

Monopolizing the Nation

Evidence from the Israeli Settlement Issue on Right Wing Capture of National Lexicon and Symbols

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Abstract

National symbols and lexicon can serve as an effective tool to define elite agenda and mobilize public support. In many countries however, the national discourse is monopolized by one side of the political map, often the right wing, leaving the other unable to legitimately incorporate the nation's symbols and lexicon into its agenda. What enables one political camp or group in society to take over the definition of the nation and the use of its ethos? I argue a group can monopolize the national discourse through the construction of a single controversial issue. The paper explores this general question in the context of the Israeli case. Systematic text analysis on extensive archival material tracks each political camp's discourse in the debate over the construction of settlements. The findings demonstrate how the issue generated a new national lexicon, exclusively dominated by the right. The results point at the topic's construction as indivisible, and at an early Israeli right wing takeover of the national symbols and language.

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1. Introduction

Right wing and left wing rallies are often marked with striking visual differences. While in right wing rallies the national flag is present on stage and in the audience, in left wing rallies it is far less visible. On right wing camps, the flag sometimes seems to be fetishized, and images of individuals wrapped in the flag are not uncommon. On left wing camps, on the other hand, the flag is a formal symbol on stage, and an occasional one in the crowd. This one-sided relationship with the flag is evident where the flag, or even the entire concept of nationalism, is attached to a problematic history, as in the German case. Complicated relationship with the national ethos is common in Central and In Eastern Europe as well, where nations have been involved in ongoing violence as well as attempts for liberation, and national sentiment and symbols were later suppressed by Soviet regimes. It is not surprising therefore that the national, its language, and symbols are often politicized.

Two questions about the politicization of the flag arise. First, the national symbols carry enormous political capital; they are powerful cultural reference for winning hearts and minds. When movements and politicians frame their actions they have to draw from a pool of finite available resources.¹ National symbols are one of the most immediate cultural resources for very large populations. Why does a political camp give up this useful tool and abandon it for a rivaling party to monopolize? Second, observing the recent European experience, it seems natural that the nationalism is a right wing construction and so the right wing political affiliation of the national lexicon appears to be inevitable. However this is not at all the case both temporally and geographically. Nationalism through much of the 19th century was tied to liberal ideas and movements in Europe, and it continues to serve as a liberalizing force in many instances, including in some of the movements that led the Arab Spring.² Moreover, the connection between the right wing and the use of national symbols does not hold in Latin

¹ Zald, Mayer N. "Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing." *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*, 1996, 261–74; Tarrow, Sidney G. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. 3 edition. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

² Pflanze, Otto. 1966. "Varieties of Nationalism in Europe and Africa: Nationalism in Europe, 1848–1871." *The Review of Politics* 28(2): 129–143; Springborg, Robert. 2011. "Whither the Arab Spring? 1989 or 1848?" *The International Spectator* 46(3): 5–12.

America.³ These observations lead to the second puzzle this paper addresses, how does constructive change occur? How is the national lexicon monopolized by a new group and how is it reproduced over time? What enables one group to use national symbols, and makes it difficult for a rivaling group to do so, and is this process necessarily related to right-left wing politics?

I argue that the monopolization of national symbols by a group can occur through a framing struggle over a central controversial issue. If a group can bind a salient issue to the core elements of national identity, and it is able to ‘own’ the issue, it may be able to take over what defines the nation, including its language and symbols. If the identity of the nation is now defined by the issue – e.g. exclusion toward immigrants or minorities; a certain economic system; a particular regime type – then opposite camps will have limited access to the national ethos and its symbols.

This paper addresses the puzzle of politicized monopolization of national symbols through the case of the Jewish settlement in the West Bank of Israel/Palestine. Jewish-Israeli nationalism or Zionism was strongly linked with left leaning party Mapai (Workers Party of the Land of Israel) for decades. However, as in other cases, the national lexicon has shifted toward the right of the political map. This shift observable makes for an excellent case study of the process of monopolization over the national language and symbols.

The settlements in the West Bank have been one of the main obstacles in different peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. They are central on the Israeli political agenda, a core issue in defining the Israeli right-left political spectrum over the years, where the right wing broadly supports the settlement project and its expansion, and the left broadly supports the evacuation of settlements. I argue that supporters of the settlement project managed to tie the question of settlement construction to Jewish Israeli national identity through the construction of framing narratives in the very early stages of the settlements. Since the issue became so central in the Israeli polity, supporters of the settlements eventually managed to redefine Zionism to mean settlement construction, and monopolize the national discourse and symbols in the process.

³ Castañeda, Jorge G. 2012. *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War*. Vintage; Miller, Nicola. 2006. “The Historiography of Nationalism and National Identity in Latin America.” *Nations and Nationalism* 12(2): 201–221; Petras, James. 1997. “Latin America: The Resurgence of the Left.” *New Left Review* (223): 17.

The paper utilizes vast archival materials, including nearly four hundred news articles on settlements, as well as over a hundred letters written in protest and in support of settlement construction around particular events. The paper analyzes the content of news articles and letters according to type of discourse and narrative, and shows that already in the debate over the first settlement in Samaria, the supporters of the settlement issue were far more ambitious than the protesters in the framing of the issue. Settlement supporters used a long arch of history, a complex plot, and Zionist, Jewish and emotional discourses to build a narrative tying between the settlement question and the very nature of Jewish-Israeli nationalism – Zionism. This association between Zionism and the settlements made it increasingly difficult for protesters against settlements to comfortably access the national discourse and symbols. As the archival materials demonstrate, the struggle over the meaning of national identity continued in later years. Protesters developed their own arguments on the settlement issue, which may have been effective on occasion, but failed to construct a narrative which retakes the question of national identity, and ultimately they continued to struggle to win hearts and minds for the center-left camp.

Beyond the particulars of the Israeli case, the paper demonstrates that a salient issue can serve as a vehicle for politization of national identity, and the capture of national lexicon and symbols. The process presented here is not a smooth or single direction capture, but an ongoing struggle over the content and ownership of national identity. Similar processes occurred in Central and Eastern Europe in the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in Western Europe in earlier decades and centuries. The paper contributes to our understanding of the mechanism of national construction, and changes in construction, as well as the causes for this conflictual process.

The paper proceeds as follows, the next section reviews the theories of issue ownership, framing, and political narratives and build from them the theory suggested here of the use of issue ownership and framing strategies to politicize and reshape national identity. Next I present the case of the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza as a highly salient issue in Israeli politics, and its ties to Israeli Zionist national identity. The following two sections explore the archival data used in this paper, the methods used to analyze it, and the results of the analysis. Finally I

discuss the implications of the results for the Israeli case in particular, and for the capture of national lexicon and symbols more broadly.

2. Theory

The theory of issue ownership asserts that if a party or a candidate is perceived as best able to offer a solution to a certain issue, they will gain from framing an election around said issue.⁴ Scholars in the field added that for this strategy to be successful, the issue must already be perceived as salient by voters.⁵ Social movement framing theory discusses the different cultural and discursive resources available for movements attempting to establish themselves and draw supporters.⁶ Drawing from these related bodies of literature as well as literature on narrative building in politics,⁷ I argue that if a group can own an issue and link it to core national language and symbols, and the issue is highly salient, it may be able to monopolize the national corpus through the issue. The framing of the issue is done through the utilization of national symbolic history to create stories which make a particular agenda the only one in line with national identity. Moreover, in the long run the national framing of an issue might even be able to reframe the national ethos as a whole, and further limit the access of other groups to national language and symbols. In this section I will first discuss issue ownership and framing theories, and elaborate on how the theory presented here draw from these and expands on them. I will then discuss the process of narrative construction as it applies to my theory.

In discussing issue ownership, Petrocik argues that parties or candidates which are perceived as better able to “handle” an issue will attempt to increase the salience of the issue in their election campaign, and shape the decision facing the voter around the issue.⁸ Thus, for example, if a party is considered to be stronger on foreign policy issues, it will try to frame the

⁴ Petrocik, John R. “Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 1996, 825–50.

⁵ Bélanger, Éric, and Bonnie M. Meguid. “Issue Salience, Issue Ownership, and Issue-Based Vote Choice.” *Electoral Studies* 27, no. 3 (2008): 477–91.

⁶ Zald, 1996; Tarrow 2011; Benford, Robert D., and David A. Snow. “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000, 611–39.

⁷ Krebs, Ronald R. 2015. “How Dominant Narratives Rise and Fall: Military Conflict, Politics, and the Cold War Consensus.” *International Organization* 69(4): 809–845; Patterson, Molly, and Kristen Renwick Monroe. 1998.

“Narrative in Political Science.” *Annual review of political science* 1(1): 315–331; Shenhav, Shaul R. 2005a. “Concise Narratives: A Structural Analysis of Political Discourse.” *Discourse Studies* 7(3): 315–335; Shenhav. 2005b. “Thin and Thick Narrative Analysis: On the Question of Defining and Analyzing Political Narratives.” *Narrative Inquiry* 15(1): 75–99.

⁸ Petrocik, 1996

struggle between the candidates as mainly a struggle over foreign policy to be decided through the elections.

The theory easily applies to large parties which have an established reputation around certain issues, but it also stands for new candidates or small groups. In the US, Donald Trump seems to have acquired rapid issue ownership in regards to immigration for certain audiences. Another example is that of far right movements in Europe which have managed to own issues from immigration to European integration in a number of countries.⁹ In Hungary, small and unknown Jobbik managed to own and increase the salience of the Roma social problem (or “Gypsy Criminality” as the movement framed the issue), between 2007 and 2010 and become the third largest movement in the Hungarian parliament in the 2010 elections.

The salience of an issue, however, is not based solely on a successful campaign. Immigration has been a central issue in American politics long before Trump’s presidential run. In the case of Jobbik, issue ownership over Roma integration was assisted by a large scale economic and political crisis in the Hungary. Belanger and Meguid demonstrate that ownership will only be successful for parties and candidates in regards to issues which are already perceived as salient.¹⁰ In a sense, this is a question of the relationship between framing and other causal factors, and Belanger and Meguid qualify the independent effect of framing as influencing voters’ decision.

“Frames are the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action.”¹¹ Political actors wishing to address different audiences use framing to attempt to shape their own message, or more ambitiously, the general public agenda. Social movements use framing to draw support and win over political allies, but also to encourage collective action from potential participants. Achieving both tasks can be difficult: the ideas, cues, and metaphors which draw a broad base of support are not necessarily those which mobilize a dedicated group of supporters

⁹ Mudde, Cas. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Vol. 22. 8. Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 2007. pp. 240-242

¹⁰ Belanger and Meguid, 2008

¹¹ Zald, 1996, p. 262

to take action.¹² The use of injustice frames is quite common for social movements as they usually seek to correct a certain wrong they perceive.¹³

I argue that in regards to some issues, the same frame, which incorporates the national corpus, can both mobilize for action and reach mainstream audiences. Certain issues can be linked to the national ethos in a way that is both perceived as injustice, and is appealing to large identity groups in society. Immigration policy belongs to this category; the question of who belongs to the national community is related to the core of the national ethos, and thus can reach audiences through an appeal to the ‘real’ national identity. At the same time it is not difficult to frame the immigration policy as an issue of injustice toward weak or working class native populations, in particular in times of economic strife. The successful run of 1920s Ku Klux Klan in the US is an example for such framing. The movement’s bundle of agenda issues was packaged under the title, “100% Americanism” appealing to “real” Americans – White, Protestant, native born – to protect themselves against the surge of Catholic immigrants.¹⁴ In the American case, nativist claim on American national identity were always countered by immigrant – Multi cultural narratives that are a powerful part of the national ethos.

