48. Post-Zionism and Its Moral and Political Ramifications

Amal Jamal

Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the meaning of post-Zionism and explore the foundation of a trend that became very prominent in the Israeli academic and political scene over the last two decades. This paper argues that post-Zionism is an incoherent intellectual orientation that challenges the moral and political foundations of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel, its Jewishness and its meaning for Jews and non-Jews in the surrounding environment. This reflection on the rise of the Zionist movement and its practices pose questions regarding the consistency between the moral and political discourse of the movement and its practices. These reflections were extended to include questions of legitimacy and security since post-Zionists, who provided very basic research in the fields of history, morality, sociology and politics, argue that warfare and force do not guarantee the security of Jews and cannot legitimize their rights. Thus their own criticism undermines mainstream Zionism that intermingles might and right. Self-reflection, it is argued, is a precondition for improving Jewish reality and closing the gap between the rights of Jews for security and self-determination and the universal ideals of equality and sovereignty. Therefore, post-Zionists do not stop at this instrumental utilitarian point but seek to establish a positive moral argument that does not sacrifice all that has been achieved so far, and calls for its transformation under certain circumstances in order to reconcile it with universal human values.

This paper addresses the necessary discrepancies in post-Zionist and Zionist discourse by characterizing the former through an exploration of their greatest points of contention – their respective orientations toward time, space and morality. Zionist thought is inclusive of a number of dimensions – moral, ontological, epistemological, etc. Over time, it sought to justify itself in each of these domains largely through posturing that aligned with mainstream intellectual trends. This ongoing adaptation therefore resulted in highly sophisticated approaches to Jewish historiography and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which enabled itself to transcend empirical discussion and facilitate its physical and metaphysical expansion.

The following analysis is also a modest attempt to reconcile post-Zionism's various dimensions and interpretations by exploring its epistemological, ontological and normative foundations, while contrasting it with mainstream Zionism. The paper proceeds by laying out the dominant depictions of the post-Zionist trend in Isra-

eli academic discourse, demonstrating the ways in which it is analyzed and characterized and whether it co-opt parts of it into mainstream Zionism or delegitimizes other parts by arguing that it is not intellectually coherent. After that the paper clarifies the basic pillars of the post-Zionist trend and demonstrates its fundamental break with mainstream Zionism. The paper ends with an exploration of the implications of post-Zionist arguments for the future of the relationship of Jews with their Middle Eastern surroundings.

Zionist views of post-Zionism: between cooptation and delegitimation

Since its emergence in the late 19th century, Zionism has undergone a series of reinventions in response to its various historical contexts. From political Zionism at the state's inception, cultural Zionism in the initial years of the Israeli state, post-Zionism in the last two decades to the emergence of its countering force, neo-Zionism, "mainstream" Zionism has taken many forms. Mainstream Zionism is a philosophical, moral and ideological trend that dominates the central institutions of the Zionist movement and the Israeli state. Despite the fact that this is neither a consistent nor a coherent trend, mainstream Zionism has been able to continually define its ideological and political environment and classify itself based on its own conception of reality.

The literature dealing with Zionism speaks usually of two main types of classical Zionism – political Zionism and cultural Zionism – which are distinguished based on their orientations toward the "territory" of Greater Israel and the meaning of Jewish sovereignty.[1] At the state's inception, political Zionism, the purest and most positivistic form, derived legitimacy for the State of Israel based on its biblical connection to the land and, as a result of historical events, such as the Holocaust, necessitated its establishment as a haven for Jews.[2] The impetus of the political Zionist project was to eradicate antisemitism and its effects on the Jewish people through the establishment of a legitimate state. A major feature of political Zionism, as opposed to any subsequent form, is the emigration of Jews from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel and the establishment of Jewish sovereignty, in which Jews finally live based on their own collective will.[3]

As the socioeconomic status of diasporic Jews began to rise – particularly those in Western Europe and the United States – many of the elements of political Zionism lost their salience in Jewish society. Antisemitism was not a matter of rule but an

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1 Newman 2001.

