CHAPTER II

ABSORPTION OF IMMIGRANTS
IDEOLOGICAL PREMISES AND POLICY
FORMULATION
Chapter II

ABSORPTION OF IMMIGRANTS
IDEOLOGICAL PREMISES AND POLICY FORMULATION

This chapter seeks to examine the realms of ideology and policymaking that constitute the absorption dynamics in Israel. Absorption was perceived as a policy as well as process by which the immigrants could be settled in Israel. It was not conceived merely in specific technical terms but in broader ideological terms and thus forms the crux of the very nation-building in Israel. It was also integrally linked with how Zionist perceptions have been moulded through generations and got concretised and operated in the period of statehood.

With the advent of statehood, Israel strongly committed herself to massive Jewish immigration, institutionalised by the Law of Return. It inspired a widespread expectation of normalising every Jew’s status by immigration; that is a Jew supposedly alters his minority status in the diaspora to a majority status in Israel when he becomes a citizen. Accordingly, Israel has made, directly as a government and indirectly through the Jewish Agency or subsidiary agencies, a historically unprecedented effort to maintain a large-scale, well-financed machinery for the immigration and absorption of Jews.

In the first four years itself (1948-52), the Jewish population in Israel had doubled from about 700,000 to 1,400,000 by immigration.\(^2\) The major change in the nature of post-1948 immigration was the large influx of the Oriental Jews. In the years 1919-48, 89.6\% of 452,158 immigrants were from Europe and America and only 10.4\% from Asia and Africa.\(^3\) In the period, 1948-62, only 45.4\% of a total of 1,074,792 immigrants were from Europe and America and 54.6\% were from Asia and Africa.\(^4\)

**Jewish Immigration to Israel: The Early Immigrants**

Aliyah which means "ascension" or "going up" derived from the Old Testament, is the term used to denote the immigration of Jews to Israel. Those who "go up" for this purpose are known as olim-a term used in the Bible for Israelites who 'went up' from Egypt\(^5\) and at a later period, for the exiles who returned from captivity in Babylon.\(^6\) The call of Cyrus- "whosoever there is among you of all His people-his God be with him-let him go up..."\(^7\)-has been used as a

---


\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Genesis 50:14 and Numbers 32:11

\(^6\) Ezra 2:1,59 and Nehemia 5-6

\(^7\) Ezra 1:3,11 and Chronicle 36:23
watchword for *aliyah*. WHILE Jewish in-migrants ‘ascend’ to Israel, out-migrants *yored*, that is ‘descend’ today, these metaphors are used in the media as well as in government documents. These are the terms available in colloquial discourse and remain unchallenged in Social Science research. In-migration *per se* reflects glory on the individual. And, out-migration is considered as an act of personal failing and a demonstration of disloyalty to Israel.

It was *aliyah*, idealised as redemption, which was interpreted as having recreated the Jewish commonwealth after the Babylonian exile, and repeatedly renewed the Jewish presence in Palestine during the periods of Byzantine, Arab, Mamluk, and Ottoman rule. While widely dispersed throughout the diaspora, the Jews all over the world turned towards Jerusalem to pray; and in synagogues across the globe and across the centuries the salutation would ring out: ‘Next year in Jerusalem’. However, writes Weingrod, “a truly nationalist migration dates from the birth of modern Zionism. It is therefore to the late nineteenth century that one must turn for the modern origins of the Jewish State”.

Zionist historiography records five *aliyoth* (pl. of *aliyah*) embodying the hope of returning to Zion, which was politicised by the intensification of

---

intolerable conditions under which Jews lived in Europe, and culminating into the creation of the state of Israel. Thus, the first modern aliya\(h\) was in the 1880s. In the period between 1882 and 1903, Jews from Russia arrived in Palestine in reaction to the growing anti-Semitism in Russia and in response to the nationalist awakening among the Jews of Eastern Europe. These ‘pioneers’ found a small, pious Jewish population, mostly of Sephardic and Middle Eastern descent, whom they called the ‘old yishuv’ (pre-state Jewish community in Palestine) in contradistinction to themselves, the new yishuv. Also, there was a group of predominantly Hungarian Jews living in Jerusalem who developed the idea of “Return to the Soil”. In 1878, this small group, living on donations from Jews in Hungary, bought some land close to Jaffa and established a moshava (agricultural settlement) called Petah Tikva (door of hope)\(^{10}\). Although this agricultural settlement lasted only for a short time, the news of its founding contributed to the development of a movement called Hovevei Zion (lovers of Zion) among the Jews of Eastern Europe. This movement called for Jewish immigration and colonization in Palestine. In 1881, the bilu movement arose derived from the Hovevei Zion. Members of these two movements founded the first modern settlements of Palestine. The second aliya\(h\) began in 1904, following the Kishinev pogroms, and is known as the “May Flower of Israel”. Coming out of the ferment of the unsuccessful

\(^{10}\) Gilbert Kushner, *Immigrants from India in Israel* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1977), p.26
Russian Revolution of 1905 with its attendant ideas of social equality and freedom, they laid the foundations of a worker's commonwealth, over and above their national aspirations. They founded collective and cooperative settlements, worker's parties, youth movements etc. The third *aliyah* followed first world war, (1919-23) and they, largely Russian immigrants, together with their second *aliyah* predecessors, founded the *Histadrut*, the General Federation of Labor and the *Hagana*, the defense organisation. The fourth *aliyah*, which continued toward the end of 1920s, was largely urban and middle class from *Poland*.

Zionism, socialism and pioneering were the ideals of this generation. According to Weingrod, Zionism had three main features; first, it called for the creation of a fully autonomous Jewish nation to resolve the problems of anti-semitism and Jewish marginality; second, the development of a viable economy, in which various Jewish agencies and organisations were instrumental; third, cultural autonomy which emphasised the following elements: the use of Hebrew as a daily language, a firm attachment to the Western world rather than to the Middle East…

The fifth *aliyah* (1932-38) consisted of Jews from central and Eastern Europe. The rise of Hitler in 1933 resulted into mass influx of immigrants from Germany, Austria and Poland. During this period, pressure was

---

11 Alex Weingrod, opcit., no.5, p.28
immense for *aliyah*, but was restricted by British White papers. This was also the period of growing Palestinian Arab resistance to Jewish settlers. From 1934 to 1939, due to British opposition, clandestine measures were taken to save Jews from Hitler’s persecution bringing Jews in what was known as illegal immigration. From 1940 to 1948 many more Jews entered Palestine with or without documents.

