The Role of Civil Society in Developing and Consolidating

Democracy: Evidence from Israel

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Introduction

In addressing what is commonly labeled the 'democratic phenomenon', Sidney Tarrow (1996: 389) states that "all self-respecting political scientists like to think of themselves as intrigued with what makes democracy work". This probably has to do with the fact that democratic government has become commonly accepted as a 'normative good' or in the words of John Drysek (1996: 475) "almost everyone everywhere now seems to believe that democracy is a good thing" and the more of it – the better. This is not so much because democracy is a 'perfect' political arrangement, only that it seems to be less flawed than other forms which have come under inspection. Political scientists, then, are interested in the various mechanisms which make this 'better polity' work and more specifically, how to achieve it where it does not exist, and how to maintain and strengthen it where it does.

Although modern, and primarily liberal, definitions of democracy take it to be more than any given set of institutions; most accounts of democratic process are solely concentrated in the structure and action of a single actor - the state (Drysek,
1996: 475; Dahl, 1989: 37). Dryzek however suggests that this exclusive focus is inappropriate, and attention should be shifted to what he terms as 'the polity beyond the state'. Political and economic scholars (see Weisbrod, 1977; 1988; Salamon & Anheier, 1997) have identified two social and economic sectors in addition to that of the state. If the state itself is regarded as a 'first sector', then the second is comprised of all economic initiatives within society, but distinct from the sphere of the state. These include private and public enterprises often identified via their primary target – financial gain. The 'third sector', as it has come to be known, is comprised of all the residual organizational activity that is excluded from both the state and profit making categories.

Although this organizational sector includes numerous and diverse organizations, for the purpose of this paper we will concentrate on one specific sphere of the 'third sector', often labeled 'civil society'.

The concept of 'civil society' is not new to the literature in social sciences. It has been used by many political thinkers, among them Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, De Tocqueville, Hegel, Marx, and Gramsci. Nevertheless, many have interpreted 'civil society' differently, making it one of the most changeable terms in academic literature (Seligman, 1992). Moreover, only since Cohen's and Arato's 'Civil Society and Political Theory' (1992) has the academic debate truly focused on the civil society's role in the promotion of democratic regimes (Dryzek, 1996: 475).

In an important piece Diamond (1994: 5) provides future goals for academics interested in the relationship between civil society and democracy. These include further conceptualization of the term, classification of organizations and their activities and, most notably, a clearer picture of the specific means by which civil society benefits democratic countries, and the limitations of this potential
contribution. A retrospective examination almost a decade later shows that while some of these goals have been advanced, others are still lacking. Conceptualization of the term civil society has been advanced and a large array of literature now exists on civil society of various shapes and forms. If anything, it seems that too many definitions are now in use and academics writing in the field are troubled by choice of words and meanings. Classifications of various 'types' of civil society are common, but the relation of these to democratic theory has hardly been advanced. Moreover, very little knowledge exists on the various ways by which different configurations of civil society influence democracy. Finally, Diamond's (1994: 5) statement that "we need to think about the features of civil society that are most likely to serve the development and consolidation of democracy" seems as necessary today as it was at the time of its writing. As our knowledge of democracy increases we grow more aware that there is no single model on which all democratic states are molded. Democracies vary in size, shape and essence and no two are identical. It is thus reasonable to assume that some configurations of civil society are more liable to influence certain forms of democracy, while others are suitable for different democratic varieties.

The goal of this article is therefore threefold. First, we wish to investigate and advance the various ways by which promotion of democracy by civil society has been described in the literature. Our focus is on different configurations of civil society, and the respectively different roles these play in the development and consolidation of democratic polities. From this, by examining the nature of Israel's democratic foundations we believe that the theory of democracy has much to benefit from the study of 'imperfect', yet functional, democratic regimes such as Israel. Finally, by presenting several case studies from Israel we put forward the argument that different
configurations of civil society are better suited for promoting democracy in non-liberal or partial democracies, than those effective in established liberal democracies.

**What is civil society?**

In order to understand what civil society does, it is imperative to agree what civil society is. Foely and Edwards (1998: 5-6) identify the notion of civil society as an effort to rethink the bases of social order, placing it as a realm of politics situated between the state and citizenry or put otherwise, between government and those governed. The attractiveness of the term, according to Seligman (1992: x), is its "assumed synthesis of private and public 'good' and of individual and social desiderata". Another way of getting closer to what civil society is, is by ruling out what it is not (Yishai, 1998), or what it is distinct from (Diamond, 1994). Civil society is first and foremost identified by its detachment from the state. As noted by Ahrne (1998) "it is distinct and, as a social phenomenon, different from the state" or by Keane (1988) "a realm of life institutionally separated from territorial state institutions". Drysek (1996: 481) notes that civil society consists of associations "not seeking any share in state power". Yet, civil society should definitely not be taken to include the whole of society, meaning that it is everything which is not the state. According to Diamond (1994: 5) "it is distinct from 'society' in general in that it involves citizens *acting together collectively in a public sphere* to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable" (italics in original). Thus, civil society is located in the public, rather than private, realm of human activity, and is inherently political in that (a) it involves public goals and interests and (b) its actions are often directed specifically at the state. Therefore, civil society excludes not
only the state, but also the private (individual and family life and inward-looking group activity such as recreation or entertainment). Finally, civil society is also distinct from what can be termed 'market', or 'profit-making activity'. This does not mean that there is no profit generated in this activity, nor that participants must not receive pay, but that financial revenues are not distributed to owners or shareholders, and the goals and aims of these organizations surpass the individual desire of their founders to accumulate wealth (Salamon & Anheier, 1997). This often, but not always, implies some sort of voluntary membership.