National identity is a master frame, broad in scope, composed of largely accepted symbols and cues, which groups and individuals in society are constrained by.¹⁵ Tapping into national identity is an asset for a movement attempting to justify its actions and draw support. When such framing also leads to policy outcomes, the long term results can be the reshaping of the national ethos. A significant change in immigration policy can highlight exclusive elements in a national identity and strengthen the identification of citizens with these elements. This is a possible outcome of the recent rise in exclusionary right wing parties throughout Europe. This may imply that camps who support different immigration policies will hesitate to invoke national ethos when making their case. In the Israeli case, as will be demonstrated here, the construction of settlements integrated the expansionist project into the Zionist national identity. By doing so it limited the access of opponents of the policy to the use of national symbols and lexicon.

¹² Benford and Snow, 2000

¹³ Gamson, William A. “Constructing Social Protest.” *Social Movements and Culture* 4 (1995): 85–106.

¹⁴ Pegram, Thomas R. *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s*. Chicago : Lanham, Md.: Ivan R. Dee, 2011.

¹⁵ Benford and Snow, 2000

The final theoretical component this paper rests on is that of political narratives. Narratives organize reality into familiar structures and give events context and meaning.¹⁶ Often confusing real life occurrences are organized according to a time continuum and given causal interpretation.¹⁷ Some political schools disregard political narratives as being a mere reflection of political interests. However, others have studied political narratives as a significant part of political contestation.¹⁸ Here, I will examine how the construction of a political narratives based on common frames can give a group ownership over an issue, but also how these narratives, when successful can alter the core national ethos.

In the study of Israeli contestation over the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, I find that the political camp which supported settlements was constructing stories whereas the political camp who opposed settlements made arguments. I draw the distinction from Ronald Krebs¹⁹ who defines stories and arguments as different in purpose, structure, and breadth. Where arguments deduce a desired course of action from known principles and seek to “persuade the audience of the correctness of a course of action”²⁰, stories are far more ambitious. They do not directly attempt to promote one policy but rather to organize and offer interpretation to a series of events, creating a broad understanding from which a course of action can be deduced. Thus while stories are more distant from a particular course of action than arguments, they are more powerful in defining the limits of argumentation for other actors.²¹ Using this rhetorical mode enabled settlement supporters to control the issue and hinder other actors. They were able to do so because elements in the national ethos lent themselves to such use, but also because the opposite camp was both slow to understand the framing shift, and unable to put forth an alternative convincing story.

What begins with successful framing of an issue through national identity may eventually politicize national ethos and link it to one political camp over its political opponents. I turn now

¹⁶ Patterson and Monroe; Krebs

¹⁷ Ibid; Shenhav

¹⁸ Ibid; Kaufman, Stuart J. 2006. “Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence.” *International Security* 30(4): 45–86; Kaufmann, Chaim D., and Robert A. Pape. 1999. “Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain’s Sixty-Year Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade.” *International Organization* 53(4): 631–668.

¹⁹ Krebs. 36-37

²⁰ ibid

²¹ ibid

to an overview of the case of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and the framing of the issue in Israeli politics.

3. Nationalism and the Jewish Settlements in the West Bank

The right wing camp in Israel is often defined as the National Camp,²² whereas the left is merely ‘the left bloc’.²³ Criticism of the left blames it for failing to serve national agenda or being post-Zionist.²⁴ Politicians on the right have been incorporating national symbols into their campaigns for a long time. For example right wing Likud’s colors have traditionally been blue and white, the colors of the flag, whereas the labor party colors were red until the 1992 elections.²⁵ Other examples include individual right wing politicians’ common use of the flag and other national symbols, and the common reference of right wing politicians to biblical and historical events tied to national story.²⁶

Despite indications for the right’s strong hold over the national lexicon, the situation was very different in the past. The labor party, Mapai, was at the center of the Zionist project since long before the formal establishment of the state of Israel. Labor was the head of the Jewish governing institutions in pre 1948 Palestine, it was the head of the labor union which included most workers in the country (Histadrut), and it owned large sections of the industry.²⁷ During these long years in power, right wing politicians and individuals aligned with right wing parties were outcasts within Jewish society. Right wing identified individuals were marginalized in the job market, and their access to the party’s superior welfare system, health care, and other benefits

²² In 1984 Likud and its allies began to refer to themselves as the national camp, Hamachane Haleumi, in attempt to exclude their political rivals from the borders of legitimate politics. Lustick, Ian. *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*. Cornell University Press, 1993. p. 359

²³ In several of the last elections in Israel, left wing party Meretz campaigned around the message that a vote for the party is a safe vote for the ‘Left Bloc’, <http://meretz.org.il/meretz-chairwoman-answers-haaretz-readers-questions/>. The center-left party, Labor (Avoda) competed in the 2015 elections as a joint party with more centrist nominees under the name ‘The Zionist Camp’ (Ha’Machane Ha’Zioni), the party was attacked by the left for trying to imitate the right, and from the right for false claims over Zionism, and ended up failing in the elections.

<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/188666/israels-new-zionist-camp;>

<http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.641282;>

²⁴“Netanyahu and Herzog Spar on Jerusalem, Iran,” Haaretz, Mach 14, 2015.

²⁵ Sandler, Shmuel, and Daniel Judah Elazar. *Israel at the Polls, 1992*. Rowman & Littlefield [with] Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 1995, 35.

²⁶ Notable example include Likud’s Miri Regev and Zeev Elkin, but also the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Lustick, 1993.

²⁷ Shafir, Gershon, and Yoav Peled. *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship*. Vol. 16. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

was restricted.²⁸ Moreover, the main right wing party, Herut, was considered an illegitimate political actor. When first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion defined the acceptable limits of his governing coalition he coined the slogan “Without Herut and without Maki” to mean that the right wing party and the extremist communist party cannot be considered for governing position. This utter marginalization from political power lasted for two decades after the formation of the state.²⁹

Due to its position in power, the left not only controlled the national discourse and symbols. It practically invented these.³⁰ Leaders of the Jewish nationalist project focused on the construction of shared language and symbols. Quite literally, the spoken Hebrew language itself was invented (or “revived”) to serve the national project.³¹ To create the national ethos, Zionists turned stories from antiquity into nationalist symbols and holidays. The stories chosen focused less on the religion and more on heroic defense of the land and self-rule within the land. The examples are manifold, to name a few, the radical story of Jews choosing death over surrender under siege in Masada, became a symbol of heroic cry for national independence. The Masada myth was not a part of traditional Judaism but a Zionist interpretation Masada continues to serve as a location for Israeli military formal ceremonies.³² Another example is the holiday of Hanukah which was transformed from a story of divine miracle to a declaration of autonomy of the Jewish Maccabee nation state.³³ Some holidays were celebrated in a completely new way; the minor ancient holiday of Tu Bishvat was revived in early 20th century and celebrated as a national day for planting trees in the land of Palestine/Israel.³⁴

A central aspect of Zionism was the sanctification of the land. This was done not only by Jewish-turned national symbols, but also through the “religion of labor”. Although the movement was urban from early on, its ideals were of agricultural labor. One of the prominent thinkers promoting this idea was A.D Gordon who preached for agricultural labor as a mean for gaining legitimate ownership of the land. Though a secular man, Gordon believed in the high spiritual

²⁸ Ibid; Lustic, 1993

²⁹ Israeli Institute of Democracy

³⁰ Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

³¹ Sachar, Howard M. *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time*. Knopf, 2013.

³² Zrubavel 1995; Almog, Oz. *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*. University of California Press, 2000. 37-38

³³ Almog 2000, 37

³⁴ Almog 2000, 56-57

value of labor. Accordingly the agricultural forms of settlement and in particular the socialist Kibbutz became the face of Zionism. The curriculum in schools contained classes named “the land of Israel” (“Eretz Yisrael”), or “homeland” (“Moledet”) instead of geography, teaching children about the terrain, the fauna, the plants of the land. Students were also taught classes in agriculture.³⁵

Though right wing parties and politicians in those years used the flag and the discourse of the ‘Whole Land of Israel’, they did not have access to core Zionist values like socialism, labor as a value, and the mythology of pioneering which belonged to the left.³⁶ This paper will attempt to demonstrate the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and in particular the settlement issue, changed the relationship between the political groups and Zionist identity, and eventually altered the Zionist ethos itself.

The outcomes of the 1967 War marked a new phase in the ongoing Arab Israeli Conflict. Following the war, Israel took control over Gaza and the West Bank territories between the Green Line (Israel’s internationally recognized border), and the Jordan River. These territories, inhabited by Palestinian population, were neither annexed to Israel nor given an independent status.³⁷ In the nearly fifty years since, despite some changes in legal arrangements including the formation of the Oslo Accords and Palestinian Authority, the status of the Occupied Territories remains unrecognized by the international community and disputed.

The struggle for self determination of the Palestinian people during these years has become a central regional and international political issue. This paper takes on the far more narrow issue of the effect of the occupation, and in particular the Jewish settlements in the territories on left-right political discourse in Israel, and on Zionist identity. It is important to stress that Zionist identity by no means covers all Israeli citizens. The Israeli population includes a large Arab-Palestinian minority of approximately 20%.³⁸ Political parties and political

³⁵ These habits persist to date. Almog 2000, 141, 160-161

³⁶ Lustick 1993

³⁷ Zertal, Idith, and Akiva Eldar. *Lords of the Land: The War Over Israel’s Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007*. Nation Books, 2009; Gorenberg, Gershom. *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977*. Macmillan, 2006.

³⁸ 2014 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics Population Report. Available at: http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton66/st02_01.pdf

discourse in Israel are divided according to ethnic lines;³⁹ however, as will be discussed below, it is far more difficult for the left to maintain both liberal and Zionist-national narratives. I will try to demonstrate this difficulty is increasingly prominent with the growth of the settlement project and its deep ties with Zionist identity.