2 Don-Yehiyeh 1998.

3 Ibid.; Gorny 2001, 3–12.

exception. Younger generations of Jews no longer had personal references to the Holocaust, experiences of antisemitism or a desire to return to their putative homeland.[4] Thus, cultural Zionism was reborn. Cultural Zionism has been for a long period of time a minor trend within the Zionist movement. Since Achad Haam in the early 20th century until today there have been voices that questioned the Jews' need for sovereignty and viewed the State of Israel as a cultural center, whose main legitimacy is based on its ability to foster Jewish culture, thought and tradition. Cultural Zionism reemerged in recent years and no longer utilized this positivistic narrative, but an ontological one, justifying the state based on the necessity of a "spiritual center" for Jews in order to protect Jewish history.[5] Cultural Zionists established their arguments based on two fundamental conditions. First, they argued that political sovereignty should be no longer a primary element of Zionist discourse, since sovereignty has been achieved and secured. Second, the positivist orientation toward the land is no longer essential, since the legitimacy of the state and its continued expansion are justified and energies should be devoted to its cultural and moral character. Accordingly, the major focus of Jewish life should be measured by its development of Jewish culture and its capacity to provide answers to dilemmas that Jewish sovereignty raise vis-à-vis Jews and non-Jews.[6]

With the passage of the Oslo Accords came greater reflection of the Jewish people on the meaning of their Jewishness and its connection to Israel's borders, security and statehood.[7] Sociologists and historians began to re-conceptualize the identity of the state as one which had achieved its mission – ensuring the safety of its citizens and culture – and attempted to review foreign and domestic policy in an attempt to reconcile their existence with those living within and around Israel.[8]

As part of the internal debate about the identity, goals and practices of the Jewish state, new voices began to rise, questioning the foundation of the debate between political and cultural Zionism and expanding the realm of the dispute to new historical, moral and ideological levels. Post-Zionists questioned the official narrative of the Zionist movement and the collective memory of the Jewish public in Israel and sought to rewrite major parts of its history. These efforts have led to what could be depicted as *Historikerstreit*. Post-Zionists also questioned the moral foundations of Zionism and Israeli sovereignty and practices. They shifted their focus from territorial gains to issues of human rights, freedom of religion and association, and the right to security.[9]

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4 Don-Yehiyeh 1998; Kelman 1998.
5 Kelman 1998.
6 Rubinstein 2000.
7 Ben-Moshe 2005; Aronson 2003.
8 Kelman 1998.
9 Newman 2001.

The recognition of competing national narratives poses a significant challenge to the identity of the state and its potential for reconciliation. Historical revisionists and critical sociologists have grown to prominence in modern academic literature since the 1970s and 1980s. Famous post-Zionists, particularly in the West, emerged in historical and sociological domains, such as Hans Kohn, Elie Kedouri, Eric Hobsbawm, and Ernest Gellner.[10] Due to the recent opening of Israeli archival material, a strand of Jewish post-Zionist political journalists and academics have emerged as today's foremost historical revisionists, greatly surpassing the number of Arab or Palestinian post-Zionists and historians: Tom Segev (1984, 1986), Simha Flapan (1988), Benny Morris (1986, 1987, 2004), Avi Schlaim (1988), Ilan Pappé (1992, 1999, 2006, 2010), etc. This emerging criticism is more than a singular trend or short-term phenomenon. Despite the major differences between them, both Zionist and post-Zionist scholars have identified the construction of Zionism over time as a reflection of the political and nationalistic character of the time.[11]