Thus, definitions of civil society often refer to "voluntary political associations oriented by a relationship to the state, but not seeking any share in state power" (Dryzek, 1996: 481).

**Civil society and Democracy: The Odd Relationship**

Civil society is often referred to as a 'democratic' phenomenon, but this is by no means a pre-requisite derived from many of the popular definitions. In fact, Diamond's (1994: 6-7) account of civil society as necessarily pluralist in the liberal democratic sense, and the outright exclusion of "religious fundamentalist, ethnic chauvinist, revolutionary or millenarian movements" and other such organizations from the civil society phenomena is indeed an exception. Some accounts of civil society even place it at the forefront of anti-democratic activity. Booth and Richard (1998: 781) refer to a "violent and confrontational" type of civil society they term as 'uncivil society'. The examples they provide are precisely those excluded from Diamond's account, the Ku Klux Klan, militia organizations in the United States, ideological extremist groups, paramilitaries and death squads of Central America. Berman (1997) provides an earlier account in which she shows civil society's role in
the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany and Eubank and Weinberg (1997) presented a similar account with regard to the fascist regime in Italy.

In effect, and by way of logic, civil society may take on one of four typical configurations: First, civil society organizations may actively and purposely seek to consolidate democracy. Such organizations have been labeled by Pedahzur (2002) as 'pro-democratic' civil society. Second, organizations may act to achieve goals which are neither democratic nor undemocratic, but as long as these organizations are internally democratic in nature, it may be assumed that they benefit democracy indirectly (perhaps by developing democratic norms, leadership, trust, social capital and so on). Third, organizations not seeking specific democratic goals may be internally undemocratic. The contribution of such organizations to democracy is questionable. Finally, organizations may actively and purposely seek to undermine democracy, as exemplified by Booth and Richard (1998) in the concept of 'uncivil society'. These organizations, by their own nature, make a negative contribution to democratic polity.

Yet, most writers seem to at least imply that civil society and democracy go hand in hand, each feeding on the merits of the other. This was termed by Walzer (1992) as the 'civil society argument'. Yishai (2002: 215) states that "a vibrant civil society has been perceived as pivotal to democracy" as "it contributes to government's legitimacy and its efficiency". Bella et al. (1985) have advanced the idea that civil society plays an important role by implanting democratic ideas (coined 'habits of the heart') in the hearts and minds of individuals, thus creating and aiding a democratic citizenry to 'complement' the democratic institutions of the state. Civil society has also been acclaimed as playing a crucial role in the toppling of authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, China, South Africa and South America and
introducing democratic government and practices to developing countries. (Fukuyama, 2001; Seligson, 1999; Glaser, 1997; Kotze & De Toit, 1995; Tong, 1994; Cohen & Arato, 1992; Ekiert, 1991).

Indeed, one of the most complete accounts to date can still be found in Diamond’s (1994: 7-11) classic piece in which he lists no less than ten specific functions in which civil society plays a crucial democratic role. These include: (1) limitations of state power; (2) alternative channels for political participation, increasing the political efficacy and skill of citizens, and promoting a better understanding of the rights and obligations which make up democratic life; (3) development and communication of democratic norms; (4) channels for articulation, aggregation and representation of interest; (5) mitigation in political conflict; (6) provision training and experience for political leadership; (7) non-biased monitoring of political activity and government; (8) development and provision of information; (9) formulation of political coalitions; and (10) the accumulation of all previous functions, though occasionally agitating for the state, often strengthens it in the end. The 'total' influence, it can be said, is greater than the aggregated effect of the individual influences.

Finally, no review of the civil society-democracy relationship is complete today without addressing the work of Putnam, whose work on civil society's role in Italian (Putnam, 1993) and American (Putnam, 1995; 2000) politics is perhaps the most appraised (for good and for bad) in the field. Putnam and his supporters portray a specific effect of associational engagement which is deemed most important to democratic life – social capital. Social capital, as described by Putnam (2000: 19) "refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them". Viewed as such, civil society
need not specifically intend to develop and consolidate democracy, for this is a natural 'side effect' of its activity. In his influential article titled "Bowling Alone", Putnam (1995) brings forth the example of bowling leagues as important civil activity without which democratic stability is lessened, thus claiming that the virtues of civil engagement are not derived solely from intentional political action. But Putnam's work has also been criticized. Tarrow (1996) claimed that Putnam's sequence of Italian history is reversed, and rather than civil society having a strong impact on government performance, it is the state and its institutions that have affected civil society. In her study of Israel, Yishai echoes the same idea, suggesting that the imperfect Israeli democracy is reflected in its imperfect civil society. Lynch (1997) and Olvera (1997) have shown how undemocratic events in Latin America have affected civil society. Booth and Richard (1998: 782) are troubled by Putnam's "obscure and murky connections" between the actions of civil society and those of government. They state that "Putnam never elucidates how group involvement affects performance or enhances the prospects for democracy", and by referring to specific "state-impinging" activity (labeled by them as 'political capital') they refute the notion that any civil society action is inherently political – just those primarily focused on the state or the larger public.

