IRANOPHOBIA

THE LOGIC OF AN ISRAELI OBSESSION

HAGGAI RAM

Iranophobia

Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures

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For Ilana, who has taught me
the true meaning of love and companionship

I teach at the university . . . in the department of Middle East Studies. First and foremost the Arabs, naturally, but also Turks, Iranians, and all the other nut cases.

—Prof. Yohanan Rivlin,
protagonist of A. B. Yehoshua's *The Liberating Bride*,
explaining the essence of his craft to a shop vendor.

"Iran, Israel, and Zionism Since the Islamic Revolution: From Rational Relations to Threat and Disaster."

—The title of a keynote address given at a symposium on Iran, Israel, and the Arab World: The New Middle East, Netanya Academic College, Israel, 2008.

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PREFACE

IRANOPHOBIA is the product of an intellectual journey that began more than seven years ago. It started in 2001, when I was invited by the Van Leer Institute of Jerusalem to write a book reflecting on Israel's shifting understandings of Iran, the Jewish state's onetime intimate ally and today its most bitter foe. The book, *Reading Iran in Israel* (*Likro Iran be-Yisra'el*), came out in 2006 as part of a book series devoted to critical perspectives on Israeli society. The book was well received by Israeli historians and social scientists, and the Arabic edition that soon followed (2007) won praise in the printed and electronic Arab media.

Following these auspicious circumstances I decided to try reaching out to a wider audience of readers by translating the book into English. However, as is usually the case, what began as a simple work of translation culminated in a different book altogether. Thus, the present book, *Iranophobia,* differs from the Hebrew edition in its scope of empirical research, in its methodologies, in its narrative strategies, and in the range of subject matters it covers. It is both a product of my disenchantment with the displaced anxieties about Iran among Israelis and an attempt to make sense of these anxieties outside the domain of geopolitics, with which previous scholarship on Israel and Iran has been primarily concerned. In the final analysis, by proposing new ways for thinking about the relationship between domestic and foreign policies in the overall manufacturing of the Israeli polity, I hope this book also provides new ways for thinking about the Jewish state's anti-Iran phobias.

It is my pleasant duty to thank all of my colleagues, students, and friends who have assisted me in the various stages of conceiving and writing this

book. Special thanks go to my dear friend Yehouda Shenhav. As chief editor of Van Leer's *Theory and Criticism in Context* book series, Yehouda was the one who had originally proposed that I write a critical book on Israeli perceptions of Iran. He has not only followed through the Hebrew edition with much commitment, skill, and faith, but also read earlier drafts of the manuscript and provided valuable comments and suggestions. His imprint is evident in many pages of the book. Yossi Yonah is another dear friend from whose companionship, wisdom, intellectual breadth, and critical mind this book has benefited tremendously. I also thank Adrianna Kemp, Avi Rubin, and Bob Vitalis for their incisive comments on parts of the manuscript's earlier versions.

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Finally, I should thank the anonymous reviewers. Their encouraging and thought-provoking comments enabled me to sharpen my arguments and situate them for a wide English readership and beyond. Kate Wahl, the acquisitions editor at Stanford University Press, Joa Suorez, her editorial assistant, and Judith Hibbard, senior production editor at Stanford University Press, have gone out of their way to make academic publishing both pleasant and feasible. To David Horne, the copyeditor, I want to express my appreciation for his meticulous editing of the manuscript. I would like to thank the Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy at Ben Gurion University and the center's director, Yoram Meital, for providing the funding for the preparation of the book's index. As it is customary to state, all the above-mentioned friends and colleagues are not responsible for the flaws of this book for which I alone should be held accountable.

Over the years I have come to appreciate and depreciate the heated passions that surround all things related to the Islamic Republic of Iran, in and outside academia. Present world politics and the "war on terrorism" have amplified

these passions. In such a context, writing against the grain of common fears, overt and covert political designs, and wartime consensus is bound to meet all kinds of disgruntled reactions. I respond to these reactions by endorsing the following introductory statement from Zachary Lockman's *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6: "I will not be surprised if those who understand the world in ways that are diametrically opposed to my own do not like this book. In fact, I would feel as if I were doing something wrong if they were not unhappy with what I had to say."

Iranophobia

INTRODUCTION

It is, of course, possible to compare many things, even a mosquito to a helicopter, or a fish to a submarine.

—An Iran expert explaining why a comparative study of Iran and Israel is unjustified

IRANOPHOBIA is concerned with Israeli perceptions of Iran before and especially after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. By historicizing these perceptions, tracing their twists and turns, and situating them within the multiple and contradictory contexts in which they were produced, this book provides a first-of-a-kind critical (and reflective) analysis of Israel's self-understandings of its place in the world; of contemporary Israeli identity, society, and politics; and, accordingly, of the cultural logics at work behind the Jewish state's anxieties about the "Iranian threat."

In this book I take a strikingly different approach to issues involving Israel and Iran than has usually been the case. Much of the literature on these topics has been preoccupied with political, strategic, and economic issues and concerns. This book does not shun discussion of these issues and concerns and acknowledges their importance. At the same time, however, it aims at transcending them by attempting to decipher what the meanings Israelis have produced about Iran are likely to tell us about contemporary Israeli identity, society, and politics.

By calling attention to the resonances of these meanings to the internal dynamics of the Israeli polity, this book demonstrates that although Israeli anxieties about Iran derived from legitimate strategic concerns, they also derived from the Jewish state's *domestic* crisis of modernity since the late 1970s. At the same time, these anxieties can, and should, be linked to Israel's repertoires of violence in the post-9/11 world. In other words, meanings about Iran in the Israeli public sphere were deeply wedded to, and embedded in, the specific world in which they were produced.

For nearly three decades Israelis have understood the enmity between Iran and Israel to be a manifestation of a perceived opposition between a backward, Islamic, religious, and Oriental dictatorship, on the one hand, and a modern, Jewish, secular, and Western democracy on the other hand. Others have come to view this enmity as a manifestation of a strategic rivalry for power and preeminence in the Middle East. In this book, however, I argue that Israeli understandings of Israel's conflict with the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) were not necessarily transparent reflections of the politics of difference. Nor were they necessarily expressions of strategic concerns about the Iranian regime's drive to have the Jewish state "wiped off the map." Rather, they were at least as much (perhaps more?) concerned with what historian David Cannadine described in the context of the British Empire's relations with its overseas possessions as the "construction of affinities."[1] Put differently, these understandings were rooted in the intimidating presumption that Iran was the same as Israel, that the two states were, in fact, inexorably entwined by common trends and phenomena. This presumption, in turn, has yielded reactions by the Israeli media, the public, and agents of social control that can be collectively described as a displaced or exaggerated "moral panic."

THE UNTHINKABLE: INTEGRATING ISRAEL INTO THE MIDDLE EAST

Although I did not know it at the time, the idea of writing this book was born in my mind in 1996. In March of that year I gave an interview to *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement*. Titled "The Demon Is Not So Terrible,"[2] the interview immediately sparked a public uproar that nearly cost me my academic career. In that interview I essentially suggested (a) that the Israeli government, academia, and media were disseminating distorted images of Iran that are informed by the state's security and ethnocentric concerns; (b) that Israeli scholarly research on the Middle East and Iran has remained impervious to innovative analytical tools and paradigms used in other disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences in ways that are reminiscent of the "epistemic self-sufficiency"[3] of Orientalism as a mode of knowledge production; and (c) that in spite of dominant Israeli conceptions to the contrary, Iran and Israel were, in fact, similar in that they were both founded, among other things, on the interpenetration of the secular and the religious.

As a young and admittedly self-conceited (but untenured) faculty member at the newly established Department of Middle East Studies in Ben Gurion

University, I was completely unprepared for the devastating backlash that would soon follow. A barrage of condemnations coming from various academic and political sources appeared in the printed and electronic media questioning my "intellectual integrity and basic knowledge of facts."[4] Prof. Avishai Braverman, the university president (now turned Labor Party politician), demanded my head and let it be known that he would be content with nothing short of my dismissal. Save a handful of colleagues who hailed my "daring attempt to challenge the accepted perceptions in the [Israeli] Middle East Studies establishment,"[5] the message coming from virtually everywhere was loud and clear: "Dr. Ram doesn't represent us."[6]

Fortunately (for me) I survived the backlash. More to the point, however, it appears that what prompted the scathing outrage against me was not my charge that the boundaries between the Israeli state and Israeli Middle East studies were dangerously porous; many of Israel's Middle East scholars would see nothing wrong with that.[7] Rather, it was my contention that the Israeli and Iranian polities deserve to be studied comparatively or contrapuntally. Consider, for example, how David Menashri—Israel's most prominent expert on Iran and my former teacher at Tel Aviv University—responded to this call of mine:

> Dr. Ram's main original contribution is a comparison between Zionism and Khomeinism. I see no fault in such intellectual drills, but we must distinguish between what is important and what is marginal. It is, of course, possible to compare many things, even a mosquito to a helicopter, or a fish to a submarine. But are the two really essentially similar? Compared within the context of their ideational substances, the similarities between Khomeinism and Zionism are marginal. It suffices to read Herzl and Khomeini in order to appreciate how different the two are. Did Zionism aspire to establish a theocratic state (*medinat halacha*)?[8]

In this book I take issue with this kind of contemptuous dismissal of the possibility that a comparative study of "Zionism" and "Khomeinism" may be of any beneficial value. Indeed, as will become apparent, my interpretive perspective on the benefits of such a comparative undertaking is not merely an "intellectual drill," a creation of my imagination. Rather, it was born in the interstices between my own research agenda and the accepted cultural practices in the Israeli polity. As such, it is based on a "double hermeneutic," to use Anthony Giddens's useful term,[9] or, in other words, on my attempt to read the

meaning of "lay" or everyday concepts by reappropriating them into my own scholarly discourse.

Much has already been said and written about the partitions and enclosures that formed "the Euro-Israeli self-image, which sees itself as an extension of Europe,"[10] or, in Ehud Barak's more revealing formulation, as a "villa in the jungle."[11] The implications of these partitions and enclosures for Israeli understandings of monarchical and post-monarchical Iran will be explored in the various chapters of this book. I will say here, though, that efforts to mark clear borders of identity between Jews as Westerners, on the one hand, and Arabs as Easterners, on the other hand, have permeated Israeli institutions of higher learning, in which a clear-cut institutional division of labor has been introduced between "Israel (and Jewish) studies" and "Middle East studies." In both cases, rarely will one come across any attempt to incorporate Israel into the larger Middle East in teaching and research agendas.

One of the answers to the question of why Israeli scholars have shunned incorporating Israel into their research on Middle East societies is to be found in the disciplinary, coercive role of the politics of Western modernity within the Jewish state. "Nation-states," as Dipesh Chakrabarty instructs us, "have the capacity to enforce their truth games, and universities, their critical distance notwithstanding, are part of the battery of institutions complicit in this process."[12] Embedded as they are in various institutional practices that invoke the nation-state at every step, Israeli scholars of the Middle East have, therefore, been predisposed to insist on Western modernity. This insistence becomes particularly manifest in times when trends and circumstances within the Israeli polity seem to threaten the hegemony of the Israeli ethnocratic regime, which historically has buttressed the dominance of the Ashkenazi (European) Jewish ethno-class.[13]

The latter part of the 1970s was a crucial turning point in this respect. The ascendancy of the Likud Party to power in 1977, as literary critic and scholar Ariel Hirschfeld contends,

> did not only signal the downfall of the Labor Party. It signaled the collapse of Israeli society's ethnic outlook. . . . [T]he political change shook up [Israeli] society's profile. That moment made it possible to view Israeli society as an assortment and not as one thing; an assortment of ethnic groups (*'dot*) and communities, settlements and regions, a rabble of human beings who could be very different from each other.[14]

Hirschfeld refers here to the emergence of Jews of Middle East descent, or Mizrahim, as a social and political force to be reckoned with, which in turn showed the Israeli melting pot to be an empty concept. Representing "the eruption of the 'repressed' in Israeli society and culture,"[15] the rise of the Mizrahim posed a grave threat to members of the Israeli ethnocracy. Faced with the predicament of having to share their country with the "Oriental" (albeit Jewish) other, they became extremely alarmed over what they perceived to be the creeping assimilation of the Jewish state into the surrounding Arab and Muslim Middle East.[16]

The emergent Mizrahi politics of identity was not the only cause of their alarm, however. In addition, the 1977 Likud victory occasioned the rejuvenation of "traditional"-cum-"exilic" Judaism, while also prompting the entry, for the first time since the foundation of the state of Israel, of an ultra-Orthodox, *haredi* party (Agudat Yisrael) into coalition government.[17] Moreover, even if the religious Zionist settler movement, Gush Emunim, was launched in the aftermath of the 1967 war and was officially founded in 1974, it was the new Likud government that had given it official recognition as a settler movement of the same rank as the cooperative agricultural communities of the Kibbutzim and the Moshavim.[18] Thus, if the ascendancy of the Mizrahim threatened to submerge the Jewish state into the Middle East, the rise of religious politics had shown that Israel could not fully subscribe to the separation between religion and secularism, and that any attempt to occasion that separation from within the Zionist framework would be tantamount to "a snare and a delusion."[19]

Israeli anxieties about Iran are indeed linked to, and cannot be examined in isolation of, these *domestic* (ethnic and religious) challenges to the nature and outlook of the Jewish state. Still, because these challenges might imperil neat and homogenous conceptualizations of Israel as a "Europe in the Middle East," many Israeli scholars insist on examining them in relation to the countries of Euro-America. By leapfrogging over the immediate Middle East, they have in effect joined, intentionally or unintentionally, the enterprise of calibrating an insurmountable gap between the Jewish state and its Arab and Muslim neighbors. Historian Benny Morris provides a striking example of this, contending that the Middle East is in reality "a world whose values are different [from ours]. A world in which human life doesn't have the same value as it does in the West, in which freedom, democracy, openness and creativity are alien."[20]

Interestingly, even critical Israeli scholars have not been immune to such endeavors. Sami Shalom Chetrit is a classic case in point. Chetrit is a radi-

cal scholar identified with the "new Mizrahim"—that is, those Israeli Jews of Middle East descent who, as Chetrit himself explains, "are very critical of Zionism, are radical from a social perspective, hold leftist positions on political issues and are not linked in any way to [Israel's] Ashkenazi Zionist parties."[21] In his illuminating book *The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel*,[22] Chetrit therefore sets out to deconstruct the Arab-Jewish dichotomy and to demonstrate, among other things, that the Jewish state's discriminatory and racist practices against Mizrahi groups stemmed in large part from those groups' Arab identity. Chetrit also comes out strongly against repeated charges issuing from liberal Israeli Jews that the Mizrahim are "Arab haters" and, consequently, an obstacle to peace. He claims, rather, that by virtue of their Arabness the Mizrahim could—and should—serve as a constructive "bridge to peace" between Jews and Arabs.[23]

One can only wonder, therefore, why Chetrit's point of departure, from which the rest of his analysis proceeds, is a discussion of the Mizrahim struggle in Israel within the context of—and in comparison to—the African American struggle for equality in the United States.[24] At first sight, this comparison seems to make some sense: after all, the Mizrahim protest movement of the 1970s took the African American struggle as a model and inspiration, as attested by its choice of name, the "Black Panthers" (*ha-panterim ha-shchorim*). However, by making the human rights issue in the United States the main, if not the only, point of reference, Chetrit unwittingly reinforces the process of dismembering the Israeli state and its "Jewish victims,"[25] the Mizrahim, from the political, geographical, and cultural zone (the Middle East) to which they belong. By doing so, he glosses over the main cause of the latter's position of subalterity in Israeli society.[26]

The Israeli media, too, have been anxious to consign Israeli realities to an imaginative Europe—"a hyperreal Europe," in Chakrabarty's terminology.[27] In a panel on the set of Channel 1's late-night television news show dedicated to the publication of the Hebrew edition of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*,[28] the host, Emmanuel Halperin, was concerned not with the validity of Huntington's thesis, which he uncritically embraced, but rather with the question, "Where are *we* [Israelis] located" civilization-wise? The foreign affairs commentator, Oren Nahari, did not pause for one second: the Jewish state, he proclaimed, is "the rampart," "the emissary of Western civilization in the Middle East."[29] Or take Channel 10 News mega-meteorologist Danni Rop, who joyfully announced on one particularly stormy day (in February

2007) that "the snowiest place in all of *Europe* today was the [occupied Golan Heights'] Mount Hermon."

Of course, one cannot really address Israel's drive to constitute itself as Euro-America without referring to the continuous "wall" (or "fence" or "barrier") with which it has surrounded itself in recent years. The barrier, it is true, was designed as a buffer against horrific terrorist bombings by Palestinians in Israeli cities, and it has contributed very substantially to a great reduction in penetration of Israel by Palestinian bombers. Still, as Ian Lustick recently commented in a highly instructive essay,

> [T]he effect of the barrier, and perhaps more of its purpose than is commonly acknowledged, is not to keep Middle Easterners out of Israel, but to physically and psychologically remove Israel from the Middle East. The iconic formula, offered originally by Yitzhak Rabin, picked up by Ehud Barak as his campaign slogan, but used now by virtually all supporters of the barrier to describe its purpose most succinctly, is "*Anachnu po, hem sham*" ("Us over here, them over there"). . . . It is undeniable that a continuous barrier separating Israel from the Palestinian territories . . . greatly reduces the amount of contact Israelis have with the only part of the Muslim/Arab Middle East to which they have had direct access. In these ways the barrier contributes directly to an Israel separation or escape from the Middle East.[30]

Clearly, in and by itself the "wall" does not, and cannot, remove Israel to Europe (or Euro-America) in any concrete or tangible way. But it does endow Israelis with the mental capacity to *imagine* that it does, which is perhaps why, contrary to the domino effect akin to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Communism, "the only wall in sight—Israel's apartheid wall—pointedly stays up."[31]

Consider, for example, a disturbing interview with Avraham Burg on the occasion of the publication of his provocative book *The Defeat of Hitler*.[32] Burg, it needs to be emphasized, is not an outsider to Israeli society and politics. Son of Yosef Burg, long-time leader of the Mafdal (National Religious Party) and Minister of Interior under Menachem Begin, "Avrum," as he is usually nicknamed with much affection, is former speaker of the Knesset and chairman of the Jewish Agency, as well as a one-time contender for leadership of the Labor Party. In the interview Burg speaks in ambiguous terms about the barrier. On the one hand, he seems to accept the barrier as an idea and a practice, saying that "physically [it] demarcates the end of Europe. It says that

this is where Europe ends. It says that you are the forward post of Europe." On the other hand, Burg voices strong reservations with respect to the barrier on grounds that it is a "pathetic . . . bill of divorce from the vision of integration [into the Middle East]"; "there is something so xenophobic about it," he concludes. However, in the final analysis Burg emerges as an avid supporter of what Lustick described earlier as an "Israel separation or escape from the Middle East." Asked if he was a "salient Europist," Burg replied, "Completely. Completely. I see the European Union as a *biblical utopia*. I don't know how long it will hold together, but it is amazing. *It is completely Jewish.*"[33]

And so, are Israel and Iran—"Zionism" and "Khomeinism"—really two worlds apart, like a mosquito stands in relation to a helicopter or a fish to a submarine? I don't share this view. However, many an Israeli would like to think that Israel and Iran are not only worlds but also galaxies apart. A flagrant illustration of this was provided in the wake of the devastating earthquake that leveled the Iranian town of Bam in December 2003. Asked about the earthquake in a television interview with Channel 1, Menashe Amir, a leading Israeli expert on Iran, put it most succinctly and bluntly: "Human life has no value there." In Amir's mind, "there" is diametrically opposed to *here*, Israel's world, the putative abode of Western, *Judeo-Christian* humanity, even if the footage running in the background as Amir was making his ludicrous allegation actually told an entirely different story: mothers lamenting their children who were buried under the rubble, rescue teams spraying corpses to prevent epidemics, and physicians in makeshift hospitals trying to save lives with the paltry means at their disposal. Still, no one in the studio cared to challenge the expert's assertion. On the contrary, they remained resoundingly silent about his allegation, thus accepting it as an immutable fact of nature—even while the background pictures showed the exact opposite.

Another telling example of how Israelis have been adamantly reluctant to bring down the physical and mental barrier that separates the Jewish state from the Islamic republic is the controversy surrounding a handshake exchange between Iran's president, Muhammad Khatami, and his Israeli counterpart, Moshe Katsav, during Pope Paul II's funeral in spring 2005.[34] Reportedly, the handshake was accompanied by an exchange of words in Persian centering on the two dignitaries' shared city of provenance, Yazd.

These gestures, I argue, had the potential of destabilizing the principle of difference upon which Israelis imagine themselves in relation to Iran, because they demonstrated that the two dignitaries shared a linguistic-cultural

foundation and common childhood memories. By exchanging a handshake and a few words in their shared native tongue, the two leaders called the lie of Iran's radical alterity, showing that Israelis and Iranians were tied together in ways that defied simple unraveling.[35] And yet, the backlash against Katsav which soon followed clearly indicated that Israelis were not prepared to cast a friendly, familiar, and human limelight upon anything Iranian; not even upon the "reformist" Khatami. "Katsav disgraced Israel"—such was the knee-jerk reaction by "senior state officials" to their own president's seditious act.[36] Even Katsav himself, possibly with an eye to public opinion, tried to undo his terrible wrongdoing by declaring that the gestures had "no meaningful significance whatsoever."[37]

This overall aversion with the Katsav-Khatami encounter serves as a metaphor for the duress under which Israelis find themselves whenever and wherever they are confronted with the daunting realization that Iranians and Israelis might not be so different from each other. Take, for example, literary editor of *Ha'aretz* Benny Ziffer's impressions from a screening event of an Iranian movie that took place at a Cairo film festival in December 2006. Ziffer was particularly astounded by the fact that the Iranian guard who let him in the theater was "exceptionally friendly." At the end of the movie, as Ziffer recounted with bewilderment, the guard even "gave me a friendly wink and asked if I enjoyed the movie." Although Ziffer had serious misgivings with the quality of the film—it "was not . . . exemplary in any sense; it was just a comedy"—he was struck by its protagonists who, lacking horns, swastikas, sacred rage, and a penchant for martyrdom and jihad, were "just like everyone else in the world: fathers who want to marry off their children, and children who want to be modern . . . by using computers and all sorts of technological gadgets. . . ."[38] Similarly, when it was reported in January 2008 that the performance of Israeli pupils in mathematics was poorer than that of their Iranian counterparts, Israelis took this finding as a grave offense. This came out most clearly in many a television talk show and news program, with opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's "scaremonger-in-chief,"[39] crying out in frustration, "*even* Iran has surpassed us"![40]

IRAN, ISRAEL, AND THE ISSUE OF "POWER-KNOWLEDGE"

As mentioned, my 1996 interview with *Ha'aretz* had earned me the wrath of the Middle East studies community precisely because I insisted that "one of the best ways to understand the Islamic Revolution in Iran is to compare it to the history

of Zionism."[41] I would now like to expand on this supposedly blasphemous argument and explain how and why it bears direct relevance to this book's subject of inquiry. According to Martin Riesebrodt, a phenomenon such as the one we call "fundamentalism" should be "placed in a larger context, [so that we] can attempt to compare its ideologies, adherents, or causes of mobilization with those of secular movements."[42] No doubt, the term *fundamentalism* does not quite capture the gist of post-1979 Iranian realities—not the least because the "tradition" that Khomeini discovered had actually never existed.[43] Still, scholarly research in the past three decades or so has amply demonstrated that Iran's "fundamentalist" project bears close affinity to secular movements in different geographies and in different temporalities—fascist, populist, nationalist, and Third World anti-imperialist.[44] Thus, to the extent that "the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology . . . for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason," as Jacques Derrida suggested,[45] "fundamentalism," too, should be considered an integral part of that mythology.

Within this context, Israel offers us something of dramatic resonance for thinking about nationalism in the modern world: "a nation vested in, at times struggling with—but repeatedly failing to discard—the mantle of God."[46] Clearly, the genealogies of many Euro-American and postcolonial nationalisms have also been entwined with religion, as religion was considered an unrivaled basis for mobilization and a component of national identity virtually everywhere, in the West and in the non-West.[47] Be that as it may, the danger of messianism—as the illustrious philosopher, historian, and founder of the scholarly study of Jewish mysticism Gershon Scholem warned some time ago—feeds into the very heart of modern and (ostensibly) secular Jewish nationalism.[48] "They think," as Scholem wrote his friend Franz Rosenzweig in 1926, "they have made Hebrew into a secular language, that they have removed its apocalyptic sting." But, he continues, every word "taken from the treasure house of well-worn terms is laden with explosives."[49] In other words, messianism colors Zionism, including secular Zionism, at every turn. As psychoanalyst Jacqueline Rose forcefully argues in *Question of Zion:*

> [There is a] line that runs from messianism to the heart of Zionism, including secular Zionism—that is, to the heart of Zionism *even when, or perhaps especially when, it does not know it is there.* We cannot therefore relegate messianism to the religious Zionists and Orthodox Zionists, any more than we can to Gush Emunim or indeed the even more fervently fundamentalist and ruthlessly

> messianic movement of [Rabbi Meir Kahane's] Kach. We are talking about the "*slow but steady*" penetration of the civic culture by a vision that many of Israel's citizens do not explicitly embrace. . . . Messianism, as unconscious inspiration, is in the air and soil of Israel.[50]

In light of this brief examination, one can no longer be sure if a statement concerning the "contradiction between God's rule and man's" or, if you will, between "religious and democratic rule," which originally appeared in a "survey on Iran" in *The Economist*,[51] provides a faithful description of Zionism *or* of Khomeinism, of Israeli realities *or* of Iranian realities. I'm not suggesting, of course, that the two cases are identical—after all, Khomeinism means a range of things, from a doctrine embedded in a (certain) modernist interpretation of Shiite teachings to what Ervand Abrahamian defined as a form of Third-Worldist populism,[52] and so does Zionism. For the narrow field of my inquiry, however, I would like to suggest that messianism and the interpenetration of the sacred and the profane have been crucial in imagining the modern nation both in Israel and Iran and, moreover, they should be considered a fundamental cause of the respective tensions, contradictions, and exclusionary practices inherent in both societies and in both political systems.

Another parallel between Khomeinism and Zionism, which centers on the issue of messianic redemption, should illustrate this point even further. In most general and schematic terms, in their endeavor to break with the past—"to create an unbridgeable gulf between all they had hitherto been and all they now aspired to be," to borrow from Alexis de Tocqueville's famous passage on the French revolutionaries[53]—both *secular* Zionists and *Islamist* Iranians, respectively, differed from the old, religious, Jewish and Shiite messianic varieties in that they moved salvation from the heavens to the plains. In both these cases redemption was not to be realized by miraculous, transcendent intervention; rather, both assigned human activity a crucial role, if not *the* crucial role, in the purification of history. Zionism and Khomeinism usurped the divine prerogative, which made human agency redundant, and engaged in the tasks of the world, thus in effect forcing "the end," even if little by little. In both of these cases redemption would not come suddenly, with divine succor, but through human hands. In secular Zionism redemption would be realized through the progressive settlement of the Land of Israel—"we shall have to build houses, dig wells, and plant vines and olive trees," as one of Zionism's "Harbingers," Yehuda Alkelai, surmised;[54] and in Islamist Iran, it would be realized through

progressive revolutionary action—"with a banner and a sword, with true holy war involving all responsible believers," as the most furious revolutionary among the ideologues of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Shari'ati, has argued.[55]

Both Zionism and the Islamic Revolution thus seized the initiative from history, thrusting the task of redemption into the hands of human beings, thereby vehemently coming out, perhaps in an act of pure sacrilege, against previous Jewish and Shiite conceptions of messianism as expectant and passive.[56] What all this seems to suggest is that theological concepts or ways of thinking underlie political, social, economic, and cultural discourses in contemporary Israel and Iran. Indeed, if central concepts of modern politics are, in effect, secularized versions of older theological concepts, it is then possible to argue that political theology serves as a comparable paradigm in the histories and constitutions of both polities.[57]

It may be recalled that the Israeli Middle East studies establishment has not been particularly keen to study Israel and Iran in a comparative fashion. It is my view that the close links forged between Middle East (and Iranian) studies as an academic field in Israel and the state's security and policymaking institutions have made such a comparative undertaking unthinkable. Needless to say, this symbiosis between the academy and the state provides us with yet another glimpse into the working relations between knowledge and power as embedded in various forms of discursive and institutional formations.

To illustrate the intimate links between Iranian studies and the Israeli state's security concerns—and at the same time illustrate the context in which this book was conceived and written—I would like to recount the following episode. In April 2006, I received a telephone call from a prominent "security analyst" at one of Israel's institutions of higher learning, inviting me to participate in a "roundtable on Iran." To my query as to who else was invited to contribute to the event, the analyst provided me with a list of names; some of them were established Israeli scholars in their own right but the majority were representatives of Israel's various military, security, and political establishments. Naturally, this raised my suspicion, and so I asked him to spell out for me the precise nature and objectives of the roundtable. To my dismay the analyst replied, "I may be paranoid, but I'm afraid I can't discuss this over the phone." I protested, saying, (a) that he could not possibly expect me to arrive at the event without knowing its objective in advance, and (b) that his answer ran the risk of contradicting the very principles of academic transparency. To this the analyst replied with the following words (which have scorched

my mind ever since): "What we do here, Dr. Ram, is *different from the kind of scholarship that you've been used to.*" At that point I realized I could not possibly contribute to the event. Nevertheless, determined to make this analyst's life more difficult, I asked if the event would be open to the public. As his answer was a resounding "No," I politely declined his kind invitation.

Let there be no misunderstanding: the Iranian studies community in Israel comprises faculty and graduate students who produce excellent and exciting scholarship.[58] Still, as the preceding episode clearly illustrates, the institutional symbiosis between academic research on Iran and the Jewish state's security and political concerns carries with it detrimental implications.[59]

Another telling example of this was a conference titled "Iran's Emergence as a Regional Power," which was convened in April 2006 at Tel Aviv University (TAU), in conjunction with the inauguration of the Center for Iranian Studies (CIS) there. The conference, it is true, included many scholarly lectures dealing with different aspects of Iran's "rising power" in the Middle East and the world at large. However, it was kicked off with a keynote lecture by then Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, who spoke on the "security challenges facing Israel."

Now, I don't object in principle to having politicians attend academic forums. Nonetheless, in his capacity as defense minister, it must be emphasized, Mofaz was one of the most radical proponents of the charge marking Iran as the main threat to Israel, to the Middle East, and to the world at large.[60] Whether or not this charge is true is irrelevant in this instance, for it remains quite instructive, if not highly problematic, that an academic center committed to the "promotion of knowledge and understanding of Iran," as the TAU official Website states,[61] should at the same time associate itself so openly and so intimately with the state's official line on Iran. This, I believe, does not just make for a gross violation of the proper separation between the academy and the powers that be. For a center that has not even been launched yet, it also makes for a resounding statement about what kinds of research agendas it was likely to pursue in the future. It is of little consolation that a handful of TAU faculty signed a petition in protest of the event,[62] or that some twenty of the university's students set up a demonstration at the conference site to express concern lest "the new center would adopt a security agenda that endorses the military and the government's policy."[63]

Neither the petition signatories nor the students knew at the time that while the CIS conference was taking place, TAU authorities had already taken concrete steps to establish an additional research institute, on top of the CIS,

to supply the government with analyses and solutions concerning the "Iranian threat." In May 2006, TAU president Professor Itamar Rabinovich and the Australian entrepreneur Frank Louis ceremoniously announced the establishment of the "Institute for National Security Studies" (INSS) to replace the old Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies. Rabinovich emphasized that the institute would focus "on crucially important issues, and most notably on the threat of a nuclear Iran."[64] Louis and the newly appointed director of the INSS, retired IDF brigadier general Dr. Zvi Shtauber (who previously served as senior policy advisor to Prime Minister Ehud Barak and as ambassador to the United Kingdom), had no compunctions about explaining just how the institute's research would be put to use. Louis stated, "[A]t a time when dramatic strategic developments are taking place in the Middle East . . . the new institute will enhance the ability of the State of Israel to conduct *independent academic research* . . . to facilitate processes of decision making with respect to issues vital to Israel and to global security."[65] Shtauber was even more candid: "[T]he institute is designed to provide exactly what the state is lacking. . . . Our people take an active role in the workings of government. We are located in such a position so as to make our access to decision makers very easy."[66]

If academic analyses of Iran are institutionally embedded in "the workings of government," what is there to be said about their analytical mainstays? Let me briefly address this question by juxtaposing two texts on the threat of a nuclear Iran, the first penned by a tabloid reporter and the other by a prominent scholar of the Middle East. The first text reads as follows:

> It is 21 March . . . the Iranian New Year. In the background victory songs are played on Iranian TV, and President Ahmadinejad declares that his country has carried out a successful nuclear experiment, joining the exclusive club of states with nuclear capabilities. Millions of Iranians take to the streets in an exhilarated show of pride, which quickly evolves into a grand spectacle of hatred against the West and Israel. Iran calls on the Arab states to unite in a jihad against Israel and promises them a nuclear umbrella in protection against any Israeli unconventional threats.[67]

The other text, penned by a prominent historian of the Middle East, Benny Morris, reads as follows:

> One bright morning . . . the Mullahs in Qum will convene in a secret mission, under a portrait of the steely-eyed Ayatollah Khomeini, and give President

> Ahmadinejad . . . the go-ahead. The orders will go out and the Shihab III and IV missiles will take off for Tel Aviv, Beersheba, Haifa and Jerusalem. . . . Some of the Shihabs will be nuclear-tipped, perhaps even with multiple warheads. . . . With a country the size and shape of Israel . . . probably four or five hits will suffice: No more Israel. A million or more Israelis . . . will die immediately. Millions will be seriously irradiated. No Iranian will see or touch an Israeli. It will be quite impersonal.[68]

As can be gleaned from the excerpts above, these two texts portray an amazingly similar doomsday scenario regarding the dangers of a nuclear-armed Iran. If there are any disparities between them it is that the scholar actually transcends the tabloid reporter in producing and disseminating Iranophobia. Little wonder, then, that some of Israel's leading scholars have been pushing in earnest for an Israeli preemptive military strike on Iran. This was put unambiguously in September 2006 by Ephraim Inbar, professor of political science at Bar Ilan University and a well-known right-wing Israeli analyst. "Israel," he wrote, "can undertake a limited pre-emptive strike. Israel certainly commands the weaponry, the manpower, and the guts to effectively take out key Iranian nuclear facilities. . . . While less suited to do the job than the United States, the Israeli military is capable of reaching the appropriate targets in Iran. With more to lose than the U.S. if Iran becomes nuclear, Israel has more incentive to strike."[69] Meanwhile, in tandem with increasing reports in the international and Israeli media that Israel was considering a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, the INSS published its annual report (January 2007), in which it concluded that a strike on Iran was perhaps inevitable: "time [was] running out to deal with Iran," the report said. The INSS director, Zvi Shtauber, added more fuel to the fire, saying that owing to the reluctance of the international community to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, sooner or later Israel might have to decide "to do it alone."[70]

This almost total unanimity about the presumed apocalypse Iran has in store for the Jewish state suggests that the Israeli government has thus far remained utterly unchallenged in its dealings with that country. As one commentator described it (in favorable terms),

> [The] Iranian scourge has unified us like nothing else has since the Arab siege of spring '67 that resulted in the Six Day War. On this, we find ultra-conservative Avigdor Lieberman [of right-wing Yisrael Beiteinu Party] harmonizing with super-liberal Yossi Beilin [of left-wing Meretz-Yachad Party], Prime Minister

> Ehud Olmert huddling with Opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu and ultra-Orthodox Eli Yishai [of Shas party] cuddling—well, so to speak—with ultra-secular Zehava Galon [of Meretz-Yachad]."[71]

Needless to say, under such circumstances—in which "even the extreme left is not proposing that Israel hold a dialogue with . . . Ahmadinejad"[72]—no real or meaningful debate concerning Iran can ever take place, and no such debate is ever likely to emerge as long as so many politicians, intellectuals, and journalists continue to disseminate anti-Iran phobias. Indeed, there is an inverse relationship between the ubiquitous place that Iran holds in the Israeli public sphere and the dearth of critical discussions that are likely to seriously challenge and supplement Israel's Iran policy.[73]

That the Israeli public has taken these Iran imageries seriously, and is therefore scared out of its wits, is attested in a recent poll which found that 71 percent of Israelis believe that the United States should launch a "preemptive" strike against Iran if diplomatic efforts fail to halt Tehran's nuclear program.[74]

IRANOPHOBIA AS A CASE OF MORAL PANIC

It was against this backdrop that I set out to write this book. Disenchanted with the exaggerated or misplaced anxieties about Iran among Israelis, and, equally so, about the overall failure of much of the literature to make sense of the Israeli-Iranian conflict outside the realm of geopolitics, in this book I set out to inquire into the *cultural* logics at work behind Israel's "Iran psychosis."[75] While there are many good reasons for the Jewish state to be apprehensive of the Islamic republic, I feel there is also a great deal of irrationality involved in that apprehension, and it is the cultural roots of *that* irrationality I seek to investigate in this book.

As any informed individual nowadays would undoubtedly recognize, there is a high degree of convergence of outlooks and of cross-cutting influences between Israel and the United States with regard to the "war on terror" in general and Iran's position within the matrix of that war in particular.[76] Previous scholarship has already unraveled how the media and the experts in the U.S. have portrayed Iran (and "Islam") as a monolithic entity, synonymous with terrorism and religious hysteria, and the hidden agendas and distortions of fact that lay beneath the ostensibly "objective" coverage of Iranian (and Muslim) realities.[77] Although these portrayals produced public anxieties about Iran that are comparable in both form and content to those produced in

Israel, Israeli anti-Iran phobias also bear distinctive qualities that are rooted in the specific history of the Jewish state as well as in that state's crises of modernity. To underline the distinctive characteristics of Israeli Iranophobia and at the same time to account for its historical specificity, I will incorporate in relevant places of this book the notion of *moral panic*.

Generally speaking, the term has been used in sociological analyses to refer to periods when specific groups are negatively framed and labeled as the enemies of society's cosmological order of things and as a threat to its interests. The Massachusetts witch hunt in the mid-seventeenth century was perhaps the first paradigmatic case of moral panic, which achieved more recent expressions in American McCarthyism in the 1950s and in the persecution of the Stalinist Left in Europe during the Cold War.[78] Twentieth-century history provides us with a plethora of phenomena that can be defined and conceptualized in terms of a threat to social mores and moral rectitude: alcoholism, homosexuality, sexuality, the maintenance of family values, abortions, and the smoking of marijuana.[79] Most of these phenomena reaffirmed existing social and racial-ethnic hierarchies and hence induced feelings of misplaced and exaggerated anxiety.[80]

Although I don't intend to make "moral panic" *the* overarching concept of this book, it will occasionally come in handy as a methodological and analytical tool. First of all, it lends coherence to the source material I've used. As a mass hysteria generated by the exploitation of people's worst fears, moral panic is, for the most part, not orchestrated by one (conspiratorial) source.[81] Rather, moral panics are produced by social agents (or "moral entrepreneurs") from all ranks of society—the media, politicians, social science experts, and so on. That is to say, some are engineered by elites, some come by way of middle-level interest groups, and still others emerge almost spontaneously from the grass roots.[82] The source material I have used in this book similarly cuts across segments of the Israeli polity—from the realms of popular culture, academia, and the media to the realm of elite decision making. By resorting to the notion of moral panic I will therefore be able to draw on my corpus as a clearly demarcated site in which conflicting texts, overlapping representations, and diverse interests converged in a powerful way to produce a sense of exaggerated anxiety about the Iranian threat among much too many Israeli Jews.

Moreover, if the notion of moral panic is likely to lend methodological coherence to this study, it is also likely to anchor it in history. By this I don't merely mean to state the obvious—namely, that "moral panics are bound by history; they erupt at a particular period as a result of a configuration or

concatenation of factors specific to that period."[83] Moral panic depends on the delineation of a scapegoat—or a "folk devil"—as an identifiable object onto which our deeper social fears and anxieties may be projected. Although moral panic centers on a particular folk devil, the locus of the panic, however, is not the folk devil itself. Rather, folk devils are the ideological embodiment of deeper anxieties "symptomatic of a more general situation of protracted state and economic failure, but one not (yet) perceived of in terms of 'crisis'. . . . [T]hey are constructions or mediations of state contradictions and failures."[84] The receptacles of all these intense feelings of threat are, therefore, culturally and politically constructed, products of human imagination. As such, they are highly exaggerated. Reflecting on specific historical episodes of moral panic, sociologists Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda thus conclude, "In each case, a specific agent was widely felt to be responsible for the threat; in each case, a sober assessment of the evidence concerning the nature of the supposed threat forces the observer to the conclusion that the fear and concern were, in all likelihood, exaggerated or misplaced."[85]

What, among other things, lies at the heart of this study is the argument that Israeli phobias about Iran must be understood in relation to a moral panic about the project of modernity's perceived "contradictions and failures" in the Jewish state. More precisely, these phobias are to be understood in relation to domestic (Ashkenazi, secularist, middle-class) anxieties posed by Israel's religious and ethnic (Mizrahi) underclass since the latter half of the 1970s. Indeed, it is not coincidental, I argue, that Iran has been transformed into a repellent and frightening external other in Israeli imagination at the same time that Israel's ethnic and religious "outsiders within" (or folk devils) have shown Jewish-Israeli modernity to be in a state of crisis, and "not a finished ideal state seen as the culmination of a majestically plotted history."[86] Hence, I argue, Iran became a screen onto which we Israeli Jews projected our own *fears of difference*. By inquiring into this dialectic I will present a unique case of moral panic, one that is bounded by history but at the same time transgresses the boundaries between spaces, between self and other, between "here" and "there." By doing so, I hope to be able to contribute to the ongoing debate on the history of Jewish-Israeli nationalism and its discontent.

. . .

According to Ali Mirsepassi, the 1979 revolution in Iran was exactly the type of crisis that "provide[d] a perfect location for viewing the intersection be-

tween 'scientific apprehension' and the mythical substrata of historical existence applied on a global scale."[87] Accordingly, in Chapter 1 I examine the 1979 revolution as a "moment" when "scientific" and "poetic" knowledge intersected to produce an Iran tailored after Israelis' fears and states of conviction which, drawing their force from the depths of the soul and history, brook no argument.[88]

More specifically, I will demonstrate that Israeli perceptions of Iran at the time of the revolution were forged at the intersection of a deep-seated moral panic and geopolitical transformations. On the one hand, the revolution, as previously noted, dramatized and concretized the perceived ethno-religious threat to the dominance of the Israeli ethnocratic regime, and this threat was ultimately projected onto Iran; I will deal with this issue in Chapter 2. On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the revolution also occurred at about the same time that the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations culminating in the Camp David Peace Accords were under way. Hence, in Chapter 1 I intend to draw on some of Trita Parsi's insights from his study on the history of the triangular geopolitical relationship among the United States, Iran, and Israel,[89] but offer them a different periodization. Parsi argues that the Oslo peace process in the 1990s pitted Israel against Iran, because from then on the Israeli government "needed" to relocate the image of threat from the Arab vicinity to another source, that is, the Persian periphery.[90] However, given that historically the Jewish state has been known for its "dependency on the drug of militarism,"[91] and thereby on the existence of an external enemy, I suggest that the elevation of Iran to the status of a formidable threat was first established during the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations in the late 1970s and early 1980s: to convince Israelis that peace could be made with the Arabs it was, at the same time, also "necessary" to construct an image of threat from elsewhere. The Iranian revolution that unfolded in tandem with these negotiations provided the Israeli government with a golden opportunity to cast its eyes on the issue of the "Iranian threat."

In Chapter 2 I shift the focus of my analysis to Israeli realities since the late 1970s and introduce Israeli anti-Iran phobias as a unique case of moral panic. The organizing principle of this chapter draws on works that read metropolitan and colonial cultures together, or contrapuntally, to use Edward Said's resonant term. By studying one history (Iranian) as at once the condition and the effect of the other history (Israeli), I show that Israeli Iranophobia since 1979 was fashioned and comprehended by Israelis on the basis of what they

believed to be the (dis)ordering of their society at home. Manifestations of anti-Iran phobias in the Israeli public sphere were not only expressions of perceived cultural differences between the two polities or of justified concerns over the rise of an Islamist regime whose objective it is to "wipe Israel off the map." Equally so, they were a product of a moral panic directed at the Jewish state's ethnic and religious folk devils—or, if you will, of ethnocratic concerns about the current and future direction of secular-cum-Western Zionism. Talal Asad suggests that "the notion of horror has to do with the collapse of social and personal identity and thus with the dissolution of form."[92] Accordingly, I argue that the Israeli sense of danger emanating from Iran is linked to a range of practices employed by members of Israeli ethnocracy to protect their valued identities, beliefs, and forms of life.

A related implication of Israel's increasing entanglement in the web of Western influence in the Middle East is its perceived role within the matrix of the "war on terror." It has been amply demonstrated that Israel has been quick to seize on the Bush administration's antiterrorist agenda since September 11, 2001 in order to impose more and more brutal policies on the occupied territories.[93] It was also in the name of the "war on terror" that, in July-August 2006, the Israeli military wrought destruction on the Lebanese, making good on IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Halutz's threat "to turn back the clock in Lebanon by 20 years."[94] Chapter 3 explores the ways in which constructions of Iran as the epitome of world terrorism concertized, animated, and radicalized the phantasmagoric image of "world terrorism" into which Palestinians and Lebanese were indistinguishably cast.

To be sure, Iran does arm Hezbollah; does extend material and moral support to Islamist groups, most notably Hamas, in the Palestinian territories; and does have an active nuclear program that may or may not be proved to have hostile intent.[95] However, it is also true that in the post-9/11 world the Jewish state has engaged in a relentless effort to depict Palestinian and Lebanese politics merely as a puppet show in which Iran was pulling the strings. The endeavor to cast an ominous Iranian shadow over Palestinian and Lebanese realities, to "Iranicize" Palestine and Lebanon, has had multiple objectives. Yet it was, as I argue, primarily intended to transform Palestine and Lebanon into "spaces of exception," and in so doing to take their respective populations outside the domain of humanity, rendering them into *homines sacri*[96]—mute bearers of "bare life" from whom the rights and protections of international law could be systematically withdrawn.

One of the paradoxes of Zionism is that it called for the "negation of exile" by evoking nostalgic memories for the East, only to establish a state ideologically and geopolitically oriented almost exclusively toward the West.[97] It is for this reason that "one can define the modern Jew as being located between 'Europe' and the 'Orient,' in a hybrid place that produced continuous tensions and led to varying responses, be they 'assimilationist' or 'subversive.'"[98] The complex and dialectical Israeli position toward the Orient as a source of inspiration and/or anathema is further explored in Chapter 4 through examination of Zionism and the Jewish state's shifting and unstable perceptions of Iranian Jewry, a particularly important "Oriental," Mizrahi group that has not yet received the attention it deserves in critical scholarship.

Critical scholarship over the past two decades has unraveled the exclusionary, colonial underpinnings of the official Zionist-Israeli attitude toward Middle East Jewries. Significantly, however, most of these critical interventions have focused almost exclusively on Jews from Arab countries, thereby missing out on or glossing over the plurality of voices, as well as the ambivalences, tensions, and contradictions inherent in Zionist-Israeli representations of Middle East Jewries. In the fourth and final chapter of this book I set out to start filling these voids by providing a first-of-a-kind critical account of Zionist-Israeli representations of Iranian Jews. By focusing on Iranian Jewry as objects of the Zionist-Israeli ideological prism, I demonstrate that although notions of "exile" and "homeland," and "East" and "West," have been known to be notoriously axiomatic and rigid when applied to Jews from the Arab countries, they appear fluid, overlapping, and contingent when applied to Iran's Jews.

As I will demonstrate, on account of their distinctive history and self-conceptions, Iranian Jewry did not, and indeed could not, fall neatly within any stable Zionist ethnic or cultural categories, hence confounding the most fundamental Zionist convictions embodied in the notion of the "ingathering of exiles." To the extent that these Jews were *unclassifiable* in Israeli imagination, they brought to the fore—perhaps more than any other Jewish "diaspora"—the double-edged Zionist colonial imagination of inclusion and exclusion, of desire and anxiety, to which modern Jewish identity is (still) indebted.[99]

I write these words in late September 2007, at the conclusion of President Ahmadinejad's visit to the United Nations General Assembly, during which he also appeared before students at New York City's Columbia University. For most Israeli analysts and laypersons this visit was equivalent to "Satan

coming to New York."[100] Within this context, they lost no time showering contempt and scorn upon Ahmadinejad, even mocking him for putting on his eyeglasses during a video interview with American reporters, as though he was trying to deceive them into believing that he was an intellectual. For, according to the dominant Israeli view, Iran is a nation composed of ignorant and ignoble people who could not put eyeglasses to good use anyway. A piece offering my own perspectives on the visit, as well as an overview of the ideas I put forth in this book, was posted on *Ynet,* the Internet edition of *Yedi'ot Ahronoth*.[101] Literally 99 percent of the five hundred talkbacks that followed in response accused me of high treason and of complicity with Holocaust denial, with some even calling for my deportation (to Iran, of course) and wishing for my death. It is my intention to explore in this book the roots of the mind-set that has enabled the introduction of such extreme venomous reactions.

Thus conceived, this book should also be seen as an exercise in reflective writing. By systematically engaging with widespread Israeli notions and narratives of Iran, I (an *Israeli* historian of Iran) will incorporate my own theoretically informed readings of Iranian history, and in so doing, provide a vista into the conflicting, converging, and conflating discourses that shaped not only the history of *reading* Iran in Israel but also the history of *writing* Iran in Israel.

1 INAUGURATING IRAN'S RADICAL ALTERITY

Shifting Geopolitics, Oxymoronic Voices

The Army should use tanks and machine-guns against the masses, deploy firing squads facing the strikers, and give the secret police and its agents a free hand.

