The Violence of Imagined Communities: an Analysis of the Relationship Between National Identity and the State of Israel

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**UNRWA** The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

**IDF** Israeli Defense Forces (often referred to Israeli Occupation Forces by Palestinian communities)

**OPT** Occupied Palestinian Territories
This paper will explore Israeli national identity, nationalism and their implications on various groups within the state of Israel. I explore the characteristics of Israeli national identity and nationalism using the framework of “Imagined Communities” by Benedict Anderson, integrated with scholarship on Orientalism. Through this lens, I aim to assess the racial and ethnic hierarchies created through the construction of Israeli national identity. While there is existing research on the treatment of Othered groups within the state of Israel, this research seeks to explain how the formation of Israeli national identity, and the hierarchies it necessitates, inform state strategies of consent and coercion to maintain its hegemony. In particular, it investigates the position of Palestinians, Mizrahi Jewish communities and Ethiopian Jewish communities in those hierarchies and their ways in which the state interacts with them based on those positions.

INTRODUCTION: The Palestine/Israel Question dominates much of the scholarship, policy and international engagement in the Middle East region and will continue to until there is a just and lasting solution to the conflict. Although the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords brought some hope, it seems that the realization of a just solution continues to be more unrealistic with every year that passes. Between 30 March and 31 December 2018, 183 Gazans were killed by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in the Great March of Return, which called for the internationally recognised Right of Return for the many Palestinians displaced in since 1948 - the number peaking on the day the U.S. opened its embassy in Jerusalem\(^1,^2\). Recently, US President Donald Trump announced that he would recognise the Israeli sovereignty over the Syrian Golan Heights, and Israeli Prime

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Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised to annex parts of the Palestinian West Bank should he win the upcoming election\(^3\),\(^4\). The prospect of a two-state solution seems to be dead.

Unfortunately, it is becoming more apparent that ‘conflict’ is not only arising outside of the borders of Israel, but within the state’s jurisdiction. Over the past two decades, the state of Israel has continued its campaign of demolishing Bedouin and Palestinian villages. Recently, the Knesset introduced the 2018 Nation-State law which codified discriminatory treatment of non-Jewish citizens; essentially apartheid\(^5\). Simultaneously, Mizrahi Jewish and Ethiopian Jewish communities have faced various levels of structural violence from the state\(^6\).

As an intern at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), I was privy to discussions of these issues on the international level (although some went completely unaddressed), with a focus on moving forward. The idea of moving forward towards a peaceful reconciliation is noble and admirable, but essentially impossible to do without understanding the histories and power structures which have enabled such a situation to continue.

This paper aims to question the structures underlying violence within the Israeli state’s borders. Often lauded as the ‘only democracy in the Middle East’, why is it that the state is willing and able to readily and indiscriminately inflict violence on its own communities and citizens? To answer this question, I interrogate the existence and formation of a nation in Israel, primarily through the works of Benedict Anderson and Edward Said, to understand who is considered to be included, and who is excluded from it. This research integrates the instrumentalist perspectives of nationalism, which understand the nation to be a social construct,


\(^6\) Mizrahi refers to Jewish people of Middle Eastern descent. I use the term Mizrahi throughout, although there are quotes from scholars who prefer to use ‘Arab-Jews’.
with the post-structuralist concept of Orientalism, which argues that identity formation (particularly with regards to the Arab world) is a reactionary process. My research then relies on the work of Antonio Gramsci to demonstrate how this nation and its identity informs state practices, by constructing a hierarchy of proximity to the nation. My thesis, therefore, poses that the Israeli nation developed through relational histories, creating a hierarchy between European Jewishness, as the ‘self,’ and Palestinians as the ‘Other,’\(^7\). As in many cases, nationalism in Israel creates multiple junctures, placing Mizrahi Jewish communities and Ethiopian Jewish communities in different positions in the hierarchy, dictated by their proximity to the nation. Inclusion within and close proximity to the nation affords certain communities a higher position in the hierarchy and those in further proximity, a lower position. The position in the hierarchy dictates the extent to which these communities are presented with opportunities to consent to state practices, or coerced into doing so - correlating directly with the types and varying intensity of violence against them.

**BACKGROUND, CONTEXT & CONCEPTS:** While the history of Palestine-Israel is seminal to this work, it cannot be covered with the necessary detail in a concise manner. I will, instead, cover specific key periods of interaction that are intrinsic to the following analysis.

**On Zionism**

Zionism is the political ideology, founded in the late 1800s, that calls for a Jewish state. To be clear, Zionism is not synonymous with Judaism as is often argued; it is not a religion, but a political ideology. Founded by Theodor Herzl, Zionism had interest in establishing this state in various colonized areas: historic Palestine, of course, as well as Uganda and Kenya (at the time,  

\(^7\) I use European as coterminous with “Ashkenazi,” which refers to Jewish people of Northern French or German descent.
British East Africa), and South America. Israeli historian, Ilan Pappe, has documented the colonial aspects of this call, and the remarkable parallels to ‘civilising’ colonial missions throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Said has also documented that early Zionism “never spoke of itself unambiguously as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient”. Taking this often silenced context into account, I frame the establishment of the Israeli state as not solely a religious project, but a colonial one, too.

**On the state of Israel**

Defining the state of Israel is a difficult task. Not only are its physical borders contested, but the jurisdiction of the state operates outside of internationally recognised borders and into Palestinian territories. A shortened history of its physical borders begins with the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan which proposed the establishment of a Jewish state along the borders shown in Figure 1. The state’s borders have continued to shift, expanding and contracting through the 1948 Arab-Israeli war and the 1967 Six-Day War. Today, only two of its international borders are recognised - those with Egypt and Jordan. Figure 2, although it does not demarcate internationally recognised borders, demonstrates the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

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9 Said, *The Question of Palestine*. pp. 69
10 There is much available scholarship on the establishment of the state of Israel as colonial, or settler colonial project. See Ilan Pappe’s *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*
It is not only the state’s physical borders that have changed, but the state of Israel’s control in the West Bank and Gaza. Gaza was under Israeli military occupation until 2005, when Israel withdrew its military from Gaza. Under the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was given limited authority over the West Bank. The West Bank was demarcated into three territories, A, B and C, all under different levels of Israeli supervision (figure 3). Territory A, comprising 18% of the West Bank, is under the authority of the PA. Territory B, around 22% of the West Bank, is under Palestinian civil administration, while Israel maintains control of security. Territory C is under complete civil and security control of Israel, and the state

\[11\] United Nations. “UN Partition Plan, Resolution 181”.

\[12\] Visualizing Palestine. “Palestine Shrinking, Expanding Israel”. Accessed April 09, 2019
of Israel operates there with full authority over everything but education and medical care. The Israeli state, then, operates a state would ordinarily do within its borders in Occupied Palestinian Territories, including administering control of land and planning - and the demolition of housing and villages - in Territory C.

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Figure 3: West Bank territories

14 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “West Bank: Area C Map”
RESEARCH DESIGN: The Palestine/Israel question has dominated much of the scholarship and policy regarding the Middle East. In particular, the focus is on the question of statehood: one state, or two states? A Jewish state, or a multi-religious and multi-ethnic state? A binational state? These are important questions to be asking.