The reaction of mainstream Zionist intellectuals to the post-Zionist challenge was very critical. Many journal articles, books and monographs were published in order to argue against the post-Zionist critique of Zionism and Israel. Most post-Zionist thought was judged based on its measure of affinity with and loyalty to classical Zionist thought. Zionist thinkers wrote massive critiques on intellectuals that questioned the basic ideas of Zionism, arguing that such critiques should be judged based on the measure of legitimacy it grants to classical Zionism.[12] Hevda Ben-Israel mirrors mainstream Zionist view of post-Zionism, identifying three academic waves of post-nationalistic and post-Zionist discourse. Literary expressions question moral, political, spiritual and democratic implications of nationalism in the context of modern-day Israel.[13] The social sciences have witnessed an increase in publications on the social construction of Jewish nationalism, emptying it of its value and painting it a product of social, economic and material conditions.[14] Finally, post-Zionist narrative has evolved most problematically for Zionists, which are depicted as a tool for the elite in order to analyze history and exert control over its land and its citizens.[15] Tuvia Friling claims that post-Zionism is "a critique of what Zionism wanted to be but did not turn to be, of what Zionism turned [out] to be despite that it did not want to be what it became to be; it is a critique of a national movement and a historical phenomenon that was sinfully born and constituted that is historically redundant and its future behind it."[16] For Friling, post-Zionism means dismantling

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10 Aronson 2003.

11 Ibid.; Ben-Moshe 2005; Dalsheim 2007; Don-Yehiyeh 1998; Kelman 1998; Pappé 2000; Shapira 2006; Weissbrod 1981.

12 Segev 2001, 13–41.

13 Ben-Israel 2002.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

the current manifestations of Jewish nationalism and calling for just a normal state, disconnected from its traditional past and giving up on messianic aspirations and images.[17] Accordingly, Zionist critique of post-Zionists could be summed up through the classification of post-Zionism into two strains of thought defined by the former as "positive post-Zionism" and "negative post-Zionism."[18]

According to this classification, those who did not oppose the historical Zionist movement – political or cultural – but believed its goals had been achieved with statehood and the passage of time were viewed as positive post-Zionists.[19] These individuals do not necessarily question the moral foundations or the legitimacy of Zionism, but seek to improve the quality of Israeli reality by introducing ideas based on liberal and democratic values. In contrast, those who are viewed as rejecting Jewish nationalism in all of its forms and believed the Zionist project to be inherently racist and colonialist were classified as negative post-Zionists.[20] The positive post-Zionist movement has been viewed as one that raises legitimate debates because it does not question the morality of the Zionist movement and the legitimacy of the State of Israel. Because these are deemed legitimate, they can be incorporated into and remain within the realm of mainstream Zionist debate. In contrast, negative post-Zionists were delegitimized since they questioned Zionist historiography and its ideological assumptions and challenged them with empirical facts surrounding the Palestinian national narrative, positing that the State of Israel was founded on immoral grounds.[21] In contrast, negative post-Zionism not only criticizes the post-Zionist critique and accuses it of either disloyalty or illusion, it also opens avenues of communication in order to verify the similarities and the differences between narratives and reach mutual understanding and common grounds.

The differentiation between positive and negative post-Zionism is a continuation of the epistemic orientation of mainstream Zionists to divide the world into friends and foes and manipulate reality in ways that match their worldview. It is based on modernist assumptions of the binary dichotomies of good and evil that work to establish its legitimacy by delegitimizing alternatives. It is important to clarify that Zionist and what they view as positive post-Zionist discourse place similar and great significance in the Jewish historical narrative as a legitimizing agent for the State of Israel and its domestic and foreign policies toward Palestinians. Both leverage biblical and Holocaust stories for the purposes of territorial expansion elevate the Zionist project to the level of universal, moral values.[22] Similarly, both

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16 Friling 2003, 13.
17 Ibid.
18 Ben-Moshe 2005.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Kelman 1998.
22 Aronson 2003.

mainstream Zionists and positive post-Zionists, in an effort to reconcile the present with the past, came to view the Bible not as a map of Israel but of Judaism.[23] While both streams support Jewish culture as central to the national ethos, mainstream Zionists criticize positive post-Zionists for emphasizing Israel's primary commitment to protect its citizenry, which is inclusive of Arabs, rather than focusing only on Jewish interests.[24]

In contrast, mainstream Zionists dismiss what they depict as negative post-Zionist views, based on the latter's orientation toward space. Post-Zionist's conception of space, more precisely the homeland is accused to be a result of competing equal narratives of history, thereby granting the Palestinian narrative full and equal status to that of Zionism. According to mainstream Zionists, negative post-Zionists not only dispute Zionist historiography, but emphasize its incongruity with modern ideological assumptions and their link to the land, referencing pluralism, equal citizenship statuses and integration, as opposed to isolationist policies.

