
There is unfortunately an absence of serious scholarly Arab and Muslim discourse of Jewish and Israeli studies. Apart from a handful of Palestinian and Egyptian scholars dealing with the subject, only a few in the Arab and Muslim worlds can speak with authority about things Jewish. In the Arab world, at least, the question of Palestine has topped the political and cultural agendas for the past half a century or so. The current book under review offers a landmark analysis of Israeli society and the impact of the Israeli state on Arabs. Written by one of the most courageous and honest Israeli sociologists who have written on the subject today, the author provides deep insight into the construction of the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine, the role of politics and ideology in the making of Israel, the competing political cultures in contemporary Israeli society, and the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

As the Aqṣā Intifada (*intifādah*) against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza continues unabated and as the Israeli military response to the Intifada takes ominous new forms, it behooves us to reexamine the nature of the Israeli political and military systems and reflect on the current crisis from several angles. In this book, Kimmerling proposes a number of carefully considered theses. He argues that Zionism is a form of Jewish nationalism which emerged in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century in response to a host of European factors and the position of Jews in different European societies.

In its ascendancy in the Jewish world at the beginning of the twentieth century, Zionism was represented in the main by a secular and professional Jewish elite, which aimed at articulating a secular Jewish vision and attracting as many Jewish voices as possible to its scheme. Lacking a popular base among the Jewish masses in Europe, Zionism appropriated the preserved collective memory of Judaism, such as the ancient Holy Land and Hebrew language, with the aim of establishing a national homeland. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine, narrowed the gap between secular Zionism and religious thinking by arguing on behalf of the redemption of the Jewish people, which is based on the trinity of the land of Israel, people of Israel, and the Torah of Israel. He declared that "when as many Jews as possible fulfill the single commandment to settle ‘the holy land’, the Messiah will appear to redeem his people"
politically and theologically, and will make them follow all his commandments and precepts” (p. 122). Kook considered the Arabs and non-Jews to be hostile to the existence of the Jewish people in their ‘ancestral homeland’ and claimed that the Arabs have always been ready to annihilate the Jewish people.

Zionism’s alliance after World War One with the main European powers, especially Britain, enabled it to achieve its political objectives. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War One, Britain assumed the mantle of hegemony in the Middle East and established a colonial regime in Palestine, which ultimately proved to be highly beneficial to the Zionist enterprise. Zionism’s main success was the establishment of Israel in 1948.

However, in his analysis of the Zionist phenomenon, Kimmerling digs deeply into its philosophical and ideological foundations and follows its historical evolution in the past century. Zionism has been and remains a settler expansionist movement, which has considered Arab hostility to its designs a cause of strength and not weakness. “Israel is still an active immigrant settler society, domestically and externally a relatively strong state (even if less stable than in the past), based on two deep cultural codes, common at least to its Jewish citizens—militarism and ‘Jewishness’” (p. 1). (Emphasis added).

These two cultural codes have withstood the winds of change in both the international and Middle East arenas since the establishment of Israel. As a matter of fact, a number of international and regional factors, such as European and United States’ aid to Israel, gave Israel new ammunition to maintain its frontier stance. In the words of the author, “Israel was founded as an immigrant settler frontier state and is still an active immigrant society, engaged in a settlement and territorial expansion process down to the present day. Despite the constant rapid transformation of Israel, institutionally and culturally, it remains a settler society, living by the sword because it needs to make space for itself in limited terrain” (p. 185). (Emphasis added).

Militarism suffuses almost every aspect of Israeli society to the extent that in times of crisis, it is hard to draw the line between military and civilian aspects of Israeli society. Because of militarism and Jewishness, still held by most Jewish citizens of Israel, the Israeli state has engaged in an open-ended confrontation with indigenous Palestinians, who have perceived the Israeli system and idea as posing a great threat to their lives and properties. It is easy to see why Israel has resorted to a heavy military handling of the current Intifada. In the view of the current leaders of Israel, the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza have not been deterred in the past and it is time to force them to respect Israeli militarism.
Because Israel was constructed at the expense of another people and ethnic cleansing was the foundation of the state, the military has played an active role in Israeli civilian life from the beginning. In times of war, almost every capable Israeli civilian, man or woman, is mobilized for the purpose of achieving the state’s objectives, as in the current phase of conflict, which is crushing the Palestinian Intifada. In the insightful words of Kimmerling, confrontation with the Arabs has proved to be “a source of internal strength for [Israel’s] settler elites and leadership and a tool for material and human resource mobilization” (p. 4). However, since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Israel *de facto* has become a bi-national state with power focused in Jewish hands. The Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 lack economic, military, and political power; the Palestinians inside Israel lack both military and political power but are allowed to share material gains on the condition of good behaviour. “In this state, all political power—political rights, citizenship, access to resources, and the right to define the collective identity — has been concentrated on one side. *The other, consisting of the state’s veteran (pre-1948) Arab population, is accorded rights and access to material resources, but is absolutely never granted a share of the symbolic resources of domination*” (p. 79). (Emphasis added).