Operationalizing the 'Civil Society Argument':

It seems that the 'civil society argument' has been discussed in theory far more than it has been actually been tested in reality. This is perhaps a result of the same obscurity and murkiness that Booth and Richard (1998: 782) charge Putnam with, but are prevalent in much of the literature. It may also be the result of the complexity of the two concepts involved: civil society and democracy. One way of resolving these
difficulties is by breaking down large and complex ideas, which by nature have a tendency towards murkiness, into smaller, more manageable and clearer categories. Foley and Edwards (1996: 39) have proposed a "rough analytical distinction" of the 'civil society argument' into two broad versions, or families. The first family of arguments is labeled 'civil society I' and refers to the ability of associations to "foster patterns of civility in the actions of citizens in a democratic polity". This line of reasoning is most commonly identified today with Putnam (1993; 1995; 2000) and his followers. The second family of arguments, labeled 'civil society II', emphasizes the independence of civil society from the state and therefore its capability of "energizing resistance to a tyrannical regime". Booth and Richard (1998: 781) have extended this distinction further still, proposing 'civil society III', "a violent and confrontational, but not necessarily anti-tyrannical form of associational activism. In his use of this distinction, Pedahzur (2002) has correctly broadened the use of 'civil society II' to also include not only resistance to 'tyrannical' regimes, but also resistance to democratic and semi-democratic regimes when these (as they sometimes do) fail to uphold their democratic nature. In doing so he refers back to Diamond’s (1994) original observation that civil society is just as important for restraining democratic governments, as it is in opposing non-democratic governments. Another important observation made by Pedahzur (2002) is that these different arrangements of the 'civil society argument' may be distinguished according to the target of operation chosen by various civil society organizations. Thus, 'civil society I' is inherently focused on society and the general public (including 'civil society III'), while 'civil society II' is engaged in action against the state. By assigning examples of 'real life' organizations which fit the various configurations of civil society (I, II & III), both Booth and Richard (1998) and Pedahzur (2002) also advance the idea that this distinction
between theoretical arguments may indeed be usable to categorize actual organizational life.

The operational aspects of the civil society I, II and III distinction are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Operational aspects of the civil society I, II & III distinction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Society I</th>
<th>Civil Society II</th>
<th>Civil Society III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target of action</strong></td>
<td>Society, the general public or specific sub-publics.</td>
<td>The state, government agencies and officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals of operation</strong></td>
<td>Not necessarily focused at promoting democracy. When pro-democratic, focused on promoting democratic attitudes and behavior in society.</td>
<td>Oppositional by nature. Aims to change the regime or certain aspects of it by democratic means of resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confined to legal means of achieving goals</strong></td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Means by which democracy is advanced (or regressed in the case of civil society III)</strong></td>
<td>Education towards democratic values, attitudes and behavior; internal democratic practices; development of citizen skills; development of leadership skill.</td>
<td>Opposition to non-democratic endeavors of the state; monitoring of state activity; legal confinement of the state; organization of pro-democratic public protest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example organizations</strong></td>
<td>Democratic education organizations.</td>
<td>Human Right Organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, …</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Studying 'Democracy in Israel': Characteristics, Limitations and Advantages**

Truth be told, if the study of democracy was to focus exclusively on 'ideal type' liberal democratic regimes, the study of Israel would become obsolete. But indeed, few if any countries manage to uphold this 'ideal', and more countries than not portray a mix of ideal liberal-democratic policies coupled with non-democratic or semi-democratic ones.
From its establishment in 1948, Israel has displayed a rather stable (although shifting) mix of democratic and non democratic features. Although, Yishai (2002: 224) describes the country as "facing hurdles on its road to democracy", she also portrays it as a "parliamentary democracy with a government relying on the legislator for a vote of confidence". In 1977 Israel's democratic foundations proved strong enough to see it quietly through the transformation of power from the previously dominant party 'Labor' (and formally, 'Mapai' to its leading opposition – the 'Likud'. Moreover, as Brichta (2001) has shown, various groups have been struggling to bring about system change in Israel, with the aspiration of making it a more "stable and effective democracy".

Although not without restrictions, various theorists have considered it a stable and functional democracy. Barak (1996: 446), president of Israel's Supreme Court, states that Israel is a constitutional democracy because it is governed by the principle of majority rule and because it recognizes human rights. Sheffer (1996: 5) labels Israel as a 'private' liberal democracy while Neuberger (1998) has described it as a 'stained' liberal democracy. Eisenstadt (2002) identifies Israel (together with India) as a rare case outside the Western hemisphere that has managed to maintain its democracy. Dowty (1999) assigns Israel to what he refers to as a "more ethnic" liberal democracy.

Smooha (1989; 1990; 2002a; 2002b) describes Israel, together with other countries such as Northern Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia and Latvia, as a specific type of democracy – the 'ethnic democracy'.

However because of its less democratic features, Israel has also been referred to as a non-democracy or non-democratic state. Benvenisti (1987: 66-80) sees the state of Israel together with the West Bank and Gaza Strip as one integrated territorial,
economic and political unit, in which Jews rule by force over the Arab population. Yiftachel (1999: 38) sees Israel as a "non-democratic regime which attempts to extend or preserve disproportional ethnic control over a contested multi-ethnic territory". Yiftachel et al. (2000) argue that it is this lack of equality, and the denial of Arab basic rights, belonging and identity, that distinguish Israel from democratic regimes.