The substantive meaning of post-Zionism

Post-Zionists, by definition, are people who grew up in the Zionist movement or were educated in the Zionism system, but through exposure to competing historical narratives or personal observations of inequality or injustice, rendered Zionist ideology as incongruent with their personal conceptions of morality or truth. They are influenced by the rise of postmodern thought, a mistrust of stable epistemological categories, and their differentiation between the view of reality and reality itself. They are not a homogenous group of intellectuals that can be categorized based on unified criteria.

The subsequent divisions, "positive post-Zionist" and "negative post-Zionist" have prevailed in Israeli discourse, largely because both Zionist and post-Zionist discourse have all been dominated by Israeli-Jewish, Zionist or former Zionist historians.[26] In an effort to address Zionist criticism and so as not to lose its relevance in modern Israeli discourse, "positive post-Zionism" was born. This conceptualization enabled Zionist ideology to include, pervade and therefore protect itself from the impact of the growing post-Zionist movement by locating itself within the ideology. Positive post-Zionism, a more moderate and generous take on Zionism did not challenge the political or moral foundations of Zionism and was therefore looked upon favorably or "positively" by Zionists.

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23 Ben-Moshe 2005.
24 Kelman 1998.
25 ~~ibid.~~
26 Ram 2007.

However, post-Zionism is, by nature, "negative" in the sense that it challenges and essentially negates the foundations of modern-day Zionism. The distinction between positive and negative, made by Zionists, was pursued in an effort to marginalize the harsher and more problematic strand of Zionist criticism, which highlighted the historic wrongdoings of Israel as the impetus of the Zionist project.

By making this distinction, the goals of Zionism, whether they were met, and the future of the movement were therefore established as internal arguments among the Zionist movement, as negative post-Zionists were effectively "othered" in the discussion.

These distinctions, favored in Israel's modern, hegemonic society, effectively derail the ability for scholars and politicians to cooperate or reach agreements as to the present and future State of Israel. Neither group possesses a common framework on which it can base discussion. Jews are focused on symbolic, religious and Jewish history in their existentialist reality and post-Zionists highlight territorial, empirical and Palestinian history. Recognizing positive post-Zionism as Zionism, one and the same, enables us to simplify the discussion, wherein negative post-Zionists (hereafter simply, post-Zionists) act as a "mirror" of the Zionist movement. By reflecting the empirical realities of Zionism, past and present, post-Zionists enable Zionists to see themselves and come to grips with the realities of their own history and its effects on others. Therefore post-Zionists enable Zionism to meet its own promises and the realities it created as a result of its constitutive foundations. Post-Zionists expose the gaps between what has been assumed and promised and the manipulations and interests that were behind such assumptions and promises. This deconstructive move renders Zionism empty of its romanticism and therefore it resembles any other nationalist colonial movement. The national narrative, the moral foundations of the collective presence and the practices of the state are analyzed through philosophical and theoretical tools that demonstrate their contradictions and lack of coherence. Such a move shakes the basic foundations of Zionists' individual and collective selves and seeks to offer alternatives that meet universal ideals and values that guarantee a better type of salvation. Post-Zionism is not an alternative model of the current immoral reality, but a deconstructive effort that places Zionists in a labyrinth and demands serious treatment of the prevalent situation. This means that post-Zionism is not a mere political position or a methodological stance on history or politics. It is a deep philosophical movement that could be better understood when viewed from three interrelated avenues; namely its epistemological foundations, its ontological assumptions and its normative underpinnings.

The three dimensions

By redefining post-Zionism and locating Zionist history within the post-Zionist movement, three dimensions of post-Zionism can be derived from its orientations toward time, space and morality.