—An unnamed Iran expert explaining how the Shah can save his throne, January 1979

IT IS POSSIBLE to argue today, with the benefit of hindsight, that like many other revolutionary struggles in the colonial and postcolonial world, the 1979 Iranian revolution has run out of vital sources of energy and creativity and is left with an exercise of power bereft of any pretense of the exercise of vision. As a consequence, the revolution's "anticolonial utopias have gradually withered into postcolonial nightmares," to borrow from David Scott.[1] Nonetheless, it cannot be discounted that this revolution certainly *was* "one of the central social revolutions of the twentieth century," as Eric Hobsbawm contends,[2] not the least because it was waged against a perverted kind of modernity that "betrayed every humanistic principle [which] modernity is supposed to represent."[3]

Reflecting on the historiography of the Chinese Revolution, Arif Dirlik asks, "Why is it that revolutions which seemed to make eminent sense only decades ago, no longer make any sense?"[4] Yet to both Israeli experts and laypersons the 1979 revolution made no sense almost from the very beginning. The reason for this was that their understandings of the revolution were deeply embedded in colonial (or modernist) conceptions of violence, whose nature and implications Talal Asad describes as follows:

> However reprehensible it was to liberals, the violence of Marxists and nationalists was understandable in terms of progressive, secular history. The violence of Islamic groups, on the other hand, is incomprehensible to many precisely because it is not embedded in a historical narrative—history in the "proper" sense. As the violence of what is often referred to as a totalitarian religious tradition hostile to democratic politics, it is seen to be irrational as well as being an international threat.[5]

Hence Israelis relegated the revolutionary struggle to the realm of disorganized, untamed, "irrational" violence of the kind that historians of medieval and early modern Europe, as well as of modern colonialism, purportedly come up against periodically.[6] Indeed, to these Israelis the 1979 crisis in Iran was the kind of violence that apparently had no causes and motivations other than "inciting riots, murder, conflagration, torture, and bringing the life of [a] country to a standstill," to cite one Israeli commentary on the 1979 revolution.[7]

The revolution, it is safe to argue, was directed against a ruler whose blatant elitism and brutality were fashioned after colonial and imperial ideals of modernization. It should not come as a surprise, then, that his fate was similar in kind to that of other postcolonial rulers—or juntas—for whom nationalization "simply mean[t] the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are the legacy of the colonial period."[8] As mentioned, Arif Dirlik believes that historians of the Chinese Cultural Revolution would later forget its radical discourses and radical alternatives to capitalist modernity. That dismissal of past perspectives, as Dirlik explains, rested not on some "objective" ground, but on the "desire to forget past perspectives that have become uncomfortable owing to changes in the historian's environment and consciousness."[9] By contrast, Israelis who monitored the events in Iran refused to view the 1979 revolution as an intellectually formative event from the very start. The act of "forgetting," which in the Chinese case was bound up with important transformations of the present, did not come up in this instance because, to these Israelis, there was nothing worth "remembering" in the 1979 revolution to begin with.

In retrospect, it is not at all surprising that Israeli experts following the Iranian crisis immediately engaged with the art of "forgetting," that their narratives of the revolution were instantaneously ridden with silences that have made the whole history of Iran since 1979 into one sorry story of violence, corruption, ineptitude, and waste. For in making sense of the revolution and its aftermath, they drew on much of the same "expert non-knowledge"[10] that has long been in circulation about Palestinian realities (and Palestinian resistance). "The story of Western civilization advancing in the East through its proxy Israel," anthropologist Ted Swedenburg explains, "has consistently pushed Palestinians to the margins":

> Forced to lurk in the West's shadow, the "wild" Palestinian Other has occasionally managed to blast his or her way onto center stage with explosive charges and machine-gun bursts. Such disruption of the Western [and Israeli] narrative only lasted for a flicker of the television screen . . . for they were apprehended as

> irrational interruptions of an unfolding story of Western progress rather than as statements within a plausible counternarrative.[11]

Echoing long-standing conceptual vocabularies on the murky, impenetrable, irrational, and violent nature of Palestinians (and indeed of "Orientals" in general), Israeli conceptions of the Iranian revolutionaries' motivations and actions completely overlooked the concrete historical contexts of oppression or injustice in which they operated, and denied them the imaginative, improvisational practices through which "we" ceaselessly elaborate our world. "Their" actions were simply seen to be dictated by the very nature of "their" (religious-cum-violent) culture.[12]

Yet it would be wrong to conclude that dominant Israeli readings of the Iranian revolutionaries were essentially restatements of older themes about Palestinians and other "unruly" Muslims, in the sense coined by Edward Said, referring to the complex movement of "social and historical affiliation" of traveling ideas and theories.[13] Israeli narratives of the revolution and its aftermath also worked differently for Israelis because they displayed a moral panic deriving from the Jewish state's cultural and ethnic "outsiders within," as well as a reaction to transformations in that state's relations with the Arab world since the late 1970s.

The issue of moral panic will have to wait until the next chapter. Nonetheless, in this chapter I explore the production of these narratives within the context of Israel's shifting strategic concerns. To exemplify this issue I first trace the evolution of these narratives in "real time," that is during the time of the revolution's unfolding in the years 1978–1979. These narratives, consisting of false historical analogies, huge generalizations about human behavior, and huge assumptions about world historical processes, read more like a testimony on behalf of the "Murderous Humanitarianism"[14] of the Shah regime than a testimony on behalf of its Iranian victims. In the second section I will move on to break through the seemingly stable authority of these narratives and reveal their ambivalences and fractured nature, and through them, the unresolved tensions and contradictions inherent in the Jewish state's conflicting reality, as will be explored in Chapter 2.[15]

SETTING IN PLACE THE GREAT DIVIDE: "KHOMEINISM AND HUMANISM"

I begin my discussion with three anecdotes, the first two dating back to the 1979 revolution and its immediate aftermath, and the latter from the year 2001. On January 16, 1979, following months of stormy and violent demonstrations, the

Shah left Iran for an exile he would not return from. A few days earlier, when it became clear that the Shah's days as Iran's all-powerful ruler were numbered, a cartoon appeared in *Davar,* a newspaper belonging to the Histadrut,[16] which captured the gist of the ways in which Israelis came to understand the unfolding crisis in Iran. In this cartoon, the vast array of groups that joined forces to depose the Shah are all reduced to a figure of a bearded, turbaned, cloaked cleric. The cleric is seen setting free "the genie of the revolution" out of a bottle representing "the reaction of Islamic radicals to modernization." This cartoon clearly reveals the imagination at work in the minds of those Israelis who closely monitored the crisis in Iran. Through the genie's image, the revolution is stripped of any concrete or plausible context. Instead, it is presented as an exotic scene from *A Thousand and One Nights,* a spectacle conjured of a purely religious instinct, the purpose of which is to foil Iran's majestic march toward modern statehood and modern nationhood.

Similar silences were introduced during the international ordeal that began in Tehran on November 4, 1979, when some four hundred Iranian militant students stormed the U.S. embassy and took all diplomats and employees there hostage.[17] In the midst of this crisis, in March 1980, the late Ze'ev Schiff, *Ha'aretz*'s expert on military and security affairs, reported on a conference held in Tel Aviv University in which Middle East experts from Israel and the United States convened to discuss the implications of the Iranian revolution and the hostage taking. Schiff was particularly impressed with Columbia University's professor of Middle East studies, Richard Bulliet, who "for quite a while . . . talked enthusiastically . . . about the positive aspects . . . and the humane side of the revolution."[18] "It is remarkable," Schiff wrote, "that you can always find Americans who think differently and raise question marks about the position of the mainstream."[19] And yet in his essay Schiff said *not* a word about Bulliet's "different" modes of thought. Readers interested in the assumptions and reasoning of the American professor regarding revolutionary Iran would find none. Instead, Schiff concentrated on the negative impression Bulliet left on "most Israelis" present in the audience, who, like Schiff, were shocked to discover that "what seemed insanely murderous to many of his countrymen, seemed perfectly sane and understandable to him."[20] Paradoxically, although Schiff's declared intention was to introduce original and provocative views on the revolution and the hostage crisis, all he ended up doing was reproducing what he himself defined as "the position of the mainstream." The *other* stance, in this case the one voiced by Bulliet, was entirely absent from his account.

Moving forward to the twenty-first century, on February 12, 2001, the Channel 2 morning television show "Café Tel'ad" commemorated the Iranian revolution's twenty-second anniversary with Brigadier Gen. (res.) Itzhak Segev, Israel's last military attaché to Iran. Segev was summoned to the studio to relate his part in the operation of smuggling out a group of Israelis from the compound of the Israeli mission in Tehran, after it had been captured by Iranian demonstrators on February 11, 1979—the day the Shah's army surrendered to the revolutionary forces.[21] Against the backdrop of ominous, gory footage of the Iran-Iraq war (which broke out nearly two years after the event!), the announcer introduced Segev to the spectators as follows: "His story sounds like an Iranian-style . . . fictional Hollywood script." Thus, in this instance, the revolution, the escape story, and the Iran-Iraq war were all presented as a clutter of unrelated topics. In view of the total disregard of any essential context that would make the Israeli embassy's capture intelligible, it comes as no surprise that the announcer treated the whole affair as somewhat of a fairy tale, an "Iranian style" Hollywood script. It is no coincidence, too, that Tel'ad decided to take notice of the revolution's anniversary by recounting the Israelis' escape from the embassy—rather than, say, trying to explain the revolution and its broader implications on their own terms. In the absence of any clearly demarcated contexts, the program left two critical questions unanswered: Why did the revolution take place, and Why did a host of Iranian demonstrators storm the Israeli embassy in the first place? The fact that these questions were never raised stands as testimony to the implicit assumption—which, being self-explanatory or "normal," does not need explanation—that the revolution and the raid both stemmed from the Iranian people's Islamic provenance and the unprovoked hatred that this "Islam" nurtures against Jews in general and the Jewish state in particular.

These are merely three examples of the massive self-censorship by analysts who, by remembering only what fitted with their ready-made categories, gave testimony to a pervasive amnesia in the Israeli public sphere regarding Iranian history. As we know well today, to gain a fuller perspective on the revolution, the hostage crisis, and other episodes in Iranian history, it is necessary to situate them in the related contexts of royalist despotism and Iran's entanglement with the history of colonialism since the early nineteenth century.[22] In the absence of any talk about the implications of despotism and colonialism in Iran, Israeli experts left the impression that the Iranian revolution occurred in a timeless vacuum, hence providing yet another vivid

example of the well-known colonial gesture of "dismissing the possibility that the native can look back at you as you are looking at him."[23]

Yet it should be emphasized that these lacking images of the revolution became prevalent in Israeli public culture only gradually. At the beginning Israelis demonstrated a great deal of sensitivity to the complex revolutionary situation and were even willing to try to get to the bottom of the deeper roots and motivations of the crisis. Sometimes, too, they even expressed empathy with the revolutionaries and their causes, an empathy that Israelis have invariably lacked with respect to previous "Oriental" coups, revolutions, and popular upheavals in the modern Middle East. This mind-set, it seems, was first and foremost the outcome of one basic heartfelt wish: that the secular, pro-Western revolutionary forces gain the upper hand, even if that meant putting an end to the Shah regime, which—as will be seen in Chapter 2—was Israel's longtime ally. "In our secret hearts, perhaps in our naiveté, we still hoped that Bakhtiyar [leader of the National Front, appointed prime minister by the Shah on the eve of his departure] would regain control and put things the way they were," was the reminiscence many years later of an Israeli official and entrepreneur who had operated in Iran for nearly a quarter of a century up to the 1979 revolution.[24]

Capturing the gist of this mind-set, Michel Foucault, who covered the revolution for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della sera,* remarked ironically that "Many here [in the West] . . . are waiting for and hoping for the moment when secularization will at last come back to the fore [in Iran] and reveal the good, old type of revolution we have always known."[25] Yet the dawning realization that a different (read Islamist) scenario would most likely unfold in Iran finally prompted Israelis to cast the revolution into the realms of radical alterity. It should be borne in mind that as the struggle developed and as the popularity of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini grew, so did Islamist expressions of the popular protest become more prevalent.[26] As a result, Israeli analysts—who had watched the revolution through hyper-secular eyes and hence assigned religion to premodern "savages"—became concerned with what they perceived as the overtaking of the Iranian polity by regressive clerics. Put differently, as long as they believed that the revolution would remain faithful to what Dipesh Chakrabarty described in the context of colonial India as "the rule of institutions that delivered us from the thrall of all that was unreasonable and irrational,"[27] they could identify with it and even show empathy for its instigators. But when it seemed to them that the revolution strayed from

these institutions they were quick to label it a diehard expression of reactionary anti-modernity.

As previously noted, in the early stages of the revolutionary upheaval, in late summer 1978, Israeli figures from the media, government, and academia revealed a remarkable understanding of the complexity of events in Iran and attempted to place them in their multiple and sometimes conflicting contexts. Such sensibilities enabled them to trace the roots of the crisis to the destructive impact of the Shah's policies rather than to violence running rampant outside the boundaries of modernity. "Explanations that relate the causes of events to the actions of hotheaded fanatic groups are too simplistic and do not fully elucidate the problem," noted Haifa University historian Gad Gilbar. Attention should instead be focused, he said, on the Shah's projects of modernization in the 1960s and 1970s (collectively known as the White Revolution reform program), which created "serious problems [such as] a dearth of human resources, severe communications problems, massive urbanization by village populations, transportation difficulties, storage problems and a serious shortage in apartments."[28] Other analysts traced Iranians' grievances to a pervasive sense of cultural alienation deriving from the Shah's reckless Westernization, and to "inflation and corruption that spread like a plague."[29] Still others noted the Shah's political repression—"by means of the armed forces and the vast secret police, the SAVAK"[30]—as an important determinant in the formation of the resistance movement.

At this early stage of the struggle, too, Israelis acknowledged the heterogeneity of the resistance movement, that this was "an opposition . . . with deep social roots."[31] For example, they reported that anti-royalist demonstrations included "clerks, day workers, students, craftsmen and peasants who left their villages to look for work in the cities";[32] and that "the working classes, the craftsmen and the petty bourgeoisie, hard hit by hyper inflation," fanned the crisis.[33] On the basis of these analyses, one could conclude that it was not religious commitment or religiously incited violence that triggered the Iranian revolution but rather the darker and more sinister dimensions of the Shah's modernist project. It therefore comes as no surprise that on the eve of the old regime's demise some Israelis even dared describe the Pahlavi monarchy as an anachronism rather than as the embodiment and *sine qua non* of human progress:

> Twenty years ago Egypt's king in exile, Farouk, was asked for his opinion about the fate of monarchies in the modern world. Farouk mulled it over for a minute

> and responded: "In twenty years there will be only five kings, four in the deck of cards and the king of England." Now, as the rule of Iran's Shah is over, it appears that Farouk's prophecy was on the mark. The Shah of Iran, bearer of the Peacock Crown, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, was the last king to rule his country as absolutist monarchs did hundreds and thousands of years ago. In a world of democratic governments and Communist dictatorships the Shah was the last ruler whose life was distinguished by a splendor and magnificence that seemed to be drawn from the world of fairytales.[34]

As the excerpt above clearly indicates, at this stage Israelis were still prepared to integrate the unfolding revolution into the entangled histories of modernity of which it was part. Thus, for a fleeting moment the struggle appeared to them as something familiar and knowable—something that could even be empathized with:

> Had television existed at the time of the French or Russian Revolutions we would have witnessed spectacles similar to those we have seen in the last few days . . . in Tehran. The frenzied crowds, the rampant demagoguery, the street scuffles and the inability to restrain the hysterical turbulent mob. We are undoubtedly living in the midst of revolutionary events of which we have only had occasion to read in history books.[35]

However, as Islamic images and symbols proliferated, and as Khomeini's exiled figure became more ominous, fear of the purported regressive character of the revolution increased as well. Put differently, the expulsion of Iran to the realms of radical alterity in the Israeli public sphere can be traced back to that very "moment" when it became increasingly clear to Israelis that the stern cleric held the cards for the (Islamist) future of Iran. The beginnings of this trend can be found in anti-royalist demonstrations in Tehran in August and September 1978, which were understood as "resistance . . . to the secularizing efforts of the Shah . . . to extricate Iran from its state of underdevelopment and turn it into a modern state."[36] By the same token, the massive killing of demonstrators by the Shah's forces in Tehran's Jaleh Square[37] drew sympathy not, as one might expect, for the victims but for the forces committing the massacre: "The internal strife proves once again that the Shah is an innovator, and that resistance to his rule clusters around intransigent Muslim zealots who can motivate [the] masses and who are opposed to progress."[38]

Note how these commentators reduce the revolutionary crisis into an

anachronistic backlash by "religious leaders" against the Shah's drive "to extricate Iran from its state of underdevelopment." Note also the passive demeanor which they accredit to the demonstrators. Not unlike colonial narratives elsewhere, and echoing long-standing Israeli representations of Palestinians and Arabs in general, the Iranian demonstrators were said to be ignorant, gullible, and manipulable masses, relieved of a will of their own and stumbling blindly to the tune of heartless manipulations orchestrated by tyrannical and cynical clerics; ostensibly, "anything may be prized out [from them] and in whose heads, apparently, anything may be planted."[39] As the religious-Zionist daily *Hatsofeh* stated, the Iranians are "simple-minded and ignorant masses," a "furious mass," for which "religious slogans are far more powerful than . . . democracy, civil rights and social justice."[40]

Note also how fears of being deprived of the Shah, Israel's much valued ally and the guardian of Israel's diverse mega-interests in Iran, effectively rendered any empathy with the demonstrators as unthinkable. Indeed, so great was the fear of escalation (and Islamization) of the revolutionary struggle that an unnamed Israeli "expert" of Iran called upon the Shah to massacre his own people in order to save his progressive throne:

> Upon my return from Iran, when the riots started, I was asked whether the Shah regime was in grave danger. . . . I said that if the Shah and his officers will have the courage to do unto their opponents what these opponents are scheming to do unto them, the regime stands a better chance of survival. . . . *The army should use tanks and machine-guns against the masses, deploy firing squads facing the strikers, and give the secret police and its agents a free hand.* . . . Despite the aversion . . . to such steps, I witnessed what such an incited and zealous mass and its Shiite mullah leaders may do once they are allowed to act freely.[41]

When, on January 16, the Shah had to give up his throne and leave Iran "on vacation" for an unlimited period of time, Israeli anxieties reached new heights. As mentioned, before leaving Iran for good the Shah entrusted his sovereignty to a civilian government headed by Shahpur Bakhtiyar, one of the leaders of the "National Front." Yet owing to the fact that the latter was totally identified with the Shah, he had little chance of survival. Three days after the Shah went into exile millions of people marched through the streets of Tehran calling for Bakhtiyar's resignation. Then, when on February 1, 1979, Khomeini returned to Iran, he called upon Mehdi Bazargan, leader of the "Freedom Movement," to be his appointed prime minister. As these events unfolded, a senior Israeli

reporter speculated, "No one knows to what extent the [Bakhtiyar] government will be able to put a stop to these waves of fanaticism by extremist religious circles, which threaten to run the country awash in waves of reactionary religion and violent conservatism."[42]

By the time Khomeini returned to Iran, but especially in the wake of the Shah army's surrender to the revolutionary forces on February 11, 1979, the discursive process of banishing Iran to the realm of radical alterity had been completed. Henceforth, a firm and impenetrable wedge was set between Iran and the West, between Iran and History, and between Islam and modernity. An essay by the celebrated Israeli novelist, translator, and publicist Hanoch Bartov, suggestively titled "Humanism and Khomeinism," vividly demonstrates how, from then on, analyses of Iran and the revolutionary crisis were firmly rooted in a narrative of the "absences" and "failures" of Iranian modernity, and of the "Iranian" as a "figure of lack."[43] In this essay, Bartov seeks a compelling answer to the apparently perplexing question of how it was that a nonmodern revolution such as Iran's was able to topple a hypermodern state such as the Shah's:

> Islamologists and Sovietologists, energy experts, strategy experts, and their ilk will tell us—in a postmortem analysis—how such an elderly cleric succeeded, thousands of miles away from his homeland, with no access to any of the trappings of government, without a single cannon to his name, using only whispers recorded on tape cassettes, to topple the mighty Shah, an absolutist monarch who held his people in an iron grip by force of one of the best equipped armies of the world, by force of wide-ranging networks of spying and intelligence, and by force of a merciless centralized machinery of government. All this is after the fact. For before the fact it all seemed nigh impossible, just as it is no longer possible for the horseman with the fastest Arab mare and the sharpest Saracen sword to overcome a "Chieftain" tank or a "Phantom" fighter-jet. Revolutions of the kind that took place in previous generations—of peasants, proletarians or those bearing the sword of faith—are no longer possible in a modern state.[44]

Bartov construes the revolution as an inexplicable and unjustifiable violent backlash against the Shah's modern state, as though this violence was a matter of a natural, automatic, and autonomous growth, "uninfluenced," to borrow from Pandey's critique of colonial historiography in India, "by the development of world capitalism, European dominance, scientific racism and other related phenomena."[45] By ignoring how deeply the revolution was, in

fact, entwined with the histories of colonial modernity, Bartov cannot but visualize it solely in terms of Iran's purported deficiencies in relation to the imaginative stories that Euro-Americans told themselves about themselves, or in other words, in relation to a "hyperreal Europe,"[46] a self-fashioning of the West as something that occurred only within its self-assigned geographical boundaries. Bartov defines the 1979 revolution by what it is not, as an absence. He compares it to the pattern of long-gone revolutions—carried out by "peasants, proletarians or those bearing the sword of faith"—which, in his view, can no longer come to pass in the modern world. What confounds Bartov, then, is how an "absolutist monarch," who had access to all the apparatuses of political control that the modern state can offer—"one of the best equipped armies," "wide-ranging networks of spying and intelligence," and "a merciless centralized machinery of government"—was unconditionally defeated by something that could only be defined as a relic of bygone ages.

As a consequence, Bartov dissociates himself from this Iran by constructing an impenetrable wall between "humanism and Khomeinism"; there is, he claims, an "abyss between the two parts of our world and it is that abyss which lies at the base of the Western collapse in Iran."[47] Note that Bartov renders the extraordinary inequalities and depredations which the Shah's state exacted on its subjects as "humanism." By doing so, he uncritically reproduces a self-induced blindness, in which "the West" is seen as reaching out only to bring to others the fruits of progress that would otherwise be beyond their grasp.[48] In this way Bartov is able to conceive of the revolution as an ungrateful Iranian gesture against a benevolent West—or in Bartov's own words, as "humanism run over by the hooves of the black barbarians' horses."[49]

The anonymous Iran "expert," whose call upon the Shah to massacre his people I discussed earlier, also had a couple of things to say about Iran's self-inflicted failures to come to terms with the rickety road to modernity. In his account, which brings to mind Karl Marx's Orientalist descriptions of India in the mid-nineteenth century, our expert uncovers in Iran a classic Oriental society—petrified, unchanging, wild, and unruly—with no ability to break through the barriers of precapitalist patterns and traditions. Describing India in his day, Marx ruled that "[a]ll the civil wars, invasions, revolutions, conquests, famines, strangely complex, rapid and destructive as the successive action in Hindustan may appear, did not go deeper than the surface." India existed for Marx on a flat and unchanging plane throughout history—for however often political transformations have swept the country,

the "social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity."[50] Given that "civilization is too low and the territorial extent too vast" in India, no social classes are likely to rise there to counterbalance the power of the state. Under such circumstances, Marx says, the "Oriental despot" was able to "stand above," "poise over," and act as the "all appearing unity of all the lesser communities."[51] Keeping Marx's proposition in mind, consider the Israeli expert's conclusions with respect to the putative "lacks" and "absences" in Iranian history and society:

> I see no alternative to a despotic regime [in Iran]. . . . Iran's people is not yet mature enough for an independent democratic government and Iran has no entrenched advanced and educated class of people who could take it upon themselves to actually run the government. . . . Those who know the real Iran, the one behind the showcase windows . . . the coffee houses and the restaurants of Pahlavi Street, would know also that most of Iran's people are still taking their first steps to emerge from the darkness of feudalism and Islamic religious fanaticism, and that most of the population is made up of uneducated peasants who have only recently begun to change ways of life and labor techniques, which were in existence since the days of the Achaemenid dynasty [*sic*]. When you leave Tehran and arrive at the villages between the Alborz and Zagros mountain ranges, or at the towns scattered on the arid Iranian plateaus, you find out that people's ways of life and mentalities do not change with red or white revolutions, and that despite the agrarian reforms, the economic revolution and the media, most of the people remained unchanged for hundreds of generations—pious, distrustful, materialistic and fatalistic.[52]

Barring massacre, such is the conclusion of our expert, only an "oriental despotism" of the Shah's type could somehow restrain the expansion of "religious Islamic fanaticism"[53] and establish a modern state—thereby defending Iranians from their own reactionary and fanatic forces that are always on the lookout for the opportune time to raise their heads.

To sum up, Israeli commentaries on the 1979 revolution in real time consigned Iran to an "anachronistic space"—space that is "prehistoric, atavistic, and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity."[54] As Israelis realized that the Shah would have to abdicate in favor of Khomeini, they increasingly described the revolution in terms of backwardness that would "send Iran back to the dark ages."[55] This motif of "going back in time" stands in stark contrast to the idea of leaping forward into an open future—a

future in which "new things would continue to come about"[56]—which is an essential part of the experience of modernity.[57] Thus when Khomeini returned to Iran, challenging the legitimacy of Bakhtiyar's government, the Israeli press predicted that "in the next few hours the entire world will follow, in breathless anticipation, the fatal struggle between legitimate government in Iran and its adherents, and the elderly cleric who strives to set the clock back and cast his country back into the dark ages."[58]

How are we to account for these sweeping, awe-inspiring representations of the revolutionary crisis and its aftermath? Should we view them as reformulations of older Zionist and Israeli beliefs about the ways of life and the "mentality" of "Orientals"? As previously argued, we certainly should. Alternatively, are we not better off examining them against the backdrop of corresponding Iran images in the United States, where similar silences and distortions with respect to Iranian history, the revolution, and its immediate aftermath can be detected?[59] I think that would be a worthwhile endeavor as well. After all, it was not until the revolution and the hostage crisis that "a conjunction between 'Islam' and 'terrorism' was established within American public culture, through which many Americans and Israelis were able to find a common language and a common cause."[60] However, I suggest that these Israeli images, as well as the anti-Iran phobias they gave rise to, also bear distinctive qualities that I would like to further explore in what follows and then again in the next chapter.

To begin with, I propose that Israeli anxieties about Iran since 1979 should be attributed to the Jewish state's shifting geopolitical concerns—especially in light of the Israeli-Egyptian peace process of 1977–1981, which was concurrent with the unfolding Iranian revolution and its immediate aftermath. "The Likud's victory in the 1977 election," says historian Avi Shlaim, "was not just a ballot box revolution in Israeli politics but also a watershed in Israel's relations with the Arab world and especially in its approach to the occupied territories."[61] I suggest that Israel's approaches to and anxieties about Iran as exemplified above were greatly affected by this dramatic geopolitical turnabout in Israel's relations with the Arab vicinity, a turnabout that came at the same time the Iranian people were ousting their Shah.

Trita Parsi, in his informative history of the triangular relationship among Iran, Israel, and the United States,[62] suggests that the ascendancy of the Labor Party to power in 1992 and the ensuing Israeli-Palestinian Oslo peace process were watershed events in the history of Israeli-Iranian animosities. As

Parsi demonstrates with much clarity, although in the 1980s Israel did not take Iran's anti-Israel rhetoric too seriously—indeed, Israel supplied the clerical regime with weapons and spare parts it desperately needed to survive the war with Iraq and even defended Iran in Washington—once peace with the Palestinians seemed within reach all the tables were turned: to convince a skeptical Israeli public to accept peace with the Palestinians, Parsi surmises, Israel started depicting Iran as a threat to the region and the world. This, he says, was an unprecedented shift in Israel's geopolitical outlook:

> It completely contradicted the very heart of Israel's guiding strategy since the days of Ben-Gurion—the periphery doctrine [i.e., the idea of cementing relations with the outer-ring, non-Arab states of the Middle East, such as Iran, to counter the expansion of Arab radicalism and Soviet influence]. By seeking peace with the Arab states in Israel's vicinity and portraying the key peripheral state—Iran—as a threat, [Israel] turned the periphery doctrine on its head.[63]

While I accept Parsi's claim that hopes for an Israeli-Palestinian thaw in the early 1990s prompted Israel to actively promote the notion of the Iranian threat (see Chapter 3),[64] this was by no means without precedent. Although correct in principle, Parsi's thesis should be brought back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Israeli hopes for peace with Egypt interacted with, and amplified, corresponding Israeli anxieties about the regional repercussions of the ongoing Iranian crisis. To the extent that Israel *needs* an existential threat—"it could be a country, like Iran; an ideology, like Islamic fundamentalism; or at other times it could be a tactic—terrorism"[65]—Israel's march toward peace with Egypt, the Arab world's most dominant power, immediately turned the limelight onto the newly emerging menace from peripheral Iran. In short, in making peace with Egypt Israel instantaneously found in the 1979 revolution the opportunity to replace one existential threat (Arab) with another (Iranian).

Support for my argument can be extracted from the Israeli printed press of the period, where, as one commentator remarked at the time, "Rivers of ink have been spilled and hundreds of articles written . . . about the upheaval (*mahapach*) in Iran and its ramifications for international and Middle East politics and for Israeli-Egyptian negotiations." The same writer went on to say,

> The situation in Iran is still fluid and no one can really predict how the political drama will turn out. It remains clear, however, that Iran will not return to what it had been in the past—even if the Shah retains his throne. For all practical

> purposes, [Iran] was expropriated *(hufqe'ah)* . . . from the West's zones of influence. . . . The balance of power has been violated because Iran's armed forces are the strongest and the largest in the region and equipped with the most up-to-date weapons, including F-15 and F-14 fighter jets and top secret electronic means of combat.[66]

As this writer suggests, in view of the unfolding Iranian "upheaval," Iran could no longer be counted on as Israel's (and the West's) ally within the framework of the alliance of the periphery. Quite the opposite, the writer is now worried lest the Shah's turbaned adversaries—whom he probably did not expect to be receptive to any rational criteria—would turn the mighty Iranian military against Iran's former regional allies, including Israel. On the other hand, as he writes,

> Lately we have been witnessing a sea change in Sadat's Egypt—namely, the abandonment of the Soviet orientation in favor of an American orientation. This led to a gradual "drying out" of [Egypt's] Soviet weapons arsenal which in turn required the introduction of radical reforms in the Egyptian military. This military is today at its lowest point ever. . . . Given that the Egyptian soldier is not known for his high level of intelligence, the application of new technologies is, indeed, a difficult task.[67]

Here we have the periphery doctrine "turned on its head," to use Parsi's useful formulation, only several years before he assumes it to be the case. For according to the Israeli writer's reckoning, Egypt has become too weak militarily and too "impoverished economically"[68] to be able to pose a formidable threat to the Jewish state. Instead, the same writer now identifies revolutionary Iran as *the* new regional bogeyman for Israel. In other words, the reshuffling of geopolitical realities rendered the periphery doctrine, in which Iran was expected to serve as a major building block in the erection of a dam against the Arab world, null and void. Although framing his favorable view of Egypt in highly contemptuous terms befitting traditional Israeli attitudes toward Arabs ("the Egyptian soldier is not known for his high level of intelligence") he is now envisioning a new pro-Western, Israeli-Egyptian alliance to impede Iran's spread of Islamic radicalism. In the words of another Israeli commentator at the time, "The Iranian crisis emphasized how essential it is to reach an agreement [with Egypt] before instability increases, and the realization of that agreement . . . is essential for advancing stability in the region."[69]

Now, it is true that throughout the 1980s many of Israel's leaders continued to rely on the periphery doctrine, falsely believing, as Parsi further demonstrates, that Iran remained Israel's "natural ally" against the Arabs.[70] Indeed, that explains, as revelations emanating from the "Iran-Contra" (or "Irangate") plot also clearly demonstrate, why Israel set out to arm Iran in its war with Iraq.[71] Nevertheless, there were at the time also other voices within the Israeli establishment who seriously questioned the wisdom of the periphery doctrine. How could Israel continue to rely on Iran, they wondered, if that very same Iran had now transformed into a "crazy state" (*medinah metorefet*) that is keen on resorting to "a new type of barbarism"?[72] Significantly, even those who dismissed the view that Iran was a "crazy state" did not necessarily take issue with the term's practical implications. Hence professor of Middle East history Haim Shaked concluded, "Those who try to escape reality or ignore it by labeling distressing phenomena as 'crazy' are akin to those who would define a person hastily as 'insane' and lock him up, rather than study psychology and get to the bottom of the problem."[73] That is to say, although the Iranians are not as "crazy" as some would have us believe, they are nevertheless mentally deranged.

In sum, even if "throughout the 1980s, no one in Israel said anything about the Iranian threat—the word wasn't even uttered," as an Israeli informant told Parsi,[74] the *perception* of that threat was already deeply entrenched in Israeli public culture, if not in word then in spirit. Anxiety about Iran among Israelis owed much of its intensity and scope to older Zionist-Israeli ideas about the Muslims and Arabs, and it shared much of the same imagery that was prevalent in American public culture. Yet these anxieties were also intimately related to geopolitical transformations in Israel's relations with the Arab world, which coincided with the revolutionary crisis in Iran.

But that is only part of the story. As discussed previously, while moral panics come in all shapes and sizes they are invariably concerned with stigmatized internal groups, or "folk devils," that embody deep anxieties about state contradictions and failures.[75] Accordingly, in the next chapter I will argue that the production of Iran as a radical *external* other in Israeli imagination is to be understood in relation to the emergence of ("Iran-like") ethnic and religious *internal* others that violated the Jewish state's self-image as "the West." Israeli anti-Iran phobias were driven in no small measure by a domestic crisis precipitated by the Jewish state's "outsiders within" who brought to the fore the tensions and contradictions *within* the Israeli polity beginning in the late 1970s.

In the remainder of this chapter I would therefore like to redirect the object of my inquiry to the unstable nature of mainstream Israeli narratives on Iran. It is my contention that these narratives are ridden with oxymoronic voices that underlie the Jewish state's contradictions and failures, in the light of which Israeli anti-Iran phobias will be examined in Chapter 2. Zachary Lockman contends that when Europeans looked at the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, they in effect "perceived an extreme case of tendencies they feared and condemned in their own societies. . . ."[76] I argue, in the same vein, that when Israeli experts dealt with post-1979 Iranian realities they on some occasions wrote more about their own times and selves than about their topic. In other words, they had their eyes fixed on the perceived ethnic and religious threats to the dominance of Israeli ethnocracy—those "tendencies they feared and condemned in their own [society]."

UNPRECEDENTED AND PERENNIAL: THE 1979 REVOLUTION

As we've seen, the term *Islam* as employed by Israelis was made to cover everything in Iran while also depriving Iranians of their autonomy and placing them on the historical arena with no will of their own. Needless to say, this totalizing or metaphysical view of Islam is inherent to classic Orientalism, to which Jewish-Israeli identity was and still is very much indebted.[77] According to this tradition, while Western, "Judeo-Christian" civilization transcended the religious phase, managing to break through to the age of modernity, Muslim societies (including Iran) were left behind, bogged down by a religiosity that did not permit them to break free from their traditional, past-oriented and past-perpetuating frameworks.[78] Indeed, the departure point of many an Israeli narrative is that post-1979 Iranian "Islam" has come to represent a pervasive, irresistible, and totalizing force:

> Islam "covers" all walks of life: in accordance with this purely religious outlook, concepts of government are an outcome of belief; modes of economic policy are to be dictated by the principles of Islam; the social system and its cultural values are dictated by religious traditions. Thus . . . the believer's life experience is to be tied up with religion, and it would be improper to disengage it from the world of faith.[79]

This overriding assumption blinded observers as to anything that lay outside the putative purview of "Islam." Thus, for instance, all activities and events in the Islamic republic, including those that should be attributed

primarily to the modern state's means of coercion and means of socialization, were placed under the regressive rubric of "Islam." Various actions of the regime, whose relation to this imaginative Islam was at best tenuous and circumstantial, were therefore reduced to or dismissed as manifestations of "Islamic indoctrination." These include

> impressive ceremonies commemorating principal events in the revolutionary calendar, such as the anniversary of Khomeini's return to Iran (January), the ousting of the Pahlavi regime (February), the foundation of an "Islamic Republic" (March), the inauguration of the first Majlis (May), the struggle against the Shah in 1963 (June), the commemoration of the events of "Black Friday" in 1978, and the breakout of war with Iraq (both in September), as well as the storming of the U.S. embassy (November).[80]

Even "the replacement of coinage, stamps and seals in government ministries" under the new regime was said to be an integral part of the "Islamization process," or alternatively, as deriving from "the inherent totalitarianism . . . of Islam."[81] Significantly, these views bring to mind Edward Said's critique of H.A.R. Gibb's *Whither Islam?* (1932), in which, as Said notes, "we learn that the new commercial banks in Egypt and Syria are facts of Islam or an Islamic initiative; schools and an increasing literacy rate are Islamic facts, too, as are journalism, Westernization, and intellectual societies."[82]

In exploring these Israeli narratives one nevertheless does come across the recognition that our world today is saturated with the legacies of Euro-America, and that these legacies can therefore be seen everywhere, even in Iran. Put differently, most of the Israeli experts subscribing to the idea that "*Islam is or means everything*"[83] did not necessarily turn a blind eye to the fact that Iranian culture, far from being a bounded totality, has interpenetrated and entangled with other cultures. For instance, in a series of diverse and influential studies, Israel's leading historian of Iran, David Menashri, has shown how "Khomeini's revolution was a revolution *in* Shiite Islam no less than a Shiite revolution."[84] The unprecedented politicization of Iranian clergy in the twentieth century, and mainly Khomeini's doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (Governance of the Jurist), were, according to Menashri, "an innovation when compared to the world views common among Shiite Ulama [in the past]."[85] Menashri also provides a useful analysis of the transformations that occurred in the meaning and values attached to Shiite symbols and myths in the years preceding the revolutionary crisis.[86] This analysis cogently demonstrates the process of

inventing traditions in Iran, and at the same time challenges notions about the fixed and self-sufficient nature of Muslim societies. Last, Menashri traces political and economic transformations in twentieth-century Iran that led to the 1979 revolution. He demonstrates how various historical constellations—local and global, religious and secular, monarchist and Islamist, "western" and "eastern"—have combined to create the revolutionary "moment" there. Thus, as he claims, it was not Islam as such that brought about the revolutionary crisis but processes and phenomena such as the repressive rule of the Shah, the detrimental effects of the White Revolution reform program, the enforced secularization of Iranian society and, last but not least, the "exploitation by imperialism."[87]

Although Israeli narratives on Iran revealed an appreciation of how the Iranian revolution was shaped by interaction with Euro-America, in the final analysis they also betrayed a reluctance to let go of deep-seated beliefs about Islam's pervasive force. This simultaneity of two basic yet mutually exclusive assumptions—the one, that events in Iran could and should be explained through general trends and processes, and the other, that these same events can only be explained within the framework of a metaphysical "Islam"—created constant tension and ambivalence in Israeli narratives, as exemplified in the following three passages (italics are mine):

> This "*new*" [revolutionary] ideology . . . was nothing but a *return* to the glorious past of the beginning of Islam; the clerics [aspired] to banish the *old,* contaminated by the imprint of the royalist regime and Western culture, and to create in its stead *new* patterns, based on the *old* principles of Islam.[88]

> Searching for a "*new*" way, a safe haven, and having tried various ideas that proved disappointing . . . Khomeini suggested a *return* to Islam as the only alternative capable of extracting Iranian society from crisis.[89]

> The Islamic revolution in Iran presents a *new* pattern of power-seizure in the modern history of the Muslim Middle East. . . . [I]t was led primarily by clerics, it had mass support . . . and its "*new*" ideology was nothing more than the *return* to the glorious past and to the ideology most familiar to Iranians—to Islam.[90]

Note how all the admittedly new and unprecedented phenomena stirred up by the revolution—"ideology," "model," and "way"—are at once a return to something old and familiar—"a glorious past," "old principles," or simply "Islam." This simultaneity of old and new also finds vivid expression in the

way the word *new* is enclosed in quotation marks. Models, ideologies, and directions enunciated by the revolutionaries are concurrently presented as new and primordial, unprecedented and perennial.

Similar oxymoronic voices find vivid expression in Israeli mainstream readings of Iran's drive for nuclear power under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. I will say more on this issue later on in Chapter 3, but here I would like to focus on one influential book on Iran's nuclear program that reveals the conceptual tensions of the kind I have described.

The book *The Sphinx,* coauthored by Yossi Melman (*Ha'aretz*'s expert on espionage and international terror) and Meir Javedanfar (an Iranian-born Israeli and an independent Iran expert), went to the bookstores in spring 2007.[91] The timing is extremely important as it helps to understand why it provoked so much interest among Israeli readers. The book appeared approximately a year after Hamas, an Iranian-backed organization, took power in the Palestinian territories in democratic elections, and immediately after the second Lebanon debacle, in which another Iranian-backed organization, Hezbollah, dealt a decisive blow to Israel's sense of military prowess. The two events not only underscored the Jewish state's vulnerability but also raised grave concerns that Iran was gaining a foothold across Israel's northern and southern borders with a view to making good on its alleged pledge to have the Jewish state "wiped off the map." By attempting to decipher the extent of the Iranian nuclear threat and to assess Israel's options for containing it, *The Sphinx* responded to a genuine existential want among Israeli Jews.

In *The Sphinx* the authors are primarily concerned with situating Iran's nuclear program in its multiple contexts, a welcome endeavor that carries the potential of reducing exaggerated Israeli anxieties about Iran. However, because Melman and Javedanfar unwittingly succumb to deep-seated Orientalist assumptions, and particularly those privileging Islam as an explanatory category, the book ends up reinforcing these anxieties while also failing to challenge the official Israeli position on Iran in any meaningful way.

To begin with, the authors trace the origins of "the Iranian bomb" to the nuclear program of the defunct monarchical regime. To garner international recognition for Iran as a great power, the Shah sought to arm himself with nuclear weapons, and many a Western state, including the United States, was eager to cooperate with him. This, according to the authors, is "the greatest irony in the story—[namely,] that the U.S., which stands today together with Israel at the forefront of the campaign to halt the ayatollahs' nuclear program,

was the first to extend a nuclear arm to the Shah" (p. 91). The authors further contend that Iran's "nuclear ayatollahs" revived the Shah's nuclear program toward the end of the Iran-Iraq War. Throughout the years of the conflict Iran's supreme leader, Khomeini, was reluctant to pursue nuclear power capabilities, which he identified as one of the deplorable phenomena associated with the capitalist West. However, as the war drew to its conclusion, in 1988, Khomeini "came to realize that Iran would have no choice but developing weapons of mass destruction in order to protect itself from future chemical assaults and to acquire a deterrent force" (p. 106). The authors argue that a breakthrough on this issue was achieved by Rafsanjani in his capacity as president of Iran in the years 1989–1997.

It remains unclear if the authors are correct in asserting, contrary to consistent denials by regime leaders, that Iran's activities in the nuclear arena are in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The book follows in detail Iran's deceptive maneuvers to conceal from the International Atomic Energy Agency any incriminating evidence regarding its nuclear program. "In order to cover up one lie the Iranians came forward with another lie. Ultimately, Iran became entangled in a complex web of lies from which it could not break free easily" (p. 135).

Regarding a possible "preemptive strike" on Iran's nuclear facilities, Melman and Javedanfar's view is realistic. The Iranians, they say, scattered these facilities throughout the country, and some of these facilities were built underground in fortified bunkers. Moreover, in light of the loss of a Republican majority in the U.S. Congress and the military quagmire in Iraq, President Bush—the only head of state with "the practical military capability to carry out an efficient aerial strike" (p. 210)—will not hurry to undertake an attack on Iran. Under these circumstances it is possible that Bush will tacitly support an Israeli strike, but "given that Israel's ability to carry out a comprehensive attack is not a viable option, it may have to confine itself to a limited attack" (p. 219). Such an attack is likely only "to delay, disrupt and slow down . . . Iran's nuclear program," but not to destroy it (p. 219). Worse, an Israeli strike runs the risk of provoking a severe Iranian retaliation. It is therefore not implausible that Israel and the international community will have to come to terms with "the notion of life under the shadow of the nuclear sphinx from Tehran" (p. 251). Whatever the case may be, "in the event that Iran will obtain nuclear weapons, the chances it will actually employ them are extremely low" (p. 249).

The authors should be commended for their calm and balanced appraisal of the Iranian nuclear threat—a rare phenomenon in Israeli public discourse. In addition, they should be praised for situating Iran's nuclear standoff in the context of the protracted entanglement of Iranian history with the history of Euro-American colonialism. As I mentioned earlier, it was this silencing of the dark side of European expansion in favor of an emphasis on "the failure to thrive, in the past three to five decades, of many decolonized nation-states,"[92] that compelled Israeli analysts to look at "Islamic fanaticism" as the root cause of the Iranian regime's conduct and (evil) designs. Yet Melman and Javedanfar carefully demonstrate that Iran's confrontational attitude may in fact be connected to this colonial past; that, irrespective of the thorny question whether Iran is actually pursuing a nuclear arsenal, there is some compelling logic in the allegation that the current U.S.-led campaign against Iran's nuclear program smacks of previous colonial enterprises that have kept the country in a state of structural underdevelopment.[93]

Even so, it appears that the authors are reluctant to break off the fetters of the Orientalist paradigm upon which their identity as Israeli Jews is built. For, although they go out of their way to explain Iran's nuclear policy in terms of the shifting circumstances in modern Iranian history, at the same time they suggest that Ahmadinejad's religious worldview is the main (if not the only) "key" for making sense of Iran's nuclear ambitions.

It is for this reason that Melman and Javedanfar painstakingly reproduce dominant Israeli doomsday scenarios, according to which the clerical regime would not hesitate to drop a bomb on Israel in order to achieve its Islamist millenarian agenda. According to *the* messianic Shiite tradition, they say, an Armageddon-like battle will usher the return of the Mahdi, the expected Shiite Messiah. Guided by a mystical belief in a divine mission, Ahmadinejad "will not fear war and will most probably welcome [it], not only to defend Iran but also as a divine decree." To further this apocalyptic war Ahmadinejad will also be prepared to suffer personal "martyrdom," which is, as the authors assert, a custom "every Shiite must adopt" (p. 60). Needless to say, this observation stands in stark contrast to the authors' previous estimation that Iran will not rush "to push the button."

It is only unfortunate that those parts of the book that situate Iran's nuclear threat in its various contexts are in conflict with, and are then neutralized by, those parts of it in which "Islam" is somehow made to cover everything that one most disapproves of from the standpoint of civilized, Western rationality.

It is for this reason that the book utterly fails to provide any viable alternative to official Israeli discourses on Iran. Little wonder, therefore, that Shimon Peres endorses the book on its back cover, writing that it "exposes to its most diabolic form the danger emanating from Ahmadinejad's personality."

As the preceding discussion clearly demonstrates, although Israeli narratives conceded the interaction between and commensurability of Iran with the larger world, the view that the Iranians were (still) unable or unwilling to "adjust" to the institutional logic of secular capitalist modernity remained intact. To resolve the conceptual contradiction, Israeli analysts seized on the concept of "pragmatism." According to *Webster's New Dictionary,* pragmatism is invariably "a practical approach to problems and affairs," an approach standing in stark opposition to underlying "principles." In polities in which Islamic doctrine was supposed to hold such a decisive sway, so the logic went, change can be thought of and explained away only if it is relegated to the domain of the superficial and the auxiliary—in short, to the domain of "pragmatics." In other words, the category of pragmatism enabled the analysts to cling to their assumption that the Iranians lived exclusively by a set of rules spelled out in their sacred scriptures and at the same time to argue that they lived in constant dialogue with the changing circumstances of their lives. It allowed our experts to account for change in Iran while at the same time retaining the notion that Iranians as people were somehow untouched by time, living in a continuing unchanging "prehistory." If change were to be acknowledged, it was to remain external to the purported unchanging fabric and spirit of Muslim culture and society. The incorporation of the category of "pragmatism" in Israeli narratives was thus in keeping with the notion of an internally structured archive (called Orientalism) in which things came to be seen as neither completely novel nor thoroughly familiar.[94]

Israeli analyses of post-1979 Iranian identity provide excellent illustrations of these discursive acrobatics. Benedict Anderson reminds us that "since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in *national* terms . . . and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past."[95] As I have discussed elsewhere,[96] the Iranian revolution was no exception to this rule: ideologically and structurally, Iran's Islamists operated within Western-inspired political paradigms of the nation-state. In addition, their Islamist identity was greatly entwined with Aryan hypothesis as elaborated by nineteenth-century European philologists and disseminated by the defunct Pahlavi regime.[97]

Yet according to a great many Israeli narratives that appeared at the time of and immediately after the revolutionary crisis, the revolution represented the ultimate defeat of nationalism at the hands of radical Islam, signaling the "failure of national identity."[98] Because the Shah had failed to "convert" his subjects' allegiance to "secular national identity," so the rationale went, "Islam remained the focus of allegiance and loyalty among the masses."[99] What we are left with, then, is a conception of the Iranians as a community molded and governed exclusively by a backward and regressive Islamic superstructure. This "Islam" allegedly uprooted and displaced the *secular* (territorially and ethnically based) nationalist attachments of the previous Pahlavi regime in favor of a purely *religious* imagined community. The end result has been a view that renders the pre- and the post-1979 Iranian polities as two incompatible and antithetical forces; national identity belonged exclusively to the realm of the *modernizing* Pahlavi monarchy, whereas "Islam" belonged exclusively to the realm of the *regressive* post-1979 Iranian regime.[100] In keeping with Western scholarship's "obsession with coherence and holistic approaches that freezes the meaning of both text and context,"[101] Israeli narratives revealed an enduring reluctance to recognize that modernity embraces a multidimensional array of historical phenomena that cannot be prematurely synthesized and compartmentalized into a unified *Zeitgeist*.

However, as Iran's successes in the Iran-Iraq war increased, Israeli analysts were more inclined to acknowledge the power of Iranian nationalist identity as "the main dimension in the Iran-Iraq War."[102] "They are fighting to protect their homes, their homeland, against a cruel foreign invader," explained an Israeli analyst,[103] and another analyst seconded him, saying, "This is not Khomeini's war but a national war."[104] Yet for the most part, these analysts were still not quite prepared to go all the way in acknowledging that national identity was a vital force in post-1979 Iranian realities or that nationalist imagination and religious imagination in Iran were not necessarily antithetical forces. Reluctantly compelled to integrate Iranian nationalism into their narratives, Israeli analysts introduced the category of "pragmatism":

> By the nature of things, revolutionary movements, once in power, often deviate from their original radical doctrines. The Islamic Revolution was no exception. As long as he headed an opposition movement, Khomeini had depicted a "new Iran" modeled on early Islam. The wholeness of the Islamic *umma,* an ecumenist conception *par excellence,* was the ideal that followed naturally. But, once in

> power, he knew he could not rule by means of revolutionary slogans—certainly not slogans derived from seventh-century thought. He and his disciples were now called upon to manage, rather than discuss, affairs of state. *Soon they compromised with realities, not from any new-found moderation, but from a pragmatism responsive to the exigencies of their situation.*[105]

Note that nationalism here is merely a "deviation" from the "radical [Islamist] doctrine" of the revolution, and not an integral part of that doctrine. It is a sheer pragmatic maneuver, a utilitarian performance that, in fact, militates against everything the revolutionaries genuinely aspired to. Thus, as the same writer goes on to say elsewhere, "the will to Islamize dictated the new regime's basic attitude toward the issue of nationalism; but facts of life forced upon it a measure of realism and an emphasis on the 'requirements of state' rather than on 'an ideological crusade'"[106]; "though Khomeini's [Islamist] vision has not been abandoned, its implementation has been subordinated to practical calculations."[107] In this way nationalism was transformed into a kind of false consciousness, an unnatural growth with which the Iranians have had to come to terms, a pragmatic "compromise" they were compelled to strike in light of changing realities.

