Nationalist-Religious Ideology and Civic Education:
The Israeli Case

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Are we riding the fourth wave of democracy, as predicted by Toffler (1984) and Huntington (1991), a post-capitalist, post-global wave? Western liberal democracy is currently responding to the dramatic change in the economic system after capitalism, the coronavirus pandemic, and the growing power of nationalist and fundamentalist ideologies. Does this process indicates a change in Western democracy or is it the end of democracy and what is the role of civic education within it? In Israel, as in other Western countries, the nationalist and fundamentalist ideologies (gained strength, undermining liberalism) threaten the conception of global citizenship and strive to shape a model of an illiberal democracy. In Israel, contrary to other Western countries, they also threaten civic equality and the very existence of the democratic rule. In the absence of a constitution and consensus, Israel is experiencing culture and religious war over values, identity and the concept of "citizenship" as a legal, political, and social framework. Thus, the struggle over civic education reflects the struggle over educational hegemony, as well as over national hegemony. In this process, nationalists and fundamentalists initiate anti-democratic legislation, violate human rights, obstruct government supervisory mechanisms, and expand ideological education in order to change Israel's character to a Jewish state rather than a Jewish and democratic state.

Keywords: Liberalism, Nationalism, Fundamentalism, Civic Education. Ideological Education, Global Citizen, Digital Citizen

The Challenges of Civic Education in a Global Era

Civic education in the West can be analyzed across two periods: the first from the 1970s up to 2008 (the global financial crisis) in which liberal democracy had legitimacy and a political, social, and educational presence, and the second period from 2008 to the present, in which national and religious models of non-liberal democracy appeared in this space, rejecting liberalism.

In the first period, global civic education was reflected in policy, institutionalization, and identity. UNESCO's declared policy was to promote education for a global citizenship in European countries as "refer[ing] to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasizes political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and global" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015, p. 14). A similar policy was adopted in the United States in 2014 by the National Council of the Social Studies (NCSS), which extended the definition of the "good citizen" beyond the borders of the United States (Barrow, 2017).

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International institutions including the World Economic Forum and the World Bank, the International Court of Justice at Hague, and others legitimized the conception of global citizen that is a non-political actor, whose role is to fulfill historical and ethical tasks in fundamentally shaping the conception of the world (Ortiz, 2018). The question of identity was examined, and in 2016, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that 49% of the citizens in 14 countries (out of 21) considered themselves global citizens more than citizens of their own country (Ortiz, 2018).

In the first period, civic education attempted to respond to the economic/social effects of globalization: In order to cope with what was described as an individualism alienated from society, it was necessary to strengthen the collective identity and civic involvement (Ravent, 2013). In order to cope with the waves of immigration, xenophobia, and exclusion of minorities, education for respect, pluralism, tolerance, and consensuality was required (Putnam, 2000; Martin & Osberg, 2007) as well as education for integration and conflict-resolution (Gurin, Nagda, & Sorensen, 2011).

The emergence of populist and autocratic leadership (Gutmann, 2002) required developing critical thinking skills (Gur-Ziv, 2013), and in order to inoculate society and its democratic values, education for democracy, volunteering, and civic involvement is needed (McFarland & Thomas, 2006; Hoskins, Barber, Van Nijlen, & Villalba, 2011).

The factor most influencing the expansion of global civic education until 2008 is attributed to the new media. A high level of accessibility to information, the ability to read, write, understand, and navigate information online, exercising critical thinking, and act for change enable the creation of a digital citizen. The discourse of rights that is developing in the social networks strengthens liberal citizenship (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008). Exposing students to global knowledge and expanding their understanding vis à vis the complexity of the world develop tolerance and pluralism (Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014), and cooperation through the Internet enables realizing active citizenship (Minjeong & Dongyeon, 2018).

The Decline of Liberalism, the Emergence of the New Nationalism and Fundamentalism and Implications for Civic Education

It appears that the celebrations over "the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992) and the victory of liberal democracy were short-lived: Already in 2018, there was a public and academic discussion regarding "the end of democracy", "the death of liberalism", and the collapse of the liberal world order (Ruchiman, 2018; Levitsky, 2018; Przeworski, 2019; Mounk, 2018; Deneen, 2018).

The arguments for the decline of liberalism vary. In a system analysis, one can point to the following causes: (1) The economic crisis that is preventing the state from providing its residents with welfare, justice, security, and a sense of fairness is undermining democracy and might legitimize a new type of regime that will be perceived as better suited for the times (Huntington, 1991); (2) Cultural-religious forces are fighting against the liberal hegemony and oppose the West's efforts to promote its values. They are growing stronger since people define themselves in tribal rather than universal terms and tend to see relationships between "themselves" and "others" in terms of "us" versus "them" (Hobson, 2009); (3) The goal of disseminating liberal democracy and global citizenship throughout the world is meeting with the resistance of external forces (illiberal powers such as China and Russia) and the resistance of internal forces in each country due to cultural/religious/national differences (Hobson, 2009); (4) The loss of public trust in democracy as a system of government and in politicians: In 2015, 65% of American citizens said that they are dissatisfied with the government; in the

European Union, 68% said so (Shattuck, 2018); (5) The competition between countries over resources—on the background of economic, environmental, health, and political dangers—has led to a failure of integration and the dissolution of the Western, European nations (Meotti, 2017); (6) The rise of intelligent machines aimed at Dataism, meaning a secular religion based on faith in algorithms (Harari, 2017), and the emergence of an unsupervised dominance headed by the new media giants has led to a loss of individual sense of power and a search for a powerful leader (Ruchiman, 2018); (7) The retreat of the United States from its traditional role of maintaining the liberal world order and disseminating democracy, the exploitation of its hegemony in order to prevent the economic development of other countries, its declaration that it is returning to economic and political nationalism, and a centralized populist government—all these have strengthened conservative trends of nationalism and the dismantling of trans-national frameworks, wild economic competition, populist politics and centralized government, which challenge democratic rule and its values (Barrow, 2017).

