attack Israel – had the counterintuitive result of further reducing the public emphasis on security within the public debate. Israel has given up on both its dreams of a peaceful existence, and its new messianic dreams of conquest.55 Instead, it turned inwards to nurse its wounds. Israel’s belated post-revolutionary era has begun (Almog 2004; Herzog, Leikin, and Sharon 2008; Shapiro 1984).

Between 1974 and 1982, for example, all 204 new emergency regulations enacted dealt with economic matters, rather than security issues (Mizock 2001, 227). Similarly, the public began to scrutinize the military establishment and severely limited its previous autonomy; the automatic symbolic capital enjoyed by military leaders began to erode (Y. Levy 2010). As economic liberalization began to pick up, the aspirations of Israeli elites transferred from military to entrepreneurial leadership. This process within civilian society

54 A long-term occupation of at least some of these territories was not a completely surprising development for the IDF, which was planning for it as early as 1963 (Z. Inbar 2002).

55 The latter dream, however, was never quite given up on, at least within some portion of the population (Pedahzur 2012).
triggered a shift in the military that would culminate, some decades hence, in a re-militarization of the social debate and a strong alliance with once peripheral forces in Israeli society whose allegiance lies more with a restrictive Jewish identity than with democratic values (Y. Levy 2010).

However, once Israel’s attention was again focused inwards, the idea of security did not fade from view. Instead, it was again focused on the perceived threat posed by the Arab minority. This perceived threat itself changed, however. Instead of viewing the Arab citizens as a potential fifth column in the case of military attack, it has shifted within the ideational network to focus on the “demographic threat” posed by the Arab population’s rapid growth rate, particularly within peripheral areas in the north. Concurrently, the policy solutions shifted from means of control to reasserting Jewish sovereignty by what was overtly referred to as “Jewification of the Galilee” (Koren 1994).

As this revival of the public debate on Israel’s Arab citizens as a potential threat began to take shape in the form of land expropriations, it roused the younger generation of the Arab population to action. In 1976 the first Land Day protests erupted. These demonstrations, long hyped by Hebrew media as a danger and prepared for by the security forces as a threat, quickly did devolve into fierce violence. Six Arab citizens were killed in the riots which only grew stronger as word of the deaths spread, and dozens on both sides were injured (Koren 1994).

But it is here that we can see the change that has gone over Israel in those years, and indeed, the power of democracy within the ideational network at the time. Rather than causing a downward spiral in the relationship between Israel and its Arab minority, the 1976 Land Day events were a turning point in this relationship, marking the beginning of a
new spurt of liberalization of the institutions controlling them, and the first few (arduous) steps towards integrating Arab society into Israeli society as a whole (Herzog, Leikin, and Sharon 2008). This process, which began under the first Rabin government, would peak under his second Government, sworn in in 1992.

The 1976 Land Day events are also an important parallel to the October 2000 events. The latter saw 13 Arab citizens killed at the hands of police forces attempting to repress demonstrations that began in the Galilee simultaneously with the beginning of the second Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza (see chapter 7). Despite the damning findings of the Or Committee established shortly after these events to investigate them, which identified rampant discrimination against the Arab minority in Israel, the vastly different ideational field into which this report was issued prevented it from having any significant influence, and the October 2000 events failed to stop the process of retrenchment in Arab minority rights that began in the mid 1990s, and continues to this day.

But while the idea of security was demoted in the public debate on internal policies, its ideational transformation in the aftermath of the 1973 war held on, and it was ready to combine with a reinvigorated idea of Jewish identity as the latter made its way to equal status with the state’s commitment to democracy. As security was reinterpreted not as physical security, but rather as the security of the national identity, the dangers of the “defensive democracy” model soon became apparent. That the “demographic threat” is equivalent to physical annihilation became common place and uncontroversial (see, e.g. Korn 2002; Horowitz and Lissak 1989), and this lent more strength to arguments in favour of the abrogation of democratic rights for reasons of “security” (Weinblum 2015).
Writing in the late 1970s, Ian Lustick described the failure of the Arab minority in Israel to form a coherent identity by noting that in the state’s first 30 years, they have “not succeeded in forming an independent Arab political party which could appeal to the communal sentiments of the minority and exert itself on behalf of Arab rights and Arab opinion in Israel;[...] no significant independent Arab social, economic, cultural, or professional organizations have been formed; there are no independent Arab newspapers; no Arab leaders of national stature have emerged; no Israeli-Arab terrorist organizations have crystallized; and there have been only scattered instances of protests or demonstrations” (Lustick 1980, 4). But Lustick’s seminal work was published on the very verge of an upheaval in this very relationship between Israel and its Arab minority.

By the mid-1980s the picture Lustick described has transformed completely: in 1984 Mohammed Miari was voted into the Knesset on an independent Arab party’s ticket (albeit in a joint list with Mati Peled’s Alternativa party), and was later joined by Abdulwahad Darawshe who split from the Labour party to form the Democratic Arab Party in 1988; In 1983, Israel’s first privately owned Arab newspaper, A-Sinara began publication, which was joined by Kul-al-Arab before the end of the decade; And a growing number of Arab civil society organizations have formed since the beginning of the 1980s (although they remain underrepresented among Israeli civil society as a whole; Zidan and Ghanem 2000, 10).

Yet while the Arab minority in Israel gradually increased its participation in Israeli political and social life since the publication of Lustick’s Arabs in the Jewish State, and increasingly allowed itself to challenge Israel’s Jewish identity, those aspects listed by Lustick which challenge security have never manifested within Israel’s Arab society, even
as violence rose across the Green Line. No terrorist organization has developed within Israel's Arab society, nor even has there been a significant recruitment of Arab Israeli citizens to Palestinian resistance organizations;\textsuperscript{56} and Arab protests and demonstrations remain infrequent and, with the exception of the October 2000 protests, of small scale.

This non-development could be explained in two, non-exclusive ways: either as a true commitment of the Arab minority in Israel to democracy and coexistence, coupled with faith in the possibility of effecting change through Israel's democratic institutions; or it could be the result of Israel's continued control regime, which either directly or indirectly disincentivizes Arab citizens of Israel from attempting to effect political change through the use of violence. The two explanations are in no way mutually exclusive – with growing faith in the efficacy of Israeli democracy as a means for effecting change, Israel's control regime could concurrently work to dissuade radical groups within Israel's Arab minority from attempting change through violence.

Thus, despite the lack of violence perpetrated by the Arab minority in Israel, they were perceived as an ideational threat which complements the threat of external violence from the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and from neighbouring Arab countries. This ideational process was bolstered by societal processes that have shifted the core of the military's human resources from the old elite to the peripheries, most importantly to the settler society, which has an interest in further blurring the line between Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinians in the occupied territories, to the detriment of the former (Y. Levy 2007).

\textsuperscript{56} “Lone wolf” attacks by Arab citizens of Israel, however, have been known to happen.
As we have seen, the three ideas – democracy, Jewish identity, and security – have held a prominent place in public thought on the relationship between Israel and its Arab minority throughout Israel’s history. It is important to remember, however, that this is far from the limit of their usefulness in understanding policy making in Israel. Examples are rife throughout Israel’s history. Khanin and Filk (1999), for example, describe the rhetoric surrounding the repression of the sailors’ strike in 1951 as composed of three components: criticism of the economic damage caused by the strike; a nationalist-Zionist component, which combined accusations of betrayal while implying the strike threatens the physical security of Jews in Israel and abroad;\(^5\) and a democratic component, arguing the strike is an attack on democratic values, because it ignores the majority decision of the government and the Histadrut, the Mapai controlled union. The ideational network surrounding the idea of security was further invoked in this case when Ben-Gurion decided to draft the leaders of the strike for two-years of military service.

However, these ideas have changed both in their meaning and in their relative position and strength within the ideational network, and these changes are influenced by all the different arenas within which these ideas operate and interact. While the overall stability of the network explains Israel’s rare ability to maintain its stable institutional framework as an ethnic democracy in a challenging environment (Kanengisser 2014), the internal changes within it explain the small, gradual and adaptive second order changes that can be seen nonetheless within this broad framework.

\(^5\) Ben-Gurion went so far as to even chastise the leaders of the strike for turning to “Nazi Berlin” for assistance. This, at the very same time that Israel was already engaged in reparation talks with the German government. The sailors were also accused of working in the interest of a “foreign power”. 
THE INSTITUTION OF ETHNIC DEMOCRACY

According to every comparative classification of state regimes, Israel is and always has been a democracy. Freedom House has labelled Israel as “free” since its first year (albeit with minor fluctuations in both the political rights and the civil liberties dimensions), and the Polity IV project for political regime characteristics and transitions similarly indicates Israel has been a stable democracy since its inception. Israel’s status is similarly taken for granted to be democratic by many scholars when comparing democracies (e.g., Lijphart 1999). Indeed, measured through easily comparable procedural and legal indicators, Israel certainly fits most realistic definitions of democracy. However, scholars focusing on Israel in particular have found the situation to be less clear cut, with opinions varying from unwavering adherence to the democratic label (Gavison 1999), through more qualified terms such as “ethnic democracy” (Smooha 2002), “control regime” (Lustick 1980), and all the way to Yiftachel’s (2006) “ethnocracy”, which strips Israel of its democratic credentials altogether in light of its endemic discrimination against its Arab minority (Dowty 1999).

The debate is far from a parochial one, for Israel shares some critical aspects of its regime with several other countries, particularly in Eastern Europe: a large ethno-national minority group as well as an exclusive majority ethnic nationalism (Smooha 1997; Smooha 2002; Peled 2014; Haklai 2013). Such states could face similar criticism or pressures if Israel’s democracy is found wanting. Its status as a stable borderline case of a minimally perfect democracy can serve as a useful analytical comparator for many young democracies and assist in our understanding of their internal dynamics.

However, while the semantic debate is not without its uses for analytical purposes, it still is merely a semantic debate, which has more to do with deciding where to put the line between “democracy” and “not-democracy” (or “quasi-democracy”), than it has with actually understanding the political system within the state (Dowty 1999; Peled 2014). The participants in this debate are not, after all, disputing the facts of the Israeli regime, but how they should be interpreted vis-à-vis the idea of democracy. An example of this can be seen in Peled and Navot’s (2005) revisiting of ethnic democracy, in which they divide Israel’s history into four separate regime periods. But the differences between each regime can be seen as minute, and failing to justify such an elaborate description.

Where Peled and Navot identify four different periods, I see (and indeed, so does Peled himself, in subsequent publications, e.g. Peled 2014) a single process of change within a single system of ethnic democracy, where each event, rather than acting as a watershed moment, represents a sub-type within this label. In broad terms, this process describing the history of Israel’s relationship with its minority Arab group can be divided into two legs – a slow process of equalization from independence to the mid 1990s, and a process of (partial) retrenchment of this equalization, starting around the turn of the century (Klein 2010). However, it would be wrong to view either period as linear or unidirectional. Elements of both liberalization and retrenchment can be seen in both, as the

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59 These periods correspond also to broader political changes in Israel, and therefore tend to crop up in other political periodizations of Israel, e.g. Peleg (2014), as do they in the current essay.

60 Note that the specific label chosen is inconsequential. The argument is that changes in Israel’s regime have never been substantial enough to warrant a distinction into different regime periods, regardless of how we define these regimes.

61 The Polity IV State Fragility Index, maintained by the Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm), shows Israel’s instability rising from low to medium between 1998 and 2009. The rise is caused by an increase in the security legitimacy score from 1 (“no repression”) to 3 (out of a total of 5, where 5 is “systemic, collective repression”). Israel’s political legitimacy score throughout the period is at the maximum of 3 (least legitimate) throughout the period (Marshall and Cole 2010).
various decision-makers struggled with the tension between Israel’s Jewish identity and its democratic values in an environment of security threats.

Ethnic democracy is defined as an electorally democratic regime in which a minority population enjoys diminished civil rights in comparison with the majority population, and rule of law is at times eschewed to counteract what is perceived as a threat posed by the minority (Smooha 2002). The continued institutional discrimination of Arab citizens of Israel (Kretzmer 1990), at the same time that they enjoy many of the rights associated with liberal democracy, including representation in parliament and in the judiciary, and a slew of personal freedoms (especially after the abolition of the military regime) makes Israel the archetypical case for an ethnic democracy. It is worth noting that in Smooha’s earlier formulations, the perceived threat posed by the minority was not part of the ethnic democratic model, and even seen as a “complication” of the Israeli case (Smooha 1997, 208). I concur with his subsequent inclusion of a real or perceived threat as a necessary part of the model, and further argue that it is the ability to rely on real or imagined security considerations which allows ethnic democracies to keep the balance between their two pillars of democracy and identity (Peled 2014). For example, security considerations are the direct or indirect basis for many of the policies which covertly discriminate against Arab citizens in Israel (Kretzmer 1990, chap. 6).

Smooha further argued that this regime type is characterized by its stability (in contrast with herrenvolk democracy), however Peled (2014) persuasively argues that this cannot be seen as inherently part of the model, but rather that the model is applicable to a number of cases that have proven less stable than Israel. This, then, opens the question of what explains the relative stability of Israel, as opposed to some other cases. Far from being
archetypical, the stability of Israel’s ethnic democratic model requires explanation. Finding this explanation can also prove useful in analyzing other cases of ethnic democracy to determine their longevity.

The fluctuations of Israel’s ethnic democracy’s internal structure indicate one solution to this mystery: that an internal adaptive mechanism successfully applies small-scale changes to the institutions of the regime to counteract any threats to its stability. This mechanism, I propose, is the ideational network that upholds the Israeli regime, and prevents radical changes in either direction.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter provided an overview of each of the three central nodes in the ideational network that underpins ethnic democracy in Israel, and showed how they have shifted through time, and how these changes resulted in minor changes within the institution of ethnic democracy itself. The three ideas of democracy, Jewish identity and security were presented as independent, but it is impossible to define any of the three within the Israeli context without reference to the other two.

The three ideas are inextricably intertwined within the ideational network, but their relationships are fluid and pliable. Changes to the network are effected by pressures emanating from three sources: external events such as wars and financial crises that weaken certain links within the network; ideational innovations entering the network either through organic evolution or from adjacent networks such as the academy and foreign countries; and political pressures caused by frictions of the institution of ethnic democracy with other institutions and interests. As shown above, the ideas of democracy, Jewish identity and security were influenced by changes in the level of military threat
facing Israel, by change in the way the international community defined democratic principles, as well as by electoral pressures generated by the particularities of Israel’s electoral system.

These changes, however, were sometimes counterintuitive, and almost never immediate. As a new pressure works its way through the parallel constraints satisfaction network, the results can sometimes be unpredictable. As in the case of the 1976 Land Day and the October 2000 riots, similar pressures can lead to radically different results due to the ideational context they take place in. And the time required for these results to emerge may further confound the observer of the development of ethnic democracy in Israel.

Moreover, some of the changes described cannot be explained by reference to external factors of any sort. They are organic mutations in ideas that have found a receptive audience among Israeli elites and the public at large. Justice Zussman’s innovative “defensive democracy”, for example, may have borrowed from external sources, but it was its particular and peculiar phrasing, and the particular ideational network into which it was deployed, that allowed it to become so central to Israeli discourse.

The following chapters will examine in depth four significant events in the development of this ideational network. They will observe how different pressures influenced or failed to influence it, how organically evolved innovations found receptive niches within the ideational network, and also how these changes instigated as well as limited changes in the institution of ethnic democracy.
4: 1966, Democracy Over Security

I wonder if a historian – although it doesn’t have to be an historian – were to ask why they did not reach a new phrasing, a new change, maybe he would conclude that we all felt that we were likely to get entangled in the phrasing no less than we are in the present phrasing.

- PM Levy Eshkol in the Knesset, 1963

Immediately after the Declaration of Independence was issued and while the nascent Israel’s first and worst\(^\text{62}\) war was still being waged, Israel declared martial law over all Arab villages and cities under its sovereignty, based on the British Mandate’s Defense (Emergency) Regulations, which were originally designed to quell Jewish and Arab resistance in Palestine.\(^\text{63}\) The martial law was made possible by the declaration of a state of emergency – a declaration that has been periodically renewed since, and is still in effect today. After the ceasefire, this martial law was converted into the military government,

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\(^{62}\) 6,000 Jews were killed throughout this war, of which some 2,400 were non-combatants. This number is not merely the largest absolute number of casualties in any of Israel’s wars, but given that Israel’s entire Jewish population at the time numbered approximately 600,000, the number represents a full percent of this population. The number of Arab casualties has been estimated between 8,000 and 17,000, of which Palestinian Arabs are between 3,000 and 13,000. The latter, a figure given by Arraf al-Arraf, puts the ratio of casualties among the Palestinian population on par with that of the Jewish population, at approximately one percent (Harichbi 1965).

\(^{63}\) The regulations were much reviled by the Jewish yishuv, and originally adopted as an interim measure, pending their replacement with more appropriate laws suitable for a democratic country. The State did revoke immediately those clauses that limited Jewish immigration into Israel and several other clauses directly targeting Jewish settlement of Palestine.
organized within the Defense Ministry, and officially instructed to maintain law and order and prevent plundering in the regions under its control (Linn 1999, 122).

This military government became gradually more controversial with time, as different parties raised increasing concerns regarding the moral justification, practical need, and political impact of this policy. Eventually, despite constant parliamentary wrangling over the military government, it was dissolved, as it was created, by prime ministerial fiat.

This chapter will follow the development of the institution of military government between 1949 and 1966, and the ideational impetus for its ultimate removal. An intra-elite battle over the meaning of Jewish identity in Israel was responsible for the lasting power of this policy despite many attacks on it, and ultimately accounts for the change in policy with the rise to power of Prime Minister Levy Eshkol. Nonetheless, the debate surrounding the policy focused primarily on the ideas of democracy and security, and supporters and opponents of the military government attempted to justify or reject the policy in terms of its contribution to the security of the State of Israel, or its impact on its democratic character.

The argument that changes in the security situation were directly responsible to the abolition of the military government is difficult to reconcile with the reality that little change can be observed once the violence from infiltrators has substantially receded in the late 1950s (see Figure 1). The fact that less than a year after Israel’s abolition of the military government it was again faced with a coordinated attack by its neighbours in the 1967 war attests to the continued objective security threat from the outside throughout the
period. Internally, violence by Arab citizens of Israel was rare throughout the period. The explanation for the timing of the decision, therefore, must be sought out elsewhere.

![Casualties from Palestinian Terror, 1949-1966](image)

**Figure 1:** Casualties from Palestinian attacks, 1949-1966. The figures include both civilian and military casualties of terror activity, primarily by cross-border infiltrators. (Sources: The Jewish Virtual Library; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Throughout this debate, the idea of Jewish identity was mostly abstracted out of the discussion, and references to it were made only indirectly, through other ideas that linked it to the other two central nodes of the ideational network. Yet, as I show below, it is impossible to understand the failure of the opponents of this policy, both outside Mapai and within it, to bring it down even as Mapai remained solitary in its support of it, without understanding the diverging conceptualization of these opponents with regard to the Jewish identity of the state.
THE IDEATIONAL FIELD

BEN-GURION’S ISOLATIONISM AND THE INTEGRATIONIST CAMP

In 1963, David Ben-Gurion quit from his post as Prime Minister of Israel, just under a decade after his previous resignation in 1954, when he was replaced by Moshe Sharett.64 But in 1954 Ben-Gurion was explicitly taking some time off to act as a role-model and re-engage Israel’s youth with his vision of “halutziut” (pioneering) by moving to a newly formed Kibbutz in a remote location, not before he made sure that key positions in the government were occupied by his appointees,65 and left the new government with a detailed, three-year plan to improve Israel’s security (Shlaim 1983). In 1963, however, he was bitter and disillusioned with his own party.

Repercussions of the Lavon Affair, a botched sabotage attempt in Egypt, had plagued the Israeli government since it exploded (secretly, under a heavy veil of censorship) in 1955, during Ben-Gurion’s vacation. In 1960 the government formed a ministerial committee to investigate the affair and exonerated disgraced Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon of any involvement in it. But Ben-Gurion would not accept such a decision from a political committee, and demanded a judicial committee be formed. Ben-Gurion argued that in its ministerial form, the committee was a breach of the separation of powers and of the rule of law, and was willing to stake his reputation on this demand. For him, this breach of the public trust was a blow to the carefully cultivated mamlakhtiyut – the Jewish republicanism (Kedar 2002; 2009) – which was at the core of his philosophy of state. His

64 Ben-Gurion was a serial resigner, who scarcely passed two years as Prime Minister without resigning for one reason or another. However, with the exception of 1954 and 1963, his intention was always to reform the government shortly afterward. His resignation in 1961, two years into the 4th Knesset, was similar in nature, but he failed to form a new government, and was forced to go to elections.

65 Although Mapai’s choice of his successor as PM was opposed by Ben-Gurion.
fellow party-members, however, did not view the affair as quite as abhorrent as Ben-Gurion did.

Yet it would be wrong to presume that Ben-Gurion’s motivations were pure. He had a long-standing ideological dispute with Lavon, whose integrationist stance on the issue of Arab-Jewish relations was diametrically opposed to that of Ben-Gurion. The latter sought to segregate and isolate the Arab citizens of Israel as a way to protect Israel’s Jewish identity, whereas Lavon was more interested in liberalizing Israel’s democratic character, and also believed that the continued discrimination of Israel’s Arab minority created security concerns far worse than the threat posed by the Arabs without this discrimination. In other words, Lavon’s worldview offered a realignment of democracy and security that threatened the structure of ethnic democracy by virtue of substantially reducing the role of Jewish identity in the considerations of policy making. As Minister of Defence under Sharrett, Lavon also attempted to conscript Arab citizens as a way to increase their integration in Israeli society and reduce inter-ethnic suspicions. The move appeared to be a success, with thousands of Arab youth reporting for duty. But its very success caused consternation among other leaders in the party. Lavon’s term in office was short, however, and as soon as we was dismissed following the Lavon Affair, with Ben-Gurion appointed in his stead, the policy was reversed, and the Arab recruits were discharged (Kafkafi 2009, 357).67

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66 In fact, Ben-Gurion was opposed to giving the Arab residents citizenship in the first place, claiming “these Arabs should not be living here,” and that civil rights for the Arabs “undermine our moral right to this country” (quoted in Kafkafi 2009, 353)

67 Lavon was also one of the few within Mapai who called for the dissolution of the military government already in the early 1950s (Kafkafi 2009, 357).
This last battle of Ben-Gurion is an important reminder that none of the actors, within Mapai and without it, can claim to be single-mindedly devoted to democratic values while others espouse other values. Perceiving ideas as a network emphasizes that each idea is defined by the multitude of ideas around it, and different leaders may view different links within that network as more powerful than others. Democracy, therefore, can be interpreted in different ways, even while the general perimeter is agreed upon. The way leaders balanced democratic values with other values, such as Israel's Jewish identity and security concerns, was both a result of these different interpretations, and a powerful factor in how they were constructed and evolved – and how they interpreted the events surrounding them.

Ben-Gurion’s commitment to democracy was hopelessly entangled in his republican ideals (Kedar 2009). Once Arab residents were granted citizenship, Ben-Gurion adhered to the view that they are equal in all ways to Israel's Jewish citizens. Yet he could not see them as ever fulfilling the ultimate role of the citizen as part of the good society, because they could not identify with the national identity of the Jews. Thus he exclaimed in 1937 that “the Zionist character of the state will be secured in as much as the government of the state will be based primarily on the social forces who identify their own interests with the historical principles of the nation” (cited in Kedar 2009, 144). His democracy, then, is ultimately reserved for the Jews of Israel alone, for only they can truly take part in it.68 He

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68 As in other democratic-republican ideologies (Peled 2014, 3), Ben-Gurion viewed it as possible for the Palestinian Arabs to become part of the Jewish nation, in much the same way that a foreigner might become French by espousing the French culture. However, espousing the Jewish culture includes converting one’s religion. Ben-Gurion did entertain the possibility of mass conversion of Arabs to Judaism, but after “several failures” to promote this, ruled it out as impractical for the time being, “although failure does not prove it is impossible,” as he wrote in response to Aryeh Kimkhi’s suggestions of a similar vein (ISA C 2263/10, September 30, 1954). Another indication of this part of Ben-Gurion’s view can be seen in his rejection of a distinction already evolving between Jewish and Israeli – a distinction which will play a growing role as we will see in
agreed with Lavon that explicitly excluding Israel’s Arab minority from the state’s
democratic institutions would be detrimental to Israel’s interests. Just as he knew that an
explicit policy of deportation during the 1948-9 war will be unacceptable to the world, and
therefore created the appearance that what activities took place were a part of continued
fighting (Morris 1987), so he knew that the international community will not accept an
Israeli democracy that explicitly excluded the Arab population that remained within Israel.
Ben-Gurion’s much cited statement that “our future depends not on what the gentiles will
say but on what the Jews will do,” in that sense, is false: Ben-Gurion was keenly aware of
the need to maintain the legitimacy of the State of Israel, and its democratic character was a
key component in the plan to do so. His reliance on security, therefore, was an expedient
third pillar that balanced the two (Peled 1992).

Thus, for example, in a meeting of the Mapai secretariat on the Arab minority
problem, Ben-Gurion begins his speech by identifying “the correct approach to the
problem”:

We must approach this problem from two aspects that bear a contradiction,
but a contradiction that cannot be avoided: one aspect is the character of the
state. The character that this state must have in the eyes of the world, that is
from the principle of equal rights and democracy in the life of the individual
within it; the second aspect – from the state’s security.70

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69 This is the concluding sentence of a speech given by Defense Minister Ben-Gurion on April 27, 1955, during an
IDF parade. The speech was reprinted in full in Davar, April 28, 1955 (1, 3).

70 ISA C 2263/16, February 12, 1960.
Democracy for Ben-Gurion is not a sham, but in as much as it applies to the Arab minority, it need only extend as far as is needed to maintain the image of a liberal democracy in the eyes of the international community, so as to safeguard its republican ideals. A similar position was voiced by Uri Lubrani, Ben-Gurion's Arab Affairs Advisor. In a 1961 meeting of the Mapai Arab Affairs Committee, the members (including a representative of the military government) discussed the most expedient arrangement to corner the Arab vote in the upcoming elections. The debate revolved primarily around the number of Arab Mapai-affiliated lists that should run in the elections. To support his position in favour of presenting three, rather than two, affiliated lists (a position also shared by the representative of the military government), Lubrani warns that “Mapai until now had a monopoly in the Arab field on affiliated Arab lists. Every attempt to form an independent list opposing Mapai was thwarted. But if, God forbid, an independent Arab list opposing Mapai should form – we lose this monopoly, and then begins a competition of liberalisms and winning the minds of Arab villages.”

Here Lubrani expresses not just a sense of how democracy for the Arabs was at the time limited to a choice between essentially identical options of clientalist politics, but also the fear that real democracy means a liberal one. A real democracy, then, would pose a threat not merely to the continued hegemony of Mapai, but to the Zionist endeavour in its entirety, in as much as it demands that the sovereign body be the Jewish people, and not a civic conception of the citizenry. Lubrani’s phrasing is a rare candid look at the fear that liberalization – strengthening the democratic aspects of Israel's institutions over their Jewish identity.

71 LPA 2-7-1960-116, Minutes of the Arab Affairs Committee meeting, May 5, 1961, emphasis added.
components – may spiral out of control and topple the ethnic democratic structure in its entirety.

The contours of the internal debate in Mapai on integration versus segregation, nevertheless, revolved largely on the point of how much must Israel do to outwardly appear liberal while safeguarding its security. Pinhas Lavon, a prominent integrationist, was not averse to employing control tactics so long as these could be democratically justified (Kafkafi 2009, 356–357). It is in this vein that Israel, under Ben-Gurion, developed the regime that Ian Lustick (1980) labeled a “control regime”, wherein the Arab minority enjoyed nominal equal rights, but suffered under severe limitations in the name of security, and was constantly seen as a threat. It is important to note what sort of threat the Arab minority appeared to present: they were seen as a physical threat, a potential fifth column that may rise up against Israel and the Jews in case of a possible attack by Arab states – an eventuality that was not in itself unlikely, given the belligerent language used by leaders of Arab countries at the time. It is in this light that one may understand the rationale leading Ben-Gurion to assert that the military government would end once the Arab countries no longer show hostility to Israel (Bauml 2002, 141).

The segregationist camp lead by Ben-Gurion therefore saw the views of the Arab citizens of Israel as given by their national identity. The Arab citizens could not be expected to change their minds unless it was as part of a pan-Arab acceptance of Israel. Therefore, their expressed views, their actions, and their beliefs were irrelevant. Short of full conversion to Judaism, Arab individuals could not relinquish their national identity and therefore their presumed commitment to the annihilation of Israel which is sought by the

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72 Which Ben-Gurion has considered at some points, see supra note 66.
Arab states. This is so not because these words and deeds were lies, but because the Arab citizens would not be able to withstand the pressure once the protection afforded by the military government is removed. For as long as hostilities continue, the Military Government is the only thing allowing the Arab citizens to resist their national commitments: “What might be the result of the new campaign [to abolish the military government] in the Knesset, should it succeed? In my opinion: disturbing the security and peace of Israel, and abandoning the majority of Arab Israelis who wish to live in peace and tranquility within the borders of Israel, abandoning them to the agents of Nasser and the rest of Israel’s enemies beyond the borders.”

As a result of this view, Ben-Gurion could only see any implementation of democratic relations with the Arab minority as a sort of clientalism underlined with suspicion. When debating the potential for Arab loyalty to Israel, a minister from Mapam argued that a vast majority of the Arab population voted Mapai, to which Ben-Gurion responded: “I wouldn’t have my children’s safety depend on those [Arabs] who voted for Mapai, nor on those who voted for Mapam.” Israel must provide the Arab population with the best possible services and freedom, so long as they are kept at arm’s length; and it must do so not out of hope that the Arab citizens will gradually become loyal to Israel, but simply because Israel must maintain its democratic image, and will be judged by the international community based on the treatment of its minorities.

Ben-Gurion, like many Zionists, saw the Jewish identity of Israel as itself a measure of security – the Jews, in this perspective, cannot rely on the nations of the world that

73 ISA A 7921/1, February 20, 1963, Ben-Gurion speaking before the Knesset, emphasis added. Nasser is Gamal Abdel Nasser, president of Egypt from 1956 to 1970.

allowed them to be massacred in the heart of Europe. Only Jewish sovereignty guarantees security. This is the ideational link between Jewish identity and security that balanced the central place democracy had to take in the construction of Israeli institutions, allowing Ben-Gurion to prevent liberalization so long as he was in power.

Ben-Gurion held on to these views later in his life as well. In a meeting between him and ICP MK Tawfik Tubi, after the declaration that the military government is to be abolished, Tubi confronted Ben-Gurion with the accusation that he missed an opportunity to create a cooperative relationship between Jews and Arabs: “You may doubt this, you may think it cannot happen, but I tell you this is something that is today in the hands of the state.” Ben-Gurion did not deny his doubts, but rather answered:

We are under siege, and a siege necessitates special actions, and this sometimes damages freedom and the principle of equality, and every country does such deeds... I don’t know if there is still a need for it now. I believe also now [it is necessary]... It hurts equality – maybe. But [on the other hand] the Arabs don’t serve in the military (cited in Osacki-Lazar 2010, 362).

Given this perceived threat, the solutions provided had to do primarily with atomizing Arab society, preventing it from organizing in any effective manner, and keeping the Arab citizens away from border regions where it was feared they may aid invading forces.

During the above-mentioned meeting of the secretariat, Ben-Gurion touted two primary solutions to the problem: encouraging migration of Arab citizens to mixed cities (e.g. Haifa), and encouraging migration of Jews to peripheral areas currently inhabited
mainly by Arabs (a policy titled “Jewification of the Galilee and Negev”). The former was still considered viable in 1970, while the latter has never fully left the agenda of Israeli governments – specifically, a major project of Jewish settlement of the Galilee was carried out in the 1970s and 1980s. Achieving control of Arab regions by promoting Jewish migration to them has been a staple of Zionist policy-making since before the establishment of the State of Israel, and “conquering the desolate wilderness” was a primary goal touted by Ben-Gurion. His definition of “desolate wilderness” (shmama) was broader than many assume. Thus, for example, in a cabinet meeting on the issue of Nazareth in 1957, he again emphasized the need to expand the newly formed Jewish neighbourhood in Nazareth, later to become the independent town of Nazareth Illit, by saying that “this is one of those parts of the Negev that must be settled. Whenever I talk of the Negev, I always add Nazareth, this is a desolate wilderness in the north that must be settled.”

This sentiment was an important part of the ideational network of Jewish political elites at the time, and can be identified in the views of many others in the political elite, inside and outside Mapai. In a meeting with PM Eshkol in 1963, Mapam MK Yaakov Khazan

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75 Notably, Ben-Gurion did not support more integrationist proposals which included encouraging migration of Arabs into wholly Jewish cities, or the creation of Jewish neighbourhoods within Arab cities – both moves supported by Lavon and other integrationists.

76 ISA C 6692/22, Letter from Arab Affairs Advisor Toledano to PMO Director S. Dinitz, August 7, 1970.

77 Encouragement of migration of Arabs into mixed Jewish-Arab populations was discontinued in the 1970s, in what may have been the death of integrationism in Israel for decades to come. Revealing yet another aspect of the ideational change that has taken place, the Qa’adan case brought before the High Court of Justice in the 1990s appealed against the conditions set for lease of state lands in the settlement Katzir, in the Galilee, which effectively barred non-Jews from the settlement. The High Court eventually ruled in favour of Qa’adan, but the ruling was seen as controversial, and there have been several attempts since to legislate around it (HCJ 6698/95, Qa’adan vs. Israel Land Administration and others). This joins with the development of a largely religiously motivated popular movement against intermingling with Arabs and miscegenation in recent years.

78 ISA Minutes of the 7th Government’s Meetings, meeting 80/317, August 18, 1957, p. 31. The Negev, the desert region of Israel, is in Israel’s south. For a full treatment of the formation of Nazareth Illit, see Forman (2006).
proclaimed Israel’s policy in the Arab sector “nonsensical”. “Why do I call it nonsensical? I think our purpose as the state of the Jews is to bring about a situation where as many Arabs as possible are in the home-front, and we’re doing everything possible to keep them on the borders!” Eshkol’s government also viewed the migration of Arab villagers to the mixed cities favourably, as argued by Eshkol’s Arab Affairs Advisor, Rehavam Amir, during a meeting of the Population Dispersal Committee that same year.

But while the integrationists wished to see the Arab citizens mix with Jewish population, Ben-Gurion’s segregationist views instructed that the reality of Jewish sovereignty be made clear by surrounding Arab villages by Jewish towns, in his words - by “making the wilderness bloom”. Only by asserting Jewish presence in Arab regions, through the military government on the one hand and by settling the land on the other, can the majority of the Arabs who have come to terms with Israel stay safe from the malice of those who wish ill on Israel.

SHARETT AND THE QUESTION OF JEWISH IDENTITY

Demands from the opposition to abolish the military government continued throughout its existence, although Mapai’s willingness to entertain changes to it has fluctuated throughout the period. In November 1953, then Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett (who would shortly be announced prime minister after Ben-Gurion’s resignation) wrote in his diary about a presentation given to the government by the head of the military government, Yizhak Shani. He mocks Minister Serlin (from the General Zionists, a centrist, liberal party) for his

79 ISA A 9721/1, meeting of PM Eshkol with Mapam MKs on the military government, October 15, 1963.
80 USA GL 17021/8, November 27, 1963.
81 ISA A 7921/1, 20 February, 1963, Ben-Gurion’s speech before the Knesset.
“self-flagellation, which is all support for abstract principles”, and continues to describe “the naked truth” as recounted by the general, which includes tens of thousands of infiltrators, and the unwillingness of the internally displaced Arabs to accept the lands of their displaced brethren. “They are certain that one day all will return to be as it used to be, and they will then have to answer for what they have done with their brethren’s property.” He concludes the entry by angrily stating that “one must hope that after this lecture, the General Zionists’ demand to end the military government will be stifled” (Sharett 1978, 150–151).

That Sharett, often seen as the polar opposite of Ben-Gurion, so completely adopted Ben-Gurion’s view on the matter at the time, is in itself a significant statement. Indeed, he refrained from touching on the issue as prime minister, and only upon Ben-Gurion’s return to this role did Mapai take its next step towards changing the military government. However, the emphasis placed by Sharett on the demographic aspects of the threat posed by the Arab minority, as opposed to Ben-Gurion’s regular emphasis on the security threat posed by them, highlights the differences in ideational perspectives that directed the two leaders. While Ben-Gurion espoused a vision of Jewish identity as a civic and republican nationalism, Sharett’s idea of the Jewish nation was far more spiritual. Thus it was that he could claim that possibly the greatest threat to the Jewish people was that of liberty:

Almost eight million Jews enjoy a regime of political liberty, civil equality and economic affluence, that Jewish history has never known. This liberty bears within it a grave threat to the existence of the Jewish people, through a process of assimilation, an automatic process, a process that may do and already does great damage to the existence of the Jewish people, by
emptying Jewish life of its content, by mixed marriages, by eroding and blurring Jewish consciousness, by the dissolution of Jews in their environment, in light of the immense pressure of rich cultures, which drop the self-consciousness and the ground of Jewish culture from under the feet of countless Jews... And no other factor can equal in its efficacy of influence the State of Israel. The State of Israel can be the centre, a great centre, of Jewish consciousness, a great leverage of Jewish action, a rich source of Jewish inspiration, and a practical goal for the unification of the Jewish people and its education by unifying it in one country, under one sovereign Jewish rule which protects it from any danger of mixed-marriages and assimilation.82

Sharett’s views were closer, in a sense, to those of Ahad Ha’am’s (Asher Ginzberg) *Spiritual Zionism*, which saw the core of Zionism’s goal as the preservation of Jewish spirituality (Dowty 2000). In another sense, Sharett was a precursor of an ideational development that only became commonplace decades later, seeing the danger posed by the Arab citizens not as a physical danger of violence, but a spiritual danger of Jewish assimilation into its surrounding peoples. It is this view that has prompted Sharett to promote a fairly strong autonomy for the Arab minority in Israel, believing it will serve as a buffer to insulate the Jewish population from the great danger of assimilation into its surrounding cultures. So strong was this autonomy that Moshe Dayan went so far as to call his position one of “bi-nationalism”.83 Like Ben-Gurion, Dayan believed that to be truly

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83 LPA 2-7-1690-116, August 11, 1960, meeting of the Arab Affairs Committee, p. 5.
equal, the Arab population must assimilate fully into the Jewish national identity, and was not wary of the reverse happening.

It was this conception of Jewish identity that has prompted Sharett, by 1963, to support the abolishment of the military government, believing by then that the Jewish spirituality in Israel is sufficiently safe-guarded, and dismissing fears of the Arab minority acting as a “fifth column”. Sharett’s views did not receive much accord in his own time, but parts of his peculiar combination of Jewish identity and security rose again decades later and played a central role in the transformation of Israeli politics, in ways that it is doubtful the mild-mannered moderate would have condoned.

**ABOLISHING THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT**

Early on, Ben-Gurion clarified that the purpose of the military government was to prevent Arab citizens from possibly aiding foreign hostiles to enter Israel and carry out attacks. Therefore, by 1950, the four cities of Lod, Acre, Ashkelon and Jaffa, all in the midst of Jewish population, were removed from under the military government, since the robust Jewish presence surrounding them effectively prevented them from posing a real threat (and possibly, because by virtue of being in the midst of Jewish population, they no longer posed a threat to Jewish sovereignty). The military government remained in effect over Arab populated regions in the north (Galilee), south (Negev) and central border regions (the Triangle). While officially the military government was imposed geographically and not ethnically – a fact Mapai leaders were always quick to emphasize – its administration was

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84 ISA A 7921/1, October 9, 1963, “Our Comrades” forum meeting, pp. 5-6.
such that the limitations it imposed applied only to the Arab residents, who were prohibited from travelling between villages or to central cities without special permits.