Some, though not nearly so much, scholarship has been dedicated to the idea of nationality in Palestine/Israel. There is existing literature on Palestinian national identity, nationalism, statehood and liberation. My research, instead, investigates the Israeli nation, and its development with an expanded focus on understanding the non-religious markers that classify the members of this nation. The question of the state, however, is not irrelevant to this work. My research aims to bridge the gap between understandings of statehood and nationalism, investigating the ways in which the formation of national identity interacts with and informs Israeli state policy and practice.

As elections approach in Israel, this research will seek to explain that the continued dispossession of Palestinians and non-European Jewish people is not a product of a singular government or politician, but is in fact built into the very fabric of it. Through this research, I hope to demonstrate that the ‘business-as-usual’ approach, through pseudo-democratic institutions of Israel will not bring peace to the region; the problem requires a wider analysis of the Israeli state and its national identity. While often conflated with nationhood, I define the Israeli state as the political community and institutions that exist both within the internationally recognised borders of Israel, and that maintain authority over Territories B and C in the West Bank.
METHODOLOGY: This research was partly based on informal interviews and an internship at UNRWA. UNRWA was established in 1949 to support displaced Palestine refugees through direct relief and works programs. The Agency is funded almost entirely by voluntary donors, and aims to act as non-political body, focusing solely on humanitarian provisions. In 2018, UNRWA’s largest donor, the United States, withdrew all funding for the organization, leaving it in a race to secure donations. My time at UNRWA was largely shaped by this development, and the prioritisation of fundraising.

Through the internship, I conversed with various actors, both intergovernmental and non-governmental representatives and specialists, who provided historical context as well as accounts of life in Israel today. I attended Security Council meetings on the Question of Palestine, meetings of the Israel-Palestine Working Group and informal meetings with Non-Governmental Organizations. In particular, I met with representatives of Mossawa, the Advocacy Center for Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel, who discussed the discriminatory treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel, demolition of Palestinian homes (particularly the village of Khan al-Ahmar), and Palestinian resistance to this. These discussions informed my research question, and prompted me to ask how and why the state of Israel is able to continue these acts of violence against Palestinians.

For the case analysis, I used primary and secondary resources. Regarding primary sources, I obtained maps drawn by the United Nations in 1947, illustrating population demographics and land ownership prior to the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and prior to the United Nations mandated partition of Palestine in 1967. I also analysed the writings of early Zionist thinkers, Theodor Herzl and Chaim Azriel Weizmann. Secondary sources ranged from theoretical studies that pertained to questions of nations,
nationalism and identity more broadly, and the relationship between the state and civil society, including the nation. My secondary sources also included studies of various groups in Israel, particularly Palestinians, Mizrahi Jews and Ethiopian Jews, and specific analyses of hierarchies in Israel, colonial aspects of the State and its exclusionary practices.

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** In order to understand the relationship between the nation and the state, the idea of the nation and its formation must be clearly understood and conceptualised. I trace well-known schools of thought with a focus on the debates between **primordialism** and **modernism**, and **perennialism** and **instrumentalism**. After assessing the merits of this scholarship, I integrate a post-structuralist lens - particularly that of Orientalism - with instrumentalist theories of nationalism, to explain the trajectory of nations and national identity formation in relation to the Middle East.

The second section of this review looks at ideas regarding the relationship between the nation and the state using a Gramscian perspective. Antonio Gramsci’s work is both widely praised and critiqued, but in this review, I find that Gramsci’s work, including its limitations, adds value to the research into the nation/state relationship.

**On the Nation, National Identity and Their Formation**

There are two main debates in the study of nations and nationalism, in particular they focus on the when nations first appeared, and the ways in which nations were developed. The first debate is between **primordialism** and **modernism**, and the second between **perennialism** and **instrumentalism**. The two debates are heavily linked to one another; modernists usually align with the instrumentalist approach around the nations development, and primordialists align with perennialists.
Primordialists generally propose that the nation is a natural phenomenon, integral to humanity and based upon ethnic, linguistic, religious and territorial ties. Edward Shils is an important theorist in primordialism, arguing a sociobiological approach that emphasises proposes ethnicity and nations as an “extension of kinship”15. Primordialism has often been derided in the discussion of nationalism, and few scholars would purport the radical idea that ethnicity or nation are unchanging ‘natural’ phenomena. As Brubaker writes, “virtually everyone agrees that they are historically emergent and in some respects mutable,” including those who use rely on evolutionary or cognitive psychology16. The primordialist position of ‘natural’ ties suggests that nations have existed throughout history, preceding modernity, which is the position of perennialists. This argument firmly aligns primordialists with perennialism, but does not necessitate that all perennialists are primordialists.

Unfortunately, primordialism and perennialism are often lumped together because of the former’s reliance on the latter, and sometimes the two are used synonymously. While this categorization can be useful, it is important to outline the distinctions between the two. While all primordialists rely on the idea that nation-like forms existed in pre-modern times, not all perennialists argue that this is a result of ‘nature,’ or kinship.

On the contrary, the modernist argument poses that nations and nationalism are a relatively new phenomenon, stemming from the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution, and its uneven distribution, eroded fixed social structures of family, and more broadly a village and city-state17. Modernists argue that, to replace these social structures, classifications of groups based on their commonalities emerged to form the nation.

16 Brubaker, Rogers. "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism." Annual Review of Sociology 35:21-42. pp. 28
**Instrumentalism** contends that nations are created by nationalists; that they can be invented, constructed and relearned. As such, it is reasonable to align modernists with instrumentalists, as neither of them argue that pre-modern, unchanging ties underpin the nation. However, similarly to the primordial-perennial relationship, that both theories argue that nations are modern does not suffice to that instrumentalists view nations as a necessary byproduct of modernity, nor that modernists believe they can be constructed or reconstructed.

Anthony Smith situates his theory of *ethno-symbolism* as a negotiation between these existing schools of thought. To frame his work, Smith begins by surveying the existing theories of nationalism, and the modernist, perennialist and primordial schools of thought. Smith rejects modernist claims that nations are solely a production of modernity, and simultaneously rejects the claims of primordialists and perennialists in suggesting that nations today do not *directly* reflect pre-modern communities, and that there is little evidence to connect the two so explicitly. He asserts that “there have, indeed, been important changes within collective units and sentiments [since modernity]...but these have occurred within a pre-existing framework of collective loyalties and identities, which has conditioned the changes as much as they have influenced the framework.”\(^\text{18}\) He names this pre-existing framework as *ethnie*. The core of ethnicity, or the *ethnie* (the group of people), does not lie in the “human experience,” but in “myths, memories, values and symbols”\(^\text{19}\). These configurations are documented in artefacts and history, and therefore, they are slow to change and are durable in shaping the *ethnie*, and later the nation. Smith claims that intellectuals convey these myths and histories. It is the strategic use of these symbols - the artefacts, maps, art - that help the modern nation reminisce, and draw from pre-modern *ethnie*. This relationship to pre-modern ties is opposed to modernist thought, which

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\(^\text{19}\) ibid. pp. 15
claims that nations are created as a by-product of modernity. Despite earlier his refutation of perennialism, his theory is at the very least ‘perennial-like,’ given this assertion of pre-modernities.