In an ideological analysis, one can point to the following causes: (1) "The religion of democracy"—that completely embraces "the values of democracy" and prescribes in minute detail the way of life of the individual and society—contradicts classic, neutral democracy (Steinitz, 2001); (2) Liberalism is self-contradictory: It demands human rights yet creates economic inequality; it relies on consensus while limiting commitment to the community and the nation in favor of individualism; it strives for personal autonomy while also leading to the growth of the largest governmental system in history (Deneen, 2018); (3) Liberalism undermines the collective national identity and harms the national ethos when it posits an individual alienated from the community as a central theme. It encourages a discourse of identities instead of a collective identity and strengthens criticism instead of blind loyalty to the state (Ruchiman, 2018; Przeworski, 2019); (4) Multi-culturalism has failed (Nevo-Kulman, 2018): The adoption of pluralism in an attempt to construct a more tolerant society (Reddy, 2018) facilitated the establishment of a separatist Muslim-Shari' society that rejects the values of the West, and due to a fear of "insulting" the Muslim minorities, countries have ignored the burgeoning phenomena of religious radicalism, which has led to murderous terrorism, loss of personal safety, and also to a loss of trust in politicians and the elite's ability to govern (Michta, 2017; Meotti, 2017). Consequently, the public is rejecting the liberal parties and the elite's liberal consensus (Barrow, 2017); (5) Liberal democracy is not the only possible form of democracy nor the best, necessarily (Steinitz, 2001); (6) The massive, separatist Muslim immigration, which is perceived as a double threat to existence (economically and security-wise) and a double threat to the nation (demographic and fundamentalist), strengthens the citizens' feelings of affiliation and loyalty and enables the state to rally them once more to the national flag, citing a national emergency (Vidino, 2015); (7) In the state of emergency prevailing around the world due to the global coronavirus pandemic, democratic issues are sidelined. A distinction is formed between "us" and "them", which enables creating a "gallery of enemies" and gaining legitimacy for expressions of hatred, discrimination, and racism (Williams Foster, & Krohn, 2008), and there is legitimacy for infringing upon basic human rights, first and foremost the freedom of expression (Ben-Porath, 2006). In a state of emergency, patriotic feelings of support, national unity and solidarity are strengthened, and soldiers and fighters are considered good citizens. Political participation reverts from being voluntary and open to compulsory and guided (Ben-Porath, 2006) and is measured by the readiness to sacrifice and contribute to rescuing the country from the security threat (Tamir, 1997). In a state of emergency, countries can redefine the boundaries of the nation and purify the community from elements that are seen as negative, such as immigrants and the homeless (De Carolis, 2020) or liberal demonstrators (Kortez, 2020), and they can disguise decisions based on national or fundamentalist pressures as political decisions

related to the emergency. Citizens motivated by the fear of losing their lives in light of the apocalyptic vision presented to them by the state may choose tyranny and belatedly discover that it continues after the crisis ends (Agamben, 1998).

Nationalist rhetoric and practice were observed in the West already in 2008, but since 2016 and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, it has become a global phenomenon. Trump uses a separatist, national rhetoric that rejects the idea of global citizenship: "There is no global anthem. No global currency. No certificate of global citizenship. We pledge allegiance to one flag and that flag is the American flag" (Barrow, 2017, p. 163). The actions he has taken have indeed signaled to the world the adoption of a separatist national policy, and a large number of countries have indeed adopted a policy and practice of national separatism.

These characteristics of the past decade have legitimized, in the West, the development of a "non-liberal democracy". This is a model that nullifies liberal values but also reduces democratic government from "the government of the people" (majority and minority) to "decision by dominant majority', which includes legitimacy to impinge upon the rights of minorities in the name of the national interest, sacrifice individual liberty for the will of the dominant majority, and nurture paranoia vis à vis global citizenship (Burhanettin, 2019). This is a model that bolsters national/nationalistic citizenship and patriotism, encourages military activism, and exacerbates conflicts and xenophobia, which are translated into exclusion and racism.

Civic Education: Coping With the Decline of Liberalism and the Growth of Nationalism and Fundamentalism

The burden created by the aforementioned threats has thwarted education for global citizenship. The attempt by the European Union to construct a collective regional identity that would challenge the national identities and point toward a global identity has failed: Out of 28 potential identities, the citizens of the European Union identified with 27 identities related to national affiliation and only with one related to the regional identity. In addition, 53% of the respondents preserved their national identity alongside their European one (Siklodi, 2014).

How will civic education develop in light of these trends? Will it continue to educate for global citizenship or should it give up and educate for a particularistic citizenship in a non-liberal democracy, in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the government and its policy through the construction of a collective identity and a common national ethos, as well to cover up for the failures of globalization? The observed trends reveal that a decision has been made: The West is moving away from the liberal model and is acting to implement new models of non-liberal democracy, some of which are slipping into a model of a non-democratic regime.