For the purpose advanced in this article, i.e. development and consolidation of democracy by civil society, we believe that the Israeli setting, rather than hampering the intended study, lends it further support and comparability. For one thing, studying the development of democracy and its consolidation is only of historical interest if the regime is deemed a 'perfect' or 'ideal' democracy. Of course, this is not an acute problem, as ideal types are rarely (if ever) to be found. Moreover, many of the nations being studied in this respect today are far from the ideal model. Many countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East still lack the most basic democratic foundations but their colonial history is sometimes staggeringly similar to that of Israel, indicating that perhaps the Israeli model of democratic formulation is of greater importance than, say, that of the more established liberal democracies. Moreover, processes of globalization and democratization in these countries have been in force for some time, and it is these processes (not the existence of a stable democratic regime) which are the center of analysis for many academics interested in democratization.

Finally, this does not contradict the fact that Israel is indeed much closer institutionally, ideologically and culturally to Western democracies than it is to any other regime type. This is not only expressed in the adaptation of Western norms by Israel, but also similar reaction to similar situations and stimulations. Security considerations which have often been faulted with Israel's democratic insufficiency,
have also led other democracies to take actions which can be considered contradictory to democratic norms and behavior.

All this considered, the study of democratization in Israel may lend much knowledge to the study of democracy, democratic transitions and development and the strengthening of already existing, but 'imperfect' democratic regimes.

**The Study and its Rationale:**

Previous study of pro-democratic civil society has concentrated on the anticipated effects of organizational activity on democratic consolidation. This debate has often been more theoretical in nature, as precise measurements of democracy or the influence of civil society on such are virtually impossible. Little attention has been paid to the various configurations of civil society and the precise role these play in the consolidation process. Even less has been said about the way each of these different configurations is in itself affected by the democratic nature of the state, and the immanent fluctuations in democratic nature of any given country over time.

In this study we focus only on those organizations actively seeking to advance democratic values and behavior – i.e., pro-democratic civil society. We wish to advance the notion that different configurations of pro-democratic civil society play different roles in the process of democratic consolidation. Moreover, by their own nature, various 'types' of organizations interact differently with the state and thus are affected differently by changes in the democratic nature of the state. One claim we wish to advance is that civil society I organizations, which target society (and not state mechanisms) are less likely to be conceived by the state as a direct threat, and are thus given more space to develop, while civil society II organizations are more often imposed upon by the state. In 'strong' states, such as Israel, 'civil society I'
organization are often incorporated into state politics in what many times resembles a 'bear-hug': organizations also tend to become dependent on state cooperation and resources, thus unable to effectively pose independent agendas or oppose undemocratic state behavior. By contrast, although civil society II organizations suffer the daily hardships of state antagonism, they are more independent and more effectively able to oppose the state. By this, they are able to provide democratic consolidation not only when backed up by state actors, but specifically when this support is absent.

This study was advance by two stages of data collection. In the first stage, pro-democratic civil society organizations were identified via publications of their official goals. As academic treatment of 'pro-democratic' civil society in Israel is still in its beginnings, data was compared from several different sources: (a) the official registrar of NGOs in Israel; (b) two independent lists of Israeli NGOs (list self-help organizations and list of voluntary organizations in Israel); (c) the New Israel Fund (a private fund dedicated to the development of pro-democratic civil society) and (d) Shatil (an organization specializing in the provision of organizational training to those organizations receiving monetary aid from the New Israel Fund). Eventually, 156 pro-democratic organizations were identified, and questionnaires were administered to them. Additional data was gathered through in-depth interviews with organization activists. Telephone interviews were carried out during the month of April 2001 and again in August 2002.

Civil Society in Israel – Origin and Development:

The historical development of civic organizations in Israel dates back to the days of pre-statehood. Both the Ottoman Empire and the British mandate which
followed allowed ample space for self rule. This was utilized by the relatively small
Jewish community, consisting mainly of immigrants from Eastern Europe, and
characterized by high political awareness, partisan culture, and a participative political
culture. Pre-state civil society organizations provided all the basic requirements of the
Jewish settlements, including among others: security, health, welfare, education and
recreational activity (Horowitz & Lissak, 1977). In fact, pre-statehood civil society
was so encompassing and effective that many of these organizations were called upon
by the new state following independence to continue provision of services in the
formative years. These organizations enabled the new country to deal with incredibly
demanding needs, mainly immigration absorption and security threats.

What is more, this highly organized civil activity provided not only the
organizational bases for the young state, but also a strong democratic foundation. Pre-
state politics was very much pluralistic, distinguished by loose central governance,
and exceptionally tolerant for the affluent divergence of many distinct immigrant
communities.

However, in the formative years of Israeli independence, circumstances have
changed dramatically for civil society. The burdens of security and immigration
absorption necessitated a centralized polity and the new government soon became the
chief political actor. Not only civil society was absorbed by this new sovereignty, but
even political parties became so identified with the state itself that Akzin (1955) had
termed the country a 'party state'. In the following decades, independent civil society
was in effect non-existent. The 1977 elections, and the fall of the Labor party which
had been considered a dominant party till this point (as it had never before lost an
election) signified a new era for civic activity. The 'hibernation' period of civil
society, as it was termed by Uri Ben-Eliezer (1999), was nearing its conclusion.
The overall number of civic organizations has undoubtedly been on the rise since the early 1980s, and new organizations are registered annually. In fact, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (where all associations are required to register) the number of registered organizations rose from only 3,000 in 1982 to over 34,000 by the end of 2003. Several scholars (among them Gidron, 1997; Gidron & Katz, 1998; Gidron, Kramer & Salamon, 1992; Yishai, 1991) have documented this growth, and portrayed optimism that a strong and pluralistic civil society is indeed developing in Israel. The question remains, what (and how) do these organizations contribute to the democratic nature of the country?