Even outside of the military government proper, however, the treatment of Arab citizens was relegated to a specialized unit within each ministry. This practice was criticized by Baruch Yekutiely of the Arab Affairs Advisor's Office for being inefficient and leading to arbitrary discrimination both against and in favour of Arab citizens. He recommended that all “Arab units” within ministries be absorbed into their respective ministries, and Arab citizens receive equal treatment to Jewish citizens, arguing that the perception that the Arab population has unique characteristics that require separate organizational responses is false.\(^8\) His advice was not implemented. Similar views were voiced by many of the Arab Affairs Advisors, who commonly objected to any overt discrimination, claiming such actions are causes for contention among the Arab population, and prevent the development of trust in the Israeli government, therefore being counterproductive to the chief goal of reducing security concerns. That this consistent approach was not adopted by the government is an indicator that security concerns were not the only ones at play.

Concern with crossing a boundary that would undermine security efforts also influenced the utilization of the Emergency Regulations. While technically the military government had access to over a hundred authorities delineated in the Regulations, in effect only five were actually used by the Governors: preventing a person from entering or staying in certain areas (regulation 109); placing a person under police supervision while...

\(^8\) ISA CL 11/17002, March 4, 1954, letter from B. Yekutiely of the Arab Affairs Advisor’s office to the Prime Minister on “the manner of government treatment of the Arab population in Israel".
displacing the person from his or her habitual place of residence (110); administrative arrest (111); curfews (124); and closing down areas and preventing movement to or from them (125).\textsuperscript{86}

As early as 1951, the Arab Affairs Advisor Joshua Palmon proposed that the military government must either be strengthened and streamlined, or abolished altogether. He argued that in fact, the military government has been beneficial for the Arab population, and actually provides them with better services and larger budgets than the Jewish population gets directly from the government. He further claimed that as a result of the military government structure, "there was a possibility of carrying out special operations such as fighting infiltrators, encouraging emigration, directing certain political and economic processes – although not with complete efficiency."\textsuperscript{87} After recommending that the military government be strengthened, he added that if not, it must be abolished so that Israel may at least gain support from this popular decision that will eliminate what is perceived as a discriminatory policy (although, he notes, one that works in the Arabs' favour). He then continues to prophetically warn that failing to choose either way will lead to a slow deterioration that will end up effectively the same as abolition, but without the political gains, and with a moral and financial loss to the state. This warning has largely come true in the subsequent decade and a half.

Instead of moving resolutely in either direction, the history of the military government has been characterized by a slow progression of changes, each intended to reduce the direct influence it had on the residents’ quality of life while maintaining the

\textsuperscript{86} ISA A 8153/1, February 24, 1956, Ruttner report.

\textsuperscript{87} ISA GL 17002/11, October 24, 1951, letter from J. Palmon, Arab Affairs Advisor, to the Prime Minister, p. 3. Emphasis added.
ability of the state to control the Arab population. Each step, in turn, prompted further pressure by opposition parties who, rather than seeing the easements as reducing unnecessary inconveniences while retaining crucial protections, viewed them as emptying the military government of what usefulness it may have had (or proving it was never useful to begin with) and leaving it only with those capacities useful to Mapai to perpetuate its rule. In that way, the opposition argued to an ever more attentive Mapai leadership that previous changes in the military government in fact prove that security concerns are immaterial, and therefore that the military government is in fact counter-productive and excessively damaging to Israel’s image and values. In other words, first order changes to the institution of military government were eroding its ideational underpinnings.

In 1954, the 45 sub-divisions of the northern military government, between which residents were forbidden to travel without permit, were reorganized into 17 sub-divisions only, allowing the majority of Arab residents in the Galilee to more or less freely travel between the Arab villages and the central Arab city of Nazareth. In 1957 travel to and from Afula and Acre was allowed without travel permits. Subsequently additional cities, including Tel-Aviv and Jaffe were opened up for travel during weekdays to residents of the military government in 1959. These changes had as much to do with the need for labourers as they did with any visible change in security conditions, a fact that was clear to the Jewish population and its leadership (Bauml 2002, 138). Travel permits themselves were gradually made easier to obtain, until in 1962 short-term permits were replaced with automatically renewable year-long permits – in other words, the onus for limiting the travel rights of an individual has shifted to the military government itself, rather than the resident having to obtain the right to travel.
Also in 1962, the government removed all travel limitations imposed on “the members of a community whose sons serve in the military” (i.e. Druze and Circassians). This change occurred despite the official position of the government that the military government is geographically based, not ethnically.

The military government was also criticized for more mundane political reasons. Shortly after the end of the war opposition parties began raising concerns that Mapai agencies were colluding with military government personnel for political purposes. Such collusion was vehemently denied by both sides, but records show intensive participation of military government officials even in the most core political party activities. Isser Harel, a central figure in Israel’s security institutions and head of the Mossad in its early years, even argued later in his life that Mapai did not abolish the military government primarily because of its political benefits to the party (cited in Osacki-Lazar 2010, 335). However, not all military government involvement in political issues was considered unacceptable. The military government’s role in preventing the growth of the ICP was recognized and accepted by many within and outside of Mapai as necessary to prevent the Arab minority from empowerment (Forman 2006). That the votes taken away from ICP

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88 ISA CL 17002/9, “Tmrot bamimshal hatzva’i” (Changes in the military government), March 1962.
89 Amnon Linn, a central member of Mapai, argued as late as 1999 that no such collusion ever occurred.
90 In one May 1961 meeting of the Mapai Arab Affairs Committee, discussing ways of strengthening the party’s electoral success among the Arab population, one of the participants was Yossef Pressman, the Military Governor at the time. He did not shy from making recommendations on the preferred number of Mapai-affiliated Arab lists to construct to maximize Arab votes. The results of this collusion can also be seen in the remarkable success of Mapai among Arab voters: between 60-80% of the Arab voters voted for Mapai or its affiliated parties until 1965, at a time when within the general population, Mapai received the votes of only 30-40%. It is telling that in 1969, the first elections after the repeal of the military government, when Mapai and Mapam’s alignment achieved an unprecedented 46% of the vote, the Arab support for the Alignment and its affiliated Arab lists fell by a full 10 percentage points to 56%, and continued its descent since, as Arab voters gradually shifted their votes to the communist party and independent Arab parties (Barzilai 2003, 737; see also, Lustick 1980, and below chapters 6 and 7).
were then diverted in Mapai’s way was the centre of contention, but not the political involvement itself.

Three committees were formed in the 1950s to investigate the need for a military government. In 1952 Mapai Minister Pinhas Lavon headed a study which conclusions advocated for the dissolution of the military government for much the same reasons advocated by the Advisors on Arab Affairs. Ben-Gurion outwardly agreed with the recommendations but did not carry out any actions to implement them (Kafkafi 2009, 354–355).

In 1955 the Ruttner Committee was formed by PM Ben-Gurion, to “examine the possibility and need for reducing the military government in its area and scope of activities, in accordance with section 51 of the government guidelines [...] and [...] to examine whether the military government in Nazareth should be left in place.”91 The committee’s recommendations rejected wholesale any possibility of cancelling or even reducing in scope the military government, not even during “normal” emergency times.92 Instead, the committee suggested a series of “improvements” that were intended to streamline the military government and make civilian interaction with it less burdensome. The concluding paragraph of the report repeats the refrain often spoken by Ben-Gurion himself: “Once true peace is established between Israel and its neighbours the military government will also be cancelled.”93

91 ISA A 8153/1, February 24, 1956, Ruttner Report, p. 1.
92 “Normal” emergency times, as opposed to the heightened emergency time in the mid 1950s, when the Arab countries were showing signs of increased cooperation, which would ultimately result in the formation of the short-lived United Arab Republic in 1958.
93 ISA A 8153/1, February 24, 1956, Ruttner Report, p. 26. Of the conceptions of the Arab minority that informed the committee’s work we can learn from a column published by one of its members, Daniel Auster, who wrote
However Mapai’s coalition partners were not pleased with this conclusion and demanded a ministerial committee to review its findings and present the government with its own recommendations on how to implement the recommendations of the Ruttner committee. This new committee was finally nominated in 1958, with five members: two from Mapai and one each from its three coalition partners. The recommendations of this committee, submitted in 1959, split along these lines. The majority opinion favoured abolishing the military government altogether. The two Mapai ministers, however, recommended the continuation of the military government together with a series of alleviations intended to enable and encourage migration of Arab citizens away from the borders and into mixed cities, where they would pose less of a threat. Despite the unequivocal majority position in the ministerial committee’s report, the government ultimately rejected these recommendations and adopted the recommendations of the minority opinion. Heads of the military government supported this position by arguing that the Arabs respect the IDF because “bullets speak to the heart” (Kafkafi 2009, 359).

In his address to the Knesset on the report, Ben-Gurion quoted at length from the Ruttner report, and spoke only of the recommendations accepted by the government, while emphasizing that according to the committee head, Minister Pinhas Rosen, the majority opinion spoke of “stopping”, not “cancelling” the military government. Ben-Gurion refused to discuss these recommendations further (Bauml 2002, 140–141).

In 1963, under new Prime Minister Levy Eshkol, the government went an additional step forward and eliminated travel permits altogether for residents of the Galilee and the

that “out of 200,000 Arabs and other minorities residing in Israel, we have found not one who is loyal to the state, I say this in all seriousness and responsibility” (cited in Osacki-Lazar 2002, 123).
Triangle, replacing the general control regime with an individualized regime of travel limitations on particular people deemed dangerous. This was more a symbolic gesture than a practical change, since the existing permits were already automatically renewable. The purpose was explicitly to make the military government as invisible as possible in the lives of Arab citizens, while maintaining its power to intervene wherever and whenever necessary, thus accepting the common view of Advisors on Arab Affairs throughout the years. These restrictions were also lifted from the residents of the Negev early in 1966.

Eshkol decided to seek ways to abolish the military government even before the 1965 elections, but was wary of involving the issue in the elections. Soon after the elections, however, he made known his intention, and began a round of talks with political leaders and public officials to decide on the manner in which this can best be achieved. As early as June 1966, the relevant authorities were preparing to make the necessary adjustments in their activities, however the decision was finally made public only on November 8, 1966, and went into effect on December 1 of that year.

**Eshkol and the Era of Normality**

Many of the arguments in favour of the reduction or abolishment of the military government revolved around the assessment that the Arab population has finally accepted the reality and permanence of Israel. It is interesting to note that according to Boimel (2002, 138), this is a case of projection: it was the Jewish leadership who internalized the

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94 ISA A 7921/1, October 23, 1963, PM Levy Eshkol’s speaking before the Knesset following the debate on the PM’s opening address.

95 ISA A 9721/1, undated, untitled top secret memo.

96 ISA CL 17005/4, June 1, 1966, “Organization command – increasing activity in minorities’ areas”.

97 E.g., ISA A 7921/1, July 21, 1963, Consultation with the Arab Affairs Department, p. 7.
permanence of the Arab minority, and were then faced with a choice between an eternal military government and its replacement with a less conspicuous mechanism of control. Boimel cites a report by Arab Affairs Advisor Shmuel Deebon, who wrote in 1959 that “it can be assumed with certainty that there is no likelihood in the foreseeable future of mass emigration of Arabs from the country. Therefore this possibility must be removed from the agenda in future policy planning”. This is a rare explicit example of the involvement of considerations of the Jewish identity of the state in the debate on the military government, and shows how security concerns were often merely thinly masked concerns over the state’s Jewish identity. This masking was necessary because outright actions for the bolstering of Israel’s Jewishness through disenfranchising or actively promoting the emigration of Arabs was still seen as distasteful in an ideational network (and an international environment) that placed democracy highly in the ideational hierarchy. However, hoping for similar results from actions that were justified by security was not seen as equally distasteful at the beginning of this period. In other words, the idea of the Jewish identity of Israel was still an important, if covert, motivator for policy making, but implying that it may be in contradiction with Israel’s democratic nature was unacceptable. Implying that security concerns may necessitate limits on democratic freedoms, however, was more agreeable. There was, therefore, a collaboration between the idea of Jewish identity and the idea of security, but not a formal ideational linkage between the two. Security actions were not generally explained in terms of Jewish identity, and while the need in Jewish sovereignty was sometimes explained in terms of security for the Jewish people, this was generally done in regards to external threats, not internal ones.

Strengthening Jewish superiority under the guise of security was done both by manipulating what was considered a security threat, and by using a fairly limited definition
of democracy. This definition focused on procedural aspects, and emphasized not only the rights of citizens, but also their duties – which, in Israel, identified the Arab citizens as lacking due to their exemption from military service.

The abolishment of the military government, therefore, required not that security concerns be dismissed altogether, but that democratic values trump them. This could be achieved by lowering security concerns enough so that the benefits from addressing them will no longer outweigh the costs to Israel’s self-definition as a democratic society, even if some concerns remain outstanding. As already noted above, the “objective” threat posed by Palestinian attacks has already been low for more than half a decade at that point in time, while the perception of threat persisted through ideational means. The change needed to reduce the perception of threat, therefore, was ideational. This type of ideational development became available with the resignation of Ben-Gurion and the removal of his spectre. It was already noted at the time of his resignation that a political transformation can now take place, as the state machinery which guarantees security is already in place, and the government, now outside his shadow, can take a more technocratic, less “heroic” and revolutionary function (Avineri 1965). Years later, prominent left-wing leader Yossi Sarid said the main task of the post-Ben-Gurion government was “to initiate an era of normality ... to extricate us ... from the syndrome of the founding of the state, from the syndrome of the battle for survival” (cited in Hazony 2001, 324). In other words, Ben-Gurion’s successors did not need to change the reality of Israel, but how it was perceived.

Indeed, this is the thinking we find in talks surrounding proposals to abolish the military regime: a perception that partially dismisses security concerns themselves, but also argues that what concerns remain are still outweighed by the moral damage done by
perpetuating the military government and the need to become a “normal” state. Simultaneously, perhaps through increased exposure to the West and in particular the civil rights movement, the definition of democracy itself was expanded to preclude discrimination on any grounds. However, this was done with caution, to avoid implying that the Zionist endeavour itself contradicts democratic values. This is evident in the lack of general support for the repealing of the Defense (Emergency) Regulations that were the basis of the military government, and which allowed the State to continue to control the Arab population in various ways after the military government was abolished.

The ideational transformation that Levi Eshkol has gone through from a stout supporter of Ben-Gurion’s stance as his Finance Minister, to making the abolishment of the military government a central highlight of his government’s plan, all in the span of three years, is a striking example of the strength of ideational change (and its elusiveness), while also showcasing the inherent limitations of institutional change driven by underlying ideational transformations.

In the late 1950s Eshkol supported whole-heartedly Ben-Gurion’s views on the need and purpose of the military government. During the cabinet debate on the report of the ministerial committee, Eshkol was even more reserved than Ben-Gurion in regards to the phrasing of the report, worrying that it may be misinterpreted as recognition by the government of wrongdoing by the military government.98 But later on he became reserved in his statements on the subject. Despite participating in several Mapai and cabinet meetings on Arab affairs, his statements in the available protocols of those years are almost strictly administrative in nature, and he avoided joining in on even the most heated

debates, clearly preferring to listen and absorbs ideas from others than voice his own opinion. This was most uncharacteristic for this quick witted man who was generally happy to infuse his views into any discussion. It would seem a transformation in his ideational network has taken place over these years. When the topic re-emerged shortly after his nomination as Prime Minister in 1963, as he was finally forced to contend with it in light of bills put before the Knesset and a growing opposition within the cabinet to the continuation the military government, his own views were markedly different from the ones he expressed only four years earlier.

Eshkol was still not ready to publicly support the abolishing of the military government. But while still remaining reserved in talks with the opposition (both internal and external), he felt safe enough to voice doubts within more supportive forums. On July 9, 1963, Eshkol met with his Foreign Minister Golda Mair,99 and opened the conversation by stating “I am very troubled by the issue of the military government which will be debated in the Knesset in a few months. I am not comfortable with the fact that Israel, 15 years after its establishment, needs this tool... I think half the country doesn't want it.” Mair was quick to assuage his concerns arguing that opposition on the right was not as vehement as they made it seem. Eshkol then also named both Moshe Sharett and (former Chief of Staff and then Minister of Agriculture) Moshe Dayan as an internal opposition within Mapai to the military government. Having clearly given the matter much thought, Eshkol then began elaborating his ideas of replacing it with a “10-20 KM wide region all along the [border], which will be shut off to both Jews and Arabs without a permit” (emphasis added), and then continued to discuss the relative merits of establishing Jewish settlements in Arab regions,

as opposed to simply erecting police stations, quoting Arab Affairs Advisor Rehav'am Amir as claiming that these will make sure the Arab population “knows there is a Jewish rule”. His emphasis, then, is not on the freedoms of the Arab population per se, but on the discrimination inherent in the military government, and he seeks to turn the old trope of the military government as geographically-based, not ethnically-based, into practice.

But Mair and Eshkol’s secretary Lubrani (the former Arab Affairs Advisor) shift the topic back towards security concerns and discuss the benefits of the military government and possible dangers from its abolition. Ultimately, Eshkol responds to this by exclaiming “I cannot accept the claim that we cannot do without the military government. Maybe we really can’t for one year, two years, three, but it must have an end. Why can there be no military government in Ramle and Lod [two mixed cities in central Israel] but not in other places? ... I suggest the Prime Minister, who is interested in the cooperation of the Foreign Minister, holds a conversation with the Foreign Minister, and maybe also with Minister Sasson, on the topic: us and the Arabs, and not just the Arabs in Israel.”

This is then followed by a long conversation in which Eshkol raises options for improving Israel’s relations with the Arab world, considering possible scenarios for the development of the Cold War, and Mair strikes them down as either ones that were tried and failed, or ones which cannot possibly succeed. Finally, in what appears like frustration, Eshkol reaches new heights of pathos:

We require a man of vision, like Herzl in his day, who would rock the world greatly and call upon all the greatest leaders of the world to solve the problem of the Jewish nation and its diaspora... We can say: 15 years after the decision in Lake Texas, we ask to hold a world debate on Israel to decide
what shall be of it -- we can do this thing if it is guaranteed that all of Europe agrees, and within Israel’s current borders.

He further suggests that Israel become a neutral state, like Switzerland, and withdraws from the UN, all to achieve recognition by the international community and the Arab states, of Israel’s right to exist. Mair’s response to this outburst is dry: “I think it is but a dream for the UN to once again convene to discuss this question,” she says, and warns that first the issue of the Palestinian refugees must be done away with. Eshkol reveals here the lengths he is willing to go to in order to secure Israel’s Jewish identity, but also that he wants this to be done through diplomacy, not violence.

Throughout this long conversation on foreign affairs, neither Eshkol nor Mair ever return to the topic of the military government. Implicitly, Eshkol appears to have accepted, for the time being, Mapai’s old position that the military government will come to an end when hostilities with the Arab countries end, despite his protests earlier in the text.

But whether he accepted that position then or simply agreed to set aside the issue for the moment, he soon returned to arguing that the continuation of the military government must be contingent on the behaviour and beliefs of Israel’s Arab citizens, not on those of external forces. In a meeting with the Arab Affairs Department later that month, together with Deputy Prime Minister Abba Eban and Minister of Postal Services Eliyahu Sasson, Eshkol was far less willing to accept fatalist depictions of the relations between Israel and its Arab minority.100 Secretary Lubrani began the meeting by setting out the standard position of Israeli governments in the past:

100 ISA A 7921/1, June 23, 1963, “Consultation with the Arab Affairs Department”.
Since the establishment of the state, the Arab minority was primarily a security issue. I think it is fair to say that the key mission of the state with regards to its Arab citizens -- who are some 10-13% if the population -- is: how to continue the progress and development of the State of Israel given that it has 10-13% Arabs, without this fact getting in the way. The fact is the situation even today is a majority of the 13% Arab citizens are potentially enemies of the state.

Lubrani then continues to describe candidly Israel’s control regime of the Arab minority, explaining that this regime allowed the state to manage the threat posed by the Arab minority, so that “we can carry on with our work” in other fields. “Nonetheless,” he adds, “we followed the dictum of maximum development with minimal necessary security measures. Although of course everyone has their own view of what is the minimum.” To which Eshkol responds “both things can be argued about, also the maximum. It’s a very flexible thing,” showing his doubts about Israel’s commitment to the improvement of the lives of its Arab citizens. That Eshkol seems to have an overly optimistic view of what Israel has done for its Arab citizens, nonetheless, is also telling. In an off-hand remark he says he believes all Arab villages have access to roads and electricity, to which his Arab Affairs Advisor Amir responds by correcting him that several villages have no access to roads, and some one third of them no power. Eshkol seems surprised by this, but quickly recuperates by stating that “the government does what it needs to do for its citizens. Maybe we need to do another 20-30%.”

But Eshkol outright rejects Lubrani’s premise. Several times he responds with incredulity to claims of Arab hostility to Israel. When S. Bendor claims that “the Arab
students in Jerusalem, who are not isolated, are all enemies of Israel”, Eshkol is reluctant to accept this: “All are enemies? How many are there?” and later, after he suggests that 100 Arabs are accepted into the civil service, he asks “do you think if we do this, these 100 will remain enemies?”; later still, when Amir explains the hatred of Israel is an issue of national sentiment, Eshkol rejects its again: “I do not accept that. We do not know our job well. We do not know Arabic. I will see it as my life’s goal that somebody who speaks Arabic takes care of these 130 Arab students. Why should they be haters?”

The three key ideas of Jewishness, democracy and security appear to be carefully balanced in Eshkol’s decision making process. Unlike Ben-Gurion, Eshkol’s decision is not instructed by a devotion to the technicalities of democracy, nor is he willing to accept security concerns as inmitigable. Instead, his more civic-minded inclusive nationalism leads him to balance the two through seeking solutions that do not merely “manage” the threat posed by the Arab minority, but ones that actively mitigate it. His ideational network appears to combine discursive tools from both the isolationist and the integrationist camps within Mapai, allowing him to bridge the gap between them. Therefore, he opposes integration as a solution to the problem of security, but he also opposes leaving the Arabs on the outside, and treating the problem as if it is one of foreign affairs. Instead, he sets integration as the goal of government actions:

This is the question: do we view them as eternal mortal enemies - then there is no chance, and we needn't take care of them; or do we say: there is some chance, all that is done is necessary to create a modus vivendi... Of course it doesn't solve all the problems, but the question is do we want to appear to be doing, or do we want to actually do something. The core question isn't
about the military government... I am asking: how will we live with the Arabs, and how should be act?

When he asks Lubrani if Israel should treat all Arabs as enemies, Lubrani rejects this, and claims some are enemies and some are loyal, to which Eban asks if by “loyal” he means they hope the state will keep existing.

_Lubrani_: There are those who await the day that someone comes and destroys Israel. The question is, are they willing to actively cooperate to bring this about, or wait comfortably for someone else to do the job. We need to give them maximum civil rights.

_Eshkol_: But then, why?

_Lubrani_: How can it be any different?

For Lubrani, as for David Ben-Gurion, there is an impossible tension between security and democracy, while neither may bend before the other. The paradoxical solution is full civil rights in combination with a repressive control regime. This view is not seen as hypocritical from their perspective, but inevitable, because democracy is interpreted as a set of technical rules that guarantees legitimacy, not as a value that must be internalized and extended to all sectors of the state. Eshkol, on the other hand, views this solution as morally dishonest, since his commitment to democracy is a moral, not practical one. If repression is inevitable, then engaging in the niceties of civil rights is pointless. The only way to preserve his democratic inclinations, then, is by rejecting the necessity of repression, and striving to achieve true, unfettered equality.

A similar sentiment was voiced by Arab Affairs Advisor Rehav'am Amir, who described in this conversation his vision of establishing Jewish settlements throughout the
military government areas as a means of making it unnecessary. Following his long statement, he is cut down by minister Sasson: “In everything you suggested, you solved nothing... You say ‘to solve’, but what have you changed [by implementing this program] in the state of mind of the Arabs?” To this Eshkol responds:

He says that within the backdrop we’re all familiar with and understand, we must be loyal, or the state has to carry out its duties without stint.

These two conversations were followed by a round of talks with representatives from all parties but the communist ICP, in which Eshkol presented his plan of making the military government invisible in the lives of the vast majority of Arab citizens. While not significantly changing the daily lives of most Arab citizens, this plan was intended to minimize the friction between the Arab citizen and the military government. Throughout the talks Eshkol emphasizes that the legal basis for the military government will not be changed, making it available immediately if conditions suffer a turn for the worse. He also argued that his plans to increase Jewish presence through government buildings and new settlements in Arab regions will lead to less need of directly threatening the Arab population with power. In one telling exchange, during his meeting with representatives of the National Religious Party on October 11, 1963, Eshkol expounds on the nature of Jewish settlement he hopes to achieve and its goals. His reasoning echoes that of Sharett:

I prefer there to be Kibbutzim on the ground. I see what’s happening in Tarshikha where there are 600 families from Romania. The Romanians
learned Arabic and got closer to the Arab culture, *instead of the other way around*.101

The Jewish settlements are there not just to quash any hopes of secession, but also to teach the Arabs Jewish culture and make them more like the Jews, leading to better integration of the Arab minority into society as a whole.

And yet, despite all his reservations, at this point in time Eshkol was still unwilling to completely forego the formula set by his predecessor. His address to the Knesset on October 21, 1963, where he informed the legislature of his plans for the military government, ended with a return to Ben-Gurion’s dogma:

Unfortunately, acts of incitement and terrorism in the Arab countries necessitate the continuation of control on particularly sensitive areas. We therefore cannot abolish yet at this stage the actual military control, so long as there are no changes in the elementary security conditions of Israel, which will enable the end of this special control.102

It took another two years for his views to complete their transformation, further reducing his perception of a threat posed by the Arab minority in Israel. Throughout this time Eshkol has made unprecedented efforts to reach out to the Arab minority, while his own party struggled internally with this ideational shift. Thus, for example, a 1964 draft for a comprehensive government plan for the Arab minority begins with the statement


102 ISA CL 17002/9, October 21, 1963, “Draft of the Prime Minister’s Address on the Opening of Knesset Seat”.
After 16 years of the state’s existence we have all, Jews and Arabs, arrived at the conclusion that reality demands co-existence. [The following is marked for deletion:] The Jewish population arrived at the realization that despite the hostility of surrounding Arab countries we must absorb the Arab minority within us as a positive and constructive element. While the Arab population arrived at the realization that the State of Israel will continue to exist, and they must therefore accommodate its existence, and derive the most from the co-existence.103

Dissent within Mapai, was vocal, but its focus on security issues did not seem to be a mask for concerns over Jewish identity. During a meeting of Mapai’s ministers on December 12, 1963, Shaul Avigur went on a diatribe against calls to ease the lives of the Arab minority, referring to them as “a security risk of the first degree” and arguing that the better their financial condition becomes, the less loyal they are.104 While he agrees with the goal of increasing Jewish presence in the Galilee, in his view this will not bring any change to the state of mind of Arab residents, but simply prevent them from enacting their hostile intents. He calls on the government to strive to achieve a large majority of Jews in the Galilee immediately to avoid the dangers posed by the Arab minority there. Avigur voiced similar concerns in a letter to Eshkol in February 1964.105

Similarly, Amnon Linn, head of Mapai’s Arab Department and a stalwart opponent of the integration of Arabs into Israeli society (Linn 1999) wrote a memo following the 1965

103 ISA CL 17002/9, undated, circa 1964, “The government policy toward the Arabs”.
104 ISA C 2263/16, December 12, 1963, “Our Ministers meeting”.
105 ISA A 7921/1, February 25, 1964, letter from Shaul Avigur to Levi Eshkol.
elections in which he condemns Ben-Gurion’s newly formed Rafi for advertising among the Arab citizens that Mapai is not the stable paragon that it presented itself as.

Despite the venom and hatred that characterized Rafi’s fight against us in the Jewish street, it was reasonable to hope that Rafi’s activists, of all people, who mostly served in various roles in the security apparatus, will be wary of inciting the Arab population against us - that is, against the government. We believed that Rafi will keep in mind that only we, as the central power ruling in Israel, can successfully wage the war against the extremist circles in the Arab street, and hoped they would allow us to carry out this difficult battle without being troubled by Rafi in the Arab street as well. But, again, that was a false hope. Rafi activists, who only yesterday were our partners and knew well that the secret to our success was in “the myth of our invincibility”, did not refrain from fighting us in negative ways. While ignoring the danger of destroying the belief in our stability, Rafi broke a crack in the wall that previously prevented mass voting for extremist circles.106

Linn also repeats the argument that modernization of the Arab population, rather than bringing them closer to the state, actually increases nationalist sentiment and “hatred of Israel”.

Avigur and Linn represent a portion of the leadership who perceived security concerns as trumping democracy, and it is hard to see in their proposals any intent to promote ideas related to Jewish identity. They are a reminder that ideational networks, while shared across a society, are nevertheless interpreted differently by each actor.

106 ISA C 2263/16, undated, “The Elections to the Sixth Knesset among the Arab and Druze Population”.
Trends may be identifiable in the aggregate, but individuals my diverge from them considerably.

The disagreement did not skip the security forces themselves, either. In a meeting of PM Eshkol with the heads of the security forces in 1965, a debate started on a proposal to further lift restrictions imposed as part of the military government. Yossef Harmelin, head of the Shin-Bet (intelligence service), opposed allowing Arabs from the Triangle to travel to the Galilee and vice-versa, to prevent them from mass gatherings. Eshkol asked in response what difference would it make if the Galilee’s 200,000 Arabs met by themselves, or if they were joined by the Triangle’s 60,000 Arab citizens. Harmelin continues to object to this, but Chief of Staff Yizhak Rabin comes to the support of Eshkol, explicitly pointing out the tension between values inherent in the situation:

We are in an internal contradiction. On the one hand, we know who the Arabs are, and on the other we want to see a state that gives its citizens freedom... The question is where is the golden path. For the golden path, so long as the law exists and the framework to use it exists. That's the whip.

... I think so long as we have the law and the framework of the military government - that's the main basis for it. Easements, with everything we all know - we have no recourse. We are in a slow process for 17 years of inability to insist on discrimination... Theoretically I can say that every easement we gave was unwanted for us, but we had no choice, because we felt the internal contradiction.

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107 ISA A 7921/1, August 13, 1965, minutes of a meeting of PM Eshkol and heads of the security system.
The Triangle, in my view, is a border region... But what is Nazareth? Nazareth is the centre of the country, what can I say there about security concerns? ... I see no severe problem that Taibe’s people come to Nazareth. On the other hand, I don’t want people to come to Taibe and Kafr Kassem, which are on the border. Anyway, it’s a security zone by Israeli law. (Eshkol: For Jews, too?) Theoretically for Jews too. Every law is in theory equal for all, the question is who do you check.108

**HERUT AND MAPAM**

A similar debate took place at the same time in Herut, whose founders were committed to democracy and human rights but also to nationalism. Their attempts to reconcile the two often split the party when it came to the best response to Arab resistance. One potent example of this came in a Herut faction meeting in the Knesset, held on July 20, 1964.109 This brief discussion followed the publication of the El Ard Memo, in which Arab Israeli citizens sought to challenge Israel’s land confiscations which were invariably justified as “security needs”, but often used to form new Jewish settlements in Arab regions. The responses offered by Herut’s MKs reveals the entire gamut of the political debate in a concise series of statements:

*Shostak:* [I] doubt there’s a way to bring forth arguments against the El Ard group without creating the impression of limiting the right to freedom of speech.

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108 Nonetheless, Rabin was opposed to the abolishment of the Military Government itself as late as 1965, even after the Shin-Bet changed its view and supported the abolition (Bauml 2002, 150).

109 JA H2 2/8, July 20, 1964, Herut faction meeting.
Begin: I truly am in favour of equal rights; however these people do not ask for equal rights, they ask for secession: the separation of parts of the state. They fight for the dismantlement of the state. [...] It is our duty to emphasize that we are in favour of equal rights but in this memo it is stated by citizens of Israel that they turn to the world to take a third of the state’s territory and give it unto others. Why must we keep silent? The most appropriate stage is the parliamentary stage.

Meridor: I would not be satisfied with speaking as the chairman [Begin] suggested, we must demand that the government examine promptly and thoroughly whether the distribution of this document constitutes a criminal offense, because in my opinion this document includes incitement against the state and not criticism. I wouldn't complain if they had written a memo to the UN with criticism against the military administration, but with regards to this document, it should be examined whether there is room for prosecution under civil law. Condemnation is not enough, since the argument is with a small minority (even though many support them).

Tier: The audacity of the extremist circles among the Arab minority keeps rising, the problem gets worse and worse and in my opinion in this case they have crossed the line.

Shostak, in this debate, presents the tension and argues in favour of allowing democracy to trump over the threat to Jewish sovereignty (although, again, he is focused on the appearance of freedom of speech, rather than any affront to freedom of speech itself). Begin, however, introduces security concerns as a means to negotiate the two, in
much the same way that David Ben-Gurion has often done. Still more assertive is Meridor, who argues that the memo is enough of a security threat to warrant the use of state force against its authors. Both pay lip service to their commitment to democratic values, but argue that this action goes beyond what democracy should allow any citizen to do. Tier, however, goes beyond his colleagues and introduces an argument that at least partially disenfranchises the Arab citizens of Israel, calling their actions not simply illegal, but audacious, and implying that they, as the minority, must be repressed. El Ard, for him, did not cross a line that applies to any citizen in a democratic state. They have crossed the line that limits the actions of the Arab minority. Unlike those who spoke before him, notably, Tier refrains from proposing a plan of action in response to the memo. The subsequent debate oscillates between these views, and ultimately agrees with the position of Begin, and the faction raised the issue before the Knesset without demanding specific actions against the group.

Yet the views that Eshkol espoused, and which ultimately led to the abolition of the military government, were more akin to views that came from the left – from Mapam. Eshkol even complained that it was Mapam leader Ya’ari who has pushed him to commit to a deadline for ending the military government.¹¹⁰ During his round of talks with the various parties in 1963, while all party leaders voiced their support of the abolishment of the military government, those on the right – including Ahdut Ha’avoda, which would later join Mapai to form the Alignment – were concerned primarily with the image of Israel as a democracy, and suggested means to ensure that the security related functions of the military government continue to operate while the title itself is eliminated. Mapam’s

leaders, however, raised the argument that the security problems are caused by the military government, rather than mitigated by it. "We do everything to perpetuate the difference between us and them," Said Yaakov Hazan in the meeting, “[instead of] making it easier for them to be good citizens.”

Mapam supported integrating the Arab population into Israeli society in all possible ways. Early on, Mapam were adamant on the possibility of fully incorporating the minority into the majority and attaining a shared identity for the state. This view has even led to a split within the movement in 1954. The group leaving the party published a pamphlet where they announced:

We do not agree to have in our midst comrades such as Rusthum Basthuni who declared "we carry the banner of national liberation for the Arab minority in Israel"... We do not believe an Arab can be a Zionist, any more than we can believe a Jew can be an Arab nationalist.

Mapam also organized the “Association of Pioneering Arab Youth in Israel”, who in 1958 wrote to the Minister of Agriculture seeking lands to form an exemplary Arab Kibbutz, exclaiming that “we see it as our duty to lead the Arab public in Israel and contribute our share to the building of the land.”

The divergence between Mapam’s views on the identity of Israel, and those of the opponents of the military government on the right, precluded any agreement between the

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111 ISA A 7921/1, October 15, 1963. “Meeting of the Prime Minister and Defense Minister Mr. Levi Eshkol with representatives of the Unified Workers’ Party [Mapam].”

112 LPA 2-12-1954-134, undated, “Why we left Mapam!”.

113 ISA C 8024/2, January 14, 1958, Letter to the Minister of Agriculture from the Association of Pioneering Arab Youth in Israel.
two factions on the right manner in which the military government should be abolished, and the structure with which it should be replaced. Only once Mapam found an ideational ally in Eshkol could the stalemate be brought to an end.

**INTEGRATION AND LIBERALIZATION**

In his meetings preparing for the abolishment of the military government, and in his unprecedented visit to Taibe in the summer of 1965, where he called on the Arab citizens to integrate into all sectors of life in Israeli society, Eshkol gave voice to a perspective that refused to see security and democracy as inherently opposed.114 Similar views were echoed in Arab Affairs Advisor Toledano’s debriefing memo following the visit.115

Nonetheless, Eshkol did not dismiss security concerns entirely. Abolishing the military government was the realization of his long-time goal of turning it into an invisible agent. The authorities previously held by the military government were transferred to other, less conspicuous agencies, and the legislation that served as the legal basis for the military government was never repealed. Less than a year after the military government was abolished within Israel, it came back to life in the territories newly occupied by Israel in the 1967 war. Some aspects of Israel’s control regime, including the involvement of intelligence agencies in the nomination of educators in the Arab Israeli education system, persisted into the 21st century (Ettinger 2005).

While others around him supported the abolishment of the military government to remove the stain of discrimination from Israeli democracy, Eshkol moved forward with this

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114 ISA CL 17001/9, August 16, 1965, “Address of the Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Mr. Levi Eshkol, in Taibe”.

115 ISA CL 17001/9, August 18, 1965, “The visit to the Triangle – evaluation and conclusions”.
decision, as well as other policies, with the intent of changing Israeli identity to be a more inclusive one. And for the next two decades, his plan appeared to be coming to fruition. Israel’s Arab minority enjoyed a (slow) process of liberalization and modernization, and as younger generations lost touch with the diasporic Jewish culture of their parents, the cultural gap between Arabs and Jews also began to shrink. This process also benefited from Israel’s resounding victory in the 1967 war, which quelled any lasting hopes among Israel’s Arab citizens of Israel’s passing nature (Khmeisi 2003, 61–62). The outburst of Arab protest in 1974 over land confiscations, rather than bringing about a heavy-handed retaliation by the state, in fact drove Israel to recognize the continuing discrimination of its Arab citizens, and spurred further efforts to integrate this minority into the social fabric of the state. The changed ideational and institutional landscape was not limited to the left-wing, either. The liberalization brought about by the right-wing Likud government that took power in 1977 did not skip the Arab sector, and “Israelization” was strengthening within growing numbers of Israeli Arab citizens.

Despite the symbolic presence of Ben-Gurion in the Israeli public sphere long after his final withdrawal from politics, his isolationist views, embedded as they were in a perception of the Arab minority as a physical and national security threat to Israel, have largely disappeared from Israeli discourse. The lack of internal violence in both the war of 1967 and, more importantly, 1973, has eliminated any lingering doubts about the ability, if not the will, of Israel’s Arab minority for acting as a fifth column in the case of an all-out Arab attack on Israel. Yet integrationism was equally shunned, and a status-quo based on the de-facto geographical and linguistic segregation of the Arab minority enabled governments since to uphold the institution of ethnic democracy without overtly challenging democratic ideals.
Security concerns have not disappeared from the Israeli public debate, of course, but their targets now mainly resided beyond the Green Line, in the occupied territories. Physical security concerns were not tied with the Arab minority in Israel until the events of October 2000, which reignited the discourse on Arab loyalty, although the ideational context had changed considerably by then.

A form of liberal Zionism, rejecting oppression but avoiding integration, became practically hegemonic. It was a reactionary and radicalized form of Sharrett’s spiritual Zionism, which saw the preservation of Jewish spirituality as the purpose and core of the Zionist project, and his fear of a demographic and identity-based Arab takeover of Israel, which ultimately set the gears in motion toward a retrenchment in Israel’s national liberalization.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Throughout Israel’s first three decades, Its Jewish identity was intentionally left as a floating signifier. This allowed the secular leadership of Mapai to placate its religious allies in the NRP and maintain ambiguity in its dealings with the Arab minority. Moreover, the idea was abstracted out of the public discourse altogether, and its impact can only be seen in the background of debates relating to the Arab minority’s place in Israel. It is these qualities that allowed significant variation in the meaning attributed to this idea within each of the parties, and mutations of it were freely deployed and propagated throughout the system. At the same time, however, these ideas were central to much of the thinking underlying the development of the institutions of the military government, even as they were masked by security arguments.
This freedom enabled a significant institutional change at a time when few other factors appeared to be militating in its favour. The timing of the decision cannot be explained by security threats or by changes to the internal balance of power within in the Israeli political system. “Objective” factors that enabled the abolishment of the military regime have been in place for almost a decade before the decision was reached. Nor can it be explained, as one might expect, by a radical shift in favour of more liberal democratic ideas within the Israeli public. It is, in fact, remarkable how little has changed in the ideas of both democracy and security over the decade that preceded the decision to abolish the military regime, despite the many important events that took place over this span of time. The abolishment of the military regime is an example of an institutional change that was delayed beyond what was dictated by external pressures, by internal ideational ones.