CONCLUSION

The portrait of Iran emerging from the Israeli narratives since the time of the revolution was that of a world entrenched in pre- or anti-modern patterns, affected neither by the vicissitudes of time and overseas expansion nor by the Shah's tyrannical modernization. Indeed, for most Israeli analysts the revolution was a powerful indication of the Iranians' "failure to thrive" in the age of modernity; they did not grow anything of tangible and lasting value, and they played little if any part in what since the nineteenth century was seen as universal historical progress. According to this portrait, the revolution raised from its slumber the specter of primeval reactionary forces, and these uprooted everything the Shah's benevolent modernizing project had sought to introduce and implement. Like a body rejecting foreign implants, Iran rejected with unrestrained violence the foundations of secular capitalist modernity. As we've seen, this portrait of Iran, although not lacking in tensions and contradictions, drew on a number of sources—from long-standing Zionist and Israeli attitudes toward Muslim societies through shifting geopolitical concerns since the late 1970s.

As an anachronism imbued with vitality, power, and tenacity, Iran emerged as a paradox in Israeli public culture, a phenomenon devoid of any logic. On the first anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Uri Lubrani, Israel's last ambassador to Iran and one of the Jewish State's foremost experts on that country, reiterated the gist of this paradox. Referring to Qom, Khomeini's chosen residence following his return to Iran, he wrote,

> Almost nothing has changed in the human landscape. In this city, sacred to Shiite Islam, history moves along at an excruciatingly slow pace. With its ancient mosques, this city embodies the immense gap between the extremist Islamic world view and the Western one. . . . Khomeini . . . has taught the twentieth century a remarkable lesson in the immense power of irrationality.[108]

How did Israelis cope with this paradox? Simply put, they tried to wish it away. Thus, when in May 1979 the head of the Jewish community in Iran, Habib Elqaniyan, was executed during a great purge of supporters of the old monarchical regime, they predicted that "this dark utopia of Khomeini and his ilk will not withstand the reality test of the late twentieth century."[109] Uri Lubrani joined in, predicting, "This is a tyrannical, cruel and very dogmatic regime. It will not last long."[110]

Indeed, the expectation that Iran's Islamist radicalization would be short-lived was in keeping with the view of many Israelis who had extensive contacts with the old regime and came to play a major role in the formulation of the Jewish state's Iran policy. This basic aspiration increased as threats to the existence of the young Islamic republic became more frequent. Successful raids by the opposition against state institutions and personalities; uprisings of ethnic and religious minorities, which had made use of the absence of a stable central government to lift their heads; and border skirmishes between the armed forces of Iran and Iraq (which developed into full-scale war in September 1980)—all these indicated to analysts the impending "disintegration of the Iranian State."[111] This wishful thinking was also reflected in titles of newspaper op-eds, such as "Iran Disintegrates,"[112] "Chaos Reigns in Iran,"[113] "Tehran Hourglass,"[114] and "Khomeini—The Beginning of the End?"[115]

Yet the Islamic republic existed on—despite the series of crises at home and abroad that threatened to break it apart and despite Israelis who wished it away. This baffling resilience prompted several past and present Israeli state officials to try to hasten its demise by assisting Iranian exiles "to turn the wheel the other way," as Yaakov Nimrodi put it. Nimrodi, it should be emphasized, was

one of the chief architects of this "counter-revolution that never took place,"[116] a move that, although unsuccessful, still indicated that Israelis viewed Iran's Islamic nature and extremist views as "a historical parenthesis."[117] This impressive resilience of the post-1979 regime perhaps set the greatest challenge to those who prematurely predicted (or expressed the desire to see) the demise of the postrevolutionary Iranian state: how to account for the survival of such an outdated anachronism in the modern (and postmodern) world.

But which *anachronism* exactly did they have in mind? As I will argue in the next chapter, it is not at all unreasonable to suggest that when speaking about relics of a bygone age, Israelis were referring not only to Iranian realities but also—perhaps mainly—to "Iran-like" (Jewish) forces of ethnicity and religion that operated in their own midst.

2 MODERNITY IN CRISIS

Israeli Pipe Dreams of Euro-America and the Iranian Threat

We are not only on our way to becoming a state of the ayatollahs, we are already in its midst.

—An Israeli commentator expressing concerns over the rise of Mizrahi and ultraorthodox politics of identity in the late 1990s.

HELD SINCE 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest is an annual event traditionally dedicated to the eternal themes of love, peace, and harmony.[1] Yet asked to pick a song to submit to the 2007 contest in Helsinki, Israelis paid little heed to these themes. Instead, they settled for "Push the Button," a controversial number by a punky Israeli group called "Teapacks," which is generally understood as a description of life under the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran with its "crazy rulers."[2] Meanwhile, an Israeli fashion house (Dan Cassidy) commissioned a series of photos at a construction site in southern Tel Aviv that showed a topless model lying in a pit. The project was designed as a warning against the "holocaust" that would follow Iran's possible nuclear attack on Israel; the pit, as the project's creative director explained, represented "a mass grave of complacent Tel Aviv residents."[3]

These are merely two vivid expressions of the acute Iranophobia that has taken hold of the Israeli public sphere in recent years. With some notable exceptions,[4] this phobia has been disseminated by leading Israeli scholars, journalists, and politicians who argue that, should Iran be allowed access to weapons of mass destruction, the "nuclear ayatollahs" will quickly turn them against Israel so as to achieve their apocalyptic ambitions. "With a country the size and shape of Israel . . . probably four or five hits will suffice. No more Israel," predicted historian Benny Morris.[5] The Israeli public has taken these doomsday scenarios seriously: as noted in the Introduction, a recent poll found that 71 percent of Israelis believe that the United States should launch a "preemptive" strike against Iran if diplomatic efforts fail to halt Tehran's nuclear program.[6]

Needless to say, there are many good reasons why the Jewish state should be apprehensive of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the course of just one year—2006—Israel has fought a war with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah on its northern border; seen the election of candidates from Hamas, another Iranian-backed organization, in the Palestinian Territories; and watched the growing influence of Iran in Iraq.[7] All the while Iran has kept up its Israel-threatening rhetoric (and Israel reciprocated in kind), and is suspected of pursuing nuclear weapons capability with contempt for international opposition. As a result, "a rising tide of anxiety at the Iranian threat is afflicting Israelis at all levels."[8] Still, as the earlier illustrations clearly demonstrate, and as we've seen in the previous chapter, there's something utterly irrational and exceedingly disproportionate in Israeli understandings of the Iranian threat—even if that threat is, in certain respects, very real.

In Chapter 1 I argued that Israeli anxieties about Iran derived in no small part from geopolitical shifts in the Jewish state's relations with the Arab world since the late 1970s. In this chapter I further inquire into the roots of Israeli perceptions of the Iranian threat. To do so, I change the analytical focus from politico-strategic issues with which previous scholarship on Israel and Iran has been preoccupied to the realm of culture. Following works that read metropolitan and colonial cultures together, or contrapuntally, I will emphasize the collapse of boundaries between Israel and Iran, and view one history (Iranian) as both the condition and the effect of the other history (Israeli). So doing, I will demonstrate that Israeli perceptions of the Iranian threat should be examined and understood within the framework of a moral panic evocative of what Israelis believed to be the (dis)ordering of their society at home.

In the first section I analyze various Israeli texts on Iran under the old monarchical regime, which appeared *after* the fall of the Shah in the 1979 revolution. These retrospective texts were often created by Israelis who had spent extended periods of time in the Shah's realm either as state emissaries or as private entrepreneurs. Although I am aware that these texts cannot provide a transparent access to the monarchical past—for, as Edward Said has noted, "there is no just way in which the past can be quarantined from the present"[9]—they are likely to redirect attention to the kind of commonsense world that bonded Israel and Iran in the pre-revolutionary era. This commonsense world was in keeping with the two states' perceptions of themselves as outsiders to the Arab Middle East, as well as their desire to integrate their respective (Jewish and Iranian) populations into the Christian West.

In addition, these retrospective texts show that the Jewish state's unqualified support for the Shah regime's oppressive modernity was firmly embedded in various colonial gestures, including the "bourgeois European evaluation of 'unprogressive' and 'fanatical' Islam that required to be directly controlled for reasons of empire."[10] These aspects of Israeli-Iranian relations before the revolution at once complemented and outweighed many of the other (political, strategic, and economic) issues upon which the two states agreed.

In part two of the chapter, I demonstrate that Israel's perceptions of and anxieties about the Iranian threat cannot be sufficiently understood unless we keep in mind these conceptual mainstays of the Israel-Iran alliance before the revolution. Whereas mainstream Israeli readings of monarchical Iran worked to reinforce self-images of the Jewish state as "the West," the revolution and its aftermath equally worked to underline the precarious nature of these self-images. Although the revolution and the Islamic republic showed the Shah regime to be "not even the replica of Europe, but its caricature," to borrow from Frantz Fanon's scathing critique of postcolonial ruling juntas,[11] they also brought to the fore the very ethnic and religious tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions inherent in the attempt to demarcate and safeguard the Western character of Israeli society. Even if some of Israel's concerns with the Islamic republic may be justified, the anti-Iran phobias issuing from its public sphere should be examined within the context of heightened anxieties lest Iran's post-1979 realities turn out to be the dark future of the Jewish state. In other words, manifestations of anti-Iran phobias in the Israeli public culture are derived not only from the emergence of a hostile Islamist regime in Iran but also from the current and future direction of secular Zionism. Images of Iran as threatening were, in effect, expressions of a moral panic directed at the Jewish state's "outsiders within"—the very domestic forces (or "folk devils") of ethnicity and religion that jeopardized definitions of the nation as a unified cultural community, a national culture ethnically pure and homogeneous in its "whiteness."[12]

A "WONDROUS LOVE AFFAIR": ISRAEL AND IRAN UNDER THE SHAH REGIME

To appease the Arab states on the one hand, and domestic (Islamist and leftist) forces of opposition on the other hand, the Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi conducted his relations with Israel under a thick veil of secrecy. It was to that end that he always refrained from granting the Jewish state more than de facto

recognition.[13] And yet, contacts between the two states intensified in various fields and reached what an Israeli expert described retrospectively as "a wondrous love affair (*roman mufla*')."[14] Indeed, as the same writer goes on to say, "Even if these relations were informal, their intimacy, scope and depth were extremely impressive."[15]

According to most scholarly accounts, apart from its concern for Iranian Jewry,[16] Israel's enchantment with Iran derived mainly from strategic and economic interests and considerations. First of all, Iran was Israel's main partner in the strategic anti-Arab and anti-Soviet "alliance of the periphery."[17] Accordingly, in the late 1950s Iran sought and obtained the assistance of the Israeli Mossad in building and administrating the SAVAK, the Shah's notorious secret police.[18] Then, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Shah undertook responsibility for ensuring peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region, in accordance with the dictates of the "Nixon Doctrine." As a result, Iran became a crucial export market for Israeli arms, about $500 million per year in the 1970s.[19]

The literature further tells us that when the Shah embarked on his ambitious modernization programs in the 1960s, he became increasingly dependent on Israeli know-how in technology, transportation, construction, and agriculture. As a consequence, the initial security and intelligence alliances between the two countries expanded into sprawling business and financial initiatives that produced nice profits for Israeli companies, officials, and entrepreneurs.[20] Israelis operating in Pahlavi Iran now enjoyed a lifestyle they could hardly dream of having in their own country:

> Most of the Israelis congregated in Tehran as representatives of medium- and large-size companies. . . . They rented offices—entire floors, and sometimes entire buildings, too—hundreds of cars and hundreds of apartments. They also left their mark on the city's cultural life. The Israeli colony (*ha-moshavah ha-yisra'elit*) often constituted the lion's share of the elegantly dressed crowds who frequented events of Western culture in the eastern parts of [Tehran]: imported French and Italian operas, an English theater put up especially for foreigners, night clubs with the best shows from European countries. . . . Nearly every Israeli family had a housemaid, and there were cases . . . when employees brought housemaids from the Philippines; the local ones were just not good enough for them.[21]

Little wonder that Eliezer (Geizi) Tsafrir, the Mossad's last resident agent in Iran before 1979, grieved over the "loss" of the country in the revolution, saying, "If it were not for the fact that they destroyed the country, Iran could have

been an excellent place to spend a few years in service."[22] For Tsafrir, then, "the East is a career," as Benjamin Disraeli famously told his readers in *Tancred*.[23]

While these *material* aspects are crucial for understanding the Israeli-Iranian alliance before the revolution, they still fail to illuminate what drew Israel so powerfully to Iran under the Shah regime. After all, Iran was not the only Muslim state with a sizable Jewish community that cultivated strategic and economic ties with Israel; Turkey and Morocco are other examples. Nor was Iran the only Third World country that Israel ultimately "lost," as its short-lived adventure in Africa during the 1960s clearly demonstrates. However, as I have shown elsewhere,[24] no other of Israel's relations with Third World or Muslim countries have ever evoked so much nostalgic reminiscing as its relations with Iran under the old monarchical regime.[25]

To understand what singled out Iran from other Third World countries in the eyes of the Jewish state, we need to direct our attention to the cultural values at work in their bilateral relations. Much has already been said and written about the partitions and enclosures that designated the Jewish state as the forefront of Western, "Judeo-Christian" civilization in the Middle East. I would like to suggest that Israel's enchantment with Iran under the old monarchical regime derived in no small part from that regime's analogous endeavor to shut itself off from the Arab Orient and to define the Iranian polity in classic Orientalist terms as Euro-American.[26]

To achieve these ambitions, both states implemented colonial ideals of modernization, which involved the coercive secularization, or de-Orientalization, of their respective subjects, turning them into what anthropologist Stanley Diamond described as "conscripts of civilization, not volunteers."[27] In the Zionist case, the target communities were primarily exilic "Oriental" Jews—East Europeans (*Ostjuden*) on the one hand and Middle Easterners (*Mizrahim*) on the other hand; they were to be molded in accordance with the image of Aryan masculinity, with a view of making them European in each and every respect, except in their religion.[28] In the Iranian case, the Shah sought to progressively secularize religious identity into an autonomously conceived national identity by keeping with the nineteenth-century philological construct of the "Aryan hypothesis," which designated Iran as part of the Indo-European family of nations.[29] Indeed, Aryanism was a potent force in Iranian nationalism even before the Shah came to power.[30] However, as I have shown elsewhere,[31] the inculcation of Aryan identity became the highlight of the Shah's modernization programs in the 1960s and 1970s, the so-called White Revolution.[32]

Thus to varying degrees both Israel and Iran at the time of the Shah were guided by political theologies whose strategic objective was to transform Oriental subjects—Jews and Iranians, respectively—into deracinated replicas of Europeans, even while they remained affiliated to their own religious cultures. To paraphrase Gauri Viswanathan's analysis of religious conversion in colonial India, both Iran and Israel were committed to the idea of shading religious identity into the artificial fabrications of a *secular* Israel and a *secular* Iran, which were still made interchangeable with *Jewish* Israel and *Muslim* Iran. The two states were equally driven by the liberal colonial idea of transforming their respective communities into nonreligious *religious* communities. While the first sought to turn Israelis into "non-Jewish Jews," the latter sought to turn Iranians into "non-Muslim Muslims."[33]

Accepting the notion of *history* as a term referring to the Christian West was crucial in defining Jewish and Iranian identities as European and as opposed to the Arab Orient. Consequently, each of the two states invoked a pre-Islamic, pre-Arab, and (purportedly) secular mythical past; interestingly, both these pasts stretched back to and converged on the days of the great Persian Achaemenid Empire. In Israel's case nationalist identity was constructed on the myth of return originating in the biblical narrative concerning Cyrus and Ezra[34]; and in Iran's, it was built on the origin myth of the "Aryan hypothesis," which also encompassed the pre-Islamic imperial Persian past.[35]

It goes without saying that many nationalist movements that developed in Asia and Africa embraced Eurocentrism as the informing principle in their constructions of history, and hence their "return to history" was necessarily to a Western context.[36] Yet for the most part this perception of history served as the basis for these movements' resistance to European domination—which is perhaps another example of how "the legacy of Eurocentrism . . . continues to bedevil even its most ardent critics."[37] In the cases of Israel and Iran, however, Eurocentric conceptualizations of history served as a means of joining—or "returning to"—all that was envisaged by the concept of "Euro-America." If in the colonized world the objective was to dislodge "Euro-America" from the East, in Israel and Iran the objective was to implant the Western model and the Western image in the East.[38]

The "love affair" that characterized Israeli-Iranian relations before the revolution therefore rested on mutually constitutive perceptions of each other as carriers of the Western mission to the Middle East. These shared perceptions of time, space, and civilization, I argue, provided the essential condition

for the various strategic, political, and financial contacts between Israel and monarchical Iran, and not the other way around.[39]

The so-called "alliance of the periphery" is a case in point. Devised by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and his close advisors after the 1956 Suez War, its most immediate incentive was strategic, namely to check Soviet advances in the Middle East and to curb the spread of Nasser's pan-Arab ideology in Asia and Africa.[40] However, Israel's objective, I think, was far more ambitious: delineating a de-Arabicized Middle East, rearranged around non-Arab entities (such as Israel, Iran, Turkey, and even Ethiopia) that would be linked to each other, and to Israel, through their accommodation with the institutional logic of secular capitalist modernity. Particularly impressed with the Shah regime's inculcation of extreme anti-Arab, Aryan identity, Israel soon came to regard Iran as that alliance's "jewel in the crown."[41] The cultivation of relations with the Lebanese Christian Maronite community almost from the advent of the Zionist movement is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it falls neatly within this larger scheme. Constituted by the French colonial authorities as a people distinct from all others in the Orient—"one might say a European colony haphazardly cast into the midst of desert tribes," as the French poet-traveler Alphonse de Lamartine contended in the 1830s[42]—the Maronite community was assigned by Israel an important role in the latter's dream of a "new Middle East."[43] Israeli support for the Iraqi Kurds' guerilla warfare against the Iraqi army in the 1960s and 1970s, which won the Shah's active support, should also be understood within this context. As Parsi contends, paraphrasing a former Mossad operative, "After all, the creation of a non-Arab state in the middle of the Arab heartland wasn't a scenario Israel felt it had to fear."[44]

Important as Israel's strategic, political, and economic interests may have been, then, monarchical Iran assumed a special place in Israeli imagination because it seemed to vindicate the innermost spatial, temporal, and civilizational assumptions of Zionist political theology. As both states shared a common space in the "imaginative geography of the 'our land–barbarian land' variety,"[45] Israel drew hope from Iran that its fantastic undertaking of constructing a Euro-American enclave in the heart of the Orient was a feasible task. Relating his experiences in Iran under the Shah regime, an Israeli immigration envoy thus noted with unabashed delight the proliferation of "the miniskirt model" among Iranian women, which he saw as a clear indication that they "did not lag behind the Israelis and the Europeans."[46]

Support for my arguments can be further extracted from Israeli texts on

monarchical Iran that appeared *after* the fall of the Shah in the revolution. In addition to applauding the deposed and then deceased Shah for having "taught [his subjects] the lessons of the twentieth century after having wallowed in the Middle Ages,"[47] or for having "recognized the historical destiny linking [Iran to Israel] in their mutual confrontation with Arab pressure,"[48] what stands out distinctly in these texts is unqualified support for the Shah's oppressive modernity. This unqualified endorsement of the Shah regime was rationalized by colonial gestures of various kinds, including the view that "collective suffering was often the price to be paid for historical progress."[49]

As mentioned, the texts I explore here were written after the fall of the Shah by Israelis who had spent time in Iran either as official emissaries or as private businessmen and entrepreneurs. Three memoirs deserve our immediate attention. The first is by Meir Ezri,[50] an Iranian-born Israeli who immigrated to Israel in the early 1950s only to be sent back to Iran in 1958 to "build bridges between the two states." He remained there until 1973, first as a chargé d'affaires and then as Israel's ambassador.[51] The second memoir was penned by Eliezer (Geizi) Tsafrir[52] who, as noted previously, headed the Mossad station in Tehran until (and even during) the 1979 revolution. The third memoir was written by Yaakov Nimrodi,[53] who stayed in Iran for nearly twenty-five years, first as head of the Mossad station (1955–1959), then as military attaché and head of the Ministry of Defense delegation (1960–1969), and finally as a private businessman (1970–1979). During this last period, as Nimrodi himself boasts in his book, he established himself economically through lucrative financial ventures, including arms deals, with the Shah regime.[54]

It is clear that these and other writers could not engage with (pre- or post-1979) Iran in an impartial way. In stark contrast to the pre-revolutionary days, when they appeared in Iran as omnipotent figures, they are now denied entry into that country and can no longer influence the state of affairs there.[55] By using the genre of memoir—which is neither objective nor entirely fictitious—they seek to privilege their own historical roles in the Shah's realm, which, to their minds, was a land of endless opportunity now turned into a lost horizon.

However, what is at stake for these writers is more than nostalgia for bygone days of glory and power. Their main objective, which is never fully or consciously elaborated, is to exonerate the monarch from any wrongdoing that would account for the revolutionary crisis. As a consequence, each casts his narrative as a tragedy—the story of Western "progress" overcome by a sinister and regressive revolution. Accordingly, they extol the virtues of a monarch

who, though autocratic, was also enlightened and improved the lot of his people. The State of Israel and its emissaries also received their share of praise for assisting the Shah in this noble task.

All the same, the authors end up implicating both royal despotism and themselves. As active players in Iranian history they had witnessed the Shah's political and social repression of his subjects, and some of them were even directly involved in it. However, even as narrators after the fact they enthusiastically embraced the Shah regime's repressive modernity. Indeed, to their minds the suffering and grievances of the Shah's subjects and the injurious repercussions of his domestic policies on "Oriental" cultures and traditions were negligible when weighed against the implementation of such ideals as progress and civilization. In short, to these writers the Shah's subjects were nothing more than "spectral figures, transparent testimonies to the worldly triumph of a secular capitalist modernity."[56]

Consider, for example, Meir Ezri's account on the origins of SAVAK-Mossad relations. It seems there is nothing new in his story; the ties between the two organizations, says Ezri, were established in 1957 as part of the emerging alliance of the periphery to "exchange information and evaluations about developments in the Middle East in two main areas . . . the danger of Nasserism and the Soviet threat."[57] Ezri's story is illuminating in other respects, however. It demonstrates that Ezri and his superiors in Israel knew full well that the SAVAK was a covert, cruel, and violent organization, yet they did not voice their objection to Israel's increasing cooperation with it.[58]

Ezri is reminded of his own deep apprehensions about an interview set for him with one of the SAVAK heads in 1958, at the beginning of his Iran mission. He opens with an assertion that establishes his understanding as hindsight: "The name SAVAK is notorious all over the world today, especially since it carries entire burdens of hostility, vilifications and deep hatred following revelations in the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran." Yet Ezri admits that even then, in 1958, he knew that the SAVAK instilled "fear and terror in the hearts of all those taken for interrogations on the premises." "I was fully aware," he recounts, "that those who entered the gates of SAVAK didn't leave of their own accord." Alas, having no other option, Ezri arrived at the SAVAK headquarters at the appointed time:

> All along the way it was on my mind. I pieced together bits of information that I had heard so far about the SAVAK's deeds. One rumor was that one day some

> one hundred and fifty members of the opposition were taken aboard helicopters and dropped to their dreadful death in the big salt lake southeast of Qom. I also heard that all those summoned to [head of SAVAK] General Bakhtiyar's room had to stand at attention for about a quarter of an hour in front of his desk. . . . On both sides of Bakhtiyar's desk there were always two loaded pistols. A quarter of an hour later few were those who did not fall at Bakhtiyar's feet to admit the suspicions and deeds attributed to them.[59]

The Shah's autocratic rule did not go unnoticed by Israeli emissaries in Iran, but they would not allow this knowledge to detract in any way from the image they created of him as an "enlightened despot." On the contrary, his autocracy was deemed indispensable in the endeavor to abolish his subjects' Oriental alterity, bringing them into the orbit of secular capitalist modernity.[60]

Indeed, "the colonial," as Fredrick Cooper observes, "evokes above all the marking of certain people as distinct, in need of special forms of surveillance and supervision, and unable to participate fully in the projects of a modernizing society."[61] Accordingly, in January 1979, while the Shah was still helplessly trying to hang on to his throne, an unnamed Iran "expert" wrote a commentary in *Ha'aretz* asserting that since the Shah's subjects were "not mature enough for an independent democratic government," he saw "no alternative to an absolutist regime in Iran."[62] This was the same "expert" who, as we have seen in the previous chapter, called upon the Shah to massacre his people in order to be able to save his throne. Small wonder, then, that after the Shah's demise the Histadrut daily *Davar* described his legacy as follows:

> Pahlavi was one of the most important rulers of the last generation. . . . He undoubtedly advanced Iran and took it from underdevelopment to regional power status, with pretense to become one of the first-rank nations in the world. . . . Only in historical perspective will we be able to balance the Shah's achievements and failures but even now it is clear that in many cases these achievements rested on shaky grounds, because Iranian society was not mature enough to continue its advance without the Shah.[63]

To stand decisively behind the Shah's autocracy also meant to think of the people who were on the receiving end of it as mute bearers of "bare life," subjected to a biopolitics in which they were marked as outcasts.[64] Thus Tsafrir reminisces about a brief official visit to Tehran in 1974, noting that "the North / South divide exists there too":

> As in so many other places the North is rich and ostentatious, the South poor and crowded. One cannot escape the potential image of an outraged southern mass striking at the North, and, like locusts, devouring every blade of grass and looting it all. Meanwhile, however, it all seems quiet and peaceful. The rich are ensconced in their luxurious mansions, driving their air-conditioned cars between home, office and fancy restaurant, or taking trips to the northern snow covered vacation sites. The masses, meanwhile, are in servitude in these very mansions, on the road, in stores, and so on. To each his own, and one has to bow down when receiving the tip.[65]

Tsafrir of course is writing with the fall of the Shah in mind, which is why he foresees, as it were, signs of the calamity the Shah would ultimately suffer at the hands of the very people upon whom he had exacted extraordinary inequalities and depredations. And yet by branding them as a "southern mass" and "locusts," Tsafrir does not endow these people with the same vital humanity which he accredits to the Shah and his elites. In doing so, he reduces Iranians to "shadowy 'third things' lodged between animal and human," to cite from Paul Gilroy's critique of racist notions that establish "some human bodies [as] more easily and appropriately humiliated, imprisoned, shackled, starved and destroyed than others."[66] In the final analysis, Tsafrir refuses to recognize that Iranians' actions can be explained in terms of concrete historical experiences of repression and injustice. Rather, under Tsafrir's gaze, these masses soon return to accept the repressive order of the day as an unalterable fact of nature; they remain indifferent to their political selves as though history bypasses—or merely acts upon—them.

Nimrodi's book, *My Life Journey,* offers many other examples of how the Iranian people are included as the objects of sovereign power but excluded from being its subjects. Even a cursory look at his memoir reveals that Nimrodi did not once stop to consider that his financial ventures with the Shah regime actually worsened the conditions of many an Iranian. This comes out most clearly in Nimrodi's account of his involvement in developing the Persian Gulf island of Qish as a high-class tourist resort, in tune with the Shah's modernization schemes. Here Nimrodi describes the project, in which he played a crucial role:

> The most conspicuous public building in Qish was the grand new "Shavan" hotel run by a Rothschild company. After paying an initial entry fee of fourteen hundred dollars, for twenty hundred a week, no meals included, the hotel

> offered every kind of pleasure offered in Monte Carlo. . . . The menu was French, and a Concorde jet would carry fresh produce and fine cheeses from Paris, and once in a while pretty lady escorts too. . . . The hotel itself had a small casino, but right next to it a bigger one was built and run by a British company. . . . On a hill overlooking the sea a new shopping mall was constructed with branches of the best European haute couture. According to the initial design only electric cars were to be used on the island . . . to allow the guests to move between the many attractions: casino, a spacious golf course, health spas, diving clubs, horse ranches and so on.[67]

Needless to say, only a small fraction of the Iranians could afford such luxuries at the island of Qish, which Nimrodi crowns as "the paradise of the Persian Gulf."[68] In fact, this island was off limits to Iranian citizens, except for the few wealthy patrons who allegedly passed the Shah regime's "ordeals of civility." All hired staff came from outside the country: the hotel, says Nimrodi, "had two hundred and fifty rooms, and among its staff there was not a single Persian. The receptionists were Swiss, the telephone exchange was operated by a French woman, the waitresses were either Italian or French, and the chamber maids were Portuguese. Even the caretakers were mostly European."[69] To sum up, in the accounts of these Israeli writers the Iranian people simply did not matter. Not unlike the subaltern classes in Indian historiography that Dipesh Chakrabarty critiques, they were "read as such telling figures of misery and privation that the violence and undemocracy of the state look[ed] like a small price to pay for the attainment, ultimately, of a more just social order."[70]

It is important to emphasize that the reluctance of Israelis to consider seriously the complicity of their state with the Shah's repressive policies is ingrained in the Israeli public sphere. Israel's run-of-the-mill historiography, for example, has usually tended to fluctuate between describing Israeli involvement in pre-1979 Iran in ostensibly neutral terms and assigning Israeli representatives there pure, even altruistic motives. A historian of Iran thus remarks—somewhat testily, but also approvingly—that Israel "assisted . . . Iran by training its army, sold it army surplus and even helped with the founding of the secret police, the SAVAK. Israel also tended generous assistance to Iran in agriculture and regional development."[71]

Conversely, Israeli historians have been keen to attribute Iranians' misgivings with Israel not to any concrete historical experience, but to the very nature of "their" culture—that is to say, to the pathologies that are supposed to

inhere within their religious culture. As another historian of Iran concluded, "Iranian animosity toward Israel springs from the core of the regime's worldview, according to which the conflict between the Islamic Republic and Israel is pivotal to the larger conflict between Islam and the imperialist West and its materialistic culture."[72] While that may very well be true, the writer refuses to hold the Jewish state accountable in any way, as though nothing it has ever done could deserve such a hostile backlash: "[T]he high visibility attached to the Israeli success story," as he claims, "has come with a pathetic size, territorially and demographically, and therefore *invites* aggression."[73] This oversight introduces yet another colonial gesture that emerges from Israeli texts on Iran—what political geographer Derek Gregory defined as the asymmetry of "accepting the privilege of contemplating 'the other' without acknowledging the gaze in return."[74]

ISRAEL AND POST-1979 IRAN: ARTICULATING DIFFERENCE WITH INCORPORATION

We have seen that Israel's enchantment with the Shah regime derived from a complex web of sources. Among these was a heretofore unexplored, albeit highly critical, commonsense world, which encompassed the idea of "inviting the sub-men to become human, and to take as their prototype Western humanity as incarnated in the Western bourgeoisie," to borrow once again from Fanon's critique of the "pitfalls of national consciousness."[75]

This dimension of Israeli-Iranian relations before the revolution opens up new possibilities for reexamining Israel's concerns with Iran since the revolution. Although these concerns are not necessarily unfounded, the expressions of Iranophobia issuing from the Israeli public sphere should be viewed as a disproportionate and fearful backlash against a revolution that, by shattering the foundations of the Shah's Euro-American enterprise, also jeopardized the theoretical edifice upon which the Jewish state was constructed as "the West." In other words, what lies at the bottom of Israeli anti-Iran phobias is the disheartening feeling that present-day Iranian realities are, in effect, actualizations of the Jewish state's future.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in Israel (as elsewhere in the West), "the media, academia and public were overwhelmed by the vision of a modernizing and pro-Western monarchy being overthrown by a mass movement under the leadership of men whose image matched the most deeply entrenched Orientalist stereotypes."[76] From then on, Israelis saw the revolution as a "terrible detour"

from the trajectory toward progress and civilization and hence (re)consigned the Iranians to static backwardness, regardless of how the revolution was shaped by interaction with Euro-America. Accordingly, for the past three decades the Jewish state has been keen on imputing the radical alterity of the Iranian polity, canceling out pre-1979 notions of shared histories and intertwined destinies. Deeply rooted in readings of Islam and Western ("Judeo-Christian") secularity as two incommensurable entities—and of Iranian history as a failed attempt to live up to the narrative of progress—the post-1979 Iranian polity became the bête noire, the nemesis, from which Israeli citizens should disassociate. By constructing Iran's Otherness, the Jewish state sought to reaffirm its self-image as a modern, secular, and Western society and to justify its utter isolation from the cultural zone of the Arab and Muslim Middle East.

Still, even if the revolution and its aftermath were instrumental in the endeavor to reinforce constructions of Israel as "the West," they also unearthed and, in turn, radicalized the tensions and contradictions inherent in the very process of demarcating and safeguarding the Western character of the Israeli polity. I argue that Israelis went about to set Iran apart as eccentrically Oriental, fanatically religious, and outrageously hostile precisely because they have come to see in it the "strangers from within," the Oriental and religious "folk devils" threatening their own identity.[77] Rebecca L. Stein has shown the ways in which Palestinian violence in 2002 against Israeli cafés—which she renders as a "defining feature of Tel Aviv's urban, Ashkenazi centers"—militated against the construction of Israel as a Western society, "a nation-state that, given both its Palestinian and Mizrahi histories, had never been."[78] I suggest that the 1979 revolution and its aftermath have equally shown the fallacy of such constructions.

To fully understand this point it is necessary to situate the revolution not, as one might expect, in its immediate Iranian context but rather in the context of Israeli domestic politics since the 1970s. Indeed, it is crucial to remember that the 1979 revolution happened to unfold in the streets of Iran at a particular moment when the Israeli ethnocratic regime, which historically had buttressed the dominance of the Ashkenazi (European) Jewish ethno-class,[79] was coming under direct attack from various directions. Two years before, in 1977, the Likud party had won the national election, ending nearly thirty years of Labor party rule. Personifying the antithesis to Labor's quasi-socialist ethos, Likud appealed to many Mizrahi Israelis, mostly first- and second-generation Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries, who were continuously being treated by members of Israeli ethnocracy as second-class citizens.

The entry of the Mizrahim into Israeli politics as a force to be reckoned with was not the only serious threat to Israeli ethnocracy, however. So, too, were Likud's open embrace of "traditional" or "exilic" Judaism and the rise of the religious Zionist settler movement since the mid-1970s. While the former militated against the "Euro-Israeli self-image,"[80] thereby threatening to assimilate the Jewish state into the surrounding Arab and Muslim Middle East, the latter drove home the message that the Jewish state could not fully subscribe to the separation between religion and secularity, and that any attempt to do so within the framework of Zionism would be tantamount to "a snare and a delusion."[81]

By virtue of its timing and its internal dynamics, I argue, the 1979 revolution concretized and dramatized these threats. Divisive politics of ethnicity, charismatic clerical leaders and their underrepresented "Oriental mobs," messianic politics, and the conflation of nation and religion and state and religion—all those features that had made their striking appearance in the 1979 revolution seemed to represent and to underline the domestic, ethnic, and religious threats to the dominance of Israeli ethnocracy as well. The expulsion of the post-1979 Iranian polity to the realm of radical alterity was driven, at least in part, by the Israelis' perception of radical, religious, and ethnic alterities operating in their own midst.

In what follows I substantiate this argument with several illustrations from the past three decades. In January 1979, while the Shah was still waging a battle of survival, Israelis already had noted a perceived resemblance between Khomeini's "religious reactionary regime" and the religious Zionist settlement movement. Yossi Sarid, then a Knesset Member from the center-to-left, secular Alignment (Labor) Party, lashed out at Hebron's religious Zionist settlers, describing them as "Khomeini-style fanatics . . . gripped with convulsions."[82] At about the same time, Michael Harsagor, a professor of European history, traced in the 1979 revolution the paradoxes of Jewish secularity. In an editorial bearing the suggestive title "Israel, Beware of the Ayatollah,"[83] Harsagor claims that "Ayatollah Khomeini was not the only person . . . putting into practice the ideal of backwardness in the East." Participating in this endeavor, he alleges, were also ultra-orthodox and religious Zionist political parties: "their objection to theater plays, autopsy, abortion under medical supervision, [and] women rights . . . puts them in one front with the fanatic old man who is turning Iran upside down."[84] In short, for Sarid and Harsagor, two avid secular Zionists, Israel potentially faced a fate similar to that of Iran, given

that a sizable portion of the population closely allied religious heritage with political Zionism.

In 1980–1981, while reports from Iran focused on the deterioration of that country into anarchy and civil war, Israelis were preoccupied with an election campaign that was rightly described at the time as "befittingly violent."[85] In early June 1981, nearly a month before the election, confrontations began between supporters of Menachem Begin, Likud Party's incumbent prime minister, and supporters of Shimon Peres, Alignment (Labor) party's candidate for the position. These confrontations soon transformed into serious street scuffles between Likud and Labor activists, and the last election rallies were held under the heavy protection of Israeli police.

Whatever the significance of these events may be, it is clear that they "[s]ignaled for the first time the tensions between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim . . . as the real threat to the existence of Israeli society," as literary critic Dror Mishani suggests.[86] Mishani draws on several of that period's press reports in order to illustrate the apocalyptic terms and imageries that were used to describe this assertive entry of the Mizrahim into Israeli politics. Described as a "great time bomb," it was likened to "explosives of the kind that could detonate any minute"; "everyone feels that it is an undercurrent bursting from the depth of the earth, simmering lava pouring from a volcano."[87] Expressing profound anxiety about this development, Amnon Dankner, journalist and future novelist, related his impressions from an election rally held for Shimon Peres in the town of Petah Tikva, which was interrupted by Likud supporters:

> We drove through streets adjacent [to the rally], and all of the sudden we saw a gathering and heard shouts. I got off the car and walked in the direction of the gathering. From afar I could hear people shouting: "Traitor! Maniac! Go fuck yourself, you communist!" I watched those people—they were scores of [Likud's] blackish youth whose faces were twisted in hatred and their clinched fists raised high. The air was soaked with sweaty, savage violence and loaded with intense hatred. "Maniacs," the rioters screamed, "we will smash your face! Go away you son of a bitch! We'll kill you!" One of the rioters approached me and screamed to my face, "Shut up you piece of shit!" As I looked into his eyes I got frightened. In them I saw hatred that could provide for an entire public rally in a central square in Baghdad. . . . Finally, members of the [Alignment Party's] security unit arrived. . . . I felt like someone participating in a scene from a

> Western movie, in which a fort is about to surrender to Indians and a unit of the cavalry suddenly shows up in gallops and trumpet blasts.[88]

Given this frightened backlash, it is not surprising that a parallel was immediately drawn between the political behavior of the Iranian masses and that of Likud supporters; both were assumed to be passive "Oriental" victims easily manipulated by cynical charismatic leaders, Khomeini on the one hand and Begin—whom *Ha'aretz* branded as a "perfect demagogue"[89]—on the other. It is no coincidence, too, that when the term *Khomeinism* gained parlance in Western media,[90] the term *Beginism* came to evoke undemocratic and unruly political behavior in Israel: "This time you really must choose between Beginism and an enlightened government," read an Alignment Party election ad.[91] Within this context, when Likud Party supporters interrupted the previously mentioned election rally arranged for Shimon Peres and threw tomatoes at him, he rebuked them as follows: "You are a Khomeini-like unruly mob! I'm not afraid of your tomatoes. Khomenists! Fascists! . . . Go back to Persia—that's where your future belongs."[92]

The routinization of the post-revolutionary Iranian state in the 1980s and 1990s redirected attention in Israel to the theocratic foundations of Iran's Islamic regime. But this, in turn, once again reinforced the understanding that the conflation of religion and politics also ruled out definitions of the Israeli polity as secular. A typical example is the phrase "This is not Iran" (*kan lo iran*), which was penned by Meretz, the center-to-left secular Zionist party, as its slogan for the 1992 election campaign. In this slogan Meretz obviously rejected Iran, but at the same time it also suggested that Israel was becoming an Iran-like state, treading a dangerous path that might culminate in the establishment of a Jewish theocracy.

The phrase "this is not Iran" is intimately related to the increasing alarm with which secular Israelis from across the political spectrum have watched the ascendancy, since the 1980s, of Shas Party to the center of the political and public stage in Israel. Shas is an ultra-orthodox party associated in the main with Israel's Mizrahi community. Support for the party was fueled in large part by prejudicial treatment the Mizrahim bore from state institutions as well as from ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi parties.[93]

Because Shas blended ultra-orthodox Judaism with Mizrahi politics of identity (hence ushering the "Mizrahi-Haredi Revolution"), its electoral successes have unsettled the political and cultural status quo in Israel. As Amnon Raz-

Krakotzkin contends, "Whatever values it supports, Shas provides and generates a collective identity, challenging the foundations of the dominant culture. Arieh Deri [Shas's ex-convict leader] . . . has produced a critique of Zionism that focuses on the suppression of religion and Sephardic Jewish tradition."[94] The secular mainstream, in turn, mounted a campaign against Shas, charging that it aimed at instituting an "Oriental" theocracy that would remove Israel from the progressive First World—a similar scenario that they scripted for Iran with the political domination of clerics under Khomeini and his successors. Accordingly, the liberal press repeatedly warned that if Shas were to continue operating freely in the political field, the ultra-orthodox Mizrahim would turn Israel into "an Iranian-style theocracy (*medinat halacha*)."[95] On other occasions commentators argued somberly that Israel has already been lost to an Iranian-style Shas regime: "There are those among us who warn against the danger of making Israel a theocratic state. They are probably too late. We are not only on our way to becoming a state of the ayatollahs, we are already in its midst."[96]

It is important to note that the striking electoral successes of the (now defunct "secular" and "liberal") Shinui Party at the 1999 and 2003 elections, in which it gained 6 and 15 out of 120 parliament seats, respectively, stemmed in large part from similar concerns about an Iran-like, ultra-orthodox Mizrahi regime taking over the country. Note, for example, the following statement by a businesswoman from Ramat Hasharon, a city that gave Shinui overwhelming support in the 1999 election:

> When I watch [Shas supporters] on television, [that is] all those black people . . . I panic. Their appearance reminds me of Iran and [the] violent demonstrations in which the Shiites beat themselves until their blood comes oozing out. Sometimes I say to myself: "Good Heavens, they look exactly like them!" That's why I voted for [Shinui] at the parliamentary election.[97]

It appears that the appeal of a Euro-American Israeli order was so great that anxiety about its "contamination" by the *haredi*-cum-Mizrahi values of Shas was shared not only by that order's proponents but also by its most radical detractors. That is perhaps why even the latter resorted to making analogies between Shas and Iran's post-1979 Islamists. Sami Shalom Chetrit is a case in point. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Chetrit belongs to "the new Mizrahim"—those Israeli Jews of Middle East provenance who, as Chetrit himself explains, "are very critical of Zionism, are radical from a social perspective, hold leftist positions on political issues and are not linked in any

way to [Israel's] Ashkenazi Zionist parties."[98] Yet despite the fact that Chetrit's scholarship is genuinely indebted to "opening a wide frontal gate to the critical story of Israel's Mizrahim, whom the state has denied in its official history,"[99] he sets out to debunk Shas leaders by comparing them to Iran's Muslim clerics. By doing so, he paradoxically reaches conclusions similar in kind to those of the state regarding the eccentric and alien nature of Shas. Moreover, at times Chetrit even seems to surpass Israeli ethnocracy in denigrating Shas. He claims that whereas Iran's revolutionary movement upheld democratic principles as "one of its main foundations," Shas displays "no . . . democratic decision making processes . . . either at the field level or in the leadership."[100] Elsewhere Chetrit argues that the authentic revolutionary spirit of the Iranian movement stands in stark contrast to Shas's "sense of contentment and self-indulgence."[101]

A final example of the complex ways in which images of Iran underscored a moral panic with respect to Israel's "outsiders within" is taken from the 2001 prime ministerial elections. On election eve it became increasingly clear that Ehud Barak, the Labor Party's incumbent prime minister, would suffer a landslide defeat at the hands of his Likud Party rival Ariel Sharon. As a result, secular and liberal Israelis once again voiced their alarm over what Talal Asad described as "the potential entry of religion into space already occupied by the secular."[102] In their forecast, Sharon was to be elected prime minister but would fail to entice secular Zionist parties to join Likud in a coalition government. Sharon would then have no other recourse but to seek the support of ultra-orthodox and anti-Zionist factions. Submitting unconditionally to their sectarian demands, he would be forced to install a "fundamentalist" government. This would inevitably make Israel a "Jewish Iran."[103]

Russian immigrants in Israel, many of whom support separation of religion from state and espouse anti-Mizrahi sentiments,[104] were particularly alarmed by this prospect. Yaakov Kedmi is a case in point. Kedmi, a Russian-born Israeli, was Barak's one-time confidante and the person who headed the Mossad's Russian Immigration Bureau. Probably better than anyone else at the time, he knew that, unlike in 1999, the majority of Israelis of Russian descent would not vote for Barak in the forthcoming election. Asked, therefore, if it was still possible for Barak to restore his credibility among Russians, he replied, "Yes," but only if these immigrants were to be told

> You are not choosing between Ehud Barak and Arik Sharon, but between a democratic Israeli state, which is modern, free and does not discriminate among

> Jews of types A, B and C, on the one hand, and, on the other, a state dominated by a fundamentalist Jewish school in all respects. . . . This [latter] state will resemble Iran in terms of belligerency, aggressiveness, cruelty and influence on the life of its citizens. Today we must choose between Jewish fundamentalism and a normal Jewish state. . . . On 6 February we shall vote either for a democratic state or for a fundamentalist state.[105]

Here Kedmi reinforces a secular, albeit distinctly *Jewish* definition of the Israeli collective. He assumes that "a democratic Israeli state, which is modern [and] free," is a state where no distinctions would be made among "Jews of types A, B and C." The overriding problem, of course, is that Kedmi excludes the non-Jewish, mainly Palestinian, citizens from his imagined community and does not view their exclusion from it as an obstacle to the kind of "democratic, modern, and free" state he is calling for.

It has recently been suggested that since the early 1990s, the mutually condemnatory rhetoric issuing from Israel and Iran has been driven less by "an ideological clash" than by a "strategic rivalry . . . for military preeminence in a fundamentally disordered region that lacked a clear pecking order."[106] No doubt, there's much truth in that contention. Nonetheless, as the foregoing discussion has shown, the expulsion of Iran to the realm of radical alterity and the expressions of Iranophobia issuing from the Israeli public sphere also stem from a perceived hegemonic imperative to exorcize the "Oriental," ultra-nationalist and ultra-religious (Iran-like) "demons" within Israeli society. The production of meaning about Iran is driven by a moral panic concerning the nature of Israeli identity no less than by any strategic rivalry between the two states.

CONCLUSION

What do we glean, then, from the preceding discussion in the matter of the great sway that the discourse of Western modernity holds over certain influential members of the Israeli public sphere? It is perhaps appropriate to start addressing this question with Talal Asad, who contends that "certain people in power" are well aware that "'modernity' . . . is not a verifiable object," and that contemporary societies generate, and are themselves products of, "disparate, even discordant, circumstances, origins, valences, and so forth."[107] Still,

> These people *aim* at "modernity," and expect others (especially in the "non-West") to do so too. This fact doesn't disappear when we simply point out that

> "the West" isn't an integrated totality . . . [and] that the modern epoch in the West has witnessed many arguments and several irreconcilable aspirations. On the contrary, those who assume modernity *as a project* know that already.[108]

For Asad, the important question is not why the idea of "modernity" (or "the West") is a misnomer but rather "why it has become hegemonic *as a political goal,* what practical consequences follow from that hegemony, and what social conditions maintain it."[109]

If we link these observations to my argument—namely, that Israeli readings of Iran and the Iranian threat reveal a moral panic over the current and future direction of secular Zionism—we may begin to understand why certain influential members of the Israeli public sphere continue to insist on Western modernity. In a country that has become increasingly entangled in the web of Western influence in the Middle East—"with Israel now serving as a Mediterranean Fort Laramie in America's 'war on terror'"[110]—the intrusion of "diasporic" religiosity and "Oriental" ethnicity within the body politic is seen by "certain people in power" as a grave threat. The more ubiquitous these threats become, the more these people forcefully "*aim* at 'modernity,'" in keeping with the practice of ethnocratic regimes to absorb, contain, or ignore the challenge emerging from its peripheries, thereby trapping them in their respective predicaments.[111] Take, for example, Yosef Lapid, leader of Shinui Party. When asked in 2002 why he was so worried, Lapid replied,

> Because we are in a corrupt, lazy, backward Middle Eastern environment. What keeps us above water is our cultural difference. The fact that we are a forward outpost of Western civilization. If our Westernism erodes, we won't have a chance. If we let the Eastern European ghetto and the North African ghetto take over, we will have nothing to float on. We will blend into the Semitic region and be lost within a terrible Levantine dunghill.[112]

These are not words that befit only a politician such as Lapid, who is infamous for his racist—anti-Haredi, anti-Mizrahi, anti-Arab, and homophobic—ideas.[113] Israeli Jews across the political spectrum, and most notably liberal and secular Zionists, have voiced similar views, and they have done so by employing no less extreme terms. Ari Shavit, a senior commentator for the liberal daily *Ha'aretz,* is a case in point. According to Shavit, Israel failed to achieve its military objectives in the 2006 second Lebanon war because "the energies devoted to maintaining the defensive shield that isolates [it] from

the region and protects it from this region were drastically reduced."[114] Shavit therefore called for the reinstitution of that shield to ensure that Israel remained "a Jewish state in an Arab region . . . a Western country in a Muslim region . . . and a democratic state in a region of fanaticism and despotism."[115]

Be that as it may, my discussion has shown that many of these ideas about Israeli modernity derive from commentaries about pre- and post-1979 Iran. These commentaries bestow coherence and aesthetic value upon the order of Israeli culture, and they compel Israelis "in power" to reexamine their assumptions about the domestic front in light of the challenges posed to them by the very people they rule.