Kimmerling notes in passing that all settler states calculate the benefit or cost of its occupation of another people’s land. Israel is an exception: it has not considered this approach. Israel does not seem to care about the skyrocketing costs of its militarism and occupation. The author does not delve deeply into this point. Is Israel able to maintain a large army, run a war economy, and expand its settlements on the West Bank and Gaza because the United States has been footing the bill? The Israeli economy entered its boom years after 1967 in the wake of occupying the Sinai Desert, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights. After 1967, Israel controlled land transactions, expropriated Palestinian lands and controlled water resources. Israel found it expedient to hire a large Palestinian labour force to expand its infrastructure and build new settlements. In addition, the newly conquered territories were an ideal market for Israeli products. This did not change much after the Oslo Accords.

Since its establishment, Israel has been defined as a country belonging to Jews all over the world. Any Jew can immigrate to Israel and automatically become a citizen of the state. The Palestinian citizens of the state, currently numbering around one million, can never become part of the Jewish nation. Israel is a settler society that since its foundation has constantly expanded its borders. In spite of the two Palestinian Intifadas against Israel and the high cost of military expenditure, Israel has been active in building settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Israel’s unselective immigration policy has
encouraged many Jews from depressed economic backgrounds to migrate there. The Jews of the centre have for the most part resisted the temptation of migrating en masse to Israel, like those from Arab countries in the 1950s and 1960s, and as the Soviet Union, Russia and Central Asia have done in the past 20 years.

However, the story of Jewish immigration to Israel has been far from easy for a large number of people. According to Kimmerling, the secular Ashkenazi elite governing the Yishuv and Israel looked down on Arab Jews and considered them to be backward Orientals, who needed to be cleansed of their cultural and intellectual habits if they were to become full-fledged members of the Jewish nation, “In stereotypical terms, these immigrants were perceived as aggressive, alcoholic, cunning, immoral, lazy, noisy, and unhygienic” (p. 95). In order to be accepted, they had to be modernized. Because of this, those Oriental Jews were expected in the early days of the state to perform menial jobs and become part of the Israeli working class.

Early Zionist settlers comprised a secular Ashkenazi (European) elite priding themselves on being early pioneers. With the beginning of the immigration of other Jews, the Ashkenazi elite fought to preserve their status and managed “to convert the Zionist pioneer myth into both status and power” (p. 72). This Ashkenazi elite was represented by the Mapai Party (nowadays, Israeli Labour Party), which was active in building and strengthening military and state institutions. The Ashkenazi elite places itself squarely within the discourse of both Jewishness and Western liberalism. Kimmerling maintains that secularism is primarily a class phenomenon, which forms the cultural bases of the “highly educated, affluent Ashkenazi middle and upper middle classes” (p. 119). Mapai found it difficult to rally support among the new immigrants. Kimmerling contends that seven competing, and at times contradictory political cultures, make up the Israeli system: secular Ashkenazi middle class culture; national religious; traditional Mizrahim; Orthodox religious; Arab; Russian; and Ethiopian cultures.

A large influx of Sephardic (Mizrahi, Oriental or Arab) Jews in the 1950s and 1960s began to pose a major challenge to the hegemonic secular Ashkenazi culture. Other new forces did the same afterward, which upset the original system set up by the Ashkenazi elite on the eve of the foundation of the state. Along with the Arabs, the Mizrahim have formed a counter culture in Israel and have lately split from the Ashkenazi Orthodox community, forming their own Jewish orthodoxy around the charismatic figure of Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, who is of Moroccan Jewish origin. They formed the Shas Party, which has become a chief player in Israeli politics holding around 28 seats in the Knesset. “The rise of the Shas counterculture liberated many second-
third-generation Mizrahi both from their political and cultural subordination to Ashkenazi non-Zionist Orthodoxy and from Zionist hegemonic culture, thus contributing to the breakup of that hegemony” (p. 133).