Three processes enabled Eshkol to conceive and enact a decision to abolish the military government and liberalize the relationship between Israel and its Arab minority: first, a shift in the ideational balance of power between security and democracy. Second, the growing proportion of people who truly viewed the military regime in terms of the security threat posed by the Arab minority, without seeing its value in protecting the Jewish identity of the state (and therefore saw the military government as unnecessary). Finally, a convergence of streams in the conceptualization of Israel’s Jewish identity and how it related to its democratic character towards a more inclusive conception. Whereas earlier on, the dominant perception saw any contact between Jews and Arabs as dangerous for the Jewish identity, and likely to weaken it (Eyal 2005), Eshkol and his supporters within Mapai grew to believe that contact with the Arab minority would rather create loyalty and a shared identity based on the Jewish identity.
At the same time, however, the changes in the idea of Jewish identity also helped to pin down this idea, thus making it an explicit object of political debate in decades to come. Subsequent attempts to deploy innovative ideas of Jewish identity faced a much more difficult battle as the network surrounding it became stronger and more entangled.
5: 1985, Jewish and Democratic

If until 1966 the fate of the Arab minority in Israel was tied, in the view of most decision makers, with the behaviour of the surrounding Arab countries, the war of 1967 and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, along with the Sinai desert and the Golan Heights, began a process that shifted this link to the behaviour of the Palestinians in the occupied territories – a shift from the “1948 paradigm” to the “1967 paradigm” (Shenhav 2010). This process was driven by a number of factors and events: the lack of any internal violence during the 1967 and 1973 wars and the reduced threat following the peace agreement with Egypt in 1979 meant that justifying ethnic democracy by claiming Israel’s Arab minority is a potential fifth column in the case of a regional war was far less convincing; the intifada which took place in the late 1980s, on the other hand, offered a new threat in the form of the possible recruitment of Arab Israeli citizens to support or even take part in the violence; finally, at the very time that Eshkol’s hopes for a process of “Israelization” of the Arab minority began to bear fruit, resistance began to grow in the form of a radicalization, or “Palestinianization”, movement within the Arab minority itself, refusing to normalize the Israeli regime (Smooha 1989). This latter, in fact, was a direct result of the promise implicit in the policies enacted by Eshkol: as Arab citizens became more “Israelized”, they expected more equality\(^{116}\) – in other words, the process of Israelizations of the Arab minority should

\(^{116}\) A similar dynamic happened again in the 1990s as the promise of the second Rabin government led to a renewed Israelization of Israel’s Arab citizens, while its shattering brought about an unprecedented level of Palestinization among that population.
have been accompanied by a process of Israelization of the Jewish majority. But this process, if it happened at all, was significantly slower.

To the extent that a process of Israelization among Israel's Jews did occur, however, it was accompanied by its own concurrent radicalization within Jewish nationalist thinking, epitomized by the rise of Rabbi Meir Kahane and his Kach (literally, “thus!”) movement. The internal contradictions in continued de-facto isolationism within a putatively liberal ideology could no longer be denied. The answer was found in a deepening of the Jewish identity in Israel towards an increasingly religious definition. This gave new justification to a public that was looking for reasons to prevent the mutual integration of Jewish and Arab societies in Israel and the threat implicit in such a process to the definition of Israel as a “Jewish state”. Concerns about possible acts of violence were replaced with concerns of hitbolet - intermixing, which results in conversion out of Judaism. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the adoption of Arab culture by Jews was a concern for Levi Eshkol and Moshe Sharett in the 1960s, and Ben-Gurion even considered conversion in the opposite direction on a massive scale. But as the conception of Jewishness shifted from the national towards the religious, so the central focus of the threat was shifted from the political to the private sphere.

The rise of Kahane and the ambiguous response he received, as we will see below, in terms of Israel's democratic institutions, is a critical case exemplifying the importance of ideational factors in determining institutional development. Neither his rise nor the response to it can be fully explained by structural factors. 1984, the year he was voted into the Knesset, saw the last elections to take place before the eruption of Palestinian violence in the West Bank and Gaza, and even the war in Lebanon did not trigger violent responses
from Arab Israeli citizens in the north. If ever there was a time that the Jewish population in Israel should view the state's Arab minority in a favourable light, if ever they should have seen mutual integration as a realistic and positive outcome, it was then. Indeed, the 1980s did see a rapid increase in public investment in the Arab sector (Bishara 1997, 313), and the liberalization brought by Menachem Begin's governments was also reflected within the Arab population. In the political realm, the Arab minority finally succeeded, much to the chagrin of the Jewish leadership, in putting forward and electing an independent Arab party which did not hide behind a communist agenda, but rather stated its Palestinian nationality as a point of pride. The elections of 1984 could have been a turning point for Israel's ethnic democracy. Instead, the Jewish public had shown considerable empathy to Kahane's views, even as they rejected the very heart of his ideology: a theocratic Israel.

Kahane's rise to power must be seen within the context of the concretization of the idea of Jewish identity within the ideational network. The continued failure of both Labour and Likud to put forward a clear definition of this identity, despite the centrality that it gradually took within the network, left the ideational field open to innovations that would appeal to many Israelis. But Kahane's significance is not so much in his own formulation of his ideas on what a Jewish state meant, as those were largely rejected by the Israeli public, even among his supporters. His significance lies in his successful attack on the links forged between Jewishness and democracy, and the failed attempts of his opponents to forge these links anew. Indeed, this failure only served to emphasize the tension between the two ideas as they emerged during this period.

In the mid 1980s, then, the Israeli ethnic democracy was faced with formidable threats from two directions – an increasingly politically justifiable demand for
liberalization of Israel’s relationship with the Arab minority, and an emphatic demand to
demote democratic principles to a secondary place after Jewish values in the public sphere.
In facing this predicament, Israel’s elites also had to contend, finally, with the decreasing
feasibility of ethnic democracy as it was practiced before 1966, and as it continued to be
practiced, sans the institutional infrastructure of the military regime, well into the 1980s.
The response developed by the political centre was a crucial step in the development of a
new ethnic-democratic compromise, a new infrastructure able to support ethnic
democracy within its established perimeter, albeit in a different configuration. This new
compromise defined the debate on the subject in the subsequent decades, and it found its
clearest expression in the term “Jewish and democratic” that began to appear with
increasing frequency, and remains central to Israeli discourse to this date (see Figure 2).
The manner in which both these competing discourses were unraveled, weakened, and
finally absorbed into the ideational network supporting ethnic democracy, is a testament to
the resilience and adaptability of this network.

But this adaptability came at a cost. Integrating rival ideas into the network gave
them legitimacy and opened the way for them to influence the network from within. For
emaciated as Kahane’s ideas of what the Jewishness of Israel meant were, they outlived and
outgrew Kahane himself. Now in their “acceptable” form within the ideational network,
they combined with ideas of security to form a new and more substantial threat to Israel’s
democracy more than a decade later. At the same time, to accommodate the new
compromise, the idea of democracy adapted by becoming thinner, more majoritarian and
technical, while shedding some of its liberal links. In this form, it could subordinate Jewish
identity for the time being, and enable the period of liberalization to extend further, albeit
in a limited form. And yet, this thinner version of democracy also carried the seeds of its
subsequent decline.

**Figure 2:** Prevalence of the phrase "Jewish and democratic" in Hebrew publications, 1930-2009. (Source: Google Books NGram Viewer)

Were Kahane’s ideas not planted at that time, or had they remained the purchase of obscure fringes of Israeli society rather than plunging into Israeli consciousness as they did, Israel’s slow process of liberalization may have continued unimpeded. Yet it is important to remember that it is this process of liberalization that led to the very concretization of the idea of Jewish identity in the ideational network, and that ultimately brought about liberalization’s retrenchment. The interactions within the ideational network continuously serve to limit changes to it and absorb shocks, before they can create substantial institutional change.

As it were, Kahane provided the Israeli public with the ideational tools to reject the integration of Jews and Arabs into a closer Israeli society. This exacerbated disillusionment among the Arab minority with any hopes for true equality, leading to a more emphasized Palestinianization of Arab Israeli citizens, which, in turn, led to the stronger linking of Arab-Israelis to the actions and fate of their Palestinian brethren in the West Bank and Gaza in
the view of the Jewish Israeli public, which will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

In the following pages we shall examine the ideational contributions of both Kahane and Muhammad Mi’ari, leader of the Palestinian nationalist Progressive Movement which achieved representation in the Knesset as part of the Progressive List for Peace (PLP). We will then turn to analyze the political elite’s response to these ideational changes. This response established a new ethnic-democratic compromise, in the form of an institutional adaptation: an amendment to the Basic Law: The Knesset that gave the Central Elections Committee (CEC) the power to ban parties from running in the elections. Finally, we will discuss why this institutional change failed to address the underlying ideational challenges that prompted it in the long run, and the ideational processes that were set in motion by both the new ideas and the institutional response to them.

**THE IDEATIONAL FIELD**

**Meir Kahane**

When Meir Kahane arrived in Israel in 1971, he was already on probation in the US following his involvement in violent activities as leader of the Jewish Defense League (JDL) – an organization formed to protect Jews from antisemitism through vigilantism, and which quickly also took on the goal of freeing the Soviet Union’s Jews by attacking Russian targets in the US. Even after he immigrated to Israel, taking up Aliya (Jewish immigration to Israel) as a new core value of his organization, he continued instigating acts of violence in the US, for which he was arrested in Israel in 1973 and received a suspended sentence, and again in the US in 1975, when he was sentenced to one year imprisonment (Cohen-Almagor 1994, 155–156).
Immediately after his arrival in Israel, he formed the Israeli chapter of the JDL, along with its political arm, Kach, and began campaigning for the “consensual” emigration of Arab citizens from Israel. While he was courted by both Herut and the NRP, Kahane declined their entreaties and chose to run to the Knesset on his own platform in 1973 (Pedahzur 2012, 64), receiving just over 0.8% of the vote – equivalent to one seat’s worth, but not enough to clear the 1% threshold. He ran again in 1977 and 1981, receiving approximately one quarter of a percent of the votes in each round. In 1981 a formal request was made to the CEC to disqualify the party due to its racist platform, which included *inter alia* calls for the formation of Jewish vigilante groups to terrorize Arab citizens (i.e. “Terror Against Terror”; Weinblum 2015, 43). The request was rejected since the CEC determined it did not have the authority to disqualify a party for such reasons, and the request received little public attention (Pedahzur 2004, 80–81). The strategy of ignoring Kahane and his organization was proving itself. In 1984, however, Kach quintupled its votes and squeaked in with 1.2% of the vote. Several explanations were offered to this sudden change in the party’s electoral fortunes: Some have suggested that Kahane was carried on the waves of fear brought by the prolonged war in Lebanon (Cohen-Almagor 1994, 162–163), despite the lack of involvement of the Arab-Israeli population in any hostilities; another explanation pointed to the resignation of Menachem Begin from his leadership position, which left many Mizrahi-Jewish voters without a leader who spoke directly to them, a position that Kahane was quick to take up, partly since his plans for the Arab population promised to remove a significant economic threat to the largely lower class Mizrahi population (Pedahzur 2012, 67); finally, the decision to ban Kach from the elections by the
Election Committee, which was reversed by the Supreme Court,\textsuperscript{117} may have placed the party more squarely in the public eye, adding to its anti-institutionalist appeal. This latter explanation is corroborated by the leap in Kach’s strength in polls shortly after the elections, which saw the party gaining the equivalent of seven seats in the Knesset (although by 1986 the party has descended to within statistical margin of error of its original strength) (Maariv 1986).\textsuperscript{118}

Kahane’s ideology was anchored in radical interpretations of Jewish scripture (Cohen-Almagor 1994, 165–166). It saw the Jewish people as unique, and their claim for the Land of Israel as dependent on their commitment to the role intended for them by God. Kahane explicitly rejected democracy for a principled reason and a practical one. In principle, he viewed democracy as a foreign influence, which goes against the teaching of Jewish law. This reasoning, however, was actively hidden from his secular target audiences (Pedahzur 2012, 66). The rational presented to them was far more practical, and relied on a quintessentially liberal understanding of democracy, in line with his personal background growing up in the United States: a democracy, argued Kahane, cannot take any steps that will prevent the Arab minority from ever becoming a majority, thus putting an end to Israel as a Jewish state. Anyone who objects to this possible eventuality, therefore, must object to

\textsuperscript{117} EA 2/84 Neiman vs. the Central Elections Committee for the 11\textsuperscript{th} Knesset (1984).

\textsuperscript{118} It is also telling that 	extit{Moledet}, led by Rehav’am Ze’evi, which has called for transfer of the Arab population from Israel, and therefore should have benefitted most from the banning of Kach, only gained two seats in 1988, when it first ran for elections, and peaked at three seats in 1992. While Ze’evi did not have the charisma of Kahane, he did enjoy the appeal of his background as a general in the IDF, as well as greater support among the settler movement. Claiming, as some supporters of Kahane do (e.g., Kahane 2003), that he was banned because he was on the verge of gaining a large number of seats, flies in the face of available evidence. A poll conducted by Peled (1990) before the party was banned from running found Kahane enjoyed the support of three percent of the Jewish public, or approximately 2.5 percent of the total population, equivalent to three Knesset seats. Other pre-elections polls published in the media also predicted 3-4 seats for the party (Pedahzur 2004, 84). It should be noted that 	extit{Kach} also saw a rise in pre-election polls prior to its 1984 banning (Cohen-Almagor 1997, 68).
democracy itself.\textsuperscript{119} Kahane, in other words, merely expressed the inherent tension between two key ideas in Israel’s identity, and took the concept of defensive democracy to its logical conclusion.

In its decision to ban \textit{Kach}, the Central Elections Committee (CEC) wrote that “the list upholds racist and anti-democratic principles which contradict the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, openly supports terrorist activity, strives to incite hatred and hostility between different parts of the population in Israel, intends to hurt religious feelings and values of some of the state’s citizens and rejects in its goals the pillars of Israel’s democratic regime. Realization of the principles of this list would be a danger both to the democratic regime in Israel and may bring about the collapse of public order.”\textsuperscript{120} The court ultimately reversed the decision arguing that this description was custom made to fit the requirements set in the Yardor precedent, and that the party’s goals, reprehensible as they may be, cannot be said to lead to the destruction of the State of Israel. Israel, therefore, had no legal recourse to prevent a party from participating simply because its platform was anti-democratic. This decision reaffirms the argument made above, i.e., that the Yardor decision, which established Israel as a “defensive democracy,” did not view this form of regime as one which protects democracy itself, but as one where democracy is subordinated to the protection of the ethnic aspects of ethnic democracy.

Despite its decision, and ever aware that arguments based on the idea of democracy alone are not likely to resonate with the public, the court has taken upon itself to devote a lengthy discussion to explain not merely that \textit{Kach}’s values oppose Israel’s democratic

\textsuperscript{119} LPA C 4-39-1981-65, undated letter from MK Meir Kahane on “Referendum – Jewish State of Western Democracy.”

\textsuperscript{120} Quoted in EA 2/84 Neiman.
values, but also that they militate against Jewish values. It also implored the legislature to create legal tools that would make it possible in the future to ban a party such as *Kach*.

**Muhammad Mi’ari**

Muhammad Mi’ari was for many the mirror image of Kahane. Born in a village that was destroyed in the *Naqba* (“the disaster” – the word used by Palestinians to describe the war of 1948 and its aftermath), Mi’ari was a member of Mapam’s Arab Pioneer Youth Movement. But as an adult he was disillusioned with hopes of cooperating with the Zionist movement. He was among the founders of Al Ard and a candidate for the Socialist List that was disqualified from running in the elections in 1965. Subsequently, he maintained ties with the Communist Party and its successor, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE). However, in the early 1980s he felt the Arab population needed a political alternative to the communists, a movement that has “a distinctly Palestinian color and identity rather than having it submerged in the overall democratic struggle” (Miari and Bishara 1984, 38), and formed the Progressive Movement.

Miari first considered running for elections under that banner alone, but soon decided his movement will gain more traction if it would appeal also to Jews, and possibly also believed a joint Arab-Jewish list would be better protected from the fate of the Socialists Party (Lustick 1990, 117). Israel’s first ever nationalist Palestinian party, despite its outright calls for the dissolution of Israel as a Jewish state, then, still saw Jewish support as a valuable goal. He teamed up with Mati Peled, a former Major General and veteran of the 1967 war turned peace activist, whose organization, “Alternative”, was among the chief opponents to the Lebanon War. Together they formed and led the Progressive List for Peace (PLP) which called for a full withdrawal from the occupied territories and full
equality for Arab citizens in Israel, turning Israel from the state of the Jews to the state of all its citizens.

On the eve of the intifada, Mi’ari brought back to the forefront of Israeli politics the link between the Arab minority within Israel and the Arab peoples outside of it, primarily the Palestinian people. Mi’ari explicitly supported Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people and called on Israel to hold talks with him. This, only a short time after the Israeli government went to war against the PLO in Lebanon following a terrorist attack (despite knowing this attack was carried out by a different faction of the Palestinian resistance movement) (Mann 1998, 3). Within the Jewish-Israeli ideational field, Mi’ari emphasized the link between the perceived threat from the Palestinians in the occupied territories and beyond and the Arab minority in Israel, enabling a reengagement of the security discourse within internal politics in Israel.

Like Kach, and possibly with the intention of “balancing” the disqualification of Kach (Cohen-Almagor 1997, 68), the PLP was also disqualified by the CEC, arguing that “there are subversive elements and trends in this list, and central people within it identify with enemies of the state... The majority of committee members were convinced that this list upholds principles that endanger the existence of the State of Israel, and its uniqueness as a Jewish state in accordance with the pillars of the state as they were expressed in the declaration of independence and the Law of Return.”¹²¹ Unlike in the case of Kach, however, the court did not reject the rational for the banning in the case of the PLP, but rather argued that these accusations were simply not supported by any information brought before the CEC itself. Indeed, the original notice sent by the committee explained that the decision was

¹²¹ Quoted in EA 2/84 Neiman.
based on the deposition of Major General Avigdor Ben-Gal, and “information presented before the Defense Minister”, implying that the information was not presented directly before the CEC. The court, therefore, said that if the description given by the CEC could be proven, it would be sufficient to justify banning the party, but no such proof was presented to the CEC, and as such its decision making process was deficient. As in the case of Kach, the attempt to ban the PLP has likely benefitted the party and gave it both more public credit and more public attention among its target audience (Yerushalmi 1984).

Both parties were allowed to contend the elections. Kach won a single seat for Kahane, whereas the PLP won two, allowing both Mi’ari and Peled to become Members of Knesset. The increased public attention to both parties, and their ultimate successful bid for the Knesset, has coloured a substantial part of the political debate during the life of a Knesset most defined by inaction and gridlock within the Labour-Likud “national unity” coalition. But while attention was focused on the uncoalitionable extremes of the political spectrum, a remarkable process was taking place within a party that has been a part of every coalition in Israel, the very epitome of centrist pragmatism: the National Religious Party.

**The Realignment of the National Religious Party**

Far from the centre of attention, another ideational process was taking place within the NRP which eventually had a significant impact on the Israeli ideational field and political history. The NRP, once a stalwart ally of Mapai, was undergoing a transformation that by the end of the 11th Knesset had landed it to the right of the Likud. This ideational transformation taking place within its ranks was a re-alignment and the forging of a novel
link between the ideas of Jewish identity and security, which was tilting the balance of power away from democratic values.

Shortly after the 1967 war, groups within the NRP began to push for settlement of the territories occupied by Israel. *Gush Emunim*, as they came to be known, became a major force within the settlement movement. This movement did not go against the wishes of Mapai, however. In those early decades of the occupation, Mapai and its successor parties took pride in building settlements themselves.\(^{122}\) But while Labour settlements were mainly in the circumference of the territories, in strategic locations, the NRP’s settlements were more religiously motivated in their geographic choices (Pedahzur 2012, 33–34).

But alongside Likud’s rise within the general public in Israel, the NRP was going through an internal realignment. In 1984 the party still held on to its centrist position on security issues, leading to its fragmentation. *Morasha* splintered to the right, claiming the NRP refused to represent the national-religious public’s nationalist values (Mendilow 2003, 120–121). The party, already reeling from its electoral results in 1981 which saw it losing half its strength, lost two more seats, for a total of four seats won in 1984. By 1988 “the old and dovish leaders of the [NRP] were replaced by [settler] network activists,” and the party became committed to the settlement project and a nationalist ideology (Pedahzur 2012, 96; Grunfeld 2005). The party espoused a new vision of Jewish religion that was firmly tied into language of security and defense, transforming its creed from “*Torah ve’avoda*” (Torah and labour) to “*Torah ve’tzava*” (Torah and army).

\(^{122}\) In one elections ad published ahead of the 1973 elections, the Labour party boasted being responsible for 26 settlements, with NRP-affiliated groups building 12 settlements, and only 4 settlements formed by Likud-affiliated groups (private collection).
This transformation became the basis for a new alliance between the NRP and Likud – an alliance that would bring forth a new identity for the right wing as a whole, combining nationalist and religious ideals to form a new conception of security that would threaten democratic principles in a way that Kahane, who posed Jewish identity directly against democracy without incorporating issues of security, never could. And yet Kahane’s ideas proved crucial for the formation of this new identity.

**BANNING EXTREMIST PARTIES FROM THE KNESSET**

The Knesset took several routes in attacking the problem posed by Kahane, and most were mirrored by actions taken against Mi’ari as well (Shamir 1990). The Knesset limited his MK privileges, his bills were denied by the Speaker of the house, and two pieces of legislation were passed for the express purpose of preventing Kahane from spreading his views. One was the anti-racism law, an amendment to the penal code which made publication of incitement for violence punishable by a prison sentence of up to five years. This law defines racism as “the persecution, humiliation, degradation or hostility towards a public, or causing hostility between parts of the population, as well as acts of hostility or violence, all due to membership in a race, nation or religion” (Penal Code, 5735/1977, section A1: incitement for racism). The law explicitly excludes religious acts or quotes from scriptures from this definition.\(^{123}\)

The second piece of legislation was the introduction to Israel’s constitutional framework of a new mechanism for banning parties from participating in the elections on

\(^{123}\) This exclusion was added for fear that common Jewish prayers, such as the morning prayer in which Jews say thanks for not being made a gentile, and other parts of Jewish tradition, may be cited as acts of racism by this definition.
substantive grounds. The amendment, passed in 1985, added a new section 7a to the Basic Law: The Knesset, which stipulated three reasons for disqualifying lists from running in the elections: 124

(1) Rejecting the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people;

(2) Rejecting the democratic character of the state;

(3) Incitement to racism.

One substantial change between the original phrasing of the bill and the one eventually enacted was the contents of subsection (1). The original phrasing was “rejecting the existence of the State as stated in the Declaration of Independence.” This more open to interpretation format had been deemed too vague by the Knesset, and was eventually changed. However, it is interesting to note that the possible interpretations offered by the Members of Knesset ranged from “Israel as the state of the Jews” to “Israel as the state of all its citizens, with a Jewish majority.” 125 This range, as we will see below, characterized and coloured the elite debate on the correct balance between democracy and Jewish identity throughout the period and into the next decade. 126

The bill, tabled by the government, argued in its explanatory note that “it is clear that the state has a right and even a duty to fight against those who wish to destroy it or the

124 Originally, the bill also included an additional reason for disqualification – the reasonable suspicion that the list will be used as a cover for illegal acts, but this article was later dropped.

125 EA 2/88, Yehoram Ben Shalom v. The Central Elections Committee for the 12th Knesset. Notably, no such debate took place about the vague use of the term “democratic character”, which is also lacking a clear definition.

126 It is also interesting to note that Justice Levine, in his minority ruling on the appeal to the CEC’s decision, described these views as “polar opposites”.

pillars of its regime... The suggested amendment expresses the idea of a defensive democracy, and provides a tool for the protection of the state and its core values from those who wish to undermine the state from within.”

The section was amended a number of times: once in the late 1990s to allow the disqualification of parties in municipal elections - a move that was criticized as overreaching the defensive democracy justification in light of the unlikelihood of any damage to the existence or the regime of the state by elected officials at the municipal level (Shamir and Margal 2005, 127); and again in 2002, to rephrase the existing causes for disqualification and add support of armed struggle against the state to the list, as well as to add a new tool allowing for the disqualification of individual candidates on a list (see below, chapter 8).

Ultimately, not a single party has been disqualified by the court from running in the elections since 1992 (although several were disqualified by the CEC and the decisions were overturned by the court), and never has any party been disqualified according to Clause 7a article (1) (i.e., due to its rejection of Israel as a Jewish state). This, despite perennial attempts to disqualify both Arab and extreme-right parties, and rephrasings of the law intended to make it easier to ban anti-Zionist parties, which saw the wording of the clause grow from 32 to 122 words. The Supreme Court has kept its guard over Israel’s democratic principles of fair and free elections, reinterpreting the clauses as subordinate to principles of balancing and imminent danger so as to dismiss calls for the banning of uncoalitionable parties (Rottman 2013; Cohen-Almagor 1997).

127 State of Israel Records: Bills 1728, April 17, 1985, p. 194. As before, the concept of “defensive democracy” is extended to include protection of the state and its values, rather than simply its regime type.
A Balancing Act

The balancing of “the two extremes” has been an important factor in the development and justification of section 7a. The very decision by the CEC to disqualify Kach in 1984, despite its decision to the contrary in 1981, was explained in part by the existence of a balance in the form of the disqualification of the PLP (Pedahzur 2004, 81–82). Similarly, debates within the Grand Coalition government formed in 1984 about the means to stop Kahane were always phrased in terms of a balance between the two extreme parties, and the Likud even posed this balance as a basic demand for them to support any legislation on the matter, despite the fact that the right-wing parties themselves were eager to disqualify Kach no less than were the parties on the left.128

The view that Kahane and Mi’ari are mirror images was also used to explain that the outright rejection of the PLP and DFPE was not a rejection of the Arabs per se, just as the rejection of Kach was not a rejection of the Jews.129 Labour leader Shimon Peres even went so far as to call his party “a Jewish and Arab party”,130 and chastised the PLP for demanding that they commit to supporting full equality between Jews and Arabs, saying that the Labour party does not need the PLP’s stamp of approval.

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128 There is a degree of irony in this insistence on balance on account of the Likud’s own experience with being placed in a similar role when Ben-Gurion declared he seeks a wide coalition with most parties but “without Herut [Likud’s predecessor] and ICP”. As early as 1949, Ben-Gurion explained that “all parties are acceptable [for coalition talks] that are loyal to the principle of Zionism and democracy” (Mann 1998, 55) – which is extraordinarily close to the phrasing of clause 7a, particularly in its later phrasing of “Jewish and democratic”. Furthermore, while the difference between the ethno-religious definition of “Jewish” and the ideological (and therefore more inclusive) definition of “Zionist” is important, this also sharpens the difference between the 1985 and the 2002 phrasings, as “Israel as the state of the Jews” is a core tenet of Zionism, whereas the term “Jewish state” is more open to interpretations that can grow farther from the original ideology, as it indeed had.

129 Although this view was by no means universal. Likud MK Uzi Landau candidly explained during one caucus meeting that the only danger he sees from Kahane was as a catalyst for the PLP’s propaganda. JA H2 42/2, November 27, 1984, meeting of the Likud caucus.

It cannot be denied, however, that a sincere change has taken place in the 1970s, perhaps less visible in the actions taken in favour of the Arab minority, but clearly visible in the type of language that was used by Labour to address and woo them. If before, the choice was between maintaining the separate identities through isolation, or full assimilation of the Arab citizens into Israeli society through the shedding of their collective identity, now a new pluralist integrationist compromise was described. For example, shortly before the elections, during a meeting of the Labour party's Centre (general assembly), Peres promised that a Labour-led government “shall cultivate friendship with our Arab and Druze citizens; offer the Arab and Druze citizens, without blurring their identity, to integrate into society and identify with the needs of the state.”

In fact, the Labour party was even concerned that its language towards the Arab minority could be seen negatively among the Jewish population, leading it to include a segment in a Q&A pamphlet distributed before the elections addressing this issue:

Q: Excuse me, but if you don’t mind, I get the feeling you really like the Arabs.

A: This is not a matter of liking... There's a difference between ‘Arab loving’ (and after all there's no room for generalizations here) - and respecting their rights. He who chooses to live in a democratic state must respect also the rights of minorities to equality of rights and full protection by the law.

One might wonder why this question is even warranted in a pamphlet that also warns that “the Likud's way will lead us, through the years, to a state in which the majority of the

\[131\] LPA 2-23-1984-126 A, April 5, 1984, meeting of the party centre, p. 37, emphasis added.

\[132\] LPA 4-30-1984-29, undated, “Peace and Security: Direct Questions, Straight Answers”. 
citizens are not Jews.”¹³³ But this is an indication of the lines of equivalence that already began to appear with the entrenchment of the two-block political landscape in Israel in the 1970s, which identify the left-wing with the Arabs (and terrorism) and the right-wing with Jewishness (and security). Even as the Likud argued that it supports equal rights for the Arab citizens no less than the Labour party, the latter nevertheless found itself forced to balance its support for Arab equality with calls for increased security. Thus, for example, during a meeting of the Likud caucus on September 9, 1985, minister without portfolio Sarah Doron exclaimed that “damage is caused because of leftist organizations to our fight against terrorism. They are encouraging terrorism... The Alignment [Labour party] is also very much to blame because it does not put an end to one-sided talks from its ranks.”¹³⁴ The media was similarly blamed for these leftist tendencies by Doron.

That this sentiment was widespread was echoed by MK Moshe Shahal in his speech to the Labour Party Centre before the 1984 elections, arguing that “democracy over the last three years was in constant danger... Constantly they tried to take away the opposition's legitimacy, constantly they tried to take away the legitimacy of the different opinion, the dissenting opinion, as though it was guided by foreign interests. Every day there was talk of a knife stabbed in the back of the nation, of poisoned wells and so forth abhorrent terms... Not only the opposition was targeted... but also the free press, it too was attacked as traitorous and serving foreign interests.”¹³⁵

¹³³ Ibid. Emphasis in original.
¹³⁴ JA H-2 34/2, September 9, 1985, meeting of the Likud caucus management.
Labour’s sudden need to prove its commitment to Jewishness, while also mitigating attacks from the Arab minority on its commitment to Arab equality, found the answer in drawing a new line connecting “Jewish” and “democratic”, by placing an emphasis on the idea of a Jewish majority. This new balance allowed Labour to attack the Likud as endangering Zionist ideals by insisting on “Greater Israel” – the annexation (or, at the very least, continued occupation) of the West Bank and Gaza as historically part of the Kingdom of David. This line of attack featured in the platform on security issues devised by the Labour Party in its 4th convention in 1986, where it stated the first goal for Israel in conducting peace talks is “maintaining of the State of Israel as a Jewish democratic state with a large and stable Jewish majority, while maintaining full equality of rights for all its citizens, Jews and non-Jews.”\textsuperscript{136} It is important to notice that this wholly internal issue is raised in the context of peace talks with other countries, raising once again the ties between the Arab minority in Israel and the occupied Palestinians beyond the Green Line.

This clause was at the centre of a heated debate engaging many of the leaders of the Labour party, which revealed the scope of the ideational field as far as the balance between Israel’s commitment to its Arab minority and its Jewish identity was concerned. One instance of this debate took place in a meeting of the preparatory committee for the convention:\textsuperscript{137}


\textsuperscript{137} The following quotes are all from LPA 2-21-1986-147 A, March 23, 1986, minutes of the preparatory committee for the 4th Convention.
Peres: I suggest it appears as in the declaration of independence:

"maintaining the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and the citizens living in it."

This formula, suggested by Prime Minister Peres, is a bold attempt to find a compromise between the commitment of Zionist dogma to the notion of Israel as the state of the entire Jewish people, including those of it who do not live in Israel, and the formula promoted by the PLP, or "a state of all its citizens". This latter, while it adheres to democratic ideals of sovereignty, has been interpreted by most Jews as the end of Israel and its replacement with a Palestinian state. Peres tried to have his cake and eat it too by being doubly inclusive in his phrasing. However, his party members were quick to reject this formula, if only for its intended vagueness.

Harish: [This clause] is the demographic principle, [it] is the entire purpose of the State of Israel. If we omit the matter of a large and stable majority, we omit a very important principle. Does the PM's [Peres] suggestion keep the words "a large and stable majority"?

Peres: "...while maintaining full equality of rights to all citizens, Jews as well as non-Jews."

Hillel: There are two elements here, the issue of democracy and the issue of the Jewish people. The State of Israel was formed to be a state for the Jewish people wherever it may be. There is a commitment to full equality for all residents. Beyond that, it is the state of the Jewish people, and in 1948 we

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138 Contrary to his claim, however, this phrasing does not appear in the declaration of independence, although it could charitably be said to be an interpretation of its meaning.
didn't ask to form a state for the Arab residents living in it. I suggest in this matter we do not change but settle for relying on the declaration of independence.

While Harish places an emphasis on the demographic aspect, which in his view allows Israel to be inclusively democratic without jeopardizing its Jewishness, Hillel takes a more classic, Ben-Gurionesque position that refuses any inclusion of the Arabs at all. Clearly, Eshkol’s view of Jewishness did not become hegemonic within the party. But even among those who cannot abide by an exclusionary Zionism, democracy is only practicable if Israel ensures it results in a decision within a predefined field; in essence, that the democratic sovereignty of the people is subordinate to the sovereignty of the Jewish people as an idea.

Several other members voiced support or opposition to Peres' phrasing, until Yadlin again focused the debate.

_Yadlin:_ I'm in favour of this phrasing. We want to run against the Likud, against trends for annexation that turn the State of Israel into a bi-national state, against trends of annexation that endanger the Jewish majority in the State of Israel. Of course we wanted to secure full rights for all citizens. I'm not sure if the declaration of independence leaves room for any other phrasing. We could say "Jewish state" instead of "state of the Jewish people". I'm in favour of the phrasing as it appears in the document.

_Bahat:_ We're unnecessarily conflating two things. The term "of the Jewish people" is to state the _raison d'état_ of the State of Israel. It’s a state of the Jewish people wherever it may be. This is not up for negotiation. This
segment must appear in the decisions of the convention regardless of the negotiations. What's relevant for the negotiations is maintaining the State of Israel as a democratic state with a Jewish majority. The whole beginning of the sentence is unnecessary. We can start in section 1 that will say "maintaining the State of Israel as a democratic state with a large and stable Jewish majority."

Bahat's practical solution is essentially to ignore the problem by excluding Jewish identity altogether from the definition, and allowing the Jewish majority itself to determine the Jewish nature of the state. Of course, one might ask how the state can set the maintaining of a “stable Jewish majority” as a goal if it does not define itself as a Jewish state. But Bahat’s emphasis on the practicality of the solution allows him to rely on the implicit understanding that Israel is a Jewish state, without having to declare it, in essence trying to preserve the previous status of the idea of Jewish identity as an invisible shadow, rather than a concrete part of the state institutions. It is debateable whether that option was realistic at the time. The other members, however, reject this solution.

*Ramon:* In the argument with the Likud they wanted to take out the residents of the State of Israel and leave only the Jews. This must not be repeated here.

*Peres:* I suggest we also mention Arab citizens. If it says "a democratic state with a stable Jewish majority", will that be OK?

*Harish:* The sentence as it is now, about a large and stable Jewish majority, in terms of propaganda it's actually the fight against annexation. That's how it will be read, I think. If it's not spelled out specifically, we can also talk about 45%-55%. For the Arabs there is section 2. That's the political chapter of the
subject. On the equality of rights for residents of the state, there’s X chapters
dealing with that. Here we’re talking about goals for negotiations for peace,
and we looked for a formula that allows us to set a political goal and also
explain it to the Jewish population of Israel. This emphasis, I would not
soften. With this formula we’ll have to fight for the Israeli public opinion so
that it supports us in the battle for peace.

Peres: By the time you won over the Likud you lost a great deal of your
voters. Say you’re an Arab citizen. Why should you? We can go with what
Bahat suggested, a Jewish state with a stable majority. We don’t need the
word "large".

Realizing the endemic contradiction in the task the committee has taken upon itself,
Peres agrees to Bahat’s practical solution, but is again thwarted by his fellow members.

Namir: I don’t understand what values I’ve been raised on in the State of
Israel. I was taught that we came here to build a Jewish state. Is there a
withdrawal from our statement that we came to Israel to build the State of
the Jews? In my view, I don’t think it’s the same thing. Why should we go
back on our statement that the State of Israel is the state of the Jews?

Peres: Did your parents not raise you to believe we shouldn’t deport the
Arabs? There are 700,000 Arabs in the country, what about them?

Hillel: We explain every time to all sorts of representatives of the world. I tell
them that all the citizens in the State of Israel are equal before the law, but
the State of Israel was formed to be the state of the Jewish people wherever
it may be... An Ethiopian Jew who was in his state for 3000 years, belongs to
the State of Israel. Nevertheless, somebody else who lives in the State of Israel, his rights are secured, but nothing more. If we wish to give up on that...

Peres: We're not giving up. It's written in the declaration of independence.

Amir: Whoever gives up on the term "state of the Jews", "state of the Jewish people where all the citizens will have full democratic rights", is giving up our rights according to the Law of Return. We mustn't give up this formula. The Law of Return is part of the declaration of independence. You can't create two citizens, one to whom the state belongs, and the other to whom it doesn't. The State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, that is Jews who don't live in Israel. We must say: "maintain the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with a stable Jewish majority and full rights equality to its Jewish and non-Jewish citizens".

Hillel: You omit the word "large", you annex territories.

Bar-Zohar: The word "large" has to be included. Otherwise we might as well accept the views of the Likud.

In this exchange, the dramatic ideational shift taking place is made plainly visible. Namir, Hillel, and Amir represent the Mapai-era perceptions of democracy and the Jewish character of Israel as easily reconcilable. Peres, however, highlights the contradictions that have come to light within the ideational network through developments in both the idea of democracy and demographic reality: simply relying on the majority status of the Jewish people is not enough to reconcile Israel’s democracy and its Jewish character. He is looking
for a new institutional formulation that will balance the two without undermining the essential elements of ethnic democracy.

But even as the ideological debate rages, some members of the committee insist on a pragmatic view, even raising issues of public relations before the international community. Nevertheless, the solution they propose is again in making the state’s Jewish character invisible in the official statements, thus enabling it to have a far stronger impact than any public phrasing can allow it to be:

*Leket:* There’s an argument here that’s not even a storm in a tea-cup. There is much sense in the comment made by the PM saying that the only thing that’s translated throughout the world is the chapter on foreign affairs, and there it will be said that Israel is the state of the Jewish people. It will be written in many chapters and many times. These decisions in this chapter will be in the hand of all the socialist parties around the world and in all the other places. These are the goals for negotiations. What are we offering: that we say a Jewish democratic state with a majority and so forth. Why do we need all this debate? Inserting here what is known by its definition, that’s not part of the chapter on negotiations. It will be wiser to find a phrasing that says a Jewish state and not necessarily here. This term appears in twenty other places in the decisions. I suggest we accept Bahat’s proposal.

*Bahat:* I did not suggest to omit. On the contrary. That the State of Israel is the state of the Jewish people, that’s not a goal for negotiations. That has to appear by itself, elsewhere. Here it is not necessary.
Peres attempts a new formula to untangle the ideological knot, only to find himself faced with a new conundrum:

**Peres:** I suggest like so: "The goals of Israel in negotiations for peace are: a. ensuring the Jewish and democratic character of the State of Israel as having a large and stable Jewish majority while securing full equal rights to its Jewish and non-Jewish citizens." That's the goal of negotiations, to ensure its Jewish and democratic character.

**Leket:** What's Jewish character? Trains on Sabbath or no trains on Sabbath?

**Hillel:** What's Jewish character?

**Tzadok:** I suggest the PM does not back away from his previous suggestion. In committee we discussed the question of the Jewish character, and for reasons I don't wish to repeat we agreed it's not the right term. I support the PM's proposal that says "maintaining the State of Israel as a Jewish democratic state... and as having a large and stable Jewish majority while keeping full equal rights for its citizens, Jews and non-Jews".