In her fascinating work on the relationship between domestic and foreign policies of American empire and their cultural manifestations, Amy Kaplan has demonstrated the link between domestic and foreign affairs in the manufacturing of such an imperial project. As Kaplan explains, "the concept of foreign policy depends on the idea of the nation as a domestic space imbued with a sense of at-homeness, in contrast to an external world perceived as alien and threatening. Reciprocally, a sense of the foreign is necessary to erect the boundaries that enclose the nation as home."[116] My analysis likewise has shown that perceptions of the Iranians as alien and threatening were fashioned and comprehended on the basis of what Israelis believed to be the (dis)ordering of their society at home. Consequently, these perceptions have turned into a defensive protection of the home front. This interpenetration of the "foreign" and the "domestic" belies the premise, which is shared by most scholars of Israeli-Iranian relations but put forth most recently by Trita Parsi, that "internal developments . . . —while important—have little or no impact on [these states'] respective foreign policies."[117]

As I have argued in the previous chapter, Israeli mainstream understandings of Iran have much in common with their American counterparts, as analyzed in the literature.[118] However, they also bear distinctive qualities that can help us develop a "post-Orientalist" approach to Israeli politics, culture, and society. The Orientalist paradigm à la Said, as we know, presupposes the homogeneity of the "Occident" (or "Judeo-Christian civilization") and the "Orient" (or "Islam"), respectively, as well as the impenetrable gulf that separates "Occidentals" from "Orientals." However, Israeli readings of Iran contested such notions of homogeneity and difference—specifically because they were informed interchangeably by an acute awareness of cultural differences at home and of commonalities between Israelis and Iranians.

Nonetheless, many Israelis "in power" continue to disseminate Orientalist understanding of the non-West with a view to silencing critical (ethnic and religious) reassessments of Israeli society and enforcing "a contradictory unity, a democratic despotism, in a single space."[119] This Orientalism practiced by the Israeli state is thus in keeping with "the tendency of colonial regimes to draw a stark dichotomy of colonizer and colonized without themselves falling into such a Manichaean conception."[120] The Israeli case also suggests, perhaps in another departure from the Saidian paradigm, that even producers of Orientalist representations know full well that these representations are not reliable and faithful reflections of reality.

Finally, the Israeli case may also suggest that constructions of national identity do not depend solely on the production of difference, but on the rejection of affinity with—or ambivalence toward—the Other, who is already included in the national self. Paradoxically, national identity becomes intelligible not only through a perception of threat that produces *difference,* but also through a perception of threat that is produced by *similarity.*[121]

3 IRAN AND THE JEWISH STATE'S REPERTOIRES OF VIOLENCE IN THE POST-9/11 WORLD

We are entitled to another Kfar Qana! We are permitted to demolish everything.

—Justice Minister Haim Ramon justifying the killing of innocent Lebanese in an air force strike on Kfar Qana during the second Lebanon war, August 2006.

> The second Lebanon war began . . . on 12 July 2006, more than 27 years after the ascendancy of Khomeini to power in Iran, and on the very same day as the industrialized states were prepared to impose significant sanctions against the regime in Tehran, a regime relentlessly working to obtain nuclear weapons. On 12 July Hasan Nasrallah, "the General Officer Commanding Southern Iran," as Israeli military intelligence is keen on calling him, changed the world's agenda by unleashing his forces against Israel.

With these words Ronen Bergman, an Israeli journalist turned terror-cum-espionage expert, begins a highly popular—albeit equally problematic—book on Israel's dealings with Iran and the Hezbollah.[1] Despite its repetitive and oftentimes tedious narrative, which spans more than six hundred pages, and despite (or perhaps owing to) its many inaccuracies and distortions regarding Iranian history and culture, the book topped the nonfiction best-sellers list for many weeks in 2007. This is not coincidental, partly because the book exudes so systematic a visceral hatred of everything Iranian, but in the main because it is rooted in an *a priori* assumption that many an Israeli would readily endorse. Indeed, as the excerpt above vividly demonstrates, in his book Bergman sets out to fit all of his many empirical sources (hundreds of interviews with past and present Israeli and foreign officials, as well as thousands of previously unpublished documents) to one single overriding hypothesis: that Israel's war against the Hezbollah was, in reality, part of "a wider and more fateful conflict between Israel and Iran, between Israel and Islamic extremism," as Bergman proposes.[2] In this respect,

Bergman's book not only fails to challenge but also ends up reproducing the prevalent (if not entirely hegemonic) view in Israel—namely, that the 2006 Lebanon war was, to cite Benjamin Netanyahu, "conceived, organized, trained and equipped by Iran, with Iran's goal of destroying Israel and . . . building a . . . Muslim empire."[3]

Like the many anti-Iran charges uttered by Netanyahu and like-minded Israeli officials, journalists, and scholars, Bergman's book is not a product of sheer fantasy. As with all other acts of propaganda and disinformation, Bergman's *Point of No Return* is predicated on an element of truth.[4] The Islamic Republic of Iran truly *has* been the main culprit behind the Hezbollah's "transformation into a formidable force, able to confront the great and mighty IDF," as Bergman contends.[5] Yet Bergman's function—like the function of most Israelis who have introduced and disseminated these notions—is not to expose and confront that truth. Instead, it is to take that element of truth and package it in a manner that would serve the belligerent policies of the Jewish state in the wake of the "war on terror" the Bush administration has unleashed in retaliation to the attacks of September 11, 2001.[6]

Indeed, it has already been amply demonstrated that the Israeli government has, with the full backing of the United States, "hijacked the antiterrorist agenda to impose more and more brutal policies on the occupied territories," with the ultimate goal being "to render completely unviable any prospect of a Palestinian state."[7] The very same "antiterrorist agenda" was also invoked in summer 2006 to rationalize and vindicate the devastation of the Lebanese state by the Israeli military. It was to this end that repeated attacks on Gaza and the West Bank, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and, as of late, the second Lebanon war, were presented as interlinked fronts in the generalized, rationalized, "global war on terrorism."[8] This representational framework, in turn, worked to transform Palestine and Lebanon (together with Iraq and Afghanistan) into inchoate spaces and to amorphously mark their respective populations as "targets" and "terrorists" whose blood can be shed with impunity. "All of this," as Edward Said somberly noted immediately after 9/11, "adds up to a near promise that anything to do with Palestinian (or Lebanese) resistance to Israeli practices—never more brutal, never more dehumanizing and illegal than today—has to be destroyed after (or perhaps while) the Taliban and Bin Laden have been destroyed."[9]

We have seen in the previous chapter that Israeli anxieties about the Iranian threat have, in effect, been precipitated by a moral panic directed

against the Jewish state's ethnic and religious "folk devils" or "outsiders within." In this chapter I set out to demonstrate that these same anxieties cannot be sufficiently understood unless we link them to Israel's expanding repertoires of violence in the post-9/11 world. As I will show, the vision of Iran as the embodiment of world terrorism obscured and at the same time vindicated the violence and destruction wrought by the Israeli military in the Palestinian territories and in Lebanon. By implicating Iran as the main villain in a war purportedly extending from Afghanistan to Pakistan, through Iraq into Palestine, Lebanon, Somalia, and ever onward, Israel sought to designate Palestine and Lebanon as "spaces of exception." In so doing, Israel hoped (and was to a large extent able) to take Palestinian and Lebanese populations outside the domain of humanity and render them into outcasts from whom the rights and protections of international law could be systematically withdrawn.[10]

Political scientist Neve Gordon has found that during the six-year period from 2001 to 2007 Israel, on average, killed more Palestinians per year than it killed during the first twenty years of occupation, and that since the eruption of the second *Intifada* Israelis have killed almost twice as many Palestinians as they killed in the preceding thirty-four years.[11] Gordon convincingly postulates that this horrific increase in Palestinian causalities should be attributed to structural changes in the forms of control that Israel used to manage the Palestinian population since the onset of the second *Intifada* in October 2000. I suggest, in addition, that Israel was able to legitimize (indeed, to get away with) this increasing violence by relocating the discourse of the "war on terrorism" to the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By doing so, it has set in place a "differential exchange value in the marketplace of death,"[12] one in which the lives of Palestinians became less valuable than the lives of Israelis and therefore their deaths, too, less disturbing. As I argue, it was by and large the totalizing specter of the "Iranian threat," as constructed and disseminated by various Israeli (and American) knowledge-producing individuals and agencies, that authorized, dramatized, and radicalized this fiction of "world terrorism" in which Palestinians and Lebanese were indiscriminately targeted as terrorists and outcasts. Israeli Foreign Minister, now turned Kadima Party leader, Tzipi Livni captured the gist of this totalizing image in September 2007, when she told the United Nations General Assembly, "[Iran] is a major source of instability and conflict in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and across the entire Middle East and it is the enemy of Arab-Israeli co-existence."[13]

"THE ENTIRE WORLD NEEDS A ROOT-CANAL JOB"

Three acclaimed Iranian films, "The Colors of Paradise" (2000), "Baran" (2001), and "Kandahar" (2001),[14] were shown in Israeli movie theatres either in the midst of the second *Intifada* or immediately after the attacks of 9/11. As with many other films produced in Iran, Israeli critics and moviegoers loved to love these films.[15] This infatuation with Iranian cinema—as with many other "Oriental" artifacts—has enabled Israelis to keep clinging to their old anti-Islamic phobias and racisms and at the same time to take pride in and celebrate their liberal, progressive, "multicultural" outlook. Be that as it may, when one compares the raving reception of these Iranian films with what was at the same time said and written about Iran in Israeli public culture a stunning disjunction emerges.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in 1992 the ruling Israeli Labor party began, with the full backing of the United States, to publicly depict Iran as an existential threat.[16] Until that time Israel did not necessarily take the Islamic republic's rhetoric too seriously and, still enticed by the periphery doctrine, preferred to treat Iran as a potential regional ally.[17] The Oslo peace process in the 1990s changed all that, as prospects for peace with the Arabs underlined the need to amplify the threat from the Persian periphery.[18] It was during that time that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, embarking on his first visit to the Clinton White House in early 1993, first told a reporter that Iran was on a "megalomaniacal" quest "to be a Middle East Empire, by using all the varieties of fundamentalist Islam to shake Arab regimes."[19]

I will return to the 1990s later on in the chapter. In the meantime, it is interesting to note that despite this dramatic turnabout, in the early phase of the war on terrorism Iran came into the picture in Israeli public discourse merely as one among many adversaries in the vast camp of "Muslim evildoers" (*muslemim horshei ra*'). Iran was singled out only to the extent that it helped to construct a vision that conjured up a vast undifferentiated and transnational Islamic conspiracy against Western civilization. "Bin Laden's suicide terror, the terrorism of Hamas, Tanzim and Hezbollah, the terrorism engineered by the Palestinian Authority, Saddam Hussein's involvement in and support for Palestinian terrorism, and the terrorist networks directed by Iran are all inseparable components of that same axis of evil which threatens peace and stability everywhere in the world," as Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon asserted on the first anniversary of 9/11.[20]

Enlightening as well were revelations provided by an unnamed high-ranking IDF officer about "Global Jihad," a new division set up by military intelligence in the wake of 9/11 to uncover the "genetic code [*sic*]" of terrorist organizations. When "Global Jihad" set out to mark all of the countries in which these organizations were operative, "the entire map was soon covered with red," he said. Thus the officer had come to realize that these organizations have struck roots "virtually everywhere: in the United States and in Canada . . . in Germany and in the United Kingdom, in Italy and in Spain, in Austria and in Turkey . . . in the countries of Africa and the Far East . . . in Australia and in South America. In other words, *the entire world is infected; the entire world needs a root canal job.*"[21] Little wonder that Israelis saw the October 2001 American invasion of Afghanistan, which launched Bush's war on terrorism ("to save civilization"), as "prelude" to a greater war destined to be waged worldwide, "from Iran to Lebanon's Baqʿa [valley], from the meeting point of the borders of Paraguay-Argentina-Brazil to the Sudan."[22]

Soon after the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, however, Israelis became less shy of pointing directly at Iran as a major force within the matrix of world terrorism.[23] To the best of my knowledge, nothing Iran did or said during that time actually warranted this escalation of anti-Iran rhetoric. The main reason for this should therefore be sought elsewhere. Indeed, there is ample reason to believe that what actually prompted Israel's alarm was not new revelations about Iran's involvement in acts of terror but rather signs of an impending thaw between the United States and Iran, which was made possible through their cooperation in the war against the Taliban regime, the two governments' mutual enemy.[24] Iran and the United States exchanged highly publicized symbolic gestures to this effect,[25] and these, to be sure, did not go unnoticed by the Israel government.[26] That the United States would have liked to count on Iran's—and not on Israel's—support in the war against terror was particularly disturbing and humiliating to Israelis.[27] *Maʿariv*'s Dov Goldstein expressed this sense of humiliation most candidly:

> Israel has been fighting terrorism . . . for more than one hundred years. . . . No country in the world has ever fought so long and so resolutely . . . against terrorism. . . . No country in the world has ever been as just in its war against Islamic terror. No country in the world has ever sacrificed more victims . . . in its war against terrorism. . . .To recognize the horrors of terrorism . . . Israel didn't need . . . the bloody events of 11 September. . . . [Israel's] war on terrorism

> began long before the U.S. began mourning its victims of terror. . . . [But] suddenly Israel is isolated. It is not worthy of joining the good [in the fight] against evil. . . . Instead, the administration is conspiring behind Israel's back in order to . . . enlist the support of [terrorist] states.[28]

Alarmed by the prospects of a breakthrough in U.S.-Iranian relations, the Israeli government (not to mention the Israel Lobby and the neoconservatives in Washington) mounted a powerful campaign to nip it in the bud. It is within this context that the Karine-A affair—named after the freighter the Israeli navy intercepted in the Red Sea in early January 2002—should be examined. Because most of the weapons allegedly found on board the ship were produced in Iran, Israel charged that Iran was attempting to arm the Palestinian Authority (PA) in clear violation of the latter's agreements with Israel.[29]

The official Israeli version of the Karine-A story was received with great skepticism by the Western and Arab media.[30] In addition, Iran flatly denied any involvement in the affair, and some American officials even speculated that it was staged by Israel.[31] This, however, did not prevent the Jewish state from capitalizing on the affair in order to bring to a halt the U.S.-Iran dialogue. Israeli officials thus quickly alleged that the exposure of an "Iranian link" to the Karine-A was "of utmost importance" in the campaign to "uncover Iran's real face" and return that country to the "category of evildoers (*ra'im*)" in the eyes of the United States.[32] One commentator even argued that the Karine-A should make Iran "an immediate and clear target of the total war . . . against terror." "Bush needed Iran to set up the coalition for the war in Afghanistan," she explained. Now, however, "Bush can no longer ignore the need to act against Iran with the very same means he had used against the Taliban—even if the Iranians didn't attack New Yorkers but residents of Tel Aviv."[33]

Whatever the case may be, it appears that the Sharon government's endeavor to exploit the Karine-A affair for its own advantages eventually paid off: it removed any doubt the Bush administration may have had about Iran's continued ties to terrorism and hence doomed the fate of the U.S.-Iranian engagement.[34] And so it was that on January 29, 2002, President Bush, in his first State of the Union address, designated Iran (together with Iraq and North Korea) as part of an "axis of evil" and accused it of endangering world peace by aggressively pursuing weapons of mass destruction and exporting terror. The Sharon government responded with a sigh of relief, if not outright exhilaration. "Political sources" in Jerusalem, as *Ha'aretz* reported, were "greatly

satisfied" with Bush's address and "estimated that it would put an end, once and for all, to Washington's dilemma with respect to the appropriate policy to be pursued regarding Iran."[35]

If the Karine-A episode was "the smoking gun the Israelis needed to halt the U.S.-Iran dialogue,"[36] it was also crucial in the endeavor to entangle the PA and its head, Yasser Arafat, with "world terrorism," thus in effect transforming the ongoing *Intifada* from a local conflict between occupier and occupied into a potentially catastrophic war with global proportions. "The PA is a major player in the network of international terrorism spearheaded by Iran and aimed at sowing death and destruction throughout the entire world," Sharon declared in the wake of the freighter's seizure.[37] An ominous Iranian shadow was cast over the entire PA: "From now on [Arafat] is merely a Small Satan, whereas Iran, the arms supplier, has become a Great Satan," as one commentator surmised.[38] Expressing "shock at the depth of intimacy" between Iran and the PA, Israeli observers now claimed that Iran "furthered its penetration of Palestinian territories . . . in order to achieve its sacred objective, the extermination of Israel."[39] Israel, so the rationale went, was not merely confronting Palestinian resistance, but "an all-inclusive war against Iran . . . without Tehran having to cover its hands with dirt"[40]; both Arafat and Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenehi seemed to have risen above their "mutual disgust" in order to "rekindle the flames of the *Intifada*."[41]

It should be borne in mind, however, that Israeli allegations concerning an Iran-Palestine "unholy alliance"[42] are at least as old as the 1979 Iranian revolution itself. Yet while in the post-9/11 period Israel was keen on speaking about the *Iranization* of Palestine, at the time of the revolution it was keen on advancing an inverse thesis—namely, that of the *Palestinization* of Iran. As we saw in Chapter 1, having signed a peace agreement with Egypt, Israel found in the Iranian revolution the opportunity to replace an old foe with a new foe. But Israel was also quick to capitalize on the revolution in order to create an incriminating link between this new foe and the PLO, to which the Jewish state was still adamantly opposed.

At first glance, the bundling together of Iranian and Palestinian realities at the time of the revolution appears quite justifiable. After all, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat was the first foreign leader to visit Iran after the revolution. He was warmly received by Ayatollah Khomeini and, according to Mansour Farhang, "their meeting was so emotional that Arafat, to his eternal credit, managed to extract a public smile from the Ayatollah—a historic breakthrough

that has not been repeated since."[43] However, to conclude, as several Israeli politicians, journalists, and scholars did at the time, that Arafat's visit to Iran exposed "the extent of the PLO's penetration of [Iran's] radical opposition"[44] would be a gross exaggeration. Some members of the Iranian anti-Shah movement did receive training in PLO camps in Lebanon, but nothing close to the "tens of thousands" alleged by Israelis.[45] Be that as it may, soon after the revolution's victory PLO-Iranian relations cooled down substantially owing to ideological differences between the Islamist Iranian revolutionaries and the secularist PLO, as well as Arafat's open embrace of Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war.[46]

Contrary to this reality, however, Israeli analysts took pains to describe the revolution as the work of PLO extremists: "Khomeini was actually a product of the PLO," asserted Amnon Rubinstein, who at the time was a Knesset member of the centrist Dash party.[47] It suddenly appeared as though post-1979 Iranian realities in their totality—from the quelling of ethnic unrest in the provinces, to the taking of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, and through the foiling of a plot to assassinate Khomeini—were controlled by Palestinian extremists who treated Iran as a puppet show in which they were pulling the strings.[48]

Returning to the aftermath of 9/11, on March 27, 2002, as they sat down for a Passover *seder* in the city of Netanya, 28 Israelis were murdered and 140 injured by a suicide bomb. Within twenty-four hours the IDF had called up twenty thousand reservists, its largest mobilization since 1967, and Operation Defensive Shield was under way. Tanks smashed into Arafat's compound and troops stormed into the offices of the PA in Ramallah. In a calculated echo of Bush's rhetoric, the Israeli prime minister hailed the operation as the first stage of a "long and complicated war that knows no borders."[49]

An "incursion" into the Jenin refugee camp by the Israeli military soon followed, clearing paths for tanks and troops with giant Caterpillar D-9 bulldozers and (literally) "walking through walls," that is, moving in the refugee camp through domestic interiors by punching holes through party walls, ceilings, and floors.[50] Then, when thirteen Israeli soldiers died in a booby-trapped building on April 9, the scale of destruction intensified, and the center of the camp was reduced to rubble.[51] According to eyewitness reports, as summarized by Derek Gregory, "thousands of houses had been destroyed; scores of bodies were buried beneath the ruins; 16,000 people had fled in terror, and those who remained were left to survive without running water or electricity."[52] These facts on the ground supplied ample evidence that the real aim

of the operation was nothing short of "destroy[ing] not only the Palestinian Authority but Palestinian society itself."[53]

"All of Gaza is terror, terror has no political leaders, only terrorists, and they should all be targeted for assassination"—thus *Ha'aretz*'s Gideon Levy summarized the long-standing Israeli rationale for the principle of "targeted assassinations," in which innocent Palestinian bystanders have been killed as "collateral damage."[54] Indeed, as historical experience suggests, Israel needed neither Iran nor Bush's "war on terrorism" in order to inflict violence on the Palestinians by branding their resistance to the occupation as "terrorism." And yet it cannot be discounted that by recontextualizing and adapting Bush's "war on terrorism" discourse, the Jewish state has been able to strengthen public support for continued occupation and to evoke much Western sympathy for its military undertakings in Palestinian territories.[55] As we have seen, to relocate Palestine into the matrix of "world terrorism" it was necessary to treat Palestinians as subservient agents of the Iranian regime. Hence, well into the Israeli invasion of Jenin, Sharon took pains to declare in an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, "The Iranians are working now among the Palestinians who are Israeli citizens inside [the country] through the Islamic movement. And then, of course, [they] are keeping a contact with Mr. Arafat and they're still smuggling weapons [into Palestine]."[56]

Two disparate events of enormous international and regional significance have been used by the Jewish state to advance the allegation that Iran as a terrorist powerhouse was predisposed to the destruction of Israel: the election of Ahmadinejad as the sixth president of the Islamic republic in June 2005, and the victory of Hamas at the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006.

A radically conservative veteran of the Revolutionary Guards, an avid promoter of Iran's nuclear program, a Holocaust denier, and an extreme detractor of Israel and Zionism, Ahmadinejad appeared like manna dropping from the sky for many an Israeli in the position of power. "It is only ironic," Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar recently observed, "that Israeli intelligence was quite pleased with the 'Ahmadinejad phenomenon.'" They went on to explain,

> For several years this intelligence and the Israeli leadership tried to draw the international community's attention to Iran's speedy advancement in acquiring nuclear weapons, but to no avail. The prevailing feeling was that Israel was sowing panic without reason. Following Ahmadinejad's victory and, moreover,

> due to Ahmadinejad's extreme [verbal] attacks, it became much easier for Israel to convince the world that Iran posed a threat not only to the existence of the Jewish state but also to the stability of the Middle East and the world at large.[57]

The 2006 Hamas victory in the Palestinian legislative election seemed to vindicate these fears, especially so because it raised the specter of yet another emerging Iran-like Islamic fundamentalist state, this time in the Palestinian territories, closing in on Israel. Israeli politicians lost no time exploiting these fears by increasingly employing the term *Hamastan*—a neologism for the concept of a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Islamist theocracy under Iranian tutelage—to describe these circumstances; "before our very eyes," as Netanyahu warned, "Hamastan has been established, the step-child of Iran and the Taliban."[58]

It was, among other things, owing to this collective sense of siege that a decisive majority of Israelis supported their government's decision to go to war against the Hezbollah in the summer of 2006. They were convinced that in this war, which once again featured Iran as the ultimate villain, "We will be victorious!" (*anahnu nenatse'ah!*), as a popular sticker predicted at the outset of the hostilities.[59] Hence a new front in the boundless "war on terrorism" had been inaugurated.

TO "TURN BACK THE CLOCK IN LEBANON BY 20 YEARS"

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah launched diversionary rocket attacks toward Israel while a Hezbollah ground force crossed the border into Israeli territory and attacked two Israeli armored vehicles. In this operation three Israeli soldiers were killed and two others captured and taken to Lebanon. Five additional Israeli soldiers were killed on the Lebanese side of the border during an unsuccessful attempt to rescue the two seized soldiers. The Olmert government considered these events a *casus belli* and hence a new chapter, retroactively called the second Lebanon war, had begun in the long and unending saga of the "war on terrorism." Indeed, to the extent that Israel (along with the United States) was concerned, this was by no means a conventional war. A communiqué released by the Israeli government on July 16 asserted, "Israel is not fighting Lebanon but the terrorist element there, led by Nasrallah and his cohorts, who have made Lebanon a hostage and created Syrian- and Iranian-sponsored terrorist enclaves of murder."[60]

Small wonder then that, much like dominant representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the second Lebanon war too appeared to be lack-

ing in any tangible contexts. Instead, it was portrayed as part of the global war between Western, "Judeo-Christian civilization" and its lofty values against the barbarian darkness of the Islamic world, with Israel appearing as the former's vanguard. When asked during the fighting, "What historical importance do you give this war?" Olmert replied,

> Terrorist, fundamentalist, extremist, and violent movements seek to destroy the foundations of Western civilization. The civilized world has been attacked by terrorist organizations that have been manipulated by certain countries. Israel is in the process of creating a precedent, of making an example for many other societies. Israel decided to say: "Enough is enough!" If Hezbollah thinks that there are places where we will not go, they are wrong. . . . We are in a position to take by surprise, to stun, to hit hard.[61]

The Israeli media quickly lined up behind Olmert, reproducing not only his argument that the destiny of the entire "free world" rested on Israel's performance in the war but, significantly, also contemporary evangelical messianic visions in which Israel assumes a central role in the unfolding of God's plan for the end of time.[62] "This is the first battle in the war for the world's peace," one commentator explained in Orwellian terms. "Victory in this battle," he added, "will likely prevent or postpone the future onslaught of Islam against the Western world." To conclude, he called on the Israeli military to be "tough and brutal" in the defense of "the entire world [from] the flood of fundamentalist violence."[63] Accordingly, the Hezbollah was denied any autonomy and any independent decision making: its daring operation (the kidnapping of two soldiers, which precipitated the war) was said to have been executed at Iran's behest ("Nasrallah receives his orders from Iran"[64]) and exclusively serving Iranian interests (it "divert[ed] attention away from the international debate over [Iran's] uranium enrichment program"[65]). What is more, the entire Hezbollah phenomenon was depicted as an Iranian creation ("Iran has invented, given birth [to] and consolidated the Hezbollah"[66]). That is to say, Israel's *offensive* war on the Hezbollah was, in effect, a *defensive* war against Iran.[67]

What all this seems to suggest, then, is that Israel produced Iran as a cover or a pretext for the devastation that its military had sown in Lebanon (and at the same time in Gaza as well). The invasion of Lebanon was intended, on the Rumsfeldian model of "Shock and Awe," to cripple the Lebanese national sovereignty, polity, society, and economy for yet another generation. The army chief of staff, General Dan Halutz, admitted as much, declaring at

the onset of the conflict that his military would "turn back the clock in Lebanon by 20 years."[68] Other Israeli officials and spokespersons quickly followed suit, with Rafi Noi, former head of Israel's northern command, urging the military "to grind Lebanon." Justice Minister Haim Ramon joined the choir, avowing in the wake of an Israeli airstrike on Kfar Qana that killed innocent Lebanese, "We are entitled to another Kfar Qana! We are permitted to demolish everything."[69]

As is well known, the Israeli military faithfully kept to these words, leaving hundreds of murdered Lebanese civilians and more than a million refugees, and causing indiscriminate damage to Lebanon's civilian infrastructure.[70] Meanwhile, under the cover of the darkness of the Lebanon war, the Israeli military returned to its old practices in Gaza, as though there was no "disengagement," killing more than two hundred Palestinians, dozens of them children and women, and mutilating scores of others; "it bombed and assassinated, destroyed and shelled, and no one stopped it," as *Ha'aretz* commentator Gideon Levy wrote in despair.[71]

The Israeli military was able to commit such atrocities in both localities without domestic or international retribution mainly because they were understood to have been carried out in the name of defeating "world terrorism," a fiction that was held together by making it synonymous with Iran. The overarching rationale ran as follows: How could the Israeli military possibly hold on to the principles of "proportionality" when it was, in effect, confronting not Hezbollah or Palestinian resistance but a terrorist powerhouse such as Iran, whose leaders are intent on developing nuclear weapons and destroying Israel? Indeed, this was the dominant line of reasoning coming through in many a television talk show and in many an Internet talkback in reaction to an Amnesty International report published in August 2006, which found Israel to be guilty of "war crimes in Lebanon, including indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and the intentional destruction of civilian infrastructure."[72]

Significantly, in the aftermath of the war concerns about the Iranian threat became so ubiquitous in the Israeli public sphere that they virtually came to eclipse everything else—including the government and military's mishandling of the war, increasing investigations into and charges of corruption and embezzlement pressed against politicians and state officials (including Olmert), and the growing toll of Palestinian casualties. Olmert's defiance of mounting popular demands for an independent, official commission of inquiry to look into the government and military's mishandling of the war is a telling case

in point.[73] At a time when Israel was "contending with the Iranian threat," as Olmert took pains to explain, it would be imprudent, he said, to place the Israeli military at the mercy of an "official commission of inquiry."[74] Olmert's concern with the Iranian threat in this instance was perhaps genuine, as it was to some extent justified. Yet by using this threat as a pretext for acting against majority will—however that will was ill-conceived and misguided[75]—Olmert was trying, in addition to diverting attention away from other pressing issues, to evade the consequences of unaccountability.[76]

Netanyahu, as is well known, was especially keen on speaking at length on the purported genocidal threat issuing from Iran, thus completely disregarding the truly dangerous hourglass—the Palestinian problem.[77] And yet, Netanyahu's inducement of amnesia by playing up the Iranian threat was just the tip of the iceberg. The "Herzliya Conference," which took place in January 2007, provides a telling example of how the Iranian threat has come to eclipse all other issues, and most notably the Palestinian problem. To the best of my knowledge, this annual gathering is an occasion that rarely has an equivalent elsewhere in the world. Each year members of the country's political, academic, and military elites gather in one hall and talk in public for four days about Israel's strategic challenges. Each year the conference concludes with a keynote address by the prime minister. Comparing Ehud Olmert's words at the 2007 conference with the speech he made in the previous year starkly reveals the extent to which the issue of the Iranian threat had come to overshadow all other issues that preoccupied Israelis in the previous twelve months. Whereas in 2006 Olmert focused on the need to separate from the Palestinians for the sake of Israel's "democratic legitimacy," at the 2007 conference the Palestinian issue was barely even mentioned. Instead his focus was the existential threat posed by Iran. "This was not just the prime minister's priority, but was the dominant theme for all four days of the conference."[78] Benny Elon, a Knesset member from the right-wing Ichud Leumi-Mafdal Party, expressed this very same sentiment most candidly, saying that the existential threat emanating from Iran "makes the issue of territories in exchange for peace a pathetic issue and turns the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a dark and irrelevant alley."[79]

Influential members of the Israeli media have also been instrumental in the endeavor to raise Iran to the top of Israel's strategic concerns, at the expense of all other pressing issues, including the continuing apartheid regime in the Palestinian territories. Referring specifically to the Iranian threat, *Ha'aretz* commentator Yair Sheleg explained that "the Jewish people are once again in

danger of being destroyed" and that this placed before it "a challenge no less serious than that facing the Jewish people in the 1930s." To face that challenge, Sheleg concluded, "We must . . . put this threat at the top of [our] priorities, even at the expense of issues that during normal times would be the focus of attention."[80]

Interestingly, even commentators who are known to be highly critical of Olmert's government have allowed these concerns about Iran to obscure all other pressing concerns such as the Palestinian problem. Ari Shavit is a classic case in point. Shavit was one of the most vehement critics of Olmert. In many appearances on television and in many commentaries in *Ha'aretz,* Shavit called for Olmert's immediate resignation, especially owing to corruption investigations carried out against him and his misjudgment in handling the war in Lebanon. However, with respect to Iran Shavit not only seemed to endorse Olmert's position but also to surpass it. Appealing to Olmert, Shavit wrote,

> Understand the immediate threat to Israel is Iranian, not Palestinian. Classify the Iranian . . . threat as the national challenge of this generation. And appear before the nation and say that from this moment forward, all national resources will be used to deal with the historic threat. The entire country, with all its might and ability, will be harnessed in the joint effort the likes of which have not been seen since 1948.[81]

THE THUNDERING SILENCES OF EXPERTS

I have repeatedly argued in this book that scholarly analyses of Iran both affect and are constituted by hegemonic state discourses. Indeed, as we've previously seen, there is a high enough degree of convergence of views on Iran among Israeli scholars and state officials to suggest that they feed on each other. The question of how we Israelis have come to share these anti-Iran sentiments and phobias, to the extent that they keep us blind to what our state has been doing in our name in our immediate vicinity, thus requires close scrutiny of the workings of power and knowledge. In what follows, I analyze texts on the causes and nature of the Iranian threat written by Israeli scholars of the Middle East. I have not limited myself to "scientific" texts, whose readership is usually restricted to the university ivory tower, and have included those scholars' essays and viewpoints that were accessible to a wider audience and are known to influence Israeli public opinion.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, Israeli conceptions of Iran echoed previous

vocabularies on the murky, impenetrable, irrational, and violent nature of "Oriental" peoples. Through a focus on a metaphysical "Islam," which glosses over the concrete historical contexts in which people operate, the Iranians' motivations and actions were simply said to be dictated by the very nature of "their" religiously inspired violent cultures. It is not at all surprising then that the common thread that runs through much of the scholarly preoccupation with Iran's nuclear program is the argument that it is almost invariably driven by theological, millenarian dictates that are entirely incommensurate with Western standards and rationality.[82] Consider, for example, Mordechai Kedar, lecturer at the Department of Arabic Studies in Bar-Ilan University, who traces the main driving force behind the Iranian regime's nuclear buildup in "Nucleotheism":

> In the Ayatollahs' view, an Iran armed with nuclear weapons will be an instrument in Allah's hand to impose Islam on the entire world. And they, the Ayatollahs, have been chosen by Allah to carry out His mission. To the Western mind, this Islamic logic is hard to comprehend, inasmuch as it brings Allah's wishes into the realm of political planning and into the very core of its nuclear program.[83]

Indeed, many Israeli scholars of Iran and the Middle East have disseminated the view that Iran's nuclear policy is purely and essentially the offspring of a theologically driven "jihadi project" for the realization of a "pan-Islamic dream of a trans-national *Ummah,*" with Iran standing at "the center of a prospective Muslim Empire."[84] As such, this policy, they claim, provides us with "glimpses into an apocalyptic game plan."[85]

In this scheme of things Ahmadinejad appears standing at the summit of an imminent apocalyptic spectacle, fitting well with Evangelist descriptions of him as today's anti-Christ. And so, Ahmadinejad's pronouncements about the imminent return of the Hidden Imam and his "mystical belief in a divine mission and heavenly oversight"[86] have almost always been taken as an indisputable sign that "deep in his heart he may actually be hoping for a nuclear holocaust";[87] with Allah at his side, he may "well take into account a counterstrike and simply, irrationally (to our way of thinking), be willing to pay the price."[88] For the likes of Ahmadinejad, then, "even the sacrifice of the homeland is acceptable if the outcome is the demise of Israel."[89] It is this kind of understanding that enabled Haifa University's Middle East historian Amazia Baram to suggest, "I can imagine some commander in

Iran acting out of ideology, like some Dr. Strangelove, shooting off a nuclear bomb against Israel."[90]

In asserting that Iran's nuclear program is embedded in a theocratic worldview, little do these analysts wonder, say, if U.S. foreign policy under the Bush administration can also be explained in terms of theological dictates, especially so since the language it employed was thoroughly apocalyptic and drew on a series of Manichean absolutes;[91] nor do they care to note the related "complex genealogy that connects contemporary [liberal] sensibilities about . . . the value of humanity with the Christian culture of death and love."[92] Never mind these oversights, which would be totally irreconcilable with these analysts' understanding that "to the Western mind, this Islamic logic [of Ahmadinejad] is hard to comprehend."[93]

I'm not suggesting that Israeli scholars shouldn't bother exploring the ideological-cum-theological foundations of Iran's policies, only that they should also be able to explore these policies on the basis of other pertinent concerns, which they rarely conjure up. For instance, to underline their conviction that Iran's nuclear policy makes no sense according to "our" standards, that it is solely guided by belligerent theological injunctions, Israeli scholars regularly resort to the argument that, in reality, "Iran has no real enemies."[94] By saying as much they fail to mention, among other things, that Iran *is* surrounded by enemies or potential enemies—from nuclear Russia in the north to Iraq in the south and Afghanistan in the east, both of which are presently occupied by hostile American forces. Nor do they care to engage with the proposition that the American (and Israeli) anti-Iran campaign has in effect contributed to Iran's intransigence in the nuclear standoff and, more important, to "the quietude of opposition political activists, encouraging the Iranian regime to greater abuses of power."[95] That India and volatile Pakistan are also armed to their teeth with nuclear warheads that might pose a threat to the "international community," including Iran, is hardly mentioned. Also lacking is an awareness of the irreconcilability "of the U.S. priority on non-proliferation enforcement with the international record of inconsistent enforcement, with known proliferators escaping any consequence and other proliferators facing severe, punitive sanctions."[96] Taken together, and given the suspected trajectory of both *nuclear* Israel and *nuclear* U.S. to overthrow the Iranian regime,[97] it would perhaps not be ludicrous to suggest that an Iranian leader *not* pursuing nuclear technology should be considered a madman, and not the other way around.

Ahmadinejad is certainly not a Zionist, and he may very well be a despicable anti-Semite. But even detested individuals deserve to be quoted properly. It is only unfortunate, therefore, that Israeli scholars have stubbornly clung to the long-discredited story about Ahmadinejad's alleged threat to have Israel "wiped off the map" at a time when even the international media appears to have backed away from the incorrect quotation.[98] That is not to say that one could not easily come up with lots of other nasty and violent anti-Israel pronouncements by Ahmadinejad and other Iranian officials.[99] Yet these pronouncements, too, should be placed within their appropriate contexts. Indeed, it should be remembered (although many Israelis would care to forget) that Iran's anti-Israel rhetoric has not been produced in a vacuum, with Israel simply standing at the receiving end as a passive and innocent bystander. On the contrary, this rhetoric is part of a long-standing Iranian *and* Israeli exchange of threats and counterthreats. Seen in this light, the anti-Israel rhetoric issuing from the Islamic republic does not appear to be more ominous or more immanent than Israel's anti-Iran declarations. While the first has made public its hope that "the Zionist regime" would "vanish from the page of time," the latter has been keen on pushing for "regime change" in Iran. Given that Israeli leaders, such as Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer, have in recent years gone out of their way to state publicly that "an Iranian strike on Israel will lead to an Israeli response that will devastate the Iranian nation,"[100] it seems to me there is no essential difference between the kinds of venomous rhetoric which the two states have persistently unleashed against each other.[101]

If Israeli analysts have been reluctant to quote Ahmadinejad properly, they have been equally consistent in glossing over dissenting voices within the regime and public that might show Iranian realities to be more complex and more nuanced than most Israelis would like to believe. With notable exceptions, they remained conspicuously silent, for example, about the chorus of criticisms against the president emanating from a wide array of domestic forces and about the brewing crisis of legitimacy over Ahmadinejad's unfulfilled campaign promises.[102] Israeli analysts also remain silent about the increasing resentment to Ahmadinejad in the so-called Iranian street. Indeed, it would be sufficient to briefly look into Iran's "blogistan"—the name of that country's vibrant blogosphere[103]—in order to appreciate just how much indignation Ahmadinejad's confrontational posture has provoked among the rank and file of Iranians.[104] The implications of these elisions and silences are not far to seek. They conjure up a reified picture of Iran as the midwife of a

nuclear catastrophe, overlooking the pluralism and the divergent views that coexist, negotiate, and conflict with each other within the Iranian polity, and that are likely to problematize such sweeping apocalyptic conjectures.[105]

This brings us to the contentious and thorny issue of Israeli scholars' (silent or vocal) complicity with the allegation about Iran's embrace of genocidal Nazi ideologies, the gist of which Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu captured when he declared, "The year is 1938, Iran is Germany."[106] As we have seen, Israeli scholars have conjured up a picture of Iranian realities as a direct derivative of omnipotent and omnipresent Islamic injunctions. However, there is also much consensus among them that the only sphere in which Iranians have actually been able to break through Islam's straightjacket is the sphere concerned with their attitudes toward and hatred of Jews and the Jewish state. On this latter issue, as they claim, Iranians have been able to draw on extraneous, non-Islamic (European) sources, such as anti-Semitic ideologies of past and present.[107]

Now, it is true that there is a persistent anti-Jewish, even racist trait among the Iranian political elites and in Iranian popular culture,[108] which dates back to Iran's nineteeenth-century encounter with the European philological Aryan-Semite discourse.[109] Hannah Arendt has warned us not to confuse Aryanism with racism; as a linguistic-cultural construct, Aryanism, she maintained, did not constitute "the origin of a racial concept only because racial ideology later was particularly fond of this idea.[110] All the same, by virtue of the ardent inculcation of Aryanism by the defunct Pahlavi monarchy, Aryan racism was "in the air" in Iran throughout much of the twentieth century. To be sure, Ahmadinejad is a product of this Aryan legacy, only that he espouses a perverted, racist version of it, which—to argue cautiously—only a negligible fraction of the Iranians would concur with.[111] Here, too, a close reading of Iranian blogosphere attitudes would reveal the extent to which Iranians feel unease (and at times revulsion) with their president's anti-Semitism as well as with the pathetic Holocaust conference that he convened in Tehran in December 2006.[112]

In assessing the Jewish state's recourse to analogies between Iran and Nazi Germany, it is necessary not to dismiss the *genuine* feelings of vulnerability among Israelis that are nurtured by the collective memory of the *real* genocide perpetrated against Jews in Europe. It is for this reason, among other things, that despite the Jewish state's military superiority and its own nuclear arsenal, Israeli public discourse has historically been pervaded by a profound sense of

threat of a second Holocaust.[113] Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni recently gave a vivid example of how the memory of the Holocaust has become caught up with Israeli realities of everyday life. In a letter she handed to President Bush in January 2008, Livni wrote,

> To be Jewish is to dream the Holocaust, to live the Holocaust, to die the Holocaust—without ever having been there. To be an Israeli child is to try to imagine the number 6 million without ever reaching a full understanding of what it means. To be a mother in Israel is to reveal to your surprise that you have passed on to your children the collective memory and the experience of the Holocaust. To be a Jewish leader in Israel is to reflect on what you would have done if you were there and saw the writing on the wall . . . to understand the magnitude of the responsibility and to take an oath that you will never forget.[114]

Under such circumstances it is not at all surprising that throughout the Jewish state's history the memory of the Holocaust has fed—or rather has been used to feed—Israeli anxieties about the Arab world. A few pertinent examples of this should suffice. In the wake of the 1963 proclamation of the short-lived Egyptian-Syrian-Iraqi federation (which spoke prominently of "the question of Palestine and the national duty to liberate it"), Prime Minister Ben Gurion wrote that "after what had happened to the Jews during World War II, he could not dismiss the possibility that this might occur again if the Arabs continued to pursue their policy of belligerency against Israel."[115] Similarly, the two weeks that preceded the June 1967 Six-Day War were a period in which the entire Israeli nation succumbed to a collective psychosis: "The memory of the Holocaust was a powerful psychological force that deepened the feeling of isolation and accentuated the perception of threat."[116] Last, memories of the Holocaust resurfaced in Israel during the 1991 Gulf crisis, when the Israeli government decided to distribute gas masks to the civilian population so as to provide defense against Iraqi missiles suspected of carrying chemical warheads. "For a nation haunted by memories of the Nazi gas chambers," writes historian Avi Shlaim, "this was a highly sensitive issue."[117]

Many other examples of how Israeli feelings of vulnerability became entangled with and were reinforced by the memory of the Holocaust may be cited—including the one concerning the recurring representation of the Palestinians as the present representatives of Nazi exterminism.[118] However, the examples cited above should provide the reader with a historically grounded understanding of the deep-seated anxieties that enabled Israelis to compare

Ahmadinejad to Adolph Hitler and Iran's suspected nuclear buildup to Germany's acts of aggression in the 1930s.[119]

I will say more about these analogies and their concrete implications in the next chapter. In the meantime, it is important to point out that Israeli scholars' participation in the production of these analogies should not be easily absolved, even if—as Talal Asad has noted—"the reality of [these] feelings [of vulnerability], their importance, must be recognized."[120] In the first place, in producing Iran as Nazi Germany, and Ahmadinejad as the "new" Hitler, they almost invariably fail to mention the nearly thirty-thousand-strong, largely prosperous Jewish community in Iran, which is the largest in the Muslim Middle East. This community is not a persecuted minority merely "tolerated as impure dhimmis,"[121] as certain Israeli scholars have repeatedly contended. Quite the reverse—although they had experienced persecutions in the more distant past, they are currently deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of Iran and consider Iran (and not Israel) to be their ancestral homeland.

More important, repeated invocations of Hitler as a scarecrow is not only tantamount to a dangerous deflation of the Holocaust but also provides one more indication that the Israeli-Jewish propaganda arsenal has perhaps run out of most of its moral ammunition. Ahmadinejad has rightly earned the infamous reputation of a Holocaust denier and an anti-Semite. Yet to raise Hitler banners against him means, in effect, to participate in a dangerous game whose rules Ahmadinejad himself has set, rules in which the Holocaust speedily descends from the rank of the most terrifying horror in modern human history to the rank of a sheer political weapon. Moreover, comparing Ahmadinejad to Hitler essentially means "to amplify the importance of this man, a man who, as opposed to Hitler, is also [largely] abhorred by his fellow citizens."[122]

Last, I should briefly note the complicity of Israeli scholars with the poetics of Hamas and the Hezbollah's subservience to Iran's evil designs. As I previously mentioned, I do not question the existence of Iranian links to or support for either the Hamas government or the Hezbollah.[123] Nor do I wish to dwell at length on the folly of the West's isolation of the democratically elected Hamas-led Palestinian government, which only served to push it closer to Iran. Indeed, it would be terribly foolish of me to discount Hamas's Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's own account of Iran as the Palestinians' "strategic depth."[124] What I question, though, is these analysts' portrayal of the relationship between Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah as one between an omnipotent pa-

tron and pliant clients. As has been argued time and again (but only rarely in Israel), both these organizations have deep-rooted social and political bases, they run schools, hospitals, and an extensive welfare system, they enjoy the support of the great majority of Palestinians and Lebanese Shiites, respectively, and they are democratically elected to defend the interests of their constituencies rather than any external force such as Iran (or Syria).[125] Columbia University's Hamid Dabashi put these arguments most forcefully in the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006:

> The phenomenon of the Lebanese Hezbollah has been the chief focal point of the propaganda machinery on behalf of Israel—all behaving as if this thing they call "Hezbollah" fell off from the sky on the innocent Lebanese, preventing them to live in peace and prosperity with their splendidly democratic, peaceful, and generous southern neighbor. . . . Hezbollah is not a band of Martians who have landed in Lebanon. Hezbollah in Lebanon is what Hamas is in Palestine . . . the political manifestation of the historically denied and politically repressed subaltern components of [two] national liberation movements. . . . Hezbollah [and] Hamas are not manufactured banalities . . . like al-Qaeda, created and crafted by the U.S.-Pakistan-Saudi alliance to fight the Russians. . . . [They] are grassroots movements—the shame of the national liberation movements in Lebanon [and] Palestine . . . that had historically failed to include the most disenfranchised subaltern communities in their emancipatory projects.[126]

Thus the fact that the Hezbollah arsenal includes missiles of Iranian provenance or that Hamas enjoys Iranian backing should not in any way be taken as indisputable proof of a vast anti-Israeli conspiracy concocted by Iranian puppeteers. As the editors of *Middle East Report* recently noted, "By this same logic . . . Washington must be ordering every sortie of Israeli F-16s over Beirut and every demolition of Palestinian homes by Caterpillar bulldozers."[127] By portraying these two organizations as pawns in an Iranian game plan, these scholars have in effect continued the colonial tradition, described earlier, of constructing and encouraging specific kinds of human subjects (namely Israeli Jews) while outlawing others (namely Palestinians and Lebanese).

CONCLUSION

The Jewish state has not been the only state that has exploited the post-9/11 "war on terrorism" in order to legitimize its repertoires of violence. In other parts of the world, too, this war has been localized and negotiated by diverse

sources in rather diverse ways. For instance, Karmen Erjavec has shown how young Serbian intellectuals recontextualized Bush's discourse on the "war on terrorism" in order to legitimize, retroactively, Serbian violence against Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s. Erjavec skillfully demonstrates how these intellectuals equated the attacks of 9/11 with the former Yugoslav wars and at the same time rendered former Yugoslav Muslims into "terrorists." Echoing representational strategies employed by Israelis with a view to making sense of Palestinian and Lebanese resistance, Serbian intellectuals extended the meaning of "terrorism" to include all violent acts carried out by Muslims regardless of the specificities of different political and historical contexts.[128] The same strategy of recontextualization and adaptation of the "war on terrorism" has been employed by Russia to hammer in the message that "the war in Chechnya is a battle against international terrorism, not a brutal suppression of domestic separatists."[129]

However, what distinguishes the Israeli case from all other cases is that the Jewish state has thus far enjoyed widespread international recognition of its self-proclaimed role as the spearhead of the West's war against Islam in the Middle East. Islamophobia in Europe and North America is, no doubt, a form of "neo-racism."[130] Israel, it must be stated, has ingeniously exploited this phobia by presenting itself as a gatekeeper against the Islamic tide that threatens to flood the entire "free world," a gatekeeper similar in kind to the legendary virtuous Dutch kid who stuck his finger in the dam's hole.[131]

Historically, this mission is linked to the desire of the Zionist movement from its very outset to (re)enter into a permanent alliance with Euro-American imperialism against the Arabs in the eastern Mediterranean.[132] The 9/11 attacks, which coincided with the second *Intifada,* presented the Jewish state with a golden opportunity to enter into such an anti-Arab Western alliance, first against the Palestinians and then, in the summer of 2006, against the Lebanese as well. By wiring together Palestine and Lebanon with Afghanistan and Iraq, the alliance could present all four territories as different parts of the very same "war on terrorism." This enabled Israel to construct the former two as "spaces of exception" and thereby to subject their inhabitants to a sort of biopolitics in which they would appear as outcasts—as "nothing more than points on a map or nodes in a network: in short, as targets."[133] As I have shown, the poetics of *Ahmadinejad equals Iran equals Nazi Germany equals a nuclear Holocaust* facilitated and concretized the fiction of world terrorism into which Palestinians and Lebanese were cast as an undifferentiated mass of "targets."

On the eve of the war on Lebanon, *Ha'aretz* commentator Gideon Levy lamented the fact that Israelis "stopped asking questions" about the occupation:

> The press, whose role it is to ask questions, hardly asks questions at all; the Knesset won't ask questions; the attorney general won't ask questions; the High Court won't ask questions; teachers, doctors, students, and intellectuals—they hardly ask questions; and of course we can't expect IDF commanders and the security forces to ask any questions either. There is no clearer sign for society's ills than the fact that it has stopped asking questions.[134]

Meanwhile, politician-turned-*Ha'aretz* columnist Yossi Sarid didn't mince terms either in reprimanding the Israeli media for succumbing entirely to the national consensus during the Lebanon war. The media, Sarid charged,

> Stood for the most part among the national chorus, like in a tragedy, and went along as usual with the government and the chief of staff. . . . [I]t usually played according to an official score composed and dictated by ministers and generals. . . . In the early days, before the war lengthened and grew complicated, not many wondered whether it would be best not to attack at all. The media . . . looked like the Knesset, which silently listened to Ehud Olmert's recruitment speech; and it had the same look about it as public opinion, 90 percent of which unconditionally supported the opening moves of the war—onward, onward. . . . [135]

As I have argued in this chapter, it was by and large the production of Iran as the embodiment of world terrorism that has kept many Israelis silent about and complicit with the devastation that their military has been sowing in Palestine and in Lebanon.