Alongside of these European *aliyoth* in the pre-state period was the arrival of Yemenite Jews between 1910 and 1014. These immigrations were proposed in 1907 in the debate over the use of Arab labor in the new Jewish settlements. The Palestinian Arab labor employed in many early settlements was seen by the ‘pioneers’ as corrupting the Zionist ideals and the principle of exclusive *avodah ivrit* (Hebrew labor) was proposed. It was in this context that the 2,000 Yemenite Jews were brought to Palestine to replace the Arabs. In addition to the Yemenites, a few thousand Kurdish and Persian Jews were also brought into work in the quarries and do other menial jobs. By the time the statehood was proclaimed, Asian and African Jews constituted 20-25 percent of the Jewish population.

---


13 Ibid., p.55.

Zionism and the Oriental Diaspora

The modern concept of the Jewish people as a nation is essentially a European one, with its roots deeply embedded in the nineteenth century nationalist ideology. For non-European Jews, however, the constructs of community, ethnicity and religious sect were more relevant in their efforts to maintain their identity. The Jews of Asia and Africa, existed for countless generations in a state of isolation from the mainstream of western Jewish life, and cultural developments.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Zionist movement was expected to provide an unprecedented opportunity to build links among Jews all over the world. Despite its stated goals of uniting Jews all over the world, the fact is that the movement was not active in Asia and Africa. It failed to reach out to the non-Ashkenazi Jews and to make them equal partners in the enterprise of nation-building. Raphael Patai has commented that the Zionist movement, in its concentration on East European and later also on central European Jews had neglected other great Jewish communities. It practically disregarded the existence of the Oriental Jewish communities in Asia and Africa, and of the Sephardic communities in the Balkans, Turkey and elsewhere.


16 Ibid.
The possible reasons for the Zionist neglect of the Oriental Jewry, according to Sammy Smooha, are as follows:  

First, Zionism was originally a response to the Jewish problem in Europe and as such it limited its activity to European Jewry. Expansion to the Near East or North Africa would have split its effort and drained of its resources. Second, the non-\textit{Ashkenazi} Jewry was small (only 10 per cent of world Jewry at the end of the nineteenth century), and it was poor and backward by European standards. As such it was not expected to contribute much in people and funds. Third, because of the limited contact between \textit{Ashkenazim} and non-\textit{Ashkenazim}, the \textit{Ashkenazi} Zionist activists knew very little about non-\textit{Ashkenazim} and felt detached and remote from them. Barriers of language and culture added to these difficulties. And, finally the Zionist movement was prohibited in some Muslim countries in the 1930s and 1940s and Oriental Jewish leaders did not encourage it because they feared being identified with the Jewish settlers in Palestine and with Zionists all over the world who were considered enemies of the Arabs.

The consequence of all these factors was that the Afro-Asian Jews remained outside the Zionist agenda almost until the Israeli State was established. At the same time most of the Oriental Jewry showed little interest in political Zionism and many were even opposed to it. Anthony D. Smith conceptualises Zionism as a form of “diaspora nationalism” which renewed Jewish \textit{ethnie} in the common territory of the Holy Land.  

---

17 Sammy Smooha, op.cit, n.1, p.53.

the Zionist narrative. It presupposes that the outcome of the Zionist project in the twentieth century is the only possible and desirable historical alternative and does not allow the independent existence of a counterfactual option. However, not all the Jews in the diaspora followed such a linear transition and it is essential to distinguish between ‘Jewishness’ as ethno-linguistic category and Zionist nationalism as propounded by European Jews.

The relatively peaceful diasporic experience, the wide gulf which separated Oriental Judaism from the Western Jewry, third world national movements against colonialism and general apprehensions of racism—all these have contributed for many Afro-Asian Jewish communities to remain indifferent to the political goals of Zionism until recently. For example, the Iraqi Jews had not experienced a “Zionist awakening” and did not consider Palestine an attractive option. In the 1940s the Zionist emissary, Eliahu Epstein, in Iraq was unable to convince them to settle in Palestine and invest their capital there. Some of them told him that they did not believe in Zionism. They explained that they had no intention of displacing

---

19 The limited Zionist activity in India and the Indian Jewish responses will be discussed in Chapter 3. For details, also see Sreekala S, *Israel in the Perception of Indian Jews: A Case Study of Bene Israel* (Unpublished M. Phil dissertation: Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1995).

the Arabs of Palestine and that migration to Palestine was feasible only for Jews who were indigent or had relatives here.  

Post-state Immigration: Aliyah as the Mission of the State

After independence, Israel opened its doors to the ‘ingathering of exiles’ from all over the world. The proclamation of independence stated, “the state of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion. Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development, and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations for the redemption of Israel.”

Aliyah is now considered as the state’s first and superior mission. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion compared Israel with other immigrant societies like the United States, Canada and Australia, arguing that whereas in those countries the immigrants came to a new land with the aim of building a new life and a new world for themselves, in Israel the Jews came back to their ancient land to build it not only for themselves, but to help prepare for the ingathering of the exiles and their amalgamation into a single nation.

On 5th July 1950, the Knesset passed the Law of Return, which stated that every Jew has the right to immigrate to the country. The Law grants

21 Ibid, p.237
22 Gilbert Kushner, op.cit, no.10, p.41.
automatic citizenship to those who make *aliyah* and settle in Israel. But at the same time, the law discriminates against the Israeli Palestinians who could not gain for their families living abroad the same right of automatic citizenship.\(^{24}\) The very identification of Israel as a Jewish state is a perfectionist principle, deemed to be of crucial importance, in order to secure a home for the Jewish people. In the words of Ben-Gurion, "it is the law of the continuity of Jewish history. It codifies the redemptive principle out of which the state was born. It proclaims that it is not the state that gives the Jew from abroad the right to settle in Israel; the right inheres in him as a Jew. He has only to want to come".\(^{25}\) *Aliyah* was seen as the essence and fulfillment of the Zionist dream and was also conceived as a means to reinforce state security, in terms of sheer numbers against the Arabs.\(^{26}\) Jews from Islamic countries were considered as a key population reservoir, which could tilt the demographic balance in Israel in favor of Jews.