Peres insists on clarifying what it is that is Jewish about Israel, yet is fellow party members refuse to concretize this definition. Oddly, it is his opponents phrasing that leave the meaning of the state's Jewishness vague, and yet attack his phrasing for re-opening the debate on the meaning of Israel's Jewishness. This can only be reconciled by understanding their argument as saying that by concretizing Jewishness in a certain meaning, Labour will open itself up for opposition from those who wish Israel's Jewishness to be more religiously inspired. Maintaining the meaning of Jewishness vague allows Labour more flexibility in negotiating, not with the Arab world, but with its fellow Jewish parties who
seek to concretize Jewishness in other ways. They fear that Peres’ formulation, rather than
shift the Israeli ideational network, would merely strengthen the logic of equivalence that
pits Labour against Jewishness altogether. They prefer the short term benefits of aligning
the party platform with the ideational network, over the potential long term benefits from
attempting to refashion the Israeli ideational network in a way that will be more in line
with novel trends within Labour’s internal ideational networks.

Amit: The subject we’re arguing about isn’t part of the negotiations. We all
agree the State of Israel is the state of the Jewish people. It doesn’t matter if
there’s a clear majority or not. That’s not a matter for negotiations.

Libai: This says what the Labour party is aiming for. There’s one side that
wants a Greater Israel, and another side that says it wants in the Land of
Israel a Jewish democratic state.

As can be seen from this debate, there was little agreement within the Labour party
about what “Jewish and democratic” means. The differences, however, manifested in how
this Jewishness should be concretized in the quasi-institutional party platform, and
ultimately in more formal institutions such as international treaties.

Security issues were not raised throughout this debate. Nowhere in the document
are any internal security issues even raised (although, of course, such issues are raised with
regard to threats from foreign countries, and the proposed solution to the Israeli-
Palestinian conflict includes demilitarizing the West Bank and Gaza). It would appear that
in the two decades since the abolition of the military government, the Labour party has
abandoned any suspicions of a substantial security threat from Israel’s Arab minority.
However, at the same time, the very notion of “threat” has been changing, and the danger
was no longer physical, but metaphysical – a threat to the very identity of the state, and one in which democracy can be a destructive tool, hence the growing role of the idea of “defensive democracy” within the ideational network. Defensive democracy creates a logic of equivalence that pits democracy against security, while creating a positive link between security and Jewish identity. By embracing the idea of defensive democracy, while at the same time conceptualizing democracy through liberal principles, Labour was setting itself up for failure. The contradictions between the two perspectives were sure to rise to the surface soon, and indeed they have.

The difference between Likud and the majority view within Labour was therefore a difference in degree and not a difference in kind. This points exactly to the argument made by Kahane: that a true liberal democracy cannot act to prevent a minority from becoming a majority. Certainly there are no means by which a democratic Israel can ensure a “stable” Jewish majority.139 The solutions offered by Labour merely postpone the inevitable, while giving Israel more time to maintain its appearance of democracy. These solutions revolve around a conceptualization of democracy as a strictly majoritarian form of electoral democracy. They are also curiously opposed to the liberal view of democracy expressed by Moshe Shahal: far from viewing democratic liberties as essential for enabling the minority to become a majority through free and peaceful deliberation, the commitment to the equal rights of the Arab minority is contingent on their inability to challenge the Zionist character

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139 As of 2014, the Jewish majority in Israel stands at approximately 75% (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014). Were it not for the influx of some one millions Jews from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, this majority would today be below 70%.
of the regime in any way. As soon as the threat of actual change will be tangible, however, these liberties will be at risk.\footnote{These conclusions are similar to the logic which subsequently led the CEC to reject the disqualification of the PLP ahead of the next elections.}

This conundrum led to an increasingly vague definition of democracy as it was used in public discourse, even as this very debate became more pronounced; as members of the public found themselves speaking up for democracy, they also found themselves at a loss to conceptualize what it is beyond elections, without committing to full equal rights. Instead, they reached for a variety of vaguely positive values such as civility. In a panel in the Knesset on education to democracy, one speaker, Shmuel Haramati from the ministry of education, became exasperated with the debate and said “It’s hard for me to understand what’s the link between the things that were mentioned here and the issue of democracy - politeness, culture, attentiveness. These things have been discussed for many years. Maybe we failed in that. We might even blame this house for what youth sees etc. Until a year or a year and a half ago, many things were discussed, without placing it under the word democracy. There’s a bit of a blurring of concepts such as politeness, culture, attentiveness, respect for one’s fellow’s words. I’m not sure the definition is clear.”\footnote{LPA 4-39-1981-65, March 19, 1985, “Minutes from a seminar on: imparting democratic customs in the education system; discussion group A: the political environment and education for democracy.”}

Democracy's nature as a process of peaceful deliberation between conflicting views was further blurred by the grand “Unity Coalition” formed in 1984 and the discourse it inspired. Abba Eban went to some lengths to try and prevent this blurring of democratic principles during a debate before the coalition was formed, saying that “the very term at the heart of the concept [of a unity government] is absurd... a strong confrontation
between diverging opinions is not a flaw but a virtue”. Nonetheless, he argued, the unity government is a necessary evil in light of the alternative. Yet his fears that unity will become a defining character of Israel’s understanding of democracy, that “this monstrous image” will be enshrined, have certainly come true. In 1985 Shimon Peres spoke before his party’s political committee and argued that “we mustn’t forget that in a democracy – the two blocks fight over the centre; we are not fighting over the fringes.” Grand coalitions became de rigueur in Israel, and the two largest parties sat together in a coalition again in 1988, and after a respite in the 1990s (see chapter 6), again in 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2013 (as well as a brief spell in 2012).

We see then how just as Jewishness was being concretized in the ideational network, democracy was becoming vaguer. This process is the result of the shifting of nodes and the reformulating of the network of links. The need to define what it means for the state to be Jewish inevitably revealed some of the contradictions between the two core ideas of democracy and Jewishness. In as much as ideas linked to democracy could not be subordinated to the idea of Jewishness, they had to be decoupled transformed into elements of the opposing chain of equivalences, thus further weakening the idea of democracy.

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143 LPA 2-21-1985-142, November 21, 1985, “Meeting of the political committee”.
144 In 2009 the two largest parties were the Likud and Likud splinter party Kadima, which refused to join the coalition. The government formed by Netanyahu in 2009, nonetheless, did include the much decimated Labour party which was the fourth largest party with 13 seats. Kadima joined the coalition between May and July 2012 following the replacement of its chairperson Tzipi Livni with Shaul Mofaz. In 2013 the second largest party was newcomer Yesh Atid, which joined Netanyahu’s third government. Labour, the third largest party, refused to join the coalition. In 2015 Labour, under the “Zionist Camp” banner, regained its status as the second largest party, but remained in the opposition to Netanyahu’s fourth government.
While political communication and practice blurred the meaning of democracy, anti-democracy was a far more clearly defined idea. For instance, in the declaration on the formation of the Knesset lobby for education for democracy, which refrained from defining what democracy entailed, but was comfortable in defining expressions of anti-democratic sentiment as including “racist ideas, intolerance to the opinions of political foes, degradation of the status of the Knesset and a yearning for a single ruler.” Since anti-democracy was most often mentioned in regards to Kahanism, it was often defined in terms of racism or intolerance. In one instance, Labour MK David Libai explained that communist parties, while not strictly speaking democratic, can function within a democratic framework, but this is not possible for racist parties, which “say there are those who are masters and those who are lessers”. This link between anti-democracy and racism was reinforced by the central place the Holocaust takes in the Jewish-Israeli ethos, and the lessons Israeli elites learned of the rise of Nazism in Germany.

Defining democracy through a logic of equivalence – through what it is not rather than what it is – allowed the political elites more flexibility as they fought over the meaning of Jewish identity and its position within the ideational network vis-à-vis ideas of democracy and security.

**Security**

While debates surrounding democratic values and the meaning of Israel’s “Jewish character” abounded in the time period surveyed, security issues were far less prevalent in

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146 LPA 4-39-1981-65 D, February 20, 1986, “Minutes of the meeting of the preparatory committee of the 4th convention”.

147 For a discussion of the place of the Holocaust in Jewish-Israeli thought, see below, chapter 6.
the discourse than before. Mentions of the Arab minority within Israel in these contexts were nearly non-existent, and appeared mainly within the discourse of the Likud. In a reversal of the role assigned to them in the 1960s, the Arab citizens of Israel in the 1980s were seen not as dependent on the behaviour of the Arab countries, but as reflecting, to use the phrase chosen by Shimon Peres,\textsuperscript{148} Israel's intentions for peace towards the Arab countries. However, it is precisely because of that that the Arabs continue to pose a threat to Israel, but of an altogether new sort: if Israel does not treat its Arab citizens well, “we will pay for this dearly, both ideologically and politically”.\textsuperscript{149} One can identify here an attempt to recruit the idea of security in favour of democratic ideals, in a way similar to formulations we have seen previously used by Mapam. However, this recasting of the ideational field failed to find purchase within the general ideational network.\textsuperscript{150} Instead, security issues, when they appeared at all, were either dismissed (e.g., by Rabin: “In favour of Israel's Arabs it should be said, that there were more Jewish spies than Arab-Israeli spies. No Arab Israelis have lent their hands to the problem of espionage”\textsuperscript{151}); or, more commonly, used to explain racism against Arabs (e.g., Ariel Sharon: “The Kahane problem will disappear when there will be security in the Land of Israel and when Jews will no longer be hurt, not through legislation”\textsuperscript{152}; Zachi Hanegbi: “If we wish to give the racism

\textsuperscript{148} LPA 2-21-1985-142, November 21, 1985, minutes of the first meeting of the state committee, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} This is hardly surprising, as this attempt was carried out within the framework described above of a democratic state ensuring a Jewish majority. In the speech in which Peres made the above statements, he also claimed, as one of the reasons for Labour's willingness to take risks for peace, that “we want to safeguard the Jewish character of Israel. And when I say Jewish character, I don't just mean the number of Jews, but also the content of Judaism” (Ibid).

\textsuperscript{151} LPA A 2-21-1986-153, April 12, 1986, “Rabin opposes national service for Arabs because “they will become ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’”.

\textsuperscript{152} LPA B 4-39-1981-65, August 8, 1985, “Sharon: The Kahane problem will disappear if there will be security”.
law any actual weight, the government must abandon immediately the absurd courting of 'moderate Palestinians' and fight terrorism relentlessly, anywhere and by any means"\(^{153}\) – although, again, even in these cases it is recognized that it is not the Israeli Arab citizens who are to blame for security problems.\(^{154}\)

Others, however, retained the “classic” idea of security, and went to great lengths to explain why the Arab citizens of Israel still posed a security threat. For example, the Likud’s Uriel Linn argued in one caucus meeting that any criminal activity by Arab citizens should be considered as a form of terrorism, as it is motivated by hatred of Israel and disregard for its laws;\(^{155}\) while Moshe Arens accused the supporters of both DFPE and the PLP of supporting the PLO and terrorism against Israel.\(^{156}\)

But these, again, were sporadic references to security threats. Unable to establish a widespread ideational hold in the context of Israel’s Arab citizens, the idea of security became peripheral to debates on internal affairs, and as a result began to quickly splinter in a variety of directions. But it was the new focus, promoted on both sides of the political divide, of a “Jewish majority” as key to the identity and democracy of Israel, which ultimately decided the direction the idea of security had taken. Security was transforming from an idea concerned with physical violence against Israel through military and terrorist attacks, to a spiritual and political security concerned with threats to the sovereignty and

\(^{153}\) LPA C 4-39-1981-65, September 12, 1985, “We’ll get rid of Kahane, and get stuck with Kahanism”.

\(^{154}\) As previously noted, however, in one statement the causal arrow was reversed, when MK Uzzi Landau argued in a meeting of the Likud caucus that the main threat from Kahane was that he is a catalyst for Arab nationalism in the form of the PLP. JA H2 42/2, November 27, 1984.

\(^{155}\) JA H2 18/2, October 10, 1985. This tendency to expand the definition of terrorism beyond generally accepted definitions will re-emerge in the 2000s, as Israeli leaders accuse Palestinians, Arab citizens of Israel and left-wing organizations of various forms of “legal terrorism”, “economic terrorism” and “diplomatic terrorism,” among others.

\(^{156}\) JA H2 42/2, November 27, 1984, meeting of the Likud caucus.
supremacy of the Jewish people within Israel. The military threats of the 1960s and 70s were replaced with a demographic threat. This direction was first fostered by the settler-focused radical right – the same group that previously rejected Kahane (Pedahzur 2012), but ultimately absorbed his ideas and was overtaken by them.157

Kahana failed, then, not merely because his ideas conflicted with a strong adherence to democracy, but because his anchor point, Jewishness, was at the time successfully subordinated to a very thin conception of democracy, making it too weak to hold up the conceptual structure necessary for this attack. The contradiction between Jewish identity and democracy, rather than lead to a weakening of democratic sentiment, led instead to a subordination of Israel’s Jewish identity to its democratic nature, setting the stage for the next step of liberalization.

But even as Kahane was defeated, Kahanism scored an important victory. Kahane has sown the ideational seeds that later led to democratic retrenchment, by putting in motion the legislation of Israel’s Jewish identity into its Basic Laws, thus institutionalizing it for the first time, and concretizing it within the ideational network. The phrase “Jewish and Democratic”, initially created to subordinate Jewish identity to democratic practices, placed the two on an equal footing, turning Jewish identity itself into a formidable anchor point. In effect, the Jewish character of Israel moved from a given, a background

157 This rejection was primarily at the level of the elite. In 1985, 22% of the voters in the municipal elections in Kiryat Arba, a radical settlement outside Hebron, voted for the Kahanist “Koah” (Power) list in the regional municipality’s first ever municipal elections, forcing the more established leadership to include them in their coalition. This move was sufficiently controversial to prompt one of the central leaders of Kiryat Arba, Eliyakim Ha’etzni, to publish a three-page column in the settler magazine Nekuda explaining his decision. LPA 4-39-1981-65 A, undated clipping, “Why I went to the coalition with Kahane’s people”.
assumption of any political debate, to the status of an ideological tenet that must be actively defended; from what simply *is* to what also *ought* to be. In other words, he politicized the question of Israel’s Jewishness – not, as was before, the question of what kind of Jewishness will prevail in the public sphere, but rather *if* the public sphere will be Jewish at all. By making it visible, he made it possible for Israel’s Jewish identity to conceivably be threatened, thus opening a path for linking it with the idea of security.

Already during the debates surrounding the amendment to the Basic Law in 1985, MK Shulamit Aloni, of the Movement for Civil Rights (Ratz), identified the risk inherent in accepting this discourse:

> You created a distinction between a Jewish state and a democratic state. There are two separate sections. If you had said in section (1) ‘rejecting the existence of the state in its democratic character,’ as it appears in the declaration, I would have said: you want a Jewish state, but a democratic one. Separating it into two sections only serves he who said there can be a Jewish state that is not democratic. That is, that these are two different things. These two things don’t appear separately in the Declaration of Independence. You are separating them.¹⁵⁸

Importantly, since the left remained steadfast in its support for a Jewish state, this change made it necessary for them to define how their definition of Jewishness is different from no Jewish identity at all, thus putting them in a perpetual defensive position. From this point onwards, two battles raged concurrently – what is “democratic”, but also, what is “Jewish”.

¹⁵⁸ May 14, 1985, 84th meeting of the 11th Knesset.
Subsequently, the idea of security re-emerged in the forefront of the public debate, this time in an altered form clearly influenced by the idea of “defensive democracy”, that speaks not of the security of the state, but of the security of its Jewish identity. It was this re-emergence that helped the idea of Jewishness take centre stage and finally subordinate democracy. Two things had to occur for that re-emergence to take place. First, the newly found “unity” of left and right in Israel had to be dispelled. This was achieved by Shimon Peres in what came to be known as the “dirty trick”, where he tried to break up the unity government and form a government led by Labour with the ultra-orthodox Shas party, but ultimately led to the formation of a Likud-led government. And second, the formation of a government without a “Jewish majority” in the Knesset – which happened when Yizhak Rabin formed his government in 1992 after securing a “blocking majority” of the left wing and Arab parties, and depended on the support of the latter for the stability of his coalition (although they did not officially join it). We will turn to these events in the next chapter.

**AFTERMATH**

Luckily for Kahane’s opponents inside the Knesset, he was very fond of provocative acts and language, and would often use reprehensible language when talking about the Arabs in Israel and elsewhere, calling them cockroaches, pigs and dogs (Pedahzur 2012, 68). Latching on to his overt racism allowed the Knesset to attack Kahane without truly addressing his argument, and allowed many on the extreme right to distance themselves from him to increase their own legitimacy. Ultimately, the legislation passed by the Knesset to prevent Kahane from running in the elections again simply denied the tension

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159 E.g. HaTehiya’s leader, Geula Cohen, whose party split off from the Likud in protest against the peace agreement with Egypt, who declared she will “come down hard” on Kahane. Despite her own attacks against Israel’s Arab citizens, when Kahane called “Arabs out!” in the Knesset, she responded “No! The Arabs will not leave! Only murderers and PLO supporters!” (Reicher 1985).
altogether by disqualifying anyone who either rejected Israel as the state of the Jewish people or as a democracy. In 1988 Kahane stayed true to his message and demanded that all parties be disqualified from the elections since the two are mutually exclusive, and one cannot qualify for one condition without failing the other. Unsurprisingly, however, neither the CEC nor the Supreme Court accepted his reasoning, and his request was denied. The CEC also decided to disqualify Kach based on the new legislation permitting the disqualification of a list which opposes Israel’s democratic regime, as well as on the grounds of racism. Justice Goldberg, head of the CEC, objected to disqualification on the grounds of their anti-democratic principles, arguing that such a decision can only rest on strong proof of actual danger to Israel’s democratic nature (Cohen-Almagor 1997, 75), but the committee, comprised primarily of representatives of the incumbent parties, decided to cite both clauses in its decision.

Meir Kahane was assassinated in 1990, but his legacy lived on, both in Israeli culture and in its politics. Two parties claiming to succeed him tried to run in the 1992 elections – Kach and Kahane Khai (Kahane Lives), headed by Meir Kahane’s son, Binyamin Ze’ev Kahane. Both were disqualified. In 1994 both organizations were also declared terrorist organizations following a massacre in the Cave of the Patriarchs carried out by Baruch Goldstein, a supporter of Kahane. Another extreme right wing party, Yemin Yisrael, faced appeals for its disqualification, but those were struck down by both the Party Registrar and the Supreme Court. Subsequent attempts were made in 2003 to ban yet another Kahanist party, Herut, but failed. Despite a number of attempts to run in the elections which were

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160 Declaring the two organizations as terrorist organizations could be seen partially as a result of the disqualification of the parties – as this raised fears that without a political outlet, the organizations would turn increasingly to violence (Pedahzur 2004, 31).
not thwarted by the CEC since the early 2000s, no Kahanist party was successful in crossing the electoral threshold (1.5 percent until 2003, then raised to two percent, and again to 3.25 percent before the 2013 elections). Michael Ben-Ari, who was formerly a member of Kach and openly supported Kahane’s views, was elected as part of the right-wing coalition list Ha’ihu’d Ha’leumi (the National Union) in 2009. He subsequently split off again and tried to run in the elections under a more extremist platform under the name Otzma Le’yisrael (Power to Israel) alongside prominent Kach activist Baruch Marzel, but failed to clear the threshold. In 2015, Marzel joined with Eli Yishai, formerly of Shas, to form Yakhad Ha’am Itanu (“Together – the People are with Us”). Shortly before the elections the party was predicted to get four or five seats, but ultimately failed to clear the threshold by a quarter of a percent.

Like Kahane, Muhammad Mi’ari refused to tone down his message despite the looming threat of disqualification. Throughout his first term as a Member of Knesset, he continued to voice his opinions, carefully avoiding outright support of the then outlawed PLO, but not shying away from equating its terrorist actions with Israel’s use of violence (Bitzur 1985). In 1985, ten months after Kahane’s special privileges as MK were limited by the Knesset, a similar motion was passed against Mi’ari, for calling Israel a terrorist state during a rally in memory of the former mayor of Hebron and key PLO activist, Fahed Kawasme (Shamir 1990, 165; Lapid 1985). Mi’ari refused to apologize or even condemn the PLO’s terrorist activities, willing, at long last, to condemn only “terrorism from both the Palestinian and Israeli side” (Bitzur 1985), which led the Labour Party to join the right-wing parties in passing the motion with an overwhelming majority. In late 1987, with the elections
looming and the new legislation for banning parties firmly in place, Mi’ari did not hesitate to state in an interview to Israel’s largest newspaper that “the Israeli occupation of the territories has to be more costly. For there to be a change of heart among those who lean towards annexation, the occupation has to have a price. Like in Lebanon, this cannot be a stroll in the park” (Schibby 1987). This same interview would later feature in the “evidence file” submitted by the Likud to the CEC in its bid to disqualify the PLP in 1988.

Unlike in the case of Kach, however, the CEC was not quite as monolithic in its support for the motion to disqualify the PLP before the 1988 elections. Justice Goldberg, chairman of the committee, was opposed to the motion, arguing that the new banning mechanism should only be used in the case of imminent danger to Israel’s existence as a Jewish state (or, in the case of anti-democratic values – if there is imminent danger to Israel’s democratic regime), which he claimed was not the case for the PLP (Cohen-Almagor 1997, 72). The members of the committee split along partisan lines, with the 19 right-wing members voting in favour of banning, and the 19 left-wing members against it. Chairman Goldberg’s nay vote was the decisive one.

In court, the decision was upheld by a majority of three against two, although the court’s reasoning was different from that of Justice Goldberg: they argued that the question was merely one of evidence, and there simply was not enough evidence to show that the PLP’s platform aimed at ending Israel’s status as the state of the Jewish people. The minority opinion argued that this line has been crossed, and Deputy President Elon further argued in his minority opinion that the likelihood of such ends being realized is immaterial to the decision whether or not to ban a party based on the new legislation (Cohen-Almagor 1997, 72–73). The PLP was allowed to run in the elections, but a new challenger, former
Labour MK Adbulwahab Darawshe, who split off and formed an Arab-only unaffiliated list, has split the Arab vote further, gaining one seat for himself at the expense of the PLP which fell to one seat as well.

By the 1992 elections, the PLP lost its support among the Arab public in Israel. Darawshe’s Democratic Arab Party (DAP) grew stronger, and Rabin’s more vocally dovish Labour Party, as well as the newly formed left-wing Meretz party, drew more moderate Arab votes, bucking the long-standing trend of Arab voters abandoning the Jewish parties. Even the religious parties, particularly Shas, successfully pulled in new Arab voters (Barzilai 2003, 737). Mi’ari was out-radicalized on the left, and squeezed by more moderate forces on his right, and thus dropped out of the political game. He later lent his support to Azmi Bishara’s National Democratic Assembly (NDA), and was placed in the symbolic 120th place on the party’s list to the Knesset.

Attempts to disqualify Arab parties resumed in 1996, with appeals against the Parties Registrar decision to allow Ahmed Tibi’s Arab Movement for Renewal (AMR) to register. The decision was upheld by the court, and the party was allowed to run in the elections. Attempts to disqualify Arab parties have become commonplace since the late 1990s, with the CEC occasionally disqualifying parties and (since the mechanism was added in 2003) individual candidates, and the Supreme Court invariably overturning the decisions.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter followed a case of institutional change in response to an attack on the ideational network by a novel idea. The attack attempted to delink democracy and Jewish identity by altering Jewish identity to be based to a greater extent on religious Jewish
principles, on the one hand, and by emphasizing the link between democracy and liberal values on the other. At the same time, the attack created a logic of equivalence equating liberalism with anti-Zionism and the Arabization of Israel.

Kahane’s attack was bolstered by similar logics deployed by Mi’ari, albeit for diametrically opposed goals. It is a matter for speculation whether Kahane’s attack was as effective if the PLP had not won seats in the Knesset at the same time that Kach did. Mi’ari attempted to attack the Jewish identity node of the ideational network by linking it with racism. But, ultimately, he was unable to produce an attractive alternative to Jewish identity. He could not create a true logic of equivalence that describes two equal and opposite sides with which moderate Jews could identify. Rather, his efforts merely provided fodder to those who opposed further liberalization of Israel’s ethnic democracy.

The response devised by Labour and Likud was twofold. Ideationally, democracy was made thinner, stripped of its liberal underpinnings and replaced with a majoritarian and largely technical conception, which allowed Israel’s Jewish identity to be subordinated to it. This change was reinforced through an institutional change that emphasized the link between Jewish identity and democracy, which was justified largely through the language of security and threat. This institutional change, however, also enabled the two nodes of Jewish identity and democracy to become equal in strength within the ideational network – a change that to some extent bolstered Kahane’s own efforts. In other words, by institutionalizing their contemporary ideational compromise, they gave Kahane’s ideas a stable purchase within the system. The phrasing of the amendment to the Basic Law: The Knesset was meant to be read as subordinating Jewish identity to democratic principles. However, it was merely a matter of a slight shift in the balance between the two nodes,
facilitated through a new ideational alliance between Jewishness and security discourse, to allow it to be read as subordinating democracy to Israel’s Jewish identity.

This episode demonstrated the interplay and interdependence between ideas and institutions. Shifts within the ideational network could lead to (gradual) institutional change – in this case, the creation of a novel tool to exclude parties based on their ideology, which later continue to evolve as these ideological requirements are further refined – while these changes could serve to reinforce trends in the development of the ideational network itself.

It is also an example of why ideational change must be considered in the longue durée. The new ideas introduced by Kahane in the mid 1980s, if considered only in the short term, appear to have done little but reinforce pre-existing institutions and trends. But observed in the long term, it becomes clear that his ideas, and the way they were absorbed into the institutional arrangement as a way to adapt to the immediate threat they posed, were the seeds of the retrenchment of the liberalization trend that would only begin to be institutionalized in the late 1990s.

Finally, this chapter presented an example of an institutional change where “objective” change (the first ever election of an independent nationalist Arab party to the Knesset) and ideational change worked together synchronously to generate institutional change. Ideational change need not be glacial, when relevant ideational tools are ready to be deployed once the need arises. Once the ground has been prepared, a novel ideational construct can be disseminated effectively and quickly, as in the case of the idea of “Jewish and democratic”. As we will see in the following chapter, the lack of such ideational tools
can leave would-be agents unable to act on their interests even in the face of clear external pressures.
6: 1992, Democratic But Jewish

In 1990 Ian Lustick argued that the increasing willingness and interest of the Arab population to exert its own force on Israeli politics, combined with the growing polarization and ongoing stalemate between right and left among Jewish Israelis, would inevitably bring about the inclusion of Arab parties in a Labour-led coalition. This, he predicted, would spell the end of Israel as a Jewish state and transform it into a bi-national one. Lustick’s prediction, however, underestimated the strength of the ethnic-democratic compromise in the Jewish Israeli ideational network. A large segment of the “anti-annexationist” camp within Zionist parties (Lustick 1990) was not driven, as argued by Lustick, by liberal ideals. Rather, they were driven by their wish to perpetuate Israel as a Jewish state, under the definition that developed in the 1980s, as described above – an electorally democratic state with a Jewish majority where Jews and Jewish culture is dominant in all domains of life outside a narrow Arab cultural autonomy (while leaving what constitutes “Jewish culture” as an internal Jewish affair). The Zionist left saw, just as Lustick did, that forming a coalition with the Arab parties will necessarily bring an end to this vision. It was therefore impossible for it to accept such an eventuality without a substantial ideational shift that will weaken the role of Jewish identity in favour or a more inclusive identity. Such a shift, however, did not materialize. In the aftermath of the second Rabin government of 1992-1995, the very fear that such a shift might materialize drove a mass exodus of voters that abandoned the left-leaning Jewish parties and left them
emaciated.\textsuperscript{161} As the Jewish left was driven to cooperate with the Arab parties, voters left it for centrist or right-wing parties.\textsuperscript{162}

But the elections of 1992 brought about a situation that has not occurred since 1973, and was never repeated since: the left-leaning parties and the two Arab parties (DFPE and DAP) held 61 seats - a blocking majority of the Knesset – without requiring additional support from centrist or religious parties, preventing the right and religious parties from forming their own coalition or thwarting Labour’s coalition formation efforts (see \textbf{Error! Reference source not found.3}). This achievement (due, at least in part, to the oss of votes in the right due to fragmentation, but also to public admiration for Yitzhak Rabin and disappointment with Likud’s leader Yitzhak Shamir)\textsuperscript{163} took the median seat

\textsuperscript{161}In the 1996 elections, the first under the new system of direct election of the PM, Labour lost 10 seats, achieving its lowest showing since 1977 - this, despite the public sympathy to the party after Rabin’s assassination. While this result could at least partially be explained as a result of the new system’s incentive to vote splitting (Likud, which won the elections, gained the same 32 seats as in 1992, but only after absorbing Tzomet, which gained 8 seats on its own in the previous elections), the same cannot explain Meretz’s loss of three seats. Arab parties DAP-UAL and DFPE gained four seats together over the previous elections. In 1999, Labour (now under a new name, “One Israel”) continued its decline and lost eight additional seats, while Meretz gained one (Shinui, a secularist and centrist party that joined the left wing Civil Rights Party and Mapam to form Meretz in 1992, left the united list and gained six seats independently; Labour’s socialist splinter party Am Had gained two seats). Arab parties collectively gained one additional seat in these elections. Notably, Likud has also suffered a significant decline in these elections, losing 13 seats that primarily flowed to the Mizrahi-orthodox Shas. In 2003 Labour lost seven more seats, bringing it to a mere 19 seats in the Knesset, while Likud recuperated and doubled its strength to 38 seats. Together with Meretz’s loss of four seats, and Am Had’s additional gain of a single seat, the Zionist left in the mid 2000s numbered 28 seats – less than a quarter of the Knesset. In 2009, with a showing of only 13 seats, the Labour Party lost for the first time in its history its status as one of the largest parties in the Knesset – a status it has only regained in 2015. After the 2013 elections, the Zionist left parties accounted for 21 seats (an increase of five seats over the 2009 return), and the Arab parties were stable at 11 seats. In 2015 the Zionist left won 29 seats, its best result in over a decade, but still less than what the Likud won in those same elections on its own. The Arab parties, running in a united list, gained two more seats for a total of 13.

\textsuperscript{162}Although, as we will see in chapter 8, distancing itself from the Arab population did not make Labour more appealing for Jewish voters either, further emphasizing the unsustainable position the party has chosen.

\textsuperscript{163}Kimmerling (1999, 31) notes that electorally, the right-religious block actually gained more votes than the left-Arab block, by some 5,000 votes, but its fragmentation led to the loss of this majority in the final distribution of seats.
away from the religious parties\textsuperscript{164} and enabled Labour to pick its coalition with less pressure than any leading party over the previous decade.

![Balance of Power, 1973-2015](chart.png)

**Figure 3**: Number of seats after the elections for the 8th through 20th Knessets, by bloc (source: Knesset website).

That Lustick’s predictions failed even in this exceptional situation creates a critical test case for the theory propounded in this essay. As Lustick shows, Rabin’s government should have been a turning point in Israel's history – a critical juncture – where both structural and moral conditions militated in favour of the unravelling of ethnic democracy,

\textsuperscript{164} No centre parties won seats in the 1992 elections. These elections were the last time this had happened. Beginning in 1996, the centre bloc began growing steadily, achieving dominance in 2006 when Kadima emerged as the largest party and headed the coalition. Kadima was again the largest party, by a slim margin, in 2009, but was unable to obtain the support of a majority of the Knesset, and the Likud under Netanyahu returned to power.
or at the very least the unravelling of the Zionist left’s commitment to it. Legitimating the Arab parties and forging a sincere alliance with them could have secured Labour’s place as the governing party for years to come and effected an irreversible change in Israel’s democratic structure. The upcoming reform in the electoral system should have given the Labour party an even stronger impetus to secure the support of Arab voters.\textsuperscript{165} A similar prediction should be derivable from Peled’s (2014) materialist explanation of ethnic democracy’s stability, as at the time of Rabin’s coalition formation efforts, the republican “discourse of citizenship” has already diminished to the point where it can no longer serve the purpose of a balance between the two poles of Jewish and democratic (Peled 2014, 111–118; Y. Levy 2007). Instead, the financial benefits that could accrue from a liberalization of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel in light of the Arab Boycott – benefits that did materialize partially following the Oslo Accords (Peled 2014, 116) – should have served as an impetus to follow this route. That this opportunity was squandered requires an explanation.

This period, however, did not prove to be a critical juncture that would take Israel across the threshold from ethnic democracy to a more liberal form of democracy. Instead, the Rabin government proved to be a critical juncture for Labour and the Israeli left in

\textsuperscript{165} According to the reform, passed in 1991 and set to come into effect in the elections of 1996, the prime minister was to be elected directly by a simple majority of the electorate, rather than indirectly through parliament; however, once elected the prime minister would have to maintain the confidence of parliament or risk being ousted by it. This system allowed voters to split their votes, and in effect led to the loss of votes for both Labour and Likud, in favour of several small parties representing ethnic and religious sectors. The need to secure the support of the Arab voters in such a system would subsequently be made evident as between 7-10 per cent of Arab voters refused to support Prime Minister Shimon Peres in 1996 and placed a blank vote in the prime ministerial elections, leading some to blame them for his defeat by political newcomer Binyamin Netanyahu shortly after Rabin’s assassination (Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem 1997, 11; Kaufmann and Israeli 1999, 99). Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem (1997), however, claim that the Arab turnout would have had to be 10 percent higher – levels unknown since the 1950s, and higher than the Jewish turnout – to be able to balance the 44 percent support Peres received among Jewish voters. Ultimately, the electoral reforms were reversed by Ariel Sharon in 2001, in a bid to stop the fragmentation of the party system.
general, which embarked on an electoral descent that did not show any signs of reversal until 2013.

This chapter argues the explanation lies in the failure to effect the necessary ideational changes for forming a sincere alliance between the Jewish left and the Arab leadership. Such changes would have had to include sidelining Jewish identity in favour or a more inclusive identity that could either be based on a thickened conception of democracy (as did other de-ethnicizing nations such as Germany or Canada; Juteau 2002; Joppke 2001), or a completely novel identity.\textsuperscript{166} This, because without a significant change in the way Israeli Jews identify themselves, forming an alliance between the Labour party and the Arab population would only drive away left-leaning Zionist Jews (as indeed happened, despite Rabin’s choice for a less conspicuous partnership). It is far more politically expedient to cater to that demographic’s existing Jewish identity, despite the long term instability of such a course of action. Here we see how the difficulty of generating ideational change prevents institutional changes, and how the Labour party and the Zionist left in Israel painted themselves into an ideational corner.

Of the institutional changes discussed so far, the one that failed to happen in 1992 is the first one dealing with an institution that is informal, yet one which is also central to the ethnic democracy of Israel: the uncoalitionability of Arab parties (Elazar and Sandler 1995a, 322; Smooha 2002; 2010, 27). As we’ve seen in the previous chapter, in amending the Basic Law: The Knesset to include a provision for banning parties who reject Israel as either a Jewish or a democratic state, Israel’s parliament created an institutional tool for

\textsuperscript{166} A somewhat similar argument is made by Waxman (2006), who sees the battle over identity as critical to the failure of the Rabin government in rallying the support of Israeli Jews for the Oslo Accords.
the restriction of legitimate political speech in Israel so as to preclude outright anti-Zionist parties from participating in Israel’s democracy. However, the identification by the court, as well as the left, of free (albeit not full) participation by all citizens as one of the core values of democracy, limited the usefulness of this tool. Attempts to disqualify Arab parties were repeatedly thwarted, although arguably the amendment had a chilling effect on speech by Arab candidates.

Notably, it was the existence of the informal institution that made the formal institution less important in the view of the court. As seen in the previous chapter, the court’s decision to allow nationalist Arab parties to run in the elections was predicated on their inability to realize their demands for full democratization and dissolution of Israel’s ethnic democracy. If it were to become realistic for them to achieve this goal, even if by the legal parliamentary process alone, then by the court’s own reasoning they must be disqualified (see Kretzmer 1990, 31). Furthermore, from the Arab parties’ point of view, the prospect of disqualification is a win-win situation. Unlike any Jewish party, a vote for an Arab party is predestined to go to an opposition party, regardless of the results of the elections. Disqualification from the Knesset, then, did not threaten Arab parties with the loss of significant power, but instead opened the possibility for political gains within the Arab community, as well as in the international arena, as a way to unmask Israel’s deficient democracy.

167 While some short-lived Jewish parties never entered a coalition, no party but Kach has ever been a-priori and permanently excluded from coalition talks. Specifically, the only parties in the 19th Knesset to have never been part in a ruling coalition are the DRPE, NDA and UAL-AMR. This situation was repeated in the 20th Knesset.

168 During the 2015 elections, when polls predicted it may be possible for Labour (under the banner of The Zionist Camp) to form a government with support from the Arab United List, the latter issued contradicting statements on whether it outright rejects the possibility of joining such a coalition. Either way, it was made clear that it was not eager to join.

169 Compare this to the refusal of Irish nationalist party Sinn Féin in the UK to take their place in parliament.
The informal institution that dictates that ruling parties refuse to include Arab parties in their coalitions – even in the case of Mapai-affiliated Arab parties in earlier decades – is key to the exclusion of Arab citizens from the public sphere in Israel. Nonetheless, this informal institution still adheres to our definition of institutions as those products of ideas that must be actively changed (see above, page 32). Since a coalition inclusive of Arab parties will have to win a vote of confidence, their nature as uncoalitionable must be intentionally challenged by a conscious decision of, at the very least, a large proportion (though not a full majority) of the Jewish parties in Knesset. But such an institutional change, however, must be accompanied by ideational changes in the role of Arab citizens in Israeli public life, and in the meaning of the Jewishness of Israel. Moreover, these changes must find purchase in the ideational fields of a substantial portion of the elite at the very least.\(^{170}\)

This chapter examines the institutional and ideational background at the time of the 1992 elections, and then follows the ideational battle that took place within the coalition and between Labour and Likud throughout Rabin’s term. It shows how Labour arrived poorly equipped for this battle, and ultimately lost it, as it was unable to untangle its own interests from the ideational underpinnings of ethnic democracy. Not only was the Likud able to stave away any chance of full alliance between Labour and the Arab parties, but it was also able to seize the opportunity afforded by the suicide bombings that plagued Israel in the mid 1990s to create a logic of equivalence that pitted security against equality, and associated the two with the ideas of Jewishness and democracy, respectively. As a result,

\(^{170}\) Here, we see again the possible interactions between ideational and institutional change – ideational change among a few can prompt them to promote an institutional change which will be supported by others for other, structural reasons. Subsequently, however, the new institution will have to prompt a broad ideational change in the society, or it will be undone.
the Likud successfully prevented not only a full-fledged institutional change, but also a more gradual institutional drift, barring even the slightest erosion to the uncoalitionable status of non-Zionist parties which could have resulted from this administration. Throughout this, Labour failed to even mount a counterattack. Rabin’s determination in initiating talks with the PLO did not extend to initiating an internal Jewish ideational shift. This failure marked the beginning of Labour’s decline.

The chapter demonstrates the difficulty of creating new ideas when they are required, thus emphasizing two elements that are important to the theory promulgated in this dissertation: first, that ideas cannot simply be created and manipulated by politicians on demand to satisfy political interests; and second, as a result of that, that there is a need for the availability of ideas developed in other streams, which can then be recruited and deployed to effect institutional change. In the absence of these new ideas, change that goes beyond the perimeters defined by the existing ideational network becomes nearly impossible.

THE IDEATIONAL FIELD

PERES AND THE ARAB VOTE

Initial signs of a shift within Labour’s ideational field could be seen in 1990, when Treasury Minister Shimon Peres, as leader of the Labour Party, attempted to topple the unity government of which he was a senior member in favour of a narrow coalition of the left and the religious parties. This coalition was to be supported by the Arab parties (Ghanem 1997, 74), but was ultimately thwarted by the religious ones.\(^\text{171}\) Objections by ultra-orthodox

\(^{171}\) Notably, despite Peres’ fierce attempts to form a left-religious coalition in the aftermath of the 1988 elections,
leaders varied from a rejection of the secular lifestyle of the left,\textsuperscript{172} to objections to the left’s support of giving up parts of the Land of Israel. This is one of the early markers of the alignment of the idea of Jewishness in a strictly religious sense with nationalist and right-wing politics,\textsuperscript{173} and the position of left-wing politics as their opposite in a logic of equivalence that posed Jewish-Zionist-nationalist-right wing-patriotic against the equivalence of Left wing-secular-non Jewish-Arab-post Zionist-cosmopolitan-traitorous. The ultra-orthodox parties instead joined with the Likud to form a right wing-religious government, although public outrage at the entire ordeal also led to reform in the electoral system.\textsuperscript{174}

However, this turn must not be overstated. Peres’ view of the role of the Arab citizens has not strayed away from the classic liberal-Zionist view which awards national rights to the Jews but only personal rights to the Arabs. This is evident in his speech before a Labour convention early in 1992, while the question of early elections was still debated. He spoke of the need to rally new voters to support Labour, and detailed the different

\footnotesize{he did not consider the Arab parties as actual partners for such a government, although naturally they were counted towards a blocking majority against the Likud (Horowitz 1990, 226).