Since 1967 the issue of the settlements became the defining one in Israeli politics, and the left-right political spectrum has most commonly been determined by attitude toward the conflict in general, and the future of the settlement project in particular.⁴⁰ Israeli right has been mostly supportive of the settlement project. In fact it can be argued that Likud, the large party on the right, helped define its rule ideologically through the settlement issue, giving ideological context to its new found political power.⁴¹

The settlement project began shortly after the 1967 war, settlements were built first in Jerusalem and later expanded to the West Bank and Gaza strip. The initiative was of ideologically driven individuals who continued to form new settlements with or without state permission. The organizing movement of the settlers was ‘Gush Emunim’, formed in 1974.⁴²

1974-1975 was a forming period for the settlement project, and it is thus a key moment in time to examine the budding discourse of the settlement supporters’ camp and the settlement opposition. In December of 1974 a group of young religious Jews, a part of Gush Emunim movement, attempted to settle in Sebastia, an old railway station in the Samaria area of the Occupied Territories. The Israeli state had built approximately 50 settlements in the Occupied Territories by 1973, home to 4,000 settlers.⁴³ However, settling Samaria was against the government’s informal policy on the future of the territories because of the region’s dense Arab population.⁴⁴ The makeshift camp at Sebastia was not the group’s first attempt to settle in

³⁹ Smooha, Sammy. “The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State.” *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 475–503.

⁴⁰ Shamir, Michal, and Asher Arian. “Competing Values and Policy Choices: Israeli Public Opinion on Foreign and Security Affairs.” *British Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 02 (1994): 249–71.

⁴¹ Lustick 1993

⁴² Rubinstein, Dani. *Mi La-Adonai Eli*. Tel Aviv: Hkibbutz Hame’uchad. 1982, 38

⁴³ Settlement Committee, Ministry of Agriculture, File A/ 17/ 7310 Israeli State Archives

⁴⁴ Allon Plan was the hawkish marker of Labor governments’ policy on the territories. It included constructions in all other areas of the occupied territories, but not in Samaria because of Allon’s expressed concern about the reaction of the local Arab population. Allon Plan was never formally accepted but some argue its logic applied when deciding on new settlements (Gorenberg, 2006). There was no other government plan to build in Samaria, however two members of the government did support the settlers, as will be discussed below.

Samaria. Earlier that year, Gush Emunim attempted to settle in and near Nablus several times. In those attempts, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered the military to forcefully remove the settlers from the land. By the time the group got to Sebastia, they have already drawn significant public and media attention, making settlements in the Occupied Territories into a truly controversial issue for the first time since 1967.⁴⁵

Gush Emunim members came to Sebastia in thousands. The government blocked the roads to the area, leading many to travel distances on foot. Among the members were many teenagers, families with young children, and pregnant women. The military on the ground, sent to evict the settlers, and members of government were particularly concerned about this composition of the crowd. Government debates show a fear of the consequences of a pregnant woman or a child being injured by an Israeli soldier.⁴⁶ The place was swamped with media reporters, and photographers.

After initially ordering the evacuation of the settlement, Prime Minister Rabin agreed to negotiate with the settlers. According to the compromise deal, the protesters were to leave Sebastia, and only thirty of them would stay in a nearby military base until the government found a new location for their settlement. The protesters did end up leaving Sebastia, but instead of thirty members, thirty families remained in nearby Kadum. They would become the core of the settlements Kdumim and Elon More later established in Samaria. This marked the beginning of the settlement project in Samaria.

A few years later, the settlement project received a significant boost when right wing Likud became the largest party in parliament for the first time. Likud expressed support for the settlements both practically and ideologically. However, in the following years the project experienced two significant setbacks; first, the peace process between Israel and Egypt led to international pressure on Israel to stop expanding settlements; second, in 1979 the Supreme Court ruled for the first time in favor of Palestinian plaintiffs and deemed the Jewish settlement Elon Moreh illegal. After much postponing and deliberation the state complied with the court's

⁴⁵ The Occupied Territories were a salient issue since 1967, but the Jewish settlements did not draw much attention before Sebastia. Ibid.

⁴⁶ *ibid*

order causing much concern among settlers. Thus these were years of settlement expansion but also of fierce struggle over the legitimacy and future of the Jewish settlements.

I turn now to present and analyze a data source of four hundred news articles on the settlements published in mainstream media between 1974 and 1981, and over a hundred letters written to Prime Ministers Rabin and to Deputy Prime Minister Yigael Yadin between 1974 and 1981. The first and most significant batch of letters was written in 1974-5 and addresses the attempts to settle Samaria, and the response of the government. The second batch of letter addresses different stages in the struggle over settlements after 1977. The letters were written by supporters of and opposition to the project, both private citizens, and political figures and institutions. A close examination of the language, tone, and narrative of the letters sheds light on the early construction of the topic within Israeli politics, which would become the crucial starting point of each camp for years to come. The analysis of the news articles demonstrates the mainstream configuration of these political narratives.

Using the archival data I will try to demonstrate the pro-settlement camp managed to own the settlement issue in the 1974-1975 period, at least for certain populations who viewed it as salient. The data also points at an ongoing struggle over the framing of the issue, and implicitly over the framing of national identity. The monopolizations of parts of the national ethos by the settlement camp are evident by the discourse disparities between the different camps letters.

4. Data and Analysis Methods

Two main sources of data were used in this paper: letters written in support and protest of settlement construction and kept in the Israeli National Archives,⁴⁷ and news articles on the settlements published in Israel's widest spread daily newspaper 'Maariv' and in left leaning paper 'Davar' between 1974 and 1981.⁴⁸

The first batch of letters was written around the Sebastia settlement affair in 1974. They were addressed to Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin. (24 letters against the settlements, 56 letters

⁴⁷ File Codes: G/37/6721; G/38/6721; GL/2/7827; GL/7/7829; GL/8/7827; GL/9/7834; GL/10/7834; GL/11/7834
Israeli State Archives

⁴⁸ The articles were procured from the National Library of Israel and Beit Ariela Library, Tel Aviv. Some of them were available in an electronic version through: The Historical Jewish Press website at:
<http://www.jpress.nli.org.il.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/Olive/APA/NLI/?action=tab&tab=browse&pub=MAR#panel=browse>

for the settlements). Many of the letters are hand written, a few are typed, and several are telegrams. Most of the letters are in Hebrew, although several on both camps are in the English language, and were sent from abroad (The US mostly, although one letter was sent from South Africa, and another from England).

While most letters in support of the settlement project were written by private individuals, the majority of letters against the settlements were written by groups, including social movements, party branches, and Kibbutz assemblies, and by professional politicians. Interestingly, at least 15% of the letters in support of the settlements were composed by children or teenagers (these state the age or school grade of the author in the body of letter, the youngest composer is in the third grade). These letters are in line with the general emotional content of the letters in support of settlements, and the emotional construction of the issue by settlement supporter, as will be elaborated below. The involvement of young teens is also connected to two other factors; first, participation in political youth movements was common in Israel at the time.⁴⁹ In these movements, current events were discussed in groups, and each movement had a distinct political orientation. Particularly, within the religious-nationalist movement B'nei Akiva, support for the settlers was in vogue in the mid 1970s.⁵⁰ Second, many of the Samaria settlers themselves were teenagers. Some were members of different Yeshivas like Merkaz Harav,⁵¹ and others were free spirited teens on a holiday adventure.⁵² Given the rebellious youth image of the settlers, their popularity among other young supporters of similar background is not altogether surprising.

While the settlers were mostly religious, their supporters seem to be more diverse in religiosity. Many letters do not open with a Jewish religious acronym,⁵³ and do not refer to religious symbols. Regionally, letters in favor of the settlement project are very diverse, whereas letters protesting the settlements are commonly from Kibbutz, Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. In terms of gender, most letters in both groups were written by males.

⁴⁹ Adler, Chaim, and Yochanan Peres. "Youth Movements and 'Salon Societies': A Comparative Analysis of Youth Cultures in Israel." *Youth and Society* 1, no. 3 (1970): 309.

⁵⁰ Gorenburg, 2006

⁵¹ Rubinstein, 1982. Merkaz Harav, headed by Rabi Zevi Yehuda Kook, was the spiritual center of the early settlement project.

⁵² Gorenburg, 2006

⁵³ In the Orthodox tradition written documents open with an acronym for Besiyata Dishmaya, or B'ezrat Hashem.

The first step of the analysis was dividing the letters to those supporting and those opposing the settlements. The letters are very clear on that issue and usually state the agenda of the writer in the first line (e.g. “We protest the illegal act of settling Sebastia in Samaria”; “Preventing Jews from settling in Samaria is an affront to Zionism”).

Next, I identified topics or discourses within the letters. Words or expressions were divided into eight categories: Nationalism; Judaism; Democracy and Rule of Law; State Institutions; Security; Emotions; Personal; and Other. The words included in each discourse and their frequency in the letters can be found in Appendix 1.

Some words or expressions were readily classified: ‘Zionism’, ‘Pioneer’, ‘State of Israel’, were placed in the Nationalism category; biblical phrases or quotes were placed in the Judaism category. Other terms were more ambiguous, in particular between the Jewish and Zionist categories. As Jewish nationalism naturally has a Jewish component, it is not always easy to disentangle the two discourses. Discourses are not separate units,⁵⁴ and there is much overlap in this case. Two rules guided the categorization; first, I preferred to err in favor of Judaism. As my argument is about the monopolization of national identity, I was more cautious in classifying a word or term as nationalist if it could also be interpreted as Jewish-religious. For example, ‘Land of Fathers’ was classified as Jewish, even though in the context of a different national movement it would have probably fallen under nationalism. ‘Land of Fathers’ in Hebrew has a highly religious context. I believe if it is viewed as nationalist today, it is a part of the increasing religiosity of the nationalist discourse in Israel I elaborate on in the discussion. Similarly, ‘Jerusalem’ was classified as Jewish rather than Zionist.

The second principle that guided the classification of words and terms was the context within the text. ‘Democracy’, for example could have been classified as a separate category from rule of law. In democratic countries, ‘Democracy’ is often used to mean ‘Justice’ or ‘Will of the People’. However, in the analyzed letters, ‘Democracy’ was most often used in conjugation with other ‘Rule of Law’ terms such as ‘Law and Order’. The reference to a democratic state was often clarified as one in which citizens abide by the law, or one in which citizens have to abide

⁵⁴ Gee, James Paul. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. Routledge, 2014.

by the decisions of an elected government. Thus, the context of the letters, more than the general dictionary definition of a word, guided the classification.

The second batch of letters is a less unified group of documents than the first, and indeed was recovered from six different files in the National Archives.⁵⁵ These letters, written between 1978 and 1981, were addressed to Deputy Prime Minister Yigael Yadin. Yadin was the head of the party DMC ('DASH', Democratic Movement for Change). The party ran for elections in 1977 on a liberal and anti corruption platform, and managed to take votes mostly from the left, causing a tremendous political overturn, when the leftist ruling party was ousted for the first time since the establishment of the state.⁵⁶ The letters indicate that many DMC voters did not expect this dramatic political change, and were not supporters of the new right wing government, and particularly their new party's role within it. Indeed, DMC did not survive its first term in office and collapsed before the following elections. Judging from the archival materials, Yadin was a proliferate correspondent. While in office, he received hundreds of letters from citizens on a variety of issues including hundreds of letters of protest and few letters of support. Yadin replied to many letters himself, penning hand written responses on the letter, later to be typed by an assistant.