Smith’s work is limited by several factors but primarily, and most importantly, by his blurring of the definitions of the ‘nation’ and the ‘state’. He attributes certain functions of the state, such as its legal purview, to the nation and occasionally seems to use the terms interchangeably. In an attempt to question the relationship between the state and the nation, a framework which integrates the two is unhelpful.

Modernist schools of thought often take their cue from Ernest Gellner, who frames his argument by exploring definitions of the nation. He assesses two ‘temporary’ definitions: first, that a nation is based on the same culture, where culture is a “system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.”20 Second, he suggests that shared attributes are not so important, but that it is members’ mutual recognition of one another, as members, which establishes the nation. He attributes merit to both of these explanations have merit, but states that neither is “adequate,” given the lack of consensus around definitions of culture21. Making this assertion, Gellner approaches the question of nationalism “without attempting too much in the way of formal definition [of the nation], and looking at what culture does.”22 His focus on nationalism, instead of the nation itself, can be explained by his assertion that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.” 23 It is not so important to Gellner to define the nation, but to explore the circumstances in which it came to exist. It is here that his instrumentalist argument begins.

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21 ibid. pp. 6
22 Gellner. Nations and Nationalism, pp 7
Gellner’s instrumentalist perspective relies on the idea that everything, including ideas of community and nation, can be invented, reinvented, and relearned. Like many instrumentalists, he argues that the uneven distribution of the industrial revolution eroded social structures\(^{24}\). In order to maintain social cohesion, shared cultures and values become a more important unifying factor\(^{25}\). Education systems proliferate and facilitate ideas and identification factors that form this ‘shared culture,’ creating, shaping and maintaining the nation. The idea of social construction is well-evidenced and compelling, and provides the basis upon which many other theorists have developed.

Benedict Anderson builds on Gellner’s work, as both a modernist and an instrumentalist. Although he sees a similar relationship between nationalism and nations, he diverges slightly from Gellner’s assertion that nationalism “invents nations”\(^{26}\). Anderson does not see the nation as an invention or “fabrication” of the community, but as an “imagining” and “creation”\(^{27}\). He also makes clear to define the nation, unlike Gellner, based upon his instrumentalist perspective. The nation is an “imagined political community,” that is both finite and sovereign\(^{28}\). The community is *imagined* because members may never meet one another, but the community still exists within their minds, echoing Gellner’s explanation of mutual recognition\(^{29}\). This community is finite or *limited*, as it is defined by boundaries at which other communities (nations) exist - no nation claims or envisages that it is synonymous with humanity\(^{30}\). It is imagined as *sovereign*, or free from another's will, because it came into being at a time in “which

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\(^{24}\) ibid. pp. 166
\(^{25}\) O'Leary. “On the Nature of Nationalism” pp. 194
\(^{28}\) ibid. pp. 6
\(^{29}\) Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. pp. 6
\(^{30}\) ibid. pp. 7
Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm,” and as such the nation was free of religions “ontological claims and territorial stretch”\(^{31}\). This freedom has manifested in the existence of sovereign states. Finally, a nation is a community because - despite any existing inequality and exploitation - there exists a common sense of camaraderie among its members, so much so that its members are willing to die for it. In defining the nation, even as a product of nationalism, Anderson provides clarity throughout his work, a clarity which explains members’ loyalty to the nation, as well as its changing nature through his modernist and instrumentalist perspective.

Here, we can offer some nuance to Anderson’s work. While it is well supported, the unequivocal statement of sovereignty is lacking. There are plenty of ways in which both the state, and the nation are not sovereign; for example, underground drug trafficking threatens this idea. This is something I will briefly touch on in Israel.

Anderson also differs from Gellner in terms of the factors, post-industrialisation, that led to the development of nations. While Gellner refers to the erosion of social structures, such as the family and city-state, Anderson attributes nationalism to the erosion of three structures: sacred languages, religious dynasties, and linear apprehensions of time. The rise of print capitalism facilitated this erosion, providing a platform from which nationalism and nations could occur. Those with access to print languages had access to the production of knowledge; printing and recording in history their perceptions as historical truths, which defined and limited the nation. Capitalism allowed these print languages to proliferate these ideas through mass media, in particular through newspapers. He substantiates his theoretical assertions with the proliferation of John Calvin’s *Geneva*, the development of Early English and importantly, the development of nationalisms in the Americas. With this framework, Anderson’s theory “helps to explain the

\(^{31}\) ibid. pp. 7
correlation there between nationalism and racial exclusiveness [in Australia],” but can also be used to explain this correlation elsewhere, including in Israel\textsuperscript{32}.

Anderson, like Anthony Smith, interrogates the use and influence of symbolism to assert the existence of a nation and its identity. He discusses the use of maps, censuses and museums primarily. Maps provide a pictorial, color coded representation of a nation, and more specifically the ‘limited’ nation; maps depict borders that exist between nations, demonstrating their exclusive and limited nature. The map becomes a ‘brand’ or a ‘logo’ for the nation, one which is reproducible for masses, and unifies those that live within the borders - reaffirming the ‘community’. In the same vein, the census collects and presents data on those that belong; the citizens, versus those that don’t, the foreigners. These symbols, employed by nations, demonstrate both the community that Anderson defines at the start of his book, and the limited nature of nations through their exclusion of the Other. Museums, through the process of archaeological restoration, further shape ideas of the nation by first of all, establishing the antiquity that is so prevalent, but more than that, establishing the nation as a protector of the tradition that exhibits in museums represent; further entrenching the idea of the ‘community’.

Anderson’s contribution to the scholarship on nationalism is widely noted, but is also supported in particular by post-structuralist arguments around Orientalism and the creation of the ‘Other’.

Edward Said’s \textit{Orientalism} theorizes about understandings and misunderstandings, and representations and misrepresentations of the Arab World particularly in relation to the West, or the Occident. Said’s claims about the formation of identity between the Occident and the Orient (the Middle East) are seminal to research about nationalism in the Middle East.

In its simplest form, Said’s argument is that “the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority”\(^{33}\). In his introduction, Said is clear to establish three interdependent definitions of Orientalism; the first refers to scholars of the Orient; the teachers, writers and researchers who conduct their work with regards to the East (the Orient) are Orientalists. The second definition is the “ontological and epistemological” distinction made between the West (the Occident) and the Orient. The third definition alludes to the West’s endeavours to dominate, shape and exercise power over the Orient\(^{34}\). These three definitions rely on Foucauldian concepts of knowledge, and its creators and conveyors, as corresponding with power.