In addition, Zionism failed to co-opt the Orthodox (Haredi) community living in both Israel and the United States, which has yet to accept the secular premises on which the state of Israel was established. For centuries, the Haredi community has thought of redeeming the Jewish people in theological terms: only a Messiah could establish a state for Jews. In the author’s view, this Haredi community has taken a strong anti-Zionist stance and blamed the Holocaust on secular Zionism, and this community, still influential in Judaism, is the least understood in the Arab world.

As a cultural minority, the Arabs in Israel have been mostly insulated from the variety of Jewish cultures in Israel, and the official state’s discourse has divided the Arabs into Muslims, Christians, Druze and Bedouin. That policy aimed at ‘de-Palestinizing’ the Arabs in Israel and dividing them along sectarian lines. “Israeli Arabs became a bilingual and bicultural people, educated to obey ‘Israeli democracy’, but, at the same time, they were systematically deprived of their land and access to welfare, jobs, housing, and other subsidized goods” (p. 134). Many lost their homes and in the words of both David Grossman and Edward Said, a large number of them were considered to be ‘present-absentees’.

For a while, the Arabs in Israel were represented by the Communist Party, which did not deny them their national character as Arabs. Nationalist Palestinian parties or groups, such as Abnāʾ al-Balad (Children of the Land) movement, were vehemently opposed by the state, and the Communist Party was more or less tolerated. For all sorts of reasons, both domestic and international, the Israeli Communist Party ceased to be a major force of mobilization for Arabs in Israel since the 1980s. Also, when the charismatic Arab leaders of the Communist Party, such as Tawfīq Zayyāḍ, Emile Habiby, Tawfīq Touba passed away, no strong replacement was in sight. This somewhat facilitated the rise of the Islamic movement in Israel as a mobilizing force, especially to the poor peasants and workers in the countryside. The strength of the Islamic movement remains primarily in the Triangle area, a peasant area of around 13 villages conceded by Jordan to Israel in the Rhodes talks of 1949. The Arabs in Israel are citizens of the state but do not belong to the Jewish nation. They have not been accorded cultural and educational rights as a community. The selection of teachers usually is done by the Shin Beit, Israeli security.

Kimmerling notes that in the first wave of immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel in the 1970s, less than one fourth desired to come to Israel. However, since 1990, around one million Russian and Central Asian Jews have been forced to migrate to Israel because “Zionist lobbies worked to funnel the bulk of Jewish immigration to Israel” (p. 139). Many have become ‘captive immigrants’ who would rather have gone to the United States instead of Israel. Israel needed these populations to bolster its security and counterbalance the Arab demographic threat. Kimmerling also contends that many Russian and Central Asian Jews found themselves to be non-Jews under the Halachah laws as practiced in Israel. According to Halachah, a Jew is a person born of a Jewish mother and he/she remains a Jew even if they convert to another religion.

The most difficult story is that of the Falasha Ethiopian Jews (around 75,000 people), who were airlifted from Ethiopia and Sudan to Israel in the 1980s. Upon arrival in the state, the Falasha were required to undergo “a ritual ceremony of conversion” to Judaism as defined by the rabbinical authorities in Israel. They were required to change their names to Hebrew names, which was “hurtful to their self-image and self-confidence” (p. 151). Furthermore, they were marginalized because of their (1) skin colour; (2) doubts about their Jewishness; and (3) lack of modernization (p. 157). In addition, Ethiopian Jews were considered to be a high-risk group in terms of contracting HIV. The Magen David Adom Organization, the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross was destroying their blood donations without even testing them first.