\textsuperscript{172} Rabbi Shach, a spiritual leader of Shas, said in a landmark speech that the Labour leadership has abandoned Judaism, and called the Kibbutzim – a key demographic of the Labour movement and a crucial source for its leadership recruitment – “farmers of rabbits and pigs” (both non-kosher animals) (Mann 1998, 158–159). He nonetheless withdrew from the party leadership in the aftermath of “the Dirty Trick”, leaving the more conciliatory Rabbi Ovadia Yossef as the chief spiritual leader of the party.

\textsuperscript{173} Traditionally, the ultra-orthodox Jews rejected Zionism and the secular State of Israel. While participating in the elections as well as in governments, this was explicitly done only to safeguard their own community. For this reason, ultra-orthodox parties have always refused ministerial positions, although this refusal is somewhat symbolic: on many occasions, they appointed deputy ministers for ministries without an active minister, effectively controlling them. As deputy ministers, however, they were not part of the cabinet and thus did not share in the responsibility of the government to its actions.

\textsuperscript{174} Despite Peres’ failure to form a Labour government, the affair was not necessarily a net loss for the party which was increasingly perceived as subordinate to Likud, while at the same time increasing the Likud’s legitimacy through its support of the government (Arian 1990, 215). By dismantling the national unity government, Labour was able to take on an oppositional role and focus public discontent on its rival. By the time of the 1992 elections, Labour managed to aim public outrage at political corruption squarely against the Likud.
messages that must be directed at different voters. Peres described two special groups: new immigrants from the Soviet Union, and young Arab voters. For the young Arab voters, Peres advocated emphasizing the economic situation and the improvements that Labour can bring to the Arab sector’s standards of living. For the new immigrants, however, Peres believed the issue was one of identity: the Labour party needed to distance itself from socialism. He chose to do this by connecting the party to Jewish heritage, and creating a logic of equivalence that made Jewish identity and socialism opposed, while placing Labour firmly on the side of Jewish identity, defined through key figures in Jewish religious mythos: “we must explain to them that Ezekiel is not Stalin and Moses is not Marx”.

Clearly, Peres was willing to make a practical concession in light of structural pressures, but his ideational network’s support of the twin nodes of Jewish and democratic has not weakened, and he continued to seek a means of balancing the two.

The Rise of Post-Zionism

Peres’ shift took place within a broader shift within the academic world, as a new generation of social scientists and historians adopted a “post-Zionist” view that was much more critical of the process of state- and nation-building in Israel’s earlier decades (Ram 2007; Likhovski 2010). This shift took many names, but perhaps the first to gain public attention was the dichotomy between “old historians” to “new historians” (Ram 1998). The new historians began to appear in the mid-1980s, and brought about a storm of unapologetically critical accounts of Israel’s treatment of its Arab minority, and doubts with regards to the relevance of the Zionist enterprise altogether. The “Post-Zionist” label, contested as it may be (Nimni 2003a), symbolizes the new generation’s disenchantment

with and disentanglement from the Zionist ethos, while seeking a new route to carry forward the successes of Zionism, rather than discarding them altogether as proposed by anti-Zionists. Post-Zionism, then, is a delicately complex position that has yet to fully flesh out its political project, if it ever will. But as it emerged in the late 1980s, it held a unique promise that was enticing to many progressive Israeli Jews: an Israel cleansed of its past and present wrong-doings, without losing the benefits Israel has accrued its Jewish citizens in its 50-odd years of existence. Indeed, despite its sometimes rebellious rhetoric, post-Zionism is still very much a form of the classic, liberal Zionism (Likhovski 2010, 2; Ram 2004, 317), and as such was as much trapped in the ideational network that supported ethnic democracy as classic Zionism had been.

Put briefly, post-Zionism strives to reduce the status of non-citizen Jews and improve the status of non-Jewish citizens within Israel. A post-Zionist Israel will be, at one and the same time, the state of the Jews and the state of all its citizens (Kelman 1998). In other words, despite the critical edge which defines post-Zionist writing, it is essentially “a term of hope” (Nimni 2003a, 1) that seeks to transcend the flaws of the Zionist project in the past without actually giving up on any of the benefits it reaped for Zionists; an endeavour to provide an intellectual foundation to the idea of “Jewish and democratic” that became ubiquitous at that time.

176 For a more detailed treatment of the political project of Post-Zionism, see Nimni (2003b).

177 This can be contrasted with the “bi-nationalists” – a small movement that developed around the turn of the 21st century. While its origins lay in work done by Meron Benvenisti in the 1980s, his work was, at the time, couched in the language of inevitability and viewed bi-nationalism as an unfortunate yet inevitable result of existing policies, rather than as an opportunity. Later iterations of this idea, developed after the turn of the century, will seize on it as the latter, in a manner reminiscent of the fringe bi-nationalist movement in Zionism in the early 20th century – bridging a gap spanning the entire history of the State of Israel, when that movement has been all but forgotten (Hermann 2005; Ghanem 2009; Benvenisti 2007; Shavit 2003; Shenhav 2010). This shift, still limited to a fringe group within Jewish-Israeli society, is yet another example of the slow process of
**Neo-Zionism**

Yet the emphasis placed by the post-Zionist movement on the failings of Zionism and on the diminished nature of Israel’s democracy, earned it great animosity from the nationalist camp, leading to the rise of “neo-Zionism” and the branding of post-Zionism as anti-patriotic (Likhovski 2010, 3; Nimni 2003a, 1). At the same time, neo-Zionism was also creating a new alliance, one that allowed the radical right composed of national-religious and settlers, to merge with the ultra-orthodox community and the broader traditionalist Mizrahi Jewish community (Ram 2004, 315–316; Klein 2010, 73–83; Pedahzur 2012, chap. 3; Elman 2014). To achieve this, a subtle change in the values of the radical right had to take place: While the three core values of the radical right – the Land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the *Torah* of Israel (the Jewish religious teachings) – remained, the once top priority of the Land of Israel was demoted, while the *Torah* followed by the people of Israel rose to the top. “This means that during the 1990s, neo-

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178 As documented by Likhovski (2010), the animosity against post-Zionism had at least a partial role in the turn, in the early 2000s, to what he calls “post-post-Zionism” in Israeli historiography and sociology, which shies away from the political and the controversial, favouring instead the private and the cultural.

179 In a sense, this move is a precursor to what has been termed the GAL/TAN (Green-Alternative-Libertarian/Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist) dimension of politics in Europe, which notably appears when political focus shifts from economic issues to those pertaining to minorities and identity (Marks et al. 2006). That in Israel the focus was on minorities and identities long before this shift took place may indicate that other factors are also necessary for this dimension to become politicized.

180 A manifestation of this change can be seen in the surprising results of a survey conducted in 2014 among Israelis who identify as “national-religious” – the camp most closely associated with stalwart support of the Greater Israel vision. When asked which is most important to them, a Jewish majority or control of the entire land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, fully 62 percent supported Jewish majority as the most important, while only 22 percent preferred control of the Land of Israel, and 10 percent responded both are equally important. The authors of the study note these figures are equivalent to response rates from the Jewish Israeli population as a whole (Hermann, Be’ery, et al. 2014, 135). It is worth noting that this emphasis on Jewish majority in the state of Israel over Israeli control of the Land of Israel originated with the Labour party, as discussed in the previous chapter.
Zionism became somewhat less militant in terms of territorial identity, but, on the other hand, it became even more militant in terms of ethno-religious identity” (Ram 2004, 316).181

Nonetheless, post-Zionists offered the intellectual underpinnings for the beginning of a transformative process in Israeli society. This was prevented, however, by the ferocious attack mounted against post-Zionist ideas, on the one hand, and the inability of the Israeli political left elite to embark on an equivalent ideational transformation to form new alliances outside its core group, or even to commit to the post-Zionist project itself despite partially accepting its criticisms, on the other. In a demonstration of the fickle nature of ideational change, this rejection of post-Zionism by the centre-left strengthened the right-wing attack on the former. Once post-Zionism was firmly established in the public debate as an unequivocal evil, it remained a simple matter of associating any action increasing Arab equality in Israel with it, creating a logic of equivalence that placed post-Zionism and the left in general alongside anti-Zionism and even anti-Semitism, which were, respectively, associated with the Arabs and Europe.182 Thus the left was subsequently demonized as anti-patriotic and the courts discredited as post-Zionist and leftist holdouts,

181 It should be noted that Ram (2004) views neo-Zionism as beginning in the 1970s and only undergoing a transition in the 1990s. I however concur with Pedahzur (2012) who views the two movements as substantively different: a significant ideational change on both sides was required to create the alliance that now defines the neo-Zionist camp and makes it so powerful in Israeli society.

182 For example, Yoram Hazony, then president of right-wing think tank Shalem Centre, wrote of post-Zionism, under the sub-header “The Israeli Urge to Suicide”, that it had “in the end succeeded in undermining – and then reversing – the worldview of the political leadership. And if the opinions of the intellectuals could, apparently without warning, bring about so vast a political change in the country’s foreign and security policy [i.e., talks with the PLO], was it not merely a matter of time before the rest of their ideas would become the policy of the state as well?” He subsequently promises to “trace the influence of post-Zionist ideas on the institutions of the state of Israel and the threat that their influence poses to Israel’s existence as a Jewish state,” and even goes so far as to unfavourably compare this threat with a military threat (Hazony 2001, 5–6, emphasis added).
at best the unwitting outposts of an anti-Semitic European conspiracy, and at worst, willing collaborators.

**Explaining the Failure of Post-Zionism**

Why was the set of ideas that collectively form neo-Zionism so successful, while those of post-Zionism ultimately failed at reshaping the balance between the two nodes of Jewishness and democracy? Two related factors can explain this result: the fostering of identity, and links with the discourse of security.

**Identity:** Neo-Zionism developed on the basis of the existing idea of Jewish identity. As we have seen here, and was shown by others (Farago 1989; Farago 1999; Farago 2007; Auron 1997; Liebman and Yadgar 2004), this idea has been growing in strength since the 1960s at the expense of a potentially more inclusive Israeli identity. Furthermore, even among those who state their Israeli identity is stronger than their Jewish one, the two are substantially interconnected and overlapping, and Israeliness is rarely inclusive of non-Jews (Farago 1999, 159). Instead, Israeliness is defined as an *exclusive* identity, used to distinguish Israeli Jews from world Jewry. This distinction, which originated as a prescriptive pioneer value of rejection of the diaspora, organically grew as a cultural distinction between the straightforward, practical *Sabra* Jewishness of Israelis, and the more thoughtful, wary Jewishness of diaspora Jews (Liebman and Yadgar 2004, 163). Farago (1999) found that stronger identification with either Israeli or Jewish identities correlated with a stronger aversion to Arabs. Neo-Zionism was able to capitalize on this mixed identity by simply increasing the Jewish aspects of this mixed Jewish-Israeli identity. That Jews in Israel were receptive to this ideational pressure is most starkly evident among the immigrants from the Soviet Union. A mere decade after this ardently secular group
arrived in Israel and took up a militant stance against any religious limitations on their way of life, 22 percent reported they were more religious than before, and fully 76 percent expressed a desire for their children to observe Jewish traditions (Liebman and Yadgar 2004, 166–167). As noted above, this is the same group that Shimon Peres hoped to recruit by strengthening their Jewish identity. It was neo-Zionism that capitalized on this, however, and despite continued animosity between the Russian immigrant community and the ultra-orthodox community, both are crucial components of the neo-Zionist camp.

Post-Zionism, on the other hand, had much less to offer in terms of identity. In fact, as an ideology of liberal individualism, it was far more interested in eliminating collective identities than in forming them (Rouniger 1999; Ram 2003, 34; Ram 2004). The values it had to offer were of a more universal nature – democracy and human rights – and, on top of that, they appeared to be mostly geared to the benefit of Arabs at the expense of Jewish peripheral groups such as Mizrahis, strengthening the equivalence of Ashkenazi in the chain. There was, in other words, very little Israeliiness in the Israeli identity promoted by post-Zionism.

Post-Zionism was further disadvantaged during Rabin’s tenure as Prime Minister. It was increasingly identified with the wave of consumerism and Americanization of Israeli culture that followed the end of the Arab boycott and the subsequent opening up of Israel to trade. While these processes had little to do with post-Zionist ideology, they fit well with its message of individualism and liberalization, and their temporal correlation was seen by many as a sign of causation (Waxman 2014, 149–150).

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183 For a similar analysis from a neo-Zionist perspective, see Elazar (1995).
This lack of a clear identity wasn’t addressed even decades into the life of the ideology. An example of that can be found in Ari Shavit’s (2002) op-ed following his viewing of the film Yossi & Jagger, a drama about two gay Israeli soldiers stationed at the Lebanon border before Israel’s withdrawal. Shavit, a self-proclaimed liberal Zionist and member of the Israeli peace camp, is nonetheless troubled by the “unholy combination of hedonism, spontaneous liberalism and free spirit”, which is what makes Israel a “democratic society to its core”. He laments “the free society that has developed here in the last two decades. A society that is still having trouble defining itself, finds it difficult to tell its story.” In other words, the secular-democratic society in Israel inherently lacks a clear identity. He writes of Israel as “a democracy under siege”, and warns that it will not remain stable if it does not devise a well-defined narrative. But, contrary to Shavit’s claims, the lack of clear identity fostered by post-Zionism and the individualist culture of Israel at the turn of the century did not weaken the state against attacks from the outside. Rather, it weakened its fragile democratic culture against the internal challenge posed by neo-Zionism.

Security: Neo-Zionism strengthened the link between Israeli identity and Jewish identity, while post-Zionism failed to produce any particularistic identity of its own. In a largely secular society, what does this Jewish-Israeli identity entail for the majority of the population? The link had to be established through an intermediary – an idea peripheral to democracy that can be subverted and made to stand in opposition to it in the logic of equivalence that posed Jewish identity against liberal democratic values. This intermediary was found in the idea of security.
Fortuitously for neo-Zionism, as the state cast about for a new unifying ethos for the post-independence generation, it increasingly relied on the memory of the Holocaust for this purpose. The Holocaust has always featured centrally in the arguments of Israeli leaders, particularly David Ben-Gurion, though mostly when targeting the international community (Zartal 2002), but the rise of Menachem Begin to power made it central to Israel's internal debate as well. The Holocaust has a central role in Begin's world view, and on many occasions he equated the Arabs to the Nazis, not merely as a rhetorical tool, but out of a sincere belief that the Holocaust was part of a historical cycle that is doomed to repeat itself unless broken by a determined Jewish state (Rowland 1983). Even as he spoke to Egyptian President Sadat during his historic visit in Israel, Begin could not restrain himself from mentioning the Holocaust, and reminding his listeners that only Jewish soldiers in a Jewish army can protect the Jewish people (Rowland 1983, 10).

The Holocaust rapidly took its place as a central pillar of Jewish-Israeli identity, and a prominent ingredient in the “civic religion” of Israel (Auron 1993, 111). In a survey of students in teacher training colleges in Israel in 1990, Auron (1993, 112–113) found that the Holocaust became a central component of Jewish identity in Israel. That this was equally true for Jews of Asian or North-African descent as it was for Jews of European descent, emphasizes that this is a result of a society-wide process of socialization, rather than an issue of personal histories. When comparing his own findings with those of previous studies, Auron also found a marked increase in the proportion of young Israeli Jews who believe there is a high likelihood of another Holocaust for Jews outside Israel. It is

\footnote{During the Lebanon War against PLO forces, Begin wrote to US President Ronald Reagent that he “feels as a Prime Minister empowered to instruct a valiant army facing Berlin, where amongst innocent civilians, Hitler and his henchmen hide in a bunker deep beneath the surface” (Silver 1984, 23).}
also telling that when comparing students in the public (secular) school stream to those in
the public-religious stream, which serves the national-religious Jews (but not ultra-
orthodox haredim), it was found that the latter dedicated less time to studying the
Holocaust and more time to studying Zionism than the former. This perhaps indicates the
role the Holocaust serves in linking secular Jews to their Jewish identity – a role that is
superfluous among the religious Jews.\(^{185}\)

The centrality of the Holocaust in the identity of Israeli Jews and in their
understanding of the very purpose of the Zionist state entails two conclusions. First, the
inherent existential threat of Jewish existence: the Jew, by definition, is never safe. He will
always be reviled by the nations of the world, and nothing can be done to alleviate the
threat, up to and including renouncing one’s Judaism.\(^{186}\) Second, and a corollary to the first,
Jews can never rely on anything to protect them but themselves.\(^{187}\) As a result, the

\(^{185}\) It should be noted that secularism in Israel denotes two different groups – non-practicing Jews and atheist
Jews, which roughly evenly split the larger group between them. Non-practicing Jews retain a belief in God and,
broadly, Jewish teachings, but may limit the actual practice of these teachings to special life events (Brith, Bar
Mitzvah, weddings) and particular holidays (67% of Jews describing themselves as strictly non-observant in one
survey said it was important for them to celebrate Jewish holidays and 21% even said it is important for them
to observe them according to tradition. 90% of all Jews in the survey said they always or almost always
celebrate the Passover Seder; S. Levy, Levinsohn, and Katz 1997, 28). This is an interesting reversal of the
situation among Jewish communities abroad, where atheist Jews often practice Jewish ceremonies as part of
community building. Since Israel makes “banal Jewishness” possible, some less strict religious Jews allow
themselves to abstain from practicing most of the time (Katz 1997, 78).

\(^{186}\) Recent years have seen a public debate surrounding the growing number of young Israelis moving to Europe
and North America in response to growing economic difficulties. The responses from public figures including
leading journalists and political leaders were overwhelmingly couched in terms of the dangers that Jews face
living abroad. That a popular destination for these emigrants was Berlin did only to make these criticisms more
explicit in reminding their targets of the fate of Jews living there in the past, although obviously these
emigrants were fully aware of the history of German Jews.

\(^{187}\) Auron (1993, 95-97) asked the students in his survey whether they agreed that a lesson we may derive from
the Holocaust is that “we [the Jews] can only rely on ourselves” for our defense. The highest rate of agreement
was among the national-religious, where 78.3% “very much agreed” and a further 16.3% agreed, followed by
the secular Jews whose figures were 45.7 and 40.6 respectively. Among the ultra-orthodox, however, Auron
registered a general displeasure with the statement, where even those who agreed with it (less than 40% for
both answers combined) qualified it by noting that Jews cannot rely on themselves, but only on God. It is
interesting to note that such qualifications did not appear among the national-religious.
“lessons” to be learned from the Holocaust are primarily particularistic ones, and to a much lesser degree universal ones (Firer 1989, 32–33). The slogan “never again”, often used in Jewish remembrance of the Holocaust, is to be understood as “never again will this be allowed to happen to the Jews”. This is indeed the sentiment expressed by Begin himself in his address to the Knesset during President Sadat’s visit to Israel in 1977: “never again shall we endanger our People; never again will our wives and our children - whom it is our duty to defend, if need be even at the cost of our own lives - be put in the devastating range of enemy fire.”

Yet it is precisely these universal values that post-Zionism placed at the fore – the values that Israeli socialization increasingly presented as insufficient, ever counterproductive, to promise the physical safety of the Jews. Neo-Zionists, instead, were able to claim the “lessons of the Holocaust” as strengthening their argument. The safety of the Jews cannot be assured by the West nor by western ideas (Firer 1989, 114). Democracy can serve as a convenient tool, but only if it subservient to the purposes of the Jewish people, only if it is a “defensive democracy.” Otherwise, democracy becomes a weapon in the hands of the enemies of the Jews (Weinblum 2015). And hence, democracy in Israel must mean rule by the Jewish majority.

Inasmuch as post-Zionism was incapable of and unwilling to relinquish the Holocaust as the lynchpin of Jewish-Israeli (secular) identity in Israel, it was undermining

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188 Address of Prime Minister Menahem Begin to the Knesset, November 20, 1977, <https://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/beginspeech_eng.htm> (accessed September 22, 2014). However it should be noted that Begin’s lessons from the Holocaust were more universalist than this statement implies, as can be seen, for example, in his decision to grant entry and citizenship to Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s.
its own efforts and blocking off any chances of creating a more inclusive Israeli identity that incorporated Israel’s Arab citizens.

As the results of the 1992 elections were announced, Labour did not have access to any truly revolutionary ideas that would allow it to break with classic Zionism and challenge ethnic democracy – the only path that could save it from the slow and painful decline it was facing. The ideas that did develop within the left, in fact, provided new ammunition for the Likud and the right to pre-empt any new developments through the creation of a logic of equivalence that successfully linked key nodes of Jewish Israeli identity with the opposites of the identity post-Zionism was trying to promote. The Likud (and more generally the right) has taken for itself the title of “the national camp”, implying that the left is lacking in national identity. But while some on the left, including Rabin himself, disputed this dichotomy, others accepted it and began to describe the left as “the democratic camp” (e.g., Meretz’s official name on the 1992 ballot appeared as “Ratz, Mapam, Shinui – Democratic Israel”) or “the peace camp” – neither moniker providing much in the way of identity. If any new idea came into being that could have blocked this development, it arrived too late, and never made any inroads in the public debate. Post-Zionism was the most radical idea developed within the left with any traction beyond fringe groups, and it failed to provide the mainstream left with the necessary tools to effect real change.

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189 It can be argued convincingly that Labour had no wish to break with classic Zionism. However, as noted earlier, this work takes the position that ideas are the building blocks of action. Had a viable idea been made available to Labour, and given its electoral interests, it is very possible that this will would have grown within the party. In other word, this lack of interest itself requires an explanation. Only by showing that no ideational alternatives were available can we explain why Labour adhered to an ideology that rendered it moribund.

Rabin’s government was the left’s last chance to stop the decline that Lustick anticipated. Its heroic efforts left a lasting mark on Israeli history and identity, for better or worse, but ultimately it arrived at the battle unarmed, and could not succeed in its mission.

BUILDING THE COALITION

The 1992 elections created a hitherto unprecedented opportunity for both the Labour party and the Arab parties. Yizhak Rabin was faced with two alternatives: a left-wing coalition including Labour, Meretz, DFPE and DAP, or forming yet another unity government with the Likud. However, despite Rabin’s resolution to form a narrow centre-left coalition, he still could not cross the threshold of Arab representation in the cabinet (Elazar and Sandler 1995a, 322). Instead he chose to coax the Sepharadic ultra-orthodox Shas party to join his coalition, while the Arab parties gave their vote of confidence from outside the coalition, based on a signed agreement with Labour that promised improvements to standards of living in Arab towns and villages, as well as renewed efforts to achieve a breakthrough in the peace negotiations with the Palestinian leadership (E. Inbar 1995, 37).

Even in the case of Abdulwahab Darawshe, himself a former Labour MK, the informal ban on inclusion of Arab parties in the coalition stood. By sheer virtue of his contending the elections in a strictly Arab party, Darawshe and his list were doomed by the

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191 Inbar (1995) attributes this to Rabin’s own aversion from a government without a Jewish majority. However, this explanation fails to explain why the Arab parties were not made part of the coalition once Shas joined it. The “Jewish majority” argument for Rabin’s actions, therefore, seems to be post-hoc (see below).

192 Rabin also spoke with secularist right-wing party Tzomet, but these talks did not come to fruition. Tzomet broke up later in the term and a splinter group from it controversially supported the Rabin government after a splinter group from Labour itself left the government in protest of its willingness to make concessions to Syria in the Golan Heights.
Democracy, Identity and Security in Israel’s Ethnic Democracy

ethnic democracy of Israel to remain at the sidelines of its parliament, even under the most sympathetic minority government imaginable, despite his explicit wish to join the coalition (Al-Haj 1995, 145).

But it would be wrong to assume that it would have been simply politically unthinkable for Rabin to include the Arab parties in his coalition. According to a survey conducted in 1995, a majority of Arab citizens were in favour of the inclusion of Arab parties in the coalition on an equal basis and full responsibility for the policies of the government. At the same time, 20.9% of Jews, and fully 38.8% of left-leaning Jews, were in favour of unconditionally including Arab parties in the coalition. Only 40.5% of Jewish respondents (disproportionately on the right-wing) rejected outright any inclusion of the Arab parties. Some 60 percent of Jewish respondents agreed that a Jewish majority must be secured for territorial withdrawals (Smooha 1997, 226). According to a similar survey conducted by Arian (1999, 44), this indicates a rising trend throughout the Rabin government.\(^{193}\) A decision by Rabin to include the Arab parties in his coalition under certain conditions could have encouraged the expansion of existing ideas within the Jewish public, and put to rest continuing doubts, leading to a substantial change in Israel’s ethnic democracy. Rabin’s move to direct negotiations with the PLO, after all, did not enjoy majority support in advance either, and the original Oslo accords made no mention of a Palestinian state, as the concept was still anathema to a majority of Israelis even as the peace accords were being signed. Public opinion can be swayed by actions of leadership (Kimmerling 1999, 29).

\(^{193}\) Notably, however, Arian did not find such support for the inclusion of Arab parties, with only 45% supporting inclusion of Arab parties in the coalition in 1996 and as few as 33% in 1993. Interestingly, after a two-year decline in 1997-1998, the rate of support leaped to 50% in 1999.
Instead, the Labour party chose to reach an agreement with the Arab parties for their external support. Labour provided DFPE and DAP with a list of its positions on the peace process, general social issues, and specific issues pertaining to the Arab minority.\footnote{194} These positions were emphatically not presented as commitments of the Labour party, nor as the result of negotiations. “The coalition includes 62 Members of Knesset. It will be supported from the outside by an additional 5 Members of Knesset, to whom we gave a document clarifying the views of the Labour Party according to its platform, period,” announced Rabin before his party’s Centre on the eve of presenting his government before the Knesset.\footnote{195} However, the detailed list of “positions” appears to be, at the very least, tailored to the wishes of the Arab parties, if not the result of actual consultation with them. It was, however, crucial for Rabin not to present his government as in any way committed to the Arab parties or even as listening to their opinions.\footnote{196}

The Rabin government can hardly be said to have kept all its promises. Of 18 issues listed in the list provided by Labour, 11 saw no progress throughout its term, and only five had seen substantial progress (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 25–26). Nonetheless, the changes it did implement were unprecedented, and stand out in particular in comparison to subsequent governments. It was the government’s failure to change the ideational network, however, that had prevented its policy initiatives from having a long lasting impact.

\footnote{194} LPA 2-23-1992-146 E, July 9, 1992, letters to Abdulwahab Darawshe and Tawfik Ziad.


\footnote{196} DFPE will leverage its liminal position in the government later on in its term, when it tabled a no confidence bill over the government’s decision to build a new settlement in East Jerusalem. Rabin withdrew the decision, and the vote was cancelled. Yoman Hashavua, Israel Broadcasting Authority, May 26, 1995.
RABIN'S GOVERNMENT

As he took office as Prime Minister, Rabin was acutely aware of the challenges facing him to achieve his stated goal of making peace with the Palestinian people. Crucially, he was also aware that this change will not be possible without bringing about a real change in the national identity of Jewish Israelis. In his inaugural speech, Rabin addressed some of the key aspects that have informed Jewish “siege mentality” in the past: “We are no longer an isolated nation, and it is no longer true that the entire world is against us. We must rid ourselves of the feeling of isolation that has afflicted us for almost fifty years. We must join the campaign of peace, reconciliation, and international cooperation that is currently engulfing the entire globe, lest we miss the train and be left alone at the station” (quoted in Waxman 2014, 144). His close aid, Eitan Haber, claimed that Rabin “thought that it was necessary to revise Israeli national identity by discarding those elements of it that had become anachronistic or dysfunctional” (Waxman 2014, 144–145) – namely their traditional defensiveness and sense of international isolation. They must stop seeing themselves as “a people [who] shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations”.

Nowhere did Rabin express this belief more explicitly than in his address to the graduates of the National Security College, in August 1993. After repeating the familiar narrative of the weak diaspora Jew that became the strong Sabra with the formation of the State of Israel, Rabin diverged from this narrative and emphasized the drawbacks of this “new Jew”: “the stronger we were, the more we were attacked... There was more than a grain of truth in the definition that accompanied our lives here for many years: the whole world is against us... We lost faith in others, suspected everyone. We created a siege mentality. Lived in a sort of political, economic and psychological ghetto... We created
patterns of stubbornness and a view of the world in dark colours.” However, he said, the world has been changing rapidly, and with it, Israeli identity must change as well:

In the face of a new reality in a changing world, we must form a new dimension for the image of the Israeli. Now is the time for changes: to open up, to look around, to talk, to integrate, to welcome, to make peace. We must see this changing world with sober eyes: No longer is it against us... This is the new reality. We must be a part of it, and it commands us to revolutionize our thinking and behaviour patterns for the next years. As we near the end of this century, we wish to live in a state of the Jews, that also has an Arab minority with equal rights, and which folds into its being thousands of years of history, in which our spiritual, religious and political image was made. *This is the realization of the Zionist dream...* For this we must change thinking patterns that were imprinted upon us through years of enmity. We must think differently, see things differently. Peace necessitates a new vocabulary, new definitions, education and guidance. Thus, we shall return to our roots, to the Zionist dream. Thus, also, we shall strengthen the foundations of democracy in the only democratic state in this part of the world... *Democracy stems from the roots of the Jewish people and its traditions (Rabin 1993).*

Not only does Rabin make multiple mentions of a need to change “patterns of thought”, but he also signals the general direction that such a change must take: more openness, more integration into the region, more democracy. This is set within, and enabled by, a context of less pressing security needs: the world is no longer against us. Rabin is also careful to couch this change in a language of a “return to the roots” – both of
Zionism, and of Jewish tradition, attempting to tie the ideas of democracy and Jewishness together into a new compromise. Yet, for all his calls for change, Rabin never conveyed what the needed changes were and how they may be achieved (Waxman 2014, 146). Furthermore, Rabin did not seem to view as necessary (or at least, as within Israel’s responsibility) a concurrent identity change among Israel’s Arab citizens.

Similarly, Shimon Peres often discussed national identity in his speeches and writings, tying the success of the peace process with changes to how Jewish Israelis understand themselves. As before, Peres focused on the Jewish component of Israeli identity, commonly tying the values he wished to promote to Jewish tradition and heritage. This language was aimed at the international community as much as it was aimed at the Israeli public. Thus, during the signing ceremony of the Israel-PLO agreement in Cairo in 1994, Peres said: “Our position stems from a moral call: Govern yourself, don’t rule others. The agreement today is not a submission to threats of weapons. It is a return to the values of our heritage” (quoted in Waxman 2014, 146–147).

Rabin and Peres, then, were not oblivious to the challenge facing them, of changing Jewish Israeli identity. On the contrary: they were fully cognizant of it, and made direct attempts to address it. However, despite their careful attempts to initiate changes in Jewish Israelis’ identity, they lacked the ideational tools necessary for this task. As discussed above, no revolutionary ideas were available to the Labour government to counter the attack from the right, which enjoyed the leverage of the status quo. Like post-Zionists in academia, neither Rabin nor Peres reached across the national divide to form novel alliances with Israel’s Arab citizens, which could serve as platforms for the creation of new, inclusive identities. Instead, they limited themselves to the existing ideational schemes of
Zionism and Jewishness, in which their opponents on the right held a far superior position at the centre of the ideational network. Rabin’s government was a liberalizing force unlike any before it in Israel’s history (Peled 2005, 92), but its ideas and underlying ideology were, still, a liberal form of ethnic democracy, if only because Rabin and Peres had no ideational scaffolding on which to build another identity, even as they understood the need for it. They did not have access to the tools needed to elucidate and fashion such an identity – tools that must be fashioned over years – even if they were willing to take a leap of faith and try to construct this identity. Instead, they wagered on promises of security as a linchpin that would hold Jewish support of the peace process together. This promise proved to be a double-edged sword.197 The extreme nationalists on both sides were given a new impetus to raise the level of violence in the region. The massacre perpetrated by a Jew in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, and the wave of Palestinian suicide bombings that followed it, became a coup-de-grâce to Rabin and Peres’ aspirations.

Jewish Majority

While Rabin was unable to push the envelope of ethnic democracy, the opposition continued to promote an evolutionary development of the idea of “Jewish majority” – previously touted by Labour themselves as central to Israel’s compromise between its character as a Jewish state and as a democratic regime. In its new sense, the majority no longer related only to the population of the state, but to how policy is made. In essence, by demanding that policies affecting Jewish-Arab relations attain a Jewish majority in the Knesset, the opposition effectively excluded the Arab parties from any meaningful

197 Rabin was not consistent, however, in tying the peace process to security, famously stating at one point that his government will “make peace as if there is no terror, and fight terror as if there is no peace”. Notably, this approach is also reliant on the government’s ability to prevent terror attacks, and implicitly accepts the perspective that the peace process limits Israel’s ability to fight against terror.
participation, and pre-empted any attempt of breaking the informal institution of Arab uncoalitionability. The right’s communications seized the opportunity of the Labour’s apologetic stance, and attempted to shift the public ideational network towards a new balance between democracy and Jewishness.

This line of attack characterized the Likud’s discourse throughout the government’s term, and was voiced by all ranks of the faction. It was also a central criticism raised by the party against Shas: that in its support of the Rabin government, it was robbing the opposition of its strongest argument against the government. Ultimately, Shas left the coalition in light of the Oslo Accords in the latter half of 1993, further bolstering this criticism.

Even before the Labour party began constructing its coalition, the Likud began to brand the new government with the description that will haunt it throughout its tenure. Already in their meeting with President Hertzog following the elections, MK Matza warned that “the government as it can be expected to be, will be formed on elements that are politically, distinctly left. This is not good,” and he then suggested the president ignore the results of the elections and designate Yizhak Shamir as the prime minister so that he will form a unity government. MK Eitan was even more blunt, when he argued that Likud or Likud-leaning parties won an electoral majority “among the Jewish vote, and to a lesser extent among all citizens of Israel”. However, despite this clear line of attack, even Likud never thought the Arab parties will be part of the Labour government. Throughout the

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198 Similarly, when the Knesset passed a bill requiring a referendum before any decision to rescind lands under Israeli control to other entities in 2010, and then again when the law was enshrined as a basic law in 2013, some, including Likud MK Silvan Shalom, suggested the referendum must be passed by a 60% majority to cancel out the expected “automatic support” of the Arab voters (Shargai 2013).

199 JA H2 23/2, June 29, 1992. “Meeting – Likud faction/ President”.

meeting, they note that the dominant members of the government will be Labour and Meretz, and fail to mention the Arab parties in any way. The stability of the unwritten rule was never once doubted, and the Likud did not even see this as a plausible threat to bolster its view before the president.

The emphasis on this aspect continued in the Likud’s public and internal communications for the duration of Rabin’s government. In a Likud faction meeting in October 1992, MK Matza called on the Likud to “clarify to the public that this is a minority government – when they talk about a blocking majority, they’re hiding the fact they are relying on Arafat, since Darawshe met today in Tunis with Arafat, and the government is based on his support.”

A statement by MK Hanegbi re-introduced the idea of security, warning that the government’s reliance on Arab support was loosening Israel’s ability to control the Arab minority, leading to “transgressions of the line of identification to the Arab side.” In June 1993, during a debate on a proposed bill to limit the government’s ability to commit to land transfers, Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu agreed that the bill had no chance to pass, but suggested that Shas’ cooperation was sought, and “if we lose by one vote – Darawshe – excellent.”

The implication was that the passage of the law without a Jewish majority would constitute a substantial propaganda victory for the Likud. As more details on the Oslo Accords came to light in September, statements alluding to the lack of Jewish majority became more and more common. MK Landau warned that passing the resolution with “less than 60 Jews will erode the Jewish consensus.”

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200 JA H2 23/2, October 20, 1992, faction administration meeting. Emphasis added.
201 Ibid.
202 JA H2 23/2, June 29, 1993, faction administration meeting.
203 JA H2 35/2, September 9, 1993, Likud faction administration meeting.
Some even questioned whether a decision taken on this subject without a Jewish majority is democratic: “If Shas is separated or separates from the government, there is no majority – they are in a Jewish minority;” “this is a government based on the support of PLO-supporters. Can they sing the praise of democracy when the government has no majority?” An ideational transformation was taking place, as part of the subordination of democracy to Jewish identity: a lack of Jewish majority is not only opposed to the demands of Jewish identity, but it is also opposed to the requirements of democracy itself.

Yet even more benign issues, such as the request by Arab MKs to postpone a vote of no confidence that took place on a Muslim holiday, met with aggressive responses, e.g. from MK David Mena: “previously, nobody took Muslim holidays into account, but today because of Darawshe’s blocking majority, they started raising their heads and Labour is capitulating. Public opinion will not tolerate marking this holiday. We are a Jewish state. We respect other religions, but we do not mark other holidays.” The overtones of Mena’s statement were ones of a pending threat, reiterating the newly forged link between the idea of Jewish identity and security.

Although many of these statements went unopposed, at times concerns were raised within Likud as to the validity of this argument. In August 1993, after MK Matza asked if in light of the majority’s reliance on “a minority of PLO supporters and Shas”, the Likud should continue to try and explain its position to the public, “or incite it for mutiny,” MK

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204 JA H2 23/2, June 29, 1993, Likud faction meeting, Limor Livnat; August 30, 1993, Likud faction meeting, Yehoshua Matza. Emphases added.

205 JA H2 36/2, May 23, 1994, Likud faction administration meeting. Emphasis added. It should be noted that since the early 1990s, a vote of no confidence can only pass with a special majority of 61 Members of Knesset, meaning that even if the Arab MKs could not attend the vote, the opposition would score only a symbolic victory.
Benny Begin immediately intervened and stated that “God forbid. A majority is a majority”. MK Dan Meridor, who belonged to the more liberal faction of Likud, nevertheless asked Begin, “can a government relying on a minority with a non-Jewish component hide behind democratic positions?” to which Begin responds flatly “they [the Arabs] are part of this democracy”. Notably, after MK David Levy also voiced his discontent with racist undertones in the Likud’s statements “these days and even in this meeting”, Meridor backtracked. He stated that the Likud fought in the elections “to gain a majority composed of all citizens of Israel,” although he framed it, in response to Matza’s original statement, in the context of rejecting civil war. In this exchange we can see the manner in which the parallel constraint satisfaction network operates: while Meridor was initially receptive to some arguments phrased in the language of democracy and Jewish identity, once the implications of this on ideas lined to democracy in his ideational network were demonstrated to him, his network quickly bounced back. An attack would have to first sever these peripheral links before the balance between democracy and Jewish identity can truly be altered.

Several weeks later, Meridor was more explicit in rejecting the Jewish majority argument, noting that DFPE’s Jewish MK Tamar Gozansky was counted with the “Arab

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206 Although belonging to the more hawkish side of the Likud, Begin (son of Menachem Begin) was an outspoken champion of liberal democratic values. He left the Likud in 1998 to join the right-wing Herut party, and subsequently headed a joint list of small right-wing parties in 1999 under the banner of The National Union. Following the disappointing electoral results of the party, Begin resigned from the Knesset. He returned to the Knesset and the government during Netanyahu’s 2nd coalition in 2009, where he was most notably active in opposing legislation he viewed as limiting the rights of minorities and left-wing organizations. As a result, he failed to secure a high place in the Likud’s list in 2013.

207 He subsequently left Likud to form the Centre Party in 1999 and later dropped out of public life altogether, only to return to Likud in 2008, and was finally ejected from the party’s list in the 2012 primaries due to his refusal to align with the more right-leaning membership of the Likud in recent years.