What followed was massive immigration, which drastically changed the map of the world Jewry from where the Jewish communities were

\(^{24}\) For a detailed analysis, see Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "Harm Principle, Offence Principle, and the Skokie Affair", *Political Studies*, vol.41, 1993, pp.453-70


27
transplanted to Israel. Several special operations were planned and executed by the Jewish State and the Jewish Agency. The most dramatic were Operation Magic Carpet, for the Yemenite Jews, and Operation Ezra and Nehemia, which brought over Iraqi Jews. Thousands of Yemenite Jews had been making their way south on foot carrying their scanty belongings to the British colony of Aden. Although the Jews of Yemen were not forced to leave, almost the entire community made a long and arduous trek to Aden, whence they were brought to Israel in an intensive large-scale airlift. About 47,000 were thus transported to Israel in an intensive large-scale airlift. About 47,000 were thus transported to Israel “on eagle wings”.

In March 1950, the Iraqi government enacted a “special law authorising the emigration immigrant absorption policies of Jews” provided they renounced their citizenship in writing. More than 100,000 Jews were brought to Israel from the period between May 1950 and June 1951, all of them by air. Some 60,000 of them were brought to Israel in the last three months of the operation, between March and June 1951, but only after all the property of this rich community had been impounded by the Iraqi government. The Israeli government invoked this as an excuse to justify the nationalisation of Palestinian assets and


29 Ibid
refused to compensate the 1948 Palestinian refugees. Its argument was that the Jews from the Arab countries were also refugees. The Zionist national ideology was used to silence the protests of Iraqi Jews in Israel.30

Similar operations were held in the case of Ethiopian Jews in 1984. Between 1955 and 1984 about 6000 Jews from Ethiopia immigrated to Israel.31 In November-December 1984, a massive unpublicised air and sealift codenamed as ‘Operation Moses’ was carried out by the concerted efforts by the U.S and the Israeli governments thereby taking the Jews from Ethiopia and Sudanese camps. About 7000 individuals were brought to Israel during the course of Operation Moses.32 The Sudanese President El Numery announced that the Ethiopian Jews were free to leave Sudan “as long as they do not go to Israel”.33 The Ethiopian government demanded the immediate return of the Ethiopians who, it charged, had been forcibly abducted. In March 1985, another operation codenamed "Joshua" airlifted about 900 Ethiopian Jews out of Sudan. "Operation Solomon", in 1991, the last in the series, brought a further 14,300 individuals to Israel.34

30 Ibid, p.624
31 Israel: Year Book and Almanac (Jerusalem), vol.51, 1997, p.38
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid
Table 2.1: Jewish Population in the World and In Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>In Israel % (1)</th>
<th>In World (Thousands)</th>
<th>In World (Millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1918</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2,582</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3,283</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3,947</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4,441</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Jews in Israel per hundred Jews in the world.


**The ‘Melting Pot’ and ‘Fusion of Exiles’**

*Klitat ha Aliyah* (absorption of immigrants) was the phrase used by the pioneering policy makers in Israel to denote the process by which the immigrants would be settled and integrated through specific policies and programmes. It would involve different stages from collecting the immigrants at the port or airfield, providing temporary and permanent housing, finding employment, expanding health services, organizing
education etc. and the process would be complete only by fulfilling a number of tasks in all spheres of life where mizug ha galuyot (fusion of exiles) would occur.

Theoretically the concept of mizug ha galuyot implied integration of immigrants through a melting of cultures to produce one enriched common Jewish national culture. In the words of Ben-Gurion,

we are bringing home a unique people, dispersed to the ends of the earth, speaking many languages, brought up in foreign cultures, divided into communities and tribes. The whole of this vast and variegated influx we shall have to melt down afresh and recast...we must break down the geographical, cultural and linguistic barriers between the sections, and endow them with a single language, a single culture, a single citizenship, a single loyalty, and new laws and statutes. We must fit them into new social and political frameworks; imbue them with an attachment to our past and a vision for the future; educate them for life as an independent people in a sovereign State, for self-government, freedom, Jewish unity, mutual aid and collective responsibility...we must become a model State, and with the help of the pioneers of labor and the men of spirit, we can do it”.

Thus, absorption was conceived not merely in specific technical terms, i.e., as assistance to the immigrants to perform basic occupational, civic, educational or cultural roles, rather it was conceived in broader ideological terms, as a complete re-education and re-socialisation of the immigrants.

35 David Ben-Gurion, op.cit, n.23, pp.xxi-xxii

During the early waves of post-state immigration, public statements by the Prime Minister and other officials went beyond the ‘melting pot’ with frequent allusions to the Israeli ‘pressure-cooker’.

In the immediate post-1948 period, there was a confluence of political, economic and security concerns, were projected as playing a crucial role in determining the policy measures of the new state authorities. The task of population dispersal was of primary concern due to several reasons. Up to 1948, more than 60% of the Yishuv population was concentrated in the three major urban centres of Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem. Vast areas in the Negev and in the Galilee Hills remained almost uninhabited and underdeveloped. Also, from a security point of view, the obsession with a perceived Arab threat urged the Israeli decision-makers to fill the vacuum opened by Arab departure and to block Arab infiltration from across the armistice line. Above all, Israel was critically short of food and its agricultural sector required immediate development. Keeping in view with these goals, the absorption of immigrants was perceived as a problem of both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

Although the settlement of the immigrants was perceived as the immediate and urgent task and responsibility of the new state, it was not performed outside the general paradigm of political and economic development.

---

There were well-framed policies and programmes as well as centralised mechanisms of absorption since it was perceived as an integral part of the nation-building process.

The political setting into which the new immigrants arrived in Israel was on the one hand being shaped by Ben-Gurion’s *mamlakhtiut* which became a mobilizing ideology and a concrete policy premised on the assertion of the state primacy over all sectors and institutions in Israeli life and on the other, was dominated by the labor movement that increasingly took on the form of a paternalistic elite. Labor not only formed Israel’s governments in the first three decades, but also was regarded as the establishment by virtue of its political, economic and social power. It dominated government, army labor unions and the Jewish Agency and set the tone of Israel’s value system and elite structure. This multiple domination was for all practical purposes in the hands of the country’s *Ashkenazim*- Jews of European-American origin.

