

## Educating for Unity: Israel's Path from Nation-State to Multicultural Identity

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**ABSTRACT:-** This article delves into the critical transition of Israel from a traditional nation-state to a society that fully embraces a transnational, multicultural identity, with a specific focus on the transformative role of education. It challenges the outdated construct of the nation-state, advocating for a civil state model that resonates with the principles of democracy and aligns with the nuanced demands of contemporary global dynamics. The discussion promotes a holistic educational overhaul, endorsing bilingual and multicultural educational frameworks from an early age, designed to harmonize Israel's diverse ethnic compositions and cultivate a cohesive Israeli identity. This paper highlights the imperative of such educational innovation for Israel's enduring stability, drawing parallels with global transnational trends and advocating for a clear distinction between religion and state. It further illustrates the efficacy of similar inclusive educational strategies in multicultural settings, positioning Israel's potential transformation within the wider context of global shifts and underscoring the strategic significance of education in navigating the country towards a progressive, inclusive future.

**Keywords:** Israel, Nation-State, Transnational Identity, Multicultural Education, Democratic Principles, Civil State, Educational Reform, Ethnic Integration.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the nation-state, integral to the fabric of contemporary global politics, finds its roots in pivotal historical events that have sculpted its progression across centuries. Defined by its sovereign authority over a specific territory, a nation-state embodies a cohesive government and a populace sharing a unified culture, language, and sense of identity. This framework became foundational to the international political landscape after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which concluded the Thirty Years' War in Europe. Celebrated as the inception of the nation-state system, the treaty established the tenets of territorial sovereignty and the principle of non-interference, underpinning the modern concept of statehood (Meyer et al., 1997).

The trajectory of the nation-state, from its early genesis to its present form, has been characterized by relentless transformation and persistent challenges. The advent of globalization and technological breakthroughs, along with evolving societal norms, have profoundly tested the traditional frameworks and identities that nation-states were built upon. The era of digitalization, epitomized by the internet and swift exchanges of information, questions the relevance of physical boundaries, sparking discussions on the nation-state's resilience and adaptability in an ever-evolving global landscape (Zhou, 2011). Moreover, the aptitude of nation-states to effectively tackle transboundary challenges—ranging from climate change to cybersecurity and global migration—has been increasingly questioned, highlighting the imperative for innovative governance structures and collaborative efforts that transcend conventional nation-state models (Hirst & Thompson, 1995). Furthering the evolution beyond the conventional nation-state framework, Israel's challenge lies in unifying its varied populace into a harmonious national identity that honors its multicultural essence. Integrating Israel's Arab citizens is pivotal, advocating for an inclusive approach that champions equality and unity, fostering a collective identity reflective of a pluralistic and interconnected citizenry. Such a shift is vital for transitioning to a governance model that mirrors the nuanced composition of Israeli society, promoting cohesion amidst diversity (Estreicher, 2016).

The role of education in Israel's transformation is pivotal, serving as a critical catalyst in fostering a multicultural society and integrating diverse groups within the nation. Emphasizing the importance of education

underscores the commitment to developing a multidimensional Israeli identity that reflects the rich tapestry of its citizenry. By nurturing an environment that values diversity and promotes inclusivity from an early age, Israel can cultivate a cohesive national identity that resonates with all its inhabitants, thereby reinforcing the societal fabric essential for a unified and progressive future.

The article explores the transformative shift required for Israel to progress from a traditional nation-state to a society that embraces a transnational, multicultural identity. It emphasizes the crucial role of educational reform in this transition, advocating for a system that promotes bilingual, multicultural learning as a foundation for cultivating an inclusive Israeli identity. The main objectives include redefining national identity, integrating diverse ethnic groups, and aligning Israel's societal framework with global trends towards transnationalism. This shift is presented as vital for Israel's adaptation to contemporary global dynamics, ensuring its relevance and sustainability in an interconnected world.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Nation-States

#### The Concept and Decline of Nation-States

The concept of the nation-state, representing both an ideological ethos and a structural entity, boasts a rich yet contentious historical evolution. While scholars debate the precise origins of the nation-state model, many acknowledge the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 as a critical juncture. This landmark treaty, ending the Thirty Years' War, is often celebrated for formalizing state sovereignty principles and establishing the contemporary international state system framework. It marked a transformative epoch, delineating sovereign rights and setting the stage for a new interstate era characterized by clear sovereign authority and the inception of non-interventionist norms, facilitating a more structured and cooperative international landscape (Kayaoglu, 2010).

Nevertheless, it is vital to discern the emergence of state systems from that of nation-states. While the Peace of Westphalia significantly molded the modern state apparatus, equating it with the genesis of nation-states recognized today might oversimplify the historical narrative. The term 'nation-state' typically denotes a political unit wherein the state's territorial boundaries coincide with the distribution of a unified ethnic or cultural populace - the nation (King, 2002). Hence, though the Westphalian peace was crucial in state development, it did not directly engender the nation-state concept or system as it is contemporarily understood. This analysis contends that grasping this distinction is critical to unraveling the nation-state's complex historical and theoretical underpinnings, offering a nuanced understanding of its development and subsequent challenges in the global arena.