208 JA H2 23/2, August 30, 1993. Likud faction meeting.
votes” while Likud’s Arab MK Assad Assad is counted with the Jewish votes.\textsuperscript{209} MK Begin continued in this vein and claimed it is not even enough to reject the phrase, and Likud should explicitly reach out to the Arab minority to form an alliance with them to preserve the “relationship fostered between us and the non-Jewish minority since ‘48”.\textsuperscript{210}

Once Shas dropped out of the coalition in September 1993, and as Israel began implementing the peace accords with the Palestinians in spite of suicide bombings within its borders, the debate surrounding the government’s lack of Jewish majority intensified. By 1995 even Netanyahu found it necessary to lower the flames during a faction meeting, and emphasized that the Likud does not have an issue with “Israel’s Arabs whose world view is with the Zionists. I am talking of those MKs who say in the Knesset they are committed to the PLO, and the PLO will not determine what Israel’s Knesset does.”\textsuperscript{211} This statement echoes a statement made by MK Geula Cohen in her opposition to Kahane in 1985 (supra, footnote 159), further reiterating the inroads that overt anti-Arab sentiments have made into the right-of-centre Likud over the intervening decade.

The idea of “Jewish majority” is an important combination of the three core ideas of the Jewish Israeli ideational network. The mutation observed from the 1980s meaning of maintaining a Jewish majority in the population, to the 1990s meaning of maintaining a Jewish majority when making decisions, is critical for the hierarchy of these ideas. In terms of democracy, both meanings allude to democratic values of rule by majority. Implicitly, both meanings also allude to the presumed dangers that will befall the Jews if they lose

\textsuperscript{209} Assad subsequently abstained from the vote on the first Oslo accords, and criticism of this decision attributed it to his preference to identify with the Arab minority in Israel over the Likud’s values. JA H2 35/2, October 25, 1993. Likud faction administration meeting.

\textsuperscript{210} JA H2 24/2, September 20, 1993. Likud faction meeting.

\textsuperscript{211} JA H2 25/2. July 5, 1995. Likud faction meeting.
control of their own fate.\footnote{212} However, it is the role of identity within the democratic framework that differs. In the original sense, democracy dominated. The need for a Jewish majority was justified by the argument that a state with an Arab majority cannot continue to be a Jewish state. In the new sense, however, the Jewishness of the state is immutable, and it dictates how democracy should function: the Arab minority can have a voice, but it cannot have a decisive vote. Democracy is subordinate to the Jewish identity of the state, and the meaning of this identity can only be decided upon by the Jews themselves. Hence the issue raised by Likud MKs on several occasions of the Rabin government “hiding behind” democratic technicalities, those technicalities being the government’s majority in the Knesset. In this interpretation, democracy must work for identity, and once it ceases to do that, it is no longer necessary to uphold it.

Following the election of Netanyahu to Prime Minister in 1996, as the threat of Arab influence on decision making subsided, the original meaning of the phrase returned to the fore and was used by politicians and academics who warned of a “demographic threat”. But the new meaning did not recede far, as this demographic threat was used as the rational for demands to limit the political rights of Arab citizens in the face of growing demands to collective rights raised by Arab leaders (Peled 2005, 93).

**Human Rights**

Demands voiced by Arab leaders for collective rights could have be addressed by changing the core identity of Israel and bringing it in line with its concept of citizenship, so that the latter is no longer merely a technical artefact. But as we have seen, this route was never really open, ideationally, to the Israeli left. The responses chosen instead by the left were

\footnote{212} This is one of the key “lessons of the holocaust” that feature in the Israeli curriculum (Firer 1989; Auron 1997).
two-fold, but both ultimately ignored the problem (Elazar and Sandler 1998, 7). One response, which drew on classical socialist Zionism, was the insistence that there is no tension between the two components of Jewish identity and democracy – and that the Jewish identity of Israel can be preserved through strictly democratic practices. The alternative strategy was setting identity aside altogether for the purposes of policy-making, and focusing solely on democratic aspects of the state without addressing the influence they have on its identity. This response did not disavow Israel’s Jewish identity, nor did it propose an alternative one. However, the lack of any room for identity in its policy-making prevented this strategy from gaining traction among larger numbers of Israelis, who could see that implementing such a strategy in the long term will result in a critical erosion of the state’s Jewish identity. This strategy was most clearly taken, at the time, by Meretz, which, as noted above, even defined itself in its official title, as “the democratic camp”. Meretz espoused a fervently secularist position and was often perceived as “anti-religious” and “anti-Jewish” (Elazar and Sandler 1995b, 11).

Shortly after the government was officially sworn in, and long before the peace process became the locus of the divisive debate surrounding the Rabin government, Meretz instigated the coalition’s first crisis. The party tabled a bill for Basic Law: Human Rights. The bill sought to give official protection to a list of basic rights that have so far been protected by force of common law, but not by legislation. It was viewed by many as threatening Israel’s religious status quo – the arrangement arrived at by Ben-Gurion and his contemporary religious leadership, which ensured the state will not blatantly break Jewish law within its official institutions, protected some aspects of the Jewish Sabbath, and gave the state Rabbinate control over marital relations and other aspects of the lives of Jews in Israel. Meretz’s bill was also criticized for protecting the rights of Arab citizens
without demanding that they shoulder an equal burden (i.e., serve in the military). The combined criticism saw the bill as giving undue place for universal values at the expense of Jewish ones, and this brought together the opposition along lines that already began to define the Neo-Zionist camp, as discussed above.

A review of the original bill\(^{213}\) reveals an effort to limit the conflict between the liberal rights and the value of security. Section 20 stipulates that certain human rights can be denied from individuals in active service in the military, police, correctional services and other security apparatuses of the state. Section 22 provides for “defensive democracy” by stating that “no human right may be used for the purpose of endangering the existence of the state, the democratic regime, or to repress human rights”. However, no effort was made to secure the Jewish identity of the state as part of these protections. An amended version of the bill tabled by Shas focused solely on this aspect of the bill, adding language alluding to Israel’s Jewish nature to the majority of sections in the bill. For example, section 2, which stipulates that human rights are not to be denied or limited except by a law befitting a democratic state, was amended to say “except by a law befitting a Jewish state with a democratic regime”; and a subsection 3(b) was added stipulating that “a law stemming from Israel being a Jewish state will not be deemed discriminatory”.\(^{214}\) Shas also sought to postpone the law coming into effect for seven years. In addition, Shas wished to change the title of the law from “human rights” to “human rights and duties”, although notably no language was added to the bill that refers to any duties of the individual.


\(^{214}\) Ibid.
The Labour party, and particularly Justice Minister David Libai, who was committed to consolidating Israel’s basic laws into a constitution, supported the bill in general, but left the public stage mostly to its two warring partners, as the details of the bill were worked out. Meanwhile, the opposition was strengthening its bonds through joint opposition to the bill. This alliance came at the expense of internal cohesion within the Likud, as its more liberal faction, led by MK Dan Meridor, argued in favour of the bill.

On December 21, 1992, the Likud administration met to discuss the bill. The discussion was opened by Meridor who spoke at length and reprimanded those who opposed the bill, invoking Likud’s former leaders Jabotinsky and Begin and lecturing on the role of the individual in Jabotinsky’s teachings. He noted that he himself previously proposed a similar bill that was criticized by the left for maintaining the status quo. Finally, he advocated for the Likud to support the bill and work to amend it in committee. Meridor’s position is similar in some ways to the classic liberal Zionism that saw Jewish identity and democracy as fully compatible, and reject a tension between them.

In his response, MK Eitan begins by agreeing with Meridor, but quickly shifts to attacking the bill for ignoring Jewish values, and states the Likud should call on the Knesset to "enact the Human Rights Law ... in a way that combines universal values with Jewish particular values."215 He went even further later on, saying that “the constitution must reflect Jewish elements. We mustn’t follow the world’s lead. The left has an aspiration: civil rights, a state like all nations, paying lip service to the issue of Jewishness. We want a Jewish character for the state, because there is a clash between the modern Western state

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215 JA H2 23/2, 21 December, 1992, Likud faction administration meeting.
and a Jewish state.” Eitan explicitly stated that there is tension between the ideas of democracy and Jewish identity, and called for the former to be subordinated to the latter.

When Eitan went on to say “the left says the individual is more important than the general public,” Meridor cut him off and exclaimed “Jabotinsky says! We say!” He then made a distinction between the Likud and the NRP, saying “the religious are saying the state is above all, and must sanctify the name of God,” whereas the liberal Likud places the individual above the state. However, his fellow MKs saw more in common with the religious party than with the proposed bill, and decided to collaborate with the NRP in fighting the bill.

This collaboration was based on talks that already took place at the time between the two parties. One such talk took place on December 7, 1992. While the Likud was still contemplating whether to apply party discipline on the matter, leaders of both parties met to coordinate the opposition’s response to the bill. Meridor was advocating supporting the bill in principal, but his fellow Likud members were far more skeptical. The NRP members, however, were speaking in no uncertain terms: “This bill is a great test for us. It’s not nationalist, it’s not religious, it’s just anti. This is a bill that befits the PLO, since in essence it’s a secular democratic state … [Meridor] needs to decide where he is on the political map,” said MK Yigal Bibi, and asked “how could you let [Chief Justice] Barak be in charge of this law, with his rulings? He’s not a nationalist”.

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216 Ibid. Emphasis added.
217 JA H2 35/2, December 7, 1992. Meeting of Likud faction administration with NRP. Emphasis added. As noted above, the word nationalist in Hebrew has two forms – a “positive” and a “negative” one. In this case, the positive word was being used.
Bibi’s argument is a striking example of the way right-wing discourse was creating a logic of equivalence that ties together all core ideas and links the various opponents and enemies of the right into a single monolith. Meretz was directly linked with the PLO – Bibi made deft use of the PLO’s own avowed goal of creating a “secular democratic” Palestinian state in place of Israel that would strip it of any Jewish characteristics, and then marked the two terms (secular and democratic) as opposite of the duo “religious” (i.e., Jewish) and “national”. This is further emphasized when he clarified that the two groups are mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive – Meridor can be either in the “national” camp, or with the PLO. He then continued to draw the division lines by placing Chief Justice Aharon Barak, known for his liberal views, on the “anti-national” side and again insinuating that Meridor is also in the “anti-national” camp for supporting a bill that would increase Barak’s power to limit “pro-national” legislation. In similar fashion, elsewhere in the same debate, MK Eitan apologizes to Meridor for saying he was “collaborating with the left”.

NRP MK Hanan Porat was slightly more conciliatory, and said in principal he’s in favour of human rights, but he wanted the bill to balance rights with duties: “if each section of the law included, next to the right, also the limitation, then I’d support it.” Again, this requirement subordinates democratic values to national values.

Finally, justifications drawn from the ideational network surrounding democracy were also given to oppose the law, thus maintaining the framework of the ideational network whole. MK Yitzhak Levy, for example, voiced concerns that the bill did not receive

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218 The “secular democratic” state was a form of bi-nationalism espoused by the PLO in the 1970s (Hermann 2005).

219 Eitan uses the phrase “meshatef pe’ula”, which is commonly used to describe Palestinians collaborating with Israeli forces in the occupied territories, and is often used derisively, implying this behaviour is traitorous.
due public debate and is rushed through, thus linking opposition to the bill to issues of democratic procedure. These concerns were shared by MK Eitan.

Meridor’s response was unequivocal: “The bill is humane, and national... You claim the bill is taken from the gentiles, that’s just improper.” Meridor also attacked Levy’s claims, and argued the bill has been in the public eye for a long time and fiercely debated. Yet Meridor’s arguments were drawn completely from the language of democracy. He did not, for example, argue that the bill meshes well with Jewish values, but simply argued that arguments on the origins of the language in the bill were “improper”. Perhaps as a result of these failings of Meridor’s arguments, the two parties agreed to request the vote be postponed.

Ultimately, the bill was never discussed in the Knesset plenary. Shas refused to support it, and since Meretz and Labour were unable to secure the support of Likud and the right wing secularist Tzomet, the bill was withdrawn. In doing so, Labour tacitly accepted the requirement for a Jewish majority, at least in issues pertaining to the Jewish character of Israel. Maintaining the constitutional status quo in Israel meant that protecting basic civil and human rights in Israel was once again left at the hands of the Supreme Court. Though most likely an unintentional side-effect, this outcome also strengthened future efforts to discredit the court as “leftist”, “anti-nationalist” and “anti-religious”, as it continued to base its rulings upholding these rights on a strenuous interpretation of the vague Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. These sustained attacks have translated into diminishing trust in the judiciary among the Israeli public, and support for calls to curb its “activism”, despite the fact that the court mostly legitimised state actions rather than
restrain them (Avnon 1998; Dotan 1998; Meydani 2011, 12; Barzilai 1998; Barzilai 2010; see also Barak 2011).

**SECURITY**

Following the Oslo accords, polarization increased, as both large parties were drawing further away from the centre pulled by both external and internal forces (Mendilow 1995, 216). Questions of security again became paramount when suicide bombers began terrorizing Israelis in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and other locales throughout Israel. The government’s reliance on the support of the Arab parties became all the more visible after Shas dropped out of the coalition in protest of the agreements, and this fact was emphasized by the Likud. Here, again, we can see the left coming to the battle unarmed. While on the right leaders were increasingly linking any and all leaders within the Arab community in Israel with the PLO and anti-Israeli sentiment, the Labour party consistently failed to be heard supporting the demands of the Arab citizens or legitimizing their links to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. Despite the frequent attacks from Likud against the Arab minority’s role in the Rabin government, I was unable to find any instances of discussions on this topic within the Labour party. While talks certainly took place on an on-going basis between the government and representatives of the Arab

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220 Including, in one instance, even blaming Likud’s own MK Assad Assad of harbouring such sentiments, because he abstained in the vote on the Oslo Accords (JA H2 35/2, October 25, 1993, Likud Faction Administration meeting). While suicide bombings were not carried by the PLO but Hamas and the PFLP, this distinction was deemed immaterial, and Arafat was seen as responsible for all terrorist activity originating in the occupied territories.

221 For a long period of time the Labour institutions were preoccupied with internal dissent within the Histadrut labour union, where a splinter group successfully wrested control from the party. This was seen as so critical to the party that during one meeting of the Labour Party Centre, when PM Rabin took a few minutes to discuss the peace process, he found it necessary to apologize and clarify that the attention of the population of Israel was not given to the Histadrut but to recent developments in the peace process. LPA 2-23-1994-151, July 3, 1994, Labour Centre meeting.
parties, public statements of trust or cooperation were rare. Indeed, rather than involving Arab citizens of Israel in the peace talks with the PLO as a bridge between the two sides, the Arab politicians were sidelined throughout the talks. Thus, the final accords made no reference at all to the Arab citizens of Israel, a fact which led some to feel abandoned by the Palestinian leadership (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998, 333–334; Rekhess 2007, 11).

One critical point for the relations between Jews and Arabs within Israel came following the Baruch Goldstein massacre, when a Jewish settler entered the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and gunned down 29 Muslims in prayer. News of the massacre brought about violent protests among the Arab citizens of Israel alongside condemnation of the extreme right from the government. The Likud found itself trapped, as it tried to distance itself from the Jewish extreme right but also on the offensive against the Arab protestors.

Mere days after the attack, some Likud MKs addressed what they saw as proof of the growing linkage between Israel’s Arab minority and the Palestinians in the occupied territories, and warned that the government was endangering Israel by “dragging Israel’s Arabs to a violent conflict” through its policies. MK David Mena advocated that the Likud “go on a counter attack” to stop the “Palestinianization of extremist Arabs in Israel”. Some in the party, including Netanyahu, saw this as a dangerous road and advocated for a more conciliatory approach to “disarm this bomb” by reaching out to Arab leaders and carrying out “serious talks”.

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222 JA H2 24/2, February 28, 1994, Likud faction meeting, Uzzi Landau.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
However, downplaying the idea of security within the public debate was an important aspect of Rabin’s efforts to promote the Oslo Accords. In his last speech, on the eve of his assassination at the end of a rally under the banner of “supporting peace, opposing violence”, Rabin told the crowd that “I was a military man for twenty-seven years. I fought as long as there were no prospects for peace.” But now that the prospects for peace are strong, there were more important roles to play. Rabin’s military background was emphasized in many of his public addresses surrounding the peace process – but rather than use it as proof of the security the peace process offers Israel, what was often emphasized was the transformation that Rabin himself has undergone. Similarly, in his address before the US Congress in 1994, Rabin said:

...And I, ID Number 30743, Retired Lieutenant-General Yitzhak Rabin, a soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, and a soldier in the army of peace; I, who sent regiments into the fire and soldiers to their deaths, I say to you, Your Majesty, the King of Jordan, and I say to you, American friends:

Today we are embarking on a battle that has no dead and no wounded, no blood and no anguish. This is the only battle that is a pleasure to wage – the battle for peace.

These statements did not resonate with an Israeli public feeling more threatened than ever in their own towns.

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Throughout Labour’s term in office, and despite its significant policy innovations, not least of which were the Oslo Accords, it failed in delivering a novel ideational alternative to support these policies. Rabin and Peres both emphasized their Zionist goals and continued to speak of the need to protect Israel as a Jewish state. Contact with the Arab parties was often of a clientalist nature, and focused on improving standards of living within the Arab population, without any actual actions to better integrate the two communities. Notably, little was done in the education system to provide long term ideational support for the policies followed by the Labour Party – when the Minister of Education, Meretz’s Shulamit Aloni, was accused by Shas of threatening Jewish values in her suggested reforms, Rabin preferred to remove her from office rather than endanger the stability of his coalition.227

The peace process itself was couched in the language of security rather than that of reconciliation. As noted above, it also completely excluded the Arab citizens of Israel. This decision was most likely motivated by Rabin’s rejection of trends of “Palestinianization” among the Israeli Arab citizens. However, his government failed to provide them with a truly inclusive alternative identity to replace their nascent Palestinian identity.

Rabin’s government legitimized the two-state solution, and its influence on Israel’s future cannot be overstated (Kimmerling 1999). However, its failure to effect an ideational change within the Israeli public with regards to its own identity was a decisive factor in the failure of the peace process and the rise of a new radical right that penetrated deep into the Jewish consensus (Pedahzur 2012). The discrepancy between policy change and ideational

227 Aloni was not reinstated to this role even after Shas’ withdrawal from the coalition.
persistence made the Rabin government into the watershed moment in the development of Israel’s institutional relationship with its Arab minority. Its demise marked the beginning of a process of retrenchment of the liberalization of this relationship.

**AFTERMATH OF THE RABIN GOVERNMENT**

On November 4, 1995, at the conclusion of a peace rally in support of Prime Minister Rabin and the peace process, Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist in what he later described explicitly as an attempt to stop the peace process and further land transfers to the Palestinians. Rather than dissolve the Knesset and set a date for elections within 90 days, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres opted to take over in Rabin’s place and continue the implementation of the government’s policies. Elections finally took place on May 29, 1996, almost seven months after the assassination. This decision was sometimes criticised on the left on purely practical grounds: a flash elections campaign would have allowed Labour and the left to capitalize on public shock with the assassination, and significantly stifled right-wing criticism during the campaign. Netanyahu himself was reported to have seen the prospects of a flash elections campaign as “a disaster to the Jewish people, a disaster to Israel, and a disaster to the right, which will be decimated if elections are called soon”.\(^{228}\)

Netanyahu seized on the opportunity given him by Peres’ reluctance to call for elections, and managed to rehabilitate the right. By the time the campaign began in earnest, the Likud was confident enough to launch a pointed negative campaign against Peres (particularly jarring in light of the largely “positive” campaign waged by Labour; Lehman-Wilzig 1998), accusing him of endangering both Israel’s security and its Jewish identity

\(^{228}\) WikiLeaks, 95TELAVIV17504_a, communication from US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Secretary of State, November 5, 1995, <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/95TELAVIV17504_a.html>.
(under the slogans “Peres will divide Jerusalem,” and “there is no peace, there is no security, there is no reason to vote for Peres”). Peres, despite his contributions to Israel’s security institutions, did not enjoy Rabin’s image of a tough champion of security issues. This strategy was bolstered by a series of deadly suicide bombings in a number of cities in Israel in February and March of 1996, in response to the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, a key figure in Hamas’ terror infrastructure. That Netanyahu never bothered to sketch an alternative to the Oslo process or his vision for a solution to the conflict did not matter to the Israeli voter (Kimmerling 1999, 30).

Yet it is arguably Likud’s ability to cultivate fear of a new government dependent on Arab voters, and following a path of “de-Judaization” of Israel, that drove away Jewish voters, and gave Netanyahu a margin of more than 10% among this public (Elazar and Sandler 1998, 11; Ben-Moshe 1997, 67; Kimmerling 1999). Danny Ben-Moshe argues that the consumerist secularization on the left, on the one hand, and the turn on the right towards what they defined as “Jewish values”, on the other, has led to a “de-Zionization” of the elections (Ben-Moshe 1997). Several days before the elections date, Chabad, a Hasidic Jewish movement that had been previously non-political, even began campaigning for Netanyahu under the slogan “Bibi is good for the Jews”. Such outright support by a religious group of a flagrantly secular man was unheard of (Elazar and Sandler 1998, 7).

Even the record participation of Arab voters, reaching turnout numbers not seen since the 1960s and overwhelmingly supporting Peres (Arab anger at Peres’ responsibility for the killing of over a hundred innocents during the Grapes of Wrath operation in Lebanon notwithstanding), did not give Peres the edge he needed (Sheferman 2009; Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem 1997). Peres lost Israel’s first ever direct premiership race to
Netanyahu on a hair’s breadth margin: 50.5% to 49.5%, with less than 30,000 votes separating the two. But this close call belies the stark difference in the preferences of Israel’s two national communities, who voted as they did precisely because of the perceived preferences of the other side.

After losing the elections to Benjamin Netanyahu, Ha’aretz journalist (and later Labour MK) Daniel Ben-Simon asked Shimon Peres about the results. “We lost,” Peres told him. Who is ‘we’? asked Ben-Simon, and Peres replied “‘we’ is the Israelis”. So who won? insisted Ben-Simon. “Everyone without an Israeli mentality”. Ben-Simon was unrelenting: And who are those? And Peres replied: “the Jews.” (Ben-Simon 1997, 13).

Yet it would be wrong to presume that Peres’ “Israelis” was an inclusive term. While Labour and certainly Meretz had a far more favourable view of Israel’s Arab citizens than parties on the right, they both still adhered to the Zionist view of Israel as a state of the Jews. The Arab citizens, in their view, deserve equal rights as individuals, but not as a nation. In that sense, they were more like the Likud than either party would like to admit. Moreover, neither Labour nor Meretz tried to provide a clear vision of how this liberal equality could co-exist with the Jewish identity of the state. Instead, they ignored the issue of identity altogether, and left the field for the opposition to paint their views on the topic in whatever way suited them best.

Because of the lack of ideational innovations that went beyond liberal Zionism, Labour was unable to make a lasting institutional change in Israel’s relationship with its Arab citizens to complement the change in its relationship with Palestinians in the

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229 Notably, if the 5.2% of the Arab voters who gave their vote to Netanyahu had voted for Peres instead, that would have been enough to reverse the results (Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem 1997).
Occupied Territories. This failure, in turn, meant there was no structure to support continued development of a shared identity. While the left was unable to articulate a new inclusive identity, the once fragmented right was able to harness existing institutional realities to quickly converge around a unifying ideational network that linked security to religious Judaism and posited democratic ideals as subordinate to both. The shared goal of preserving control of the Occupied Territories was the lynchpin, the nodal point, that enabled the new partners to make substantial changes to the surrounding network as both Likud and the religious right rearranged their ideology to better cement their alliance. Thus, despite a change in the electoral system that favoured smaller, less ideological parties, the right was able to rally its forces effectively.

It would, however, be a mistake to view these elections as a moment of decisive change in public opinion. Little has changed, in terms of the political blocs, from 1992 to 1996, and the results of the elections merely indicated the continued tie between Labour and Likud, and more broadly between left and right. The change was in the ideational network underlying each bloc and the way it was leveraged for effective collaboration within each bloc. The ideational changes on the right were to bear fruits throughout the next decade, as Labour continued to slip and the Likud emerged as the only viable party to lead a government, even as it failed to return to the electoral returns of the 1970s and ‘80s. Netanyahu’s first term as Prime Minister was dedicated to creating more “facts on the ground”, as well as fortifying institutions that strengthened the link between Jewish identity and security, and weakening the state’s ability to control them, creating havens for this new alliance to continue to grow and develop undisturbed (Haklai 2014).
A fortnight after the elections Netanyahu presented his government, with the Likud and the NRP at its core, along with the ultra-orthodox Shas and UTJ and the centrist Yisrael Ba’aliya and the Third Way. This tenuous coalition slowly unraveled over three years and finally collapsed in 1999, when only the NRP and Likud itself remained loyal to Netanyahu. The relative lull in terrorism under Netanyahu’s administration undermined his own political strategy and allowed the public to shift its focus to internal conflicts such as issues of church and state and what many saw as a continued encroachment by Israel’s ultra-orthodox minority on the secular majority.

The election of Ehud Barak as Prime Minister in 1999 was to be the last hurrah of Israel’s secularists, but it merely emphasized how limited this identity was, tied as it was to the Jewish label but unable to give it any real content. Barak’s administration’s lifespan was even shorter than Netanyahu’s, at only 21 months; but during this time it sealed the fate of the Labour party, and of Israel’s identity. However, it is doubtful if at that point anything could have been done to reverse the trend towards the de-liberalization and re-Judaification of the state of Israel, which began to appear in earnest during his term.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter followed the failure of effectively changing an informal aspect of Israel’s institution of ethnic democracy – the ban on inclusion of representatives of the Arab population in government – despite the obstacle this ban posed to the governing party. The “objective” factors militated in favour of a change that would enable Labour to form a lasting alliance with Israel’s Arab minority and refashion the core cleavages within Israeli society. The failure to do so can best be explained by reference to the inability of the ruling party to effect ideational change in the way Jewish identity was linked to democracy, and
the balance of power between democracy and the still evolving linkage between the ideas of Jewish identity and security.

Above we demonstrated how such ideational change was made unlikely, if not impossible, by the lack of available ideational tools that could support an attack on this link and serve as the basis for a new logic of equivalence. Too many of the positive aspects tied to democracy were dependent on its subordination to Jewish identity. Ultimately, the democratic principle of rule by the majority was subverted and became the principle of maintaining the rulers’ majority status. The ideas developed over the previous decades, which transformed “security” from an issue of physical safety to the preservation of the demographic balance, were crucial in cementing the prevailing logic of equivalence.

The sole ideational (and ideological) innovation of this period on the left was that of post-Zionism. Yet this framework did not truly offer a new structure for the ideational network to align with. On the contrary, it merely served to reaffirm the structure that was created in the 1980s, i.e., a “Jewish and democratic” state, in which the Arab citizens are not discriminated against, without actually giving up on any of the benefits the state reaped for Zionists. But even in this task post-Zionism failed, and was unraveled by neo-Zionism, whose novel ideational constructs were designed to attack the very links between liberal democracy and Jewish identity, that post-Zionism was attempting to remake. Ultimately, as the intellectual face of liberalizing forces in Israel who placed universal values at the fore at the expense of particularistic Jewish values and perceptions of existential threat, post-Zionism became an easy target for neo-Zionists. It served as a nodal point around which the negative side of the new dominant logic of equivalence was built: the logic of equivalence
that leads from democratic ideals, to the Israeli left, to post-Zionism, to the Arab minority, to the Palestinian threat to Israel’s security, and ultimately to treason.

Left, as they were, devoid of ideational tools by which to refashion the ideational network, Rabin and Peres could only try to work within the existing network and its institutions. This, inevitably, led to their failure, as they were prevented from building the alliances across communal divides with Arab citizens in Israel, the orthodox Jews, and the Mizrahi Jews in the peripheries, that were crucial to the success of their project.
7: 2000, the Triumphant Alliance of Jewish Identity and Security

There are many factors contributing to Ehud Barak’s meteoric rise to the premiership of Israel and subsequent fall. His brief tenure would be remembered for many failures, and none can be said to have been decisive in the crumbling of his public support. In terms of the relationship between Israel and its Arab citizens, however, the defining moment of this government took place in October 2000, when thousands of Arab citizens began violently protesting in response to the killing of Muhammad Al-Dura in Gaza in the early days of the second Intifada, and in support of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. 13 of these demonstrators were killed by police forces sent to quell the flames. Barak appointed a committee headed by Justice Theodor Or to investigate the causes of the events and assign responsibility to the fatalities. The events became a turning point for the relationship between Israel and its Arab citizens and had a clear impact on the public and elite debates surrounding the identity of Israel, its democracy and its security.

This chapter will examine the ideational changes that took place during this turbulent period, and how the ideational and institutional changes made by the previous Rabin and Netanyahu governments limited Barak’s maneuvering and set him up for failure. These changes that took place over the 1990s have led to the Labour Party’s fall to the status of a minor party, and the loss of the left’s hopes of leading a government for more than a decade hence. The chapter begins with a review of the ideational field at the time of
Ehud Barak’s election into office. In particular, it examines the ideational legacy of Netanyahu’s first term as Prime Minister. The chapter then turns to a historical review of the Barak government and its relationship with the Arab community before, during and after the October events. Finally, the chapter will turn to a discussion of the findings of the Or Committee, showing how, despite its good intentions, the committee strengthened the existing link in elite and public discourse between Arab and left-wing demands for equality, security risks, and a threat to the Jewish identity of Israel. As a result of this, the committee fell into the same ideational trap as did Rabin and Peres, who could not escape the framework of ethnic democracy for lack of any publicly available ideational alternatives.

This chapter also describes the culmination of the ideational processes that took place over the previous two decades. It marks the point in time where Jewish identity, reinforced by security discourse, was able to hegemonically overtake democratic ideas in the Israeli ideational network. The network of ideas surrounding democracy was linked to nodes such as equal rights, bi-nationalism, even anti-Semitism, which stood opposed to security and the Jewish identity of the state. However, democracy itself, as a floating signifier, remained entrenched as one of the three central nodes within the network, albeit in a much more majoritarian form, and reinterpreted in light of the idea of “defensive democracy”. This period, therefore, marks the beginning of a struggle that is still unfolding over the very meaning of democracy within Israeli society.

**THE IDEATIONAL FIELD**

Netanyahu’s first term as prime minister was characterized by an effort to reverse many of the internal changes put in place by Rabin and Peres, while upholding Israel’s international commitments to the Palestinians in the Oslo Accords. Netanyahu partially transferred
control of Hebron to the Palestinians in 1997, and signed the Wye Plantation agreement in 1998 – two moves that raised the ire of his right-wing coalition partners.²³⁰ At the same time, he cut most of the investments made by the Rabin government in the Arab sector, and enforced with renewed vigour house demolition orders for illegal construction in Arab villages (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 28).²³¹

However, it is the ideational innovations emerging from his administration that have proven most substantial in the subsequent development of Israel’s institutional relationship with the Arab minority. While no significant institutional changes were made during his first term in office, Netanyahu successfully set in unified motion all the parts of the ideational network that have been developing over the previous two decades, the most important of which was the link between security and Jewish identity. This ultimately led to the collapse of the Israeli left and the retrenchment of the liberalization of Israel's relationship with its Arab citizens that took place in the years since.

Having blocked the path of the left to a broad alliance with the Arab minority, and fostering a strong, cohesive alliance with the religious right (as described in the previous chapter), Netanyahu dedicated his years in office to further entrenching these ideational links. He strengthened the logic of equivalence that equated Jewish national identity with orthodox Jewish religiosity, and associated the left and universalist secularism with Arab identity; He expanded this logic to include the ultra-orthodox camp in the same chain as Zionism, so as to prevent future collaboration between them and the left; And, by

²³⁰ Signing the Wye agreement was the impetus for Benny Begin’s withdrawal from the government and subsequent leaving of the Likud.

²³¹ Since Israel consistently failed to produce master plans for Arab villages and cities throughout its history, in essence any new building in Arab settlements can be deemed illegal.
aggrandizing and encouraging the increasing role of the National Religious population in the IDF, he strengthened the link between Jewish identity and security within this new framework. That Netanyahu was, undeniably, successful in stopping the wave of suicide attacks within Israel was chalked up, among other things, to his firm convictions on these links between a defensive democracy, Jewish identity, and security. Netanyahu, nevertheless, insisted on his continued commitment to values of equality.

This strategy correlates well with the strategy taken by the Evangelical right in the US, which equates American identity with Christian values and liberalism with anti-patriotism. That Netanyahu was deeply influenced by this movement could be seen through his championing of Israel's strong links to this group (Wagner 1998). In 1985, as Israel's ambassador to the UN, when Netanyahu was called upon to explain Israel's partial withdrawal from Lebanon to the American public, his first TV interview was granted to Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club* (Diamond 1990, 15). When, in January 1998, Netanyahu was invited to the White House to meet with President Clinton to discuss the faltering peace process, his first meeting after arriving in the US was not with the President, nor with congress or Jewish leaders, but with Evangelical Rev. Jerry Falwell. This symbolic decision did not go unnoticed by Clinton, who reminded Netanyahu of his support of Shimon Peres during the 1996 elections and then said, according to aides, “I guess we're even” (Broder 1998, 91). Netanyahu even preferred his link with the Evangelical right over a continued relationship with non-orthodox Jews in the US. To appease his ultra-orthodox coalition

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232 Perhaps incidentally, through these parallel processes, he bridged the gap that existed between the ultra-orthodox and the idea of security, and enabled the ultra-orthodox parties to espouse overtly hawkish positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

233 According to other accounts, Clinton did not refer to his support of Peres, but rather to the unsatisfying accommodations Netanyahu was getting during his visit (Friedman 1998).
partners, Netanyahu supported a policy that would delegitimize Reform and Conservative Jewish influence on religious affairs in Israel. When he realized this led to a steep decline in contributions to the United Jewish Appeal and other pro-Israel organizations, “Likud then turned to the evangelical and fundamentalist Christian communities to offset the losses” (Wagner 1998, 45; Broder 1998, 93–95).

Netanyahu is often credited (or criticized) for his part in the Americanization of Israeli politics (Aronoff 2000; Peri 2004, pt. 2). His “media wizardry” was used to explain his ascent to power (Pedahzur 2012, 133–134). Yet it could equally be argued that it was something else Netanyahu brought back with him from his many years in the United States that established him as one of Israel’s longest serving prime ministers: his adoption of the unique ideational network of the neoconservative right. Once imported into the Israeli ideational scheme and transliterated into Jewish values and culture, this network had a singular impact on the reversals in Israel’s social liberalization that would take place over the next two decades.

Already in his inaugural address to the Knesset, Netanyahu announced that “the new government will nurture the values of the Jewish heritage in education, culture and the media,” and phrases referring to “Jewish values” and “Jewish consciousness” became more common in the governments “policy guidelines” document (Ben-Moshe 1997, 69; see also below, page 254). Two statements made by Netanyahu during his tenure, however, stand out as clear examples of his adaptation of this emerging neoconservative discourse for Israeli politics: a public declaration on the opening of a new exit from the Western Wall

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234 Of course, Netanyahu wasn’t the only actor involved in the popularization of these ideas in Israel, as can be attested by the prevalence of American-born immigrants within the settler movement.
Tunnels; and a candid remark whispered on the ear of a Sephardic religious leader that was accidently captured by the media.

**THE ROCK OF OUR EXISTENCE**

In September 1996, the opening of a new section of the Western Wall Tunnels in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem led to clashes between the IDF and Palestinians in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the occupied territories, which resulted in dozens of Palestinian and Israeli casualties. Following the events, Netanyahu justified the opening of the tunnel by saying that “anyone who visited the Western Wall Tunnels cannot help but be moved to his very soul. There we touch the rock of our existence. Without exaggeration” (Mann 1998, 217). Several months later, in January 1997, Netanyahu again used the same phrase, “the rock of our existence,” when describing the Jews’ connection to Hebron, during an address before the Knesset – but in this instance, this was the preamble to a defense of his decision to go ahead with the Hebron agreement that transferred the city to Palestinian control (Neuman and Tabak 2003).

By repeating the same uncommon phrase in these two instances, Netanyahu created a rhetorical link that helped re-establish him as a member in good standing of Israel’s nationalist right at a time when he was heavily criticized by the right for moving forward with the Hebron Agreement. This was achieved not by referring to nationalist-Zionist ideals but rather through decidedly religious imagery: the Western Wall Tunnels reveal remains of the Temple in Jerusalem, and Hebron is, as Netanyahu described it in his address, “the

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235 The phrase used by Netanyahu, “sela kiyumen” is often translated as “the bedrock of our existence”. However, this translation fails to capture the peculiarity of the original phrase in Hebrew. “the rock of our existence” is a more literal translation, which also maintains its unusual nature.
city of the patriarchs and the matriarchs”. Jewish national identity, or “national consciousness”, in Netanyahu’s own words, is therefore tied to Jewish religiosity.

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A JEW**

In October 1997, during a celebration in honor of Rabbi Yizhak Kadduri, a spiritual leader of Shas, Netanyahu was caught on camera whispering in Kadduri’s ears “the leftists forgot what it means to be a Jew”. This inadvertently public statement received wide criticism, touted as proof that Netanyahu is a divisive force in Israeli politics. However, the remainder of the statement that was also accidentally recorded, which received less public attention at the time, is even more instructive: “They think they’ll put our security in the hands of the Arabs. The Arabs will take care of us... They will take care of us. It’s like the spies were to say, not only is there a great enemy in the land, but we’ll put our security in their hands” (Mann 1998, 39).236

This is yet another peculiar combination of the ideas of Jewishness and security. He argues here that not only is trusting “the Arabs” in the security of the Jews not a good idea in terms of security, but also that it contradicts a Jewish essence. The story of the Twelve Spies, to which Netanyahu alluded, tells of the spies sent by Moses into the Land of Israel to bring news of it to the Hebrew people in the desert. The twelve returned eventually, but ten of them claimed the people who already live on the land there are too strong to conquer. The biblical story then goes on to tell that these ten were vanquished in a plague, and the Israelites, who turned away from God in fear that they will die entering the land, were cursed to wonder in the desert for 40 years until their entire generation died. Only then were the Israelites allowed to come into the Land of Israel and conquer it. This story is one

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236 The “spies” is a reference to the biblical story of the Twelve Spies in the Book of Numbers, 13: 1-33.
of the essential myths of the Jewish narrative. Comparing the left to the ten spies (and then making them even worse) is tantamount to calling for their excommunication from the Jewish people. Netanyahu, tied the three pillars in a logic of equivalence: membership in the nation is linked to religious Jewish sentiments, which is linked to protecting the security of Israel. On the other side of the equivalence are the “leftists”, the Arabs, and the biblical enemies of the Jewish people.237

Netanyahu, then, was able to fashion a logic of equivalence that created new positive and negative connecting lines within Israeli society between secular, orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews, both Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, even as existing party allegiances were collapsing in the wake of the direct elections of the Prime Minister.238 While the popularity of the two large parties began to fall in numbers, Netanyahu nonetheless secured the continued support of the religious and ultra-orthodox camps, which were traditionally seen as centrist parties (Elman 2014). What Menachem Begin was able to achieve under the banner of one party, Netanyahu built without the party umbrella, but with a far more shock-resistant configuration of Israel’s ideational network. Netanyahu picked up on the “other” that Shas was constructing – the Labour Ashkenazi – and was able to utilize it to his advantage by creating an equivalence between the Likud Ashkenazi and the Shas Mizrahi,

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237 The analogy is made even more troublesome by the fact that one of the peoples who lived in the Land of Israel before its conquest were the Amalekites, the nemeses of the Jewish people, whom the Jews are sworn to eradicate from the face of the Earth. In other words, Netanyahu was comparing the Palestinians to the worst of the enemies of the Jewish people.

238 The electoral reform enacted in 1991 and first implemented in the 1996 elections created a two-ballot system, where one ballot was cast for a party under a pure proportional system while the second ballot was cast for the prime minister in a majoritarian system. While this system was originally purported to be designed to increase the power of the large parties at the expense of the smaller ones, thus reducing “blackmailing” and corruption, in practice the system incentivized ballot splitting leading to the rapid fragmentation of the already quite fragmented party system, as voters expressed their political opinions in their vote for prime minister, and their identity allegiance in their party vote (Hazan and Rahat 2000; Rahat 2004).
while placing Labour together with the Arabs on the opposite chain of equivalences (Peled 1998).