The implementation of ethnocentric civic education began in the United States after the events of 9/11. Numerous calls were heard to strengthen education for patriotism in general (Smith, 2012; Ravitch, 2006) and for an authoritarian patriotism in particular, meaning a patriotism that endorses ideological indoctrination consisting primarily of unconditional loyalty to the state and its leaders (Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999) and characterized by obedience and the absence of criticism, the strengthening of national feelings vis à vis external and internal enemies, and preparing the public to accept harming those who have been labeled as enemies (Schiff & Yaari, 1984).

This approach has replaced education for a constructive patriotism, which prevailed in most Western countries as part of the education for liberal democracy. This is an education for patriotism that is committed to the symbols of the state but also to the rights of the minority that has equal citizenship in the national

community (Goskov, 2007; Westheimer, 2006) that questions and is critical toward decision-makers (Schatz et al., 1999), encourages and enhances civic involvement, and facilitates critical thinking and inclusion of the other (Nussbaum, 2012).

The change in civic education policy in the United States began in legislation: Two months after the September 2011 terrorist attacks, the State of Nebraska Department of Education accepted the Patriotism Bill, which requires schools to include "education for patriotism" and "love of the country" in their curriculum and allocated 120$ million for this purpose (Westheimer, 2006).

Education regulations have also changed: Since 2006, 35 US states require schools to dedicate time to reading the national anthem and 25 states read it every day, teach myths about military heroes from West Point and Annapolis and teach their students to learn by heart "The Army and Navy forever" as part of turning them into symbols of masculinity. Teachers of civics have objected to the legislation, seeing in it a constitutional violation of the principles of democracy, as well as an attempt at indoctrination; however, teachers who subjected the events of 9/11 to a critical discussion were fired (Westheimer, 2006; Hess, 2009). The results reveal that the program succeeded: a survey of high school students that studied American history and government in 2006 showed that 43% of the students agreed (or were neutral) toward the sentence: "It is un-American to criticize the country" (Westheimer, 2006).

This process did not bypass European countries. Numerous countries added two new goals to civic education: nationalism, in order to strengthen the historical background and justification of the nation-state alongside the obligation of immigrants to assimilate to society as a condition for equal citizenship (Michta, 2017), and also patriotism, in order to shape social beliefs regarding love of the motherland so as to strengthen affiliation and loyalty to the state and society through disseminating values of sacrifice, love and loyalty (Williams et al., 2008; Bar-Tal, 1998).

Trump's "America first" declaration symbolizes not only the end of education for global citizenship but also the transition, in the United States and other Western democracies, from a liberal education to a national education—a process that has not passed over Israel.

Unique Characteristics of the State of Israel and the Difficulty of Civic Education

Impediments to the Democratic and Liberal Discourse

Israel has numerous structural obstructions and weaknesses that are impeding the democratic discourse in general and the liberal one in particular, as follows:

(1) The State of Israel differs fundamentally from other Western liberal democracies in that it is not defined as a state of all its citizens but as a state of the Jewish people. It recognizes the Palestinian minority in Israel as a linguistic-cultural minority but not as a national or native minority (Kimmerling, 1994).

(2) The absence of a constitution, a binding democratic platform, and consensus: Israel has no constitution. The declaration of independence in 1984 immortalized the phrase "Jewish and democratic" as an expression of the fundamental character of the State of Israel and even details the liberal values that the state is obligated to. But it is seen as an interpretive instrument only (Modrig, 2018). In the political and legal arena, the Jewish character was given precedence (Medina, 2006), but the democratic character has a weak standing: Most civil liberties are not defined in the law and the liberal interpretations that the Israeli Supreme Court has granted the two fundamental Basic Laws that do exist (Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation and Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty) have been met with criticism (Bakshi & Sapir, 2013).

(3) Exclusion of the Arab minority: The Arab minority, comprising 22% of the population, is defined as a linguistic and cultural minority (not national) and is excluded from shaping the "common good", since it is perceived as an active enemy (Samucha, 2016). It fought against the Israel Defense Forces in the War of Independence, adopted a separatist Palestinian identity, refused to recognize the Jewish nation-state, and was in communication with enemy states (Sasson-Levi, Shavit, & Ben-Porat, 2014). On this background, it suffers discrimination in the distribution of common goods (Peled, 2001) and is prevented by law from challenging the Jewish character of the state (Neuberger, 1999).

(4) The ongoing Israeli occupation of the territories (53 years), and the application of military rule to the Jewish residents and settlements in the administered territories are viewed as non-democratic in international law (Einhorn, 2013).

(5) The lack of separation between state and religion and a bias toward the orthodox version of Judaism enables religious legislation that infringes upon human rights. The status quo in state-religion relations preserves the harm to democracy (Neuberger, 1999).

(6) A dearth of supervisory mechanisms to oversee the government, as is the norm in Western democracies: The State of Israel lacks a constitution, a president with veto powers, a federative structure, a constitutional court, and a regional system of elections. In recent years, there have been attempts to weaken the existing institutions, including the Supreme Court, the State Comptroller, the Attorney General, and the legal advisors of the government ministries (Cohen, 2018).

(7) The absence of agreed-upon borders makes it difficult to consolidate a collective Israeli identity and is tearing society apart. The political leadership avoids determining borders in order to keep the issue open, thereby preventing the consolidation of a collective identity based on a consensual national territory and splitting Israeli society into liberals who agree to apply sovereignty where agreed and nationalists who strive for sovereignty over Greater Israel (Schnel & Lineberger, 2012).