**Pro-Democratic Civil Society – General Trends**

Democratic functions are carried out by civic organizations, even when these are not the primary goals of such organizations (Putnam, 2000). We, however, are interested here only in those organizations which specifically list democratic functions among their written aims. Some 156 organizations of this type existed in Israel in the year 2001. The majority were 'young' organizations established in the 1980s (33%) and 1990s (49%). As could be anticipated, these organizations shy away from tight relationships with political parties (an overwhelming 96% stated that they have no formal relations whatsoever with political parties), and strive to maintain independence from the state (some 58% reported that more than half of their revenues are financed by various non-governmental funds). Moreover, many of these organizations report internal democratic attributes, such as democratic leadership and decision making structures, election of officials and heterogeneity among the members. All these are important if civil society organizations are expected to breed democratic behavior, or in the words of Robert Putnam (2000: 338) act as 'schools in
democracy'. Moreover, as Eckstein (1966) fittingly noted, organizations which declare their support for democracy, but at the same time do not practice a democratic organizational lifestyle, might raise suspicions regarding their true nature and their ability to support democracy.

We now turn to examining the 'democratic' functions of these organizations according to distinctions suggested by Foley and Edwards (1996): civil society I (society orientated organizations); and civil society II (state orientated organizations).

**Civil Society I: Society Orientated Organizations**

The vast majority of Israel's pro-democratic civil society (80% of the organizations surveyed) fit into the category of 'Civil Society I'. As such, their goals and operations are not focused on the actions of state, its various mechanisms, or functionaries, but rather on the general public (or citizenry) or some smaller, more specific public. Yet, within this category, one can further divide the organizations according to their targets of operation. Thus, the first subgroup includes organizations which aim to moderate the various estrangements of Israeli society. The second subcategory consists of organizations aiming to strengthen democratic norms and behaviors, mainly by means of education. The final subcategory is that of organization monitoring undemocratic behaviors within Israeli society, reporting these and working to limit future occurrences.

*Moderation of social estrangements – co-existence groups:*

The first subcategory, groups aimed at the moderation of social estrangements, is exemplified by their local character (groups working in certain cities, or even neighborhoods, and less frequently on a national level) and little
institutionalization (few members, decentralized leadership structures, minimal hierarchy, small budgets, and few material possessions). These are often referred to in Israel as 'co-existence' organizations, as they preach and practice co-existence between commonly estranged groups, predominantly Jews and Arabs.

One such group is the Abraham Fund Initiatives founded in 1989 to promote co-existence between Jews and Arabs in Israel. The groups’ goals, as stated in their mission-statement include: "Promoting tolerance, mutual understanding, and trust between groups; strengthening individual group identity by building respect for the rich diversity of Israel’s ethnically mixed society; and achieving an environment of social and political equality for all citizens of Israel" (on-line at: http://www.coexistence.org). In addition to these goals, which are representative of this category group, this organization also includes among its aims a unique objective: "implementing advocacy campaigns that raise awareness on issues of tolerance, democracy, and equality within the State of Israel; and institutionalizing efforts for the development of coexistence policies and programs for acceptance in all segments of Israeli society". By this, it goes beyond the boundaries of the classic 'civil society I' type, and advocates the state – acting much like other advocacy or interest groups.

Following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, both old and new groups broadened their focus to include meetings between secular and religious Jews, and secular Jews living within the green-line and residents of settlements beyond the green-line. With the breakout of riots many Arab settlements (and also in the cities of Jaffa, Haifa and Nazareth) in October 2000 in rejection of Israeli policies towards both Israeli-Arabs and Palestinians in the disputed territories, tension between Jews and Arabs in the country has been high, and many co-existence groups discontinued their operations.
All in all, those groups originating in Israel exist on a relatively small scale, although according to Abu Bakker Hassam, of the Abraham Fund Initiatives, over 100 such organizations are to be found in Israel (remark at the 'The Second International Workshop on Peace Education Research conference on peace education at the University of Haifa, June 8, 2003). Although studies conducted on the impact of these activities shows they are indeed useful in the reduction of negative stereotypes, and hostilities (Salomon, 2003) this impact is limited by the modest number of people whom they reach, their predisposition to be heavily affected by circumstantial events, and their minimal resources and institutionalization. The following subcategory, however, operates to achieve similar goals, but at the same time is more immune to these shortcomings, due to the nature of its operation and its target audience.

*Strengthening democratic norms – educating for democracy:*

Democratic education is an integral part in the life of every democratic country. It is a primary instrument in the socialization of young citizens, and is often required by the state itself to assure a democratic lifestyle. In Israel too, the ministry of education has initiated civic studies programs in the public schools and students are tested on these in their matriculation exams. Yet, as described by Pedahzur (2001) civic studies in Israel are limited in both scope and essence. They are allocated fewer teaching hours than other subjects, and focus almost entirely on the formal structures of government, neglecting much of the contemporary political issues troubling Israeli society today. This ongoing citation has encouraged the development of many civil society organizations which provide complementary curriculums and activities within both public and private schools. Yet, Israel's compulsory education act which provides the base for the curriculum also requires that these organizations receive the
approval of the state's ministry of education, thus binding all civic education to the whims of partisan political actors. Moreover, although schools receive a ministerial budget to be used for the purchase of extra-curricular activities, this budget too is restricted, to be used with only limited programs authorized by the ministry of education. Thus, even supposedly independent civil society organizations often find themselves involuntarily under state control.