Talal Asad is struck "by the fact that modern states are able to destroy and disrupt life more easily and on a much grander scale than ever before" and "by the ingenuity with which so many politicians, public intellectuals, and journalists provide moral justifications for killing and demeaning other human beings."[136] Although history has shown that Israel needed neither Iran nor the discourse on the "war on terrorism" in order to perpetrate and justify acts of violence, they certainly supplied it with the justification and the support it needed for the enactment of unreprimanded acts of cruelty.

4 THE UNCLASSIFIABLE

Iran's Jews in Zionist-Israeli Imagination

If you think Judaism and Zionism are one, it is like thinking Islam and the Taliban are the same, and they are not.

—Ciamak Morsatheq, head of the Jewish hospital in Tehran, August 2007

WHEN THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION broke out, and as protests against the Shah spread, Israeli politicians, public intellectuals, and journalists began to raise serious concerns about the fate of Iranian Jewry.[1] Expressing these concerns, in November 1978 the Knesset Committee for Immigration (*aliyah*) and Absorption issued an extraordinary report that called upon these Jews "to immigrate to Israel in order to establish their lives and homes there." Throughout history, the report stated, "Persian Jewry experienced multiple anti-Semitic outbreaks." Invoking the image of the fourth-century B.C. vizier of the Persian Empire under King Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes), thereby conflating the distant (mythological) past and present realities, the report noted "the Persian kingdom where . . . the wicked Haman, who wanted to exterminate the Jews, had risen and fallen."[2]

Iranian Jewry has almost invariably aroused great interest among the various Israeli establishments, partly because they are counted as one of the most ancient Jewish communities in the Middle East, partly because of the "special relationship" that developed between Israel and Iran under the old monarchical regime, and partly, as mentioned, because the 1979 revolution and its aftermath redirected attention to their safety.[3] More recently, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's anti-Israel and anti-Jewish rhetoric, not to mention his relentless campaign to play down the significance of the Holocaust, has only increased these anxieties. And yet, despite this long-standing interest in Iranian Jewry, critical scholarship has thus far remained conspicuously reluctant to engage with them in any meaningful way.[4]

Indeed, since the late 1970s, there has developed a vigorously critical literature on the exclusionary aspects of the Zionist project in Palestine and Israel. This literature has made far-reaching methodological and historiographical breakthroughs. Inspired by postcolonial theories and paradigms, this scholarship forcefully demonstrated that the location of the Mizrahim *within* the Jewish state and their politics of identity are intricately linked to that state's drive to sustain its image as an island of enlightened democracy in the Middle East. To varying degrees, this scholarship demonstrated that the Mizrahim's inclusion in the Israeli "melting pot," never quite successful, was conditioned on the creation of an impossible rupture between what were, up to their migration to Israel, compatible aspects of their identity—Arab *and* Jewish. In doing so, it unveiled the colonial underpinnings of Zionism's attitudes toward its "Jewish victims,"[5] showing—to use Ehud Barak's sympathetic description of the general Israeli sentiment of alienation from the Middle East—how and why "deep down, Israelis do not want to integrate into this region, which is poor, authoritarian, brutal, and despicably corrupt."[6]

However, with the benefit of hindsight it is possible to argue today that this scholarship has not been devoid of several limitations. The underlying limitation from which, I think, most other limitations arise, has to do with the fact that the term *Mizrahim* is almost invariably used in this literature to refer to the Jews from *Arab* countries, hence "[reducing] the relevance of Jews from non-Arab Middle Eastern countries such as Turkey and Iran."[7] Why critical scholars have generally tended to exclude non-Arab "Oriental" Jews from their analyses is a most intriguing question, the answer to which is perhaps linked to their respective politics of identity.[8] Be that as it may, by focusing almost exclusively on Arab Jews as sole representatives of the Mizrahim, these scholars missed out on the plurality of voices, as well as the ambivalences, tensions, and contradictions inherent in Zionist-Israeli perceptions of various Middle Eastern Jewries in their multiple contexts. By assuming a correlation between Arab and non-Arab Middle East Jews, and thinking about them in monolithic terms, they paradoxically reproduced the very essentialist assumptions of the earlier canonical approaches they set out to dismantle.[9] This is perhaps another instance of how "post-colonial studies—once a provocative and illuminating new way to approach problems in their fields—has become staid or inert so that it now requires, in its turn, a revivifying influx from those intellectual quarters that once benefited from its paradigm-shifting energies."[10]

The following discussion of Iranian Jewry in Zionist-Israeli imagination is intended to start filling these voids by building on, and adding to, critical analyses of Zionism and the Mizrahim.

In the first two sections, I argue that Israeli understandings of Iranian Jewry before the revolution were locked in between two contradictory narratives. On the one hand, like Arab Jews, Iran's Jews were relegated to an Oriental exilic space "outside of history." Their "return to history"—their cure from the "abnormalities of exile"—was thus conditioned on their assimilation into the Israeli "melting pot," or if you will, their meeting the civilizing requirements necessary for achieving what Michael Selzer provocatively described many years ago as "the Aryanization of the Jewish State."[11] On the other hand, in light of the old monarchical regime's ardent inculcation of anti-Arab Aryan identity, as well as this regime's implementation of colonial visions of modernization, Israelis came to view Iranian Jews as historical subjects in their own right. As a result, they allowed these Jews to remain in Iran on condition that they would pass through civilizing trajectories similar in kind to those which the Mizrahim in Israel were required to experience: if permitted to assimilate into Euro-America without renouncing their Jewish identity, they could very well go on living among their "Oriental"-turned-"Aryan" Muslim compatriots. In short, by locking Iranian Jews in between two conflicting discourses—Orientalism and Aryanism—the Jewish state has in effect revealed its inability to classify them in any clearly bounded ethnic and cultural categories.

In the third section, I go on to suggest that the 1979 revolution further complicated fundamental assertions common to most brands of Zionist nationalism—namely, that Jews everywhere, but particularly non-European Jews, should be treated as primary targets of the Zionist redemptive mission in Palestine. This revolution, I argue, was the first dramatic event after the mass migration of Middle East Jews to Israel in the early 1950s that seriously challenged this assertion. During and after the revolution the state of Israel was hardly in the Iranian Jews' minds. Although a handful of them did migrate to Israel, many others either remained in the Islamic republic or fled to the countries of Euro-America. While fitting well with the prevailing reluctance of world Jewry to resettle in Israel, this conduct by Iranian Jews imploded the Zionist master-narrative of destruction and redemption, for it introduced a *third*—unthinkable and, once again, unclassifiable—existential option, one that involved neither their destruction (in Iran) nor their redemption (in the Jewish state).

UNDER THE SHAH REGIME, TAKE 1: ORIENTALISM

I have already discussed in this book the Zionist denial of the Arab-Muslim East, which has as its corollary the denial of the identities, cultures, and memories of Middle East Jews. Ella Shohat forcefully sums up the exclusionary aspects of these attitudes:

> Zionist writings and speeches frequently advance the historiographically suspect idea that Jews of the Orient, prior to their "ingathering" into Israel, were somehow "outside of" history, thus ironically echoing 19th-century assessments, such as those of Hegel, that Jews, like blacks, lived outside of the progress of Western civilization. European Zionists in this sense resemble Fanon's colonizer who always "makes history"; whose life is "an epoch," "an Odyssey" against which the natives form an "almost inorganic background."[12]

Zionist-Israeli attitudes toward Iranian Jewry were oftentimes rooted in similar racial and cultural hierarchies. Like non-European colonized subjects in general and Arab Jews in particular, Iranian Jews were consigned to backwardness and imagined as people living outside of the boundaries of culture and civilization. Consider the following account of Jewish youth in Iran penned by a Jewish Agency emissary in the late 1940s:

> The conditions of their existence are limited, as is the scope of their world; pragmatic explanations are useless, for in their narrowness, their thinking too, has become lethargic. Mere rebuke is of no avail, but, like all children of the Orient, they too may be inspired. Illusion works. Instead of the spark of thought, give them a picture; instead of reasoning—a fable. It will take wing.[13]

It was also related that the Jewish "ghetto" in Iran was a "symbol of dirt and disease";[14] if you but enter the alleys of this ghetto, as another observer pointed out in the late 1950s, "your flesh will curl. You would not believe that people live like this. Where we live," he concluded, "even the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals would not permit beasts or cattle to live under such conditions."[15]

While these observers consigned Iranian Jews to a state of utter backwardness, they did not, however, lay the responsibility for their desolate conditions at their doorstep. Rather, following the axioms of Zionist nationalism, they regarded these conditions as deriving not from any organic, biological-cum-racial flaw but from the alleged flaws inherent in the Jews' imperfect and abnormal exilic existence. In the late 1940s a reporter named Yitzhak Ben Ziv

defended Iranian Jewry, writing, "They are not guilty; they are the victims of a heartless exile. . . . They are certainly not responsible for reaching such spiritual and social desolation."[16]

Zionism's "civilizing mission" was to rescue Oriental Jews from their "primitive exilic conditions" by relocating them to the modern, Western Jewish state. It is therefore not at all surprising that Israeli historians considered the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which viewed with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, "the onset of Redemption of Iranian Jewry."[17] Explicit redemptionist traits were especially ascribed to "Operation Cyrus" (1948–1952), in the course of which thirty thousand Iranian Jews were brought to Israel. The name, of course, bears a distinctly symbolic meaning: Cyrus was King of Persia and Medea, the founder of the great Achaemanid Dynasty, who enabled the exiles of Judah and Jerusalem to return, hence ushering in the "Second Temple Period." According to Esther Kanka-Shekalim, "when the wave of immigration began," multitudes of Iranian Jews flocked to the gates of the Jewish state "seeking permanent liberation from the dark curse of Exile. . . ."[18]

Clearly there are silences lurking behind this idealized, redemptive narrative, not the least because it completely glosses over the experiences of discrimination and severe political and economic dislocations suffered in Israel by Iranian Jews, along with other Mizrahi groups. This neat and linear narrative—which still enjoys the "scientific" authority endowed upon it by massive historiography—portrays a smooth and pleasant transition from Exile to the Land of Israel, from slavery to freedom, and, of course, from tradition to modernity.[19] A book in beginners' Hebrew published in the mid-1960s describes the Iranian Jews' "rescue" from their Iranian "captors" as follows: "Family after family, village after village, town after town, [the Jews of Iran] left the land in which they had suffered so much in the past, in order to establish for themselves new homes in the homeland."[20]

This reference to Iranians as "captors" and to Iran as "the dark curse of exile" clearly demonstrates that the history of Iran's Jews in Israel has been silenced together with their history in their country of birth, Iran. Critical scholarship has shown how the Zionist denial of the Arab-Muslim East and the related desire to de-Orientalize incoming Arab Jews produced a "Eurocentric reading of 'Jewish History,' [which] . . . hijacks the Jews of Islam from their own geography and subsumes them into the history of the European-Ashkenazi shtetl."[21] As a result, the centuries-long relations between Muslims

and Jews in the Middle East were reduced to a recurrent story of oppression, punctuated by periodic pogroms and expulsions, of fragile existence imbued with fear and humiliation, reminiscent to the history that the Jews had experienced in mid-twentieth-century Europe.[22]

According to Mark Cohen, such understandings of the relations between Jews and Muslims in Arab countries are tantamount to a "neo-lachrymose conception of Jewish-Arab history."[23] Israeli writings on the history of the relations between Muslims and Jews in Iran have also been marred by this conception, with one telling exception: the rich scholarship on "Judeo-Persian literatures," which has generally been dedicated to unraveling the reciprocal liturgical, literary, and cultural interconnections between Jews and Muslims in Iranian history.[24] Regretfully, however, in most other fields of Iranian studies, "many aspects and periods of this approximately three thousand years of Jewish-Iranian and Judeo-Islamic symbiosis are still shrouded in obscurity," as Israeli Judeo-Persian scholar David Yeroushalmi contends.[25] Yeroushalmi goes on to suggest that this stems in large part from a dearth of reliable information, as well as insufficient research and scholarly interest.[26] While this may very well be true, an additional reason may be the blindness-inducing assumption that the Jewish state *is* the only place where non-European Jews could escape a bitter fate (perhaps similar in kind to that of European Jewry).[27]

David Menashri, prominent Israeli professor of Iranian studies, thus summarizes nearly two-and-a-half millennia of Jewish history in Iran in a sweeping stroke as follows: "The history of the Jews of Iran . . . has been one of oppression, persecution and harassment. It goes back to the Zoroastrian times and continued intermittently till the end of the Qajar dynasty (1796–1925). Qajar rule was one long series of persecutions in almost any place where Jews were then residing."[28] Another Israeli observer, Haim Sadok, pointed out that "the Jews [of Iran] have, *at all times and under all different regimes,* been subject to murder, robbery and plunder";[29] and still another expert on Iranian Jewry wrote,

> During the Sassanid period . . . the Jews were persecuted and had the skin stripped off their bodies while still alive. When they converted to Islam, these same Iranians continued to view the Jew as an impure foreigner, which ought to be removed from the Iranian environment. . . . Throughout the nineteenth century thousands [of Jews] were killed or forced to convert to Islam. In Tabriz

> the Jewish community was liquidated; children were thrown to the air and impaled on bayonets. In Barforosh, Jews were cast into boiling water. Thus, Jews suffered physical and spiritual devastation in nearly each and every town.[30]

I do not wish to deny that the Jews of Iran have had their share of suffering and persecution; nor do I wish to idealize Jewish-Muslim relations in Iranian history. Rather, the pertinent point I want to make here is that viewing Jewish Iranian history *solely* as "a long chain of persecutions and atrocities almost everywhere"[31] is quite simplistic. In truth, "There have been expulsions, forced conversions, pogroms and blood libels, as well as incessant discrimination."[32] But this is a terribly narrow and selective reading of Iranian history: not only does it fail to assess the Jews' conditions "between one documented onslaught and another"[33] or to recognize that Jews and Iranians were never strangers to each other, it also fails to take into account protracted periods in which Jewish-Muslim cooperation and mutuality overshadowed other aspects of their relationship.[34]

It is interesting to note that to the extent that Israeli historians identified reciprocal influences between Jews and Muslims in Iranian history, they treated these influences haphazardly and anecdotally, as though they were merely "surface disturbances, crests of foam," to borrow from Fernand Braudel's imagery of the limitations of *histoire événementielle* (history of events).[35] For example, historian of Iran Avraham Cohen aptly suggests that the most basic "institution of Jewish learning" in nineteenth-century Iran was called "*maktab khaneh*" or "*khani mulla*," and that the teacher there "was referred to [interchangeably] as *mulla', khalifa',* or *hakham*."[36] While this observation attests to the writer's awareness of social and institutional exchanges between Muslims and Jews in Iran, by further proposing that this institution was "analogous to the Jewish religious school (*heder*) in the West" he renders these exchanges as totally inconsequential.[37] Arguably, by superimposing the Jewish-*European* experience on the Jewish-*Iranian* experience, Cohen detaches Iran's Jews from their specific Iranian, "Oriental" context and dismembers their identity.

In conclusion, like many non-European Jewish communities, Iranian Jews were conceived of as people inhabiting a flat and unchanging plane, a "natural" and exotic site standing in contrast to modern Western society characterized by tolerance, democracy, and human values. This conception conferred upon the Zionist project the redemptive role of extricating these

Jews from their Oriental conditions, leading them neatly and comfortably into a modern, Euro-American society in Palestine. As Sadok notes with great satisfaction, "The very same tens of thousands [of Jews who came] from the most impoverished and indigent corners of Iran . . . won an admirable place in the mosaic of the creative and constructive society in Israel."[38]

UNDER THE SHAH REGIME, TAKE 2: ARYANISM

As we have seen, dominant Zionist-Israeli views on Iranian Jewry have drawn on the same conceptual repertoire as the corresponding views on Arab Jews. However, at the same time these perceptions radically diverged from those about Arab Jews in that they paradoxically established distance from the very notions they seemed to be authorizing and reproducing. That is to say, Zionist-Israeli understandings of Iran's Jews produced not only conventional or hegemonic views deriving mainly from the Zionist foundational concept of "negation of exile" but also different views that undermined this concept's categorical exclusions and denials.[39]

To understand this crucial point it is necessary to briefly switch from the subject at hand and examine the Zionist-Israeli view within the context of the cultural values that were at work in the Israeli-Iranian relationship before 1979, as discussed in Chapter 2. To recapitulate, the Shah conducted his relations with the Jewish state under a thick veil of secrecy, believing that overt relations with Israel would harm Iran's standing with the Arab states and fuel domestic clerical and leftist opposition. It was for this reason that despite repeated Israeli protests the Shah refused to grant the Jewish state more than de facto recognition. Nevertheless, by the 1970s, Israeli-Iranian relations had mushroomed into "a not-so-secret marriage of convenience."[40] As I have argued, this "marriage of convenience" was made possible owing to common politico-strategic interests, but also—perhaps mainly—to corresponding partitions and enclosures that isolated each state from the surrounding Arab Middle East.[41] To ensure this isolation from the Arab world, the two states implemented colonial ideals of modernization that involved the coercive secularization—or more appropriately, the de-Orientalization—of their respective Jewish and Iranian subjects; both were to be molded in accordance with the image of Aryanism, with a view of making them European in each and every respect, except in their religion.[42]

Thus on the one hand, Israelis regarded Iran as helplessly "Oriental," and designated Iran's Jews as primary *objects* of the Zionist civilizing mission, as

though they lacked free will and volition. In this instance Iranian Jews were not treated any better than other Mizrahi groups, and most prominently Arab Jews. On the other hand, owing to the Shah regime's reliance on Aryan identity, which was intended to induce Iranians into believing that they were really European in their origin,[43] Israelis increasingly removed Iran from an exilic, "Oriental" space. As a result, they were willing to grant *qualified* approval for the Jews' continued life in Iran. Hence, I argue, Zionist/Israeli perceptions of Iranian Jewry generated two contradictory notions—the one of "negation of exile" and the other of what Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin aptly describes as the "negation *of negation* of exile."[44]

This dialectic of at once rejecting and affirming Jewish life in Pahlavi Iran appears in the sources at hand unambiguously. Consider, for example, the following observation by Amnon Netzer, a leading Israeli expert in the field of Iranian Jewry:

> Iranian Jews are attached to the state and the culture of Iran. Culturally, the assimilation of the Jewish community was more complete than that of many other tribes, ethnic groups and religious minorities in Iran. . . . The Jews were the only minority in Iran who, although non-Iranian in their historical, cultural and religious origins, created a huge quantity of poetry in the Persian language, with many common Judeo-Iranian themes. . . . They were the only religious minority whose liturgy contains, alongside prayers, lyrical poems written by non-Jewish Iranian poets. The mother tongue of the Iranian Jew is Persian. He values it and thinks and creates in that language. This is unlike other minorities in Persia, such as the Armenians and Assyrians, who preserved their original language both as a spoken language and as the language of cultural creativity.[45]

As this writer maintains, Iran's Jews are a separate group that does not really belong to Iran in terms of their "historical, cultural and religious origins," but at the same time they are deeply immersed in and have assimilated into Iranian culture and identity. The same writer expresses similar overlapping notions of "negation of exile" and "negation of negation of exile" elsewhere, in his inquiry into what he calls "the complex situation of the Iranian Jew": "On the inside he is a Jew . . . attached to Israel and to the Jewish people, while on the outside he is Iranian . . . imbued with a deep and long-standing appreciation of Iranian culture."[46] An analogous dialectic appears in the following words by Mordechai Bar On, a senior Jewish Agency official who visited Iran at the height of the Shah's power in the early 1970s. "The Persian environ-

ment," he said, "is different from other [Middle East] environments." Bar On went on to explain:

> From an economic perspective [Iran] is entirely open for Jews. In addition, in everyday life there is substantial openness in social relations. I've been told that young Jewish men prefer to interact with Muslim women, and even Jewish women [prefer to associate with] Muslim men. . . . [However,] despite this openness . . . the Jews don't forget their Judaism for even one minute and the Muslims won't allow them to forget it. Hence a conflict emerges. . . . [47]

These expressions of ambivalence provide one more indication that Zionism, contrary to its seemingly unconditional repudiation of exile, has given up, at least in practice and in certain contexts, on the claim for exclusive representation of world Jewry. Recognizing the possibility of Jewish life in Iran inevitably depends on a prior recognition, namely that secure, prosperous, and creative Jewish existence outside the boundaries of the Jewish sovereign state was, in effect, possible. Such recognition militates against the very idea that the Jewish state, as the focal point of the "ingathering of exiles," is the one single solution to the "Jewish problem."

For clarity's sake, I will elaborate on this theme a bit further. The prophet of Zionism, Theodore Herzl, had realized that only by leaving German soil and founding a Jewish state would he ever be truly German: "At present I am not recognized as a German," he wrote. "That will come soon, once we are over there."[48] Indeed, a dominant paradox in Zionism's view of the world, which was planted in its first, tentative moments but seems to me revelatory for where we find ourselves today, is that the exodus of the Jews from Europe and the hope of establishing a separate Jewish entity in the East was in fact a way of joining—or assimilating into—Europe.[49] Hand in hand with the failure of the Jews' assimilation into Europe came also the dawning realization that to become European they would have to go somewhere else. To create the necessary link with Christian Europe, to create a Western, "*Judeo*-Christian civilization," the Jews would have to relocate from Europe to Palestine where they would establish a colony of their own; "actual return to the biblical glory days of Jewish independence—and imperialism—it was this that would cure the Jews of Jewishness, for Jewishness remained despised."[50] There they would be permitted to remain true to their Jewish identity and at the same time to "act 'as if'"[51] they were indistinguishable from the European gentiles they had left behind.

If Israeli readings of Iran and of Iran's Jewry appear truly exceptional, it is because they unmistakably imply that these Jews could very well go on living in "exilic" Iran, as they could in Israel, as long as the Shah retained their links to the Christian West as a bulwark against the Arab Middle East. Under such circumstances, the imperative of "negation of exile" no longer seems applicable. If permitted to assimilate into Europe without having to renounce their Jewish identity, Iran's Jews could very well go on living in their country of birth, which, in turn, would no longer be regarded as "exilic." The following observation by Netzer makes this point explicitly clear:

> The Jews sought with all their might to look (*le-hera'ot*) Iranian. They strove hard to identify with the values and symbols of secular Iranian nationalism, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to remain Jewish in their religion. They loved Persian poetry and literature, enjoyed Persian music, enthusiastically celebrated Iranian national holidays, changed their Jewish names to Iranian names and took pride in Iran's pre-Islamic [Aryan] past. At least in terms of historical and cultural consciousness, the Jews, so it appears, enjoyed greater possibilities for rapprochement with Iranians and with the trends of secular Iranian nationalism.[52]

In reading this text and others of its kind, one may feel a creeping sense of déjà vu. Clearly, these texts can be read as a call for the fulfillment of the Zionist vision of the "Oriental" Jew-turned-European, only without her or him actually having to leave Iran for Palestine in order to achieve that transformation. While the Zionist solution for the Jews was, as mentioned, to go to Palestine, where European gentiles could not interfere in their drive for de-Orientalization, in the Shah's Iran, so it seems, they were permitted to de-Orientalize at the same time that they interacted with the "Aryan" (albeit Muslim) majority in everyday life.

Thus as long as the Shah seemed willing and able to submerge Iran into the Christian West, Israelis did not prohibit Jewish life there. Having removed Iran from an Oriental space, they increasingly came to classify these Jews as part of the well-off Jewish diasporas in the capitalist West. A report submitted to the Ministry of Immigration and Absorption in 1971, while voicing acute frustration with the dearth of interest in Israel among Iranian Jews, read as follows: "The situation of [Iranian] Jews today is above decent and they belong to the category of Jews from the developed countries (*artzot ha-revaha*), such

as the U.S., Britain [and] France. We must approach them as we approach those [Jewish] communities in the developed countries."[53]

The classification of Iran's Jews as "Western" and "affluent" also made it easier for Israeli immigration officials to accept as fait accompli their unwillingness to migrate to Israel. Sadok, for instance, while complaining that Israel does not offer so powerful an attraction for these Jews, nevertheless admitted that due to their complete integration into the surrounding Iranian society, economy, and culture, they have "increasingly come to see their residence [there] as long-term, if not permanent."[54]

It is interesting to briefly mention the comparable ambivalent Israeli attitude toward North American Jews, as summarized by the late sociologist Baruch Kimmerling: "While most Israelis (70%) know well that American Jews don't consider themselves to be in a state of exile, 60% of [Israelis] accept the Zionist argument that . . . America *is* exile."[55] That Israeli diaspora discourse treated American Jews and Iranian Jews at the time of the Shah with equal ambivalence is not accidental. It demonstrates that Zionism and the Jewish state have in effect come to accept the Jewish exilic condition, but only insofar as "diasporic" Jews are seen to inhabit a space that somehow remains connected to Western Christendom—even if that space happens to be geographically located within the Muslim Middle East.

UNDER THE AYATOLLAHS: NEITHER REDEMPTION NOR DESTRUCTION

In July 2007, the Israeli and international media reported that the Israeli government had been trying a new way to entice Iranian Jews to Israel. Several such attempts had been made since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and all of them, including this latest, failed miserably. This most recent effort, however, was unique in that it included substantial financial incentives for would-be Iranian immigrants. To step up these efforts, Israel now backed a move by Christian evangelicals and "expatriate" Jewish donors to guarantee each and every Iranian family $60,000, and each and every Iranian individual $10,000, provided they settled in Israel. Significantly, these sums were offered in addition to a host of existing financial incentives that are offered to Jewish immigrants, including loans and cheap mortgages.[56] Iran's Jews largely rejected this proposal, although a group of forty Iranian Jews, comprising ten families and three individuals, did eventually arrive in Israel as a result.[57] A statement released by the Society of Iranian Jews said that their national identity was not

for sale: "The identity of Iranian Jews is not tradable for any amount of money. Iranian Jews are among the most ancient Iranians. Iran's Jews love their Iranian identity and their culture, so threats and this immature political enticement will not achieve their aim of wiping out the identity of Iranian Jews."[58]

This brief episode is instructive for two reasons. First of all, it demonstrates that from an Israeli vantage point, the 1979 Iranian revolution put an end to all ambivalences regarding the prospects and desirability of Jewish life in Iran. As I have argued, for nearly three decades Israelis have framed the clash with Iran as one between a backward, Islamic, religious, and oriental dictatorship on the one hand, and a modern, Jewish, secular, and Western democracy on the other hand. Construing post-1979 Iranian realities as the inverse picture of pre-1979 Iranian realities,[59] Israelis reconsigned Iran to an Oriental space and, accordingly, insisted on viewing that country as an unsafe zone for its Jewish inhabitants. From this time forward, the Jewish state reverted to making sense of the condition of Iran's Jews mainly in terms of the dichotomy of "destruction" (in Iran) and "redemption" (in Israel), which was juxtaposed to the Orientalist East-West (and exile-homeland) divide upon which modern Jewish identity has been and still is founded.

As the episode of enticing Iran's Jews to Israel further suggests, since the 1979 revolution the Jewish state has found it excruciatingly difficult to come to terms with both the continued attachment of Iran's Jews to their ancestral homeland—"despite the . . . horrid and persistent anti-Jewish racist trait endemic in Iranian popular culture and even in Persian literature"[60]—and these Jews' unambiguous reluctance to leave Iran for Israel to find refuge from the "abnormalities of exile." Indeed, contrary to Israeli expectations, when the revolution came about, the Jewish state was hardly in the minds of Iran's Jews. Until 1979 the Jewish community in Iran numbered as many as eighty thousand. During and after the revolution only several thousands (ten to fifteen thousand at the most) migrated to Israel, while many tens of thousands chose to relocate to the countries of Euro-America.[61] Significantly, many other Iranian Jews—roughly thirty thousand—chose to remain in Iran, with many identifying with the post-1979 Iranian state.[62]

To be sure, in spite of the 1979 revolution and the many hardships they have subsequently experienced, many of Iran's Jews did not waver in their identification with the country of their birth. Anthropologist Mary Hegland reports, for example, that members of the Jewish community in some Iranian towns participated in anti-Shah protest marches and chanted revolutionary slogans

in support of the resistance movement.[63] According to other reports, after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980, Iranian Jews had actively participated in the fighting and in certain cases even adopted the Shiite term *shahadat* (martyrdom) to honor their dead.[64] Moreover, since 1979 prominent members of the Iranian Jewish community have repeatedly voiced their support for their government's policy vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calling on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories.[65] More recently, Maurice Mohtamed, in his capacity as head of the Society of Iranian Jews and Iran's sole Jewish representative in the Majles (Parliament), even asserted that Iran's Jews fully endorsed their government's nuclear policy.[66] On the whole, however, Israeli observers—for whom Jewish-Muslim interactions in post-1979 Iran could play out only in pogroms and persecutions, and for whom Jewish life in the Orient was totally unimaginable—adamantly refused to accept these Jews' continued attachment and loyalty to their country of birth.

According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "When reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality within the scope of these beliefs. They devise formulas to repress the unthinkable and to bring it back within the realm of accepted discourse."[67] Israelis reacted to the "anomaly" of continued Jewish life in and allegiance to post-1979 Iran in ways that confirmed this observation by Trouillot. Instead of questioning the truth of their ready-made assumptions, they forced these assumptions on reality. As a result, they read these Jews' continued settlement in Iran and their expressions of support for the Iranian government as a tactical, instrumental maneuver that, not unlike the Shiite injunction of *taqiyah* (dissimulation), conveyed neither genuine intention nor genuine belief. Israeli scholar Menashri thus asserted that the Jews who remained in Iran "*demonstratively* shifted their loyalty to the Islamic Republic,"[68] while another observer suggested that, in doing so, "the remaining [Jewish] survivors (*sh'erit ha-pletah*) attempted to save their skin and prevent attacks against them."[69] Sadok noted in the same vein that Iran's Jews were "new *converses* (*anusim*) . . . seeking to save their skins and those of the [remaining] Jewish community."[70]

The utter failure of Israelis to come to terms with the choices made by Iranian Jews stemmed in no small part from an entrenched assumption that Judaism and Zionism were one and the same—that Zionism expressed both the national *and* religious desire of all Jews. This, of course, is the well-known Zionist conflation of (largely messianic) Judaism, which was an important

element in the cultures of Middle East Jews, and the European-Zionist desire for secular-national "redemption" in Palestine, which not too many a Middle East Jew ever really cared much for.[71] Such conflation prevented Israeli observers from recognizing that identities are not at all uniform and homogeneous, and that Iranian Jews could very well be both *Jewish* and *Iranian* without necessarily ascribing to Zionism.[72] (This, no doubt, is reminiscent of the aforementioned binary opposition between *Arabs* and *Jews* in Zionism, a dichotomy that "denies the Arabness of Arab Jews, positing Arabness and Jewishness as irreconcilable opposites.")[73]

Thus, in a discussion that took place in 1981 at the Institute for Contemporary Jewry in the Hebrew University, historian Menashri admitted that he found it a "paradox" that Iranian Jews continued to practice their Judaism while expressing so little interest, and sometimes even hostility, toward Zionism and the state of Israel. Among these Jews, he said, there was "a difference between their relation to Judaism and their relation to Zionism . . . and I couldn't explain this."[74] Significantly, Iran's Jews themselves refused to accept the Zionist equation of religion and national allegiance, as an Iranian Jewish leader, Ciamak Morsatheq, recently remarked: "If you think Judaism and Zionism are one, it is like thinking Islam and the Taliban are the same, and they are not."[75]

In regard to 1979 and its immediate aftermath, the Israeli Knesset, captivated by ideological certainties (rather than by individual contingencies), contemplated taking action to "rescue" Iran's Jews—or in other words, to bring about their redemption in Israel against their will and volition. Thus even though it was reported that the majority of Iranian Jews did not believe in "the possibility of being saved in Israel, [and] even placed their trust in Khomeini,"[76] or that "abuses against [Jews] . . . equaled abuses against other Iranian citizens,"[77] there was mounting official pressure for devising an "emergency plan" to "rescue" them: "we need an intensive emergency plan to extricate tens of thousands of Iranian Jews," as one newspaper commentary insisted.[78] However, as previously noted, most of Iran's Jews refused to migrate to and settle in the Jewish state. Consequently, on the eve of Khomeini's triumphant return to Iran, in January 1979, two Israeli state officials were dispatched to Iran on a mission to induce the Jews to leave for Israel.[79] According to various reports, the Jewish community there received them with open arms but, still, asked the officials to report back to the Israeli government that they wanted to be left, as it were, alone.[80]

It is interesting to note in passing a comparable failure of Israeli authorities to come to grips with the reluctance of other Middle East Jewries to resettle in Israel. The most recent example of this dates back to the 2003 war on Iraq, when an attempt was made to encourage the immigration—or *aliyah*—of the "saving remnant" of Iraqi Jews, thirty-four childless elderly individuals. However, as *Ha'aretz* reported, much to the dismay of Israeli officials there was, in fact, no "existential danger" to their lives and property; and, moreover, these Jews "indicated that . . . [they] did not wish to immigrate to Israel."[81] (It was in relation to this episode that *Ha'aretz* commentator Benny Ziffer noted "the automatic reflex of the Jewish Agency to see every Jew as a potential immigrant to Israel, even if he does not want to come to Israel, and feels fine where he is, and, should he decide to leave, it would rather be for London.")[82]

At any rate, by electing either to flee to the countries of Euro-America or to stay put in the Islamic republic, Iran's Jews amply revealed their non- and oftentimes even anti-Zionist credentials. The fury caused by their refusal to play out a pre-given role in a teleological national script was nothing short of outrage.[83] As the revolution was still unfolding in the streets of Iran this fury quickly metamorphosed into phantasmagoric analogies between Iran and Nazi Germany, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, survived to this very day. In addition to canceling out the specific ("Oriental") viewpoints, memories, and experiences of Iranian Jews, these analogies were intended to bring their "deviant" behavior back within the scope of accepted discourse, as if to warn them that they ran the risk of suffering the same destruction as the Jews of Christian Europe if they opted to stay put in Iran. Treasurer of the Jewish Agency Akiva Levinsky couldn't have put this more bluntly:

> The words uttered today by Iran's Jews . . . remind us of those German Jews who tried to calm themselves down on the eve of World War II. . . . Whoever examines the situation in Iran . . . would immediately notice the writing on the wall. However, the same phenomenon repeats itself: a majority of Iranian Jews trying to convince themselves that all this talk against Israel and against Zionism has nothing to do with what is about to befall them.[84]

Some observers even went so far as to make the untenable claim that "concentration camps were established for Jews in Iran," and that revolutionary leaders demanded that "ghettos be established [for Jews] in Iran's main cities."[85]

The myth that Iran *is* the new Nazi Germany and its president the new Hitler has been endlessly recycled since a translating error that was made of a

2005 speech by Ahmadinejad converged with the international uproar against Iran's nuclear buildup. As we've seen, this erroneous translation has survived and prospered because Israel (and her supporters in the United States) has exploited it for its own objectives of the "war on terrorism." Coupled with recent diminutions or denials of the Holocaust by regime leaders,[86] this mistranslation served to authorize the fiction that the Islamic republic represented the essence of world terrorism and also a "revolting return to Hitler's Germany."[87] Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's opposition leader, has taken a leading role in pushing the case that Iran is Nazi Germany, as has Israeli president Shimon Peres, who compared an Iranian nuclear bomb to a "flying concentration camp."[88] In Chapter 3 I argued strongly against the raising of Hitler banners against Ahmadinejad, saying that it amounts to a radical reduction of the Holocaust to the status of a mere political weapon. I will add here that such extravagant claims also amount to a gross misrepresentation of the realities in which Iran's Jews find themselves and in which they operate, as Jonathan Cook observes:

> There is an interesting problem with selling the "Iran as Nazi Germany" line. If Ahmadinejad really is Hitler, ready to commit genocide against Israel's Jews as soon as he can get his hands on a nuclear weapon, why are some 25,000 Jews living peacefully in Iran and more than reluctant to leave despite repeated enticements from Israel and American Jews?[89]

And yet, Israelis of all political persuasions are still keen on silencing the specific historical and cultural contexts in which Iran's Jews have been operating and situating them outside the fold—that is to say, within the framework of the European "destruction," *Shoah* narrative. A revealing case in point is the backlash caused in Israel by a bogus report published in May 2006 by the Canadian *National Post,* which asserted that from now on a new dress code, reminiscent of the one decreed by Nazi Germany, would require Iranian Jews to wear a yellow armband. Based on claims made by Iranian expatriates living in Canada, the report was immediately proven false; and Iranian lawmakers, too, lost no time denying it. In Israel, however, neither a single newspaper (with the notable exception of *Ha'aretz*[90]) nor a single expert was found to set the record straight in public. Instead, the fictitious report was immediately accepted as a fact of life and hence as undisputable proof that "We are confronting a man [Ahmadinejad] who is the Hitler of the twenty-first century," as Labor Party's Offir Pinnes-Paz charged.[91]

As noted, it has always been difficult for the Jewish state to come to terms with the general reluctance of world—but mostly Middle East—Jewry to resettle in Israel.[92] However, that Iran's Jews continually refused to do so was, perhaps, most insulting of all. The reason for this, I think, has do with the fact that the 1979 Iranian revolution was the first dramatic episode in the Middle East after the mass migration of "Oriental" Jews to Israel in the early 1950s, which proved the fallacy of Zionism's ready-made categories and deeply held beliefs about the destinies of non-European Jews. The revolution brought about neither the destruction of these Jews (in Iran) nor their redemption (in Israel). Through their refusal to submit to a binary Zionist-Israeli script, Iran's Jews opened up a third way of Jewish existence and in so doing totally confounded the most deeply held beliefs emanating from the doctrine of the "ingathering of exiles."

CONCLUSION

But why should Iran's Jews ever consider emigrating to Israel if, "in general, Israelis considered Iranians like dogs"? This provocative and presumably rhetorical question was posed in 1973 to *aliyah* emissary Haim Sadok by a leading member of Tehran's Jewish community.[93] It suggests that many of Iran's Jews did not relocate to Israel not simply because they were deeply rooted in Iran or lacked Zionist convictions, but also because of discrimination, if not outright racism, to which incoming Iranian Jews were subjected in Israel, whether in the early years of the state or after the 1979 revolution.

In a roundtable on "Iranian Jewry today" held in 1981 at the Hebrew University's Institute for Contemporary Jewry, the late professor of Persian literature Sarah Soroudi claimed that Iranian Jewry's lack of interest in the Jewish state stems from the fact that "Israeli society is different and is not prepared to absorb—it does not assist in the absorption of people of other cultures."[94] Soroudi obviously understated the case. Many of Iran's Jews today probably heard of, or personally experienced, the disappointment, frustration, and bitterness that were an integral part of the experiences of Iranian Jews living in Israel. "The jokes about the stinginess of Iranian Jews," as one observer noted in the early 1980s, "offend them deeply . . . and the condescending and critical attitude of the Israeli public towards them gives rise to profound disappointment. The calls behind their backs, 'Khomeini, Khomeini—barbarians,' provoke their fury."[95] Little wonder that the "dropout" (*neshirah*) rate among Iranian Jews who initially fled Iran during the revolution and immediately

after it reached 80 percent, meaning that out of thirty thousand Jews only six thousand settled in Israel; "the rest went after 'the fleshpot' [in the countries of Euro-America]."[96] These experiences also help to explain why Israel has not lived up to the expectations of many Iranian immigrants, who now dream of returning to Iran (with some even acting on these dreams).[97]

The elders of Iran's Jews may also remember the strict "selection" policy applied by the State of Israel toward candidates for immigration in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Under this policy, immigration envoys operating in Iran were instructed to select the "productive elements" among the Jews—the healthy, the wealthy, the professionals, and the strong—and to weed out those candidates who were considered "social cases." "In other words, it was a decision to employ the Law of Return selectively," to borrow from Yehouda Shenhav's account of the comparable selection criteria enforced on Iraq's Jews at about the same time.[98]

Israel's run-of-the-mill historiography hardly makes mention of this scrupulous policy of "selection" that was applied with respect to Iranian Jewry.[99] The time has now come for academic research to shed light on this policy. The many official documents dispersed throughout Haim Sadok's book *Jews in Iran* supply undisputable evidence of this controversy. Investigation of these documents should serve as a starting point for this important scholarly and moral undertaking.

It should be noted that candidates for immigration among Iran's Jews before 1979 would have been able to clearly make out what kind of treatment they were likely to receive in Israel by simply listening closely to what Israeli immigration envoys had told them. Haim Sadok, for example, recounts how he brushed off charges by Iran's Jews that their reluctance to go on *aliyah* stemmed in no small part from the Jewish state's "discriminatory attitudes." In response to these charges, Sadok embarked on a blazing defense of the "melting pot" doctrine:

> We must distinguish between the Jews of Iran and the Jews of Europe. . . . There was a break of thousands of years, just as there was with the Jews of Yemen and others. What distinguishes between you and the gentiles of this land is but 10%. They say "Mohammad" and you say "Musa," but in all other aspects there is hardly any difference. And then you climb aboard a plane and land at [Israel's international] airport only to find that what unites you with other Jews is but 10%. Both of you are linked through Musa, but are divided in all other things,

> and much time and good will is needed to reverse the pyramid and create one nation. This can be accomplished through the army, the schools, the learning of the Hebrew language, which unites all, and much, much more.[100]

Here Sadok restrains Iran's Jews to a rigid colonial straightjacket. Not unlike prevailing Israeli attitudes toward Arab Jews, Sadok "assigns Europeans the role of adults who have attained development after having endured a difficult childhood, and who are now in a position to 'help' third world children reach European-style civilization, the set telos of the maturation process."[101] No doubt, this was part of the civilizing project of the Jewish state: to make the Iranian immigrant into a European—"to create one nation," a European nation. And this, after all, "is not easy, it takes time," as Sadok said in further trying to placate the concerns of Iran's Jews.[102]

In his book on the triangular relationship among Israel, Iran, and the United States, Trita Parsi describes an environment of relative openness toward local Persian culture in Israeli society:

> There are a few Western cities where Persian pop music blasts at full volume in shopping malls. Yet this is a daily, natural occurrence at Jerusalem's high-security downtown bus terminal. Here, in the equivalent of New York's Penn Station, eighteen-year-old Israeli soldiers wait for their rides home, assault rifles slung over their shoulders, Persian pop legends Moin and Ebi pounding in their ears. Most of the CD stores here are owned by Iranian Jews, and over the past twenty years they have created a market for Persian pop in the very heart of the Jewish state.[103]

Parsi's is a somewhat idyllic account of the extent to which Israelis have come to embrace manifestations of "Persian-ness"—or "Iranian-ness"—in their midst. A vivid example of veteran Israelis' failure to share a "myth of interculturality"[104] with Israeli Jews of Iranian provenance is provided by *Ha'aretz* correspondent David Oren. In an article bearing the suggestive title "Longing for a Lost Country,"[105] Oren reported on a cultural event that took place in Bat Yam (a small coastal town adjacent to Tel Aviv), which was attended by some five hundred Iranian immigrants. Oren could not quite grasp why the participants "were all united in their longing for days bygone; for the days and nights in Teheran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Hamdan and Abadan before the ousting of the Shah. . . ." When the lead singer performed songs on the Iranian homeland some people in the crowd even "wiped their tears without shame."

"At first glance," Oren admitted, "the event reminded me of a group of exiles in a foreign land." "I'm sorry, but I don't understand this," complained one of the waiters in the hall, whom Oren cites at length:

> I've seen meetings of the Organization of Iraqi Jews, the Organization of Bessarabian Jews, but this is something special. There, at least, there was a sense that they were Israelis. They spoke Hebrew. . . . They dealt with memories and nostalgia, but lived in the Israeli present. But look at these people! Pretty soon, they'll get up and start to sing "by the waters of the Yarkon [the largest coastal river in Israel], there we sat and wept when we remembered Iran."[106]

Given that some of the two hundred thousand Iranian Jews currently living in Israel belong to the highest levels of the Israeli political elite, Parsi further suggests that they provide a glimpse into a successful experiment at social integration. Parsi particularly refers here to former (and disgraced) president Moshe Katsav, former (and disgraced) IDF chief of staff Dan Halutz, and former defense minister Shaul Mofaz. "In the Islamic Republic," he says, "these individuals would never have been able to excel in their career. Long before reaching prominence, they would have been stopped by the glass ceiling that separates religious minorities, seculars, and disbelievers from those considered to be capable of being loyal to the Islamic Republic."[107] I agree with Parsi that in Iran these individuals could not reach the apogee of their "pilgrimage," to borrow Benedict Anderson's revealing metaphor. Nonetheless, I think his assertion about the success of their integration into Israeli society is problematic specifically because it fails to examine this phenomenon within the context of power relations and politics of ethnicity within the Jewish state.

While a sociological profile of these individuals is beyond the scope of this book, it is nevertheless crucial to note that their life stories and careers resemble those of other Mizrahim who sought to join the Jewish state's dominant class by adopting integration strategies similar in kind to those of Homi Bhabha's "mimic man" or Frantz Fanon's colonial subject in *Black Skin, White Masks*.[108] That is to say, they invested in secular, mainly academic education and in business ventures so as to secure professional mobility, and, to blur their "Oriental" identity, they adopted both the practice of "mixed marriage" and the worldview of the dominant class they so wished to join. In the process, as Baruch Kimmerling contends, "a totally 'Ashkenized' political, economic and cultural elite of Mizrahi descent was created, whose features were not different from those of the veteran middle class or the middle class of East-

European descent."[109] Indeed, it is not coincidental that the very Israelis of Iranian origin whom Parsi cites as examples of a successful "pilgrimage" to the center, are the least to approach Iran with any humor. As Parsi himself acknowledges, much like other members of Israeli ethnocracy, "they are some of the most hawkish Israeli leaders regarding Iran."[110]

According to William Safran, "Some diasporas persist—and their members do not go 'home'—because there is no homeland to which to return; because, although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially; or because it would be too inconvenient and disruptive, if not traumatic, to leave the diaspora."[111] In this formulation by Safran are encapsulated most of the reasons for the reluctance of Iran's Jews to immigrate to Israel: Israel simply has not been a welcoming place to them politically, ideologically, or socially.

Yet this is an incomplete account of the relationship between Iran's Jews and the Jewish state since the 1979 revolution. For, despite Iranian-Israeli animosities, and despite everything else, Iran's Jews have been known to maintain intimate contacts with relatives and friends in Israel (and vice versa) thanks to a back and forth movement, via Istanbul, which is made possible through the silent blessing of the Iranian authorities.[112] In cases where travel has not been possible, telephones and the Internet have been used routinely to reduce distance and to facilitate two-way traffic between Iranian Jews in both states. These circumstances confirm that there is no straightforward, center-periphery relationship between Israel and its Iranian "diaspora," and that we would therefore be better off speaking about Iranian Jewry in terms of what James Clifford calls a "multi-locale diaspora," that is, a diaspora not "defined by a specific geo-political boundary."[113]

Clifford further suggests that "the history of Jewish diaspora shows selective accommodation with the political, cultural, commercial, and everyday life forms of 'host' societies."[114] However, as my discussion has shown, to the extent that Iran's Jews are concerned it is perhaps more appropriate to reverse this formulation and argue, instead, that their history shows "selective accommodation" not with the "host" society, Iran, but with the state of Israel, their putative homeland: "I'm an Iranian first and a Jew second," as Mohtamed recently claimed.[115] Iran's Jews further demonstrated their high level of integration into Iranian society by publicly condemning president Ahmadinejad's inflammatory remarks on the Holocaust.[116] This, no doubt, was a courageous act but also a powerful show of confidence, security, and rootedness.[117] This

conduct by Iran's Jews thus points to what Zionist-Israeli diasporic identity in its reification invariably fails to recognize: "the concrete place-basedness and the historicity of diasporic identity."[118] This is clearly borne by the evidence, even if "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has actively promoted Holocaust denial, Iran's Jewish population faces official discrimination, and the official media outlets regularly produce anti-Semitic propaganda," as a recent U.S. State Department report on anti-Semitism asserted.[119]

As we have seen, Israelis in various capacities have not been able to ignore the profound attachment of Iran's Jews to their country of birth, even if they found it very difficult to digest. This chapter thus has demonstrated that it is not enough to explore what sorts of Jewish life Zionism and the state of Israel are likely to negate, deny, and dispossess, but also what sorts of Jewish life they are likely to confirm, where, and under which conditions. These latter, *flipside* dimensions of "negation of exile," which have been conspicuously absent in critical scholarship, are essential for unraveling the contingent and unstable nature of this concept when applied in different temporal and spatial contexts.

Indeed, if pre- and post-1979 Iran is any indication, then this concept could mean different things to different people at different times. Iran could sometimes be imagined as "the East" and sometimes as the "the West," sometimes as "exile" and sometimes as "homeland," and still at other times as all of these things at once. In each instance, Zionism and the state of Israel have come to accept and/or deny the possibility of Jewish life in Iran, depending on where the dividing line between East and West was drawn at particular junctures. In other words, the ways in which Iran was said to overlap with or digress from an exilic space are themselves historical. Examining Zionist consciousness solely in terms of what, how, why, and whom it negates or denies or dispossesses would therefore miss on a variety of inclusive manifestations.

Last, my discussion suggests that Iranian Jewry remains an enigma of sorts for the Jewish state, an unclassifiable Jewish "diaspora" that does not lend itself to neat and convenient categorizations in ethnic or cultural terms. Indeed, to understand something historically "is to be aware of its complexity . . . to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists, motives and behavior."[120] Nevertheless, the liquidation of most Jewish communities in the Middle East by their transfer to Israel after 1948 has facilitated a radical reduction of their complex histories into a single heroic moment (and an essence) of Zionist redemption. By con-

trast, the history of Iran's Jews remains open-ended and unfinished, as it were. This history therefore turns the spotlight onto a unique Jewish "diaspora" in the Middle East that refuses to abide by the teleological master-narrative of Jewish nationalism. Consequently, this history can serve as a model for the unpacking of the remaining silences in the histories of the Jews of Islam.