(8) An ongoing security threat and loss of personal safety: Frequent terror attacks have turned the relationship between the individual and the nation into a matter of life and death, as terrorism endangers both collective and individual survival (Frosh & Wolfsfeld, 2006). The loss of a sense of personal safety is accompanied by the loss of trust in a final resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after seven wars, two intifadas, and eight military confrontations.

(9) A deeply divided society and the absence of consensus mechanisms: Five rifts divide Israeli society: a national one (Jews vs. Arabs), ideological (Right vs. Left), religious (secular vs. religious), ethnic (Ashkenazi vs. Oriental), and economic (wealthy vs. poor). In recent years, the consensus mechanisms have weakened, leading to a transition from political arrangements to escalation (Cohen & Zisser, 2003). The rifts are deepening as time goes by, intensifying the politics of hatred.

(10) Exceptional political power of the religious parties: The religious parties hold political power beyond their electoral weight, as they constitute the balance of power. Governments add them to every coalition (Blander & Galnoor, 2013), and in recent years, they have preferred the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice portfolios. The Religious-Zionist party has an especially great influence on policy changes and resource allocation, not only as a result of being part of the government coalitions, but out of a determined ideological stance: The leadership has set itself the goal of replacing the elites and becoming the national leadership and in due time seizing power (Samucha, 2016). Another source of their power is the connection

between their people and policy-makers in the government bureaucracies and filling government and public institutions with their own "ideological pioneers".

The process of "fundanalism" (fundamentalism and nationalism) that Religious-Zionist society is undergoing, alongside shared political and economic interests, have connected it to the orthodox parties, and they are working together in order to turn the Jewish religious-orthodox identity into the collective identity of Israel, particularly through the education system.

Impediments to Educating for a Global and/or Israeli and Equal Citizenship

The aforementioned structural obstructions have permeated the education system and taken hold in the Ministry of Education's structure, policy, regulations, procedures, content, and budgets. This process is possible since right-wing parties have been ruling Israel almost uninterruptedly since 1996, and seven right-wing ministers (three from the Religious Right) have held the education portfolio almost successively for 18 years. Since every minister arrives with a clear agenda of values, motivation, and strong political backing, the result is their attempt to implement a policy that will end with the construction of a national-religious collective identity.

The Israeli education system has a complex structure: There are six recognized educational streams, two of which are autonomous and are not obligated to implement the core curriculum and refuse to teach civic education. The religious-state stream has a separate supervisory body that oversees the instruction of civic education and the Arab-state stream teaches alternative content, which is sometimes subversive (Tesler, 2019). Thus, in the absence of a commitment to a common civic language and platform, there is no systematic education for a shared citizenship (Avnon, 2013), not to mention systematic education for a global citizenship.

Laws were formulated regarding education and Ministry of Education procedures in order to ensure suitable representation for each sector and to balance decision-making on pedagogical and didactic issues (Michaeli, 2014). However, in recent years, the Ministry has been ignoring these principles and anchoring the dominance of the Religious-Zionism majority in the Ministry through regulations, positions, subject-matter committees, and budgets (Tesler, 2019). One result is that, in recent years, investment in religious students is one-third larger than in secular students and two-thirds greater than in Arab students (Datal, 2018). Another result is that the process of religious and nationalist coercion is deepening, so that nationalist and religious values are penetrating the core[1], i.e., the curriculum and the instruction materials[2].

The ministers of education have backing from national politics: On the one hand, numerous laws have been added to strengthen the national and religious character of the state and there are many more in waiting. On the other hand, the laws restricting democracy and its supervisory mechanisms are multiplying. Regarding education for democracy, in 2018, an amendment to the Law of Education was passed, ordering education for significant army or national civil service and preventing activities on the part of any actors "actively operating to initiate legal or political procedures outside of Israel against IDF soldiers …" (Knesset website). Regarding civic education, the debate over the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People (henceforth: The

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[1] The curriculum for a subject called "Jewish-Israeli culture" was added as a core (obligatory) subject in Grades 1-9, contrary to the principles of the core curriculum. The curriculum vastly prioritizes Jewish identity while restricting, if not suppressing, other identities: first come Jews, then Israelis, and then people (The Secular Forum site).

[2] A review of 108 books showed that in almost all subjects there are texts from Jewish religious sources, while engaging to an exaggerated extent with the religious significance of the holidays, integrating prayers, liturgical songs, midrashim (biblical exegesis), and directing the students to religious texts (The Secular Forum site).

Nationality Bill) entered the matriculation preparation booklet in 2015, a year and a half before the law was ratified, and it is the core around which other concepts are constructed.

The Budgetary Policy Changed

The budget of the Ministry of Education for civic education programs was cut drastically: In 1999, the civic education budget was 45 million NS, as was the budget for Jewish culture. In 2018, the civic education budget was five million NS (of which only 1.1 million NS were actually approved) compared to 1.42 Billion NS that were allocated to support Jewish identity projects. From this, 234 million MS were allocated to Jewish culture (Ministry of Education Budget for 2019). The support for associations that implemented education for democracy and living-together programs in schools was cancelled: In 2000, the Ministry of Education supported 150 associations, and, in 2004, most schools in all the educational streams (excluding the Independent and Torani streams) had some kind of program under the headings of values education, living together, community involvement, active citizenship, or another name. In 2019, the Ministry supported only nine associations (Tesler, 2019).