Orientalists portray the Middle East as backwards, primitive and undeveloped - with a certain ignorance for the region’s contributions to the Enlightenment, calculus and reason. Through histories of colonialism and imperialism, the West became the gatekeeper of knowledge about the Orient and continued to ‘create’ knowledge of the Orient’s backwardness. Its ability to do so relied on the West’s access and use of print capitalist means, such as mass media and written scholarship. Said acknowledges the power of the West, particularly through the colonial endeavours of France and Britain, and the pervasive nature in which Orientalism became internalised as the foundation for any continued knowledge ‘creation’ and research. As such, the Orient, according to Said, is becomes unable to distinguish its own truth outside of the scope of Orientalist notions\(^{35}\). To avoid misunderstanding, Said does not claim that there is a ‘true’ representation of Arabs or the Middle East, but that any representation today is not unaffected by Orientalism and that Arab identity today is, in part, reactionary to colonial and Orientalist work\(^{36}\).

\(^{34}\) ibid. pp. 2
\(^{35}\) Said. *Orientalism*.
\(^{36}\) ibid. pp. 322
As valuable and important as Said’s work is, it is not without its flaws. Said writes with respect to a very particular historical moment, in the context of the West’s colonization of the Middle East. We must be careful, then, to clearly understand the implications of this. That he writes about a particular historical moment does not devalue his work, but it does limit its use as a generalised theory - it is not general, nor do I believe was it intended to be. It provides specific insight into the West’s relationship with the Orient and the ‘Other,’ where there exists a power differential.

Building upon Orientalism, Stuart Hall writes, identity can be viewed through the lens of difference. In terms of identity, “as well as many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather - since history has intervened - ‘what we have become.’”37 This conception of identity is particularly important to the understanding of identity formation as situated in colonial experience. He uses Fanonian thought to support Said’s claim of internalizing this Other; asserting that

“this kind of knowledge [of being the Other] is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm.”38

Understanding this relationship between the West and the Other explains, in alignment with instrumentalists, that identity (whether cultural or national) is not fixed, nor is it natural. It is formed, in part, by relative histories between the self (in this case, the West) and the Other.

Relying on Jacques Derrida’s use of differance, a compilation of the French verbs ‘to differ’ and

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38 Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." pp. 226
‘to defer,’ Hall argues that *difference* is not predicated upon one specific point in time, but continuously shifting and changing in relation to history, representation and other identities\(^{39}\). These relative histories shape identity not upon the basis of fact, but upon discourses and sentiments created by those that ‘create’ knowledge to be proliferated, hence the importance of *differance*. Though I am wary of relying too heavily on the work of Hall, he is worth quoting again here:

> “Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'."\(^{40}\)

Elaborating on the idea of ‘positioning,’ Hall uses Martinique and Jamaica to explain: they are different from one another in terms of culture and history\(^{41}\). In the eyes of the West, however, are the same in that they are different from the West: they are the same in their position of ‘Otherness’. While Hall focuses primarily on the identity of the colonized, he also informs theory on the identity of the colonizer. In the same way that the colonized is the same based on its position as the Other, the colonizers are the same based on their positions as opposed to the Other, or simply put, their positions as the ‘self’.

Here, I return to Said’s suggestion that identity is relational. He suggests, as I have outlined, that Arab identity cannot be separated from Orientalism, not only through its acceptance of Orientalist representations but also in attempts to dispel them. In attempting to assert an identity that is not Orientalist, Arabs are already framing their identity with respect to, and in response to Orientalism; this is its pervasive nature. In her historical account of *Women*
and Gender in Islam, Leila Ahmed tracks one example of this. Based on the West’s historical
Orientalist understanding of Islam and its convergence with strategic colonial endeavours,
Britain played a significant role in the conception of women and gender in Islam and the Middle
East today. The colonial overseer of Egypt, Lord Cromer (despite demonstrating ardent anti-
feminist practices in Britain) became an advocate for the elevation of women in Egypt in attempt
to demean Egyptian men, citing the ‘inferiority’ of Muslim men and the “complete failure” of
Islam. Cromer saw it as imperative to maintaining colonial power that Egyptians be “persuaded
or forced into imbibing the true spirit of western civilisation,” pursuing this through abandoning
Islam’s ‘derogatory’ practices of veiling. In response to Cromer’s call, and colonialist
narratives that followed, many opposed this call: as Ahmed writes “in a way that was to become
typical of the Arabic narrative of resistance, the opposition appropriated, in order to negate them,
the terms set in the first place by the colonial discourse.” Nationalist responses defended
patriarchal society and veiling as an indigenous practice. Ahmed asserts that neither the position
of Cromer or Egyptian revolutionaries were for the sake of feminism, but for the sake of
justifying colonialist or anti-colonialist narratives. This point in history “marks the emergence of
an Arabic narrative developed in resistance to the colonial narrative,” but as demonstrated still
within the terms of colonial one. Leila Ahmed’s account is one of the clearest historical
examples of the reactionary identity and narrative formation that Said discusses.

To return to my question of Hall’s relevance to the identity of the colonizer, I incorporate
this idea of reactionary and relational identity formation. As Arabs (or any Others) begin to

42 Quoted in: Ahmed, Leila. Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate. London: Yale
44 ibid. pp. 162
45 Ahmed. Women and Gender in Islam. pp. 163
assert their identity, in the terms set by Orientalism, they shape the identity of the ‘self,’ through its \textit{difference} (and oftentimes opposition) to the Other. A cycle forms:

![Figure 4: Cycle of Orientalism](image)

This cycle demonstrates the way in which Hall can be used to understand not only the effect of colonization on the colonized’s identity, but on that of the colonizer, too. We can see that as Orientalism operates, reactionary changes in identity occur for both the colonizer and the colonized exacerbating the \textit{difference}. Orientalism is not the sole factor in national identity creation, nor is it the most important; however, this cycle can be combined with Anderson’s concept of the \emph{Imagined Community} to understand Orientalism in the context of national identity.
and nationalism, and to understand the way in which print capitalism has entrenched Orientalist notions in the imagined nation.

The following research and analysis of this paper relies on this integration of Said’s *Orientalism*, with Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. Identity is a fluid concept, changing and shifting based on relationships to the Other and its representations. These representations are reproduced in the means that Anderson outlines, of print capitalism and symbolism, and shape the nation and its identity. Understanding this, we can now move to look at the relationship between the state, the nation and national identity.

**The Relationship Between the State, the Nation and National Identity:**

To understand the influence of the nation and nationalism on state policy and governance in the state of Israel requires an insight into the relationship between the state and the nation. Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* offer a position on this relationship, in terms of the State, hegemony and their relationship to civil society. The work and value of Gramsci is widely debated, and often complicated by the context in which he wrote. Imprisoned, subject to censorship and writing in note form, it is difficult to trace how his ideas developed and shifted over time, and moreso, to extrapolate meaning from language that he used to subvert censorship (i.e. using ‘dominant class,’ as opposed to the ‘bourgeoisie’). Given this context, the following review relies on a combination of Gramsci’s work directly, and secondary interpretations of it.