POSTSCRIPT

A Few Comments on a "Known Rapist"

I REALLY WOULD HAVE LIKED to conclude this book on an optimistic note. After all, at the same time that President Bush has been fanning anti-Iran phobias by raising the specter of "World War Three" breaking loose if Iran is allowed to acquire nuclear weapons,[1] some past and present Israeli officials have gone out of their way to play down the likelihood of the Iranian apocalypse. For instance, former head of the Mossad Ephraim Halevi surmised that Iran does not "constitute an existential threat to the state of Israel";[2] and Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni reportedly argued behind closed doors that "the extermination of the state of Israel is not a project the Iranians are likely to achieve." According to the same report, Livni even went as far as to denounce former Prime Minster Olmert's public pronouncements likening a nuclear-armed Iran to a "concluding note of the Zionist entity," saying that she was not prepared to participate in that "travesty of hysteria."[3]

One may also find comfort in the Israeli government's decision to dismantle the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, which was formed in the aftermath of the second Lebanon war to deal primarily with the strategic threat from Iran.[4] Significantly, that ministry was headed, until his resignation from the coalition government in January 2008, by Avigdor Lieberman, who is one of the hardest of all Israeli hardliners. As a consequence, that ministerial post earned him the much-deserved title of "minister for national fears."[5]

Recently, too, the Israeli media seems to have adopted a more favorable attitude toward contemporary Iranian realities. It is much too early to tell if this trend will persist or if it will have a positive impact on Israeli public opinion.

Nevertheless, there was something uplifting, for instance, in a recent reportage on Iran penned by one of the very few Israeli correspondents who were ever granted permission to visit that country after 1979. Contrary to Israeli views of Iranians as "a savage, extremist and belligerent nation," he wrote, the "people whom I met were pleasant, polite, open, warm and . . . enlightened." Commenting on Iran's animosities toward the "Zionist virus," he went on to say that Israel "does not really preoccupy the mind of the average Iranian; s/he is more worried about other issues, such as how to make ends meet or how to escape the tremendous traffic jams in Tehran." In contrast to cities like Cairo, Beirut, Istanbul, and Doha, he added, "in [Tehran] I didn't come across any anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli literature in bookstores' display windows and on book shelves."[6]

Still, at the time I write this concluding chapter I find no justification for being overly optimistic about the likelihood that the Iranian threat would anytime soon be placed within the scope of rational discourse.[7] To illustrate, in December 2007 Israel's Home Front Command started distributing among two million households an expensive pamphlet titled "Emergency Preparations Handbook" (*Madrich he'archut le-matsavei herum*). Drafted by the Home Front Command's best experts—including psychologists, missile specialists, and social workers—the pamphlet was designed to provide "responsible civilians" with detailed instructions on how to prepare their homes and their family members for missile onslaughts. Although no country was named in the brochure, it would not be farfetched to assume that the Home Front Command specifically had Iran in mind as a likely aggressor.

It is both instructive and ironic that we Israelis found this pamphlet in our mailboxes at the same time we were also informed about the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which concluded that Iran suspended its nuclear weapons program in 2003.[8] Why draw on the NIE report to help reducing unnecessary anxieties about the "Iranian threat" if it is possible instead to fuel these anxieties by further hammering on a hallucinatory Iranian missile attack? Perhaps that is why the tone emerging from the Home Front Command pamphlet was one of complete hysteria. Calling on the public to *immediately* prepare an emergency stock of medicines and food, coordinate assistance mechanisms with the neighbors, prepare emergency cards for disabled relatives, arrange rooms to be sealed, cover windows with adhesive tape, and so on and so forth, the pamphlet warned that "[d]angerous and emergency situations are likely to occur without giving you time to prepare in advance."[9]

The Home Front Command pamphlet was by no means an isolated instance but one among many sources cutting across segments of the Israeli polity that have converged in the production, dissemination, and maintenance of anti-Iran phobias in the public sphere. Indeed, few issues have been able to unify us Israelis like the "Iranian threat." This circumstance may help to explain why instead of finding in the NIE report a source of comfort and reassurance, or at least a source for developing a critical awareness of the official Israeli line, it was immediately understood as a powerful adversity: "We did not imagine that the blow [on Israel] would be so severe and so painful," was the response to the NIE of Chico Menahem, the political correspondent of Channel 10's television news team.[10]

To be sure, one may ask why it is that revelations raising serious doubts about Iran's nuclear buildup are instantaneously assumed to be a "blow" to Israel (and a "painful" one at that). The following description by an unnamed Israeli official of the manner in which the NIE was formulated is likely to provide an answer to this question:

> They see a known rapist, armed with a knife, climbing the eaves. On the third floor there's a young girl. But they're still not sure, and are careful to remark that it is certainly possible he is climbing up to suntan on the roof.[11]

At the very basic level, the allegory is clear: not being sure about Iran's real intention is as absurd as not being sure about the real intention of an armed rapist. It is obvious that the girl is the rapist's target as much as it is obvious that Israel is Iran's target. What is also interesting is the selection (conscious or not) of images. In the public imagination rapists form the worst kind of criminals; nothing can be compared to their bestial immorality. Unlike murderers, one cannot think of an explanation that might justify their behavior. This is exactly the case with Iran in Israeli imagination: there is nothing rational about its behavior, and it cannot be explained or rationalized other than in terms of a bestial passion to attack and satisfy its dark desires. Also playing a role in the official's use of this particular allegory is, perhaps, the old Orientalist tradition of identifying the East with an unrestrained, excessive sexuality.[12]

. . .

The debate over Iran's nuclear program has certainly not run its course, and it does not seem likely that it will in the foreseeable future. And yet this book has not engaged directly with the issue of Iran's nuclear threat. Rather, it has been

primarily concerned with observing the ways in which Israel's obsession with Iran can help in deciphering the inner dynamics of Israeli society, culture, and politics. As I have demonstrated in this book, this obsession is not simply a product of "objective" security concerns or of a strategic rivalry between these two states. Nor is it purely a derivative of perceived cultural differences between Iran and Israel. While it may be deriving from all of these things, it is most prominently linked to Israeli defensive mechanisms of the home in view of the peril of the Jewish state becoming foreign and unrecognizable to itself. At the same time, this obsession should be examined within the context of Israel's repertoires of violence in the post-9/11 world.

Paradoxically, as David Campbell argues, the articulation of danger is "not a threat to the state's identity or existence; it is its condition of possibility."[13] The articulation of danger is therefore essential for the maintenance and preservation of state hegemony. This explains, in part, why the Jewish state has gone out of its way to blow up the extent of Iran's threat to its existence. However, in this book I have not limited myself to describing the rhetorical construction of Iran as a threat. Rather, my main goal has been to penetrate these rhetorical utterances and thereby to lay bare the conceptual mainstays of Israel's construction of Iran as a "known rapist."

Indeed, the evolution of Israel's attitudes toward pre- and post-1979 Iran was tightly linked to values and constructs that were neither invented nor controlled by the state's decision makers. Iran was not instantaneously accessible to the latter. To "create" Iran, to render her meaningful to Israelis, it was first of all necessary for these decision makers to draw on a prior repertoire of *domestic* images and representations. Although monarchical and Islamic republican Iran have held pride of place in Israel's foreign policy considerations, these considerations were first and foremost reliant on a complex and multilayered system of images and representations that imbued Iran and its peoples with particular meanings and which resonated with the commonsense world of many an Israeli Jew.

Nor were these meanings produced as part of a malevolent scheme of one sort or another. Moral panic is not necessarily the product of conspiratorial designs. It does not require a coordinating center, and it is organized and carried out by different social agents such as the state, elites, and the media, as well as by the spontaneous activity of grassroots movements. In addition, moral panic is almost invariably joined by academic and non-academic experts who, by providing commentaries and forecasts, play a key role in the incitement of hostility toward particular groups. It is a spontaneous and disorderly process

that, although rooted in prior structures, is (much like Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "habitus")[14] neither objectively determined nor a product of free will. In the final analysis, moral panic is induced through various sets of texts, each with its own links and biases, that interlace with and transform each other in ways that, though unpremeditated, are never wholly arbitrary. To borrow from Melani McAlister's analysis of the discourse of U.S. expansionist nationalism, far from encompassing a set of representations in the service of power, it is primarily "a process of convergence, in which historical events, overlapping representations, and diverse interests come together in a powerful and productive, if historically contingent, accord."[15]

To present as thick a description as possible of the complex process in which Iran was singled out as an alien "folk devil," I included in a single analytic framework the positions of a plethora of knowledge-producers (or "moral entrepreneurs") in the Israeli public sphere—from statesmen and politicians through appointed officials, state emissaries, and various experts to representatives from the media and the cultural field. Even though such a motley group can hardly be assimilated into one category, it is evident that in their understandings of Iran (and of themselves) they shared a "lifeworld" of "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretative patterns."[16] This lifeworld—or "shared mythological horizon"[17]—was rooted in the "epistemological imperialism of the West,"[18] which meant that they continued to carry the conceptual impositions and exactions of colonialism.

In the first place, by relying on "universal" discourses, Israeli narratives of modern Iran fell neatly within historicist structures of history, which, in Dipesh Chakrabarty's brilliant formulation, follow a "first in Europe, then elsewhere" schemata that consigns "'rude' nations to an imaginary waiting room of history."[19] Taking their cue from narratives of progress as radiating from Europe, they ignored how deeply Iranian history was entwined with overseas conquest, how the Iranians themselves sought to reinterpret, appropriate, deflect, and resist the ideas, practices, and institutions they gleaned from their encounters with overseas colonialism. They were reluctant to examine carefully not only what Enlightenment ideas actually meant, but how they have been used—and perhaps, in being used by Iranians, given new meanings.

What also characterized these narratives is a general laxity about the destructive nature of colonialism in Iran, on the one hand, and, on the other, the repercussions of the Shah's repressive rule on his subjects.[20] By resorting to universal discourses, which recognize totality only if it is explicated in uni-

lateral terms and perceived through a singular worldview, Israeli narratives of Iran assumed the silence, voluntary or not, of the Iranians. To be sure, these narratives took notice of integration, cooptation, direct rule, and subjugation, but only seldom have they included any recognition that the Iranians needed to be listened to, that their ideas and grievances actually mattered. As with Christopher Columbus's colonial hermeneutics of Native Americans, which Tzvetan Todorov reconstructed, in Israeli narratives of Iran "human beings have no particular place."[21]

By glossing over (or whitewashing) the violent nature of Iran's entanglement with Euro-American colonialism and the extraordinary inequalities and depredations that the Shah exacted on his subjects, and by treating with contempt "impure" Iranian translations of ideas and structures asserted by Europe, Israeli narratives of modern Iran confirmed Aimé Césaire's observation that "poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge."[22] To be sure, *science* is not necessarily separate from *poetics*. Still, it needs to be said that, ridden with so many silences, these narratives could only explain the phenomenon of the 1979 revolution by resorting to the colonial trope of the "failure to thrive,"[23] in the past three to five decades, of the Iranians. That failure, in turn, was located in these very people's cultural proclivity to mix faith with politics and to express both through irrational beastly violence.

In addition to drawing on Zionist-Israeli conceptualizations of the world, Israeli narratives of Iran revealed the radically inappropriate expertise of their Israeli producers, regardless of the immense authority and popularity the latter enjoy among Israeli Jews.[24] This lack of expertise is most prominently rooted in the fact that Euro-America remains the silent referent in Israeli historical knowledge. Chakrabarty describes this phenomenon as follows:

> Third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate. Whether it is an Edward Thompson, a Le Roy Ladurie, a George Duby, a Carlo Ginzburg, a Lawrence Stone, a Robert Darnton, or a Natalie Davis . . . the "greats" and the models of the historian's enterprise are always at least culturally "European." "They" produce their work in relative ignorance of non-Western histories, and this does not seem to affect the quality of their work.[25]

The Israeli academia reinforces this asymmetry, as Israeli historians of Euro-America are generally unfamiliar with, and often look down upon, Middle

East (including Iranian) languages, histories, cultures, and societies. Nor have they been too shy of demonstrating this utter lack of knowledge either. For example, a prominent Israeli historian of Medieval European Christianity recently asked me at a social event if it were true that Aryanism was first introduced in Iran *after* the 1979 revolution! Needless to say, "We [that is, historians of the non-West] cannot afford an equality or symmetry of ignorance at this level without taking the risk of appearing 'old-fashioned' or 'outdated.'"[26]

Yet the problem of "asymmetric ignorance" becomes more acute when we consider Iran's place within the institution of Israeli Middle East studies. Israeli scholars of Iran are rightly expected to be able to conduct research using Arabic texts and to teach the Middle East writ large. Israeli scholars of the Arab Middle East, on the other hand, are generally disinterested in (if not totally apathetic to) Iranian history and culture, and are also totally innocent of the Persian language. As we have seen in the various chapters of this book, this circumstance has not prevented some of them from making categorically outrageous statements with respect to Iran. To the extent that the Israeli media are concerned, things are not entirely different. Indeed, it is only ironic that those who speak and write the most about Iran's complex realities in the Israeli printed and electronic media are the various "correspondents of *Arab* affairs," whose knowledge about Iranian history, society, language, and culture is at best partial.[27]

Israeli production of knowledge about Iran is thus in a position of subalternity not only in relation to the knowledge produced on the capitalist West but also in relation to the knowledge produced on the Middle East. This introduces yet another asymmetry: the centrality of Iran in the Israeli public sphere stands in stark contrast to the general ignorance of those who claim to be able to speak and write about it.

This relative ignorance about Iran is linked, as we have seen, to the Israeli polity's practices of closures and partitions. I will further address this contentious issue with a seemingly frivolous anecdote: the most respected and successful food and wine magazine published in Israel, *'Al Hashulchan* ("On the Table"), opened its August 2007 issue with the festive revelation, "Asia is here" (*asyah zeh kan*).[28] One would expect that, with this revelation, the magazine would feature recipes and cooking techniques that are unique to a variety of Middle East cuisines in Israel's *Arab* vicinity. However, as it turns out the magazine had an entirely different understanding of Israel's *metageography:*[29] engaging with topics such as "stir-fried noodles in olive oil," "fantasizing on

Thailand in the home kitchen," "Wasabi . . . in the Israeli garden salad," "life with Soy sauce," and "cold meat from Japan," the magazine provided an instructive culinary illustration of how the ongoing process of demarcating and safeguarding the Western character of Israeli cosmopolitanism works to separate Israeli Jews from the surrounding Arab and Muslim population.

As we've seen throughout this book, Israel has commonly comprehended Iran on the basis of these closures and partitions. Iran served as a repellent and frightening *external* other whose primary role it was to protect the Jewish state from "Oriental" "outsiders within" who threatened the Western cosmopolitan character of Israeli society. The canonization of Iran as a backward, Islamic, and threatening Oriental dictatorship is related to a moral panic about the waning social cohesion of the Jewish state in light of the emergence of "marginal" and "deviant" groups since the latter half of the 1970s. In addition, by constructing Iran as a radical external other, Israeli "moral entrepreneurs" periodically renewed militaristic narratives of states of emergency, hence reinvigorating an image of the Jewish state as a beacon of Western rationality and civility in an increasingly volatile, hostile, irrational, and fanatical region.

Israeli understandings of Iran thus reveal an unyielding desire to keep the "Oriental" Middle East at arm's length. The underlying problem with this endeavor, of course, is that, owing to the actual character and makeup of the Israeli nation-state, it has never quite been a model for a modernity that is decidedly singular and decidedly Euro-American.[30] More than an actuality, the story of Israeli modernity likewise is a "fragile fiction," which, as Rebecca L. Stein proposes, "required vigilant making and remaking in the face of its dissolution."[31]

Indeed, however begrudgingly, prominent members of Israeli ethnocracy have recognized that Israeli modernity rested on shaky grounds, that this "modernity *is* crisis, not a finished ideal state seen as the culmination of a majestically plotted history."[32] Put differently, their understandings of post-1979 Iran resonated with what one Israeli commentator described in another context as "the cry of the white man, who has seen before his eyes Israel turning from a small and pleasant European colony into a bustling Middle East metropolis full of strange and scheming faces."[33] Israeli understandings of the Islamic republic reveal a desperate desire to remain within the tangled web of Western influence in the Middle East. They provide glimpses into a displaced moral panic about the nature of Israeli society, a society that, owing to

its Palestinian, ultra-Orthodox, and Mizrahi populations, not to mention its ever-expanding nonwhite, and non-Israeli, working-class peripheries, cannot be associated with a singular Euro-American project of modernity.

. . .

That Iran in Israeli imagination provides a unique case of moral panic about the domestic front can be amply demonstrated by briefly shifting our focus of attention to the "the great chain of Orientalism"[34] in the history of Zionism and the state of Israel. From its very inception, the Zionist project has been a story of repeated repressions and projections. Beginning with Western Europe's Enlightenment, and specifically with the introduction of the Aryan-Semite discourse, French and German Christians began to cast the Jews in their realms as backwardly Oriental. In ways reminiscent of the conditions of colonial subjects as analyzed in the literature, French and German Jews (such as Herzl) were poisoned by these very anti-Semitic charges, thus at once "assimilating the negative stereotype and desiring only to escape it."[35] Internalizing the stigma and seeing themselves from the Orientalizers' perspective, but also seeking an "other" in order to measure their own advancing Westernization, they in turn projected the negative Oriental image previously attributed to them onto East European (specifically Polish) Jews, now defined as such (*Ostjuden*).[36]

As hopes for assimilation into Europe did not materialize, European Jews arrived at the solution known as Zionism. To win respect, the Jews would have to go somewhere else, to Palestine, where, faithful to the imperial trends of their time, they would establish a colony of their own. It is true: located in the Orient, Palestine had the potential to challenge the stigmatized identity adopted by European Jews. Ironically, however, given that Zionism was in many ways a (final) bid for Europeanization, designed to place Jews on the Western side of the East-West divide, that stigma "was embedded in the Zionist enterprise and traveled to Israel with the settlers."[37] Ultimately, it now remained for the veteran Israeli Ashkenazim, the former *Ostjuden*—and formerly the "'blacks' of Europe"[38]—to represent that Europe which had not so very long ago rejected them, by projecting the Orientalized image onto incoming Middle East Jews, or Mizrahim:

> What stands out is the similarity between the German Jewish orientalization of the Ostjuden . . . in Europe, and the Ostjudisch Orientalization of the Mizrahim

> in Israel less than a generation later. In orientalizing the Mizrahim, the Ostjuden simply took the arsenal of images and symbols that had been used to exclude them and applied them, wholesale and nearly unchanged, to the Mizrahim. They thus presented themselves as the westerners that they had, up until that point, never been.[39]

Hence a common thread that runs throughout the history of Zionism is the dialectic of internalizing and in turn discarding the Jews' Orientalized image by projecting it onto a host of internal and external, mainly Jewish "others." (The Palestinians and Arabs in general were, from the start, considered unassimilable Orientals.) As I have demonstrated in the various chapters of this book, post-1979 Iran has been used as a container into which the Orientalized images of Israeli society have been poured with a view to reasserting its solid standing within Western, *Judeo-Christian* civilization.

No doubt, as a country invariably aspiring to be accepted as equal in the Euro-American family—"to form a portion of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to Barbarism," in Herzl's own words[40]—but which, for geopolitical, ethnic, and religious considerations, cannot quite rid itself of the Oriental stigma, Iran becomes a threatening and repellent other onto which this stigma is persistently projected. That doesn't mean of course that Iran's "Oriental" features are merely the product of Israelis' imagination. Yet it stands to reason that the Israeli drive to expel Iran to the farthest corners of radical alterity is at least partly induced by a perceived imperative to exorcise Iran-like "Oriental"—Mizrahi, ultra-orthodox, ultra-nationalist—folk devils within Israeli society.

According to the most basic definitions, "the notion of race is a socially constructed 'container' through which we project our inner world onto others. Others are a psychological manifestation of our fear of difference."[41] In most such definitions, racism—both biological and cultural (as in "racism without races")[42]—is an ideology and a practice involving the projection onto the world of experiences and qualities that are actually part of ourselves as if they are part of someone else. Thus, "someone who is racist will project his own faults on to another group which has the effect of disowning that which is unpalatable and recognizing this in some other."[43] To expand on the arguments put forth in this book: Iran becomes for us Israelis a radical other onto which we expel our collective "uncanny" (*das Unheimlich*), namely, our own qualities, feelings, wishes, and even objects—or "that class of frightening

which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"[44]—that we refuse to recognize in ourselves. *Ha'aretz*'s literary editor Benny Ziffer unwittingly detected elements of these racist projections in Israel's reaction to President Ahmadinejad's visit to New York in September 2007:

> It is only ironic that most of the arguments put forth by Israel against the permission granted . . . Ahmadinejad to visit New York closely resembled . . . arguments that are ordinarily raised in the world against Israel. Which nation is threatening the peace of the Middle East and the world by its frenzied armament race? Most of the world's citizens would automatically say: Israel. But this was the greatest day for Dan Gillerman, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, a day in which he was able, at long last, to avenge all of Israel's detractors by casting at the Iranian demon the very same arguments that are ordinarily raised against him and against the country he represents at the United Nations. . . .[45]

Yet this was by no means a simple matter of one-way racial and racist projection, whereby the Israelis' fears of themselves were exported to Iran. For once these fears were projected from Israel onto Iran they were, in turn, imported and analogized from Iran back to Israel and served to control and reaffirm the social and ethnic hierarchy at home. To paraphrase Zygmunt Bauman's metaphorical formulation of the exclusionary practices of the modern state, this imaginative Iran was used as a yardstick to evaluate who were to be regarded as "useful plants" to be encouraged and tenderly propagated and who were to be viewed as "weeds" to be policed and domesticated.[46]

Another allegory of Bauman is that of "the stranger," and it may be of additional value for making sense of this cyclical, to-and-fro projective movement that is so characteristic of the moral panic under discussion. Picking up on Freud's notion of "the uncanny," Bauman argues that strangers are not unfamiliar people altogether, but they nevertheless violate the clear-cut lines that separate "us" from "them," "friends" from "foes," "good" from "bad"—the very polarized entities that create an illusion of social order and symmetry; "they bring the 'outside' 'inside' and poison the comfort of order with the suspicion of chaos."[47] The stranger, thus, is someone whom we know, but who also happens to sit in "our" world uninvited. She or he resembles the enemy, but unlike the enemy, she or he is not kept at a safe distance. The stranger, therefore, is other, but living within us; she or he invariably reminds us of what we are, which is, at once, what we don't want to be. By defying the boundaries between here and there, between inside and outside, the stranger introduces

incoherence in the supposedly coherent order, thereby causing confusion and anxiety and becoming a target of exclusionary practices.[48]

As shown in Chapter 2, the imaginative Iran produced by Israeli fears served as a constant reminder to Israelis of the (ethnic and religious) *strangers* operating in their own midst, strangers who invariably disrupted the dominant culture and subverted the visualized perfect order. Mizrahim and ultra-religious and religious Zionist Jews (but also Palestinians) are all *there;* they inhabit a space within the boundaries of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine. They are familiar and known, but, preserving the "exilic" and "Oriental" stigma, they are also alien, standing in direct opposition to "the new Jew" who was expected to de-Orientalize in the mold of Euro-America.[49] "Blend[ing] into the Semitic region and be[ing] lost within a terrible Levantine dunghill," as leader of the now defunct Shinui party Yosef Lapid put it in a 2002 interview,[50] that is the worst nightmare of many an Israeli Jew. The emergence of post-1979 Iran as a site where comparable forces have been playing out harks back to the menacing "strangers" at home, whose difference evokes feelings of uncanniness, uneasiness, even repellence among Israelis who have vested interests in the dominant ethnocratic order.

The Israeli case of Iranophobia explored in this book shows that although hegemonic state projects are organized around an enduring sense of threat that produces *difference,* they are also organized around an enduring sense of threat that is produced by *similarity. Secular* Zionists in particular have expressed the demoralizing idea that it is in post-1979 Iranian realities that we find the future of the Jewish state.[51] The analogies and comparisons that Israelis made between domestic (Israeli) and foreign (Iranian) societies served to reinforce the prevailing post-Enlightenment notions of cultural (and ethnic-racial) superiority and inferiority at home. As we saw in Chapter 4, it is only logical, therefore, that Iran's Jews, being both Iranians *and* Jews, have inhabited in Israeli imagination a hybrid place between "Europe" and the "Orient," a place producing tensions and ambivalences with regard to their exact ethnic and cultural identities.

Contrary to the view that sees similarity as the basis of affection and empathy, this book thus revealed a paradoxical reality, a reality in which the similar and the intimate provoke anxiety because they force one to see what one refuses to see in her or his self. As a consequence, this book introduced a novel theoretical approach to the study of identities: identities are constructed not simply by the workings of politics of difference, but also by the drive to

reject feelings of intimacy toward that which is already included in the self. The Tehran scenes in the 1991 blockbuster motion picture "Not Without My Daughter" were actually shot in Tel Aviv. While this choice of location obviously had nothing to do with anything I said in this book, it does serve as a symbolic reminder for Israelis that Tel Aviv and Tehran, Israel and Iran, are not really two worlds apart.

. . .

On 27 December 2008, long after I submitted the final proofs of this book, Israel launched a devastating military campaign on Gaza.[52] Codenamed "Operation Cast Lead," this campaign was officially intended to put an end to Hamas rocket and mortar attacks on Israel (by "teaching Hamas a lesson") and at the same time to recover Israel's deterrence, which allegedly had suffered a severe blow in the 2006 Lebanon debacle. It has also been hinted—even by senior Israeli government officials—that the operation was aimed at eliminating Hamas rule in Gaza altogether.

When three weeks later, on 17 January, Israel announced a "unilateral ceasefire," Gaza was in rubble with the number of Palestinian deaths exceeding 1,300, 670 of them unarmed and helpless civilians (mainly children and women). This was by far the most brutal and devastating Israeli attack on Gaza since the 1967 war. President Shimon Peres, appearing on Israeli television urging cheering Israeli reserve soldiers to go to battle, attested: "You, the IDF, have achieved in 16 days what many states taken together have not been able to achieve in 16 years."

This was like déjà vu, all over again: the printed and electronic media lining up behind the government and competing against each other in disseminating the official account of the unfolding events as impartial news; and the public succumbing to the great and terrible conflagration that consumed any remnant of critical and dispassionate appraisal of this account, "fall[ing] prey to the wretched wave that has inundated, stupefied, blinded and brainwashed us."[53] Never has the chorus been so loud and uniform, never has the public been so indifferent and impervious to the misery and pain of other peoples.

To get to the bottom of this contemptuous attitude, so vast and profound, toward the lives of human beings, it is necessary to turn to the rhetorical ways by means of which the Israeli government has placed its post-9/11 "wars of no choice" against the Arab vicinity within the discourse of the "war on terror," as discussed in chapter 3. Indeed, a decisive majority of Israelis did in fact

accept and support the Gaza attack in the name of the "War on Terrorism," a collectively manufactured Orwellian term that stripped the attack from its enduring contexts of occupation and dispossession, thus rendering Palestinians into an undifferentiated mass of terrorists whose humanity is seriously wanting. Israel's ultra-right-wing Knesset member Avigdor Lieberman provided a terrifying expression of this sentiment when he candidly called upon the Israeli military to "continue to fight Hamas just like the United States did with the Japanese in World War II."[54]

The inverse of such a radical deflation of the lives and humanity of Palestinians was, of course, the act of investing the Jewish state with the role of vanguard on whose performance in the war the destiny of Western civilization depends. As Netanyahu told foreign reporters in the midst of the Gaza attack, "If we don't put an end to missile attacks on [our] citizens right away, they will spread. This will be very bad for everyone [worldwide]."[55] That European leaders, too, have uncritically upheld the notion that the Israeli attack on Gaza was, in fact, an impediment to such a spillover effect is attested by their impressive show of support for it. Many such leaders—including French President Nicolas Sarkozy, U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi—while voicing concern for the increasing death toll of Palestinian civilians nonetheless arrived in Israel on Sunday, 18 January, to demonstrate their support for the Israeli cause. "Watching missiles directed against residential homes in Israel," as Berlusconi explained why he undertook the trip to Jerusalem, "we too felt that our homes were in danger. This is the real threat to the West."[56]

As discussed at length in chapter 3, to relocate Palestine into the matrix of "world terrorism" Israel has treated post-9/11 Palestinian realities as a puppet show in which the Iranian regime was pulling the strings. The entire phenomenon of Hamas was said to be an Iranian creation, aimed exclusively at advancing Iran's objective of having the Jewish state "wiped off the map." It is therefore not at all surprising that when Olmert appeared on Israeli national television, on 17 January to announce his cabinet's decision to end the campaign, he devoted a good part of his speech to the truism that "Hamas . . . was established as a power base of Iran. . . . Pursuing regional hegemony, Iran has tried to replicate its methods of dealing with Hezbollah in the Gaza Strip."[57]

Even if the recent war on Gaza has proved that only poor quality, rudimentary weapons passed through the smuggling tunnels connecting the Gaza Strip to Egypt, the fact remains that Iran has provided moral and logistical

support for Hamas. Yet, as shown in this book, by invariably overstating the extent and volume of this support, Israel has, in fact, been able to induce a radical amnesia among the public as to the continuing apartheid regime in the Palestinian territories and the Palestinians' plight in general. Consequently, these and other pressing issues have been pushed to the margins. When asked in the wake of the ceasefire, "What [do] you think is the first most strategic threat to Israel," Avigdor Lieberman stated unequivocally:

> Iran, Iran, Iran. . . . If we were a normal state, we would stop quarreling about the Palestinian issue and the Golan Heights and focus on Iran. A day after a new government will be elected [referring to the upcoming elections in February 2009] it should tell the international community that from now on we will talk neither with the Syrians nor with the Palestinians. All of you can simply fuck off. As long as there's no solution to the Iranian problem we will not deal with the settlements or the settlers—in fact, we will not deal with anything. Only after we will have taken care of the source of the problem—Iran—it will become possible to talk about . . . the problem in Judea, Samaria, and the Golan Heights.[58]

It has been argued that "the 'war on terrorism' is itself a supreme act of terrorism, a . . . pseudonym for the U.S. imperial designs for the globe."[59] Whether or not we accept this insight (and I do accept it), Israel, as I've demonstrated in this book, has repeatedly taken advantage of Bush's anti-terrorist agenda with a view of facilitating and covering up its belligerent policies in the region. One should only hope that, with Barack Obama assuming the presidency of the United States, the Gaza attack will prove to be one of the last dying gasps of this agenda, allowing for a new, sanguine era of global politics to emerge.

NOTES

Introduction

1. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), xix.

2. Ronen Bergman, "The Demon Is Not So Terrible," *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 15 March 1996.

3. Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction, 2008), 83.

4. Dayan Center's Meir Litvak and Joshua Teitelbaum in a letter to *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 29 March 1996.

5. Ilan Pappé in a letter to *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 22 March 1996.

6. Dror Ze'evi in a letter to *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 22 March 1996.

7. Take, for example, Professor Eyal Zisser, chairperson of the Department of Middle Eastern and African History and director of the Dayan Center in Tel Aviv University. Zisser sees no problem with the fact that, in addition to these two university positions, he also holds "an important and sensitive position" in Israeli military intelligence; Idan Ring, "We Have with Us Our Commander . . . eh, Our Analyst," *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 5 March 2008.

8. David Menashri, "In the Wake of a Conversation with a Former Student," *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 22 March 1996.

9. Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (London: Hutchinson, 1976).

10. Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 (Autumn 1999): 7.

11. Cited in Benny Morris, "Camp David and After: An Interview with Ehud Barak," *The New York Review of Books*, 13 June 2002.

12. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 41.

13. Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy and Its Discontents: Minorities, Protests, and the Israeli Polity," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000): 725–756; Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

14. Ariel Hirschfeld, "An Identity Has Come to an End and Another One Begins" (in Hebrew), *Politika* 33 (1990): 49. See also Hanna Soker-Schwager's illuminating study of the works of Israeli novelist Yaakov Shabtai and their reception, *The Wizard of the Tribe from the Workers' Quarters: Yaakov Shabtai in Israeli Culture* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2007).

15. Dror Mishani, *The Ethnic Unconscious: The Emergence of "Mizrahiyut" in the Hebrew Literature of the Eighties* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), 15.

16. The collectivity referred to as "Mizrahim" did not exist prior to the establishment of the Jewish state. As Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin observes—in "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews,* ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 173—"Despite certain cultural and liturgical similarities among them, it remains a construct of the Ashkenazi elite who lumped all non-European Jews into a single group, at times called 'Edot Hamizrah,' or 'Jews from Asian and African lands,' and, most recently, 'Mizrahim' (making 'Israelis' synonymous with 'Ashkenazim')."

17. Baruch Kimmerling, *Immigrants, Settlers, Natives: The Israeli State and Society Between Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Wars* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 237–281.

18. Ibid., 197.

19. Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 195. See also Avi Ravitsky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14. The emergence of Shas Party in the 1980s, which blended *haredi* or "exilic" Judaism with Mizrahi politics of identity (thereby ushering in what became known as the "Mizrahi-Haredi Revolution"), perhaps posed the greatest threat to Israeli ethnocracy.

20. Cited in Ari Shavit, "Survival of the Fittest," *Ha'aretz,* 9 January 2004. Morris reiterated these views more recently in an interview with Nir Baram, "I See You Are Skeptic," *Ha'aretz Review of Books,* 7 February 2007.

21. Sami Shalom Chetrit, "Catch 17: Between Harediness and Mizrahiness," in *Shas: The Challenge to Israeliness* (in Hebrew), ed. Yoav Peled (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Ahronoth Books, 2001), 425 n1.

22. Sami Shalom Chetrit, *The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel: Between Oppression and Liberation, Identification and Alternative, 1948–2003* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004).

23. Ibid., 272.

24. Ibid., 20–41.

25. Ella Shohat, "Sephradim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19 (Fall 1988): 1–35.

26. Ironically, this endeavor to relocate Israel to the ("Judeo-Christian") West came at the very same time that European societies found themselves contending with acute ethnic and post-secular problems arising from "invading" immigrants from the once-colonized world. See, e.g., José Casanova, "The Long, Difficult, and Tortuous Journey of Turkey into Europe and the Dilemmas of European Civilization," *Constellations* 13, No. 2 (June 2006): 234–247.

27. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 45.

28. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Shalem Center, 2003).

29. It seems, therefore, that Nahari would not necessarily raise objections to historian Avi Shlaim's critical observation that, on the whole, "Zionism was conceived . . . not as the return of the Jews to their spiritual homeland but as an offshoot or implant of Western civilization in the East. This worldview was translated into a geostrategic conception in which Zionism was to be permanently allied with European colonialism against all the Arabs in the eastern Mediterranean"; Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001), 12.

30. Ian Lustick, "Leaving the Middle East: Israel and '*HaBotz HaMizrach-Tichoni*' ('The Middle Eastern Mud')," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Israel Studies, The Open University, Israel, June 11–13, 2007.

31. Naomi Klein, "Can Democracy Survive Bush's Embrace?" *The Nation,* 9 March 2005: http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050328/klein (accessed 13 April 2007).

32. Avraham Burg, *The Defeat of Hitler* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Ahronoth Books, 2007).

33. Ari Shavit, "Leaving the Zionist Ghetto," *Ha'aretz,* 7 June 2007: http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/868385.html (accessed 8 June 2007); italics are mine.

34. Both Khatami and Katsav are no longer in office, though the end of Katsav's term as president was marked by controversy. From 25 January 2007 until his resignation on 1 July 2007, Katsav was on a leave of absence amid impending charges of crimes stemming from his alleged rape of one female subordinate, a charge that was later dropped, as well as the sexual harassment of several others.

35. Through this seemingly anecdotal episode, the Israelis, to paraphrase Trinh T. Minh-ha, were bound to recognize that their culture was not as homogeneous, as monolithic as they believed it to be. They discovered, with much reluctance, that they are just others among others; Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 98–99.

36. Itamar Eichner and Zvi Zinger, "Katsav Disgraced Israel," *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 10 April 2005.

37. Ibid. The Katsav-Khatami encounter also caused a great deal of embarrassment to the Iranian government. Perhaps that explains why Khatami immediately took pains to deny that he had engaged in "any kind of conversation with any leader of the Zionist regime." See Uzi Benziman, "Katsav Hurries to Tell His Friends," *Ha'aretz,* 10 April 2005; and "Salam 'Alaykum, Mr. President," *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 10 April 2005.

38. Benny Ziffer, "The Voice of Thunder from Cairo," *Ha'aretz,* 7 December 2006.

39. Jonathan Cook, "Israel's Jewish Problem in Tehran," *The Electronic Intifada,* 6 August 2007, http://electronicintifada.net:80/v2/article7147.shtml (accessed 1 September 2007).

40. See "Benjamin Netanyahu's Educational Plan," as posted on his official Website: http://www.netanyahu.org.il/page3_help.asp?topic_id=107&topic2_id=185&page_id=421 (accessed 2 August 2007).

41. Bergman, "Demon Is Not So Terrible."

42. Martin Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion: The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran,* trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 8.

43. Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 1–37; Charles Lindholm, *The Islamic Middle East: An Historical Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 179.

44. See, e.g., Said Amir Arjomand, "Iran's Islamic Revolution in Comparative Perspective," *World Politics* 38 (April 1986): 383–414 ; Said Amir Arjomand, "The State and Khomeini's Islamic Order," *Iranian Studies* 13 (1980): 147–164; Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993); Shahin Gerami, "Religious Fundamentalism as a Response to Foreign Dependency: The Case of the Iranian Revolution," *Social Compass* 36 (1989): 451–467; Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State;* and Sami Zubaida, "Is Iran an Islamic State?" in *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report,* ed. Joel Benin and Joe Stork (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 103–119.

45. Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 213.

46. Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8.

47. See, e.g., Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

48. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exil et souveraineté: Judaïsme, sionisme et pensée binationale* (Paris: La Fabrique Editions, 2007), 131–158; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Between 'Brit Shalom' and the Temple: The Dialectics of Redemption and Messianism Following Gershon Scholem," in *Coloniality and the Postcolonial Condition: Implications for Israeli*

Society (in Hebrew), ed. Yehouda Shenhav (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004), 387–413.

49. Cited in Rose, *Question of Zion,* 42.

50. Rose, *Question of Zion,* 53–54, italics in the original. For more on the failure to affect a radical break between Zionism and Jewish messianism, or between religion and secularity in Zionism, see Ravitsky, *Messianism, Zionism;* Baruch Kimmerling, "Religion, Nationalism and Democracy in Israel," *Constellations* 6 (1999): 339–363; and Yossi Yonah and Yehuda Goodman (eds.), *In the Whirlpool of Identities* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004).

51. "God's Rule, or Man's? A Survey of Iran," *The Economist,* 18 January 2003.

52. Abrahamian, *Khomeinism.*

53. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution,* trans. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1995), vii.

54. Cited in Rose, *Question of Zion,* 36.

55. Ali Shari'ati, "Intizar: The Religion of Protest," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives,* ed. J. J. Donohue and J. L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 303. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr (eds.), *Expectation of the Millennium: Shi'ism in History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

56. Elsewhere I've discussed in length the transformation of Shiite messianic expectation in the decades leading to the 1979 revolution and afterwards. See, e.g., Haggai Ram, *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran: The Use of the Friday Congregational Sermon* (Washington, D.C.: American University Press, 1994), 159–194; and Haggai Ram, "The Islamic Republic of Iran: Steering a Way Between Nationalism and Islam," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8 (Summer 1996): 7–24.

57. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

58. See, e.g., Uzi Rabi, ed., *Iran Time* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2008). The essays included in the book were mostly contributed by researchers affiliated with Tel Aviv University's Center for Iranian Studies. In this instance, they offer illuminating insights into changing Iranian realities and Iranian regional policies in the wake of the second Lebanon war.

59. Zachary Lockman vividly shows—in *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 99–147—how the development of Middle East studies as an academic field in the United States after World War II was also closely connected to U.S. policy decision making in the Middle East.

60. See, e.g., *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 15 February, 2006.

61. "About the Center for Iranian Studies," Tel Aviv University Website, available at http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/iranian_studies/aboutus.eng.html (accessed 2 August 2007).

62. The petition read as follows: "[Mofaz's] attendance at the Conference as keynote

speaker . . . is a badge of shame for the University. . . . The new center, which is supposed to be dedicated to the study of Iranian culture and history . . . and serve as an intercultural mediator appears to be recruited to the ongoing propaganda campaign to rank Iran as the number one threat to the State of Israel . . . and to mark [that country] as the next target in the Middle East adventurism of the United States (and perhaps of Israel as well). Instead of examining this conception critically and responsibly, as an academic institution is required to do, one of its most blatant spokespersons has been invited to give the opening lecture at the conference. The attendance of [Mofaz] . . . raises concern that [Tel Aviv] University has now incorporated yet another organ whose goal it is to provide the government with services. . . . " I thank Professor Adi Offir for providing me with the text of the petition.

63. "Protest Against Mofaz at the Inauguration of a Center for Iranian Studies in Tel Aviv University," *Ha'aretz,* 25 April 2006.

64. "Tel Aviv University and an International Public Board Announce the Establishment of the INSS," Tel Aviv University Website, available at http://www2.tau.ac.il/news/hebnews.asp?month=6&year=2006 (accessed 2 August 2007).

65. Ibid., italics are mine.

66. *Ha'aretz,* 29 May 2006. The INSS Website states, "The Institute is non-partisan, independent, and autonomous in its fields of research and expressed opinions." Yet this claim to non-partisanship and academic autonomy is contradicted by the following statement, which also appears on the INSS Website: "Through its mixture of researchers with backgrounds in academia, the military, government, and public policy, INSS is able to contribute to the public debate and governmental deliberation of leading strategic issues and offer policy analysis and recommendations to decision makers and public leaders, policy analysts, and theoreticians, in Israel and abroad." One can only wonder how this state of affairs would be conducive to "encourag[ing] new ways of thinking and expand[ing] the traditional contours of establishment analysis," as the INSS Website further explains. See http://www.inss.org.il/about.php?cat=55&in=0 (accessed 3 March 2008).

67. Arik Bachar, "A Nuclear War Game," *Ma'ariv,* 17 February 2006. Or consider the following excerpt from *Ynet,* the Internet edition of *Yedi'ot Ahronoth:* "Moments before Ahmadinejad will have mounted the stage to speak out many thousands will crowd together in a wide open hall. They will shout 'Death to America! Death to Israel!' [Ahmadinejad] will not keep his audience in suspense for too long: 'My dear brothers, if America thinks it can talk to us in coercive language it has to know that we can answer her back with the very same coercive language. If Israel thinks it can attack us, let it be known that we will not be content with threats—we will carry them out. We pledged to wipe Israel off the map and now we can actually carry this out. My dear brothers, I'm happy to inform you that, with the aid of Allah the compassionate, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been successful in developing nuclear weapons to be used any time.' The crowd will become ecstatic and the Middle East will awaken to a new dawn"; Roi

Nachmias, "The Iranians Have a Bomb: What Will They Do?" *Ynet,* 1 April 2006: http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3246324,00.html (accessed 1 July 2007).

68. Benny Morris, "This Holocaust Will Be Different," *Jerusalem Post,* 19 January 2007.

69. Cited in Patrick Seale, "Pressures Mount on Bush to Bomb Iran," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (November 2006), 10–11. Seale's article is accessible at http://www.washington-report.org/archives/November_2006/0611010.html.

70. Cited in "Military Action Needed Against Iran, Israeli Think Tank Says," *Iran News,* 4 January 2007, http://www.iranian.ws/iran_news/publish/article_19978.shtml (accessed 14 January 2008).

71. Amotz Asa-El, "Middle Israel: The Middle Israel Intelligence Estimate," *Jerusalem Post,* 13 December 2007, http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1196847331654&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull (accessed 2 February 2008).

72. Aluf Benn and Shmuel Rosner, "The Next Year: Nuclear Crunch Time," *Ha'aretz,* 12 September 2007.

73. For the ways in which Israeli experts continue to reproduce dubious, uncritical, and highly outdated notions of Iran, take, e.g., Moshe (Bugi) Yalon, IDF Chief of Staff from 2002 to 2005 and currently a senior fellow at the (ultra-conservative) Shalem Center Institute for International and Middle East Studies in Jerusalem. As he claimed in a recent essay, "The wave of jihadist Islam did not start with the attacks on the U.S. in September 2001. The 1979 Iranian revolution was a historical turning point in which radical Islam began to gain power and self confidence. The Iranian model . . . was a source of inspiration for the rise of Al-Qaeda, for the fortification of the Muslim Brotherhood and for the rise of Hamas—all of which are different and oftentimes rival movements that share a conception of a revolutionized Muslim world"; Moshe Yalon, "We Must Confront Jihadist Islam," *Ynet,* 23 September 2007: http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340, L-3452399,00.html (accessed 23 September 2007). This assessment echoes the Huntingtonian notion of the "clash of civilizations," which argues, *inter alia,* that since the Iranian revolution a "quasi-war" had been in progress between "Islam" and "the West."

74. "Seventy One Percent of Israelis Are in Favor of a U.S. Strike on Iran," *Ha'aretz,* 18 May 2007.

75. Ehud Shprinzak, "Threat Shmreat," *Ha'aretz,* 29 September 1998.

76. See, e.g., John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

77. I will refer to this literature in the various chapters of this book.

78. David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978); Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-War American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Jenna L. St. Cyr, "The Folk Devil Reacts: Gangs and Moral Panic," *Criminal Justice Review* 28 (Spring 2003): 26–46.

79. Nicola Beisel and Tamara Kay, "Abortion, Race and Gender in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Sociological Review* 69 (2004): 498–518; and Erich Goode, *Drugs in American Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993).

80. The term *moral panic* was launched in 1972, when Stanley Cohen examined the (unwarranted) hysteria that followed in the wake of scuffles between, and minor offenses committed by, members of the "Mods" and the "Rockers," two British youth groups, at a seaside English town in 1964. See Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers,* 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002). Since Cohen popularized the term *moral panics,* there has been a surge of literature and research on the concept. As mentioned, topics range from witchcraft and satanic ritual abuse to illicit drugs and, more recently, gangs. In the main, the sociology of moral panic that developed in the 1970s and 1980s was inspired by the guiding assumptions of American (and Israeli) sociology of the same period. It particularly approximated what was then defined as the "sociology of deviance." The latter has been increasingly disappearing in recent years, partly because it sought to present a normative conception of deviance and partly because it assumed there was an organic entity called "society" whose contours are solid, are continuous, and bear accepted meanings. In recent years a number of revisionist works have challenged these lines of thinking. These works have incorporated the concept of moral panic into critical theories underscoring the roles of power and hegemony. The introduction of poststructural and postcolonial approaches in sociology since the 1990s has also enabled scholars to conceptualize a link between these latter categories and such concepts as class, race, gender and identity. On the whole, this revisionist literature offered a powerful critique of the eclecticism and teleology representing the sociology of moral panic, as well as of that sociology's overriding assumption that moral panics reflect an irrational reaction to social anxieties. Instead, scholars now defined moral panics as a discourse whose complex hegemonic ideologies and interests enable an articulation of the interconnection among power, political economy, class, and identity. See, e.g., Sean P. Hier, "Conceptualizing Moral Panic Through a Moral Economy of Harm," *Critical Sociology* 28 (2002): 311–334; and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,* 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001).

81. Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978), 57–59.

82. Erich Goode, "No Need to Panic? A Bumper Crop of Books on Moral Panics," *Sociological Forum* 15 (2000): 543.

83. Ibid., 546.

84. Hier, "Conceptualizing Moral Panic," 322.

85. Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, "Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction," *Annual Reviews of Sociology* 20 (1994): 150.

86. Edward Said, *Reflections of Exile* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 473.

87. Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17.

88. Borrowing from Robert Darnton's maxim on "newsmen," I will show that it would be absurd to suggest that the Israelis' fantasies about Iran were haunted by primitive myths of the sort imagined by Carl Jung and Claude Lévi-Strauss. However, their deeply held beliefs, stereotypes, and presumptions about the Jewish state's place in the world had a profound impact on the way they perceived the meanings of the course of events "there"; Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 87.

89. Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

90. Ibid., 160.

91. Robert Scheer, "Israel's Dependency on the Drug of Militarism," *The Nation,* 2 August 2006, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060814/israel_militarism (accessed 12 April 2008).

92. Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 3.

93. As Edward Said noted in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001, "Israel is now cynically exploiting the American catastrophe by intensifying its military occupation and oppression of the Palestinians"; Edward W. Said, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map: Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 109.

94. Chris Phillips, "The Real Threat to the Middle East," *International Affairs Journal at UC Davis,* 18 July 2006, http://davisiaj.com/content/view/234/95/ (accessed 27 October 2007).

95. There is, therefore, no small measure of truth in President Bush's allegation that "Iran is funding and training militia groups in Iraq, supporting Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon, and backing Hamas' efforts to undermine peace in the Holy Land. Tehran is also developing ballistic missiles of increasing range, and continues to develop its capability to enrich uranium, which could be used to create a nuclear weapon"; "President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address," *The White House,* 28 January 2008, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080128-13.html (accessed 2 April 2008).

96. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roaxen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

97. Shohat, "Invention of the Mizrahim," 7.

98. Raz-Krakotzkin, "Zionist Return to the West," 163.

99. As Mishani explains (in *Ethnic Unconscious,* 36): "[E]ven if Israeli society was never identical to those colonial societies about which Fanon and Said had written . . . colonial imagination, the meaning of whiteness and blackness specific to the cultural circumstances in Israel, takes on an active role in establishing the kinds of desire and anxiety of Israeli[s]. This imagination, which is the ethnic unconscious of Israeli society and culture, is forced on the 'black' and the 'white' but also on those who are neither 'black' nor 'white,' because it is embedded in the Hebrew language

by means of which [Israelis] understand themselves . . . and because it is tattooed on their—'gray'—Israeli body."

100. Benny Ziffer, "Satan Comes to New York," *Ha'aretz,* 28 September 2007.

101. Haggai Ram, "Who Is the Religious Fanatic?" *Ynet,* 26 September 2007, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3453601,00.html (accessed 26 September 2007).

Chapter 1

1. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

2. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extreme: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), 453. In his *Iran and the United States: A Cold War Case Study* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1988), 3, Richard Cottam describes the revolution as perhaps "the most popular revolution in the history of mankind."

3. Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.

4. Arif Dirlik, *Postmodernity's Histories: The Past as Legacy and Project* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 20.

5. Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 8. And as Mahmood Mamdani argues—in *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 3—"Since the French Revolution, violence has come to be seen as the midwife of history. The French Revolution gave us terror, and it gave us a citizens' army. The real secret behind Napoleon's spectacular battlefield successes was that his army was not made up of mercenaries but patriots, who killed for a cause, inspired by national sentiment—what we have come to recognize as the civic religion of nationalism."

6. See, e.g., Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 54.

7. Israel Erlich, "Riots in Mashad and the Jewish Account," *Hatsofeh,* 5 January 1979.

8. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Constance Farington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 152.

9. Dirlik, "Revolutions in History," 20.

10. Roger Owen, "Willed Ignorance, Misplaced Assumptions: Explaining U.S./U.K. Pre-Invasion Iraq Policy and Its Contradictory Consequences," paper presented at Workshop on Power, Rule and Governmentality in Zones of Emergency: The Israeli Occupation in Global Perspective, The Van Leer Institute of Jerusalem, Israel, 3–5 June 2007.

11. Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 4.