The Religious-Zionist sector, despite being a minority, is a determined ideological foe that is leading the Right wing to change the character of the state, from a Jewish and democratic state to a Jewish and Zionist state (nationalistic and religious). This is reflected in the words of the Minister of Education Naftali Bennet, in 2013: "We lead. We must take responsibility for the State of Israel … to administer the state as a Jewish state" (Bennet, 2015).

The opponents of liberalism use religious arguments: (1) Religion positions the metaphysical god rather than human beings as the source of governmental authority; (2) The Halakha is the constitution. It is the absolute source of law—not international law, which relies on the discourse of rights and is built upon compromise; (3) Liberalism is identified with criticism and agnosticism, which contradict faith and view Judaism as a primitive and reactionary element that must be combated. Therefore, war must be waged against liberalism as "a murderer of religion" (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 3); and (4) Liberalism turns skepticism into the only certain foundation of knowledge and thus undermines morality: If there is no absolute truth, if there is no absolute good and absolute evil, what is society's moral anchor? (Rosenberg, 2003).

The opponents also use political arguments: (1) The liberal ideology, which was solidified in 1992 with the ratification of the two fundamental Basic Laws: Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation and Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, was implemented by exploiting a temporary balance of power in the Knesset and without any public debate (Gavizon, 1998); (2) Liberal judicial activism, which anchored the liberal ideology as part of the Supreme Court's "constitutional revolution" is illegitimate. The Court's liberal interpretation of the Basic Laws relies on international law and the human rights discourse, but ignores Zionism (Sagi, 2000) and violates the principle of the separation of powers (Shaked, 2017); (3) Liberalism puts Israel's security at risk, as it has led to an increase in terrorism and loss of security. The liberal approach of Israeli governments—such as not to interfere with the internal affairs of the Palestinian Authority—led to its agreeing to elections in the West Bank in 1976, and thus to the strengthening of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and to elections in Gaza in 2006, which strengthened the Hamas, and consequently to an escalation in the extent and quality of terrorism (Manor, 2012); (4) Liberalism legitimizes the Palestinian narrative and creates an irresolvable conflict with the Zionist narrative; (5) It endangers the Greater Israel conception, as it is the liberal approach that guided the leadership to make erroneous and illegitimate political decisions (such as the Oslo Accords and the

Disengagement from Gaza), which must be opposed, including by disobeying the law (Hellinger, 2013); and (6) Liberalism leads to the death of social responsibility and alienation from the community, to the collapse of ideologies and especially the collapse of nationalism (Rosenberg, 2003).

On this background, of the decline of liberalism in the West and the increasing extent and number of impediments in Israel and the education system, it is possible to analyze the transformations in the teaching of civic education and the influence of the trends described above on the instruction of civics today.

Teaching Civic Education in Israel: A Chronology of an "Arm-Wrestling" Battle

Civic education in Israel has shifted from one side to another like a pendulum: Between 1948 and 1980, the emphasis was on a republican-ethnic approach; between 1980 and 2010, the emphasis was on a liberal democracy; and since 2010, it is on an ethnic-national democracy.

Since the foundation of the state and until the 1980s, Israel was characterized as an ethnic republic with a centralized government, which conducts a particularistic discourse and attributes equality and solidarity solely to the dominant majority (Peled, 2001). In these years, civic education was a national education that emphasized an authoritarian patriotism and highlighted formal democracy, ignoring political issues and stressing the Zionist narrative as undisputed (Tesler, 2005; Pinson, 2005; Pedahzur, 2001). This national discourse included the Jewish streams but excluded the Arab minority.

1980-2020: A Liberal Approach to Civic Education

The murder of Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin in 1995 on a nationalist-religious background, which was the peak of a nationalist, racist, violent wave, was also the catalyst for the adoption of a global liberal discourse in the education system, after it had been incorporated in the economic and legal systems. Two committees were established to promote a pluralistic education for values in civic education and Judaism studies, and the resulting reports were adopted as policy. "The Kremnitzer Report" set a goal of developing a comprehensive curriculum for instilling civic education among the entirety of Israeli society, while recognizing the plurality of conceptions within it. It based the educational process on three cornerstones: (1) theoretical studies, meant to provide knowledge, understanding, and the ability to analyze, judge, and decide social and political issues; (2) instilling values while creating a commitment to a democratic government and the readiness to defend it; and (3) a civic experience such as instilling active citizenship skills while encouraging the students to be active, involved, and responsible citizens.

"The Shenhar Report" set goals that correspond to Jewish education in secular schools, with an emphasis on Judaism as a culture and not as a religion, with a view to humanism and pluralism: (1) to nurture graduates that recognize their cultural heritage, with its various aspects and variations; (2) to provide tools for shaping a Jewish-Israeli worldview, identity, and culture, according to the changing circumstances; (3) to nurture a Jewish-Israeli way of life and cultural climate in schools and kindergartens, in a pluralistic and multi-faceted manner, in education, society, morals, and community; (4) to teach the various manifestations of Israeli cultures while critiquing, comparing, and creatively interpreting, in a variety of subjects and with an inter-disciplinary approach; (5) to develop a humanistic view of human beings at the center of learning, which engages with the entirety of human creation and activity; and (6) to strive for an encounter and interaction with different traditions and personal and communal stories, while respecting and legitimizing a variety of Jewish-Israeli interpretations and ways of life.