Throughout this, the left remained largely static in terms of its ideas. Post-Zionism continued its decline in public opinion, and Labour rhetoric became shackled to the language of the Oslo peace process for the majority of Netanyahu’s term. Ironically, as the right became disillusioned with Netanyahu for his refusal to reject the peace process outright (Netanyahu argued Israel’s international commitments are binding), Labour and the left stepped in to support Netanyahu’s moves, as in the Wye agreement in 1998. Only eight of 17 ministers voted to ratify the agreement in the cabinet, and seven ministers abstained from the Knesset vote. Both the NRP and Moledet voted against the agreement in the Knesset, and only 29 coalition members voted in favour of it, yet the agreement was ratified in the Knesset by a majority of 75:19. The majority of support came from the left (Weissbrod 2002, 179).

Netanyahu’s ideational maneuvering was successful, creating a logic of equivalence that undermined Labour’s insistence that it was committed to Israel’s security. His success was not complete, however, as a growing part of the population in Israel began to dissociate democratic values from the right. The Tel-Aviv University’s Peace Index of October 1997 asked respondents what political bloc cared more about security issues. The majority (53%) saw both sides as equally concerned about security issues, although 28% viewed the right as more concerned with these issues, as opposed to 14% who view the left as caring more about security. When asked the same question about democracy, however, a plurality (45%) believed the left cares more about this value, whereas only 16.5% thought the right cares more, and 28% thought both cared equally for democracy (Peace Index
1997). This, however, did not necessarily translate into greater support for the left. Instead, portions of the population began to at least partially reject democracy itself as a “foreign” value, secondary (at best) to Jewish values.\textsuperscript{239}

Nonetheless, as the elections approached and in light of a relative calm in the preceding months, public interests shifted to internal issues. Seizing on the new alliance between Netanyahu and the ultra-orthodox, and the identification of the left with consumer secularism, Ehud Barak successfully waged a campaign that focused on what he called “a civic revolution”: the separation of state and church, and a reversal of Netanyahu’s neoliberal economic policies in favour of increased public spending on health and poverty-reduction. Barak formed an alliance with two parties – the minuscule Meimad, a moderate religious party; and Gesher, which splintered from Likud and sought to represent Mizrahi Jews. Labour under Barak ran in the elections with these two parties under the new banner of One Israel (Yisrael Achat), distancing itself from the Labour brand and attempting to offer Israel a new, unified and decidedly liberal identity. On elections night, after the exit polls predicted a landslide victory for Barak, he gave a victory speech before a crowd chanting “anyone but Shas”.

Nonetheless, despite his decisive personal victory, the Knesset was more fragmented than ever. Barak was ultimately forced to invite Shas (as well as the UTJ) to join his coalition, and his “civic revolution” came to naught. Instead, Barak left his mark through

\textsuperscript{239} Thus, for example, Motti Karpel, editor of the settler movement’s most important periodical, Nekuda, wrote that “democracy is an alien, Western, form of government,” and expressed his hopes that “it would be replaced someday by a religious leadership, which would then be authentically Jewish and lead Jews back to a life based on the Torah” (Taub 2007, 167).
the final withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, and his failed attempts to reach a final agreement with the Palestinians.

**EHUD BARAK’S TERM**

**The Amazing Shrinking Coalition**

Despite the vociferous disapproval of Arab citizens of Israel with Peres’ actions during *Operation Grapes of Wrath* in southern Lebanon during his brief time as prime minister after Rabin’s assassination, the majority of Arab-Israeli voters remained loyal to Labour’s leadership. Taking advantage of the split vote allowed by the new electoral system, they almost unanimously expressed their support of Peres for prime minister, even as their vote for Zionist parties dwindled in favour of the DFPE and nationalist Arab parties (Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem 1997).\(^{240}\) Netanyahu’s first term in 1996-1999 did nothing to dampen this support,\(^{241}\) and 94.3% of the Arab vote was given to Ehud Barak in the 1999 elections.\(^{242}\) Alongside the Jewish public’s distaste with Netanyahu at the end of his government’s term, this provided Barak with a landslide victory (Frisch 2000).\(^{243}\)

\(^{240}\) Approximately 7-10 percent of Arab voters abstained from the Prime Ministerial vote despite voting for the Knesset in 1996, compared with 4.8% disqualified (mostly “blank”) votes for the prime ministerial elections among Jewish voters (Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem 1997, 11; Kaufmann and Israeli 1999, 99).

\(^{241}\) Netanyahu reversed the majority of budgetary changes Rabin made in favour of the Arab community (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013).

\(^{242}\) NDA leader Azmi Bishara at first intended to run for the Prime Minister’s office as well, arguing this will symbolically situate the Arab citizens as equal in Israeli politics, and improve their stance in subsequent negotiations. The Arab public, according to advance polls, shunned Bishara, and he ultimately removed his candidacy three days before the elections (Reches 2003, 24–25).

\(^{243}\) At the same time, the Arab voters continued their exodus away from the left-wing Zionist parties, preferring by growing numbers the DFPE, UAL and UDA. The only Jewish party to increase its share of the Arab vote was Shas, thanks to its clientalist politics through its control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Elazar and Mollov 2001; Frisch 2000)
While Barak’s victory in the prime ministerial elections was decisive, however, it was more likely due to personal distaste with Netanyahu than any real ideological shift within the Israeli public. This can be seen in the results for the Knesset, where the right and mostly right-affiliated religious parties won 60 seats, while the left won only 48 seats (including the Arab parties, 38 without them). Barak had to round up his coalition with the two centrist parties, Yisreal Ba’aliya and the Centre Party (6 seats each), both of which were composed in part of public figures previously identified with the right, the latter predominantly so (Pedahzur 2000, 51), and three religious parties: the ultra-orthodox Shas (17 seats) and UTJ (5 seats), and the right-leaning NRP (5 seats). The Arab and communist parties were at no point considered as potential members of the coalition, reaffirming the unwritten law precluding them from entering coalition governments. The seven parties formed a giant coalition of 75 seats, with criss-crossing conflict lines that promised crises at every turn. Notably, NRP, Shas, UTJ and Yisrael Ba’aliya also formed Netanyahu’s coalition (together with the now defunct Third Way and the Likud itself), whereas the Centre Party, a new entrant to the Knesset, was largely a splinter party from the Likud. This precarious position, in a system that still required the elected prime minister to maintain the confidence of the Knesset, led to the rapid disintegration of the government with every challenge it encountered.

First out the door was the UTJ, who left only two months after the formation of the coalition over a decision to transport machinery for the government owned electric company during the Sabbath. Meretz left just over a year into the government’s term following a row with Shas, in which Barak took Shas’ side. Barak reasoned he could count

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244 Shas and UTJ negotiated with Barak as a block.
on Meretz to continue to support his government’s policies from the outside, while he needed to maintain Shas’ favour to successfully pass legislation. However, this decision soon proved to be meaningless, as Shas, NRP and Yisrael Ba’aliya dropped out of the coalition only one month later, in protest over Barak’s maneuvers in the peace process. The now minority government continued to hobble as the Centre Party went through its own process of disintegration. However, by the end of 2000, a number of private bills to disperse the Knesset seemed to be amassing support. In response, PM Barak resigned, prompting Israel’s first (and last) Special Elections for the Prime Minister, in which Barak lost to Ariel Sharon and what seemed only recently like a moribund Likud party, by a staggering margin of 40%. The Arab minority, in particular, deserted Barak and abstained in unprecedented numbers, with turnout plummeting from 70 to 18%, in large parts because of the events of October 2000 that cast a dark shadow over the Barak Government’s relationship with Israel’s Arab population (Sheferman 2009).

**Barak and the Arab Minority**

Barak’s government got off to a good start as far as the Arab minority was concerned, with a promise to return to the financial investments characterizing the Rabin government, and

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245 The elections were “special” in that they did not include a ballot for the Knesset.

246 Immediately after the elections, Labour joined Sharon’s broad coalition, and remained a part of it until November 2002, when its ministers resigned citing rejection of the budget, prompting a new round of elections. In yet another twist that is so characteristic of Israeli politics, Ehud Barak later led the Labour Party back into the coalition under Sharon in 2005, after Barak ousted newly elected Labour leader Amram Mitzna from his position.

247 The figure for 1999 refers to any participation in the elections. It is estimated that the number of Arab citizens who cast a vote in the Prime Ministerial race in lower. 94.3% of Arab voters who voted for a prime minister in 1999 elected Ehud Barak, and those voters disproportionately abstained in 2001. Of the few who did vote, Barak garnered the support of only 73.4% (Frisch 2000, 153; Diskin and Hazan 2002, 662).
the formation of a ministerial committee on matters of the Arab citizens of Israel (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 29). However, these promises soon evaporated.

In February 2000, the UAL tabled a motion of no confidence in light of the government’s economic policies and the conditions of poverty among the Arab population and the population of Israel in general. In his speech, MK Taleb El-Sana accused the government of failing to reform the policies of the previous government and diverting resources to alleviate poverty among the Arab population. Deputy Chairman Tal, presiding over the debate, interjected and said to El-Sana “you voted for this government.” To which El-Sana responded: “we voted for Ehud Barak as candidate for Prime Minister for two reasons: a. to replace Netanyahu; b. to be full partners also in decision making. We wanted both change and influence. We got change, but we did not get influence. And through no fault of our own, but due to the mentality that does not accept full civic legitimation, or political legitimation, for the Arab members of Knesset.”248 If some doubts could have been cast in 1992 on the willingness of the Arab parties to join a coalition, El-Sana dispelled these completely in 2000. The Arab parties were excluded solely because the Zionist parties refused to let them in.

However, despite El-Sana’s strict criticism, Barak’s policies towards the Arab citizens of Israel were far less consistent, and for a time he seemed to engage in a careful and gradual move to allow the Arab leadership to take positions of power. He was responsible for the first ever appointment of an Arab Member of Knesset, Hashem Mahameed, to the prestigious and secretive Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. Mahameed was a member of El-Sana’s UAL, and Barak insisted on his inclusion in the

committee as a way to prove to the Arab parties his commitment to their voters. He did this in spite of vocal opposition from the right, stating “I don’t care what they think. This is a democracy, and the Arabs are citizens with equal rights” (Edelist 2003, 112). But Mahameed was selected only after El-Sana himself was considered and rejected as “too thorny” due to statements he made accusing the Israeli government of being “the greatest terrorist in the Middle East”. The Arab Members of Knesset, then, could have equal rights, but only on Barak’s own terms.

Barak saw the potential of the Arab minority as a bridge between Israel and its neighbours, both in the occupied territories and beyond. For example, during his term MK Azmi Bishara, leader of the NDA, was granted permission for the first time to visit Damascus using his Israeli passport, on the invitation of the Syrian Foreign Minister (Edelist 2003, 143). However, this was seen as a pragmatist attitude that viewed the Arab minority as a potential asset in the Israeli-Arab conflict, not an ideological stance that sought to integrate the Arab minority regardless of their potential role in the conflict. That interpretation also explains his decision to delay meeting with the heads of the Arab parties during the construction of his coalition. When he finally agreed to meet with them after the coalition was sealed, he invited all three party leaders at the same time for a short and merely courteous meeting (Edelist 2003, 112). For Barak, the problem of the Arab citizens of Israel was contingent on the peace process, “and once peace is achieved, the problem of Israel’s Arabs will have a completely different character, and will become manageable” (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 5, para. 12). Perhaps unwittingly, Barak was echoing similar statements tying the fate of Israel’s Arab citizenry to the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours made in the first few decades of Israel’s existence. Barak was attempting
to re-establish the link between democracy and security that has been severed decades before.

As a result, and despite Barak’s ever more precarious position in the prime minister’s seat, the Arab sector was largely neglected by his government throughout most of his term, and no cabinet meeting was devoted to the issue of Israel’s Arab minority (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 46–47), even when law and order concerns were raised following a series of violent protests in March 2000 (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 5, para. 8–9). In December 2000, weeks before the violent events that would define Arab-Jewish relations in Israel for years to come, the National Security Council issued recommendations that Barak address the economic discrimination of the Arab sector. In order to “calm the flames”, the Council suggested Barak should “admit to the continued discrimination against the Arab population (as Rabin did) and make promises anchored in budgets and actions to corrects these faults during his term” (quoted in Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 1, para. 28). These recommendations, like others before it, were never implemented. Ultimately, however, the government was forced to attend to the issue following the events of October 2000.

**OCTOBER 2000**

On September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon, then interim chairman of the Likud, seized the opportunity of the collapse of the Camp David talks between Barak and Arafat to galvanize his position as leader of the national camp, and visited the Temple Mount. This act was

249 A special committee, headed by Minister Matan Vilnai, was created to address Arab issues. However, the committee was highly ineffective and powerless (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 29). In his testament before the Or Committee, Vilnai claimed he had warned Barak of the building pressure within the Arab population, but was summarily ignored (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 5, para. 5).
seen by many, both in the Arab world and beyond, as a threat to the sovereignty of the Muslim Wakf in that holy place (Pedahzur 2012, 143–144). That Sharon, hardly a religious man, chose to show his commitment to the nationalist camp through a strictly religious gesture demonstrates yet again the impact of the strong link forged between national Jewish identity and religious identity in Israeli discourse.

On the day following Sharon’s visit, riots erupted in East Jerusalem and spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza, in what would soon be known as the second Intifada. These protests were brutally repressed, with several casualties on the Palestinian side. In response, a general strike was announced by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, an umbrella organization of the Arab community, and protests began inside Israel. Unlike previous large scale protests in Israel such as the Land Day protests of 1976 or the Western Wall Tunnel events in 1996, the October 2000 events were a direct and explicit show of solidarity of the Palestinian citizens of Israel with their brethren in the occupied territories (Bishara 2001, 55), and it was repressed with force that was previously reserved for protests beyond the Green Line. Border Guard units, usually deployed in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, were brought in to reinforce regular police forces (Khmeisi 2003, 76–77). All told, 13 Arab citizens were shot dead by Israeli police forces between October 1 and 10 (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 2).  

While Barak believed the police failed to take necessary precautions in responding to the rioting in Arab towns, he nevertheless chose to support police commander Alik Ron,

250 This conflict is also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, after the Al-Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount.
251 The Border Guard is technically part of the Israel Police, although it is mainly staffed with military-age youth “on-loan” from the IDF to the police.
252 One Jewish Israeli was killed by rocks thrown at a car during the riots.
who was in charge of the Northern District, rather that criticize him while the protests were still taking place. This decision further angered the Arab population and increased their resentment at the unprecedented force used against them. That Ron had a long-standing murky relationship with the Arab leadership, many of whom refused to meet with him even before October 2000 due to what they viewed as incendiary statements he made, merely served to exacerbate the situation (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 6, para. 185–192). Events soon escalated further as Jewish vigilantes also joined the fray and began to attack innocent Arab citizens and mosques throughout Israel (Edelist 2003, 416–417).

Once actual hostilities died down, however, peace was not restored. The already fragile relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel has been torn apart and was never truly mended since. The police continued to exacerbate an already volatile situation by rounding up hundreds of Arab citizens who were charged with rioting, convicted and jailed. Jewish Israelis began to boycott Arab businesses. Even Arab-Jewish organizations that brought together the most moderate individuals of each sector began to break up (Smooha 2004, 11–12). The Arabs, on the other hand, demanded a formal inquiry into the killing of 13 of the protestors, and the prosecution of the officers responsible to it. The trust that was beginning to be built between the Arab population and, at the very least, the Jewish left, was shattered (Bishara 2001, 56). In the subsequent special elections the vast majority of Arab voters abstained (Reches 2003). Subsequently, the trend of ever lower turnout figures among Arab citizens in general elections, with an ever higher percentage of them voting for Arab lists, was strengthened (Smooha 2004, 12).

When Ehud Barak’s government finally met to discuss the aftermath of the October events, it decided on three main responses. Two are characteristic of Israel’s conception of
its Arab population since the 1970s, as citizens whose chief concerns are economic and as a security risk; the third, however, a direct response to demands by leaders of the Arab community, was an unprecedented acknowledgement of the political rights of the Arab citizens of Israel as equals in the Israeli polity. Unfortunately, all three responses were watered down in time, and ultimately achieved only increased alienation of the Arab population.

The first response was the so-called “Four Billion Shekel Plan”, a plan that was being prepared by Vilnai’s Committee for Arab Affairs but received no cabinet attention until the October events, and then was rushed through. The plan, which was announced on October 22, 2000, was the largest ever program for funding and investment in Arab towns and villages. It was designed to address inequality in public investments in the Arab sector, and focused on infrastructures. While the provisions of this program were (and still are) certainly needed to address decades of neglect, the rationale evident in passing it shortly after the October events is clearly couched in conceptions more relevant to the 1970s, when the first Land Day protests prompted the government to a brief spurt of funding for infrastructure in Arab regions. It completely ignored the ideational processes that the Arab community in Israel has gone through over the three decades separating the two events. The government saw the grievances of the Arab population as emanating largely, if not completely, from economic inequality. The plan included no aspects of integration into Jewish Israeli society and did not address any of the deep political issues raised by Arab leaders in Israel, including their political disempowerment, racism and hatred among Jewish Israelis, and their “invisibility” in the Israeli public sphere. Even within these limited parameters, however, the plan failed to deliver. The original budget for the plan was cut from ILS 3.9bn to 3.15bn, of which only 2.74bn were actually spent (Abraham Fund
Initiatives 2013, 30). The government cited budgetary difficulties to explain the changes (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 1, para. 55).

A second decision taken by Barak was to instruct the National Security Council to draft a proposal for new policies regarding the Arab population in Israel for the Ministerial Committee on Arab affairs. That this task was given to the National Security Council was seen by many as another sign that the government views them primarily through the prism of security concerns. While the Council presented a proposal for a policy development process that included consultation with representatives of the Arab community, this proposal was never implemented as the Ministerial Committee was dispersed following the elections (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 32–33).

Lastly, in direct response to the demands of the Arab leadership following the October events, Barak decided to form a public committee of inquiry into the police’s conduct during the protests. Only after pressure from the families of the deceased and the Follow-Up Committee did Barak agree to instruct Supreme Court President Aharon Barak to appoint a State Commission of Inquiry into the events, with more far-reaching authority, and a broader mandate (Ha’aretz 2003). The committee, headed by Justice Theodor Or, submitted its conclusions in August 2003 which were widely seen as a landmark document on the relationship between Israel and its Arab citizens. However, both the conclusions and the language used by the Or Committee were not conducive to any real change in this relationship. It is questionable, of course, if the government in place by the time the conclusions were published would have taken up the challenge of any such change even if it had, given that several ministers made public their distaste with the committee long before it published its report. Yet, as noted by Peled (2005), this could have also freed the
committee to produce more far-reaching conclusions, if it was so inclined, knowing that in so doing it is not jeopardizing their implementation. As expected, the recommendations of the committee were never substantially implemented “because the majority of cabinet ministers disagreed with them” (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 36).

THE OR COMMITTEE

The government decision on the formation of the Committee gave it a broad mandate to “investigate the sequence of events and establish findings and conclusions about all that took place in them and of the factors that led to their occurrence at that time, inclusive of the behaviour of inciters and the organizers who participated in the events from all sectors, and the security forces” and to “submit to the government its recommendations and conclusions to the extent it sees fit” (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, Introduction). The committee interpreted “the factors” in the broadest possible sense, and it solicited expert opinions on the development of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel over the decades (e.g., Osacki-Lazar and Ghanem 2003). The committee espoused the view that the October events can only be understood in the context of continued discrimination and deprivation that have defined the life experience of Arab citizens in Israel. It devoted dozens of pages to an extensive discussion of this discrimination in various aspects of the relationship between state and citizen, including lands, employment, education, poverty, language policies and budgets. It was “nothing less than an outline for an encyclopedia of inequality

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253 The government officially accepted the recommendations of the committee two weeks after the report was published. However, its decision also stated that the substantive (i.e., non-personal) decisions will be studied by a ministerial committee that would submit its own report on the means and extent of their implementation. The committee, with a majority of ministers who rejected the Or report outright, submitted its own report nine months later. The report claimed that the recommendations in the original report were already addressed by various institutions, and failed to make any recommendations to the government (Khatib 2006).
and discrimination practiced, mostly by the state, towards Israel’s Palestinian citizens” (Peled 2005, 94).

The committee viewed this state of events as an aberration from the intrinsic liberal nature of Israel as a democracy. Like liberal Zionists before it, the committee did not see a contradiction between the state’s democratic nature and its Jewish identity. Yet, at the same time, it found it necessary to remind the Arab citizens of Israel that while the Jewish majority must remember that Israel is democratic, and “equality is one of the main pillars of the state’s constitutional structure,” the Arabs must also remember that “Israel is the realization of the Jewish people’s yearnings for its own state, the sole state where Jews are a majority, a state where bringing together the diaspora is a key tenet – and that this is the essence of the state’s existence for its Jewish citizens. The state’s Jewishness is a constitutional given which is manifested, inter alia, also in the centrality of Jewish heritage and the Hebrew language in its public life” (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 6, para. 42, emphasis added). Hence, while they conclude from this that the Jewish majority must respect the identity of the Arab citizens, and may even consider adding more inclusive state symbols that would allow the Arab citizens to identify, at least in part, with the state, they explicitly refrain from voicing an opinion on the issue of collective rights for the Arab minority. While they recommend that democracy be made more robust, this recommendation is still subordinated to the Jewish identity of the state, and should only be allowed in as much as it does not pose a threat to this Jewish identity. While noting that many opinions were brought before them, the committee chose to cite only one of them – that of Ehud Barak, who repeated the classic liberal Zionist position that the Arab citizens deserve individual rights and even some autonomy in cultural and linguistic matters, but
giving them national collective rights would "threaten the state’s basic identity as a Jewish state" (ibid).

It is this adherence to the ideational network of liberal Zionism that allows the Committee to identify a second reason for the rioting, independent of the state of discrimination. This was the “radicalization” of the Arab society in Israel: “The eruption of the October 2000 Events should also be seen in light of processes of political escalation in the Arab sector in preceding years” (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 1, para. 68). As noted by Peled, “this ‘also’ creates the impression that these processes of ‘radicalization’ were not a consequence of the history of discrimination and deprivation […], but rather a separate, additional factor that combined with that history to produce the ‘October Events’” (Peled 2005, 97).

The Committee continues seeing these two factors as completely independent in its recommendations. It admonishes the police to fight against a “phenomenon of negative bigotries” that were found among certain officers, who treat the Arab citizens as enemies and as separate from the general population. It argues that the police does not invest enough, both financially and administratively, in catering to the Arab sector, and has neglected this sector both in terms of maintaining communication with it, and in terms of providing basic law enforcement services within it. Nevertheless, the Committee also condemned the Arab leadership for not going through formal procedures, such as applying for a permit from the police, when wishing to carry out protests. In other words, the Committee recognizes the state hostility towards the Arab sector, yet demands from the sector’s leadership to act as if no such hostility exists, and to adhere to the very laws that are used to limit their freedoms. They drew no line connecting police officers viewing the
Arab citizens as enemies, with “practices [among Arab leadership] that view the state and its legitimate authorities as the enemy” (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 6, para. 20).

As a result, the majority of non-personal recommendations to the police treated the problems in its conduct as if they are unrelated to the actions’ targets. Despite the fact that never had the police killed Jewish protesters in many a violent situation, including Jewish rioting during the October events themselves, the Committee phrased most of its recommendations as if the problems were to do with police procedures for decision-making, without referring to the context in which these decisions were made. Thus, when the Committee argued that “instructions to the personnel on the ground are not communicated clearly enough”, leading to fatal results (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003, sec. 6, para. 25), it never stops to question why added clarifications were never required when dealing with Jewish protesters.

Furthermore, the Committee places at least some of the blame for the violent reaction of the state and its Jewish citizens on the shoulders of the Arab citizens themselves, emphasizing their status as a possible security threat in the eyes of the state. The Arab leadership “failed to understand that violent riots, blocking of roadways and identifying with armed activities against the state and its citizens, form a threat on the state’s Jewish citizens, and severely damage the delicate fabric of Jewish-Arab relations in the state... Messages of delegitimation of the state and its security forces were passed, and a deep hostility to its symbols was expressed” (sec. 6, para. 6). Once more, these sentiments are not linked back to Israel’s own policies towards the Arab population. The implication of this perspective is that democratic equality in contingent on the Arab community’s ability to disarm Jewish fears of its threat to their security. Democracy and the state’s Jewishness,
then, are once more seen as fully compatible, and it is only extremist forces, or the police’s lack of professionalism, that have created the tensions that were seen in the October events.

In its concluding remarks, again, the Committee returns to the theme of liberal Zionism and beseeches the state to implement policies in its light. It fails to offer the Arab citizens of Israel real hope of becoming truly equal members of Israeli society, as the coexistence of Jews and Arabs in Israel remains “an existential fact, leaving both sides only one alternative, and that is co-existence out of mutual respect” (sec. 6, para. 41). The Or Committee did not challenge the consensus in Israel that sees “Jewish” and “democratic” as easily reconcilable, despite the vast evidence it itself has brought to bear against this assertion. It even reiterates the new ethnic democratic compromise that has seen democracy subordinated to the state’s Jewish identity. Ultimately, it preferred repeating the platitudes of equality over attempting to develop a new liberal language and discourse that would lead to real change.

Three years after the publication of the Or Committee Report, committee member Justice Hashem Khatib wrote that not only had the situation not improved, it had in fact worsened over the period. He pointed out the increasingly popular view that cast doubts not only on the equality of Arab citizens, but even on their eligibility for basic rights. He provided as example the growing support for revoking the citizenship of Arabs in Israel altogether and transferring authority over them to the Palestinian Authority (Khatib 2006). That the Committee’s recommendations were not implemented was hardly surprising, given the nature of the coalition at the time of their publication. But it was the lack of any innovative ideational contribution by the Committee that prevented it from having any
lasting impact on Israeli policies or politics. Its recommendations were commonsensical, not earth-shattering. It pretended basic principles of democracy and liberalism were simply unknown to the leadership of the state and its authorities, rather than acknowledging that they were intentionally subsumed under other ideological priorities (Peled 2005, 101–102). In the words of Yoav Peled, the Committee saw its main role as restoring ethnic democracy, and it is through this lens that their recommendations must be read.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The events described in this episode demonstrate the effects of an ideational network as it becomes more rigid – as the links (both positive and negative) between the its main nodes of democracy, Jewish identity, and security become more robust and less malleable, with little inflow of new ideas into it. This condition enforces stricter limitations on the actions of the leadership. Neither Barak nor Justice Or could turn to any novel ideas on democracy and equality when faced with the increasingly tighter combination of Jewish identity and security ideas spun by Netanyahu and his national-religious allies. Even the violent eruption of the Arab citizens of Israel could not shake the ideational network sufficiently given this lack of innovation within it.

This emphasized again the difficulty for decision makers to generate new ideas on demand. Ideas must grow organically in any of the myriad streams in which they can develop, and only then can they be brought to bear to effect political change. Contrary to some ideational models, leaders cannot fashion ideas out of whole-cloth as they see fit and wield them whenever needed. Their actions and inactions must be explained, at least in part, in terms of the availability of ideas that can be deployed by them. This process, in
turn, must take place over many years of fashioning new links in the periphery of the ideational network, that may ultimately be leveraged to enact significant change on the configuration of the network.

Nevertheless, during the Rabin period, relatively new ideas such as post-Zionism enabled policy-makers to understand the direction of change necessary, but were not well-adapted enough to allow them to carry this change through. However, during Barak’s term, the ideational stagnation on the left prevented Barak from even being able to change his perception of the facts on the ground, leading to a slow and inept response to a quickly changing reality. The lack of new ideas in this case prevented even an attempt at an action to respond to changes.

The events and their aftermath did have one important ideational result: democracy increasingly became a floating signifier, and its meaning became a point of fierce contention within Israeli debate. This contention would be central to the events of the following decade (Weinblum 2015), and is a crucial anchor point for any attempt to reverse the retrenchment of liberalization. This retrenchment and how it could be reversed will be discussed in the next chapter.
8: Beyond 2001, Still Trapped in the Ideational Network

Since 1999, no Labour leader has posed a threat to Likud (or its splinter party, Kadima) in the polls. Labour lost its role as the one of the two largest parties, and would not regain it until the 2015 elections. The left as a whole has been decimated, and would not gain even a third of the seats, together with the Arab parties, until this modest goal was once again achieved in 2015 (see above, Error! Reference source not found.). Throughout this period, the process of retrenchment in the liberalization of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel accelerated, and increasingly, the language of Jewish identity supplanted democratic ideals in the public sphere. This chapter discusses the influence of the previously described events on the subsequent development of the ideational network and policy in the years since the fall of Barak’s government, and the turn for the worse that Israel’s institutional relationship with its Arab citizens has taken over this time.

THE IDEATIONAL FIELD

As time passed, the ideational toolkit available to the left has shrunk, and left-wing leaders increasingly borrow from the language of the right in expressing their views on the internal relationship between Israel and its Arab minority. Along with the new dominance of nationalist sentiments, came the end of the short-lived post-Zionist turn in Israeli academia. While the 2nd generation of historiographers were entrenched in their various tenured positions, albeit under constant attack from politicians and Zionist NGOs, a new
shift could be detected as early as the late 1990s (Likhovski 2010). This shift manifested in two forms. One was the rediscovery of the history of culture as a subject of study, diverting attention away from political and economic questions (Likhovski 2010, 2). The other was an attempt to accept the criticism raised by post-Zionists towards particular policies, while ridding the state mechanism of the fault of intentionally conspiring to oppress the Arab minority. Instead, the condemned actions are explained as the result of the real sense of threat experienced by decision makers, and the different global ideational atmosphere in which previous decision makers operated (Rudnitzky 2014).

Perhaps the most remarkable metamorphosis as part of this reversal has been the change of heart of Benny Morris, formerly a leading figure in the “new historians” school,254 who in an interview to Ha’aretz in 2004 and later in a book published in 2009, withdrew his criticism of Israeli policies and lay the blame for the continued conflict squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinians. After coldly reciting his own findings on systematic massacres of Palestinians in the 1948 war and accusing Ben-Gurion of supporting transfer of the Arab residents of Palestine, he adds “Ben-Gurion was right. If he hadn’t done what he did, the State of Israel would not have been established. This must be clear. It cannot be avoided. Without uprooting the Palestinians there would not have been a Jewish state here... Under certain conditions, deportation is not a war crime. I don’t think the deportations of ’48 were war crimes. You can’t make an omelette without breaking a few eggs. You have to get your hands dirty” (Shavit 2004).

254 His book, The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem (Morris 1987) is considered one of the seminal works of the New Historians school.
Some grassroots organizations promoting binationalist, federalist or confederalist solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – solutions that necessarily must involve Israel’s Arab citizens in some substantial way – may indicate the direction of future ideational change (Bar-Gefen and Benvenisti 2010), although they will certainly face a formidable challenge in reaching out to greater numbers of Israelis and Palestinians who have little trust in either the leadership or the people on the other side.

Meanwhile, on the right, a growing network of NGOs and intellectuals has been advocating for a limitation of the freedoms of Arab citizens and left-wing organizations, and enhancing the logic of equivalence between Arabs, the left, Europeans, anti-Semitism and terrorism, in a hodgepodge of accusations and linkages that successfully made the very concept of “left-wing” poisonous. The concept of human rights was vilified as inherently hypocritical, for example, in the ironic slogan on signs carried by right-wing protesters – “Jews also have human rights”. By far the most successful effort in this vain has been made by *Im Tirzu*, a right-wing student movement that focused at first on defending the rights of right-wing students in what they perceived as a left-biased academic environment. In 2010 *Im Tirzu* embarked on a campaign against the New Israel Fund, an organization funneling contributions from North America to (primarily) left-wing organizations in Israel. The NIF was accused of supporting attacks on the IDF, advocating for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and aiding anti-Semitism and terrorism. In one report, *Im Tirzu* purported to prove that NIF-supported organizations provided evidence against IDF soldiers to the UN-established Goldstone Committee investigating the 2009 war in the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{255} In one fell swoop, *Im Tirzu* succeeded in tarnishing almost every left-wing

\textsuperscript{255} Remarkably, the report doesn’t claim this evidence is false, but merely that it was provided to the UN
organization in Israel, including aid organizations to impoverished people and disadvantaged youth, as “supporting terror”. *Im Tirzu’s* campaign enjoyed the support of some of Israel’s leading newspapers, and of some of its key politicians. Their reports were used in the justification of many bills proposed in subsequent years to limit the freedoms of NGOs in Israel (see below).

Indeed, as the disempowered left increasingly relied on the international community and international law as surrogates for internal power to control policy, so did the right increase its rejection of international law and suspicion of the international community (Peleg 2014). While the diminishing left embraced Rabin’s injunctions to forgo their natural suspicions, the right has only withdrawn further, seeing the world’s support of Israel’s left as further proof of the left’s treachery and the world’s hatred of Israel and the Jews.

As the alliance between Jewish identity and security was emboldened, its agents began an ideational gambit to take over the word “Israeli”, which groups on the left and centre have been using as a more inclusive substitute to “Jewish” to denote shared identity. Media campaigns such as “Israeli Friday” extolled secular Jews to practice religious ceremonies as a way of expressing their identity as Israelis. Tellingly, the IDF initiated a project titled “Israeli Saturday” in which soldiers were encouraged (or ordered) to experience the Sabbath at the home of a religious family (generally in a West Bank settlement). This project was subsequently expanded to the public school system. The

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256 Ironically, its own funding was also received primarily from abroad, through the Central Fund for Israel, an organization that funnels donations to right-wing organizations in Israel, and from John Hagee’s Christians United for Israel (Blau 2013). *Im Tirzu* also received substantial support from the Jewish Agency.
public “mamlakhti” (republican) school system itself also experienced an on-going process of “religionization”, with increasingly greater proportions of the school day devoted to overtly religious content, leading some to form a movement calling on the government to establish a special “secular” (i.e., non-religious) public school system, in addition to the existing religious-republican (mamlakhti-dati) and non-denominational school systems (Fruman 2015).

THE POLITICAL FIELD

Given the lack of innovation in the network surrounding ideas of democracy, and the continued development of the coalition between identity and security ideas, it should come as no surprise that the political field has been characterized by similar trends, as the Labour party lost ground on the one hand, while right-wing parties underwent a process of radicalization. In between, a growing centrist block continues to waver between short-lived parties that promise to solidify an identity that combines “Jewish and democratic”, but ultimately fail to deliver on their promises.

COALITION GUIDELINES

The change in the public debate is visible in the “Guidelines” set by each government since 1992. The guidelines are a declarative document that is published by the government as an addendum to the specific and more contract-like coalition agreements, which states the goals and policy preferences of the government. Each document begins with a brief outline of the central goals of the party.257 Under Rabin, this outline included the following:

257 For a more comprehensive analysis of the content of the guidelines with regard to the Arab citizens of Israel, see Abraham Fund Initiatives (2013, 53–57).
The central goals of the government are: national security and personal security, peace, the prevention of war, a war on unemployment, through the creation of jobs that will enable absorption of Aliya and its increase, prevention of emigration, economic growth, fortifying the foundations of democracy, rule of law, ensuring full equality for all citizens and protecting human rights.258

This list served as a template for future guideline documents, albeit in a much expanded form. In 1996, Netanyahu's first government's guidelines included the following outline:

The government presented before the Knesset will act out of faith in the right of the Jewish people for the Land of Israel as an eternal and unshakable right, and out of recognition that the State of Israel is the state of the Jewish people, which has a democratic regime and promises equality among its citizens and whose main calling is bringing in the diasporas and combining them.

The integrity of the nation, its unity, action for social justice, the securing of human freedom and striving for true peace with all our neighbours, while maintaining national and personal security, will stand at the foundation of government policy.

The government will act to achieve the following main goals:

A. Broadening the circle of peace to all our neighbours while maintaining national and personal security.

B. Fortifying the status of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Jewish people.

C. Increasing Aliya to Israel and absorption of the immigrants in all areas of life.

D. Creating the conditions for the development of a free economy, a thriving market and social welfare.

E. Strengthening settlement throughout the land, broadening it and developing it.

F. Cultivating the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and maintaining the appropriate balance between the will of the majority and the rights of the individual and the minorities.

G. Deepening education and increasing the bond to Jewish heritage and Zionist pioneering.259

The increased emphasis on Jewish identity, particularly in the preamble, is a clear indication of the different ideational networks of Labour and Likud. While the general ordering of security, economy, democracy was preserved from the Rabin document, each was punctuated with a new clause on Jewish identity, and democratic values were substantially subordinated to nationalist ones. Even the decision to push democracy and human rights from their place at the very bottom of the list in favour of Zionist education

259 This and all subsequent Government Guidelines were obtained from the Knesset website, http://knesset.gov.il.
seems calculated to further demote democracy in favour of Jewishness. Notably, equality is completely missing from the list. That this was done so shortly after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by a right-wing radical seeking to end the peace process supported by a majority in the Knesset and the public, makes the decision even more surprising.²⁶⁰

Ehud Barak’s government’s guidelines were a return to Rabin’s format, although some of the changes are telling of the changing public sentiment. Doing away with the preamble, the guidelines began with the outline paragraph:

The main goals of the government are: national security and personal security through a determined war against terror, ending the Israeli-Arab conflict through the achievement of true peace; prevention of war and bloodshed; battle against unemployment and cultivating steady growth that generates employment; reducing social gaps; promoting Aliya and its absorption through integration and partnership; creating the conditions and environment that give a sense of purpose and hope and encourage Aliya; fortifying democracy, rule of law, Jewish heritage and human rights while maintaining respect for the courts; guaranteeing equal opportunities for all; placing education as the top priority through taking care of educating the younger generation from kindergarten to university; fighting violence and car accidents.

²⁶⁰ The Guidelines of the interim Peres government following the assassination, in comparison, placed “ensuring the democratic character of Israel” directly after “national security and personal security”, and before “continuing the peace process”, as well as adding a preamble in which it committed itself “to protect democracy and act for its strengthening and fortification”.
While Netanyahu’s democracy was subordinated to Jewish values, Barak appears to do the reverse, tucking “Jewish heritage” in between democracy and human rights, rather than ignoring it completely as Rabin did. But like Netanyahu, democracy (along with Jewish heritage) is demoted to a place near the end of the list, followed by a grab-bag of practical and uninspiring issues. Barak also preserved Netanyahu’s emphasis on promoting Aliya, whereas Rabin merely attached the issue to broader economic issues.261

Ariel Sharon continued the pendulum swing. His 2001 government’s guidelines (as well as his subsequent 2003 guidelines, which were identical) offered a mix between Netanyahu’s and Rabin’s formats, with no apparent coherence or thought put into the order. Democracy and Jewish identity were separated once again, and democracy returned to its place at the end of the list, while mentions of Jerusalem’s status, Jewish heritage and Zionist pioneering, and settlement of the land are sprinkled haphazardly throughout the list. Similarly, economic issues are split into two clauses, with Jerusalem and education between them.

The 2006 Olmert government’s guidelines present the most substantial break from the Rabin format. It opens with a pledge to act for internal unity, reacting to the rift caused by Sharon’s Disengagement Plan,262 followed by a new amalgamated clause that refers to all three core ideas together:

The government will strive to set the final borders of the state, as a Jewish state with a Jewish majority and as a democratic state and will act to do so

261 Rabin’s government was formed at the height of an employment crisis generated by the influx of some one million Jews from the Soviet Union. By 1996, immigration of Jews to Israel returned to a trickle.

262 The Disengagement was Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which included the dismantling of several Jewish settlements in the strip.
through negotiations with the Palestinians, which will be based on mutual recognition, signed agreements, the Road Map principles, stopping the violence and disarming the terror organizations.

Interestingly, Olmert here ties the securing of a Jewish majority (as well as democracy) to negotiations with the Palestinians. These guidelines also eschew any mention of human rights, and the idea of equality only appears in the context of “equal opportunity” in the clause on economic development.²⁶³

Finally, Netanyahu’s 2009 government published the shortest guidelines document to date. While previous guidelines followed the outline with a long “platform” detailing the aspirations of the government, Netanyahu settled for the outline alone. The outline itself was largely a return to Sharon’s format. However, some key changes are noticeable. Jewish identity was separated from education and other topics and concentrated in a single clause. Democracy, human rights and equality, however, were eliminated entirely. Instead, the guidelines commit to reforms to improve governability and stability of the government, and the “fortification of the rule of law in Israel”.²⁶⁴

The declining role of democracy and associated ideas throughout this period, and the increasing role of Jewish identity, even as some governments attempted to reign it in and subordinate it to other values, are a startling representation of the process of

²⁶³ Ironically, three new clauses dealt with the problem of crime and corruption. Olmert was later forced to resign due to allegations of corruption, and was subsequently convicted.