From the many correspondences, I have selected to analyze all those addressing the issue of the settlements in some way. The result was sixty letters, forty four are letters of protest against DMC's lack of action in government, or against Yadin personally. All these protest letters also take a stand against settlements. They address four events from those years: the peace process with Egypt; the Supreme Court case of Elon Moreh; the Jewish settlement in Hebron; and the overall expansion of settlement by Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon. Some of the letters only allude to the settlement issues; twenty seven of the letters address the issue directly. The rest of the letters in this batch are of a different nature. Eight were written in support of the settlements, and the rest include either general suggestions about the settlements, or requests for Yadin to clarify his views on the issue.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ GL/2/7827; GL/7/7829; GL/8/7827; GL/9/7834; GL/10/7834; GL/11/7834 Israeli State Archives

⁵⁶ Peretz, Don. "The Earthquake: Israel's Ninth Knesset Elections." *Middle East Journal* 31, no. 3 (1977): 251–66.

⁵⁷ It should be noted, that the small number of letters in favor of the settlements is likely not representative of the composition of letters addressed to the government in general. Yadin and his party were the left markers of the government, and as many of the composers note, they were not a very influential member. Most of his letters were

For this batch of letters I examined the new lines of argumentation against the settlements which did not appear in earlier letters. I have also examined the language of the letters and compared it with that of earlier letters. All of the letters opposing the settlements in this case came from private male citizens, mostly from urban areas.

Finally I analyzed the narratives of all the letters together by identifying structure, and content, including the temporal dimension, location, symbols, causes, and agents.⁵⁸ This analysis best demonstrated the different ambition and scope of the rhetoric of each camp.

The letters on each side follow a particular structure as will be analyzed further, but at least letters from individual authors do not seem to be directed by a call for action of a political movement. Many of them are long, emotional or personal, and full of pathos. They are not business like, and do not focus on specific arguments for a course of action. Instead, I view these letters as the way in which the rhetoric of each camp was perceived by involved citizens. As such they allow us to view not only the arguments made by politicians and social movements, but also their intake by the public.

To understand the source of some the discourses made by individual letter writers, as well as the mainstream discussion over the settlement I reviewed two Israeli media outlets in the years 1974 to 1981. Maariv was the most widespread newspaper of the time, and did not belong to a particular political camp. Nearly 400 articles published on the settlements in the paper served as data for systematic discourse analysis. Each news article was summarized and coded according to the presence of different topics. News article topics were: nationalism; Judaism; Right/Sovereignty; security; government decision; Strategic settlement; rule of law and democracy; peace; international isolation; land ownership; Palestinians; violence; material cost. Further, to identify variation in the debate, I have also reviewed left leaning newspaper Davar during that period. The articles were randomly selected: I analyzed all articles on settlements available online and as several months were missing, I complemented these with analysis of hard copies where available. Newspapers from 1977 were not readily available online or in the archives I visited and thus not included in the analysis.

from the party's constituency, not natural supporters of the settlements. It is likely that Prime Minister Begin was on the receiving end of many letters in favor of the settlements. I will continue searching for these letters in my future visits to the archive.

⁵⁸ Shenhav; Patterson and Monroe

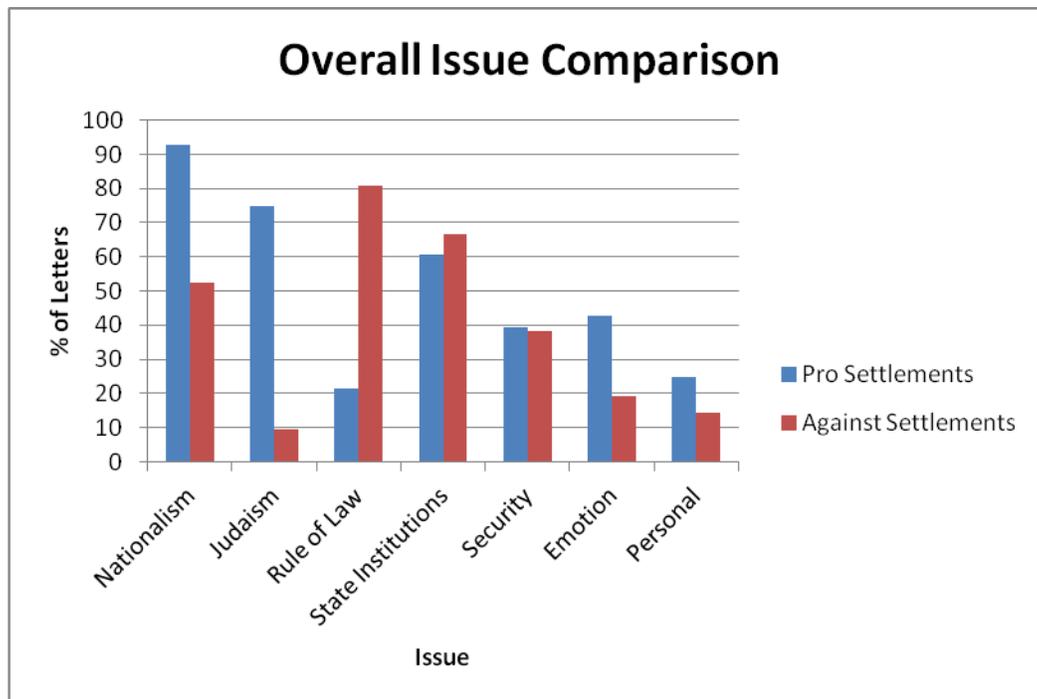
In addition to the letters and newspapers, the paper utilizes a variety of archival documents including cabinet meetings minutes, and demographic data. Another source of data is a series of interviews conducted in Israel with settler leaders, politicians, and bureaucrats.

5. Results

Letters addressing the first Samaria Settlement 1974-1975

The letters from this period address the set of events described above; however there is little communality between letters supporting the settlement in Samaria and letters opposing it. The authors use words taken from different discourses, the tone and sentiment are different, as are the lines of argumentation. The discourses used by each group of letters are demonstrated by Figure 1. Broadly, letters supporting the settlement project are more nationalist, Jewish, emotional, and personal; whereas letters opposing the settlement project focus on ‘rule of law’ arguments, and are far more impersonal and unemotional in tone.

Figure 1.



It seems that at least in that early stage, settler supporters viewed the issue in much broader terms than their opponents. Where one group was dramatically discussing the future of

Israel and Zionism in almost fatal terms, the opposing camp was far more limited in its perspective. Many pro settlement letters refer to a new settlement in Samaria as “an integral part of the historic land of Israel” or as “a vision, a dynamic of a movement, the heart and soul of Zionism.” The different scope the camps assign to the issue could be linked to the high saliency of the issue for settlers. It demonstrates that for their supporters, the settlers managed to own the issue of the Occupied Territories, and perhaps even the conflict more broadly. As discussed above, many of the composers of pro settlement letters are not themselves settlers or personally linked to settlers. The dramatic tone and large scope indicates at the successful construction of the issue by settlers, and the alliances they already managed to form by 1974.

Through their appeal to mainstream Zionism, Gush Emunim which was not composed of elite or powerful members, managed to gain the support of several notable cultural figures, which symbolized the Zionist movement. Leading Secular Zionists like Moshe Shamir, Naomi Shemer, and Haim Gouri⁵⁹ attended Shabbat dinners in the Jewish settlement in Hebron, and published ads in newspapers in support of the idea of the ‘Whole Land of Israel’. These old school Zionists and many others aligned themselves with the settlers for different ideological and political reasons.⁶⁰

Settlement opponents will not always view the issue narrowly. As will be discussed below, just a few years later, around 1980 the camp of active settlement protesters will expand to include the center of the political map, and their lines of argumentation too will develop. However, the difficult relationship with Zionism will remain prominent and even intensify over time.

Interviews with settler leaders further reinforce the existence of three distinct lines of argumentations they chose to utilize over the years: Zionist, Jewish-Messianic, and security oriented. According to interview subjects, the Zionist arguments resonate best with the larger Israeli population.⁶¹ This is not to imply that the settlers always spoke in one voice, or that their

⁵⁹ Gouri later regretted his connections with the settlers. He felt used and manipulated by them, and objected the illegal aspects of the movement. Gurenburg, 2006

⁶⁰ A full discussion on the alliances of the early settlers is beyond the scope of this paper. For alliance with Kibbutz settling movement ‘Achdut Ha’Avoda’ see: Gurenburg, 2006; For Alliance with Ariel Sharon and with Shimon Peres see: Gurenburg, 200; Zertal and Eldar, 2009; Huberman, H. *Against All Odds: Forty Years of Settlement in Judea and Samaria, 1967–2007 (Ariel)*. Netzrim Publishing, 2008.

⁶¹ Interviews with Adi Minz, Pinchas Valerstein, and Otniel Schneller. May- June 2014.

framing does not authentically reflect members' beliefs. In fact, over the years, the movement has suffered many internal struggles, and these will negatively influence its ability to create a desirable frame. The next period analyzed here (in particular the years after the Camp David Accords) reflects the beginning of these internal divisions. However, for long periods in the past half century, the Zionist framing, and the Jewish-Zionist amalgamation that can be observed in the letters were the dominant settler frame.⁶²

Nationalist type of arguments first included the act of settlement under the Zionist umbrella, and in later years made Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories into the main expression of Zionism. The letters demonstrate that many supporters viewed the settlements in that light, “We visited Elon Moreh and found there the most beautiful expression of pioneering Zionism and love of Israel that may be found in our country;” another letter written by a group of Bar Ilan University professors states, “In these days of malicious attacks on Zionism, we plead you not to curtail the pioneer enthusiasm expressed in the settlement in Elon Moreh and find a way to officially authorize it.” This was a response to 1975 UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 defining Zionism as a form of racism. A Samaria settlement was still unauthorized, and the settlers tied the two issues together as if saying the proper response to the UN resolution is more Zionism, and more Zionism implies more settlements. A letter from Elon Moreh settlers themselves expresses the view, “This [a government decision which will allow settling the Occupied Territories] will be the most simple and clear expression of our sovereignty over the land of Israel. Us the Elon Moreh settlers, along with the entire people, strengthen the hands of the government to make this decision, and will not budge from our place.” The last line is somewhat ironic as Prime Minister Rabin wished nothing more than for the settlers to budge from their place, as was expressed in speeches he gave at the time, and his 1979 autobiography in which he addressed the settlers in harsh terms.⁶³