Epistemological

Post-Zionism's epistemic foundations are postmodern, in the sense that they adopt deconstructive analytical tools in order to reread Zionism and all of its related issues, such as the history of the Jewish people, the history and morality of the Zionist movement, the history and demography of the Land of Israel, the history of the Israeli wars and demographic policies, and the moral justifications of Zionism and Israeli policies toward Palestinians, whether under occupation or as citizens of the state.

Post-Zionism deconstructs the current establishment of the State of Israel as a Jewish entity, based on its various dichotomies asserted both within and beyond its borders. Post-Zionist academics and philosophers demonstrate how Zionism promotes social, historical, moral and cultural dichotomies as the major prisms for viewing the world, which both justify its existence and blinds itself to the realities of "others." Post-Zionists attempt to break down these dichotomies, demonstrating their self-construction and their justifications that legitimate its presence in an exclusive particular form; they also demonstrate Zionism's elevation of a Western self-image vis-à-vis the Orient, against Jews of Arab origin or Palestinians. Post-Zionists reflect on the patterns by which Zionism champions the division of the world into salvation and destruction, holy and secular, Jews and non-Jews, friends and foes, good and bad, moral and immoral, modern and primitive, and enlightened and terroristic seeking to paint itself the better of these combinations. Post-Zionists demonstrate how the construction of the Zionist narrative is based on these static dichotomies that depict Zionism as authentic and loyal vis-à-vis non-Jews, who may be partners, but can never become of equal footing.[27]

Another dichotomy deals with classical Zionism's metaphysical construction of reality based on a historical model of Israel that existed thousands of years ago, assuming that the establishment of the State of Israel is the re-building of its fallen temple, as though it is a matter of fact. This line of thinking as well as the assumption of a linear relationship between biblical Jews that lived in Palestine 2,000 years ago and Jews that came from Europe, is committed to a modernist view of history as progressive and linear. In this view, the collective self plays the role of a historical

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27 Sand 2012, 179–250.

agent and fights against different types of locks – human, psychological and cultural – that suppress its freedom and self-realization. The meta-historical narrative, in which one unified Jewish nation that undergoes a process of awakening and return to its authentic homeland, is deconstructed in order to demonstrate the gaps between the invented myths that have no empirical support – such as the Kingdom of David and Shlomo – and the political use of such myths, in order to provide an answer to people that face different forms of suppression and violence.

Post-Zionists deconstruct also the assumed superior, Western morality and the form of methodological nationalism that justifies its racial and territorial policies toward the Palestinian inhabitants of what is constructed as the Jewish homeland. This line of thinking, which divides the world and the land based on national affiliation – and Israel's inherent status as a nation – elevates the rights and status of Jews at the expense of Arabs. The resulting backlash – antisemitism – is not viewed as a result of real racial and suppressive policies or behaviors, but because of inherent and essential antisemitic sentiments that build on the fact that Jews dared to assert their statehood. Post-Zionists deconstruct the essentialist nature of antisemitism that is embedded in the Zionist narrative and demonstrate why it is utilized in order to promote its claim that "the whole world is against us."

An important epistemological contribution of post-Zionist thought is its clarification and falsification of the metaphysical foundations of Zionist thought by objecting to its assumed coherence between ideas and perceptions on the one hand and experience and practice on the other.

Post-Zionists introduce post-metaphysical philosophical foundations based on the claim that human perceptions of reality are a consequence of human communication and agreement rather than a strict analogy between perceptions and a real world. Analogical thinking, whether theological or national, is deconstructed, demonstrating the gaps between what is perceived and experienced in the real world and patterns of political construction of a match between the imagined and the real, which is imagined but posed as real. Such a post-Zionist philosophical move demonstrates the power structure embedded in Zionist thought and its ability to turn images into reality and construct a collective consciousness that perceives invented myths as part and parcel of reality. Post-Zionists demonstrate that Zionism is based on magical thinking that seeks to intimate a productive relationship with a reality that was promised by a supernatural power and relies on faith to affirm basic unprovable assumptions, such as divine promise, the will of God. This magical thinking leaves no space for communication with those who do not accept its basic assumptions. The latter becomes a distorted experience that could and should be overcome in order to facilitate a connection between idea and experience. The analogy between the idea and the experience demands devoting energies, intellectual and material in order to maintain it as the logical and the major rational behind the self. In this context Zionist thinkers attempt to defend not the match between idea and experience, since there is not, but the effort to make this match the major pa-