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci proposes that hegemony is “how dominant elites exercise the state power as well as popular culture, mass media, education and religion to reinforce an ideology which supports their position.”\(^46\) This definition alludes to another concept, of consent, and its counterpart, coercion. Consent relates to civil society; as Gramsci defines it,

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“the political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the whole of society, as the ethical content of the State”\(^{47}\). Coercion relates to ‘political society’, the coercive arm of the state, including its apparatus which directly police its citizens into acting accordingly. The dominant social group relies on civil society and its covert strategies of “ideological integration [rather] than direct recourse to arms [or coercion]” to maintain consent\(^{48}\). Peter Thomas explains that in a “benevolent version, this involves forging coalitions based upon negotiation and compromise between different interest groups” and is potentially democratic\(^{49}\). However, he also provides a more cynical - and in my opinion, more accurate approach which corresponds with

> “what Spinoza described as ‘despotic statecraft’, in which the supreme and essential mystery [is] to hoodwink the subjects [...] so that men may [...] count it not shame but highest honour to risk their blood and their lives for the vainglory of a tyrant. Here, hegemony is conceived from the standpoint of the hegemon, as a mechanism of medi{ated subordination}.”\(^{50}\)

This second approach is particularly relevant given Benedict Anderson’s assertion that nation make “it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings”\(^{51}\). The nation, therefore, corresponds with hegemony, and its formation - through print capitalism and symbolism - corresponds with the “popular culture, mass media, education and religion” from Gramsci, and the “ideological

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\(^{48}\) ibid. pp. 161

\(^{49}\) ibid. pp. 161

\(^{50}\) ibid. pp. 161[emphasis added]

\(^{51}\) Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. pp. 7
integration” that Thomas asserts. Thus, I pose that the nation acts as a tool of manufacturing consent to maintain hegemony.

Perry Anderson claims that, according to Gramsci, the maintenance of consent is replacing coercive strategies of the state. He argues that hegemony “denotes a strategy aiming at the production of consent, as opposed to coercion.” This assertion is based upon a misreading of Gramsci’s work, assuming that Gramsci’s ‘starting point’ is one of opposition, referring to his reference to the “dual nature of Machiavelli’s Centaur—half-animal and half-human.” Perry Anderson states that this presents an “explicit set of oppositions,” of force against consent, domination against hegemony and violence against civilisation. Looking in isolation at this passage in Gramsci’s work, Anderson’s assertion of opposition is understandable, however, reading further into Gramsci would suggest this is not the case.

Thomas, looking at Gramsci’s work more broadly, offers a more compelling argument that coercion and consent exist and are deployed alongside one another. He points out that the reference to Machiavelli appears over three years after Gramsci began writing the Prison Notebooks, and two years after his first note using the term ‘hegemony’. Thomas argues that Machiavelli’s half-man/half-beast reference was not the starting point of Gramsci’s concept of hegemony but a later articulation of it. Instead, Thomas claims that “hegemony is the form of political power exercised over those classes in close proximity to the leading group, while domination is exerted over those opposing it. Consent is one

52 Thomas. Gramscian Moment. pp. 161
53 Thomas. Gramscian Moment. pp 160
55 ibid. pp 21
56 Thomas. Gramscian Moment. pp 164
of the means of forging the ‘composite body’ of a class alliance, while coercion is deployed against the excluded other.”

It is important to note, here, the difference between ‘subordination’ (as referred to earlier, through consent), which denotes the effort to make a group subservient, and ‘domination,’ (referred to in terms of coercion), which is to rule by superior power. Establishing this as Gramsci’s starting point, Thomas refers to a passage from the *Prison Notebooks*, in which he claims that

“the ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony [...] is characterised by a combination of force [coercion] and consent, which counterbalance each other, without force predominating excessively over consent; rather, it appears to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion.”

Consent is not eclipsing the use of coercion, but the two are deployed by the state alongside and counterbalancing one another. This position provides the understanding upon which this paper rests. Coercion (political society) and consent (civil society, and as such, nations) act in tandem, counterbalancing - not eclipsing - one another; in Gramsci’s short words the “state=political society + civil society”.

Gramsci’s work has its limitations; its specificity to his conditions and the Italian experience does not provide us with a science of theory through which we can provide general answers to questions of society. However, this specificity does not discount the value of his work. As Hall asserts with regards to racism, despite its general trends, it is adapted by the

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57 ibid. pp 163
58 Thomas. *Gramscian Moment.* pp 164
historical context of the time; he uses the example of racism in Britain, which has evolved between its “high” imperial period and where we are today\(^{61}\). Similarly, as outlined above, nations have adapted based on relative historical and cultural trends. In analysing forms of nations today, I assert - like Hall does with regards to racism - that using works with historical specificity offer a greater insight into the question at hand.

As such, I understand the nation to be a component of Gramsci’s civil society, and investigate its influence on, and shaping of Israeli state practices.

**CASE ANALYSIS:** First, this research investigates whether a nation, as articulated by Benedict Anderson, exists in Israel and finds that: yes, an Israeli nation does exist. The Law of Return in Israel grants the right to ‘return’ to all Jewish people, and only Jewish people to the state of Israel. Tekiner explains that “the right to enter a country and immediately enjoy full legal and political rights is everywhere the exclusive right of a country's nationals,” and thus, despite its name the Law of Return is essentially a nationality law\(^{62}\). However, Israel continues to claim that ‘Israeli’ is not a national identity; on citizens’ Identity Cards, they are only given the option to respond ‘Jewish,’ ‘Arab,’ or ‘Druze’ - not Israeli, regardless of religion\(^{63}\). The Supreme Court ruled, in response to a request to change a person’s national identification to Israeli, that “there is no Israeli nation separate from the Jewish people”. There, here then, is whether there is a nation separate from the entirety of the Jewish people or if only the religious community exists.

There is certainly an *imagined community* of Israel, as Benedict Anderson lays out, because members of the community may never meet one another but still recognise its existence.

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\(^{61}\) Hall. "Gramsci’s Relevance". pp. 23


\(^{63}\) All citizens of Israel are required to carry Identity Cards at all times, with different colours signifying different status (Jewish, Arab, citizen of East Jerusalem, citizen of Gaza, etc.).
This is particularly strong in Israel, given that Jewish people are a diasporic people, spread across other states and nations but, still, according to the state and its Law of Return, Israeli nationals. That community is finite, in that it does not claim to include any other group other than Jewish people. The community is also sovereign in that the state of Israel, an autonomous state, claims to exist as a Jewish state representing Jewish people (the nation). Therefore, an Israeli nation does exist under Anderson’s terms.

Understanding that a nation exists, it is important to trace the ways in which it has formed, and the ways that formation reflects Anderson’s claims in terms of print capitalism and symbolism and Said’s claims of Orientalism. Zionist thinkers have taken advantage of the spread of print capitalism and the proliferation of mass media to cement its national identity. The founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, took advantage of his access to the widely understood and recognised German language to proliferate Zionist ideologies across the West. His pamphlet, Der Judenstaat, called for a Jewish state and was received with acclaim, providing the basis for continued Zionist thought. Palestinians, on the receiving end of the Zionist project, received no such acclaim or proliferation of their work. Edward Said documents that Zionist claims of the “rightful” Jewish state, incorporating historic Palestine, have been honored internationally by universities, the press and intellectual community, at the “expense of the Palestinian Arab silence in the Western “marketplace of ideas,”64. This demonstrates the way in which print media, its proliferation throughout the West through capitalism, provided the means for Zionism and Israeli national identity to establish itself while providing no such platform for Palestinians.