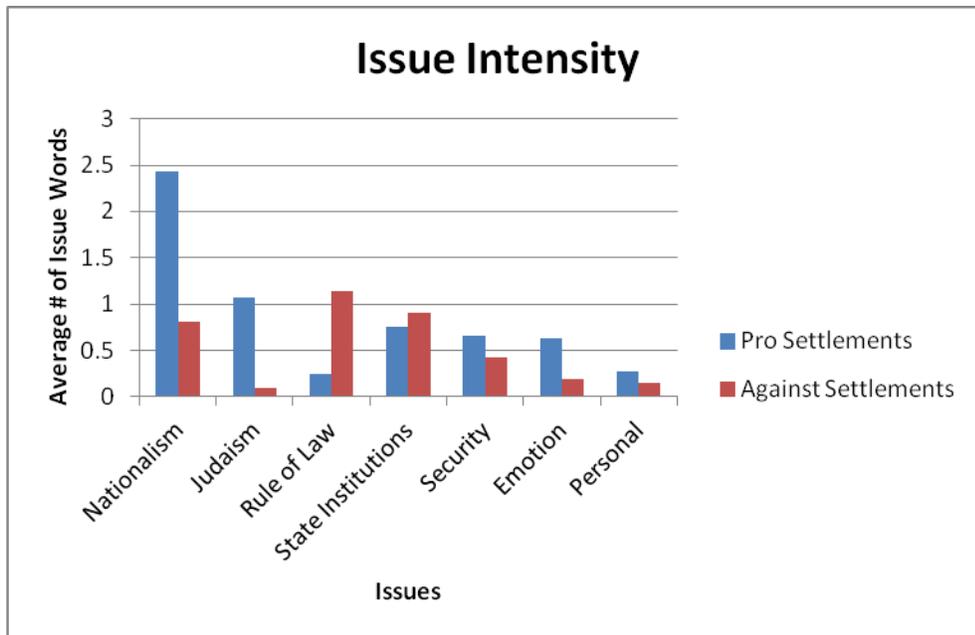
The data presented in Figure 1 considers each line of discourse only once per letter, even if it was represented by multiple words and repetition. The differences between pro and anti settlement letters were in fact greater than presented. For example most pro settlement letters contained multiple words from the nationalist discourse whereas anti settlement letters usually

⁶² Interview Minz

⁶³ File G/37/6721 Israeli State Archives; Rabin, Yitzhak. *The Rabin Memoirs*. Univ of California Press, 1996.

contained one or less. Figure 2 attempts to capture these differences by measuring how many words from each discourse were included in each letter on average. The measures in Figure 2 still exclude word repetition. Thus, if the word ‘Israel’ appeared several times within a single letter it is still counted as a single entry within the nationalist discourse. Figure 2 illustrates that ‘rule of law’ is the only issue mentioned on average with more than one word per letter in anti settlement letters. On pro settlement letters there are two issues with more than one word per letter: nationalism and Judaism. Nationalism in fact is mentioned with nearly 2.5 different words per letter.

Figure 2.



The nationalist discourse varies not only in intensity between the two types of letters; the vocabulary of nationalism is far richer in the pro settlement camp. Figure 3 focuses on the frequency of appearance of nationalist discourse words within each type of letter. Certain words like ‘Israel’ and ‘Country’ are shared between the types, however there is a variety of nationalist-Zionist words used only in pro settlements letters. These include ‘Zionism’, ‘National’ or ‘Nationalism’, ‘Pioneer’, and ‘Land of Israel’.

References to the land on the side of the settlers are easy to account for, as the purpose of their letters was to be allowed to settle the land. Nonetheless, the choice of ‘land’ (Adama, Eretz)

over ‘territory’ (Shtachim) is political, as land connects with Zionism, whereas territory is more easily connected with Occupied Territories.

The Zionist- National- Pioneer-British Mandate language was more metaphoric and constructed. The letters sent from settlers supporters from different regions and probably varying levels of religiosity demonstrate that the settlers’ framing project was quickly internalized. The settler movement connected to the basic myths of the Zionist movement. Who could better portray the spirit of Masada than the Jewish minority situated among Palestinians in the ancient territory of Israel, refusing to surrender the land? As part of the embodiment of the Zionist spirit, the settlers used illegal methods similar to those used by the Zionists pioneers to settle the land. Settlements were often built at night to create facts on the ground and avoid penalty. Real-estate was purchased illegally from Palestinian owners. The settlers named these illegal actions after the historic rebellious activities of the Zionists against British rule. The difference, however, was that the rule against which the settlers were working was the Israeli state rather than foreign colonial mandate.⁶⁴

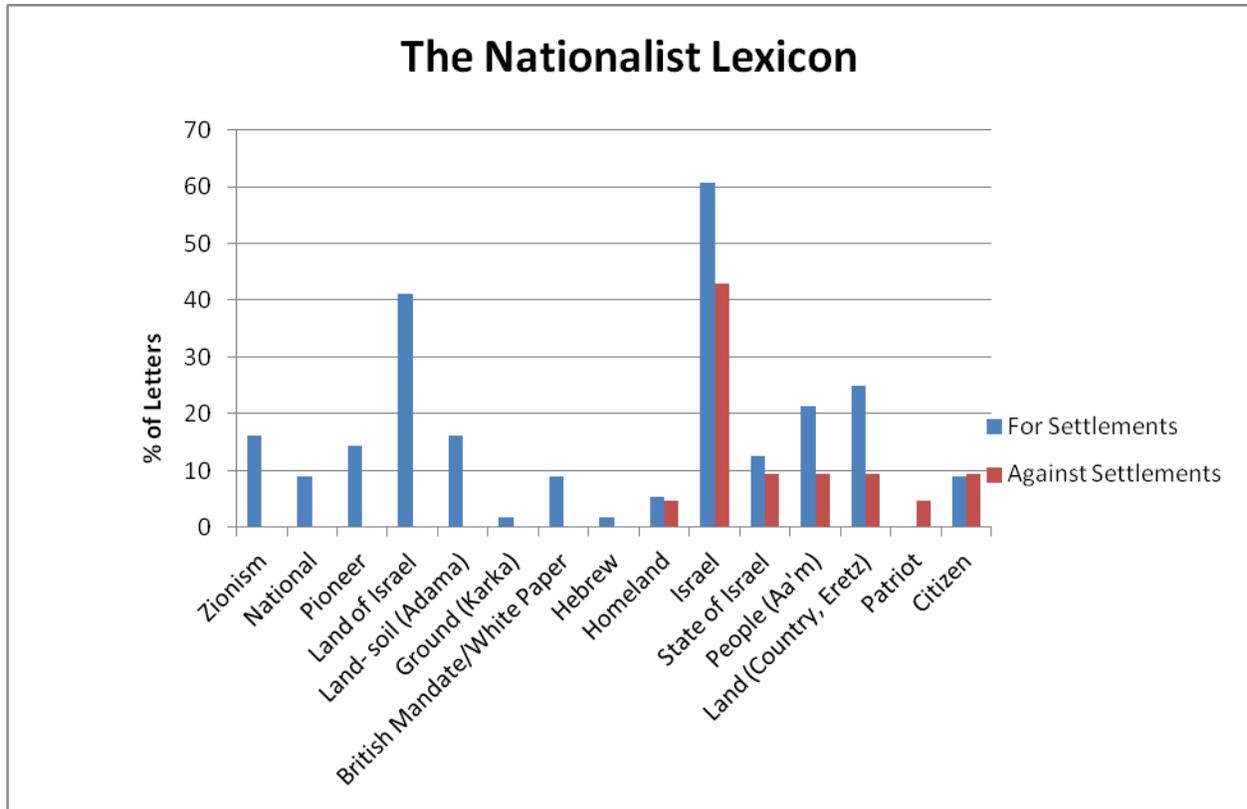
Rhetorically, the settlers used slogans connected to the Zionist ethos of land. In particular, they are the movement of the “Whole Land of Israel” (‘Eretz Yisrael Ha’Shlema’) alluding both to the biblical territory, and to their connection with the expansionist movement formed by Zionist pioneers. They too spoke of agricultural labor as a mean for obtaining ownership of the land. Much like the Zionist movement, the first settlements in the occupied territories were agricultural.⁶⁵ The Zionist socialist element was left behind, and that too suited the zeitgeist, as Israel was going through an accelerated economic liberalization process, especially after 1977.⁶⁶

Figure 3

⁶⁴ Rubinstein 1982, 53-57; Sprinzak, Ehud. “Illegalism in the Israeli Political Culture.” *Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies [Hebrew]*, 1985.

⁶⁵ Taub, Gadi. *The Settlers: And the Struggle over the Meaning of Zionism*. Yale University Press, 2010.

⁶⁶ Shafir and Peled, 2002

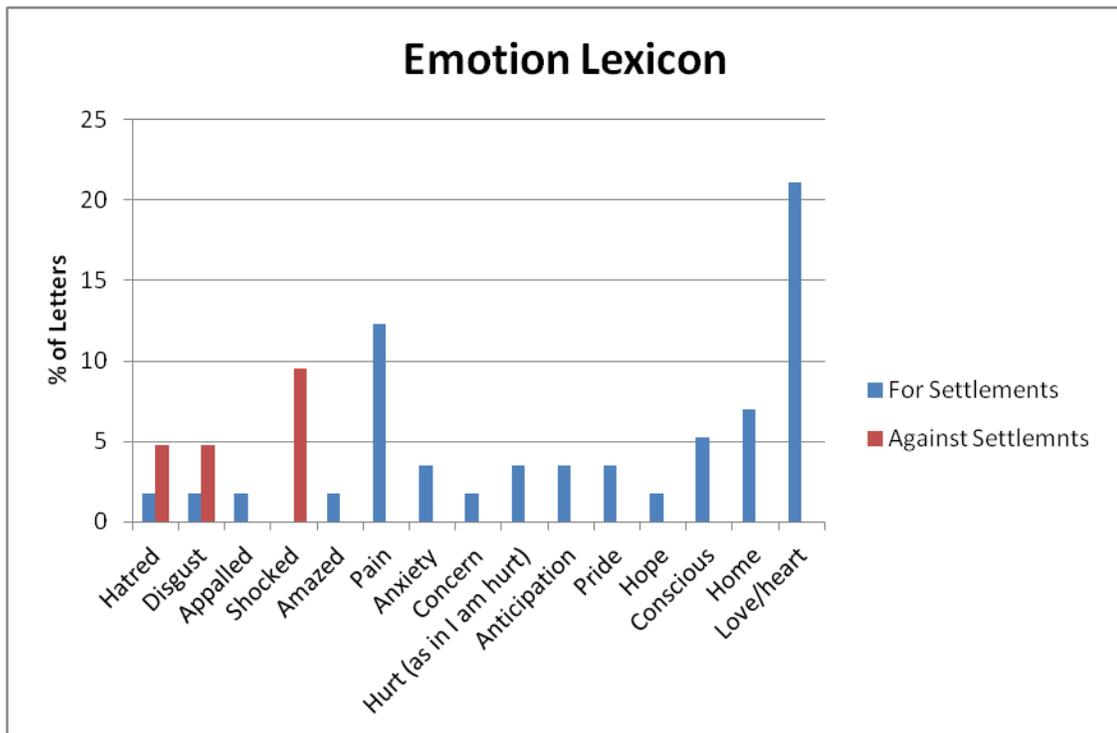


Only two words from the nationalist discourse (Figure 3) are used more commonly by settler opposition, ‘Patriot’ and ‘Citizen’. The word ‘Citizen’ was not even classified at first under the nationalist discourse. The context of the use of the word is quite different for pro and anti settlement letters. In the anti settlement camp, the word is used in conjunction with the rule of law discourse, citizenship is referred to as a community of people subjected to the state laws. One of the letters states: “Do not allow the posers of the settlements destroy the faith of the citizen in the rule of law.” Another letter protests “the behavior of citizens [civilians] toward soldiers...” On pro settlement letters, on the other hand, citizenship is used in the specific context of belonging to the Israeli state, and the rights that follow from such belonging. “We believe it is the right of the citizens and students of the state of Israel to travel through the entire country and especially to pray at ‘Rachel’s Tomb’ which is located a short distance from Jerusalem, the country’s capital,” states one letter, and another “As a Jew and citizen I am proud of the idealism and the purity of the struggle of the Emunim youth...” Even when pro and anti-

settlements use words from the same national lexicon, they choose different words, or use them to mean different things.