The concept of *mamlakhtiut* was applied to the state services and education in both spheres; the aim was to bring about the sense of governmental authority divorced from partisan considerations and thus legitimize in the eyes of all segments of population. In regard to state services, Ben-Gurion declared in 1956 that “every service which is required by the citizens as a whole – the state must perform it...Everything that was essentially a general state need dealt with by the *Histadrut* before the establishment of
the state...should no longer be carried out by the Histadrut, but must be handed over to the authority of the state.”

The State Education Law (1953) abolished the ideological educational streams sponsored by different parties. Government responsibility for curricula replaced political party control. However, the picture was, in reality, much more complex. It was only the workers and the general streams of education that were abolished. They were replaced by an official system of state education that was entitled mamlakhti, alongside which the religious parties retained their own system of education (mamlakhti-dati). The ultra orthodox parties opted out of the state systems and maintained their own system with private funds and partial state support.

In the paradigm of mamlakhti, with its Zionist glaring, the Afro-Asian Jews were “the generation of the desert” who were to be recast into new Israeli Jews. The Ministry of Education has designated them as those “in need of fostering” (Te’unei tepuach). Officially, this designation, based on socio-economic characteristics, has been promulgated to enable the educational bureaucracy to target additional funds and special curricula to schools serving low-status Afro-Asian Jewish communities. In practice, this notion

38 Raphael Cohen-Almagor, op.cit, n.26 , p.467

became a euphemism for more provocative concepts such as “primitive” and “lacking in culture”. Sami Khalil Mari writes, “A careful investigation of the cultural origin of teachers and their distribution within schools, committees and the educational hierarchy, coupled with an investigation of the curricula and the school culture in the Jewish educational system reveals a definite bias favoring western Ashkenazi culture over that of the non-western Sephardi group, which comprises more than half the Jewish population in Israel”.

The Oriental Question and Spiritual Absorption

The nation-building perspective viewed aliyah from the oriental countries in terms of absorption and modernisation. The view as observed by Ben-Gurion was that “the immigrants of Eastern Europe gave the nation its spiritual assets- the revival of language, the Hebrew literature, enlightenment and the love of Zion and the aliyah of Bilu, the worker’s movement, the values of work and pioneerism and the Orientals in contrast came with their backward principles and cultures.”

Speaking before the top command of Army in 1950, he said,

---


41 David Ben Gurion, Uniqueness and Mission (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1971), p.337
these immigrants came to us without elementary knowledge, with no trace of Jewish or human education ... The spiritual absorption of these immigrants moulding them, turning these human dust into a cultural nation, creative, independent and with a vision is not an easy job; it is as difficult as the economic absorption. A tremendous effort- moral and educational- is required in order to endow them with the riches and values of the nation, in order to absorb them into our society, culture and accomplishments.42

Then minister of labor, Mrs. Golda Meir, was quoted as saying about the Middle Eastern immigrants that "we shall bring the immigrants to Israel and make them human beings. 43 In sharp contrast to this, the Soviet Jewish immigrants arriving in 1969-70, were welcomed by Golda Meir herself with such statements as: "You are the real Jews. We have been waiting for you for twenty-five years... you are a superior breed-you will provide us with heroes."44

The labor propagated the ideology that the Oriental immigrants were a "lost generation" and posed a threat to democracy and to Israeli culture. The new policy makers in the state of Israel emphasised the distinction between the Ashkenazi population, which was portrayed as the embodiment of Jewish tradition, culture and values of modernity and the Orientals who

43 Cited in Raphael Cohen Almagor , op.cit., n.26, p.472
44 Cited in Joseph Masad, op.cit, n.12, p.62
lacked all these characteristics. Hence the latter’s entrance into the Israeli society has been described as the beginning of a process of modernisation which will end in their dispersal throughout the social structure. The idea was to create “one people one heritage”, but behind these ideals were glaring realities of superiority, paternalism and ethnocentrism.

Among the immigrants who arrived in the 1950s, the holocaust survivors from Europe who spent years in concentration camps, followed by frustrating months or years in the allied camps for displaced persons were found initially unsuited for productive work. Hence the government took it as an urgent task to clothe, feed and house them. But they were found easily adaptable to the Israeli situations (in terms of modernity) where as the Oriental Jews were viewed as traditional and less adaptable with Israel’s social structure. At the same time, in the rapid process of economic development, the Oriental Jews constituted a relatively cheap labor force. While majority of them was becoming agricultural, construction and industrial workers, large numbers of Ashkenazim were entering the public services that underwent great expansion, concomitant with the rapid economic development.

Although accepted as Jews and thus on principle welcomed to the Zionist enterprise, it soon became problematic that in most ways the majority of the new immigrants were worlds removed from the Zionist pioneers of

45 Howard Pack, op.cit, p.8
European background. In the nation-building project the definition of "Israeli" was a decidedly European, Ashkenazi one. The policies of the new state, in the formative years, regarding the cultural, educational and welfare activities gradually marginalised the Oriental Jews from the mainstream.

The state education law of 1953, advocated single curriculum. Then education minister declared, "we do not wish to establish two kinds of schools in Israel.... All Jewish children throughout the country share this curriculum and this must be our ambition: the achievement of intellectual and cultural equality for all Jewish children". 46 However, the single curriculum was heavily loaded with Ashkenazi history with extensive courses in European Jewish history and literature keeping the children of Oriental immigrants at a disadvantage. Since the Oriental culture was perceived as incongruent with that of Ashkenazis, there has been boundary maintenance between these two communities. This perpetuated a fundamental division of the Israeli society into Ashkenazis and Orientals. Thus, theoretically, writes Margaret Abraham, while all Jews were equal on the basis of their Jewish membership in Israel, in practice an asymmetrical structure developed with the Ashkenazim forming the core culture and the

\[46\] Erik Cohan, op.cit.,n.36, p. 245.
Asian, North African and Middle Eastern communities forming the peripheral cultures.\textsuperscript{47}