12. This observation is a restatement of Derek Gregory's formulation in *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 23.

13. Edward Said, "Traveling Theories," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 226.

14. Robin Kelley, "Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism," in Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism,* trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 17.

15. As various scholars who provided inspiring departures from Said's concept of Orientalism have shown, even the most seemingly Orientalist text can include within itself moments when Orientalist assumptions come up against alternative views that throw their authority into relief. Thus these "texts may in their play establish distance from the ideologies they seem to be reproducing"; Dennis Porter, "*Orientalism* and Its Problems," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader,* ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 160. This kind of *disjunction* also brings to mind Homi Bhabha's analysis of the "ambivalence" of colonial discourses, in "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

16. The Histadrut is the largest trade union in Israel and a mainstay of the Labor Zionist movement.

17. The "hostage crisis," as it soon became known, was resolved with the prisoners' release on 20 January 1981, that is, on the very day that Ronald Reagan was sworn into office as the fortieth president of the United States. On the hostage crisis and its broader implications, see Garry Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985); David Harris, *The Crisis: The President, the Prophet, and the Shah* (New York: Little, Brown, 2004); and David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

18. Ze'ev Schiff, "The Iranian Revolution in American Eyes," *Ha'aretz,* 13 March 1980.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Eventually, the mission was plundered and set on fire.

22. Even if Iran was never under direct colonial rule, it increasingly became, since the early nineteenth century, a victim to the rush for profit, looting, and enrichment that constituted the foundations of an imperial structure. On these issues, see Hamid Dabashi's searching analysis in *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York and London: The New Press, 2007), 32–66, 103–136; and Haggai Ram, *Reading Iran in Israel: Self and Other, Religion and Modernity* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2006), 59–66.

23. John Wideman, "Whose War? The Color of Terrorism," *Harper's Magazine,* March 2002. According to one Israeli commentator, Russian and British colonial interventions in Iran during the nineteenth century were, in fact, invited by "the Persians, who were willing to do [these foreign powers'] contemptuous work"; Erlich, "Riots in Mashad."

24. Yaakov Nimrodi, *A Life Journey* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2003), 491.

25. Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 224. On Foucault's

views on the revolution, see Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

26. Before returning to Iran in February 1979, and certainly before fatefully relocating from Iraq to France in October 1978, Khomeini was an anonymous and enigmatic figure for many an Israeli. Bereft of accurate and meaningful information about the old cleric, they sometimes identified him as "head of the rebels" (*rosh ha-mitmardim*) or "leader of the Shiites" (*rosh ha-shi'im*), and at other times simply as "Sheikh Khomeini." See, e.g., "Rescuing Iranian Jewry," *Hatsofeh,* 10 December 1978; "A Rescuing Mission," *Hatsofeh,* 2 January 1979.

27. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), xix.

28. Cited in Yossef Michalski, "The Shah: Still Without Replacement," *Davar,* 10 October 1978.

29. "The Mawalis Provide Justification for the Shah's Rule," *Davar,* 13 September 1978.

30. "Re-Islamization of Iran," *Davar,* 29 August 1978.

31. "Riots in Iran Thwart Democratization," *Davar,* 10 September 1978.

32. Ibid.

33. Eliyahu Salpeter, "This Is How the Shah Regime Was Undermined," *Ha'aretz,* 10 November 1978.

34. "The Shah: Farewell to the Throne," *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 17 January 1979. See also Michael Asaf (in "The Shah Is Going Away, Never to Return," *Davar,* 15 January 1979), who describes how "The last monarchy in Western Asia was terminated."

35. Daniel Bloch, "Lessons from Khomeini's Revolution," *Davar,* 16 Feburary 1979.

36. "The Black and the Red in Iran," *Davar,* 14 August 1978.

37. On 8 September 1978, in Tehran's Jaleh Square, a massacre took place that would become known in Iran's historical memory as the "Black Friday massacre." Many demonstrators who were unaware of martial law regulations announced by the regime on the previous evening were shot dead by the Shah's forces; after the revolution the Square's name was changed to "Martyrs Square" (*Meydan-e Shahidan*).

38. "Mawalis Provide Justification."

39. Pandey, *Remembering Partition,* 61–62.

40. "The Events in Iran and Their Lessons," *Hatsofeh,* 23 February 1979.

41. "Iran: How to Put Out the Fire," *Ha'aretz,* 10 January 1979. Italics are mine.

42. Shmuel Segev, "Iran Is Prepared for a Power Struggle Between Bakhtiyar and Khomeini," *Ma'ariv,* 17 January 1979.

43. Chakrabarty discusses imperialist and nationalist imaginations of Indian modernity, in which "the 'Indian' was always a figure of lack"; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–46.

44. Hanoch Bartov, "Humanism and Khomeinism," *Ma'ariv,* 16 February 1979.

45. Pandey, *Remembering Partition,* 47.

46. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 45.

47. Bartov, "Humanism and Khomeinism."

48. For an illuminating analysis of such Western "myths of self-sufficiency" see Gregory, *Colonial Present,* 17–29.

49. Bartov, "Humanism and Khomeinism." A similar reading of the revolution as an "absence," as a product of a "grievously incomplete" modernist project, is found in the musings of Michael Harsagor, a professor of European history at Tel Aviv University, whose regular appearance on a popular radio show devoted to history (European in most cases) has won him the admiration of many laypersons. See Michael Harsagor, "Israel, Beware of the Ayatollah," *Davar,* 12 January 1979.

50. Cited in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), 577–588. Such purported circumstances of "lack" in Indian society served, in Marx's eyes, to justify "saving" India from itself through British colonial tutelage.

51. I owe this last formulation to Ervand Abrahamian, "Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (1974): 7–8.

52. "Iran: How to Put Out the Fire?"

53. Ibid.

54. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 40.

55. Shmuel Segev, "Iran: Toward a Showdown Between Bakhtiyar and Khomeini," *Ma'ariv,* 17 January 1979.

56. Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts,* trans. by Todd Samuel Presner and others (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 165.

57. Ibid. For similar formulations of the experience of modernity, see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 10.

58. "The Test in Tehran," *Ma'ariv,* 1 February 1979. See also Ginai Harel, "Is It Possible to Stop the Waves of Hatred and Fanaticism Threatening Our Region?" *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 26 January 1979; Yaacov Caroz, "Khomeini's 'New Order,'" *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 9 February 1979. "Return to the Middle Ages" was also the theme of a cartoon published in the daily *Davar* on 2 January 1979.

59. Hence, rather than contemplating the possibility that the Shah regime had been unjust, or that the revolution and hostage taking were intimately linked to Iran's bitter experiences with colonial modernity, in the United States " 'Islam' was quickly offered as the explanation for the Iranians' 'irrational' actions"; Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "The International Politics of Secularism: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 127. And as Melani McAlister similarly contends—in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 211—" 'Militant Islam' quickly became the primary

narrative device for the U.S. news media; long essays and editorials in many major publications explained 'Islam' as a single, unchanging cultural proclivity to mix faith with politics, and to express both through violence." The most exhaustive study of U.S. imageries of the revolution and the hostage crisis is by far Edward Said's *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

60. Gregory, *Colonial Present,* 78. See also McAlister, *Epic Encounters,* 198–234.

61. Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 352.

62. Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

63. Ibid., 160.

64. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork advance the same thesis, albeit in a more partial manner. See their "On the Modernity, Historical Specificity, and International Context of Political Islam," in *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report,* ed. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 16–19.

65. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 167.

66. Eliyahu Hen Zion, "Egypt's Positions and the Upheaval in Iran," *Hatsofeh,* 26 January 1979.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Yaakov Edelstein, "Negotiations in Light of the Iranian Crisis," *Hatsofeh,* 24 January 1979. For similar views, see "The Camp David Summit Has Ended," *Davar,* 17 September 1978; Yitzhak Shomron, "The Events in Iran and the Withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula," *Hatsofeh,* 10 November 1978; "The Second Stage in Iran," *Hatsofeh,* 29 January 1979.

70. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 104–105.

71. Mansour Farhang contends—in "The Iran-Israel Connection," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1989): 88—that "Israeli arms shipments to Khomeini's Iran have proven to be more lucrative than the prerevolutionary sales to the shah." For a version of the Iran-Contra controversy through the eyes of one of its Israeli architects, see Yaakov Nimrodi, *The Hope and the Failure: The Irangate Affair* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2004).

72. Arel Ginai, "Where Will Khomeini's Islamic Revolution Lead To?" *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 16 February 1979; Aryeh Heshbaya, "Crazy States," *Ha'aretz,* 4 July 1980.

73. Cited in ibid.

74. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 104.

75. Donna Killingbeck, "The Role of Television News in the Construction of School Violence as a 'Moral Panic,'" *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 8 (2001): 186–188; and Sean P. Hier, "Conceptualizing Moral Panic Through a Moral Economy of Harm," *Critical Sociology* 28 (2002): 322.

76. Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47. Daniel Goffman makes the same observation in *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 28.

77. For an illuminating critique of the relationship between Zionism and Orientalism, see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exil et souveraineté: Judaïsme, sionisme et pensée binationale* (Paris: La Fabrique Editions, 2007).

78. Thus an Israeli expert on Iran suggests, "Unlike the blueprints for a model society drawn by Western thinkers (from Plato through Rousseau to our days), which have always been future-oriented utopist visions, exemplary society in Islam was a tangible reality in the distant past, backed by a rigid doctrine and well-defined patterns"; David Menashri, *Iran: Between Islam and the West* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publications, 1996), 148.

79. David Menashri, *Iran After Khomeini: Revolutionary Ideology vs. National Interests* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, 1999), 12. See also David Menashri, *Iran in Revolution* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988), 130.

80. Menashri, *Iran in Revolution,* 129.

81. Ibid., 150; Hava Lazarus-Jaffe cited in Amos Ben Vered, "Democracy and Totalitarianism in Islam and Judaism," *Ha'aretz,* 15 July 1982.

82. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 278.

83. Ibid., 279, italics in the original.

84. Menashri, *Iran in Revolution,* 64. Italics in the original.

85. Ibid.

86. See, e.g., Menashri, *Iran: Between Islam and the West,* 40–44.

87. Menashri, *Iran in Revolution,* 41. See also David Menashri, "The Islamic Revolution in Iran: The Shiite Dimension," in *Protest and Revolution in Shiite Islam* (in Hebrew), ed. Martin Kramer (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1986), 31–59.

88. Menashri, *Iran in Revolution,* 13, 50.

89. Menashri, *Iran: Between Islam and the West,* 139.

90. Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1990), 1.

91. Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, *The Sphinx: Ahmadinehad and the Key for the Iranian Bomb* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2007).

92. Ania Loomba et al., "Beyond What? An Introduction," in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond,* ed. Ania Loomba et al. (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 12.

93. The authors also ascribe Ahmadinejad's surprising victory at the 2005 presidential elections to extensive popular grievances against the injustices, corruption, and failures of the regime since 1979—and not to a putative atavistic religious essence in Iranian society.

94. Said, *Orientalism,* 58. Gil Eyal, in his critical study of the relations between military intelligence and "Oriental studies" in Israel, has likewise observed that the concept of pragmatism as employed by Middle East analysts "has no meaning unless it is posited against an original text[. . .]. 'Pragmatism' is an empty interpretative category, whose entire value is determined by its function, namely, the containment and elucidation of 'deviations.' It does not undermine the status of the original text, because this text is still held as the standard against which [all] current expressions are to be assessed"; Gil Eyal, "Dangerous Liaisons: The Relations Between Military Intelligence and Oriental Studies in Israel" (in Hebrew), *Teoria u-Vikoret* 20 (Spring 2002): 158–159.

95. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 2.

96. Haggai Ram, "The Immemorial Iranian Nation? School-Textbooks and Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (2000): 67–90; Haggai Ram, "Post-1979 Iranian National Culture: A Reconsideration," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte* 30 (2002): 223–253; and Haggai Ram, "Multiple Iconographies: Political Posters in the Iranian Revolution," in *Picturing Iran: Art, Society, and Revolution,* ed. Shiva Balaghi and Lynn Gumpert (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 89–101.

97. Administration; government; religion; philosophy; commerce; crafts; literature; language; drugs; medicine; luxuries; music; and even the games of polo, chess, and backgammon—Iran's clerical regime considered all of these things to be Iranian—that is, "Aryan"—contributions to the irredeemably immobile Semitic Arab Muslims (and to humankind in general).

98. Emmanuel Sivan cited in Amir Oren, "The Escalation of Islam," *Davar Weekly Supplement,* 9 February 1979.

99. A summary of views expressed in a colloquium held by the Shiloah Institute (later renamed the Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African History) on Islam and the Israeli-Egyptian peace accords; *Davar,* 23 March 1979.

100. A typical binary conception of this kind is provided by David Menashri: "By all accounts, Khomeini's worldview presented a mirror image to the Shah's creed. Thus the attachment to the legacy of Cyrus the Great—which typified the Shah's vision of history and politics—gave way to a return to the traditions of Imam 'Ali. While the Shah sought to generate affection and loyalty to Iran's pre-Islamic heritage and to the monarchy, the Islamic Republic has based its policies on strict adherence to Islamic culture and values. . . . Also, in clear contradiction to the Shah's stress on Iranian nationalism, Khomeini's theory ignored the existence of political boundaries within the Muslim community (*ummah*) of believers"; David Menashri, "The Pahlavi Monarchy and the Islamic Revolution," in *Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews,* ed. Houman Sarshar (Beverly Hills, Calif.: The Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2002), 381. As the same writer argues elsewhere: "In its search of ways for contending with the challenge of modernity in the last two centuries Iran has tilted between two contradictory poles: [from] an enthusiastic emulation of the West [under the old regime] to a total rejection of it [under

the Islamic republic] . . . from an aspiration to formulate Iranian policy on . . . territorial nationalism, to an Islamic doctrine . . . from the legacy of King Cyrus to the tradition of Imam Ali. . . . While the old regime made a determined drive for westernization, the Islamic republic views Western influence as a major threat"; David Menashri, "Attitudes Toward the West as Reflected in the Factions Struggle in Iran," in *In the Wake of September 11: Islam and the West—Clash or Co-Existence* (in Hebrew), ed. Esther Webman (Tel Aviv: Dayan Center for Middle East and African Studies, 2002), 49.

101. Sam Kaplan, "Documenting History, Historicizing Documentation: French Military Officials' Ethnological Reports on Cilicia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002): 346.

102. Michael Asaf, "The Main Dimension in the Iran-Iraq War," *Davar,* 16 October 1980.

103. Ze'ev Schiff, "An Israeli Angle in the Gulf War," *Ha'aretz,* 9 April 1982.

104. Uri Lubrani as cited in Eliyahu Salpeter, "Israel and the Gulf War," *Ha'aretz,* 21 May 1985.

105. David Menashri, "Khomeini's Vision: Nationalism or World Order," in *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World,* ed. David Menashri (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 47; italics are mine.

106. David Menashri, "Revolutionary Politics in Iran," in *Religion and Nationalism in Israel and the Middle East* (in Hebrew), ed. Nerri Hurwitz (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002), 98.

107. Ibid., 53. See also David Menashri, *Iran After Khomeini,* 69; and Menashri, "Attitudes Toward the West," 49.

108. Uri Lubrani, "Khomeini," *Davar,* 25 January 1980.

109. Dov Appel, "Elqaniyan's Execution: A Demonstration of Support for Israel Haters," *Davar,* 13 May 1979.

110. Cited in Amir Oren, "The Escalation of Islam," *Davar Weekly Supplement,* 9 February 1979.

111. "Iran Disintegrates," *Ha'aretz,* 15 July 1979.

112. Ibid.

113. *Davar,* 19 August 1979.

114. *Ha'aretz,* 17 August 1979.

115. *Ha'aretz,* 19 August 1979.

116. Nimrodi, *A Life Journey,* 524.

117. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 106.

Chapter 2

1. An earlier version of this chapter was published as "To Banish the 'Levantine Dunghill' from Within: Toward a Cultural Understanding of Anti-Israeli Phobias," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008): 249–268.

2. Merav Yudilovitch and Associated Press, "Israeli Entry for Eurovision Could Be

Banned," *Ynet News.com,* 1 March 2007, http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-3371543,00.html (accessed 2 March 2007). The song was eliminated alongside those of seventeen other countries in the Eurovision competition's semifinals in Helsinki in May 2007.

3. Lital Rosenstein and Dalya Mazori, "They Lost Their Marbles," NRG, 9 March 2007, http://www.nrg.co.il/online/12/ART1/554/252.html (accessed 5 October 2008); and *Ha'aretz,* 9 March 2007.

4. See, e.g., Yossi Yonah, "Before We Bomb Iran," *Ynet,* 15 September 2006, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-3304187,00.html (accessed 15 September 2006); Baruch Kimmerling, "Thus Spoke Bernard Lewis," *Ha'aretz,* 25 September 2006; and Dror Ze'evi, "Iran Motivated by Fear," *Ynet News,* 21 January 2007, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3354983,00.html (accessed 21 January 2007).

5. Benny Morris, "This Holocaust Will Be Different," *Jerusalem Post,* 19 January 2007. The same thesis, more or less, is presented in two highly popular books on the Iranian threat penned by leading Israeli media experts on espionage and international terrorism. See Ronen Bergman, *Point of No Return: Israeli Intelligence Against Iran and Hizballah* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Kineret, Zmora Bitan, Dvir Publishing House, 2007); and Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, *The Sphinx: Ahmadinejad and the Key for the Iranian Bomb* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2007). The latter book was discussed in Chapter 1. An English edition of Bergman's book was recently published as *The Secret War with Iran: Israel and the West's 30-Year Clandestine Struggle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).

6. Significantly, the same poll also found that 59 percent of Israelis still believe the war in Iraq was justified, whereas only 36 percent take the opposite view; *Ha'aretz,* 18 May 2007.

7. As Trita Parsi maintains—in *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 178—"Iran was no longer a distant and potential foe [of Israelis]. Through Hezbollah, Iran was a border state. And through the Palestinian groups, Iran was now inside of Israel or at least inside Israeli-occupied territory."

8. Toby Greene, "Fearing Iran," *Guardian,* 26 January, 2007, http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/toby_greene/2007/01/post_993.html (accessed 27 January 2007).

9. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 4.

10. Talal Asad, "Two European Images of Non-European Rule," in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter,* ed. Talal Asad (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1973), 117.

11. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 175.

12. Paul Gilroy, "The End of Antiracism," in *"Race," Culture and Difference,* ed. James Donald and Ali Rattansi (London: Sage, 1992), 53.

13. R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 148.

14. David Menashri, "Preface," in Eliezer (Geizi) Tsafrir, *Big Satan, Small Satan: Revolution and Escape in Iran* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2002), 9.

15. Ibid. On Israeli-Iranian relations during the Shah regime, see Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance;* Sohrab Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente: Israeli-Iranian Relations, 1948–1988* (New York: Praeger, 1989); and Marvin Weinbaum, "Iran and Israel: The Discreet Entente," *Orbis* 18 (Winter 1975): 1070–1087.

16. On Israeli perceptions of and relations with Iranian Jewry see Chapter 4; and Haggai Ram, "Between Homeland and Exile: Iranian Jewry in Zionist/Israeli Political Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35 (April 2008): 1–20.

17. Yet it is agreed that the Israeli-Iranian connection has its origins in 1949, when Israel received the Shah's tacit agreement to use Iran as a transit point for illegal immigration of Iraqi Jews, in effect helping to tip the demographic balance in Palestine in the Jews' favor.

18. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 25–26; Sobhani, *Pragmatic Entente,* 26–30; Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection: Who Israel Arms and Why* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 9.

19. Mansour Farhang, "The Iran-Israel Connection," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1989): 87.

20. For example, Israeli trade with Iran, estimated at $33 million in 1973–1974, rose sharply to $250 million on the eve of the revolution in 1977–1978. These data are provided in Amnon Netzer, "The Jews of Iran, Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran" (in Hebrew), *Gesher* 100 (1980): 51. Iran reciprocated by serving as one of the very few countries willing to defy the Arab oil boycott by publicly selling oil to the Israelis.

21. Elazar Levin, "Israel and Iran: Exiting Through the Back Entrance," *Davar,* 16 March 1979; see also "Iran and Israel: The End of a Chapter," *Davar,* 20 February 1979.

22. Tsafrir, *Big Satan,* 12.

23. Edward Said used this quotation from Disraeli as an epigram for his book *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), xiii.

24. Haggai Ram, *Reading Iran in Israel: Self and Other, Religion and Modernity* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2006), 29–41.

25. Thus Ehud Yaari, a veteran Israeli commentator on Arab Affairs, noted, "I miss Iran. A lot," thereby revealing his nostalgic yearning for the "good old days" in the Shah's realm; cited in Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 13.

26. An anonymous Israeli expert on Iran explained, "When we classify our enemies, Arabs are the hard heads who would operate along exactly the same guidelines forever and ever, because they're Arabs. They are narrow-minded. Unsophisticated. Iranians are something that is much harder to characterize for Israelis because they are so much like us"; cited in Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 12.

27. Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive: A Critique of Civilization* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1974), 204.

28. "The Ostjuden, perennially marginalized by Europe, realized their desire of becoming Europe, ironically, in the Middle East, this time on the back of their own 'Ostjuden', the Eastern Jews. Having passed through their own 'ordeal of civility,' as the 'blacks' of Europe, they now imposed their civilizing tests on their own 'blacks'"; Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19 (Fall 1988): 23. On this issue see also Aziza Khazzoom, "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 68 (August 2003): 481–510; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006); Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 271–312; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exil et souveraineté: Judaïsme, sionisme et pensée binationale,* préface de Carlo Ginzburg (Paris: La Fabrique Editions, 2007), 26–87; and Michael Selzer, *The Aryanization of the Jewish State* (New York: Black Star Publishing, 1967).

29. Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Paragon House, 1993); Haggai Ram, "The Immemorial Iranian Nation? School-Textbooks and Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (2000): 67–90.

30. As Hamid Dabashi has critically observed, "The generation of Reza Shah [1921–1941] believed that nonsense [of 'the Aryan race'], completely bought into it, and taught and thought itself into believing that we were really European in our origin but by some unfortunate geographical accident had ended up among Arabs and Semites"; Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York and London: The New Press, 2007), 151.

31. Ram, "Immemorial Iranian Nation"; Haggai Ram, "Post-1979 Iranian National Culture: A Reconsideration," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte* 30 (2002): 223–253.

32. Thus the Shah asserted in the early 1960s, "Certainly no one can doubt that our culture is more akin to that of the West than is either the Chinese or that of our neighbors the Arabs. Iran was an early home of the Aryans from whom most Americans and Europeans are descended, and we are racially quite separate from the Semitic stock of the Arabs. Our language belongs to the Indo-European family which includes English, French, German and other major Western tongues"; Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, *Mission for My Country* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), 18.

33. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 4–5.

34. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); Uri Ram, "In Those Days and in Our Time: Zionist History and the Invention of the Jewish National Narrative; Ben-Zion Dinur and His Generation" (in Hebrew), in *Zionism:*

Contemporary Controversy, ed. Pinhas Ginossar and Avi Bareli (Beersheba: Publishing House of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 1996); Shlomo Sand, *When and How the Jewish People Was Invented* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2008), 103–109; and Raz-Krakotzkin, *Exil et souveraineté,* 70–89.

35. Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation;* Ram, "Immemorial Iranian Nation." See also Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, "Cultures of Iranianness: The Evolving Polemic of Iranian Nationalism, in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Ruddi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 162–181.

36. For an instructive discussion of the universalization of Eurocentric approaches to history, see Arif Dirlik, *Postmodernity's Histories: The Past as Legacy and Project* (Lenham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 63–89; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 27–46.

37. Ania Loomba et al., "Beyond What? An Introduction," in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond,* ed. Ania Loomba et al. (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

38. On the Zionist-Israeli drive to implant the West in the East, see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews,* ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 162–181.

39. On this point I disagree with Parsi's conviction (which he puts forth in *Treacherous Alliance,* 29), that "the balance of power—and not the non-Arab makeup of the two countries—paved the way for the Iranian-Israeli entente."

40. Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001), 186–217; and Uri Bialer, "The Iranian Connection in Israel's Foreign Policy, 1948–1951," *Middle East Journal* 39 (Spring 1985): 292–315.

41. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall,* 195.

42. Cited in Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 22.

43. On the "early Zionist imagination" of the Maronites, see Laura Zittrain Eisenberg, *My Enemy's Enemy: Lebanon in the Early Zionist Imagination* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994). Critiquing modern Orientalist thought, and specifically that of H.A.R. Gibb, Said notes (in *Orientalism,* 278) that "there is a note of grim prophecy in Gibb's singling out the Zionists and the Maronite Christians, alone amongst ethnic communities in the Islamic world, for their inability to accept coexistence."

44. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 53.

45. Said, *Orientalism,* 54.

46. Haim Sadok, *The Jews in Iran During the Shah Pahlavi Era* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Meitsag, 1991), 15. The Iranians returned the favor, as it were. Even Jalal al-Ahmad,

who is recognized as one of the pioneers of the Islamic revolutionary ideology, initially entertained romantic views of Israel as Euro-America. As Eldad Pardo argues, "It is quite surprising that despite various reservations based on Islamic solidarity with the Arabs, Leftist Iranian intellectuals [such as Al-Ahmad] saw Israel as an important political model"; Eldad Pardo, "Israel as an Example in the Eyes of the Iranian Left in the 1960s" (in Hebrew), *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael* 14 (2004): 2.

47. Uri Lubrani, "The Iranian Shah: Not a Eulogy, Not a Lamentation," *Davar,* 1 August 1980.

48. Yehoshafat Harkabi, "Meeting the Shah," *Davar,* 8 August 1980.

49. David Scott, "Appendix: The Trouble of Thinking: An Interview with Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,* ed. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 258.

50. Meir Ezri, *"Anyone of His People Among You": Mission in Iran* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Hed Arzi, 2001).

51. Ibid., 59.

52. Tsafrir, *Big Satan.*

53. Yaakov Nimrodi, *A Life Journey* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2003).

54. This economic basis enabled Nimrodi, upon his return to Israel in 1979, to make his way into the country's political and economic elites and to obtain ownership of *Ma'ariv,* one of the country's foremost daily newspapers.

55. Ronen Bergman reveals (in *Point of No Return,* 28) that during the 1970s both Ezri and Nimrodi had "very intimate contacts with the majority of the Shah's senior military and civilian personnel," and that after completing their official tasks in Iran they "became exceedingly rich owing to private business they had done there." Bergman also notes that the Shah "offered Ezri a ministerial position in his government." Initially, he adds, Ezri's memoir described in much detail "how deeply the state of Israel meddled in Iran's internal affairs." Terrified of the possible repercussions, however, a ministerial committee ordered the removal of most of the book's embarrassing revelations.

56. Homi K. Bhabha, "Preface," in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), xi.

57. Ezri, *Anyone of His People,* 66.

58. On the contrary, according to a former Iranian ambassador, the Mossad trained the SAVAK in torture and investigative techniques; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 26.

59. Ezri, *Anyone of His People,* 62–65.

60. See also Haim Sadok's rationalization of the Shah's autocratic rule in *The Jews in Iran,* 50–54.

61. Fredrick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 26

62. "Iran: How to Put Out the Fire," *Ha'aretz,* 10 January 1979.

63. "In the Wake of the Shah's Death," *Davar,* 28 July 1980.

64. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roaxen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

65. Tsafrir, *Big Satan,* 37–38.

66. Paul Gilroy, "'Where Ignorant Armies Clash by Night': Homogeneous Community and the Planetary Aspect," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6 (2003): 263.

67. Nimrodi, *Life Journey,* 473.

68. Ibid., 472.

69. Ibid.

70. Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity,* 35.

71. Meir Litvak, "Iran and Israel: The Ideological Enmity and Its Sources" (in Hebrew), *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael* 14 (2004): 368. See also David Menashri, who is satisfied to note in passing that "part of [Iran's] hostility to Israel [should be viewed as] a reaction to the close ties between Israel and the Shah regime"; David Menashri, *Iran After Khomeini: Revolutionary Ideology vs. National Interests* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, 1999), 101.

72. Eldad J. Pardo, "Race and the Nuclear Race: Anti-Semitism in Iran," *Geo-Political Strategy* 1 (2007): 69.

73. Ibid., 77, italics are mine. The same writer expresses similar views in "The Age of Wonder and the Age of the Plumber: Iran and Israel in Global Perspective," in *Israel, the Middle East and Islam: Weighing the Risks and Prospects,* ed. Oded Eran and Amnon Cohen (Jerusalem: The Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), 51–74; "Iran and the Aspiration to World Hegemony" (in Hebrew), *Academia* 17 (Winter 2007): 25–33.

74. Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 21.

75. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth,* 163.

76. Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse,* 17.

77. "When you define someone as your worst enemy, you say a lot about yourself," noted an Israeli expert, thus expressing the perceived, distressing affinity between Israelis and Iranians that hides beneath their intense enmity; cited in Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 5.

78. Rebecca L. Stein, "The Ballad of the Sad Café: Israeli Leisure, Palestinian Terror, and the Post/Colonial Question," in Loomba et al., *Postcolonial Studies,* 326–327.

79. Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy and Its Discontents: Minorities, Protests, and the Israeli Polity," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000): 725–756.

80. Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 (Autumn 1999): 7.

81. Shenhav, *The Arab Jews,* 195.

82. "Khomeini's Zealots in Kiryat Arba Beat Up and Kicked IDF Soldiers," *Ha'aretz,* 3 January 1979.

83. Michael Harsegor, "Israel, Beware of the Ayatollah," *Davar,* 12 January 1979.

84. Ibid.

85. Gabi Shefer, "Violence and Politics," *Ha'aretz,* 8 May 1981.

86. Dror Mishani, *The Ethnic Unconscious: The Emergence of "Mizrahiut" in the Hebrew Literature of the Eighties* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), 12.

87. Cited in ibid., 12–13.

88. Amnon Dankner, "I Didn't Want to Write an Article, I Just Wanted to Return Home in One Piece," *Ha'aretz,* 19 June 1981.

89. A. Shvitzer, "To State Clearly," *Ha'aretz,* 15 May 1981; and Yoel Marcus, "The Man Who Lost His Political Mind," *Ha'aretz,* 15 May 1981.

90. Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

91. "Peres: Begin Is a 'Sycophant' and a 'Babbler,'" *Ha'aretz,* 15 June 1981.

92. "A Mob of Likud Supporters Goes Wild at a Rally with Peres," *Ha'aretz,* 15 June 1981.

93. The party won just four seats (out of 120) when it debuted in the 1984 elections, but in 1999 it won seventeen seats and became the third largest Knesset faction. In the election of 2003, Shas gained eleven seats; and in the 2006 election it gained twelve seats.

94. Raz-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West," 177. And the late Sarah Khinski adds, "[I]t has been proven that one of the most effective strategies for resisting Western hegemony and empowering Mizrahi groups [in Israel] is the revival of Jewish-Arab diasporic traditions . . . as markers of an ethnic difference which is not subject to any abstraction (the phenomenon of Shas is a case in point)"; Sara Khinski, "'Eyes Widely Shut': On the Acquired Albinism Syndrome in the Field of Israeli Art," in *Coloniality and the Postcolonial Condition: Implications for Israeli Society* (in Hebrew), ed. Yehouda Shenhav (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004), 262. For different perspectives of the Shas phenomenon, see Yoav Peled, ed., *Shas: The Challenge to Israeliness* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Ahronoth, 2001); Aviezer Ravitski, ed., *Shas: Cultural and Ideological Perspectives* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006); and David Lehmann and Batia Siebzehner, *Remaking Israeli Judaism: The Challenge of Shas* (London: Hurst, 2006).

95. Ran Kislev, "Shas Nevertheless," *Ha'aretz,* 25 May 1999.

96. Ran Kislev, "On the Way Towards a State of the Ayatollahs," *Ha'aretz,* 24 June 1998. See also Yoel Marcus, "When We Will Have Become Iran, Call Us Again," *Ha'aretz,* 18 August 2000; Aryeh Caspi, "He Who Calls Darkness Light," *Ha'aretz,* 17 March 2000 (who claims in relation to Shas that "the ayatollahs of Iran would have felt right at home [in Israel]"); and Daniel Polisar, "Is Iran the Only Model for a Jewish State?" *Azure* 7 (Spring 1999): http://www.azure.org.il/article.php?id=308 (accessed 3 January 2006).

97. Cited in Daniel Ben-Simon, "Secular Fundamentalism in Ramat Hasharon," *Ha'aretz,* 28 May 1999.

98. Sami Shalom Chetrit, "Catch 17: Between Harediness and Mizrahiness," in *Shas:*

The Challenge to Israeliness (in Hebrew), ed. Yoav Peled (Tel Aviv: Yedi'oth Ahronoth Books, 2001), 425 n1.

99. Sami Shalom Chetrit, *The Mizrahi Struggle in Israel: Between Oppression and Liberation, Identification and Alternative, 1948–2003* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 7.

100. Ibid., 252–253.

101. Chetrit, "Catch 17," 35.

102. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 199.

103. Elie Kamir, "Yaakov Kedmi: On 6 February We Shall Either Vote for a Democratic State or for a Fundamentalist State," *Ma'ariv,* 5 January 2001.

104. See, e.g., Dimitry Shumski, "Post-Zionism Orientalism? Orientalist Discourse and Islamophobia Among the Russian-Speaking Intelligentsia in Israel," *Social Identities* 10 (2004): 83–99.

105. Kamir, "Yaakov Kedmi."

106. Trita Parsi, "Under the Veil of Ideology: The Israeli-Iranian Strategic Rivalry," *Middle East Report Online,* 9 June 2006: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero060906.html (accessed 7 July 2007). Parsi expands on this argument in his book *Treacherous Alliance.*

107. Asad, *Formations of the Secular,* 12–13.

108. Ibid., 13. Italics in the original. In *Provincializing Europe,* 27–28, Chakrabarty offers a similar formulation of this issue: "Liberal-minded scholars would immediately protest that any idea of a homogeneous, uncontested 'Europe' dissolves under analysis. True, but just as the phenomenon of Orientalism does not disappear simply because some of us have now attained a critical awareness of it, similarly a certain version of 'Europe,' reified and celebrated in the phenomenal world of everyday relationships of power as the scene of the birth of the modern, continues to dominate the discourse of history. Analysis does not make it go away."

109. Asad, *Formations of the Secular,* 13, italics in the original.

110. Brian Klug, "The State of Zionism," *The Nation,* 18 June 2007.

111. Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy," 727. As Ella Shohat suggests (in "Invention of the Mizrahim," 7), "The fact that the 'Orientals' have had closer cultural and historical links to the presumed enemy—the 'Arab'—than to the Ashkenazi Jews . . . threatens the conception of a homogeneous nation akin to those on which European nationalist movements were based, while it also threatens the Euro-Israeli self-image, which sees itself as an extension of Europe."

112. Cited in Ari Shavit, "Proud White Bourgeois," *Ha'aretz,* 20 December 2002.

113. On the racist ideas of Shinui Party and its leader Lapid, see Haggai Ram and Yaakov Yadgar, "'A Jew Is Allowed to Be Anti-Semitic Too': 'Neo-Racism' and 'Old Racism'—the Case of Shinui Party," in *Racism in Israel* (in Hebrew), ed. Yehouda Shenhav and Yossi Yona (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2008).

114. Ari Shavit, "A Spirit of Absolute Folly," *Ha'aretz,* 11 August 2006.

115. Ibid. Indeed, as Klug argues (in "State of Zionism"), "Tragically, the same line has led from the walled ghettos of Europe to the West Bank barrier, separating Jews from the surrounding Arab population."

116. Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 25.

117. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* xii.

118. See, e.g., Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 198–234; Hamid Nafici, "Mediating the Other: American Pop Culture Representation of Postrevolutionary Iran," in *The U.S. Media and the Middle East: Image and Perception,* ed. Yahya R. Kamalipour (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 73–90; and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "The International Politics of Secularism: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 115–138.

119. Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 247.

120. Ann Laura Stoler and Fredrick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World,* ed. Fredrick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 3.

121. I owe this insight to Niza Yanai.

Chapter 3

1. Ronen Bergman, *Point of No Return: Israeli Intelligence Against Iran and Hizballah* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, Zmora Bitan, Dvir, 2007), 12.

2. Ibid., 14. Bergman's argument on this issue is rooted in the Huntingtonian notion, which has an astonishingly impressive following among Israelis (and Americans), that the 1979 revolution inaugurated the "quasi-war" between Islam and the West, which culminated in the attacks of 11 September 2001. Take, for example, Eliezer (Geizi) Tsafrir, the last Mossad agent in Iran before (and during) the revolution, to whom we were introduced in the previous chapter. Tsafrir writes, "Even if [the 11 September attacks] carried no Iranian fingerprints, they were executed by radical Islamic organizations that are under the sweeping influence of the Islamic Revolution and its preaching. Most diabolical of all is Al-Qaeda. . . . After Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, [Al-Qaeda] is the most horrific outgrowth in the history of terrorism and Islamic radicalism. . . . There is no doubt that one of the main ancestors of this lineage was Ayatollah Khomeini, the great exporter of revolution and terror"; Eliezer (Geizi) Tsafrir, *Big Satan, Small Satan: Revolution and Escape in Iran* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2002), 236.

3. Cited in Steven Erlanger, "Israel Seeks Hint of Victory," *New York Times,* 13 August 2006.

4. I owe this formulation to Hamid Dabashi's scathing critique of Azar Nafisi's blockbuster book *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House, 2003); see Hamid Dabashi, "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire," *Al-Ahram Weekly,* 1–7 June 2006, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/797/special.htm (accessed 2 July 2006).

5. Bergman, *Point of No Return,* 14.

6. Jim Miles thus asserts in his review of the English edition of Bergman's book—*The Secret War with Iran: Israel and the West's 30-Year Clandestine Struggle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008)—"The major fault with *The Secret War with Iran* is . . . one of context. It is a fault that puts this book squarely in the genre of blatant apologetic and rhetoric exhorting the Americans to attack Iran"; see Jim Miles, "The Secret War with Iran," *Aljazeera.com*, 25 September 2008: http://www.aljazeera.com/news/newsfull.php?newid=165031 (accessed 6 October 2008).

7. Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 11–12. See also Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 76–143.

8. Hence Talal Asad maintains, in *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 93, since 9/11 "there have been four assaults by the United States and its allies against 'Islamic terror,' in two of which (Afghanistan and Iraq) the USA was the major warring party and in two (Gaza and Lebanon) the crucial political supporter and arms supplier of the major warring party (Israel). At the time of writing, all four wars are still ongoing and have already resulted in massive losses of life that immeasurably exceed anything terrorists have managed to do."

9. Edward Said, *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map: Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004), 133.

10. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roaxen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

11. Neve Gordon, "From Colonization to Separation: Exploring the Structure of Israel's Occupation," paper presented at Workshop on Power, Rule and Governmentality in Zones of Emergency: The Israeli Occupation in Global Perspective, The Van Leer Institute of Jerusalem, Israel, 3–5 June 2007.

12. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing,* 94.

13. Cited in Yitzhak Benhorin, "Livni: UN Established to Prevent a Holocaust," *Ynet,* 1 October 2007, http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-3455378,00.html (accessed 1 October 2007). Senator Rick Santorum likewise captured the gist of this image when he declared right after the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon (much to the pleasure of attending Israeli officials), "Islamic fascism is a mosaic but the biggest piece of the mosaic, the one that reaches out and touches all the others, is Iran"; cited in Dan Jennejohn, "Christian Right and 'Islamo-Fascism'," *Global Research,* 14 August 2006, http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=20060814&articleId=2955 (accessed 1 January 2007).

14. The first two films were directed by Majid Majidi and the third film was directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

15. See, e.g., Meir Schnitzer's review on "The Colors of Paradise" and "Baran" in *Ma'ariv,* 19 October 2001; and Uri Klein's review on "Kandahar" in *Ha'aretz,* 19 November 2001.

16. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, "On the Modernity, Historical Specificity, and International Context of Political Islam," in *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report,* ed. Joel Beinin and Joe Stark (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 17–19; and Joel Beinin, "The Israelization of American Middle East Discourse," *Social Text* 21 (2003): 125–139.

17. Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U. S.* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 97–109.

18. Ibid.; Trita Parsi, "Whither the Persian-Jewish Alliance?" 16 December 2004, http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/inside.php?id=263 (accessed 2 February 2005); Trita Parsi, "Under the Veil of Ideology: The Israeli-Iranian Strategic Rivalry," *Middle East Report Online,* 9 June 2006, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero060906.html (accessed 7 July 2007).

19. Cited in Beinin and Stork, "On the Modernity," 18.

20. Cited in the official Website of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., http://www.israelemb.org/articles/2002/September/2002091100.html (accessed 2 July 2005).

21. Cited in Yoav Limor, "Terrorists of the World, Unite," *Ma'ariv,* 12 October 2001, italics are mine.

22. Rafi Mann in *Ma'ariv,* 10 October 2001.

23. See, e.g., Eitan Rabin in *Ma'ariv,* 28 October 2001; Gabi Kessler in *Ma'ariv,* 27 November 2001; Eli Kamir in *Ma'ariv,* 2 November 2001; Oded Granot, "The Real Problem Is Hezbollah," *Ma'ariv,* 8 November 2001; and the interview with Defense Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer in *Ma'ariv,* 16 November 2001.

24. Indeed, despite its basic opposition to the war, the Islamic republic offered its air bases to the United States and agreed to perform search-and-rescue missions for downed American pilots as well as to use U.S. information to track down and kill al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan. See Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle* (New York: Random House, 2004), 346–347; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 228.

25. For instance, in October 2001 Senator Arlen Specter hosted Iran's ambassador to the UN, Hadi Nejad Hosseinian, at a dinner on Capitol Hill, and at the opening of the United Nations General Assembly in November of that year, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi and Secretary of State Colin Powell posed for the cameras while shaking hands. This was the first public gesture between cabinet-level members of the United States and Iran in more than twenty years; *Washington Post,* 29 October 2001.

26. See, e.g., Aluf Benn in *Ha'aretz,* 13 December 2001; Zvi Barel, "Traffic Jam in the Axis of Evil," *Ha'aretz,* 5 February 2002.

27. This American move "incensed Israel. Suddenly . . . events in the Middle East

risked making Israel a burden rather than an asset to the United States, while giving Iran a chance to prove its value to America"; Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 226.

28. Dov Goldstein, "The Real Partner," *Ma'ariv,* 10 October 2001; also see "The U. S. Attempts to Come Closer to Iran," *Ha'aretz,* 30 October 2001; Ze'ev Schiff, "Is Change in Iran Expected?" *Ha'aretz,* 9 November 2001; and Uzi Benziman, "This Is What They Say," *Ha'aretz,* 21 December 2001.

29. See, e.g., Amir Oren, "The Old Man and the Sea," *Ha'aretz,* 11 January 2002.

30. See, e.g., Brian Whitaker, "The Strange Affair of Karine-A," *The Observer,* 21 January 2002; and Graham Usher, "The Karine-A Affair," *Al-Ahram Weekly,* 10–16 January 2001.

31. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 233–234.

32. Yoav Limor, "Iran's Real Face Uncovered," *Ma'ariv,* 6 January 2002; and Yoav Limor, "A First Nuclear Bomb by 2005," *Ma'ariv,* 15 February 2002.

33. Yael Paz Melamed, "Iran and the Taliban," *Ma'ariv,* 7 January 2002.

34. Ali Ansari, *Confronting Iran* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 186.

35. *Ha'aretz,* 31 January 2002. See also Moshe Arens, "It's Been So Pleasant to Hear," *Ha'aretz,* 5 February 2002; and Aluf Benn, "Please Don't Disrupt the War Against the 'Axis of Evil,'" *Ha'aretz,* 6 February 2002.

36. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 233.

37. Sharon's address, 6 January 2002, http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2002/01/Spokesman4707.htm (accessed 1 February 2004).

38. Hemi Shalev in *Ma'ariv,* 11 January 2002. See also Oded Granot, "A Double Game," *Ma'ariv,* 13 January 2002.

39. Yaakov Erez, "The Iranian Threat," *Ma'ariv,* 18 January 2002; Yoav Limor, "The Iranian Threat," *Ma'ariv,* 18 January 2002; Aharon Ze'evi, Head of Military Intelligence, in *Ma'ariv,* 23 January 2002; Menashe Amir, "The Iranian Angle," *Ma'ariv,* 6 January 2002; and Limor, "Iran's Real Face Uncovered."

40. Hemi Shalev in *Ma'ariv,* 11 January 2002.

41. Oded Granot in *Ma'ariv,* 13 January 2002.

42. Granot, "A Double Game."

43. Mansour Farhang, "The Iran-Israel Connection," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1989): 87. On that occasion, too, the building previously occupied by Israel's mission in Iran was ceremoniously handed over to Arafat to house his embassy there, and the name of the street on which it was located was renamed Palestine Street.

44. Eliyahu Salpeter, "The Shah, Hitler, and Us," *Ha'aretz,* 18 December 1979; Shmuel Segev, *The Iranian Triangle: The Secret Relations Between Israel-Iran-USA* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 1981), 67–68.

45. Brig. Gen. (res.) Dr. Shimon Shapira casts a very different light on the PLO's rapport with the Iranian revolutionary movement. Given the fact that Shapira is a conservative analyst for the right-wing Shalem Institute of Jerusalem and one-time military advisor to Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu, we should listen closely to what he

says. In the 1970s, claims Shapira, Lebanon did become a hub for Iranian opposition activities against the Shah. Yet the civil war that broke out there in 1975 pitched the Palestinians and the Lebanese Shiites against each other as sworn enemies. Shapira describes an atmosphere of rivalry, hostility, and mutual contempt between the two groups. On the basis of testimony by Mustafa Chamran, one of the leaders of the Iranian opposition operating in Lebanon, he asserts that during the 1970s no more than "a few hundred Iranians" trained in Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Instead, the Iranians focused their activities on revitalizing the local Shiite community and conducted most of their training in camps of the local Shiite Amal movement; Shimon Shapira, *Hezbollah: Between Iran and Lebanon* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2000), 55–76.

46. Ibid., 77–95.

47. Amnon Rubenstein, "Child of the PLO," *Ha'aretz,* 4 December 1979.

48. "Iranian Terror and the Denunciation of Israel," *Ha'aretz,* 16 November 1979; "The PLO as Khomeini's Partner," *Ha'aretz,* 18 November 1979; and Dov Appel, "Palestinians Saved Khomeini's Life," *Davar,* 20 March 1979.

49. Gregory, *Colonial Present,* 112.

50. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (New York: Verso, 2007), 185–218.

51. Ibid., 201–210.

52. Gregory, *Colonial Present,* 116.

53. Uri Avnery, "The Real Aim of Operation Defensive Shield," *Arab News,* 17 May 2002. See also Rema Hammami, "Interregnum: Palestine After Operation Defensive Shield," *Middle East Report* 223 (Summer 2002); and Yitzhak Laor, "After Jenin," *London Review of Books,* 9 May 2002.

54. Gideon Levy, "Cut and Paste," *Ha'aretz,* 12 February 2008.

55. "That way," as Amira Hass observed (in "Operation Destroy the Data," *Ha'aretz,* 24 April 2002), "[the international community] can continue to be deceived into believing that terror is a genetic problem and not a sociological and political mutation, horrific as it may be, derived from the horrors of occupation."

56. "Sharon: Israeli Troop Withdrawal Days Away," *CNN.com,* 15 April 2002, http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/04/15/sharon.interview.cnna/index.html (accessed 17 April 2002).

57. Yossi Melman and Meir Javedanfar, *The Sphinx: Ahmadinejad and the Key for the Iranian Bomb* (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2007), 246.

58. *Jerusalem Post,* 26 January 2006. See also remarks by former head of the "Shin Bet" (Israel Security Agency) and current minister of public security Avi Dichter as cited in *Jerusalem Post,* 27 January 2006. These responses to Hamas's victory once again reveal the primary narrative device at work obscuring the concrete violence of colonial occupation, which, incidentally, would also go a long way toward explaining how and why Hamas managed to win the election in the first place. Ultimately, of course, it also

served as a self-fulfilling prophecy, because it supplied the much-needed rationale for the West's isolation of the democratically elected Hamas-led Palestinian government, which in turn pushed this government closer to Iran.

59. This sticker, reflecting the national consensus at the beginning of the war, was distributed by Israel's "Leumi Bank"; see *Ynet,* 18 July 2006, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3277832,00.html (accessed 18 July 2006). Nearly three years after the war, this sticker can still be seen posted on hundreds (if not thousands) of Israeli vehicles. As the war neared its conclusion with no clear gains for the Israeli military, however, another sticker appeared that sardonically stated, "We will settle for a draw (*nistapeq be-teiqu*)." On the shifting Israeli public opinion during the war, see Yehuda Ben Meir, "Israeli Public Opinion and the Second Lebanon War," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Dimensions* (in Hebrew), ed. Meir Elran and Shlomo Brom (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot Ahronoth, 2007), 84–100.

60. Cabinet Communiqué, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 July 2006, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Cabinet+Communique+16-Jul-2006.htm (accessed 1 March 2008).

61. *Le Monde,* 3 August 2006.

62. See, e.g., Melani McAlister, "Prophecy, Politics, and the Popular: The *Left Behind* Series and Christian Evangelicalism's New World Order," in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture,* Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 288–312.

63. Uri Orbach, "The War for World Peace," *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 4 August 2006. See also Ben Dror Yemini, "Anatomy of Defeat," *Ma'ariv,* 11 August 2006; and Yonatan Shem Or, "Turn Left at the End of the World," *Ma'ariv,* 17 August 2006.

64. Menachem Ben, "Yes, Re-Conquer," *Ma'ariv,* 23 July 2006.

65. Ze'ev Schiff, "Iran's Direct Involvement," *Ha'aretz,* 16 July 2006.

66. Amos Gilboa, "Big Hole in the Agreement," *Ma'ariv,* 14 August 2006.

67. As Ephraim Sneh, Israel's deputy defense minister, declared halfway through the war: "War with Iran is inevitable. Lebanon is just a prelude to the greater war with Iran"; cited in Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 15.

68. *Guardian,* 13 July 2006.

69. Cited in Ehud Asheri, "Word Games," *Ha'aretz,* 18 August 2006.

70. In a talk given in Washington, D.C., on 20 July 2006, Zbigniew Brzezinski referred to these Israeli acts of aggression as follows: "I think what the Israelis are doing today . . . in Lebanon is in effect—maybe not in intent—the killing of hostages. Because when you kill 300 people, 400 people, who have nothing to do with the provocations Hezbollah staged, but you do it in effect deliberately by being indifferent to the scale of the collateral damage, you're killing hostages in the hope of intimidating those that you want to intimidate"; cited in Asad, *On Suicide Bombing,* 37. See also Jim Quilty, "The Collateral Damage of Lebanese Sovereignty," *Middle East Report,* 18 June 2007, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero061807.html (accessed 24 June 2007).