Following the introduction of Rabbi Cahane's 'Cach' party in the early 1980s, political opportunity structure was ripe for the appearance of many new educational organizations. One leading organization in this category is the 'Adam Institute' established in 1983 by Yona Abroshmi to commemorate the killing of Emil Greenzweig – a left wing activist – during a demonstration opposing the war in Lebanon. The aims of this organization are to provide democratic education for promoting both democracy and peace and towards active citizenship participation, equal rights, avoidance of violence and peaceful resolution of conflicts. In addition to the writing of related curriculum, which is intended for the younger citizenry, the institute also initiates adult workshops that concentrate mainly on central aspects of democratic life and trains teachers for the instruction of civic education programs.

During the 1990s the 'Adam Institute' was among the chief organizations 'adopted' by the ministry of education's 'unit for the advancement of democracy and coexistence'. As such, it enjoyed a stable source of income, and ample access to both private and public schools. In our first interview with the institute's representatives in 2001, they expressed much optimism regarding the past achievements of the institute, and its future prospects. They referred to a long lasting and stable relationship with the ministry of education, and mutual understanding of both sides to the needs of the other. Furthermore, they had high appraisal of the success of the programs on Israel's
youth. But all this seems to have taken a turn for the worse. In our second interview some two years later the picture displayed by the organization's representative was considerably different. The new agenda for 'value education' advanced by Limor Livnat - Minister of Education from the Likud party, differs considerably from that of the institute, and many other similar civil society organizations. The new agenda pushed forward by the ministry emphasizes Jewish heritage and modern Israeli history (20th century). Thus, while the institute's programs concentrate on pluralism, and the coexistence of differing opinions, the ministry's program focuses on unity based on ethnic-religious heritage. Moreover, the institute representatives stressed that while Jewish-Arab relations in the country have deteriorated, demand for a curriculum dealing in coexistence has decreased. Finally, the change has also affected the financial support received directly from the ministry, and the funds available to schools to purchase the institute programs.

Another high profile organization which reported similar disillusionment from the ministry of Education is the 'Institute for Democratic Education'. As stated in its publication 'Panim Le'can ve Le'can' (meaning 'facing in two directions'), the 'Institute for Democratic Education' was established to "aid the educational system, strengthen democratic education, develop political knowledge, encourage peaceful debate on current matters, cultivate tolerance and encourage the development of a democratic personality". In 1999 Dr. Shlomo Tzidkiyaho, founder of the institute, stated that 67% of the schools in Israel have made use of 'Panim Le'can ve Le'can' in their civic studies curriculum (Pedahzur, 2001). Controversially, in 2003 an interview with Mrs. Rachel Swartzberg, currently managing the institute, revealed that like the Adams institute, they are experiencing substantial difficulties in receiving finance for their operation.
The most interesting case, however, is that of the 'Yesodot Institute' (meaning 'foundations' in Hebrew). While this organization too operates in the realm of democratic education, its constituency is different from the previously discussed organizations and seemingly so is its recent development. The 'Yesodot Institute' operates among teachers of the national-religious school system, promoting a 'holistic' perception of citizenship combining democratic attitudes with religious heritage and lifestyle. Israel's national education law dating back to 1953 establishes two distinct, although related, systems: the general national school system and the national-religious school system. The latter, according to the law, consists of "schools which are religious in character, and their curriculum, teachers and inspectors base their education on life according to the Torah and the Commandments, as practiced by the religious-Zionist movements". Differing from similar democratic-education organizations surveyed, the Yesodot Institute portrays almost a mirror image to that of the previous organizations. In our first interview with Mr. David Atzmon, a senior instructor, we encountered a very hesitant and careful estimate of the organization's prospects and success. Although in the wake of the Rabin assassination demand for the organization’s activity was rising, Mr. Atzmon seemed uncertain about both the scope of the organization in the future, and the success of its programs to foster real change in the perceptions of national-religious educator – many of which he considered 'old school', and fearful of pluralistic worldviews. However, in the subsequent interview held some two years later it seems that the Yesodot Institute, unlike the previous two organizations, enjoyed a continuous budget rise, organizational growth and ongoing support from the ministry.

In summing up the actions and development of civil society organizations active in democratic education in Israel, one can not overlook the fact that these
organizations are dependent on the state, bound by its regulations, and subject to its caprices. The fact that some organizations enjoy continuous state support, while others do not, is apparently linked to their ideological and partisan identification. In order to operate and fulfill their goals, educational organizations require the basic approval of the ministry of education to work within the school systems. Furthermore, they are often offered high incentives in the form of budgetary aid, both directly from the ministry's budget and also through budgets of the individual schools. In Israel, where independent financing is hard to achieve and incentives for donations are low, these organizations have little alternative than to accept these offerings. But this is a 'catch 22' situation: those organizations who do not accept the financial aid of the state are almost always subject to monetary hardships; those who do are forever dependent on the state, losing their ability for independence. Moreover, past experience has shown that the state is more than willing to put civil society organizations in this compromising state, keeping them in line with the state's interests, and fully subordinate to its controls.