Many scholars have drawn parallels between the Jewish state’s attitude towards the Oriental Jews and the Palestinians in Israel challenging the notion that the Zionist leaders in Israel had been motivated by altruistic socialistic and liberal ideologies.\textsuperscript{48} On the contrary, the dictatorial and orientalist character of the Israeli system have been exposed. Shlomo Swirsky, places the Oriental Jews and the Arabs together on the periphery and exploited by the core.\textsuperscript{49} Harvey Goldberg suggests that it was specifically the perceived ‘Arabness’ of these Oriental immigrants which so troubled the \textit{Ashkenazi} policy-makers who were anxious to establish the ‘Jewishness’ of their new society beyond any doubt.\textsuperscript{50} The fear of ‘Oriental levantism’ has been consistently aired by the public figures. Ben-Gurion is quoted as saying in the mid-sixties: “We do not want Israelis to become Arabs. We are in dutybound to fight against the spirit of the Levant, which corrupts individuals and societies, and preserve the authentic Jewish

\textsuperscript{47} Margaret Abraham, “Ethnicity and Marginality: A Study of Indian Jewish Immigrants in Israel”, \textit{South Asia Bulletin}, vol.15, no.1,1995, p. 111

\textsuperscript{48} See Ilan Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique On Israel And the Palestinians”, \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies}, vol.36,no.2, winter 1997

\textsuperscript{49} Shlomo Swirsky, \textit{The Exploited Haifa: Notebooks on Research and Critique} (Tel Aviv, 1981), p.10

values.” The attitude towards the immigrants from the Muslim world has been highly complicated. Moshe Shokeid writes that the Moroccan Jews in Israel have often been accused of collaborating with Muslims.

Though over the years the Orientals have made individual gains and some political prominence, the overall socio-economic gap between the Ashkenazi and the Oriental Jews changed very little. At the bottom of the status hierarchy, an Oriental Jewish ethno-class, commonly referred to as the "second Israel" of low socio-economic as well as ethnic standing emerged; a considerable portion of this ethno-class consists of second generation Orientals.

Also, there occurred a change in the population figures in the early 1990s as the new Russian immigration disturbed the erstwhile Oriental numerical strength in Israel. The large-scale immigration from the former Soviet Union in 1992 had divided the Oriental and Ashkenazi population in Israel in the ratio 50:50. Since 95% of the Jews abroad are Ashkenazi, any future Jewish immigration to Israel implies a demographic, cultural and political change detrimental to the Oriental Jews.

51 Quoted in Sammy Smooha, op.cit., n. 1,p.88

Table 2.2: Immigration of Jews to Israel by Region of Origin, 1992 - 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Soviet Union</td>
<td>65,100</td>
<td>66,100</td>
<td>68,100</td>
<td>64,800</td>
<td>58,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other European Countries</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>4,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77,100</td>
<td>76,800</td>
<td>79,800</td>
<td>76,400</td>
<td>70,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Holocaust and Absorption

The centrality of the Nazi trauma has been a basic feature in the Israeli life. In the early years of statehood, the *churban* (destruction) as it was initially called was made manageable by digesting it into the traditional Zionist narrative of the transition from a powerless diaspora to potent sovereignty, a saga that moved from exile and catastrophe to resistance and ultimately collective national deliverance in the Jewish nation. The thousands of holocaust survivors who came into the country were often looked upon with a mixture of awe and pity and were set aside and branded by their special experience. There were unending
debates, often harsh, bitter, full of tension and emotion, regarding the Holocaust. They included the debate over the reparations from Germany, the crystallization of commemoration patterns and the trial of Malkiel Grunewald (known as the ‘Kastner trial’), during which the line of demarcation between memory and politics was not blurred but simply disappeared.\textsuperscript{53}

Beginning in 1961 with the Eichmann trial\textsuperscript{54} and accelerating after the highpoint of June 1967, a particular constellation of events produced paradigmatic shifts in Israeli representations of the catastrophe and placed what had been latent at the very defining center of consciousness. In the days and weeks immediately preceding the Six-Day War, a feeling of utter isolation and vulnerability permeated the country. As the most obvious available existential and historical analogy, the Shoah (Holocaust) suddenly assumed a central experiential relevance. The predicament of the Jewish State and the powerless diaspora were no longer antithetical—but the Jewish fate is existential and political. The uniqueness of Jewish continuity, fate and victimhood—with Holocaust as its measure and standard—was now more than ever underlined. The Israeli political culture increasingly invoked it as

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{53} Yechaim Weitz, “Political Dimensions of Holocaust Memory in Israel During the 1950s”, \textit{The Journal of Palestine Studies}, vol.26, no.2, winter 1997, p.130
\textsuperscript{54} Kastner libel case, where the Hungarian Zionist leader, in charge of negotiations with Eichmann and other Nazi figures was found guilty of collaboration with the enemy. See Steven Ashcheim, \textit{Culture and Catastrophe} (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.26
\end{flushright}
the crucial legitimising force behind the State's existence. The perception of the 'uniqueness' of the Holocaust assumed extra-historical, ideological functions.

The use of Holocaust rhetoric have occurred at any number of levels. The most bizarre instance that sought to invoke the code is the case of the Sephardi rabbi Uzi Meshulam and his band of religious followers. Meshulam and his group have consistently branded the white Israeli establishment as "Ashke-Nazi" and accused it of abducting Yemenite children during the early years of statehood and even conducting medical experiments upon them.\(^{55}\) This trend in effect worked towards standardising all conflicts, like in the case of Arab-Israeli conflict, which was understood as analogical to the anti-Semitic Nazi project. 'The whole world was and is against us'-became the logic of the Arab-Israeli conflict also. Yitzhak Shamir described Israel's pre-1967 geography as 'the borders of Auschwitz'. Menachem Begin's reference to Yassir Arafat in Beirut during the Lebanon War as "Hitler in his bunker" is well known.