As demonstrated by Figures 1 and 2, letters composed by supporters of the settlements were far more emotional in tone, using not only a variety of emotions but also pathos filled descriptions, ancient symbols and so on. Perhaps surprising is the fact that the tone of pro settlement letters was far more positive than that of settlement opposition. Figure 4 summarizes the use of emotion words in the different letters. While some opponents of the settlements expressed emotional dismay by settler behavior or the response of the government, the range of pro settlement composers was far larger. Many letters expressed admiration for the settlers ‘love’ of Israel, or defined the settlements as the ‘heart’ of Zionism. In general positive feelings were the dominant ones in their letters including ‘pride’ and ‘hope’. Even the pro settlement letters more negative words are not accusatory ones, for the most part. The words ‘pain’ or ‘hurt’ were used in the context of their feelings and not as blame thrown at a different camp. “I was hurt by the fact that under Jewish rule of all things there is resistance to Jewish settlements in the land of Israel” Is just one example.

Figure 4



A striking feature of the letters is that pro-settlement letters rarely address settlement opposition at all. Although they are a small protest group, their language is not that of grievances, but of hope, aspiration, and unity. This most of all points at the ambitious, and ultimately successful, framing project of the settlers. At many periods, including the 1974-1975 examined time frame, they did not resort to a fear based campaign, but to a very positive one, set on winning hearts and minds for their project. This is not to say that fear was entirely absent from the pro settlement discourse. The issue of security was used slightly more often and with greater intensity on the settlement camp (Figures 1 and 2). However, the differences in the use of the security discourse were not as pronounced as differences in the use of nationalist, Jewish and emotional discourses.

Letters opposing the settlements addressed the opposing camp far more often despite the fact that the government itself opposed the settlements at this point. It is important to note that many of the letters in this camp were not composed by center left supporters but by relatively radical leftists of the workers party Mapam. Several letters were signed by known Mapam members or Mapam Kibbutz assemblies. In addition, the protest is understandable, as the government ultimately acted in favor of the settlers.

Late 1970s and 1980s: The Development of the Anti-Settlement Discourse.

The next batch of letters presents a partial reversal of roles from the previous period. Here, the government stated its support for the settlements,⁶⁷ and yet during its reign settlers experienced existential threats. The period included settlement evacuation and territory relinquishing to Egypt as part of the Camp David accords, and the Elon Moreh Supreme Court case which ruled Jewish settlement on private Palestinian land was breaking Israeli law and must be removed.

Prime Minister Begin's conversations with advisors indicate that settlers were vocal in their dismay of his actions;⁶⁸ settler leaders lobbied, wrote, and orchestrated large demonstrations to protest the Camp David accords. Begin took these protests to heart, he had been one of the

⁶⁷ When elected Prime Minister Begin declared, "There will be many more Elon Moreh's" Zertal and Eldar, 2009

⁶⁸ "With Heavy Heart, But Head Held High": Making Peace - The Story of the Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt, July 1978–March 1979. Special publication by the Israel State Archives to mark the 35th anniversary of the peace treaty with Egypt

leaders of the Whole Land of Israel movement for decades and the accords were a form of betrayal for him. In a conversation with the American ambassador prior to the parliament vote on the Oslo Accord, an agitated Begin promised to resign if the accords would not be supported by the majority of the members of coalition. He knew he had a majority in parliament, as the leftist parties supported the accord, but he felt he needed the support of his own camp (or friends, as he referred to them in the conversation).⁶⁹

While I have not recovered settler protest letters from the archive, several things can be inferred from Begin's reactions, from the few letters in favor of settlements addressed to Deputy Prime Minister Yadin, and from interviews with settler leaders including the 1983-1986 secretary general of Yesha council, Otniel Schneller. First, the tone of settlement supporters during much of this period was not a positive one. When Prime Minister Begin landed in Israel after returning from Camp David he was received by settlers protesting with black umbrellas, equating him to Chamberlain returning from the signing of the Munich Agreement.⁷⁰ In some conversations Begin expresses his hurt and disappointment to be named a traitor by his 'friends'.

A few of the letters Yadin received from settler supporters were quite similar to the 1974-5 letters in the range of discourses, but indeed less positive in tone. In regards to the national discourse settlers continued to incorporate, a line from one of these letters seems to best capture the attempts to strengthen between the settlements and Zionism, "Do you not see, as the masses of Israel see clearly [that questioning settlements in the West Bank] is questioning the justification for the entire Jewish settlement in Israel?"

Other letters, however, focus more on Jewish messianic ownership over the land of Israel and less on Zionism. The period following the Camp David Accords was one of internal struggles and ideological and political splits within the settlement movement. The failure to prevent land compromise and Jewish settlement evacuation reinforced extremist voices within the movement. One extreme example was the appearance of Jewish terrorist group, The Jewish Underground, which stemmed from the core group of Jewish settlers.⁷¹ Some of the heated debates of the era were a struggle between those who insisted on building settlements in remote

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ ibid

⁷¹ On Jewish Underground see: Zertal and Eldar, 2009; Huberman, 2008; Segal, Haggai. *Dear Brothers: The West Bank Jewish Underground*. Beit-Shamai, 1988.

areas to cover as much ground as possible within the Occupied Territories, versus those who wanted to create settlement blocs closer to the Green Line.⁷² The first group was composed of more religious messianic members who viewed the land as a mean for religious redemption; the second group preferred more pragmatic appeals to mainstream Israelis, and was supported within the political mainstream by Ariel Sharon. The struggles also led to political splits, and from 1979 the settlers were represented by multiple political parties.

The divisions within the settler movement, and the vocal Jewish-messianic voices made it easier for a central camp to mobilize against the settlers. However, reestablishing a hold over the meaning of nationalism was not an easy task. As noted above, the letters protesting settlers from this period came from far more mainstream and less professional writers. Though some composers claim to represent “thousands of like minded voters”, or “the views of professors of Tel Aviv University”, all of them were sent by private citizens. The letters all share a common theme: the right wing government is destroying Israel in every sense and so their party, DMC, must quit the government and break the ruling coalition to save the country. Phrases like ‘save the state of Israel’, ‘utter national despair’, and ‘imminent destruction’ actually appear in approximately ninety percent of the letters. The dramatic tones are not only a response to the expansion of settlements but also to economic crisis and rising inflation at the time. In addition, struggles between religious and secular powers over policy were prominent during this period with legislation on abortions (1977, 1978) and religious female military service (1978) among others. The fear of religious coercion was salient for DMC supporters as this was the liberal secular party by definition.⁷³ Many letters do not list any specific reason for the imminent destruction of Israel, but simply take it as common knowledge that this is the path the country is on because of government policy. However, nearly all the letters which do list specific grievances, mention the settlement issue as a central source of concern.

In terms of language, there is certainly a vast use of words from the national discourse, in particular ‘State of Israel’ and ‘People’, but also ‘Zionism’. The letters often declare that the ‘Situation’ in the country is a ‘Shame’ or a ‘Disgrace’ to the ‘State of Israel’ and to ‘Zionism’.

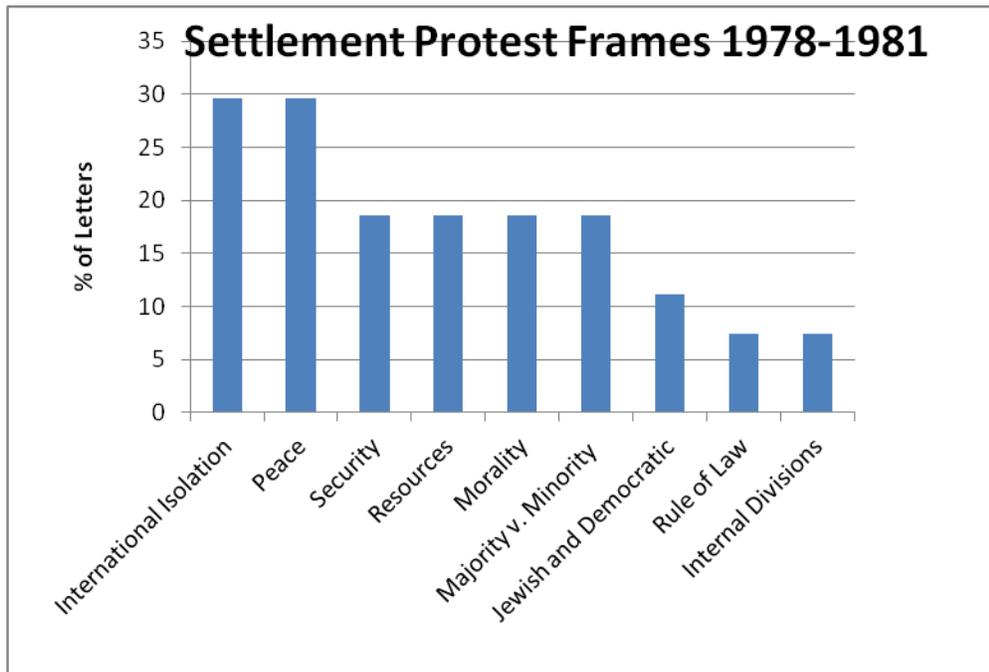
⁷² Otniel Schneller Interview

⁷³ The Israel Democracy Institute, <http://www.idi.org.il/%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%93%D7%A2-%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D/%D7%91%D7%97%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%A4%D7%9C%D7%92%D7%95%D7%AA/%D7%9E%D7%A4%D7%9C%D7%92%D7%95%D7%AA/%D7%93%D7%A9/>

Unlike the pro-settlement camp, these authors do not attempt to define Zionism, but take it for granted that growing economic cleavages, religious extremism, and certain aspects of the settlement project are against the values of Zionism.

Importantly, most letters do reject or even discuss the basic justification for the settlement project. None of the letters argues that Israel has no right over the Occupied Territories, or that the action of taking the land is against the values of Zionism, for the most part the arguments are more technical. Several lines of argumentation against settlements that did not appear in the earlier period come up in these letters, most of them still very much prominent today in the center-left camp. Figure 5 summarizes these lines of argument.