rameter by which the real is examined. The domination of the tools and parameters of judging the analogy and the intimation between a productive relation and a supernatural reality is what is revealed by post-Zionist critique of Zionism, leading to the introduction of various analytical tools that defend this pattern of power.

Ontological

One of the most important contributions of post-Zionist thought is that it reveals the ontological commitments of Zionist thought. This contribution could be demonstrated by pinpointing three central Zionist commitments. The first has to do with the commitment to the idea of the Jewish people as a given classification. A major critique of such commitment is revealed in the theory of the "invention of the Jewish people," in which the major contribution is not a lack of common origin for the Jewish people as conceived by Zionism, but the way in which Zionist historiography managed to hide such a well-established notion and establish the common image of a coherent transhistorical nation returning to history after hundreds of years of being prevented from realizing its homeland.[28] According to post-Zionism, Zionism as a political theory could not have had any logical, empirical or moral standing if it were not committed to the existence of an entity that is identified as the Jewish people, as a coherent category. The Jewish people as an entity must exist and any doubt as to its coherence had to be omitted in order for the theory of return to hold water. Zionist thought argues that the empirical differences between different Jewish communities are a result of the dispersal of the people by force and the suppressive policies taken against these communities by various historical enemies. Zionism, therefore, is a theory of liberation that leads to the integration of exiles and the reunification of the nation, based on common values and a coherent connection to Jews in the past, enabling Jewish people to manifest themselves again in the current stage of human history. The commitment to the existence of the Jewish people as a coherent entity is deconstructed by post-Zionist thought, thereby making the entire Zionist movement questionable and its political justifications that emerge from this ontological commitment doubtful.

Another ontological commitment embedded in Zionist thought is that of the Land of Israel. This commitment is also a necessary condition in order for Zionist theory to make sense. If the commitment to the Jewish people brings certain challenges, the commitment to the Land of Israel as a physical space that is defined by the Bible introduces much more complex challenges and questions. The major challenge that is presented in post-Zionist critique are the borders of the land and whether the difference in their treatment is a matter of power or of principle. The

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28 Ide[ ]08, 71–128; Eisenstadt and Lissak 1999.

relationship between the Promised Land and the evidence that exists as to Jewish presence on the land in the past becomes a serious challenge. What defines the land out of these two incongruent options, the Promised Land, the land ruled by Jews in the past or the land that could have been seized in the 1948 War becomes a very serious question. Post-Zionists explore the contradictions between these various levels demonstrating the commitments of Zionist thought to an incoherent perception of the land that does not justify its ideological and political foundations. Another challenge posed by post-Zionist thought as to the Zionist commitment to the Land of Israel addresses the human presence on the land. It is well known that the Promised Land has never been empty of human presence. Non-Jews inhabited the land for hundreds of years, creating a certain bond that cannot be dismissed or belittled. A major post-Zionist critique of the Zionist commitment to the entity of the Land of Israel deals with the status of the demographic presence of non-Jews on the land and its impact on its nature. Zionist thought demonstrates awareness as to the presence of non-Jews in the Promised Land, but the extent to which it commits itself to this presence as part of the ontology of the place is doubtful. The land as a given entity is well established in Zionist thought, but it is a given that has a particular meaning based on the divine promise or on the centrality of the land in the identity of another ontological commitment, namely the Jewish people.[29]

The third Zionist ontological commitment that is pinpointed by post-Zionist thought is historical time. Post-Zionist thought demonstrates the Zionist commitment to a coherent temporality in which there are several national junctures that play a foundational role in the reemergence of the Jewish national consciousness and the return to history and homeland.[30] Post-Zionists pinpoint the selectivity characterizing Zionist thought when it comes to time, demonstrating the arbitrariness of the choices made by Zionists and the possibility of reordering historical time, thereby demonstrating not only internal contradictions, but also the suppression of alternatives that may have enabled a concurrent view of time and its political implications. The ontological commitment to national time assumes that the presence of the nation is an agent of history that passes through various historical junctures and shapes its identity and commitments.