The same Holocaust dimension was applied with primacy in the absorption of immigrants. The Oriental Jews were found as lacking in this unique psychological dimension of suffering as their diaspora experience was relatively peaceful. Prof. Shlomo Aronson, a prominent Israeli Political

\(^{55}\) Steven Ashcheim, ibid
Scientist commented: "The Oriental Jews were victims of various means of persecution, varying greatly from time to time and from country to country, but were not survivors of Holocaust (emphasis added) as the Rumanians and other "Europeans" were. Ben-Gurion, talking about 'human dust', reflected at that time a common fear that those who eventually survived were not the main bulk of the millions who didn't". During the 1970s, when attempts have been made to incorporate elements from the history of Oriental Jewry into the whole discourse, the right-wing propagandists argued that along with the memories of European Holocaust survivors, the suffering of Oriental Jews at the hands of the Arabs should be mentioned and the Oriental aliyah and their contributions to the Zionist enterprise should be presented.

As David Biale has pointed out, "the very discourse of 'uniqueness' is ...either trivial, meaningless or a codeword for an extra-historical agenda...the best medicine for the vulgar exercise of comparative victimisation is not the copious assertion of Jewish uniqueness but an end to the fruitless debate between the uniqueness and universality of suffering in the first place".

57 Raphael Cohen Almagor, op.cit., n.26, p.478
Institutional Framework for Immigrant Absorption

An entirely new range of Israeli power structures and positions had been created to deal with the immigrants in the post-state period. The Israeli government and the various national institutions officially assumed control of the branches and offices of the Mandatory government; Israeli Defence Forces were established; development plans required a host of administrative and supportive structures and positions; and the mass immigration itself and problems attendant there to demanded the creation of new structures and the great expansion of pre-existing ones. As Eisenstadt puts it,

"Growing centralisation of the basic framework of power within the hand of the government and its administrative appendices; a rise in the social evaluation of power-relations; and a concomitant growth in the differentiation between various social classes in general and between the elite and the non-elite in particular with respect to the allocation of facilities in various fields."59

This led to a growing formalisation, bureaucratisation, and the loss of cohesiveness of the various primary groups and of their direct relation to the central values of the society. Eisenstadt observed that the field in which these changes had their most important repercussions-in addition to the

establishment of the bureaucracies themselves—was the absorption of new immigrants.

In the agricultural settlements, the Ministry of Labor and the Jewish National Fund combined to provide settlers with work on afforestation, public works, reclaiming the soil, and every sort of local development and assured them of minimum subsistence until their own plot yielded a livelihood. Other institutions were also active. Veteran Israeli-born farmers were recruited by their settlement federations to go out to the new settlement as technical and social instructors. Troops were permitted to do part of their military service as teachers in the villages. Units of Histadrut traveled through the settlements with concerts, films, dance groups etc. Kupat Holim the Sick Fund of the Histadrut) set up dispensaries and appointed nurses and physicians to care for the immigrants. The Hadassah Medical Organisation (Branch of American Women's Zionist group) established clinics in the settlements. Kindergartens and elementary schools were organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and staffed by teachers who were encouraged to live with the newcomers, since their influence naturally penetrated far beyond the classrooms, into the homes. Histadrut women's branches and clubs and Women's International Zionist Organisation sent women into the villages to help counsel and educate female immigrants. The Israel Defense Forces instituted special curricula to

---

60 Gilbert Kushner, op.cit.10, p.44
teach Hebrew, Israeli history, and general facts of national life to immigrants who were drafted at age eighteen. Indeed, much of an immigrant youth's military service found him occupied in classes of one sort or another, many having nothing to do with military training.

Types of Settlements

The *kibbutz*, the *moshav* and the development town are the three major types of settlement units in which the immigrants could be absorbed. Upon arrival, immigrants were either placed in *ma'abarot* (transit camps) from where they would be gradually shifted to permanent settlements or they were directly taken to *moshavim* or *kibbutzim*. The latter scheme was referred to as “from ship to village”\(^1\). In 1950s, the government established “development towns” in remote areas. The *kibbutz* form of social organisation attempted to implement some utopian values and goals of veteran East European immigrants in Israel.\(^2\) It has the following major features. Property, production and consumption are communally owned and regulated and the needs of members are met by communal institutions. Such needs are provided for an egalitarian basis and each member receives a small yearly allowance for personal expenses. Both men and women


\(^{62}\) Don Handelman, and Shlomo Deshen, *The Social Anthropology of Israel* (Tel Aviv; Institute for Social Research, 1975), p.3.
work in different sectors of the *kibbutz* economy. All members of the *kibbutz* take their meals together in the communal dining hall. In most *kibbutzim*, children live in a communal, children’s house where they are looked after by *kibbutz* members assigned to do this task. Children spend a few hours each day with their parents. Major decision making institution in the *kibbutz* is the general assembly, which usually convenes once a week. The day to day running of the *kibbutz* is regulated by an elected secretariat and by various elected committees. Every *kibbutz* is affiliated to one of the four major *kibbutz* federations that differ in shades of politico-cultural orientation. The major sources of external recruitment to *kibbutzim* are through the youth movements affiliated with each of the *kibbutz* federations.

The *Moshav ovdim* (*moshav* for independent farmers) which began to emerge during the second *aliyah* in the *yishuv* became the model upon which the *moshav olim* (*moshav* for new immigrants) of the post-1948 period was patterned. The first *moshav ovdim*, Nahalal, was founded in 1921 by veteran agricultural workers with a minimum of ten years’ experience in a variety of Palestinian agricultural settings. A duel impetus provided the motivations of its founders: objections to the pervading collectivism of the *kvutzah/kibbutz* with its separate children’s quarters, and the publication in 1919 of a pamphlet by Elieger Jaffe which described a new form of settlement combining “the best features of individualism with
cooperative institutions". The principles in terms of which the moshav ovdim were organized are national land, self-labor, cooperation and mutual aid. In the moshavim, purchasing and marketing are cooperatively organized. The moshav as a legal entity contracts for capital: for example, long-term loans or equipment are granted to or purchased by the community, which then determines its distribution. Similarly, the community contracts for items such as seeds, water, and fertilizers, usually on short-term credits. Members receive these commodities from a central store, and the amount received is registered in a central bookkeeping system. At harvest time all the families market their goods together. The cash value of the marketed goods is then returned to the community, where it is entered in the bookkeeping ledger. Credits are set against debits—the value of the crops marketed minus the costs of production—and only then are the profits distributed to the producers. Central marketing permits the community loan structure to function, since the produce is always under community control...these cooperative arrangements have the effect of binding the moshav members to one another and thereby heightening their mutual dependence. The moshav is in its daily reality, a highly interdependent social system. The moshav olim was, after the establishment of the state of Israel, the new version of moshav with a