Figure 5.



Three related themes reoccur in many letters: international isolation, peace and security. The concern of the letter composers was that Israel's visible expansion actions in the settlements were a danger to its relationship with the US and thus to its international position; that these actions were aggravating Palestinians, leading to growing support for the PLO; and that they were damaging the chances of peace first with Egypt, and then with Jordan and the Palestinians.

The rising saliency of Israel's isolation in the international arena was the result of UN and American pressure on Israel during this period. While the US often tried to shield Israel from direct UN condemnation, at times, American pressure increased and became a source of concern. The Carter administration was clearer in its opposition to the settlements than previous administrations. President Carter right out demanded Israel stopped settling in 1976 and later in 1978. In a 1980 interview addressing the subject he commented, "Our position on the settlements is very clear, we do not think they are legal." During Carter's tenure the UN Security Council passed several resolutions defining the settlements as illegal, and condemning Israel.⁷⁴

As mentioned above, this was not a complete rejection of the settlement idea, but an instrumental one. Several letters reject either the 'showy' settlement actions of the government, or the 'useless' small and remote settlements. Of particular objection was the expansion of the Jewish settlement in Hebron. This was deemed by many letters as 'irrational' for serving as particular cause for aggravation at the center of a Palestinian city, for being entirely 'useless', and for being the symbol of succumbing to Messianic Jews. Indeed, the Hebron Jewish settlement was and still remains at the 'Jewish' end of the settlers' ideological scale, and is populated by the extreme religious and violent representatives of the movement.⁷⁵

The resources allotted to the settlements are another theme that is prominent in the letters, and remains salient in current day Israeli political discourse.⁷⁶ This is another technical rather than principle-based issue that settlement opponents take offense with. One author even states the technical problem directly, "Let these settlements prove themselves economically." Similarly, the argument that settlers are a negligible minority, whose agenda is overrepresented

⁷⁴ Aronson, Geoffrey. *Settlements and the Israel-Palestinian Negotiations: An Overview*. Inst for Palestine Studies, 1996, 50-51; Malone, David. *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004. The US generally abstained in the vote on these resolutions. The one exception was resolution 465 which called the settlements a violation of the Geneva Convention, and called Israel to dismantle the existing settlements and cease construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. The US voted in favor of the resolution but soon after made statements disavowing its vote.

⁷⁵ From its formation in 1967 and until his death in 2015, the Jewish settlement in Hebron was led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger. Levinger was the public face of Messianic settlers. Levinger was arrested many times for acts of violence against Palestinians and incitement, and for shooting and killing a Palestinian shopkeeper after Palestinians threw stones at his car. Israel Kershner, New York Times May 18, 2015.

⁷⁶ Stories about different money transfers to settlements are very common in Israeli news papers. Several current Israeli politicians have been responsible for raising the saliency of the issue, including Labor's Stav Shafir and Yisrael Beiteinu's Orly Levy-Abekasis. It should be noted that these politicians are not necessarily very dovish, but are vocal on social issues. The issue of resources for the settlements has often been framed as a social justice issue within Israeli society, where settlements receive funds at the expense of underprivileged populations. (Interview with Adi Eldar, Chairman of the Union of Local Authorities in Israel).

in government policy decisions, does not directly address Israel's right to settle the territories (Figure 5. Majority-Minority).

Two more themes which appear in the letters are worth discussing. First, the Jewish and Democratic theme appears in only a few letters, but has since become a central argument for the settlement opposition center-left camp.⁷⁷ According to this line of argument Israel can only remain both Jewish and democratic if the Occupied Territories do not become a part of the state, as only within the 1967 borders there is a Jewish majority which will enable to preserve the Jewish nature of the state with democratic means.

The implications of the Jewish and Democratic arguments change according to the period, and the agenda behind it. For Yadin himself, 'Jewish and Democratic' did not imply the formation of a Palestinian state. He writes in one of his response letters, "Ultimately, Israel ought to be Jewish and Democratic. This will not be possible if one of our goals would be to include over a million Arabs within the domain of the state. If this is the case, and the state gives all the Arabs voting rights, the state will cease being Jewish. If we will not give them this right, the state will not be democratic. Therefore I am in the opinion that there has to be a political solution that gives Israel complete security in the East front (and thus I support settlements in the Jordan Valley and the East slopes of Judea and Samaria), and prevents the formation of an independent Palestinian state between Jordan and Israel." For Yadin then, some political solution that is not annexation will suffice to fulfill the Jewish and Democratic conditions. Here, the objection is to certain settlements that will hinder reaching such a political solution. Later, the Jewish and Democratic argument did serve as justification for formation of an independent Palestinian state for the camp that supported such a solution.

Finally, the morality justification which appears in Figure 5 deserves attention. The morality arguments usually refer to the moral implication of occupation over another people for Israeli citizens and society. They are usually combined with a variety of other lines of argument as expressed by one of the letters, "The settlements lead us to complete isolation and internal division which destroy every all that is good in the morality of the Israeli citizen, and demonstrate the government has no control over its members and the minority of Gush Emunim

⁷⁷ Prominent politicians promoting this line of argument in recent years include Yitzchak Herzog, Tzipi Livni, and Haim Ramon.

can do as they please.” Only a couple of letters mention certain Israeli acts in the Occupied Territories as immoral, for example the destruction of Palestinian property in Hebron. Thus, the debate over the nature of the Zionist project and what acts are justly included within Zionism remains in the pro-settlement camp. The settlement opposition remains committed to the Zionist national identity, but its definition of this national identity is far vaguer.

Narrative Analysis

Shaul Shenahv breaks down political narratives into three elements.⁷⁸ The first is “events, characters and background” which include the events taking place, location, institutions, and actors; Second there is the temporal element of the story or “events in sequence”; and finally “causality”. Drawing on this classification, I analyze the narratives in the different letters and find that letters who opposed the settlements hardly contained political narratives instead, as implied above, they used the rhetorical mode of arguments, and in particular instrumental arguments. The findings of the narrative analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Pro settlement letters used a broad temporal frame, often stretching from biblical times to present day. The letters were rich with symbols from these periods. As was the case for the Zionist movement, the order of events led directly from the biblical kingdom of Judah to the nineteenth and twentieth century Zionist movement. The significant addition was of a third event on the sequence of time - the act of settlement as naturally follows from the previous two. Similarly, the actors in the story were Jews, Zionist, settlers, and their agency was settling the land of Israel and protecting it.

Letters against settlers on the other hand focused on the present and the near future. They often took the structure of an argument: If the government continues to do X the outcome will be Y. The actors in these letters were very specific and neither historical nor symbolic – the government and the settlers engaged in a political struggle, the settlers were portrayed as villains, the government as weak. The letters mostly lacked a symbolic element.

In terms of location as well, pro settlement letters fall much more clearly into the realm of storytelling. The letters almost always describe events that take place in a defined space- though not necessarily clearly defined in reality- the whole land of Israel. Letters against

⁷⁸ Shenahv political narratives and political realities

settlements rarely mention a location, but when they do there is no consensus over space. Some refer to the 1967 borders as Israel’s borders, others signal out the Samaria settlements as wrong, others object to densely populated areas. This vagueness clearly represents the camps lack of unified agenda and instrumental stance.

As for causality, in pro settlement letters causality is both more abstract and clearer. It is more abstract as it presents a far reaching causal chain rather than a particular argument. It is clearer because the message is unambiguous and unqualified – for the Jewish people to survive on the land of Israel, we must settle the land. The causal chain presented by settlements opposition is shorter and more precise, but less powerful - Settlements in the present will lead to democratic decline in the future; settlements in certain areas will lead to disorder among the Arab-Palestinian population, etc.

All these elements point at a fundamental difference in mode of rhetoric between the pro and anti settlement camps. The settlement opposition camp’s rhetoric resembles Krebs’ definition of arguments rather than that of story.⁷⁹ It is narrow in scope and presumption, refers to particular events rather than attempting to explain a set of events, and directly suggests a course of action. The pro settlement rhetoric on the other hand, easily qualifies as a story. It is not directly linked to a course of action but much broader, offering historical interpretation out of which a course of action must be deduced. The discussion section below will attempt to interpret these differences and their consequences.

Table 1:

	For Settlements	Against Settlements
Time	Long arch of history. Often referred to as 2000 years. With mentions of other historical periods in particular pre state Israel/Palestine under British mandate.	Present and near future.

⁷⁹ Krebs

Location	The whole land of Israel	Israel, no consensus over its borders.
Symbols	Biblical locations and stories, heroic myths from the Jewish and Zionist past, pioneering stories from the mandate era.	None
Actors	The settlers as vanguard pioneer leaders acting for a shared national goal. They are comparable to biblical Jews and pioneer Zionists.	A weak government failing to restrain extremist and outlaw settlers.
Causality	To continue the existence of Jews in the land of Israel we must settle the land	To prevent disorder/ unrest/ international criticism/ difficulties in the peace process/ economic distress we must refrain from settling/extravagant settlements/ settlements in certain areas/ unauthorized settlements/ succumbing to extremist settlers.

Media Framing 1974-1981

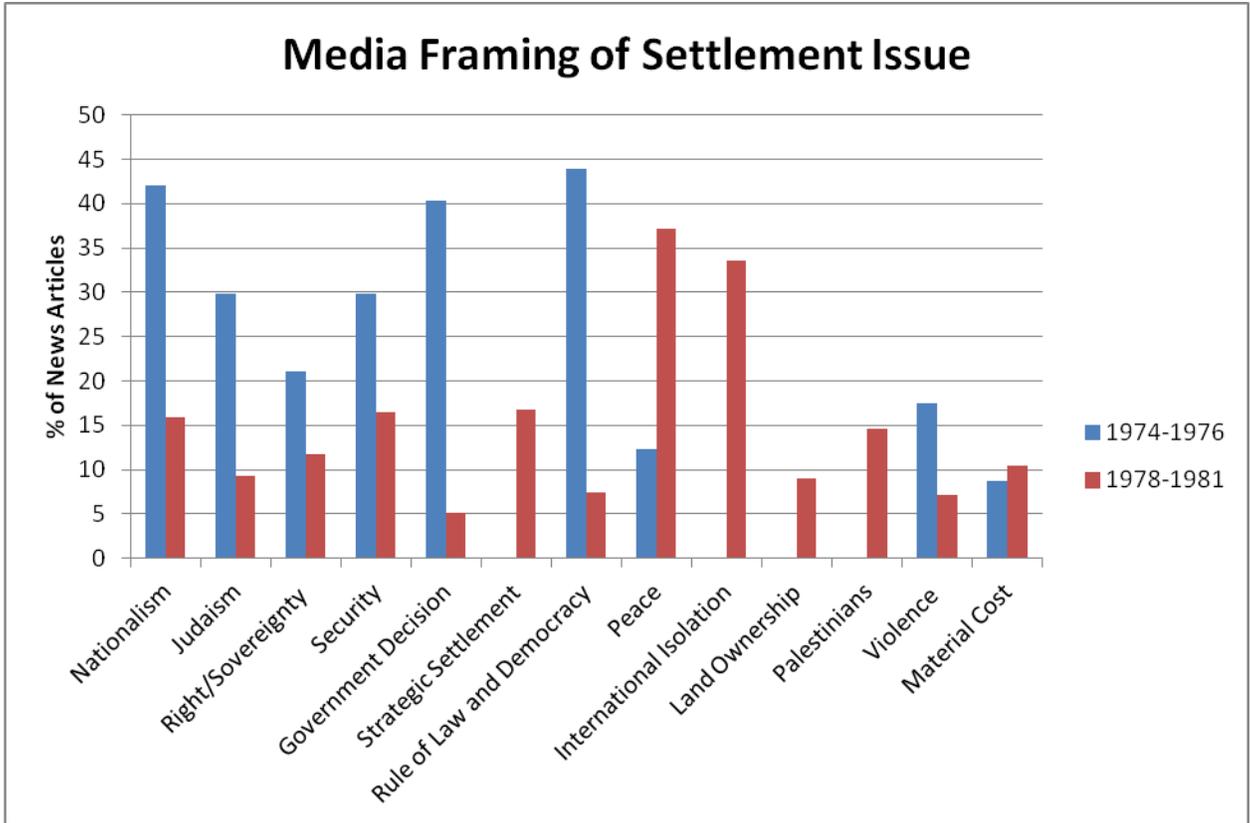
Where the letters analyzed above represent views of supporters of one agenda or another, media representation can shed light on the source of these views, and on mainstream presence of each side's rhetoric.