Kimmerling discusses the Zionist motto of capturing land and creating “Hebrew labor” in order to counter the “common anti-Semitic myth that Jews were mainly merchants and ‘unproductive’ classes” (p. 167). After 1967 and in the boom years, Israel used up to 150,000 workers from the West Bank and Gaza. After the first Intifada, Israel began to impose restrictions on Palestinian labour since Palestinians were all suspected of being terrorists. Importing guest workers from Romania, Turkey, Thailand, Sri Lanka and South Korea has become the norm in recent years. In Kimmerling’s opinion, the major challenge of foreign workers is that they “expose Israel’s character as an immigrant society, but exclusively for Jews and their first-order relatives” (p. 167). “Ironically, Israel’s legitimization in the postcolonial age was found in an increasingly religious interpretation of the state. The persecution of the Jews, the Holocaust, the ascetic heroism of the Zionist enterprise, the results of the 1948 war, with the victory of the ‘few against the many’—all appeared to legitimate building a Jewish state at the expense of the Palestinians” (p. 204).
Israel is in a state of war with the Palestinians. This war is not confined to the PLO, Hamas and Jihad organizations. It is a war against all Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Militarism is one of the main foundations of the Israeli state, and a large number of influential Zionists believe that confrontation with the Arabs is inevitable and that Israel must be constantly on the alert. The war with the Palestinians, however, has not deterred the Israelis from territorial expansion. It is quite unsettling to realize that Israel and the Zionist movement have been going out of their way to encourage Jews of the world to migrate to Israel while at the same time refusing to compromise with the indigenous population.

Israel has had the upper hand militarily, but how long can it go on fighting the Palestinians, who are no longer fearful of it? How long can Israel go on financing such wars against the Palestinians? The Israeli economy is not viable and Israel receives a great deal of aid from the United States and the Jewish community across the world, on almost a daily basis. Kimmerling fails to give sufficient consideration to the external factors affecting Israeli militarism, especially the United States and the international Jewish community. However, it is clear that migrating to Israel is at present not a healthy thing to do. Why have secular-minded or religious liberal Jews from affluent Western countries not migrated to Israel in large numbers, despite their apparent obsession with and love for Israel? Is the official Jewish community of West Europe, North America, and South America, which has had almost 54 years to make up its mind to migrate to Israel engaged in double talk or double loyalty? On the basis of Kimmerling’s analysis, the American Jewish community is scared of losing its prestigious, if not hegemonic, place in American society should they immigrate to Israel en masse.

The larger question concerns the future of the Palestine/Israel conflict. It is true that the Palestinians have been exhausted from tragedy and war since 1948, and half of them have been languishing in refugee camps ever since. Signs of exhaustion appear in the Israeli state system as well. Palestinian losses cannot go any deeper: they have already lost so much. The game playing itself out between the Palestinians and Israelis is dangerous indeed. Will an external force, such as the United States, step in to change the rules of the game? So far, no true solution seems to be in sight. Will the United States, which is threatening on almost a daily basis to invade Iraq, give Israel its golden opportunity of transferring the Palestinians en masse to Iraq once the occupation of Iraq is completed? No one knows. However, what is clear is that the conflict is not strictly between Israel and the Palestinians. The United States, for its own reasons, has put its weight behind the current government in Israel. The future seems ominous for the Palestinian people. Fresh tragedy
waits in the wings, especially considering that the transfer philosophy has been very strong in mainstream Zionist thinking since the end of the nineteenth century, as Nur Masalaha shows ably in three of his books. Let us wait and see.

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For seven hundred years or more the study of Aristotelian logic in its Avicennan form has been one of the pillars of the curriculum of Islamic madrasahs. As in other disciplines the basic textbooks are short summaries of logic, written in almost telegraphic style. Teachers and students work their way through these texts line by line, arguing about each sentence and sometimes each word. The written counterpart of these classroom discussions, and often their results, are commentaries and supercommentaries in which the implications of the text are expounded and problems are raised and dealt with. There are thousands of such commentaries in manuscript, and hundreds have been published. Some are no more than fair copies of student notes, while others are standard works well known to many generations of students and teachers.

Academic historians of Islamic logic have largely ignored these texts as the product of an age of decline and scholasticism, but the truth is that modern scholarship knows virtually nothing about the content and concerns of this literature after its starting point in the logic of Avicenna. The elementary logic texts are, of course, elementary logic, but little is known of the presumably more sophisticated debates in the commentaries and supercommentaries. The difficulty is increased for those not part of the tradition by the commentary format, which buries innovations and living disputes in masses of repetitions.