*Combating Evil – monitoring and opposing 'un-civil society'*:

While coexistence and democratic-education organizations go about strengthening the democratic polity by reinforcing its pro-democratic attributes, a second group of organizations approach this target via a different course – that of combating the anti-democratic elements in society. In theory, these two courses are complementary: one enforcing the positive, while the other weakens the negative. However, while such action is manifested in Europe in the regular counter-demonstrations mirroring and opposing anti-democratic activities, or in North America by large, well-funded, organizations which monitor anti-democratic
phenomena (e.g. the Anti-Defamation League, Anti-Semitism Watch and others), it is nearly absent in the Israeli scene.

Following several attempts during the 1980s of Rabbi Cahane's Kach movement to enter the Israeli parliament, both politicians and the public became more aware of the threats embedded in anti-democratic activity. Yet, although parliamentary arena legal actions were taken to prevent anti-democratic parties from gaining access to parliament, very little attention was paid to non-parliamentary movements. Only after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, did Israelis begin to realize the full potential of this threat. Yet even today, one is hard pressed to find non-partisan activity in this direction.

During the late 1990s and thereafter, several groups in the Israeli public have publicly expressed anti-democratic views, and sometimes openly suggested the weakening of democratic institutions in the country. One primary example is the open opposition of the Ultra-Orthodox public and leadership to rulings of Israel's Supreme Court. This opposition has occasionally taken the form of large scale demonstrations by the Ultra-Orthodox public – and on many such occasions, counter demonstrations were held at the scene by supporters of the Supreme Court. But, unfortunately, these can not really be considered as the actions of civil society, first and foremost because groups on both sides were supported by established political parties, making this out-of-parliament activity nearly a continuation of parliamentary politics. This support was manifested in party activists and members of the Knesset organizing and participating in the events on both sides, and political parties contributing to their finance. Because political parties are restricted by law to state funding only, it is in fact state money that helped pay for this activity. Moreover, public demonstrations were accompanied by a demand to appoint representatives of the religious public to
the Court, thus breaching a major characteristic of civil society – action to influence the state, but not to participate in it.

In fact, out of all pro-democratic civil society organizations we could only find one single organization which clearly fits into this category. This organization entitled 'Keshev (meaning to listen) - the center for protection of democracy in Israel', was established after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin to collect data on anti-democratic organizations, and monitor their activity. Precisely because partisan relationships are so intense in Israel, the organization has vowed to remain independent from all political parties and of course the state, and exist solely on the basis of public donations. Activities involve mostly collection of data, and writing and administering reports, but in recent years the organization has also initiated several public workshops intended to broaden the general public's awareness to the anti-democratic phenomena, and its representatives also participate in public and academic debates on these matters. In both interviews with the Izhar Be'er, chairman of the organization, Be'er displayed much caution with regards to estimating the organization’s effectiveness. His chief worries are that the paucity of such organizations in Israel is the Achilles Heel of this sort of activity. A single (and small) organization, according to him, will always be limited in its abilities. Moreover, if the data is to be accepted without suspicion it must be validated by more sources – which do not exist in Israel. Finally, he notes, the scarcity of organizations also indicates low interest on the part of Israeli society – and this, in his mind, is most troubling.

Civil Society II: State Orientated Organizations

In theory, a primary role of pro-democratic civil society is to ensure that the state itself operates within liberal-democratic boarders. In effect, only a small number
of Israel's pro-democratic civil society organizations carry out this action. Our survey revealed that no more than 18% of pro-democratic organizations view the state as their principal target of operation. Moreover, within this 18%, several organizations are think-tanks and research institutes which provide important democratic assets (such as policy papers, policy alternatives, educational programs and the like) but lack the confrontational element in their operation to fully fit the 'Civil Society II' classification, as it was originally described by Foley and Edwards (1996). Consequently, very few organizations of this type actually operate in Israel.

Civil society II organizations most commonly take on the form of combatant associations, which prod the media, public opinion and the courts to confront the state on its occasional divergence from democratic norms. One dominant example is 'The Movement for Quality Government in Israel'. As simply expressed in the movement's website, it is "a civil society organization striving for a society free of corruption and its effects" (http://www.mqg.org.il). Its primary goal is "Combating the causes and effects of corruption", most of these found within government and public administration themselves. Activities of this movement include mostly litigation in courts and media campaigns, but also public demonstrations and extra parliamentary activities to promote democratic values. Like 'Keshev', this organization too has vowed complete financial independence from the state in order to maintain its freedom to oppose state activity. Thus, membership fees and private donations are the primary source of budget.

Another high profile organization in this category is ACRI - the 'Association for Civil-Rights in Israel'. This association, founded in 1972, has become the country's leading protector of human rights. The organization operates both in Israel, and in the controversial territories, representing Arabs and Jews, men and women, citizens of the
state and foreign residents, including the many foreigners working in the country. Like the Movement for Quality of Government, ACRI too devotes most of its efforts to litigation through Israel's court systems. In fact, the work of these organizations, together with other smaller groups working in this field, has allowed Israel's Supreme Court to achieve its public image as a chief protector of human and democratic rights in the country. The nature of litigation and the high costs of bringing matters to the attention of the Supreme Courts makes it very difficult for individuals (especially those not of high socio-economic echelons) to voice their needs before the court. Protection of the courts, and especially the Supreme Court, which acts occasionally as a constitutional court, is particularly important due to Israel's lack of a written constitution, or bill of rights. Like most other organizations in its category, ACRI too refrains completely from governmental budgets. Its primary source of income is the 'New Israel Fund' – a fund dedicated to strengthening and consolidating democracy. The New Israel fund provides financial support for pro-democratic civil society organizations. In addition, it finances a daughter-organization under the name of 'Shatil' (meaning seedling in Hebrew), which complements the fund's activities by providing these organizations with organizational support – e.g. knowledge, leadership training, and also training in public mobilization and contacts with government. Shatil also provides a platform in which various pro-democratic civil society activists may meet and share knowledge important for their operation. Cooperation between organizations is also encouraged.