²⁶⁴ The guidelines of Netanyahu’s 3rd and 4th governments were a laundry list of dozens of unordered clauses with no coherent structure, reflecting the incoherent nature of the 2013 coalition itself, and barely revised in 2015. I will refrain from attempting to analyze it here, but I will note that while “equality” appears again, in the context of developing the geographic and social periphery, democracy is still not mentioned anywhere in the guidelines.
retrenchment of liberalizing policies that took place in Israel as a whole over this period, and the struggle to limit or slow it down.

**LABOUR**

The Barak government, as it turned out, was the Israeli Labour Party’s last hurrah. While the Likud succeeded in rebuilding its electoral base in 2003, following the abolition of direct vote for the Prime Minister (the subsequent split of Kadima notwithstanding), Labour’s electoral fortunes continued to wane. The party leadership in the following decade oscillated between a focus on security and economic issues, trying to find its way back into the hearts of the Israeli public. In 2003, under the leadership of Amram Mitzna – yet another celebrated high ranking military officer parachuted to a leadership role in the party – Labour garnered only 19 seats, a number it retained also under the more economically focused union leader Amir Peretz in 2006.\(^{265}\) Returning Ehud Barak to the leadership of Labour again in 2009, the party further descended to a mere 13 seats, losing for the first time its status as one of the two largest parties. It was unable to recuperate from this blow in 2013 when it gained a paltry 15 seats under Shelly Yehimovich, a former journalist focused in her political career on economic issues and welfare, who arrived in the party as a protégé of Peretz.\(^{266}\)

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\(^{265}\) However, it should be noted that these elections followed a split within Labour as well, as several prominent members of the party, including former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, joined Ariel Sharon’s *Kadima* (the party was headed by Ehud Olmert during the elections following Sharon’s incapacitation by a series of strokes). Likud at the same elections sank to 12 seats.

\(^{266}\) The 2011 primaries pitted the two former allies against one another following Yehimovich’s criticism of Peretz’s decision to take the position of Defense Minister under Olmert in 2006. Yehimovich herself was ousted from the leadership of the party in 2013 in favour of Isaac Herzog, who is not clearly identified with either the security or the economic issues, and presents centrist, third-way views on both issues.
While the fall of the Labour party can be attributed to a number of factors (e.g., the failure of the peace process, the continued chasm between Labour and the Mizrahi population, and the demographic decline of Labour’s power bases), the ideational process described throughout this dissertation was crucial in preventing its return to a leadership position. As Labour has often relied on the security credentials of its leadership, the concurrent process of linking security and Jewishness, the turn towards a redefinition of Jewishness as a religious identity rather than a more secular national one, and the increase in identification of left-wing politics with support of Arab minority rights, have posed an insurmountable obstacle before the party, barred on every turn from finding its way back to the centre of the political debate.

The two strategies taken by the party to mitigate that – oscillating between a security and an economic foci – are polar opposites, as one attempts to appeal to core constituencies which have left the party, ignoring the ideational changes that took place in the interim, while the other attempts a radical redefinition of political identities around a new nodal point which could articulate a new constituency for the party. Yehimovich’s much criticized refusal to even discuss security issues during the run-up to the 2013 elections epitomizes this strategy. Nonetheless, both strategies failed, and their failure can be explained, in part, in terms of the ideational field within which the party operates, and the strategies’ failure to address its particular characteristics. Despite the unprecedented public debate on economic issues following the social justice protests in the summer of 2011, Yehimovich’s Labour did nothing to try and indirectly attack the ideational network surrounding the idea of Jewishness so as to make it subordinate to their welfare-focused identities. Failing to do that, the new idea of social justice was simply absorbed into the existing ideational network and made subservient to existing nodal points, e.g., through
associating the demonstrators with the logic of equivalence of left wing-Arab-Anti Zionist (an association that many of the radical left protestors themselves were only too happy to accept, despite the protest of more centrist leaders in the movement). On the other side, some of the more practical demands of the protestors, such as lowering the cost of housing, were commandeered by new centrist leaders (Yair Lapid in 2013 and Moshe Kachlon in 2015) who decontextualized them and subordinated them to the ideas of security and Jewish identity (for example, through aid to discharged soldiers).

The right wing’s efforts were (perhaps unwittingly) strengthened by the appearance of the new Yesh Atid (“There Is a Future”) lead by Yair Lapid, a popular journalist and author, and son of former Justice Minister Tommy Lapid. Lapid positioned himself as the voice of the middle class protest\(^{267}\) while vociferously distancing himself from the left by taking the banner of “equal burden”, i.e. drafting ultra-orthodox Jews (and possibly Arab citizens of Israel) to military or national service. The new party succeeded in preventing Kadima’s votes from going either to Labour or to Likud and emerged as the second largest party after the elections.\(^{268}\) More than anything, Lapid promised to give middle-of-the-road, secular Israel a clear identity. Lapid himself epitomized for many what it means to be “an Israeli”,\(^{269}\) and his campaign emphasized those vague qualities that he believed

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\(^{267}\) Contrary to most democracies, and because of its atypical definitions for left and right, the Israeli middle class, which is predominantly Ashkenazi and secular, tends to vote to the left.

\(^{268}\) The secure place of the Likud in these elections as the sole alternative for heading the government was also demonstrated by its refusal to publish a platform before the elections. Moreover, even though the early elections were justified by Netanyahu through his inability to pass his preferred budget with the current coalition, he refused to reveal what this budget will include, instead alluding in broad strokes to issues originally raised by the protest movement. The Likud again refused to publish a platform in 2015, yet here voices were more often raised in favour of developing and publishing one as the possibility of losing the elections became real.

\(^{269}\) In one famous exchange, Yair Lapid interviewed his father, Yosef (Tommy) Lapid, on his prime time talk show, shortly after the latter’s appointment as Justice Minister in 2003. Lapid asked his father his signature question:
characterized “Israeliness”. At a time when Labour was failing to articulate what being an Israeli even means for centrist, secular Jews, Lapid promised to answer that question. Notably, that answer was steeped in the language of Jewishness.

**LIKUD**

Throughout this period, the Likud continued to strengthen the ideational links between Jewish identity and religiosity, on the one hand, and equality and insecurity on the other (Weinblum 2015). In 2002 Prime Minister Sharon reinstated the Demographic Council, whose role is to design policies that ensure the continued demographic hegemony of the Jewish majority (Stopler 2008), and limited accessibility to child benefits for large families. In 2003, the government amended the citizenship law to prevent family reunification from citizens whose spouses are residents of enemy states, including the Palestinian Authority (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 36). This move was explicitly made to prevent Arab citizens from marrying Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, thus enabling the latter to become Israeli citizens.

Under Sharon, Israel also further limited the political rights of Arab citizens. The police initiated investigations against almost all Arab MKs, and one indictment was filed against MK Azmi Bishara, which was subsequently withdrawn (ibid.). In 2002 the Knesset also amended the Basic Law: The Knesset’s section 7A, enabling the Knesset Elections’

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270 It is difficult to construct a coherent world view from the often contradicting public statements of Lapid throughout his career as a columnist and politician. Perhaps the clearest expression of his perspective was offered in a 2005 column he wrote on the occasion of his son receiving his ID card. In it, he defined belonging to Israeli society through serving in the military and shared experiences including cult Israeli movies (specifically, those spoofing the military) and popular musicians (Lapid 2005). Nevertheless, as Lapid moved into the world of politics, his public statements tended more often to include references to Jewish religious practices.

271 While large families can be found in both the Arab and ultra-orthodox populations, means were found to provide large Jewish families with other sources of government largesse.
Committee to ban individual persons, not only entire lists, from running in the elections. The amendment also replaced the original phrasing, requiring all parties recognize Israel as “the state of the Jewish people”, into the current phrasing of “a Jewish and democratic state”. This amendment has since been used a number of times, both against Arab MKs and against Kahanist candidates, although the court has struck down all of these decisions.

The Olmert government, which included the Labour party as Kadima’s main coalition partner, as well as Israel’s first ever Arab minister, Ghaleb Majadele, provided a relative lull in this trend. Nonetheless, a series of bills abrogating the rights of Arabs in the name of security were proposed and passed during this government’s term, while the two leading parties mostly kept silent on the matter and left the debates in the Knesset to opposition parties from both sides (Weinblum 2015). In July 2008, Olmert convened the “Prime Minister’s Convention for the Arab Sector” in Haifa. In his speech at the event, Olmert proclaimed “Israel’s Arabs are not a strategic threat, and I do not view them as a strategic threat… Israel’s citizens must be educated that the Arabs in Israel are citizens with equal rights” (Abraham Fund Initiatives 2013, 38). However, by the end of that same month, Olmert had announced he would be resigning from the position of prime minister, and shortly afterwards Tzipi Livni took over as interim prime minister until the elections in early 2009. After the elections, despite remaining the largest party in the Knesset, Kadima lost the premiership to Netanyahu.

Netanyahu’s 2nd government, sworn in in 2009 and lasting longer than any government since the 1980s, was characterized by a deluge of laws that limited the political rights and freedoms of Arabs as well as Jews who were critical of the government’s policies, and weakening the Supreme Court’s power to prevent undemocratic legislation.
Beyond 2001, Still Trapped in the Ideational Network

(Fuchs, Blander, and Kremnitzer 2015). In 2010 a law extending periods of arrest of persons suspected of security offenses without judicial oversight was passed in the Knesset. 2011 saw the passage of a bill imposing new requirements on organizations receiving funding from foreign state entities. This bill was explicitly intended to delegitimize human rights organizations whose main sources of income were EU and US grants. It was one of several bills that suggested different means of limiting such organizations from receiving this funding. A law allowing village communities to turn down candidates if they “fail to meet the fundamental views of the community” or its social fabric was also passed that year, as was the “Naqba Law”, that enables the state to relinquish funding from organizations that in any way supported statements or events that undermine the “existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state,” or violate its symbols. Both laws specifically target Arab citizens of Israel. Later that year, the “Boycott Law” was also passed, allowing for civil lawsuits against individuals or organizations that voice support of boycott against an Israeli or group of Israelis because of their affiliation to Israel or to certain parts of Israel (i.e., settlements) (Association for Civil Rights in Israel 2012). Numerous other bills were tabled limiting the rights of Arabs or left-wing organizations and abrogating freedoms of those who would criticize state policies. This government also saw the first introduction of the bill for Basic Law: Israel as the State of the Jewish People, which later received more public attention during Netanyahu’s 3rd government, and nearly brought about its fall.

Foreign funding of NGOs was also the target of two proposed parliamentary committees of inquiry that were approved by the Knesset Committee in 2011. One of the proposals was made by Likud MK Danny Dannon. However, following international
pressure, Netanyahu withdrew his support, and the proposals were subsequently rejected by the Knesset (Association for Civil Rights in Israel 2012).

As the ideational link between security and Jewishness strengthened within the ideational network, the effects of this alliance could be seen more boldly in the real world. The IDF itself became increasingly lead by national-religious officers (Y. Levy 2007); the religious parties continued to move ever more distinctly to the right (Elman 2014); and Manhigut Yehudit (Jewish Leadership), an extremist faction within Likud led by Moshe Feiglin, an observant orthodox Jew, and whose power centre is in the West Bank settlements, became the most powerful faction within the party (Haklai 2014). One remarkable example of this linking of security with Jewishness qua religion can be seen in the transformation of Moshe (Bogie) Ya’alon.272 As late as 1996, as head of military intelligence, Ya’alon was a supporter of the peace process and even controversially intervened in the elections by saying that the Iranian government was trying to influence the elections by funding terrorist attacks, a statement widely seen to imply that Likud’s Benjamin Netanyahu was favoured by the Iranian regime over incumbent Shimon Peres of the Labour Party (Caspit 2013). Like most high ranking generals to end up as Chiefs of Staff, Ya’alon was a staunch centrist,273 but following his tenure as commander of the Central Command, which has responsibility over the West Bank, he seemed to have had a change of heart. By the time he was made Chief of Staff he became a supporter of some of the most extremist settlers in the West Bank. Having voiced his objections to the disengagement

272 I am indebted to Yossi Gurvitz for pointing out this example.

273 Of Ya’alon’s three immediate predecessors, Ehud Barak joined the Labour Party and was eventually elected Prime Minister under their ticket, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak joined others to form the short-lived Centre Party, and Shaul Mofaz joined the Likud but shortly afterwards followed PM Ariel Sharon to his new centrist Kadima party. After the 2013 elections, Mofaz was left leader of a much diminished Kadima, having secured only two seats. The party failed to clear the threshold in 2015.
Beyond 2001, Still Trapped in the Ideational Network

Subsequently, he joined right-wing think tanks Shalem Centre and the Institute for Zionist Strategies.

In 2009 Ya’alon was elected to the Knesset on the Likud’s ticket, and soon became identified with its extremist religious right faction, Manhigut Yehudit. In August 2009, he was recorded in a meeting of the faction discussing how the settlements can be saved saying “the virus that is Shalom Achshav [Peace Now, an NGO advocating the peace process], and the elites in general, their damage is very grave. In my view, Jews should live throughout Eretz Yisrael [the Land of Israel] forever” (Mu’alem 2009). Yet he continued to couch his arguments in the language of security, stating that in his view, the very establishment of a Palestinian state is in itself an unacceptable security threat (Drucker 2014), and suggested instead a limited autonomy for the Palestinians – a return to the solution supported by the Likud in the 1970s and 80s (Ben-Horon 2014).

The link connecting Ya’alon’s commitment to security with his alliance with the religious right in Israel can be found in his exasperation with the Israeli public’s unwillingness to make mortal sacrifices. “The weak link in the chain of national security is the endurance of Israeli society, a society that is not willing to fight for its causes and risk its life,” he said while still Chief of Staff in 2004 (Ruttner 2004). That is, he opposes those same liberal values that have sidelined security’s role in the public debate and reduced the social capital that is to be gained from military service (Y. Levy 2007). The social group least committed to these values, and therefore most willing to “risk its life” for its causes, is

274 Technically, his tenure was not extended for an additional year, but the move was widely seen as a vote of no confidence by the Defense Minister and Ariel Sharon.

275 Clearly, from this statement, the Arab minority is not included in Ya’alon’s conception of Israeli society.
the national religious right, whose goals are not defensible borders, but the defense of Jewish religious identity and the settlement of *Eretz Yisrael*. The two groups share interests, while their ideas are compatible enough to allow the creation of the recombinated Jewish-security alliance manifested in Ya’alon.\(^{276}\)

This alliance, however, is not without its own internal contradictions, as manifest in the strong anti-institutionalist undercurrents which have resulted in the “Price Tag” acts – small scale terrorist activities ranging from vandalism to arson in Arab towns and villages both in the OPT and within Green Line Israel, which are done with the explicit intention of dissuading the state from taking measures against Jewish settlements in the West Bank.\(^{277}\)

As these actions began to escalate and pose an actual problem for security forces, Ya’alon took to attacking those who engage in them, referring to them as acts of terror “mistakenly called ‘price tag’” (Rubin 2014). However, Ya’alon did not justify his attack by calling on security concerns, nor did he call on democratic values, but rather attacked them for being an affront to Judaic values, labeling “price tag” acts as “an ugly phenomenon that has nothing to do with Jewish values and Jewish morals.” Nonetheless, he does implicitly tie Jewish values with democratic and liberal values, in claiming that as a moral state, Israel should be “compassionate and protective of its weakest citizens, which wages a war against racism, violence and xenophobia,” and in contrasting Jewish values with ‘price tag’ acts by saying the latter’s goal is “to hurt Arabs just because they are Arabs” (Rubin 2014). Democracy is not directly invoked, but instead Jewishness itself is inextricably linked with

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\(^{276}\) Ya’alon’s recent unreserved statements as Defense Minister against President Obama and the American involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (e.g., Tait 2014) further emphasize this rejection of liberal values and a willingness to reject the Western world altogether.

\(^{277}\) The acts are called “price tag” by their perpetrators because they view these attacks on Palestinians as the “price” exacted on the state for every action carried out against settlers such as house demolitions.
democratic values as it is used to fend off an attack on security interests. Once again, we can see how the three core ideas of the Israeli ideational field are linked together in the act of persuasion in order to prevent any deviation from the parameters of ethnic democracy.

2015: ANOTHER TURNING POINT?

The 2015 elections could indicate the beginning of the end of the retrenchment period, and a possible turning point in Israel's history. Of course, whether this potential will be realized is yet to be seen. As described above, Israel has been driven by a positive feedback loop further and further away from democratic ideals. As the right has successfully associated some liberal values with extremism, Labour has been playing catch-up in an attempt to shake off association to these values – yet whatever values Labour does profess to uphold are successfully integrated into the logic of equivalence that leads from Labour to the extreme left and the Palestinians. Nevertheless, this feedback loop may soon reach a tipping point that would lead it in a radically different direction. As Rabin and Peres found before, the right may now discover the political dangers of attempting to critically change a nation's identity.

Ideationally, recent years have been characterized by growing polarization in public perceptions of some of the key aspects of Israeli identity. In 2010 the Israeli Democracy Index asked respondents whether they considered Israel's Jewishness or its democracy as more important. Nearly half of the respondents answered both are equally important, thus taking up the classic liberal Zionist view. Just under one third answered that Israel's Jewish character is more important to them, and only 17 percent chose its democratic character as most important. By 2014 these numbers have radically changed: under a quarter of respondents chose both as equally important, Israel’s Jewish character achieved a plurality
with 39 percent, while fully one third answered democracy is more important to them (Hermann et al. 2014, 75).

This growing polarization has manifested in the political realm as well. Three noticeable changes have taken place in the run-up to the 2015 elections: the deradicalization and subsequent reradicalization of the Likud, the unification of the Arab lists, and the ideational gambit of Labour. First, in the Likud, as well as the second largest right-wing party, the Jewish Home, primary elections have returned candidate lists that are substantially less radical than in the previous elections. Notably, Moshe Feiglin, leader of Manhigut Yehudit, was pushed out of the list altogether, and other candidates supported by him were also unsuccessful. In the Jewish Home, former Im Tirzu leader Ronen Shoval was also unsuccessful and placed in an unrealistic position on the list. Both primaries were preceded by a public debate on the dangers of continued radicalization of the lists and the negative impact such lists have on public perceptions of the right-wing parties, which presumably fueled the shift to centrist parties in the past. Netanyahu followed up on this deradicalization by placing a renewed emphasis on security issues while de-emphasizing issues of Jewish identity. At the same time, he attempted to delegitimize the left-wing’s actions as undemocratic by claiming campaigns for his removal from power were fueled by foreign government funding.

Neither of these strategies, however, proved successful according to poll numbers, prompting a reversal of Netanyahu’s strategy. The Prime Minister fell back on anti-Arab rhetoric to change the trends reflected in the polls, which predicted a possible Labour win as elections day approached. On the day of the elections, Netanyahu warned on his Facebook page that “the Arabs are voting in droves” and called on right-wing supporters to
vote for Likud to avoid a Left-Arab government. This tactic was successful in establishing Likud as the largest party in Knesset by a large margin, but this was achieved by draining votes away from the Jewish Home, not from the centre or left – again emphasizing the strong link between the two parties both ideologically and in terms of their target electorate. It is yet to be seen how this will affect Jewish-Arab relations in Israel. The realization that radicalization has trapped the Likud may prompt Netanyahu to engage in a more slow-paced endeavour to deradicalize the party without threatening its electoral fortunes. Alternatively, the more moderate leadership may join the swelling ranks of the centrist parties and challenge the Likud’s continued dominance.

Second, on the left, the two Arab lists and the DFPE were facing elimination following the raising of the electoral threshold to 3.25 percent. As a result, the three parties agreed to run in a joint list (named “The Joint List”), although each party maintains its own institutions. This agreement was followed by a broad campaign to increase voting turnout among the Arab citizens. This proved successful when the Joint List achieved a record 13 seats in the Knesset, making it the third largest party. Polls published ahead of the elections revealed that a majority of Arab voters wanted this joint list to join the coalition if possible (Huri 2015).

Finally, and most importantly, Labour has made a political and ideational gambit that has proven successful. Labour leader Isaac Herzog reached an agreement with moribund The Movement’s Tzipi Livni to run in a joint list. As part of the controversial agreement, Herzog agreed to rotate the Prime Minister’s seat between the two leaders if the new party was to lead the coalition. While the combined list gave Labour a welcome

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boost in the polls, the most significant move made by the two was an ideational one. The new list was named “The Zionist Camp”, and its campaign focused on undoing the linkage between Labour and the Arab community, and strengthening their public image as centrist and Zionist. As part of this campaign, Labour supported in the Knesset Committee a decision to ban MK Hanin Zoabi (NDA) from running in the elections (a decision that was, as expected, overturned later by the Supreme Court).279

While this strategy may have been beneficial in the short term, returning Labour to a leading position in parliament, it may backfire in the long run. In a poll just days before the elections, while The Zionist Camp was leading comfortably over Likud and the two camps were roughly equal in size, only 8% of respondents defined themselves as “left-wing”, and fully 61% defined themselves as “right-wing” or “right-leaning” (Ha’aretz 2015). This shows that despite the change in electoral fortunes, influenced as it is by a variety of temporal factors, the underlying ideational network developed and maintained by the right is still holding, and the logic of equivalence they built remains hegemonic. A far more ambitious campaign to engage with and alter the ideational network that governs how Israeli Jews perceive the political world will be unavoidable if this change is to prove substantial in the long term.

Clearly, it would be impossible for Labour to change or manipulate the identities of Israeli Jews, as Rabin and Peres had hoped to do, within one elections cycle, or even an entire term. However, given Labour’s need for support from the Arab minority if they have any hope of holding power, the electoral strategy of delinking the party from the left will

279 In 2013, Herzog represented Labour in the Knesset Committee and argued against a similar ban, arguing it would constitute “a dangerous slippery slope, at the very time we should be standing guard over democracy” (Segal 2015).
necessarily be short-lived. If Herzog hopes to make a lasting impact on Israeli politics, he will have to actively attempt to change Israeli Jews’ identity.

As noted above, Herzog has little access to discursive tools to achieve this goal. He is therefore faced with the formidable task of fashioning such tools out of whole cloth. Yet new voices have already begun to be heard, calling for a stronger partnership between Labour and the Joint List, which will build a real ideological alternative to the right. Herzog may do well to learn from the experiences of his predecessors, break out of the constraints of the framework of ethnic democracy and seek a more formal and true partnership with Israel’s Arab citizens in order to do so.

Such a course of action, of course, will require a careful and patient construction of ideational links and political alliances, and it is sure to arouse tensions. It is questionable whether the fickle membership of the Labour party would be amenable to such a long term process and the inherent difficulties in attempting a substantial change in the ideational network. As it has been argued throughout this work, the force of the ideational network will be pitted against the political will of Hertzog. It is only in the current unique situation, where both main political powers are pushing against the perimeter of the ideational network and threatening to tear it apart, that it might be possible for Herzog to perform this feat. But he will have to find a novel ideational framework to achieve this.

One such novel ideational framework has been developing through grassroots organizations while also slowly finding its way within the elite. First and foremost to these voices is President Reuven Rivlin, who has called for Israelis to rethink how they perceive their very selves. In describing the “tribes of Israel” today, Rivlin counted the Arab minority as one of these tribes. He has also voiced support for novel ideas of power-sharing
arrangements to cut through the Gordian knot of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile, grassroots groups have been working to develop and disseminate similar ideas of power-sharing that create new bridges across communities, bringing together left-wing peaceniks with right-wing settlers, Jews, Arab citizens of Israel, and Palestinians from the West Bank. These ideas create a substrate on which new identities and new coalitions could form. It is, certainly, far too early to predict if there is any likelihood that they will succeed, but their very existence provides the first novel ideational development on the left since the early 1990s, and as such should be followed with great interest. If taken up by the centre-left, these innovations can serve as the ideational tools that the Rabin government did not have, and enable a radical change in the institutional make-up of Israel.

The road ahead of Netanyahu, however, is much simpler – a return towards the centre of the ideational network. Yet, as noted above, the radicalization of the right wing’s own electorate places limits on this course of action. Netanyahu has painted himself into a corner that may create a unique condition for significant ideational change in Israel away from democracy and towards a more overtly illiberal regime.

A third alternative is the rise of a centrist party that will draw on moderate forces from both sides. Such centrist parties have been a staple of Israeli politics since the 1970s, with Ariel Sharon’s Kadima being the most successful specimen so far. Previously, these parties have never shown lasting power. Again, however, the unique ideational situation in Israel today may allow for such a party to rise to power and sustain it in the long run, while preserving ethnic democracy and the ideational network that maintains it.

Whichever route Israel goes down, it must relieve the extreme tensions that have developed within its ideational network.
9: Conclusions

Ladies and gentlemen, the ‘new Israeli order’ now requires us to abandon the accepted view of a majority and minorities, and move to a new concept of partnership between the various population sectors in our society. Clarification of the essence of that partnership is the task of all of Israeli society.

*(President Reuven Rivlin, 15th Annual Herzliya Conference, June 7, 2015)*

**STABILITY, FLUIDITY, FLEXIBILITY**

To reiterate the question which opened this essay: why are institutions stable? The answer offered in the pages above is that institutions are stable thanks to the flexibility afforded them by the fluidity of ideas. Throughout the previous chapters we have seen how the seemingly surprising resilience and stability of Israeli ethnic democracy was made possible by the network of ideas that undergirds it and enables it to adapt to changes in its environment by integrating new ideas through small-scale changes which nevertheless preserve the institutional framework as a whole. This is possible because the ideational network is flexible: new ideas can enter, but they are either linked to existing ideas that are already part of the system, or ultimately rejected as false. Nevertheless, as the Israeli ideational network became more solidified and resistant to new ideas, as it has been over the past two decades, the institutional structure it supports became more brittle and
unstable, opening the opportunity for radical, third order change. The direction of such change, if it will indeed take place, still remains to be seen.

Throughout Israel’s history, the three core ideas of democracy, Jewish identity, and security, have kept their place at the centre of its political institutions, and particularly its institutional relationship with its Arab minority. Yet these ideas were not static throughout the period. Both their meaning and the power they held within the system have changed over the years. These changes, in turn, had an impact on the institution of ethnic democracy in Israel, which then also influenced the further development of these ideas in a recursive process.

**The Idea of Democracy**

In the first decades of Israel’s independence, democracy was identified with Western values, and symbolized, both internally and in the face Israel wished to project to the international community, the fledgling state’s allegiance with the Western world in the post-war order. As such, and particularly as the revolutionary fervour of the early years died out, the idea of democracy acquired more liberal meanings that have tied it with concepts of equality and human rights. Restrictions of these freedoms required justification, and this justification was almost invariably expressed in the language of security, not Jewish identity. “Defensive democracy”, a concept developed in Israeli discourse originally in the 1960s, was artfully crafted to draw on language of security even as it served to protect national identity, not physical safety. And yet, it was decidedly still presented as a measure necessary to protect democracy itself, and understood by all as just that.
Later on, however, as the demands of Arab citizens of Israel for equality became more sophisticated and appeals to security less convincing, democracy became associated more with majoritarian ideals. An increasingly aggressive concept of “defensive democracy” subordinated democracy more blatanty to security and Jewish identity. Democratic legitimacy became dependent on a “Jewish majority”. Netanyahu’s “the Arabs are voting in droves” statement in 2015 was roundly criticized by the press, but was highly effective in rallying Jewish voters to support the Likud. It was merely a particularly conspicuous manifestation of a widely held sentiment.

Human rights as a concept were slowly decoupled from the acceptable contours of the idea of democracy: first by demanding that rights be seen as only legitimate if they were accompanied by duties, and later by rejecting the term altogether as partisan. Democracy is still seen as an essential part of Israel's make-up, but to sustain this place, the idea had to be emptied of most of its liberal values, and wholly subordinated to language of Jewish identity.

**The Idea of Jewish Identity**

Jewish identity itself had also gone through substantial changes over the years. In particular, it experienced a process of de-secularization, which accelerated once Jewish identity successfully linked with the idea of security to transform threats to the (religious) Jewish character of the state into existential threats.

However, before that could happen, Jewish identity had to be politicized to become a visible part of the ideational network. The absence of Israel’s Jewish identity from the explicit public debate enabled the use of security as a counterweight to democracy even when no real security threats existed, but as security became less and less viable as an
ideational tool for the demarcation of the perimeters of ethnic democracy, Jewish identity was drawn more clearly into the ideational network and anchored in it. This politicization required that Jewish identity becomes a floating signifier, and provided an in for a previously marginalized group within Israeli society – the national religious. The meaning of the Jewish identity of the state, which was previously not part of public debate, was suddenly a matter of political contention.

At the same time, Jewish identity was also in a power struggle within the ideational network with democracy. Originally imagined as equal and even subordinate to democracy, as the idea of Jewish identity began to morph it found itself more directly at odds with democracy, which still retained at the time much of its liberal meaning. Yet Jewish identity had an advantage in the form of the links it retained with security. These links were easily bolstered and reshaped to match the new form of Jewish identity. Together, Jewish identity and security were able to re-engage the old idea of “defensive democracy,” reinterpret it in light of the new meaning of Jewish identity, and thus delink the liberal nodes from the democratic idea, and subordinate the latter to the idea of Jewish identity.

THE IDEA OF SECURITY

The idea of security, finally, experienced a period of decline over the first four decades of Israel’s existence, but regained strength in its association with the idea of Jewish identity and found a newly powerful role within Israel’s ideational network.

Remarkably, the fortunes of the idea of security were not tied with any real changes in the security situation Israel was in. The decline in the role of security in the Israeli...
ideational network began in the early 1960s, while a real existential threat was building at the borders. Similarly, a year after the devastating experience of the 1973 war, Israel responded to the violence of Land Day not with a turn to the language of security but quite the contrary – with a further discounting of security issues and a reaffirmation of Israel’s commitment to liberal values. Finally, in the very height of suicide terror attacks under the second Rabin government, Rabin refused to allow security concerns any role, famously stating that “we will make peace as if there is no terrorism, and fight terrorism as if there is no peace process”. Instead, it was during Netanyahu’s first term’s relatively calm years that the idea of security found its footing in a collaboration with Jewish identity, and once again became a juggernaut within the Israeli ideational network. In the process it underwent a transformation of its own, from a mere physical security to include spiritual security as well. The threat to the Jewish people was no longer expressed only in physical threats to their lives, but also by the threat to their religious identity. Miscegenation, for example, became a threat both in Israel and abroad, justifying mobilizing state resources to educate against it in the diaspora, and prevent any initiatives that would promote relationships between Jews and Arabs within Israel.

The mixing of Jewish identity and security ideas became even more tangible as the national religious community intentionally set out to take a leading role in the military, believing it to be the central route to power in Israeli society. When they discovered that the military has long since been supplanted by other routes, including the judiciary and the press, they had set on tearing down the legitimacy of these “bastions of leftist power”. Security has even acquired some degree of sacredness, and the accusation that left-wing
organizations are threatening or even merely defaming the IDF or its soldiers became almost automatic.\textsuperscript{281}

**The Institution of Ethnic Democracy**

Throughout these transformations, all three core ideas remained inextricably tied together. Despite attempts from both sides of the political spectrum to challenge the link between Jewish identity and democracy, the two have adapted in ways that enabled them to contend with the contradictions identified. But the process described here is more than the dialectics of action and reaction, for the impetus for each response was in the action itself. It is those who strove for a more liberal democracy that found it necessary to seek ways to incorporate Jewish identity into whatever formulation they came up with, thus leaving a way for others to thwart their efforts. Similarly, those who have been making efforts to increase the role of Jewish identity within the Israeli polity, are also the ones who feel a need to ensure the continued strength of democracy within Israeli society, even at the cost of alienating some of their more radicalized supporters.

It would be wrong to understand the processes taking place in Israel as a battle between pro-democracy and Judeo-nationalist forces: both sides wish to maintain both aspects of Israel, as epitomized in the phrase “Jewish and democratic”. The three core ideas are linked by numerous shared connections that prevent a straightforward full decoupling

\textsuperscript{281} In late 2015, education minister Naftali Bennett, of the Jewish Home, found himself embroiled in a scandal following the banning of a book from the list of books that can be learned in high school literature classes. The book, that was approved by a professional committee, was said to be banned because it depicted a romantic relationship between a Jewish woman and a Palestinian man. When Bennett went to the media to defend the decision to ban the book, he chose to highlight segments of the book that allegedly presented Israeli soldiers as perpetrators of war crimes, even though this was not previously presented as a reason for the decision.
of any idea from the ideational network. And on top of this flexible yet stable network, the institution of ethnic democracy is safely positioned.

Indeed, it is doubtful that any power could have prevented the collapse of ethnic democracy, either towards liberal democracy or towards an ethnocracy, other than these mutual ideational ties that ensure that the very understanding of any of the three ideas would be inextricably tied in with the other two. Throughout the changes that have taken place with these ideas, certain central aspects of them can be seen to persist: A democracy must provide security to its citizens and express their (majority) national values; security must allow the expression of these values and the freedom to exercise one’s liberties; and Jewish identity must be developed freely and established through an inclusive deliberative process wherein every Jew is free to interpret his or her Jewishness in their own way, so long as the security of the community as a whole is not compromised. Ethnic democracy emerges, always, as the nexus of the three ideas. Regardless of how each idea is defined, by virtue of the network it is embedded in, it can only be manifested in reality through a form of ethnic democracy.

Of course, ethnic democracy itself also saw some changes, as it adjusted to the ebbs and flows of the ideas supporting it. Defensive democracy was at first touted as a way to balance security needs and democratic values. As security subsided in the ideational network and democracy, strongly tied to liberal ideals, took a more central place, ethnic democracy was refashioned to ensure inequalities were less conspicuous. Separation of Jews and Arabs was no longer justified in terms of security, but rather in terms of human rights, and the protection of cultural identity of the Arab minority. This justification was easily mirrored in the protection of Jewish cultural identity once Jewish identity took a
more robust place in the ideational network. Jewish identity and democracy were seen as both complemented by the ethnic democratic regime in this form. Finally, the protection of Arab identity was discarded, and instead the idea of security was reintroduced, presenting Arab identity as a danger to (religious) Jewish identity, which requires “defensive democracy” measures to protect it.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

This work goes beyond the specific historical circumstances of Israel, and claims a more generalizable explanation for the stability of institutions (and, *ipso facto*, the failure of some institutions to achieve stability). Institutions, according to this view, are stable because the ideas that were the basis for their formation are flexible enough to allow change to be constructive rather than destructive. Ideas may slow down change otherwise dictated by “objective” factors, as in the case of the abolishment of the military regime; or, if already developed when the need arises, they may be in sync with “objective” changes and facilitate quick adaptive reactions as in the case of the amended Basic Law: The Knesset. Ideas may also block change that threatens the status quo, as in the case of the exclusion of Arab parties from Rabin’s 1992 government. At the same time, however, when political elite lack access to new ideas they may find themselves unable to adapt to changing circumstances, as in the case of Ehud Barak’s reaction to the riots within Israel in October 2000. Throughout all cases, ideational factors protected ethnic democracy and directed policymakers to actions that preserved it.

It is not a coincidence that the three ideas of democracy, security and Jewish identity were the central ones in this analysis. These are the ideas on which the very formation of the state of Israel was based, and they are at the heart of all its institutions, in one way or
another. Similar core ideas exist in many, if not all, stable regimes throughout the world. Political elites are able to manipulate them, but this malleability is not limitless. When several (or, possibly, all) core ideas shift in the same direction, the institutional transformations may very well be substantial and rapid. But to break out of the framework set by these core ideas is a far more challenging goal. Many reformers intuitively grasp that it is simpler to promote one reform if it is couched in the language of another established idea, even at the cost of compromise.

This dissertation provided an example of the use of discourse analysis tools to unveil the ideational processes that underlie institutional processes and either enable or prevent change despite external pressures to the contrary. Future applications of this ideational methodology to other institutional circumstances may reveal similar processes that have taken place, and shed new light on change and stability in other settings.

Attempts to closely examine the ideational network underlying cases of institutional failure may reveal further evidence. Based on the theory put forward in this work, one would expect that institutions that fail to stabilize are those which contradict some aspect of the established ideational network at the time of their creation. This is likely to happen when an institution is initially developed in a siloed section of the decision-making apparatus, and then imposed on a broader political elite without regard for its values. Even if at first these contradictions are not evident to those who approve the institutional structure, the cracks will appear sooner or later. This, for example, may explain the instability of democracy in some countries where democracy was imported by a political elite but no work was done to embed it within the ideational environment of the particular society, as may have happened, for example, in Thailand before the 2006 coup.
Institutions that have seemed stable for a long period of time only to collapse without any obvious relevant and immediate external shock may also prove interesting cases for study using these tools. Under this model, one can hypothesize that a process of delinking of one of the core ideas from other ideas in the ideational network should be evident before the institution would be allowed to collapse and be replaced by another. A potentially potent comparative case can be seen in the Irish ethnic democracy under Ulster Unionism and its collapse in the 1970s (Peled 2014).

Finally, understanding of processes of institutional change such as those described by Streeck and Thelen (2005) may also gain from the perspective offered by this work. For example, the manner in which certain institutions may be layered successfully while other layerings seem to be rejected may be better explained using an ideational framework. Layering, in such a formulation, will not be the result of completely disparate ideas that are forced into a single structure. Rather, successful layers will be those that have ideational links to those that preceded them. Furthermore, an ideational framework could better explain the manner in which top layers of layered institutions can slowly “seep” into older layers and transform them.

Understanding the relationships between institutions and ideas opens a new window on the workings of legitimacy in the construction of our political world: how it is gained and how it is lost. This work demonstrated the power of the forces underlying publicly legitimated institutions, identified their weaknesses, and suggested the means necessary to understand their development and impact.
Postscript

On June 15, 2016, as this dissertation was approaching its defense, a new organization named “Save Jewish Jerusalem” released a video as part of a media campaign. The video depicted a group of armed Arab terrorists conspiring to take over Jerusalem. Members of the group suggest suicide bombings, an Intifada, or knife attacks against Israelis, but the leader of the group shoots these ideas down, calling them “stupid”. Finally, the leader reveals his plan: “We will beat them with their own weapon. Their weapon is democracy. That’s how we can defeat them” (ynet, 2016).

This type of propaganda may normally cause some rebuke in Israel, but would not be taken as surprising if it was produced by fringe groups, such as the Samaria Settlers Committee. However, the organization that produced the clip was created by household names on the centre-left such as former vice prime minister Haim Ramon (originally from Labour, and one of the driving engines behind the formation of Kadima), and former head of Shit-Bet and Labour MK Ami Ayalon. The organization strives to separate the eastern (Arab) neighbourhoods of Jerusalem\textsuperscript{282} from the municipal boundaries of the city, deprive their residents of their right to residency in Israel, and extend the separation barrier between Israel and the (presumed) future Palestinian territories to separate them from Jewish Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{282} The eastern Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem were originally villages surrounding Jerusalem. Following the occupation of the West Bank, the villages were annexed to Jerusalem, and the city slowly overtook them. The Arab residents of Jerusalem generally boycott municipal elections, although they have a legal right to vote in them.
As discussed throughout this work, Labour thinking has long ago adopted a definition of the Jewishness of Israel as defined by the existence of a strong Jewish majority. Applying the same principle to Jerusalem is hardly a stretch, and the organization’s goals are therefore not truly surprising. What is surprising is the language used to describe democracy as a weapon that could be used against Israel’s Jewish identity. This language is strongly reminiscent of that used by Kahane, and adopts wholeheartedly the ideational logic of equivalence that links democracy with terrorism, in contrast with the linked duo of Jewish identity and security.

The campaign may very well be an attempt to appeal to the right wing, however as of this writing it has evoked no condemnation from neither the Labor party nor Meretz. The voices raised against the video came mainly from the radical left and right. This may indicate a new and concerning step in the ideational development of Israel’s public discourse. If this willingness to “throw democracy under the bus”, so to speak, to promote separation between Jews and Arabs, resonates with many in the centre-left in Israel, it may pose a worrying development indeed. While it is certainly too early to analyze the implications or the impact of this novel idea, this may prove to be a critical moment in the ideational history of Israel, and any future analysis of the developments Israel will go through in the next few years will have to take it into consideration.

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283 A similar message in favour of delinking the Arab neighbourhoods from Jerusalem was the centre of a previous campaign by dovish movement Peace Now in 2015.
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