From the 1990s to 2010, the liberal trends grew stronger, and in civic education, an emphasis was placed on global citizenship and cultural pluralism and on civil rights and personal liberty as a basis for the status of citizens as determiners of "the common good" (Yona & Saporta, 2003). In this period, the education ministers implemented the policies of their predecessors (though some objected and eventually led to change): In 1999, the "Kremnitzer Administration" was established to implement the committee's recommendations in the informal education system, with an annual budget of 45 million NS (Tesler, 2005). In 2005, the State Education Law was amended, and nine out of the 11 items emphasized commitment to liberal values. The Ministry of Education published a civic education book *To be Citizens in Israel: A Jewish and Democratic State* (2000).

In 2005, the report of the Dovrat Commission ("The National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel") was adopted as a comprehensive educational policy; some refer to it as "the neo-liberal revolution in education", as it created a correspondence between the neo-liberal social and economic policies and a liberal educational policy, and legitimized the embedding of the liberal ideology in the civic education curriculum (Yona & Dahan, 2013).

In 2008, civic education was expanded from one to two points in the matriculation examination, and instruction was spread across three years instead of only one. The 2011 civic education curriculum included additional guiding principles regarding a pluralistic, universal approach. Values content was added, with an emphasis on human and minority rights, liberty and equality, pluralism, tolerance, and consensuality. Instruction emphasized instilling critical thinking skills, how to conduct a debate and a dilemma, engage in value judgments, forming a personal position in a complex world, and civic involvement.

The global liberal discourse that had penetrated the education system since the 1990s was characterized by an ideological shift from collective and national values to individualistic values that place the individual and his or her happiness in the center. In the process of change, the roles and authorities of the state and civil society were redefined, as were the relations between them. The structure of the education system was criticized and a demand was raised to democratize education and define it as a public service provided to the entire population on an equal basis. The sources of authority were undermined and a demand was made to reevaluate questions, such as "What is the goal and purpose of education in the new era?" and "How does education for democratic values fit within it?" (Yona & Dahan, 2013; Yona & Saporta, 2003).

The liberal discourse in civic education encouraged reforms in a similar spirit: The Shoshani Report (1989) emphasized equality in education and pluralism in values and pedagogy; the Wolanski Report (1992) regulated the idea of self-managed schools; and the Gafni Report (1993) regulated the issue of donations to schools. "Tohnit HaMichlolim" (The Complexes Plan, 2001) aimed for integral education and emphasized the realization of democratic principles; "Ofek Hadash" (New Horizon, 2008) emphasized equal opportunities for every student; and "Oz LeTmura" ("Courage to Change", 2011) was meant to develop student ability through individual teaching hours (Vildevski, 2012). Not all the reforms succeeded, but the combination of laws, policies, and a liberal educational policy led—in a continuous process—to the incorporation of a universal civic education that included knowledge of human rights, the development of critical thinking and value judgments skills, the establishment of a personal sense of respect, fairness, justice, equality, and tolerance, and improvement in the level of commitment to defend democracy and readiness for civic involvement (Tesler, 2019). On the other hand, it was exactly this combination that aroused a counterreaction on the part of the Right and Religious-Zionism.

The Response of the National and Religious Forces to the Liberal Approach in Civic Education

Mautner (1992) had argued that the nationalist and religious forces are working together to remove any and all expressions of Western liberalism in Israel, and Sapir (2010) confirmed that the critical stances of the conservative right-wing and religious camp have penetrated the liberal camp in order to dismantle the reigning liberal ideology and replace it with the national and religious ideology.

The efforts of the Religious Right to eradicate the liberal influence on civic education began with its opposition to the "Israel Culture" curriculum, which was meant to teach Judaism as a pluralist culture to secular students in the state-secular education system; however, it was perceived as no less than the destruction of Judaism. It was argued that it was being taught by the Reform Movement (which is perceived as the enemy of Judaism), that it was inculcating a solely critical view toward Judaism in the subject matter, and sometimes even glorifying Christianity at the expense of Judaism (Kirchenbaum, 29.11.16). In 2010, Minister of Education Gideon Saar turned "Israel Culture" into a core subject called "Jewish-Israeli Culture". In doing so, he entirely reversed the rationale of the curriculum, from a universal, pluralistic one that is adapted to the state-secular system, to a particularistic, national and religious approach, imposed upon the system. The curriculum presents an orthodox Judaism, but the national camp is backing Religious-Zionism as strengthening the national identity, ignoring the fact that its interpretation of Zionism is no less than religious extremism.

The Religious Right completely rejected the civic education book *To be Citizens in a Jewish and Democratic State* (2000)—so much so that there was an instruction to put a sticker on the cover stating that "the content does not reflect our worldview. Learn it for the matriculation test and forget it" (Tesler, 2019, p. 106). The argument was that the book was too liberal and not suitable for Israel's unique characteristics, that it minimizes republican, collective, and national approaches and lacks justifications for the Jewish nation-state, that it is only loosely related to Zionist values and thereby harms the national ethos, that it undermines the authority of the state, and that it intensifies cultural and ethnic polarization (Geiger, 2009; 2011).

Objections to the liberal approach to civics education also came from a different direction: the national forces in the state-Arab education system. This group objected on the grounds that the book was not liberal at all, but rather too nationalist; that it did not include the Palestinian narrative and excludes them from the common civic space. The resistance was reflected in the guidance issued by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel to boycott the book (Zameret, 2005).

From 2001, the state Jewish secular system, which adopted the book, found itself on the defensive after the Ministry of Education revealed a mere rhetorical commitment to an equal civic education, while practicing an ideological national and religious education.