This national identity became further entrenched through the use of symbolism. The Star of David on the Israeli flag hearkens to notions of Jewish presence in historic Palestine centuries ago. This seems to reflect ethnosymbolism - the notion that the nation of Israel can be traced

64 Said, The Question of Palestine. pp. 58
back to pre-national ties of ethnic group and religion, demonstrated by a Judaic symbol. However, understanding the colonial motivations of creating the Jewish state and its aspirations for colonies in Africa, it is reasonable to extrapolate that the Star of David does not symbolise the ties of *ethnie*, but is a symbol of religion that has been exploited to justify the project. As the state has continued to expand, it has continued its use of symbols particularly maps, to identify the nation of Israel with all of historic Palestine. These maps do not depict Israel within its current internationally recognised borders, but across extended areas of historic Palestine and OPT. Given the earlier calls to settle in Uganda and Kenya, it is disingenuous to now suggest that historic Palestine has always been a Jewish homeland. These maps, used in school textbooks, proliferate into society and indoctrinate Israeli society into associating historic Palestine with Israeli identity. Unfortunately, this is not something that Israel has perpetuated itself - even Google Maps does not show Palestine, but the state of Israel with dotted lines along the borders of the West Bank and Gaza. The state of Israel has continued the mission of early Zionist thinkers; to erase Palestinian existence in historic Palestine, and to establish it as historic and *rightful* Jewish land.

We can see, now, that there is a nation in Israel, constructed in the ways that Anderson outlined and with the characteristics of an ‘imagined community’. This community has no space for, and does not claim to include non-Jewish communities within its identity, regardless of origin or indigeneity. However, there is value in analysing the experience of non-Jewish communities in terms of understanding the levels of state violence as predicated on a hierarchy.

**Palestinians and the Israeli nation**

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While it is understood that non-Jewish Palestinians are not incorporated into Israeli national identity, precisely because they are not Jewish, it is important to interrogate their position. Understanding non-Jewish Palestinians’ position as the Other, situates the dichotomy of the ‘self’ and Other, within which a hierarchy of other groups forms. To investigate the relationship between Palestinians and Israeli national identity, it is imperative to understand the relational histories between the two, informed by the scholarship of Said and Hall. I begin with a discussion on the formation of Zionism, not the Israeli nation, because Zionism predicated any realisation of Israel, as both a state and nation, and necessarily created and informed the imagined community that came to be in Israel.

In its founding, Zionism inserted itself into a discourse that saw Palestinians as a lesser population, needing civilization. Zionist, and later Israeli thinkers reinforced colonial and Oriental notions of civilisation, a core tenet of which spoke of the treatment of land. Civilised people were understood to be cultivators of land for useful and productive purposes, while uncivilised people neglected their land. These perceptions, established by Western colonialists prior, became central to early Zionist thinkers and the strategy for colonizing Palestine. Chaim Weizmann proclaimed that “it seems as if God has covered the soil of Palestine with rocks and marshes and sand, so that its beauty can only be brought out by those who love it and will devote their lives to healing it” from the supposed neglect of Palestinians. As in much of his work, Weizmann positioned Palestinians as a negative force for the land, necessitating Zionist settlement. Zionism firmly positioned itself in opposition to the ‘Orientals’ already inhabiting Palestine, as the civilised, land-cultivating ‘saviours’ of historic Palestine. This rhetoric around

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66 Said, The Question of Palestine. pp. 75
67 ibid. pp. 85
native Palestinians fell squarely in the realm of British colonial discourse, earning Zionism the ideological sympathies of the West and its tangible support in the creation of the Israeli state.

These early positions shaped the Arab response; as predicted by Said’s work in Orientalism, Arabs established a reactionary position towards Zionism. Arab states shifted towards a theological Arabism, and engaged in repressive tactics, such as forbidding the use of “Israel” in print. This did not only have implications for Arab identity, but for Zionists and Israeli national identity. As outlined in figure 3, the Arab assertion of its position influenced Zionists and exacerbated the position of difference; when Arabs, the Other, asserted a theological retaliation, Zionism repositioned itself in respect to that Other. The Zionist narrative shifted to state that Islam (not specifically Palestinians) was incompatible with Zionism, reflecting the theological shift in Arab nations and shaping Zionism in opposition. This demonstrates the way in which, as the work of Anderson, Said and Hall dictates, the colonizers identity became shaped by that of the colonized.

While this analysis has focused on the initial formations of the Zionism, these Orientalist notions continue to manifest in the Israeli nation today - and they have implications on state policy towards Palestinians. One of the clearest examples of this is house demolitions. While the majority of these demolitions are enacted in the West Bank, they are under the jurisdiction of the Israeli state as dictated by its authority over Territory C. There are generally three types of house demolition: military, punitive and administrative. Military demolitions, taking place as part of a military operation, and punitive demolitions, as punishment for a crime (or even the potential for one) are a clear attempt by the state to exercise its power through coercive means deployed against the Other, in alignment with Gramscian thought.

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69 ibid. pp. 89
70 types of demolition
The link between administrative demolitions and coercion is a little more obscure. Since administrative demolitions are supposedly dictated on the basis of ‘illegality’ of buildings, all citizens - in theory - are subject to them. In reality, this is not the case, and illegal Israeli settlements do not face anywhere close to the amount of demolitions that Palestinian villages face. There is already an unevenness here, given that the demolition of Palestinian villages typically happens in the West Bank, on internationally recognised Palestinian land. For Israel to administer ‘justice’ against Palestinians on OPT, but not against Israeli settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territory demonstrates the disproportionate application of law between the ‘self’ and the Other. Even deeper, though, the legal justification for administrative land demolitions relies on colonial, Oriental narratives. The Israeli government argues that many houses or villages are demolished because they do not “adhere to the outline plans the British Mandate authorities drafted back in the 1940s – which defined land-use zoning for the entire West Bank”.

British Mandate authorities also relied on the colonial justification of land cultivation to justify colonization of Palestinian land, and it is more than fair to suggest that the “outline plans” by the British were informed by these notions. In using this justification, the Israeli state continues its embedding in Eurocentric, Oriental and colonial representations of Palestinians and their ‘neglect’ of the land. As such, it becomes clear that coercive violence, in the form of demolitions, is enacted and informed by colonial experience and identities. The state relies on a law informed by colonial representations of Palestinian ‘neglect’ to justify its coercive state policy against the Other, operating outside of its internationally recognised borders.