---

63 Cited in Gilbert Kushner, op. cit, n.10, p.39
64 Ibid.
planned bureaucratic device designed to absorb new immigrants. Willner writes,

The *moshavei olim*, like all new settlements, are set by the Land Settlement Department of the Jewish Agency on land of the Jewish National Fund and with the financing of the Foundation Fund. These settlers are brought to Israel through the Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency... and are brought to the villages through its Absorption Department. Thus, both settlers and settlements remain for sometime in the Jewish Agency network, and are in the governmental network. Most of them are affiliated, at least through the Sick Fund, to the General Labour Federation and/or a competing organisation, and each belongs to some village federation. In fact, the actual recruitment of prospective settlers is carried out by emissaries of the various village federations... and the villages themselves are assigned to one of the federations even before their settlers arrive. In brief, the channeling of the resources that make up a *moshav olim* is carried out by and through an organisational framework established in pre-state days.\(^{65}\)

In Kushner’s terminology, *moshav* is an ‘administered community’ guided through directed changes under the supervision of agents of external bureaucratic agencies.\(^{66}\)

Development towns were built not as an administered community like *moshav*, many of its bureaucratic organs were staffed by personnel

\(^{65}\) Dorothy Willner, *Paradox, Ambiguity, and Change: The Structure of Rural Immigrant Absorption and Community Formation in Israel* (Doctoral Dissertation: Chicago University; 1961), p.69

\(^{66}\) Gilbert Kushner, op.cit, n.10, p.4
employed by various government ministries responsible for different aspects of the welfare of its inhabitants. Thus the local offices of the Ministry of welfare, the Labor Exchange and National Housing Corporation became the major sources of financial and service benefits for the immigrants of the development towns. However, many of these towns lacked industry, and therefore occupational opportunities. Context of high unemployment, minimal incomes and large families has resulted in social frustrations in towns. Marx notes that "...most of the roads of achievement lead through officials whose limited resources must be distributed among a large clientele." The dependence of poverty-stricken inhabitants on various local bureaucracies often leads them into impasses they cannot solve without recourse to bureaucratic agents. Such impasses, however, are often insoluble for periods of time, which may be of prime importance to the inhabitant-client. On occasions, such persons may resort to "...violence or threats of violence as efficacious but risky means to obtain results".

Relations between inhabitants and local bureaucrats, who were affiliated with national bureaucratic organisations, resemble relations between external bureaucratic agents and inhabitants of immigrant moshavim. And it may will be that such contacts helped to create contexts conducive to the emergence of interpersonal anxiety and stress.


68 Ibid.
Differential Pattern of Settlement

The Jewish Agency's Land Settlement Department in conjunction with various government ministries and the army first determined where the new settlements would be situated. Having agreed upon the location, the department's staff planned and began to construct the villages, and in conjunction with the various party affiliated settlement movements, recruited potential settlers. The land was leased to the villages by the Jewish National Fund, and could thereafter neither be solved nor further divided. Apart from the land, almost all other items—buildings, farm implements, central stores, irrigation systems and so forth—were financed by the Department. In addition to investment and technical planning, the Department guided the social development of each new immigrant community. Instructors were assigned to each village, and these local officials were, in turn, supervised by regional and national authorities.

The very physical location of the moshavei olim, Darin Drabkin points out, is decided upon not on the basis of the wishes of the settlers but on the basis of general and national considerations, including requirements of planned colonisation, distribution of the population, the need for maximum exploitation of water and land resources and security factors.69

69 Darin-Drabkin, H, Patterns of Cooperative Agriculture In Israel (Tel Aviv; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1962), p. 112
An understanding of qualitative difference among the Oriental and Occidental immigrants along such linear categories as traditional and modern, have actually paved the way for a differential treatment in the settlement policy. The very nature of absorption was such that the Oriental Jews were directly settled in *moshavim* or development towns while the European immigrants were offered a chance to live in the bigger cities.

The number of agricultural settlements increased from 326 in 1948 to 730 in 1964. Most of the increase came in the form of new *moshavim*-cooperative farm communities. 65% of the population of new *moshavim* was of Oriental origin. Some 40% of new *moshavim* were in the outlying areas of the country, in the hilly and arid lands. Numerous villages were established close to the borders. These were in fact defensive military installations garrisoned by immigrants of these *moshavim*, the majority were Oriental. Most of the new *Ashkenazi moshavim* were built in the central regions on better land.

A study on the differential treatment in the absorption of Moroccan and Rumanian immigrants in the 1950s showed that a greater proportion of Rumanian immigrants were allowed to choose their locality of residence upon arrival where as the Moroccan immigrants were sent to

---

70 S.N Eisenstadt, op.cit, n.59, p.93

71 Deborah Bernstein and Shlomo Swirsky, “The Rapid Economic Development of Israel and the Emergence of the Ethnic Division of Labour”, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 33. no.1. 1982, p.69
underdeveloped areas where educational and occupational opportunities were worse.\textsuperscript{72} When the last job abroad and the first job in Israel compared, 73\% of the Moroccans compared to only 31\% of the Rumanians.\textsuperscript{73} Another study done by Bernard Avishai maintained that between 1956 and 1958 over 60\% of the Oriental Jews had been sent to “development towns” where as only less than 30\% of European immigrants had ever gone there.\textsuperscript{74} Margaret Abraham in her study on the Indian Jews reveals that in the 1960s and 1970s when a large \% of Indian Jews emigrated to Israel, they were almost entirely channeled into settling in \textit{moshavim} or development towns despite the fact that many of them were professionals, clerks etc. in India.\textsuperscript{75} This spatial structuring resulted into the marginalisation of the community, rather than being geographically integrated into the mainstream.