Between 2001 and 2006, the right-wing Minister of Education Limor Livnat expanded the study of Jewish heritage and the strengthening of Jewish identity in the formal education system. New subjects were created including the history of Israel, Jewish-Israeli culture, Eretz-Israel and archaeology studies, field-nation-society studies that include becoming familiar with the land and love of the motherland, and a curriculum called "One hundred concepts in Zionism, Judaism and democracy". Programs multiplied in the non-formal education system as well, including Jewish holiday studies, bar and bat mitzvah programs, an increasement of hours for Jewish studies, studies of "The heritage of the defense forces and the underground organizations", BeReshit (In the beginning) programs for "strengthening Jewish and Zionist identity and strengthening our unique identity as

Jews in the succession of generations" (the BeReshit website), and "Masa Israeli" (Israeli journey) "to strengthen the sense of affiliation with the nation, the land and Judaism" (the Masa Israeli website). In addition, schools were instructed to raise the flag, sing the anthem at school, and invite officers to schools in order to strengthen patriotism and encourage enlistment to combat units.

In order to eliminate the gap between rhetoric and practice, strategic attempts were made to change the situation. In 2003, the right-wing minister of education decided to remove civic education from the core curriculum[3], and, in 2014, an amendment to the State Education Law was submitted to require the minister of education to set a Judaism curriculum in secular-state schools, constituting at least 25% of the teaching hours of the core curriculum.[4]

2010-2020: Implementing the Nationalist-Religious Approach in Civic Education

Since 2010 and after five consecutive right-wing ministers of education (of which three were from the Religious Right), the policy, rhetoric, budgets and curricula related to civic education changed. Thus, in 2010, Minister of Education Gideon Saar announced that "We shall intensify values education. There will be more teaching hours for the subject of Zionism and Judaism" (Kashti, 2010). True to his words, he increased the budget for Jewish identity education, he scheduled tours to the Administered Territories, and fired whoever he viewed as liberal and replaced them with his people from the national camp. Thus, he dismissed the chairman of the civic education subject-matter committee, another senior member of the committee, and the supervisor of the instruction of civic education. He authorized the disqualification of the new civic education book *Embarking on a civil path*, after it had been approved by the Ministry's chief executive officer (CEO), arguing that it was biased against the Right, and continued to remove opponents from the subject-matter committee and exclude them from shaping the teaching materials.

In 2013, Minister of Education Naftali Bennet announced his intention to link civic education with politics, Zionism, and the defense of Greater Israel: "Whoever thinks that we can fight for the Ulpana Neighborhood when the youngsters in Holon or Hadera do not know that there was a Jewish state here two thousand years ago and cannot read the Bible, is wasting our time" (Tesler, 2019, p. 109). In 2015, Bennet (2015) declared that "The essence of Religious-Zionism is 'atoning for the sin of the spies' … to not be afraid to prevail … we lead. We must take responsibility for the State of Israel … to administer the country as a Jewish state". Needless to say, the code words "atoning for the sin of the spies" is understood by Religious-Zionism (Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi Filver, Rabbi Zalman Melamed) as education, propaganda, and persuasion of the public to inherit the Holy Land and not permit relinquishing any of it; to persecute and kill the Philistines; to teach sacrifice to the point of death, and even to go against the majority when it is mistaken and forsakes God (Tesler, 2019, p. 109).

The policy (after removing the opponents and replacing them with proponents) changed: In 2012, the civic education curriculum was changed and eight new chapters on Zionist history and Judaism were added to the civics textbook (2000). In 2015, Ministry headquarters decided to produce a new pedagogical tool (which all previous civic education subject-matter committees had opposed), namely a matriculation preparatory guide for basic concepts that appear in the civics textbook. This issue was never discussed by the subject-matter

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[3] This attempt failed after a public struggle directed by "The Academic Forum for Civic Education", in order to preserve a shared language of civics.
[4] This bill was rejected by the Knesset.

committee, the committee chairman (a right-wing representative) ignored the demands of committee members to hold a discussion on the subject, and the identities of the authors were concealed. Seventy-five percent of the concepts did not even appear in the civics textbook or were rephrased according to the Religious-Zionist approach (Avnon, 2016). The guide ignored or distorted democratic values and announced a change in the character of the state: Democracy was not the rule of the people (majority and minority) but the rule of the dominant majority; no longer a "Jewish and democratic state" but an "ethnic-cultural nation-state". The conduct of the Ministry of Education in the matter of approving the guide was challenged in the Supreme Court, but the Court's recommendations to amend the guide were ignored by the Ministry (Tesler, 2019).

In 2015, Ministry headquarters decided to rewrite the "liberal" civics textbook. It underwent a complete change in a process that deviated completely from all regulations: The matter was not raised in the subject-matter committee; the committee chairman denied the committee members' requests to discuss the textbook; a sole editor was appointed for the book—a lawyer and clear representative of Religious-Zionism, one of those who initiated the "Nation-State Law" and other anti-democratic laws; the Ministry did not fulfill its commitment to appoint another editor from the field of political science who would represent the state-secular, liberal education system; it did not include an Arab academic in the writing process; and it brought about the resignation-in-protest of all the liberal authors (after the liberal entries they had written were distorted by the editor).