In the case of demolitions, the state not only relies on colonial formations of the ‘self’ and Other to maintain its state power, but also to further entrench its hegemony through

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72 ibid.
ideological means. Through conversations with the Israel-Palestine Working Group, it became apparent that the widely condemned demolition of Khan Al-Ahmar, a Palestinian Bedouin village, served to further establish Judaism in the *imagined* nation. The state was operating to further entrench and protect its hegemony, through entrenching its national identity in the physical territory of Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is internationally recognised as a site of cultural importance to Islam and Christianity, the state of Israel has maintained its sole and primary significance to Judaism. To supplement this ideological position, Israel has called for Jerusalem in its entirety to be recognised as the capital of Israel - a call which the United States recently recognised. In attempts to solidify this, the Israeli state has encouraged settlement in and around East Jerusalem (internationally recognised as Palestinian) in order to establish an Israeli ‘Greater Jerusalem’. The demolition of Khan al-Ahmar, according to conversations in the IPWG, is a move to empty the land and create way for the expansion of the illegal settlement of Ma’ale Adumim. The settlement in Ma’ale Adumim, according to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, is the first step to establish Greater Jerusalem, and the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar would create the conditions necessary for the next step. This demonstrates that, not only does the nation inform, reinforce and justify state practice, but that the state acts to reinforce the nation and the ‘self’. It is acting to create the provisions necessary to establish Jerusalem as solely a Judaic site of importance, and thus reinforce the imagined community in its finite (only Jewish) and sovereign (with only Jewish importance assigned to Jerusalem) nature.

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Palestinians, it is worth noting do threaten the sovereignty of Israel in their resistance to house demolitions. In conversations with Mossawa representatives, I learned that Palestinian women wake up in the middle of the night, and begin rebuilding their demolished homes. By the time Israeli authorities arrive in the morning, enough foundations are laid that they return to their office to seek permission to demolish those houses again; and Palestinian women keep building. The resilience of these women, in the face of occupying forces, is truly so astounding and brave, that it deserves an honorable mention here.

Now that the position of the ‘Other’ is established on the receiving end of coercive violence, I move to interrogate the hierarchies created between Palestinians and those supposedly included in the ‘self’, with a particular focus on Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jewish communities.

**Mizrahi Jewish Communities:**

Although Mizrahi Jews live in Israel, some from historic Palestine, and many from the wider region, treatment of these communities does not parallel the treatment of Ashkenazi Jewish communities in Israel. The state claims that the nation reflects Jewish people, but in reality, it reflects the Ashkenazi Jewish community. Mizrahi Jews are forced to choose between their Mizrahi identity and their Jewish identity when selecting a nationality on their Identity Cards, which determine the buses they can ride, the services they have access to and the roads upon which they can drive\(^76\). It would be a self-defeating decision to choose Arab, when Arab Identity Cards give access to lesser quality services and infrastructure. Mizrahi Jewish people must assimilate, as least in name, to Israeli Jewishness to have access to the services that Ashkenazi Jewish people immediately do.

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In fact, Israel has attempted to erase Mizrahi Jewishness completely; “within Zionist ideology, the very term "Arab Jew" is an oxymoron and a misnomer, a conceptual impossibility”77. Israel has mobilized the tactics of print media, and its proliferation with capitalism, to entrench this erasure in history books, philosophy, linguistics, poetry and other forms of cultural expression78. Ella Shohat explains that the very meagre references to Arab Jewish history “usually [consist] of a morbidly selective "tracing the dots" from pogrom to pogrom as evidence of relentless hostility toward Jews in the Arab world.”79 These narrow representations of Arab/Jewish relations reinforce a collective identity, producing a Eurocentric understanding of Jewish history, and perpetuating a narrative of “common victimization of all Jews everywhere and at all times, a crucial underpinning of official Israeli discourse” and its justification80. Israeli national identity, then, does not create space for Arab Jewish culture or history, but instead demands an assimilation to Eurocentric notions and experiences of Jewishness. The institutionalisation of these narratives in common literature demonstrates the manifestations of Arab erasure in the Israeli nation, and the inclusion of a singular, narrow understanding of Judaism: the Ashkenazi one.

This demand for assimilation has proliferated through the education system in particular; one Jewish high school student in Israel described that “our books basically tell us that everything the Jews do is fine and legitimate and Arabs are wrong and violent and are trying to exterminate us.”81 There is a clear distinction between ‘us,’ referring to Jewish people, and the Other, Arabs; but there is no space for Mizrahi Jews to fall in between. Similarly, according to

78 ibid. pp. 6
79 ibid. pp. 6
80 ibid. pp. 6
former Israeli Education Minister Director General Ronit Tirosh, “[Arabic] is a language that is identified with a population that makes your life difficult and endangers your security,” ignoring and erasing the major Jewish philosophy, poetry, and medicine that was written in Arabic with influence from Arab-Jewish culture and communities.82,83 Here, it is clear that the state is operating within the prism of hegemony, negotiating consent through its ideological apparatus to maintain the power of the dominant Ashkenazi community.

While this demonstrates structural instances of repression against Mizrahi Jewish communities in Israel, it does not parallel the physical violence that non-Jewish communities face in Israel, such as house demolitions. These instances demonstrate that proximity to the nation has a relationship with state policy and practice. While non-Jewish Arabs, the explicit Other, are subject to the coercive systems of domination, Mizrahi Jewish communities are afforded the strategy of consent. Mizrahi Jewish communities are given the possibility of ‘relearning’ the nation's identity, through the various educational and informative apparatuses of the state; the “ideological interventions.”84 This is not to say that one is better than the other, or that Mizrahi Jews are given a choice - it is a false choice, in which choosing not to identify with and practice (Eurocentric) Judaism, they would be subject to the explicitly violent, coercive arm of the state. However, it illustrates the ways in which the state manufactures consent among allied groups in closer proximity to national identity, and counterbalances it with coercion against the Other, excluded from national identity. This is where the hierarchy becomes clear.

In ascribing to this, Mizrahi Jewish communities are, perhaps unwilling and unwittingly, consenting to the State’s use of violence against the Other; so long as they are not included in that Other. In her documentation of *Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture* in Israel,

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82 Abu-Saad. “State Controlled Education”. pp. 1091
83 Shohat. “The Invention of the Mizrahim”. pp. 6
84 Thomas, Peter D. *Gramscian Moment*. pp. 161
Smadar Lavie points out that under the Labour government, poor people (a category into which most Mizrahim fall) were offered upgraded housing, but only in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories at the expense of Palestinians. Those housing developments were invested in and revitalised by the following right wing governments. The choice is clear; in choosing to be an Arab in Israel, one would be subject to the coercive aspects of the state: lesser quality services, housing discrimination, and housing demolitions. Although still distanced from the quality of life that Ashkenazi Jewish communities receive, in choosing to identify as Jewish, one would at least be able to negotiate a better position than non-Jewish Arabs. This illuminates the ‘counterbalance’ of coercion and consent as outlined by Gramsci and Thomas. The state maintains its hegemony through the various disseminations of the ‘right’ kind of Jewish, educating people from a young age that ‘Arab-Jew’ is an oxymoron. The protects that hegemony through the threat of coercive violence that Arab Jews see inflicted upon non-Jewish Arabs.