\textbf{Shift in the Ideology: From Fusion to Cultural Pluralism}

The nation-building ideology in Israel sought to create a unified national culture by ‘fusing the exiles’. It sought to create a new type of Jew—a standard Israeli in the \textit{Sabra} image. However the concept of the new Jew was moulded in the European model, which

\textsuperscript{72} Michael Inbar and Chaim Adler, \textit{Ethnic Integration in Israel} (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1977), Chapter 6

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Cited in Raphael Cohen –Almagor,\textit{op.cit}, n.26, p.475

\textsuperscript{75} Margarat Abraham, \textit{op.cit}., n.47, p.115

54
was alien to the Afro-Asians. The frustration and discontent of the Oriental Jews took visible forms creating new hurdles for the policy-makers. Social and cultural undercurrents of dissatisfaction erupted in the early 1970s into a social protest against the evils inflicted by the state on the deprived Jewish communities, mostly North African in origin. Young and vociferous activists tried to emulate the dissent voiced by African Americans and established in the early 1970s their own Black Panther Movement. It represented a social demand for a new and fairer distribution of the economic resources of the country and a share in the definition of its cultural identity.

From the late 1960s a shift in the ideology in favour of cultural pluralism became apparent. The minister of education, Zalman Aranne, laid it down as a pedagogic directive that Israeli culture was no longer to be envisaged monolithically, but as the sum total of numerous sub-cultures, Western and Eastern alike, each with its own distinction and legacy. During the 1970s attempts were made to extend the scope of symbols and landmarks of civil religion. There occurred a growing emphasis on ethnic celebrations. In contrast to everything that statism stood for, this new attitude acknowledged cultural diversity. The customs and traditions of Oriental ethnic groups like the Kurdish (the *Saharane* celebrations) and the North

76 Ilan Pappe, “Post-Zionist Critique on Israel and the Palestinians”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol.26, no.2, winter 1997, p.35

77 Raphael Cohen Almagor, op.cit, n.26, p.478
African (the *maimuna* celebrations) evoked public interest. In addition attempts have been made to incorporate elements from the history of the Oriental Jewry in to the Israeli civil religion. In 1977, when the Likud party came to power, the Oriental question became an electoral issue. The deprivation of the Middle Easterners in the cultural sphere and their institutional discrimination in the economic sphere had played a significant role in the emergence of this leading opposition party. The Labor which dominated the initial years, never admitted their mistakes which they made during the 1950s. They remained aloof from reality and alien to the Afro-Asians. The Likud, instead, made their cause a political issue and succeeded in raising their self-esteem. It had done so, *inter alia*, by giving an institutional legitimation to traditional norms and folklore. People of Middle Eastern origin who were previously ashamed of certain expressions of traditional beliefs and had been made to feel uncomfortable about them, no longer felt a sense of uneasiness in performing them in public. There occurred a sudden revival of cults and saints from the Orient.

Yet, notwithstanding these, the mistakes of the past were repeated in the absorption of Ethiopian aliyah during the 1980s and the 1990s. First of all there was a debate regarding their Jewishness. This has always been the attitude of *Ashkenazi* ideologues towards the Judaic traditions of the East and is very much Orientalist in character. Also, the absorption measures in the case of the Ethiopian case when contrasted with the new Russian aliyah
were not carried out on equal terms. There were reports of the new Russian immigrants sending petitions to the Tel Aviv Town Hall complaining about having to live next to ‘Black Jews’ and threatening to leave the country unless the government satisfied their demands. 78 The government responded by removing Mizrahi children from Ashkenazi schools and youth clubs and in some places kept them out of local swimming pools. 79

The Ethiopian community in Israel has undergone persistent and painful dilemmas. Although supportive of Ethiopian aliyah under the ‘Law of Return’, the Israeli Religious Establishment has nevertheless continued to seek their ‘symbolic conversion’ to Judaism. There have been continuing complaints of discrimination and under-achievement in education and protracted difficulties associated with housing, military service and employment. Between 1984 and 1996, public health authorities in Israel maintained a secret policy of discarding blood donations made by Ethiopian Jews on the assumption that the immigrants from Ethiopia were subject to high rates of infectious diseases, especially HIV. 80 In 1996, this led to an explosive and violent confrontation between Ethiopian protestors and agents of the state, including police and public health authorities, known as “the Blood Affair” (parashat ha-dam), which emphasised, often[

78 Ha ’Aretz, 22 March 1971
79 Joshep Massad, op.cit, n.12, p.62.
unrecognised connections between public health policy, strategies of nation-building and ethnic politics.\textsuperscript{81}

The institutional framework for absorption conformed with Ashkenazi standards and were geared to the needs of, and controlled by, Ashkenazim. Eisenstadt, on the other hand, explained that "for a relatively long period basic absorption policies which were undertaken within these frameworks were guided by 'homogeneous' approaches, rooted in basic official ideology. The strong tradition of rebellion against the Diaspora prevented full awareness of different cultural and social backgrounds and explains the initial tendency to treat all immigrants as a uniform whole."\textsuperscript{82}

In reality, these policies which Eisenstadt calls 'homogeneous' and 'uniform' are in fact practices of institutional discrimination. The 'contradiction' in the absorption policies, which Eisenstadt indicated was that the immigrants were given services and guidances at the initial stage but were then left on their own. As Sammy Smooha has rightly contended, there was in fact consistency here rather than contradiction.\textsuperscript{83}

This policy was more tailored to the Westernised Ashkenazi immigrants and it was immaterial to the absorbing agencies that it proved unsuitable

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, p.160


\textsuperscript{83} Sammy Smooha, op.cit., n.1, p.89
to the problems of Oriental immigrants. Hence, the absorption-modernisation model propounded by the policy makers as well as academic ideologues failed to achieve its declared goals of fusion, on the contrary perpetuated cleavages.

To sum up, absorption policy, defined as an integral part of the nation-building project, was formulated and implemented in such a way that it resulted into the marginalization of Afro-Asian Jews in Israel. The state ideology of fusion of exiles viewed Israeli society monolithically with a uniform cultural orientation towards the Ashkenazi culture. Hence, in the post-state period, Ashkenazi immigrants were perceived as potential full partners whereas the Afro-Asian Jews were looked upon as ‘backward’, who needed to go though a process of modernization in order to become part of the Israeli society. Such an understanding of qualitative difference among the immigrants led to a differential treatment in the settlement policy resulting into geographical marginalisation, cultural deprivation and economic discrimination of the Jews of Afro-Asian origin. Thus, the absorption-modernization model propounded by the policy-makers in Israel failed to achieve its declared goals of fusion and on the contrary perpetuated cleavages over the years.