The context of discussion of settlements in media changed from the 1974-1976 to the 1978-1981. During the first period, the debate concentrated on the struggle between the Rabin

government and Gush Emunim settlers. Stories in the paper described with mixed attitudes the settlement attempts of Gush Emunim members, the response of the government, public figures' views, and popular opinion. Some stories were feature articles on individual settlers, families, or groups. These were generally the more positive accounts on settlers, describing on the one hand their law violating activities, but on the other hand their ideological conviction, willingness to face challenges, and positive background. Fewer news reports tracked the slow expansion of government authorized settlements.

During the second period, media coverage focused on the peace process between Israel and Egypt, and later on the negotiations for autonomy in the Occupied Territories. In this context, settlements were often referred to as a hindrance, in particular by international negotiators and domestic opposition, and the government and settlers defended them with a variety of arguments. The only other notable context in which settlements were covered during this period was that of their material cost. News reports described funds allocated to settlements, at times estimating that each settler cost the government an outrageous sum of money (Some examples are: January 18, 1979; August 31, 1979; August 5, 1980). Other reports covered political struggles over the settlement budget, and some opinion pieces attacked or defended the settlement project on these grounds.

Close reading of hundreds of news articles demonstrates that both views of settlement supporters and settlement opposition were present in the media. Figure 6 summarizes the discourses in the media between 1974 and 1976 under left wing government, and between 1978 and 1981 under right wing government.



As in the letters, in 1974-1976 the most notable discourses were nationalism and Judaism on the pro settlement camp, and democracy and the rule of law on the anti settler camp. The shift in discourse on the center-left evident in the letters is very much a reflection of a changed discourse in mainstream media. Center-left argumentation mostly responded to the peace process and the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The most notable arguments of that camp revolved around the danger that may follow from unsuccessful peace negotiations, international isolation, and unrest among Palestinians. Much of the argumentation of the center-left as represented by politicians and pundits questioned the timing and locations of settlement construction (Strategic settlement, Figure 6). Similar to letter authors, some suggested a more restrained and less “showy” policy in face of American criticism, others argued that only settlements for security were necessary and these should be built in certain strategic locations (There are ample examples. A few are: January 27, 1978; February 24, 1978; October 27, 1978; May 17, 1979; August 20, 1979; December 2, 1979; April 3, 1980; September 16, 1980) . These

were instrumental arguments,⁸⁰ normative arguments or attempts at broader narratives by this camp were not represented by mainstream media.

On the settler supporter camp on the other hand, Zionism and Judaism remained strong discourses during this period. The other line of argumentation which came directly from the government was that of security. One report on the Israeli ambassador to the UN for example described how the ambassador's previous strategy of defending the Jewish people's historic right on the land of Israel gave way to security justification for the settlements (February 29, 1980). While neither strategy managed to sway a unanimously antithetical UN, Israeli officials continued to employ them in international negotiations.

Through both sides of the debate are represented in the media, as in the letters, a clear narrative of the anti- settlements is missing, whereas a pro-settlements narrative is present. The media by no means gave more space to settlement supporters, quite the contrary, but it did demonstrate a mainstream bias, reflecting mostly views of the two large parties, Likud and Alignment. On the right, notable figures, in particular Prime Minister Begin, adopted the pro settlement narrative. Central figures on the left on the other hand, did not do the same for possible anti settlement narratives. Despite bitter political struggles within the right, Begin spoke often and passionately about the land of Israel as the heart of the Jewish people and settling as a pioneering act (For example: October 1, 1978; May 4, 1979; August 2, 1980). The main figures on the left, Alignment leader Peres and others, continued to employ instrumental argument, their silence of narrative serving as accession to pro settlement fundamental assumptions.

To understand whether anti settlement narratives existed on the left but failed to reach the mainstream, I also reviewed dozens of articles on settlements in left leaning newspaper, Davar during the same period. Indeed, Davar promoted a clear anti settlement view and contained deeper reporting on the issue. Unlike in Maariv, many stories in Davar reported on settler violence and popular unrest of Palestinians in response to acts of settlements. While both Maariv and Davar reported on Supreme Court struggles over land in the territories, Davar stressed it far more and clearly accused the government of law violations meant to appease settlers and preserve lawlessness in the territories. Davar also represented some normative views against the

⁸⁰ Krebs

settlements such as the moral decay of the occupying military and society, and the rights of Palestinians for self determination however, these were not common. Overall, while the paper's reporting strengthened instrumental arguments against the settlements, it did not promote a clear anti settlements narrative.

6. Discussion

National symbols and language are often politicized, while one political party or camp can use them “authentically”, the opposite camp struggles to incorporate the national lexicon into its rhetoric. These ties between national ethos and political leaning seem entirely natural, broad temporal and spatial examination demonstrates that this is not the case. National ethos can and has shift political affiliation, and it can be tied to either right or left wing leaning movements and ideas in different periods and locations. This paper demonstrates one such process of a shift in the orientation of national ethos that was achieved through the framing of a single controversial and highly salient issue.

The settler movement was the first to frame the issue of Jewish settlements in broad terms. Very early after the 1967 War, the movement began to frame the right of Jewish Israelis to settle in the Occupied Territories as a question of national identity, by equating the right of Jewish Israelis to build on these lands with the right of Jews to form a political unit in Israel altogether. The opposing camp was far narrower, making arguments rather than constructing a narrative around the issue. One of the causes for this disparity was probably the self-perception of the anti-settlement camp as the owners of the Zionist national narrative. While only few Israelis lived in Kibbutz, socialism and cultivation of the land were at the core of Zionist pioneer symbolism. The leftist camp opposing the settlements seemed to have not yet been fully aware that its hegemony over the national narrative was severely threatened by the early 1970s, and so it made no attempt to defend it. As shown by the letters, left wing Kibbutz members were at the center of objection to the settlements at the early period. The letters also demonstrate that the framing of the settlement issue was successful, and point at issue-owning by the pro settlement camp, at least for those who viewed the issue as salient.

Only a few years later, and under a right wing government, the anti-settlement camp did grow and fight back, attempting to gain ownership over the issue of the Occupied Territories.

The camp gained mixed success over the years in regards to the particular issue of the settlements, but suffered significant losses in terms of the definition of national identity and the meaning of national identity for liberal-left ideology.

One of the problems for the pro settlement camp is that their arguments against settlement were instrumental-procedural whereas the story of the settlers was normative-ideological. While it is easy to contradict procedural arguments, it is much more difficult to do so for ideological narratives. Indeed, at times the procedural arguments won the day, but the underlying story connecting settlements and Zionism remained intact.

The more fundamental problem for the liberal camp was that liberal ideas of equal citizenship and democracy do not sit comfortably with Zionism as a living movement, and in particular they do not align with the notion of Zionism as the settlement project. Scholars like David Miller and Yael Tamir argue in defense of nationalism that national self identity can serve as the basis for promoting liberal ideas.⁸¹ This perception of nationalism seems to be the idea that led liberal Israelis who opposed the settlements in the 1980s. The frequent use in the letters of secular nationalism as signifying certain morals is in line with Miller and Tamir's scholarship.⁸²

However, the settlement project and the exclusion of the citizen Arab minority stand between Israel and Tamir and Miller's notion of liberal-nationalism. The country's large Arab minority is not included in the Jewish Zionist identity. Many states have a dominant ethnic majority and its relationship with ethnic minorities vary. That in itself does not have to create tensions⁸³ or a profound clash of ideas between liberalism and national identity. Nationalism in itself can and has been inclusive toward the population of citizens. However, that is not the case in Israel, and the tensions between the notions of 'Jewish' and 'Democratic' have been explored in depth.⁸⁴ The settlement project reinforces these tensions by strengthening the ties between

⁸¹ Miller, David. *On Nationality*. Clarendon Press, 1995; Tamir, Yael. *Liberal Nationalism*. Princeton University Press, 1995.

⁸² Tamir herself was chairwoman of the Israeli association for Civil Rights, and later as a center-left politician she served as Minister of Immigrant Absorption and Minister of Education.

⁸³ Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation." *American Political Science Review*, 1996, 715–35.

⁸⁴ Smootha, 2002; Ganim, As 'ad, Oren Yiftachel, and Nadim N. Rouhana. "Questioning 'Ethnic Democracy': A Response to Sammy Smootha." *Israel Studies* 3, no. 2 (2005): 253–67. Gavison, Ruth. "Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the 'Ethnic Democracy' Debate." *Israel Studies* 4, no. 1 (1999): 44–72. Rouhana, Nadim N. *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict*. Yale University Press, 1997. Yiftachel, Oren,

nationalism and religion which further excludes non-Jew from full membership in the community of citizens.

Moreover, a national movement that is actively expansionist and consistently promotes the interest of one group at the expense of another will struggle to fit the liberal-national bill. The ongoing expansion of the settlement project ultimately made Jewish-Israeli nationalism less and less compatible with the liberal ideology of the left, and thus limited the access of the center-left to national narratives and symbols.

In that sense, the case presented here has wider implications for a larger set of cases. The process of politization of the national corpus is dangerous for one camp not only because national language and symbols are political assets, but also because they may lead to policies that further reshape nationalist narratives. Politicized national ethos can continue to mobilize in favor of illiberal agenda. Israel is not alone in this trend, contested national identities in Eastern Europe have longed served as mobilization frames for extremist actors, and it seems that politization of national identity is taking place throughout Europe, helping to promote illiberal politicians and policies.