71. Gideon Levy, "Stopped Asking Questions," *Ha'aretz,* 18 June 2006.

72. The report can be accessed at, http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGMDE02018 2006 (accessed 1 September 2006).

73. Rejecting these demands, Olmert decided to set up two government-appointed committees of inquiry—one for inquiring into the government's conduct (which became known as the "Winograd Commission") and another for the military's conduct. The mandate of these two committees was less comprehensive and its recommendations less binding than would have been the case with an independent committee of inquiry.

74. *Ha'aretz,* 29 August 2006. See also Yemini, "Anatomy of Defeat."

75. The Israeli public's protest was directed not against the government's lack of judgment in starting the war but rather against the failure to teach the enemy "a lesson" and to instill the feeling that Israel's deterring power had been maintained.

76. Branding this maneuver as "Spinijad," *Ha'aretz* commentator Aluf Benn went on to say, "There is nothing like an external threat to quiet down the domestic arena, and a shrewd politician like Olmert knows well how to exploit this for his own benefit. . . . Having commissions of inquiry? Who has the time to deal with the Lebanese fiasco when the Iranian mushroom [ostensibly] looms large?" Aluf Benn, "Spinijad," *Ha'aretz,* 21 December 2006.

77. Gideon Levy, "Who Is Loony?" *Ha'aretz,* 19 August 2007.

78. Toby Greene, "Fearing Iran," *Guardian,* 26 January 2007, http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/toby_greene/2007/01/post_993.html (accessed 27 January 2007). According to Jonathan Cook, "In January 2007, the Herzliya conference . . . invited no less than 40 Washington opinion-formers to join the usual throng of Israeli politicians, generals, journalists and academics. For a week the Israeli and American delegates spoke as one: Iran and its presumed proxy, Hezbollah, were bent on the genocidal destruction of Israel. Tehran's development of a nuclear program . . . had to be stopped at all costs"; Jonathan Cook, "Take Tehran Next," *Al-Ahram Weekly,* 27 September–3 October 2007: http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/864/re61.htm (accessed 29 September 2007).

79. Cited in Gideon Elon, "Let Them Go to Bulgaria," *Ha'aretz,* 6 November 2006.

80. Yair Sheleg, "An Endangered State," *Ha'aretz,* 18 September 2006.

81. Ari Shavit, "Just Do It," *Ha'aretz,* 29 November 2006. Also see Ari Shavit, "Worthy Leadership for a Year of Decision," *Ha'aretz,* 17 May 2007.

82. As one analyst, Dr. Eini Abadi, explained, Iran's nuclear policy lacks "two major brakes": "The first is fear of death, and the second is a humanistic brake. Whoever possessed unconventional weapons until now . . . was motivated by these two brakes and was therefore deterred from using them. Now the world finds itself coping with an unprecedented problem: a society lacking the above mentioned brakes seeking unconventional weapons"; cited in Anat Cohen, "Apocalypse Now," *Globus,* 23–24 October 2006.

For similar views voiced by Israeli scholars, see Amira Lam, "In the Name of Hate, in the Name of Revenge," *Yedi'ot Ahronoth,* 3 November 2006.

83. Mordechai Kedar, "Nucleotheism: Understanding the Iranians," *Jerusalem Post,* 14 December 2005.

84. Eldad Pardo, "Race and the Nuclear Race: Anti-Semitism in Iran," *Geo-Political Strategy* 1 (2007): 74–75.

85. These are the words of two senior research associates at the Jerusalem-based conservative Shalem Center; Yossi Klein Halevi and Michael B. Oren, "Israel's Worst Nightmare: Contra Iran," *The New Republic,* 5 February 2007.

86. David Menashri, "What Lies Behind Ahmadi-Nejad's Hate Speech?" *Tel Aviv University Notes,* 155, 21 December 2005.

87. Eldad Pardo cited in Yael Apter, "A New Middle East," *Iton Tel Aviv,* 18 August 2006. Similar views were expressed by Haifa University's Iraq expert Professor Amazia Baram in Cohen, "Apocalypse Now."

88. Benny Morris, "This Holocaust Will Be Different," *Jerusalem Post,* 19 January 2007.

89. Ibid. See also Morris's interview with Nir Baram in "I See You Are Skeptic," *Ha'aretz Review of Books,* 7 February 2007. A particularly disturbing view of this kind is provided by Iran specialist Ze'ev Magen, chair of the Department of Middle East History in Bar Ilan University. See Ze'ev Magen, "What Did Iran Learn from the War?" in *The Second War on Lebanon and Its Aftermath* (in Hebrew) (Ramat Gan: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 2007), 19–24.

90. Cited in Steven Erlanger, "Israel Trades One Nightmare for Another," *New York Times,* 10 October 2004.

91. As World War I historian Richard Gamble contends—in *The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War, and the Rise of Messianic Nation* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI, 2003), 5—"Americans have been habitually drawn to language that is redemptive, apocalyptic, and expansive. Americans have long experienced and articulated a sense of urgency, of hanging on the precipice of great change. . . . They have fallen easily into the Manichean habit of dividing the world into darkness and light, Evil and Good, past and future, Satan and Christ. They have seen themselves as a progressive, redemptive force, waging war in the ranks of Christ's army, or have imagined themselves as Christ Himself, liberating those in bondage and healing the afflicted." See also Jim Wallis, "Dangerous Religion: George W. Bush's Theology of Empire," *Sojourners Magazine,* 32 (2003): 20–26.

92. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing,* 95.

93. Kedar, "Nucleotheism."

94. Pardo, "Race and the Nuclear Race," 75.

95. Kaveh Ehsani, "Iran: The Populist Threat to Democracy," *Middle East Report,* no. 241 (Winter 2006): 9.

96. Asli Ü. Bâli, "The U.S. and the Iranian Nuclear Impasse," *Middle East Report,* no. 241 (Winter 2006): 12.

97. According to Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Seymour Hersh, Israel's bombing of Lebanon in 2006 was a planned operation coordinated ahead of time with the Bush administration. Hersh, quoting many unnamed U.S. diplomatic and intelligence sources, wrote that Israeli officials "visited Washington separately to get a green light for the bombing," and that the Israeli Air Force bombing offensive could very well "serve as a prelude to a potential American preemptive attack to destroy Iran's nuclear installations"; Seymour Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington's Interests in Israel's War," *The New Yorker,* 21 August 2006.

98. Ahmadinejad's actual words were, "The Imam [Khomeini] said this regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time." Indeed, various experts have amply demonstrated that the Iranian president, far from threatening to destroy Israel, was quoting from an earlier speech by the late Ayatollah Khomeini in which he reassured supporters of the Palestinians that "the Zionist regime in Jerusalem" would "vanish from the page of time." He was not threatening to exterminate Jews or the Jewish state by force of arms. Rather, he was comparing Israel's occupation of the Palestinians with other systems of rule whose time had passed, including apartheid South Africa, the Soviet empire, and the Shahs who once ruled Iran. On this issue, see Arash Norouzi, "'Wiped off the Map'—The Rumor of the Century," *Global Research,* 20 January 2007, http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=NOR20070120&articleId=4527 (accessed 21 February 2007); Arash Norouzi, "Caught Red-Handed: Media Backtracks on Iran's Anti-Israel 'Threat,'" http://www.mohammadmossadegh.com/news/caught-red-handed/ (accessed 9 July 2007); Jonathan Steele, "Lost in Translation," *Guardian,* 14 June 2006; and Ethan Bronner and Nazila Fathi, "Just How Far Did They Go, Those Words Against Israel?" *New York Times,* 11 June 2006. See also Juan Cole, "Informed Comment," 3 May 2006, http://www.juancole.com/2006/05/hitchens-hacker-and-hitchens.html (accessed 1 June 2006). It should be noted that in May 2007 Iran's national security chief Ali Larijani denied Tehran was promoting the policy of wiping Israel "off the map," blaming a deliberate distortion by the Western media. "Let me tell you one thing about taking Israel off the map. It was a by-product of the Western media," Larijani told participants at the World Economic Forum on the shores of the Dead Sea in Jordan. "Our president never talked about this issue," he added. Cited in *Tehran Times,* 19 May 2007, http://www.tehrantimes.com/Description.asp?Da=5/19/2007&Cat=2&Num=003 (accessed 19 May 2007); "Iran Not Seeking Israel Off the Map," *Press TV*, 19 May 2007, http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=10313&sectionid=351020101 (accessed 6 October 2008).

99. For example, in 2003, approximately two years before Ahmadinejad's ascendancy, Iran's most influential ruling cleric, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, called on the Muslim states to use nuclear weapons against Israel, assuring them that while such an attack would annihilate Israel, it would cost them "damages only." "If a day comes when the world of Islam is duly equipped with the arms Israel has in possession, the strategy of colonialism would face a stalemate because application of an atomic bomb would

not leave anything in Israel but the same thing would just produce damages in the Muslim world." Cited in *Iran Press Service,* 14 December 2003, http://www.iran-press-service.com/articles_2001/dec_2001/rafsanjani_nuke_threats_141201.htm (accessed 1 July 2007).

100. Cited in Roni Sofer, "'If Iran Strikes, We'll Run It to the Ground,' Warns Ben-Eliezer," *Ynet News,* 7 April 2008, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340, L-3528685, 00.html (accessed 12 April 2008).

101. Israeli scholars' recourse to Ahmadinejad's purported "wiped off the map" saying is particularly telling because it shows that they are either completely innocent of Persian or, worse, that they are engaged in a deliberate dissemination of the Israeli government's propaganda. Either way, this is a brute betrayal of the Israeli professoriat or intelligentsia of their role as a voice in opposition and criticism, so that real power will not be encouraged to do its will.

102. One such exception is Raz Zimmet, "To Be a President in the Islamic Republic: Ahmadinejad in the Web of Iranian Politics," in *Iran Time* (in Hebrew), ed. Uzi Rabi (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2008), 31–48. Although most of these critics say that Iranians have the right to nuclear power, they also question Ahmadinejad's dealing with the international community and his obsession with Holocaust denials, which, they are convinced, is detrimental to Iran's interests. According to foreign reports, domestic disillusionment with Ahmadinejad within regime circles is so pervasive that there have been mounting demands to cut short his term in office or otherwise to have some of his closest associates dismissed. See, e.g., "After Iran's Supreme Leader, Top Dissident Cleric Slams Ahmadinejad," *The Indian Express,* 23 January 2007, http://www.indianexpress.com/21538.html (accessed 21 March 2007); Alireza Ronaghi, "Iran's Reformists Slam Government's Nuclear Policy," *Iran Focus,* 6 January 2007, http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=9740 (accessed 17 January 2007); and "Iran's Reformists Blame President for Sanctions," *Gulf Times,* 7 January 2007.

103. On Iran's vibrant blogosphere, see, e.g., Nasrin Alavi, *We Are Iran: The Persian Blogs* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2005); Alireza Doostdar, "The Vulgar Spirit of Blogging: On Language, Culture, and Power in Persian Weblogestan," *American Anthropologist* 106 (December 2004): 651–662; and Gholam Khiabany and Annabelle Sreberny, "The Politics of/in Blogging in Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27 (2007): 563–579.

104. Here, too, a notable exception is Liora Hendelman-Baavur, "Israel and the Blogistan: War Blogs on the Internet," in Rabi, *Iran Time* (in Hebrew), 68–76; and Liora Hendelman-Baavur, "Promises and Perils of Weblogistan: Online Personal Journals and the Islamic Republic of Iran," *MERIA* 11 (June 2007), http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue2/jv11n02a6.html (accessed 12 April 2007).

105. Even David Menashri, director of the Center for Iranian Studies at Tel Aviv University who, as we've seen previously, is not particularly known for his antiestablishment views on Iran, has said as much. Dominant anti-Iran imaginaries, he wrote, "divert attention away from very important processes and changes taking place within Iran."

Underneath them "we find a different Iran—[one in which there is] vibrant cultural life, a variegated press, a high-quality cinema, active women and student organizations, and a lively civil society. . . . The press's qualified openness, the students' heroic struggle for freedom, the decisive activity of woman organizations . . . and the critical books published in Iran, all go beyond what the West expects from an Islamic regime"; David Menashri, "Iran: Suddenly a Person Gets Up and Begins to Walk" (in Hebrew), *Academia* 17 (January 2007): 17, 21.

106. "If the Year Were 1938," *Ha'aretz,* 19 November 2006.

107. Thus Eldad Pardo contends—in "Globalism and New Islam: Iran as a Religious Actor," in Rabi, *Iran Time* (in Hebrew), 164—"The mass anti-Zionist educational campaign [in Iran] is not only reminiscent of severe European anti-Semitism, it also draws on it. This ideological axis is major and longstanding and it is not necessarily connected to the rise of Ahmadinejad." Pardo further suggests (page 167), "although ostensibly directed against Zionism and not against [Iranian] Jews, who know their place, a comparison between Iran's policy and that of Nazi Germany reveals similarities." Pardo reaches similar conclusions in "Iran and the Aspiration to World Hegemony" (in Hebrew), *Academia* 17 (Winter 2007): 30. For similar views, see Meir Litvak, "Iran and Israel: The Ideological Enmity and Its Roots" (in Hebrew), *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael* 24 (2004): 367–392; Meir Litvak, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," *The Journal of Israeli History* 25 (March 2006): 267–284; and Meir Litvak, "Israel in Iranian Eyes: From Holocaust Denial to the Denial of Existence," in Rabi, *Iran Time* (in Hebrew), 49–67.

108. Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York and London: The New Press, 2007), 151.

109. As historian of Iran Nikki R. Keddie observes, "Western nationalist and racist theories provided a model for Iran's nationalists [beginning in the 19th century], especially since, because Persian is a language in the Indo-European or 'Aryan' family, nationalists could adopt widespread Western racial theories saying that 'Aryans' were superior to others"; Nikki R. Keddie, "Introduction," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Ruddi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 8.

110. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1951), 19.

111. As I show elsewhere, Aryan identity (which is not to be confused with Aryan racism) remains a potent force in the Islamic Republic of Iran, notwithstanding the ayatollahs' tilt toward Islam. Paradoxically, the current leaders of Iran, including presumably Supreme Leader Ali Kahmenehi, continue to uphold this identity, which imbues them with anti-Arab sentiment and with much pride in the illustrious *pre-Islamic* "Aryan" Persian past. See my articles, "Post-1979 Iranian National Culture—A Reconsideration," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte* 30 (2002): 223–253; and "The Immemorial Iranian Nation? School-Textbooks and Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Nations and Nationalism* 6 (2000): 67–90.

112. The program of the conference "Review of the Holocaust—Global Vision," which was held in Tehran on 10–12 December 2006, can be accessed at http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/2006December/contents_program1.htm.

113. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin aptly suggests that the dialectic of power and vulnerability—"Redemption" and "Destruction"—is one of the primary pillars of Zionist consciousness and political theology; see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Between 'Brit Shalom' and the Temple: The Dialectics of Redemption and Messianism Following Gershom Scholem," in *Coloniality and the Postcolonial Condition: Implications for Israeli Society,* ed. Yehouda Shenhav (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2004), 387–413.

114. Cited in Doron Rosenblum, "A Text and Its Meaning," *Ha'aretz,* 18 January 2008.

115. Cited in Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 213–214.

116. Ibid., 238.

117. Ibid., 474.

118. According to Ella Shohat, "False analogies between the Arabs and Nazis, a symptom of a Jewish-European nightmare projected onto the structurally distinct political dynamics of the Israeli / Palestinian conflict, have become a staple of Zionist rhetoric"; Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29 (Autumn 1999): 6–7. On this issue, see also Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

119. Within this context, it is important to note a similar discursive device that Israel employed in 1962 in reaction to press reports about German scientists helping Egypt to develop unconventional weapons of a radioactive kind. As Shlaim reveals in *The Iron Wall,* 212–215, Ben Gurion, in a letter to President Kennedy, "recalled that the civilized world did not take seriously Hitler's statement that one of his aims was the worldwide extermination of the Jewish people. Ben Gurion had no doubt that a similar calamity could befall Israel if Nasser succeeded in defeating its army."

120. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing,* 24.

121. Pardo, "Race and the Nuclear Race," 81.

122. Benny Ziffer, "Satan Comes to New York," *Ha'aretz,* 28 September 2007.

123. On the Iran-Hezbollah connection, see Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

124. Zvi Barel, "A Muslim Wedding or Political Pragmatism," *Ha'aretz,* 11 December 2006.

125. Abas Edalat et al., "Wake Up Call to Iranian Communities Around the World," *Znet,* 31 July 2006, http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=10684 (accessed 1 September 2006); and Lara Deeb, "Hizballah: A Primer," *Middle East Report Online,* 31 July 2006, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero073106.html (accessed 23 July 2006).

126. Hamid Dabashi, "Lessons from Lebanon: Rethinking National Liberation Movements," *Al-Ahram Weekly,* 7–13 September 2006.

127. "Letting Lebanon Burn," *Middle East Report Online,* 21 July 2006, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero072106.html (accessed 24 July 2006).

128. Karmen Erjavec, "'War on Terrorism' as a Discursive Battleground: Serbian Recontextualization of G. W. Bush's Discourse," *Discourse and Society* 18 (2007): 123–137.

129. Michael Wines, "War on Terror Casts Chechen Conflict in a New Light," *New York Times,* 9 December 2001.

130. See, e.g., Amir Saeed, "Media, Racism and Islamophobia: The Representation of Islam and Muslims in the Media," *Sociology Compass* 1 (November 2007): 443–462; Chris Allen, "From Race to Religion: The New Face of Discrimination," in *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure,* ed. Abbas Tariq (London: Zed Books, 2005), 24–47; Fred Halliday, "'Islamophobia' Reconsidered," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (1999): 892–902; and Elizabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

131. I owe this metaphor to Benny Ziffer, "Merkel's Visit as an Aspirin," *Ha'aretz,* 19 March 2008.

132. Shlaim, *Iron Wall,* 12.

133. Gregory, *Colonial Present,* 53.

134. Gideon Levy, "Stopped Asking Questions."

135. Yossi Sarid, "The Media's Fault," *Ha'aretz,* 14 September 2006.

136. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing,* 4.

Chapter 4

1. This chapter draws and expands on ideas that originally appeared in my articles "Between Homeland and Exile: Iranian Jewry in Zionist/Israeli Political Thought," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 35 (April 2008): 1–20; and "Caught Between Orientalism and Aryanism, Exile and Homeland: The Jews of Iran in Zionist/Israeli Imagination," *Hagar* 8 (2008): 105–128.

2. Yona Cohen, "Saving Iranian Jewry," *Hatsofeh,* 7 November 1978.

3. On these issues see my articles "Between Homeland and Exile"; and "Neither East nor West; Neither Destruction nor Redemption: Zionism and Iranian Jewry" (in Hebrew), *Teoria u-Vikoret* 26 (2005): 149–174.

4. As the young Israeli scholar Daniel Tsadik contends—in *Between Foreigners and Shi'is: Nineteenth-Century Iran and Its Jewish Minority* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1—"scholarship on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian Jews is still many times sparse compared to the research conducted on Jews residing elsewhere. One can hardly speak of diverse approaches, different schools of historiography, or even major debates among the few scholars who address Iranian Jewry's recent past." Tsadik's *Between Foreigners and Shi'is* came out too late for me to be able to do justice to this important and learned study.

5. Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19 (Fall 1988): 1–35.

6. Cited in Efraim Inbar, "What Lies Ahead for Israel," *Jerusalem Post,* 11 December 2000. For a satirical account of this common mind-set, see Doron Rosenblum, "It's a Jungle Out There," *Ha'aretz,* 8 June 2007.

7. Harvey E. Goldberg and Chen Baram, "Sepharadi/Mizrahi/Arab-Jews: Reflections on Critical Sociology and the Study of Middle Eastern Jewries within the Context of Israeli Society," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry,* forthcoming.

8. See, e.g., Yehouda Shenhav's reflective and personal account of what prompted his scholarly engagement with the encounter of Jews from Arab countries with the Zionist project; Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 1–17.

9. In the words of Goldberg and Baram (in "Sepharadi/Mizrahi/Arab-Jews"), "an over-reliance on binary categories [such as Ashkenazim and Mizrahim] at times brings critical sociology to perpetuate the very notions it seeks to 'interrogate.'"

10. Ania Loomba et al., "Beyond What? An Introduction," in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond,* ed. Ania Loomba et al. (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.

11. Michael Selzer, *The Aryanization of the Jewish State* (New York: Black Star, 1967).

12. Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel," 5.

13. Moshe Yishai, *Delegate Without a Title* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: N. Teberski, 1950), 65.

14. Haim Sadok, *The Jews in Iran During the Shah Pahlavi Era* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Meitsag, 1991), 34.

15. B. Z. Goldberg, "The Ghetto in Tehran," *Ha'aretz,* 20 November 1959.

16. Cited in Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 66–67. Similar views by Zionist travelers and emissaries in Iran appear in Avraham Braver, *The Dust of the Road* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1944); Raphael Haim HaCohen, *Stones in the Wall* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Author's self-publication, 1970), 44–51; and Yishai, *Delegate,* 87.

17. Amnon Netzer, "Zionist Activity in Iran: From the Balfour Declaration to the San Remo Conference" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 2 (Summer 1979): 27. See also Amnon Netzer, "Periods and Stages in the Jews' Conditions and Zionist Activity in Iran" (in Hebrew), *Yahadut Zemanenu* 1 (1983): 139–162.

18. Esther Kanka-Shekalim, "Operation Cyrus: The Massive Immigration of Iranian Jews at the Time of the Establishment of the State and their Settlement in the Country," in *The Jews of Iran: Their Past, Legacy and Connection to the Land of Israel,* ed. Amnon Netzer (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Beit Koresh, 1988), 99.

19. See, e.g., a collection of essays penned by Israel's leading authorities on Iranian Jewry and copublished by Israel's Ministry of Education in Haim Sa'adun, ed., *Iran: Jewish Communities in the East in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and the Ben Zvi Institute, 2006).

20. Dov Noi, ed., *Tales Told by the Jews of Persia* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Merkaz Press, 1966), 8.

21. Ella Shohat, "The Invention of the Mizrahim," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9 (Autumn 1999): 6.

22. Daniel Tsadik makes the same complaint in his informative study of Iran's Jews in nineteenth-century Iran, *Between Foreigners and Shi'is*, 2–3.

23. Mark Cohen, "The Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History," *Tikkun* 6 (1991): 55–60. For a helpful discussion of the historiographical implications of this conception, see Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), especially the Introduction.

24. The most notable Israeli scholar of "Judeo-Persian literatures" is the Israel Prize winner Shaul Shaked. See, e.g., Shaul Shaked, ed., *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1982). See also David Yeroushalmi, *The Judeo-Persian Poet 'Emrani and His Book of Treasure* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); and Amnon Netzer, "Persian Jewry and Literature: A Sociocultural View," in *Sepharadi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era,* ed. Harvey E. Goldberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 240–255.

25. David Yeroushalmi, "Judeo-Persian Literature," in *Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews,* ed. Houman Sarshar (Beverly Hills, Calif.: The Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2003), 77.

26. Ibid.

27. Yehouda Shenhav has likewise demonstrated (in *Arab Jews,* 154) how the neolachrymose conception "was promoted by Zionist propaganda to prove that Zionism, far from causing the rift in Jewish-Muslim relations, spared the Jews of the Arab countries a bitter fate, had they remained there."

28. David Menashri, "The Jews of Iran: Between the Shah and Khomeini," in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis,* Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (New York and London: New York University Press, 1991), 354.

29. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 13, italics added.

30. Amnon Netzer, *Iranian Jews in Our Time* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Judaism, 1981), 29. Many more excerpts of this kind may be cited, but I will spare the gory descriptions from the readers. See, e.g., Hanania Mizrahi, *The Jews of Persia* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1959), 131–161; Amnon Netzer, "The Jewish Community in Tehran from Its Beginnings to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906" (in Hebrew), *Shevet va-'Am* (1980): 256–258; Amnon Netzer, "The Jews of Iran, Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran" (in Hebrew), *Gesher* 100 (1980): 45–57; Amnon Netzer, "The History of the Forced Converts of Mashad According to Yaakov Daylamgan" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 42 (1990): 127–156; and Eldad J. Pardo, "Race and the Nuclear Race: Anti-Semitism in Iran," *Geo-Political Strategy* 1 (2007): 69–91.

31. Amnon Netzer, "The Jewish Community in Iran," in Netzer, *Jews of Iran,* 7.

32. Eliezer (Geizi) Tsafrir, *Big Satan, Small Satan: Revolution and Escape in Iran* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2002), 73.

33. Tsadik, *Between Foreigners and Shi'is,* 2.

34. As Talal Asad observes, just as "the histories of Europe and Islam cannot be completely separated," so it is impossible to ignore the "rich history of mutual borrowings and continuous interactions among Christians, Jews and Muslims [in the Middle East]"; Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 10.

35. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 21.

36. Avraham Cohen, "Substantive Changes in Jewish Education in Persia," in Netzer, *Jews of Iran,* 68–70.

37. Ibid., 70. See also Avraham Cohen, "'Maktab': The Jewish 'Heder' in Persia" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 14 (1982): 57–76.

38. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 61.

39. This double narrative movement of the Zionist-Israeli gaze—which pulls in two opposite directions—is reminiscent of the tensions and contradictions inherent in colonial texts, as demonstrated by scholarship building on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); see, e.g., the illuminating essays in Fredrick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

40. Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U. S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 25.

41. "Iranians are perceived as masters of deception, and I think their mythical status arises not solely because Israelis know Iranians and appreciate their abilities, but because they are so unlike Arabs," an Israeli expert on Iran explained; cited in ibid., 12.

42. Daniel Boyarin thus provocatively argues, with respect to the Jewish state, "Zionism is truly the most profound sort of assimilationism, one in which Jews become like all the nations, that is, like the Aryans . . . but remain Jews in name (and complexion). . . . [The ultimate aim was] to transform the Jewish man from his state of effeminate degeneracy into the status of proper, that is . . . of mock 'Aryan male'"; Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 276.

43. Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York and London: The Free Press, 2007), 151.

44. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile within Sovereignty: Toward a Critique of the 'Negation of Exile' in Israeli Culture (Part 1)" (in Hebrew), *Teoria u-Vikoret* 4 (1993): 51.

45. Netzer, *Iranian Jews,* 26–27.

46. Amnon Netzer, "Problems in the Cultural, Social and Political Integration of the Jews of Iran" (in Hebrew), *Gesher* (1979): 69. For a similar double narrative movement, see Meir Ezri, *"Anyone of His People Among You": Mission in Iran* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Hed Artzi, 2001), 15–16.

47. Cited in Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 87.

48. Cited in Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 110.

49. A keen observer noted on this paradox thusly: "In a way, when Herzl spoke of a modern solution [for the Jews], what he meant was this: 'If we Jews cannot have Europe then we shall have it in another place'"; Brian Klug, "The State of Zionism," *The Nation,* 18 June 2007. On this paradox in Zionism see Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's numerous studies, such as "Exile within Sovereignty (part 1)"; "Exile within Sovereignty: Toward a Critique of the 'Negation of Exile' in Israeli Culture (part 2)" (in Hebrew), *Teoria u-Vikoret* 5 (1994): 113–132; "A Few Comments on Orientalism, Jewish Studies and Israeli Society" (in Hebrew), *Jama'a* 3 (1998): 34–57; and "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews,* ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 162–181.

50. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct,* 295.

51. I borrow this phrase from Lisa Wedeen's study of the "politics of 'as if'" in Syria under the rule of Hafez al-Asad. See Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 67–86.

52. Netzer, "Jewish Community in Iran," 13. See also Netzer, "Problems in the Cultural, Social and Political Integration," 70–71; and Menashri, "Jews of Iran," 357.

53. Cited in Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 253. See also Shefi Gabay, "Immigration from Iran Is Young and Affluent," *Davar,* 3 June 1971.

54. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 328, 402.

55. Baruch Kimmerling, *Immigrants, Settlers, Natives: The Israeli State and Society Between Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Wars* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 50.

56. Eli Bradenstein, "Vacation in the Iranian Homeland," NRG (*Ma'ariv*), 5 May 2006, http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/171/221.html (accessed 6 May 2006); Yossi Melman, "Iranian Jews Blast Offer of Cash for Immigrating to Israel," *Ha'aretz,* 15 July 2007.

57. "Iran Jews Deny Link to Israel Operation," *Tehran Times,* 27 December 2007, http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=160089 (accessed 1 April 2008).

58. Cited in Jonathan Cook, "Israel's Jewish Problem in Tehran," *The Electronic Intifada,* 6 August 2007: http://electronicintifada.net:80/v2/article7147.shtml (accessed 1 September 2007).

59. See, e.g., David Menashri, "The Pahlavi Monarchy and the Islamic Revolution," in *Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews,* ed. Houman Sarshar (Beverly Hills, Calif.: The Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2002), 381.

60. Dabashi, *Iran,* 151.

61. In the wake of the latest Israeli plan to lure Iranian Jews to Israel, the then head of the Society of Iranian Jews and Iran's sole Jewish Parliamentarian, Maurice Mohtamed, formulated this argument as follows: "Iran's Jews have always been free to emigrate and three-quarters of them did so after the revolution, but 70% of those went to America, not Israel"; cited in Robert Tait, "Iran's Jews Reject Cash Offer to Move to Israel," *Guard-*

ian, 12 July 2007, http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,,2125155,00.html (accessed 1 February 2008).

62. These statistics are available in Eliz Sanasariyan, *Religious Minorities in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 48. Estimates of the number of Jews remaining in Iran after 1979 vary from thirteen thousand (as claimed by the U.S. State Department's 2005 International Religious Freedom Report) to twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand (claimed by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, a nonprofit group based in New Haven, Connecticut).

63. Mary Hegland, "Two Images of Husain: Accommodation and Revolution in an Iranian Village," in *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 218.

64. Sanasariyan, *Religious Minorities in Iran,* 143.

65. "Israel must cease its aggressions against the Palestinians and grant them their rights," as Maurice Mohtamed declared in 2001; cited in *Al-Hayat,* 28 April 2001. On the heels of yet another round of Israeli strikes on Gaza in March-April 2008, the Iran Jewish Committee issued a statement condemning "the recent massacres in Gaza." Reportedly, the statement also called on all human rights organizations "to end their silence about the Zionist regime's crimes and to defend the Palestinians." Cited in "Iranian Jews Condemn Israeli Crimes in Gaza," *Payvand News,* 3 April 2008, http://www.payvand.com/news/08/mar/1047.html (accessed 6 April 2008).

66. *Ma'ariv,* 26 April 2006.

67. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 72.

68. Menashri, "The Jews of Iran," 36. See also Menashri, "Pahlavi Monarchy," 396. Italics are mine.

69. Shmuel Segev, *The Iranian Triangle: The Secret Relations Between Israel-Iran-USA* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 1981), 193.

70. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 421. Ronen Bergman reaches similar conclusions, saying that Iran's Jews began demonstrating their support for the revolutionary forces only after they were told by Ayatollah Taleqani, a key figure in the Islamist movement, that by doing so "no harm will befall them." Bergman also insists, in spite of clear and ample evidence to the contrary, that "a majority of Iran's Jews [today] live in constant fear as to what the future holds"; Ronen Bergman, *Point of No Return: Israeli Intelligence Against Iran and Hizballah* (in Hebrew) (Or Yehuda: Kineret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2007), 89, 96. Amnon Netzer similarly claims that it was primarily the anti-Jewish activity by "radical circles" beginning in mid-summer 1978 that prompted Iranian Jews to demonstrate their support for the unfolding revolution in a more candid manner. However, to the best of my knowledge Netzer was the first Israeli scholar to admit, however begrudgingly, that "while the Shah was still sitting on the throne, thousands of Jews took to the streets of Tehran in organized groups and joined the multitudes of Muslim demonstrators, holding placards against the regime and shouting slogans in condemnation of the

Shah"; Amnon Netzer, "Persecutions and Conversions in the History of Iran's Jews During the Seventeenth Century" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 6 (1980): 47.

71. Ella Shohat, *Forbidden Reminiscences: A Collection of Essays* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Kedem, 2001), 155–161.

72. The conflation of religious messianism and secular nationalism in the context of the history of Iranian Jews is exemplified in the following assertion by Avraham Cohen: "the desire to return to the Land of the Forefathers was woven into the woof and warp of the lives of Iranian Jews, and among them arose many messiahs who gave expression to the longing of the masses for redemption in Israel. Jewish-Persian literature, too, was imbued with love for the Land of Israel and longing for redemption"; Avraham Cohen, "Iranian Jewry and the Educational Enterprise of *Alliance Israélite Universelle*" (in Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 22 (1985): 96.

73. Shohat, "Invention of the Mizrahim," 6.

74. Menashri as cited in Netzer, *Iranian Jews,* 37. Ironically, although in many of his writings Menashri expresses discomfort with the conflation of Zionism and Judaism in the anti-Israel discourse of the Iranian state—see, e.g., his two Hebrew publications *Iran in Revolution* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988), 194; and *Iran After Khomeini: Revolutionary Ideology vs. National Interests* (Tel-Aviv: Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, 1999), 102—his commentary on Iranian Jews seems to reinforce that conflation.

75. Cited in Cook, "Israel's Jewish Problem."

76. "The Writing Is on the Wall in Houses of Iranian Jews," *Ma'ariv,* 23 January 1979.

77. Tova Tsimooki, "Will They Come to Israel?" *Davar,* 20 December 1978; Haim Pikrash, "Immigrants and Tourists from Iran," *Hatsofeh,* 15 December 1978.

78. "A Military Government in Iran: The Shah's Last *Option,*" *Davar,* 7 November 1978.

79. "We Must Dispatch Dozens of Emissaries to Rescue Iranian Jews," *Ha'aretz,* 9 January 1979; Amos Hadad, "The Magic Carpet of Iranian Jewry," *Ha'aretz,* 20 February 1979.

80. Tsafrir, *Big Satan,* 79; Segev, *Iranian Triangle,* 191–193; Ilan Shchori, "The Last Days of a Jewish Agency Emissary," *Ha'aretz,* 23 February 1979. Ronen Bergman reveals—in *Point of No Return,* 85–96—that the Mossad was also involved in these plans to "rescue" Iran's Jews.

81. "Iraq's Jews Prefer London and Amsterdam, *Ynet*, 28 July 2003, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-2707393,00.html (accessed 6 October 2008).

82. Benny Ziffer, "They Don't Want Israel," *Ha'aretz,* 27 June 2003.

83. See, e.g., Yonah Cohen, "Iranian Jewry in Distress," *Hatsofeh,* 5 January 1979; and N. Golan, "Iranian Jewry: In the Volcano's Crater," *Hatsofeh,* 26 January 1979. To the best of my knowledge it was, again, Amnon Netzer who provided the only carefully studied—and dispassionate—examination of anti-Zionist Jewish currents in Iran during and immediately after the 1979 revolution. See, e.g., Netzer, *Iranian Jews,* 21–26.

84. *Ha'aretz,* 1 January 1979. A newspaper commentary read as follows: "The apathy of Iranian Jewry, even after the volcano has erupted . . . is unintelligible to any Israeli who continually lives the lessons of the [Jews'] complacence on the eve of the Holocaust"; Daniel Bloch, "Lessons from Khomeini's Revolution," *Davar,* 16 February 1979. Arieh Beckenstein, manager of El-Al Airlines offices in Teheran during the revolution, reportedly warned his superiors in Tel Aviv, "We may miss the train, as we did in Europe; for the wise, this hint should suffice"; *Ha'aretz,* 1 January 1979.

85. N. Golan, "Iranian Jewry: In the Volcano's Crater," *Hatsofeh,* 26 November 1979; "The Writing Is on the Wall in Houses of Iranian Jews."

86. Meir Litvak, "What Is Behind Iran's Advocacy of Holocaust Denials?" *Iran Pulse: Updates & Overviews On Iranian Current Affairs* 3, 11 September 2006; and David Menashri, "What Lies Behind Ahmadi-Nejad's Hate Speech?" *Tel Aviv University Notes* 155, 21 December 2005.

87. *MSN News* (Israel), 20 May 2006, http://business.msn.co.il/news/StatePoliticalMilitary/State/200605/20060519215713.htm (accessed 3 April 2007).

88. Jonathan Cook collected these and other extravagant claims by Israeli public figures in "Israel's Jewish Problem." On another occasion, Peres referred to the nuclear standoff, saying, "The world must keep its eyes open before it's too late. History has witnessed many instances where it was too late to prevent human atrocities and bloodshed. This was the case . . . with Hitler, and now we're approaching a similar event with Ahmadinejad"; cited in *Ynet,* 19 October 2007, http://www.haaretz.com/hasite/pages/ShArtPE.jhtml?itemNo=914816&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0 (accessed 22 April 2008).

89. Cook, "Israel's Jewish Problem." Maurice Mohtamed has argued as much, asserting that Iran's Jews, even in their worst days, never suffered as much as they did in Europe; "anti-Semitism," he explained, "is not an eastern phenomenon, it's not an Islamic or Iranian phenomenon—anti-Semitism is a European phenomenon"; cited in Frances Harrison, "Iran's Proud but Discreet Jews," *BBC News,* 22 September 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5367892.stm (accessed 1 March 2007).

90. Yossi Melman, "The Yellow Armband Affair: A False News Item," *Ha'aretz,* 5 May 2006.

91. Cited in "A Yellow Armband in Iran Is a Red Spotlight to the World," *Ynet,* 20 May 2006, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3252864,00.html (accessed 8 October 2008).

92. See, e.g., Yossi Yonah's illuminating study of the manipulations and other practices used by Israeli authorities to reverse the general disinclination of Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel during the late 1980s and early 1990s; Yossi Yonah, "'Finally a Zionist Decision': The Struggle Against the 'Drop Out' of Soviet Jewry" (in Hebrew), in *Migration, Fertility and Identity in Israel,* ed. Yossi Yonah and Adriana Kemp (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2008), 56–91.

93. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 42.

94. Cited in Netzer, *Iranian Jews,* 35–36.

95. David Oren, "Longing for a Lost Country," *Ha'aretz,* 9 April 1982. See also Gideon Alon, "Was It Better Under Khomeini?" *Ha'aretz,* 4 April 1980.

96. Ibid.

97. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 10.

98. Shenhav, *Arab Jews,* 153–158.

99. Although Israel's historiography has not been keen on engaging with this embarrassment, it has been discussed in other, more popular literary genres. For example, in his memoirs on his twenty-five-year sojourn in Iran, Yaakov Nimrodi says that "after many years of bringing in hundreds of thousands of immigrants . . . the country's leaders began to apply pressure on the Jewish Agency's Immigration Department to thin out the waves of immigrants arriving through Iran and prefer the healthy young ones and the skilled workers over the elderly and the unskilled, who became a burden on the absorbing society. This selection . . . was a policy decided upon by the uppermost echelons in Israel, in response to the force of realities"; Yaakov Nimrodi, *A Life Journey* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ma'ariv Book Guild, 2003), 150–151. Yonah Cohen, who describes his years as an emissary to Iran in the early 1950s, claims that the selection policy was "a death blow to *aliyah*" from Iran; Yonah Cohen, *Toward the Forgotten Million: Aliyah Mission in Syria and Iran* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Kana, 1987), 195. On the debate over the "selection" of Moroccan Jews, see, e.g., Avi Picard, "The Beginning of 'Selective' Immigration During the Early 1950s" (in Hebrew), *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael* 9 (1999): 338–394.

100. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 310–312.

101. Joseph Massad, "Zionism's Internal Others: Israel and the Oriental Jews." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25 (Summer 1996): 57.

102. Sadok, *Jews in Iran,* 310.

103. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 4–5.

104. Ashis Nandy, *Bonfire of Creeds: The Essential Ashis Nandy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15.

105. David Oren, "Longing for a Lost Country," *Ha'aretz,* 9 April 1982.

106. Ibid.

107. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 8.

108. Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–92; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

109. Kimmerling, *Immigrants, Settlers, Natives,* 313.

110. Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 8.

111. William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 91. For a similar formulation of this argument, see Judith T. Shuval, "Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm," *International Migration* 38 (2000): 47.

112. Eli Bradenstein, "Israel Says to Iranian Jews: Immigration at Any Price," *Ma'ariv,* 8 July 2007.

113. James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (2004): 304.

114. Ibid., 308.

115. Cited in Ewen MacAskill, Simon Tisdall, and Robert Tait, "Iran's Jews Learn to Live with Ahmadinejad," *Guardian,* 27 June 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,,1807160,00.html (accessed 21 December 2006). For similar expressions by leaders of Iran's Jewish community, see Robert S. Greenberger, "How Jew-Friendly Persia Became Anti-Semitic Iran," *Moment,* 14 December 2006, http://www.momentmag.com/Exclusive/2006/2006-12/200612-IranFeature.html (accessed 21 July 2007).

116. Sadeq Saba, "Iran Jews Express Holocaust Shock," BBC, 11 February 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4705246.stm (accessed 11 February 2006); Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance,* 9.

117. As an Israeli analyst, Meir Javedenfar, suggested, their strong-worded condemnation of Ahmadinejad confirms that "the Iranian public has deep respect for the Jews and [that] relations between Muslims and Jews [in that country] are excellent. . . . "; *Ha'aretz,* 13 February 2006.

118. Arif Dirlik, *Postmodernity's Histories: The Past as Legacy and Project* (Lenham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 193.

119. "Report: Anti-Semitism on the Rise Globally," CNN.Com, 14 March 2008, http://edition.cnn.com/2008/US/03/14/anti-semitism/?iref=mpstoryview (accessed 15 March 2008).

120. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 3–4.

Postscript

1. Alex Spillius, "George Bush Warns Putin Over 'World War III,'" *Telegraph,* 20 October 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/10/18/wiran118.xml (accessed 27 March 2007).

2. *Ynet,* 10 October 2007, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3461152,00.html (accessed 11 October 2007).

3. Gidi Weitz and Naama Lenski, "Now It's Your Turn," *Ha'aretz Weekly Supplement,* 27 October 2007.

4. Roni Sofer, "Ministry for Strategic Affairs Will Be Disbanded within a Few Weeks," *Ynet,* 27 March 2008: http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-3524123,00.html (accessed 27 March 2008).

5. Gershom Gorenberg, "The Minister for National Fears," *The Atlantic,* May 2007. Created specifically for purposes of coalition politics, the ministry never enjoyed any real power. While Lieberman's job description included "coordinating all security and intelligence branches," it also stipulated that his appointment did not detract from the authority of the defense and foreign ministers. And ultimately, the buck stopped at the

prime minister. Hence Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh noted, "Olmert gave him a nice title. . . . [Lieberman] is in charge of talking"; cited in ibid.

6. Eldad Beck, "Iran: A Country with No Intermission," *Yedi'ot Ahronoth Weekly Supplement,* 18 April 2008.

7. Indeed, despite Livni's reported disclaimers, she did not refrain from pushing the case for stiffer sanctions against Iran on her trip to China in late October 2007, declaring in a speech to university students in Beijing, "Behind almost every conflict that we have in the Middle East, one can see the long arms and shadow of Iran"; cited in *Jerusalem Post,* 29 October 2007.

8. The recent NIE repudiates a 2005 estimate the White House has used to depict an Iran relentlessly working to develop nuclear weapons, and it's a ringing vindication of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has argued for years that there's no evidence of an Iranian nuclear weapons program.

9. The brochure can be accessed at the Home Front Command's Website: http://www.oref.org.il/. For a critique of the Home Front Command brochure, see Uzi Benziman, "The Home Front's Hysterical Calming," *Ha'aretz,* 6 January 2008.

10. "It's possible," speculates Yossi Melman (in "A Resounding Blow," *Ha'aretz,* 6 December 2007), "that the United States was wrong in its assessment, but it is also possible that Israel is wrong. And there's another possibility: maybe the two states' information and database are similar, but there were those in Israel who took the trouble to 'cook' it in such a way that would warrant a severe interpretation, one that would serve their political or security interests."

11. Cited in Shmuel Rosner and Aluf Benn, "U.S. Versus Iran: Handcuffed by the Bureaucrats," *Ha'aretz,* 5 December 2007.

12. I am deeply indebted to Avi Rubin for helping me to make sense of this excerpt.

13. David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 12.

14. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

15. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 8.

16. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* vol. 2, *Lifeworlds and System* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 124.

17. Ashis Nandy, *Bonfire of Creeds: The Essential Ashis Nandy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1–16.

18. Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism, and Globalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 7.

19. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7–8.

20. This remains true even if the Shah was not, as conservative historian Niall Ferguson suggests—in *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004),

117—"the worst of the despots installed and propped up by the United States during the cold war." Ferguson goes on to suggest that "the regime was very far from liberal, and the shah's penchant for conspicuous consumption was less than judicious. Compared with the dictators the United States cultivated in Nicaragua or Chile, however, he was an enlightened despot."

21. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1982), 33.

22. Cited in Robin Kelley, "Introduction: A Poetics of Anticolonialism." In Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism,* trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 17.

23. Ania Loomba et al., "Beyond What? An Introduction," in Ania Loomba et al., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 12.

24. On the authority and prestige of Middle East experts in Israel, see Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), Chapter 5.

25. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe,* 28.

26. Ibid.

27. One such correspondent told me during the second Lebanon war that he actually felt uncomfortable speaking about Iran, a country he knew so little about. This brings to mind Hamid Dabashi's criticism of "[those] overnight experts opining on matters of vital global significance without so much as an elementary knowledge of a language necessary to venture an opinion about a matter"; Hamid Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in Time of Terror* (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction, 2008), 21.

28. *'Al Hashulchan* 198 (August 2007).

29. Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

30. Fredrick Cooper comes out strongly against any notion that reduces European history to the claim of progress. Nineteenth-century Europe, he argues, "was immersed in struggles within and among many parochialisms and many universalities. Secularism was more often beleaguered than triumphant; ancient régimes and aristocracies didn't die out on the guillotine"; Fredrick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 20.

31. Rebecca L. Stein, "The Ballad of the Sad Café: Israeli Leisure, Palestinian Terror, and the Post/Colonial Question," in Loomba et al., *Postcolonial Studies,* 327.

32. Edward Said, *Reflections of Exile* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 473. Italics in the original.

33. Yuval Nathan, "Ashkenazim, Wake up," *Ma'ariv,* 25 March 1999.

34. Aziza Khazzoom, "The Great Chain of Orientalism: Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 68 (August 2003): 481–510.

35. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 301.

36. As Daniel Boyarin contends—in ibid., 302–303—"Herzlian Zionism is . . . itself the civilizing mission, first and foremost directed by Jews at other Jews. . . . The only natives to whom [Herzl] imagined directing his civilizing mission were those 'Hottentot' *Ostjuden,* whom . . . were read by him as constituting another race."

37. Khazzoom, "Great Chain of Orientalism," 499.

38. Ella Shohat, "Sephradim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19 (Fall 1988): 23.

39. Khazzoom, "Great Chain of Orientalism," 500.

40. Cited in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jews in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 425.

41. Simone Clark, *Social Theory, Psychoanalysis and Racism* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 11.

42. Etienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities,* ed. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Verso, 1991), 21.

43. Clark, *Social Theory,* 76.

44. Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *Standard Edition,* Vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 220.

45. Benny Ziffer, "Satan Comes to New York," *Ha'aretz,* 28 September 2007.

46. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 20.

47. Ibid., 56.

48. "By their sheer presence, which does not fit easily into any of the established categories, the strangers deny the very validity of the accepted oppositions. They belie the oppositions' 'natural' character, expose their arbitrariness, lay bare their fragility. They show the divisions for what they indeed are: imaginary lines that can be crossed or redrawn"; Zygmunt Bauman, *Thinking Sociologically* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 54.

49. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "The Zionist Return to the West and the Mizrahi Jewish Perspective," in *Orientalism and the Jews,* ed. Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek J. Penslar (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2005), 166–167.

50. Ari Shavit, "Proud White Bourgeois," *Ha'aretz,* 20 December 2002.

51. A most recent example of this is a backlash caused by a proposal put forth by Shas chairman and minister of industry, trade and employment Eli Yishai that would make cremation illegal. The bill came after 'Alei Shalechet crematorium, located on a Moshav in Israel's Sharon region, sustained major damage in a fire that police and firefighters believed was caused by arson. In a highly contentious pronouncement in support of the proposal, Shas minister Itzhak Cohen, who also happens to be chairman of the cabinet committee for burial affairs, said the bill "would put an end to those who are implementing the final solution [sic] all over again." Knesset member Yossi Beilin from Meretz-Yachad Party, which is the self-styled guardian of (oxymoronic) Jewish

secularity, responded by saying that Shas was "pushing Israel to the brink of a dark age." Another Meretz-Yachad Knesset member, Avshalom Vilan, added that this would come to pass after Shas will have initiated a successful "Iranian-style attempt [to] . . . have the Ayatollahs rule [in Israel]"; cited in *Ha'aretz*, 24 August 2007.

52. I thank Stanford University Press for allowing me to add these brief notes on the Israeli attack on Gaza at this very late stage of the book's production.

53. Gideon Levy, "An Open Response to A. B. Yehoshua," *Ha'aretz*, 18 January 2009.

54. "Lieberman: Do to Hamas What the U.S. Did to Japan," *Jerusalem Post*, 13 January 2009, http://fr.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1231774444907&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull (accessed 16 January 2009).

55. "Netanyahu Says to the International Media: 'What Would You Do If You Were Shot At?'" 13 January 2009, http://www.netanyahu.org.il/blog/tag/%D7%98%D7%A8%D7% 95%D7%A8/ (accessed 21 January 2009).

56. "The Prime Minister to European Leaders: We Want to Evacuate Gaza as Soon as Possible," *Ynet*, 18 January 2009, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3658264,00.html (accessed 20 January 2009).

57. "The Complete Speech: The Prime Minister Declares a Ceasefire in Gaza," *Ynet*, 18 January 2009, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-3657794,00.html (accessed 20 January 2009).

58. Ari Shavit, "Avigdor Lieberman: Missiles Will Be Launched at Tel-Aviv within One Year," *Ha'aretz*, 20 January 2009.

59. Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire* (London: Routledge, 2008), 10.

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"After Iran's Supreme Leader, Top Dissident Cleric Slams Ahmadinejad." *The Indian Express,* 23 January 2007: http://www.indianexpress.com/21538.html (accessed 21 March 2007).

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In the end, Ram demonstrates that the conflict between Israel and Iran may not be as essential and polarized as common knowledge assumes. Israeli anti-Iran phobias are derived equally from domestic anxieties about the Jewish state's ethnic and religious identities and from exaggerated and displaced strategic concerns in the era of the "war on terrorism."

HAGGAI RAM is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Middle East Studies at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. His publications include *Reading Iran in Israel* (2006, published in Hebrew) and *Myth and Mobilization in Revolutionary Iran* (1994).

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