While the fore-mentioned organizations are undoubtedly the largest and most influential of civil society II type organizations in Israel, several tens of others do exist. These are smaller organizations, often working in a specific constituency or on a single issue. Several such organizations operate among the Arab citizenry of the
country. The 'Association of the Forty' is one such organization established in 1988 to bring about state recognition in the rights of the former inhabitants of some 40 Arab villages who fled in 1948, and remain unrecognized to date.

Also active in the Arab population is HRA – 'The Arab Association for Human Rights', and 'Sikkuy' (meaning chance or opportunity in Hebrew). The main activity of the HRA, as publicized in their website, is the production of periodic reports on issues relating to the rights of the Arab community (http://www.arabhra.org). Recently, this organization (together with several other similar groups – has initiated advocacy programs directed at the European Union, and its member states. Sikkuy – 'The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equity in Israel' publishes an annual report monitoring government actions regarding civic equality between Arab and Jewish citizens (http://www.sikkuy.org.il/reports.htm).

While these groups operate within the state of Israel some organizations – like 'B'Tselem' (meaning 'in the image of' in Hebrew), 'Physicians for Human Rights' and 'The Public Committee against Torture in Israel' – concentrate the majority of their activities to the disputed territories. These organizations advocate the Israeli government about the breach of human rights by the military rule. Their chief activities include monitoring and publicizing such breaches.

Usually of lower profile, but no less important, are several organizations which protect other minorities and underprivileged groups in Israel. These may include foreign workers, women, children, the unemployed and other groups suffering from low socio-economic status, and little political representation. It is important, however, to note that Israel's long lasting preoccupation with defense and security issues has shifted both political and public agenda away from these topics, and
important as they are – they receive less representation – whether in parliament, the media, or civil society.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Pro-democratic civil society consists of those organizations within civil society which make it their primary goal to protect, strengthen or enhance the democratic nature of the country in which they operate. Although democratic consolidation is a shared goal, organizations vary in both activities initiated, and the organizational framework employed to carry them out. In keeping with the distinction proposed by Foley and Edwards (1996) we set out to explore the dissimilar opportunity structure facing organizations which target society itself and those which target the state.

Israel's 'semi-democratic' regime presents an interesting case. Yael Yishai entitled her 1991 book on Israeli civil society 'Land of Paradoxes', and this name seems to accurately represent the often opposite characteristics of Israel's struggling democratic nature. On the one hand, the country was established as a parliamentary democracy, with a multiparty system. This system has successfully seen Israel through several peaceful transitions of power. Yet for three decades it also bestowed great power to the state, and its chief political actor – the political party. During this time, civil society has been almost entirely absent (or at least low key) with regards to most aspects of Israeli politics. This situation has changed, and at least in size, Israel's civil society seems blossoming. But close examination shows that pro-democratic civil society is still struggling against a strong and inclusive state, reluctant to candidly share power with civic non-state organization.
Upon first glance, it might seem that the configuration labeled 'civil society I' is most effectively operating in Israel. Nearly 80 percent of all civil society organizations belong to this group, which is successful in its cooperation with the state, and often receives the latter's support in both legitimating and financing activities. However, a closer look reveals that this cooperation resembles more of a 'bear hug' than actual mutual cooperation. State mechanisms have always been clever in their contacts with civil society. Israel's legal framework burdens self finance of civic organizations. Tax exemptions for private donors are limited, and organizations are obliged to report their income sources to a governmental registrar. Thus large potential donors shy away from public involvement that on the one hand does not provide tax benefits, and on the other risks political coloring. Controversially, the state seems willing to provide financial support for civic associations, thus creating a dependency on state resources. In the case of organizations working in the educational scene, the state also provides incentives for schools to work with some, but not all, of these organizations, thus strengthening this dependency ever further. This, in turn, is then utilized by state actors to restrict civil society organizations, and direct them towards state interests. Moreover, it nearly completely diminishes the confrontational potential which is the back-bone of pro-democratic civil society.

The second configuration of civil society, entitled 'civil society II', is inherently incapable of close cooperation with the state. It is confrontational in nature, and targets the state itself as its focus of operation. In Israel this realm of activity is pre-destined to suffer financial hardships, and state oppression. On the other hand, those organization able to overcome this can more truly be considered as having true independence from state – thus able to fulfill the theoretical requirements of opposing
tyrannical regimes, or those actions of democratic states that breach the very nature of democratic government itself.

In recent years, the state of Israel has confronted several threats to its democratic nature – both from within and without. The ways state mechanisms have dealt with such threats have many times been democratic – but in numerous occasions they have not. The government is not without blame, but democratic attitudes are also still lacking among Israel's citizenry. In this respect, is seems that civic organizations can only provide complementary activities to those initiated by government itself. It is perhaps Israel's small but active oppositional civil society II which may be capable of pushing Israel in the direction of a more liberal democracy, with due attention to civil and minority rights.
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**On-line:**


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