One of the major contradictions entailed in the ontological commitment to national time is the relationship between 1948 and 1967. The differences between these two historical junctures reveal the various perceptions of the nation and the meaning of its history, on the one hand and the impact they have on its future, on the other. The debate raised by post-Zionists as to the multiple temporal views embedded in Zionist thought and their implications enable a better view of the political construction of time, history and narrative and the lack of an inherent meaning of

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29 Gans 2008, 9–24.
30 Chowers 2012, 19–71; Eisenstadt and Lissak 1999; Schweid 2012, 9–77.

temporality that commits the nation to a particular national path. Having made this clear, post-Zionist exposure of the Zionist ontological commitment to national time opened the door for an alternative view of history of the land, especially from the point of view of its victims, namely the Palestinians. The presencing (i.e., making present) of Palestinian history and temporality has become part and parcel of the post-Zionist analytical view. The empirical evidence of the history of the State of Israel is reexamined, demonstrating two major points with tremendous ramifications. The first is the selectivity of the archival works done in writing the history of the Zionist movement and the gaps between the official discourse and the independent academic exploration of history. New historians demonstrated these falsifications introduced by institutionalized historians, who framed their research within the official narrative of history.

The second has to with the critique of positivist historical research and the relationship between archival sources and power relations. Post-Zionist historians sought to expand the sources on which they rely in order to complement the depiction of history, since the official documents that could help in narrating the history of the Zionist movement, especially the 1948 War and the establishment of the State of Israel, are of the victorious side, silencing thereby the voice of the victims. The contributions of new historians did not ignore the moral implications of rewriting history, thereby humanizing not only the victims, but also humanizing the Jewish existential dilemmas, and made a clear difference between Zionism and Jewishness. This distinction must be made when dealing with the future, which does not have to be a continuation of the present.

Normative

Post-Zionism deconstructs the Israeli-Jewish national narrative by re-evaluating its symbolism. Israeli-Jews have dominated Zionist and post-Zionist discourse by relying upon its prominence in Western culture. Post-Zionism challenges this position by deconstructing the methods of study surrounding the national narrative and introducing alternative, normative approaches. The idea that power and force beget morality; that because Israel is strong, it is inherently right is also challenged. Post-Zionism asserts that liberal, Western morality and the assumption of clear right and wrong are not inherently superior to any other line of thought. In fact, Zionist discourse and Jewish history are located in the East, with many of its policies and patterns of behavior supporting tribal and non-democratic societal relations, or at least those which are more similar to its Arab counterparts than Zionists acknowledge.

In contrast, post-Zionism proposes a more relativist and proportional view, which is actually conducive to the Jewish national narrative if it comes to terms with its historical origins. Instead of relegating Zionism to a positive/negative dichotomy as Zionists have done in the post-Zionist movement, it challenges proponents of ei-

ther camp to derive its legitimacy not on metaphysical realities or power dimensions, but communication. Post-Zionism recognizes that ideals originate in society, and therefore can be developed through communication. This approach, which is much more supportive of Israel's ideal-type conceptualizations of the state and its democracy enable it to derive its legitimacy from its treatment of its most marginalized communities – the true measure of its morality and its moral compass. Post-Zionist discourse facilitates new discourse, which appeals to the rationality of Israeli-Jews in an effort to reveal common ground inside Israeli society, but not only. This common ground is the only avenue by which Zionists can truly establish its claim for legitimacy because it reconciles past and present realities without compromising its moral imperatives through continued occupation.