Ethiopian Jewish Communities:

I turn, now, to a third community within the State of Israel: Ethiopian Jews. Ethiopian Jewish people have followed Jewish customs since at least the twelfth century, so it is reasonable to assume they would be included in the “Jewish people” the Supreme Court refers to in lieu of a nation, or the nation as I have defined above. However, they were completely isolated from the Jewish community globally until the second half of the nineteenth century, and as such, their practices of Judaism differ from those of Jewish people in other parts of the world. This

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86 ibid. pp. 67
87 Ben-eliezer, Uri. “Becoming a black Jew: cultural racism and anti-racism in contemporary Israel” Social Identities, 10:2, 245-266, DOI: 10.1080/1350463042000227371 pp.246
88 ibid. pp. 246
juncture between Ethiopian Jewish people and Western Jewish communities has influenced the partial exclusion of Ethiopian Jews from Israeli national identity.

From the moment of their arrival at Israeli borders, Ethiopian Jews are forced to assimilate to Eurocentric Jewish practice. While Mizrahi Jews have a choice, a false choice, but a choice nonetheless between Arabness and Jewishness, Ethiopian Jews are given no such option. Upon arrival at Israeli airports, Uri Ben-eliezer documents that Ethiopian Jews are forced to change their names from Ethiopian ones to Israeli-Jewish ones89. In fact, this forced assimilation occurs before they even reach the airports. Beginning in the 1950s, the Jewish Agency and the State of Israel traveled to Ethiopia to ‘enlighten’ Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jewish) communities with “new truths,” replicating missionary work of colonial projects throughout the 19th and 20th century90. These new truths are entrenched “in the difference between the highly developed West and backward Africa, and on the perennial rivalry between Judaism and Christianity; until then these religions had been perceived by the Beta Israel as existing along a continuum, with many mutual influences.”91 This highlights the way in which the nations limits - exclusive of Christianity - are forcibly relearned by those attempting to integrate into it. They were taught of Western Jewish festivals, and to understand Hebrew as the language of prayer, capitalizing on their earlier use of print media to establish Hebrew as the national language of Israel. The use of print capitalism to establish Hebrew, and then force it upon Ethiopian Jewish communities highlights the way in which state policy is influenced by the nation’s formation and characteristics.

These are practices of ‘cultural racism’, and they consider Ethiopian Jews as “the ‘other’ - fundamentally different, an invader who must be kept at a distance and who has no place in

89 Ben-eliezer. “Becoming a black Jew.” pp. 251
90 ibid. pp. 250
91 ibid. pp. 250
society.”92 This type of racism, Ben-eliezer argues, “essentialises ethnicity and religion, and traps people in supposedly immutable reference categories, as if they are incapable of adapting to a new reality or changing their identity,” suggesting that Israeli national identity is based in those pre-nation ethnic ties that Smith discusses93. However, what this actually demonstrate is that Jewishness - the supposed national identity of Israel - is not immutable. Ethiopian Jewish communities are Jewish, but do not belong to Israeli national identity; they navigate a space of hybridity. Their Ethiopian heritage places them as the Other, in the context of colonial and Oriental discourse, while their Jewishness places them in the ‘self’. The experience and placement of Ethiopian Jewish communities in Israeli national identity exemplifies the role of relational histories in establishing the nation and its limits.

The experience of Ethiopian Jews also supports the instrumentalist argument of nations, indicated in their experience with Israeli educational systems. The Israeli state separates young Ethiopian children from their parents and enrolled them in boarding schools, which exist to assimilate the Other to Israeli culture, and to distance them from the historic ties in Ethiopia. This indicates that the state of Israel recognises the potential to construct the nation, its own imagined form, within Ethiopian Jewish communities. This process is one of “domination,” through the complete erasure of Jewishness that does not ascribe to Eurocentric values94. This domination corresponds to the coercive arm of the state deployed against the Other, demonstrating again the hybridity of the Ethiopian Jewish experience95. While Palestinians are confronted with the coercive apparatus, and Mizrahi Jews with the consent, Ethiopian Jews are subject to both, simultaneously. The state of Israel maintains its legitimacy as a nation of Jewish

92 Ben-eliezer. “Becoming a black Jew.” pp. 249
93 ibid. pp. 249
94 ibid. pp. 251
95 Thomas. Gramscian Moment. pp 163
people by allowing the ‘return’ of Ethiopian Jews to Israel, while constantly reminding them that they are not the ‘right,’ or acceptable kind of Jewish as the nation imagines itself.

The logic behind this hierarchy can be understood by looking at Israelis perceptions of Ethiopian Jewish migrants in relation to Russian migrants, both Jewish and non-Jewish. While Russian migrants were accepted and integrated into society with ease, Ethiopian Jewish communities faced the added barriers of forced assimilation. While the differing practices between Ethiopian Jews and Israeli Jews may have played a role, the extra barriers were implemented based on colonial, Oriental and racist tropes. Ethiopian Jews faced the extra layer of exclusion because they looked different - they were Ethiopian\textsuperscript{96}. This is illustrated by the fact that non-Jewish Russians were integrated with considerably more ease than Ethiopian Jews\textsuperscript{97}. As such, the state of Israel not only defines the nation as Jewish, or even Eurocentric Jewish, but white Jewish. In attempting to navigate its claim to a Jewish nation, while also maintaining its hegemonic whiteness (and whiteness as the ‘self’), it subjects Ethiopian Jews to both consent and coercion. Ethiopian Jews occupy the space in the nations hierarchy between Mizrahi Jews, in closer proximity to the nation, or the ‘self,’ and Palestinians as the Other.

**CONCLUSION:** The obstacles to a just and lasting solution in Palestine-Israel are many, and can be located across various spaces of society, government and religion. However, to approach the state of Israel as solely a religious project is a dangerous oversimplification of its intent and its practices. The nation and its identity are integral to understanding the state motivations and policies; the state seeks to both represent the nation of white, Ashkenazi Jewishness and to maintain its perpetual existence. The nation does not seek to include various stratifications of

\textsuperscript{96} Ben-eliezer. “Becoming a Black Jew.” pp. 253
\textsuperscript{97} ibid. pp. 248
society - based on religion, ethnic group, race, and relative histories, all of which have been influenced by colonization and Orientalist representations. Relying on Said’s articulation of Orientalism’s pervasiveness, it is difficult to believe that the state will ever be one that respects those same stratifications.

While the issues raised by an exclusive national identity may seem like an internal Israeli problem, the state continues to operate outside of its internationally recognised borders, enforcing its apparatus on Palestinians in internationally recognized Palestine land. As Israel continues to infringe upon the Palestinian state in the interests of its own nation, as it continues to perpetuate damaging systems of whiteness and colonialism, the two-state solution will cease to be a possibility.

However, those aspects of whiteness and colonialism are not unique to Israel; its practices reflect quite tangibly those used by the states of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States, although today they manifest in more subtle ways. Despite their subtlety, each of these states and their policies directly reflect the nations in which they formed upon, nations that were themselves products of colonialism and Orientalism. It is futile to call upon the international community to discuss those foundations of the nation and state of Israel, when so much of it is predicated on the same systems, but the frameworks of understanding must be shifted to even begin to consider justice. This paper aims to contribute to that shift.
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