The Ministry ordered a professional evaluation of the textbook but rejected it due to the recommendation to fix the chapter on democracy, which had been downsized and distorted in favor of a religious-nationalist approach. The Ministry also rejected the opinion of the arbitrator, selected after a public outcry, who recommended fixing the missing and distorted parts in the chapter on democracy. The Ministry also ignored its commitment to fix the textbook in response to two lawsuits filed in the Supreme Court. It refused to publish the names of authors of the textbook and ignored the recommendations of the Knesset's Education, State Audit, and Transparency committees, which called to delay the publication of the textbook until the flaws were fixed. In addition, the Ministry ignored the 2016 State Comptroller's Report, which demanded that the Ministry of Education intensify education for democracy and shared living, as a result of the increase in expressions of hatred and racism, while also ignoring the broad public protest (Tesler, 2019).

The rules of the game had changed, and this was reflected in the declaration of the Religious-Zionist chairman of the civic education subject-matter committee: "It's our turn now" (Tesler, 2019, p. 124). A campaign to delegitimize liberalism and remove its proponents from the centers of power was started: The liberals in the civic education subject-matter committee were removed, and if they resigned they were not replaced as required. The liberal subject instructors were transferred, and civic education teachers that criticized the IDF and the state were fired or suspected of bias. Representatives of associations that criticize the IDF and the state were barred from entering schools, and principles who voiced their criticism were summoned for hearings at the Ministry of Education. In a significant measure, the liberal representatives at the top of the hierarchy of decision-making in civil education were replaced with "ideological pioneers" from the Religious Right, and in the years 2016-2019, all the functionaries with influence on the teaching of civic education were identified with Religious-Zionism: the minister of education, the chairman of the pedagogical secretariat, the director of the humanities and social sciences cluster, the chairman of the civic education subject-matter committee, most of the members of the civic education subject-matter committee, and most of the civil

education subject instructors (Tesler, 2019).

Former Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein (2017) summarized the process in simple terms: "They have turned the state-secular schools into a step-child of the state religious system".

Conclusions

The fourth wave of democracy, which Toffler (1984) and Huntington (1991) indicated as a possibility, is already here. The opposition to liberalism in the world rests on economic, theological, ideological, political and more recently medical arguments. Opponents reject liberalism as "guilty" of society's ills: In its attempt to fortify itself against threats liberalism has gone too far and threatens communal identity, values, solidarity, religion, patriotism and national ethos.

The global pandemic crisis and the economic crisis that followed reinforce opposition to liberalism and encourage alternative ideologies that offer a stronger source of authority: nationalism, fundamentalism or autocracy. These ideologies are intensifying in the light of international competition over limited resources and growing personal threat to health, welfare and livelihoods. They rely on concepts, such as "social distancing", allow centralized political leaders to operate "above the law" "in the name of the common good", expand security authority, offer justification to reduce government supervision mechanisms and create emergency legislation that violates values of liberty and equality. When the government scares its citizens with apocalyptic visions, it leaves the citizens, who are afraid to lose their lives, only one choice: tyranny, which will continue after the crisis as well

The resistance to liberalism in Israel faces additional impediments: lack of constitution, self-definition as a Jewish state, a large Arab minority, strong religious parties, a control over the Administrated Territories and regular emergency regulations due to a constant security threat.

In Israel there is a struggle between the particularistic identity discourse (nationalist-religious), which imposes one truth, and the universal rights discourse (liberal), which strives to persuade. Since the Ministry of Education is a political position, civic education shifted like a pendulum: from an ethnic republican approach (1948-1980), through a liberal-democratic approach (1980-2010), to an ethnic-religious democratic approach, since 2010. The three ideologies, nationalist, religious, and liberal lived alongside one another even though they disagree; however, in the past decade things have changed.

The Religious-Zionism success to impose its particularistic ideology on the entire public is based on the backing provided to it by the national camp, which disregards the fact that its interpretation of Zionism is a form of extremist religion. Due to difficulties in leading the change in the political arena, the Religious-Zionist minority is using the education system as a political arena to make an over-all change. In education policy: It states that the State of Israel is an ethnic nation-state rather Jewish and democratic; it has abolished pluralism as a fundamental principle of the curriculum and increased the allotment for education for Zionism, Judaism, and patriotism. As for the budget, the civic education budget was cut down from 80 million NS to five million NS in 2019 (compared to 234 million NS for strengthening Jewish culture). Regarding Ministry procedures, it has disregarded procedures that require a balanced representation of the educational streams, and applied procedures of a tyranny of the minority in order to exclude the secular liberal majority from the decision-making process and from shaping the teaching materials in its own schools. Regarding the civic education curriculum, it moved from teaching based on encouraging students to form an independent position in a complex world to memorizing concepts by heart and dictating themes, from civic involvement to

obedience, patriotism and suppression of criticism.

The opposition of the secular liberal majority in the state-secular education system (56% of the students) to this trend and to its exclusion is reflected in a continuous public struggle, petitions to the Supreme Court, and alternative education, at times subversive. The struggle is based on the understanding that indoctrination in education is one step toward turning the Jewish democratic state into a non-democratic state (rather than a "unique democracy" as its shapers argue) and on recognition of the danger that imposing this change presents to Israel's national and social resilience.

The struggle to defend the Israeli democracy took to the streets hundreds of thousands of protesters since March 2020: some protest against Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu who continues to rule despite three indictments, some against Netanyahu's authoritarian behavior in general and specifically against his personal politics regarding the coronavirus pandemic. In a series of daily mass demonstrations, citizens are calling to strengthen Israeli democracy and inoculate it from the apparent trends of ethnocracy, autocracy, or theocracy. There is hope that the arm-wrestling battle currently conducted by the secular liberals against the centralist trends, will lead to a middle way and to a balance between Israel's national, religious and democratic values; civic education has a vital role in this process.

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