Post-Zionists have deeply related to the relationship between Jewish sovereignty and its treatment of non-Jews, both inside the 1967 borders and under occupation. The continued reliance of Israeli Jews on the duality discourse, which argues that Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, as if it is located inside the 1967 borders, while creeping into the areas beyond them and controlling and suppressing millions of Palestinians living in these areas, cannot hold anymore.[31] Post-Zionists claim that mainstream Zionists have ignored this reality, despite the fact that it contradicts with moral values that justified Jewish sovereignty in the first place. Even when mainstream Zionists opposed occupation, they provided pragmatic justifications for its continuation, based on security considerations and blaming Palestinians for their reality.[32] Post-Zionists criticized the normative foundations of the juxtaposition of the Jewish and democratic formula, demonstrating how this formula combines the procedural elements of democratic philosophy with the substantive dimensions of Jewish sovereignty, leading to justifying discriminatory policies that do not match the minimal ideals set forth by the Zionist movement. This critique demonstrates that the fundamental gap between what is sought and what is practiced is not a practical matter, but as much as a substantial contradiction in mainstream Zionist thought that promotes a close ethno-national perception of politics, emptying citizenship from meaning and placing organic identity as the main criteria of loyalty. Israeli Jews' inability to determine the future of the occupation of millions of Palestinians for almost five decades and the arguments made by Jewish settlers as to the differences between Jewish settlement in Palestine before 1948 and Jewish settlement in areas beyond the Green Line after 1967 demonstrate the contradictions of mainstream Zionism and call for fundamental change to the political reality in which Jewish rights must be guaranteed. In response to post-Zionist critique, the neo-Zionist narrative has emerged, which reaffirms Israel's legitimacy as a state and which reconnects Israeli Jews to the land, as in the time of the state's

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31 Shenhav 2010, 60–72.
32 Pedatzur 1996.

foundation and the political Zionist movement.[33] Characterized by right-wing na-
tionalist political parties such as the Likud and the Jewish Home, these groups re-
verse the trend of cooperation with Arab Palestinians, positing Palestinians' incom-
patibility with Jewish-Arab coexistence as a derivation of antisemitism and render
the entire population a demographic threat.[34] Neo-Zionists' territorial ideology typi-
cally employs historic and symbolic discourse in support of the settler movement
and its territorial claims to the land.[35]

Implications for the future

Despite the fact that the current reality was built on immoral grounds, post-Zionism
recognizes that it would be inhumane to overcome it through dismantling it. Rather,
post-Zionism is more forward-thinking. It does not dwell only on the justifications
of its existence or seek to establish new divisions of "us" and "them" but appeals to
a common ground upon which peace can be negotiated. Through mutual recogni-
tion, the establishment of a singular moral compass and conciliatory discourse as
opposed to oppositional, a resolution can be proposed because it will take into ac-
count the realities and needs of all parties.

By opening avenues of communication and dismantling the rigid, dichotomous
prism through which Zionism views and interacts with others, post-Zionism, in con-
trast to what has been delineated in the literature, is actually *positive*. Rather than
serve as a form of criticism or inherent opposition, post-Zionism champions self-re-
flection, plurality and communitarian ideals.

Despite the burgeoning post-Zionist movement, it is still relatively marginalized
within the mainstream Israeli political sphere and consequently its policies and Is-
raeli society. Because the evolution of Zionism over time has adapted the Jewish
narrative to one which is elevated above empirical argumentation, the contradic-
tions within the post-Zionist camp and their inability to reconcile the past with the
present has defeated any gains toward coexistence.

In summation, a critical examination of the evolution of Zionism leads us to rec-
ognize its conflictual manifestations over time. These manifestations have not led to
peace or advancement and have further muddled the discourse through its inherent
contradictions. The new conceptualization of a simplified framework, post-Zionism,
that enables parties to reflect on itself and its commonalities, that is conciliatory
and that reduces anxiety, has the potential to bridge differences and pave a new
path toward peace.

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33 Friling 2003.
34 Ram 2007.
35 Newman 2001.

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