The transformation from expansive imperialist dominions to the initial nation-states marks a pivotal shift in global governance, with the late 18th century standing as a watershed moment. This era saw the United States and France transcending traditional state paradigms through revolutionary upheavals in 1783 and 1789. These revolutions catalyzed the creation of the world's first nation-states, diverging significantly from the preceding imperial structures and introducing a new era of statehood characterized by self-determination and a unified national identity (Wimmer & Feinstein, 2010).

Embarking on "imagined communities," the United States and France pioneered a novel form of collective identity. This identity was anchored not in common ethnicity or cultural heritage but in a shared national consciousness stemming from their revolutionary experiences. These nations became emblematic of a new unity, with their identities intricately linked to the principles and accomplishments of their respective revolutions, thereby setting a precedent for the nation-state model (Wimmer & Feinstein, 2010).

Despite their initial emergence as distinct nation-states, these entities gradually assimilated into the imperialist paradigm, engaging in colonial expansion and influence extension, aligning with the prevalent global hegemony of their times. This transition did not obscure their foundational role as nation-states; instead, it underscored the adaptability of the nation-state concept, affirming its practicality and resilience amidst a world of diverse populations. Their evolution illustrated the embodiment of the nation-state idea, providing a tangible blueprint that validated the feasibility of such a governance model capable of flourishing amidst the intricacies of large, heterogeneous societies.

In the scholarly discourse on nation-states, there is a vast array of definitions, reflecting this concept's complexity and multifaceted nature, which complicates the consensus on a singular interpretation. This study aligns with Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as an "imagined political community," where, despite the absence of interpersonal familiarity among its vast membership, a profound sense of communal belonging exists. Anderson's perspective highlights the constructed nature of national identity, shaped by the collective imagination of its members. This framework underscores the distinction between the nation—a self-identified collective sharing a common identity—and the state, characterized by its structured political governance (Anderson, 1983).

Advancing the historical development of nation-states, the period before the World Wars was dominated by imperial powers, predominantly in Europe and North America, who maintained their global dominance through extensive colonial realms (Reis, 2004). The cataclysmic events of the World Wars and the intervening years acted as catalysts for change, leading to the dissolution of colonial empires and triggering a surge in national independence movements (Roshwald, 2011). The transformation was remarkable: the number of recognized nation-states ballooned from 62 before the First World War to more than 193 by the end of the 20th century, reflecting the accelerating momentum for sovereignty post-conflict (Gaddis, 1991; Kuvaldin & Ryabov, 1999).

The post-Cold War era, initiated by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, significantly altered the geopolitical landscape, signaling a period of reevaluation for the nation-state concept within the newly uncertain global framework (Gaddis, 1991; Talentino, 2004). This era saw an increase in the formation of nation-states, laying the groundwork for future challenges that would scrutinize the durability and flexibility of this political model.

### **Nation-State Challenges in the Digital Age**

The digital era's onset has propelled nation-states into an era filled with unprecedented challenges. Castells (2010) highlights how the emergence of a network society reshapes power, governance, and the concept of territoriality, thereby challenging the established functions and authority of nation-states.

Significantly, the digital age redefines traditional sovereignty paradigms, with the ubiquity of digital technologies prompting reevaluating how nation-states assert their sovereignty. Pohle and Thiel (2020) explore the intricacies of digital sovereignty, emphasizing the need for states to adapt to a reality where digital domains challenge conventional governance structures and state authority, particularly concerning cybersecurity and information integrity.

In the digital epoch, governance is undergoing significant transformations. The vast influence of the internet and accelerated data exchange presents complex challenges for upholding regulatory frameworks and law enforcement. Iakhiaev et al. (2023) highlight the external pressures on states' digital sovereignty, pointing to the intricate governance demands of cyberspace. Emerging governance models must be agile and capable of addressing digital phenomena that transcend traditional national boundaries while ensuring public order and legal adherence.

Simultaneously, the digital age poses a formidable challenge to national identity, traditionally a linchpin of the nation-state concept. The pervasive reach of digital media and the influx of global cultural currents threaten to erode distinct national characteristics, fostering a more uniform global culture. Rebro et al. (2021) probe this issue, urging a reevaluation of national identity maintenance in an era dominated by digital globalization. Adapting to this new reality necessitates a reconsidered understanding of national identity and strategies for its preservation in the face of global digital influences.

The cyber domain represents a pivotal frontier in national security, where the digital landscape facilitates diverse threats that challenge conventional security paradigms, encompassing espionage, sabotage, and cyber warfare. Paterson and Hanley (2020) discuss the strategic ramifications of these cyber threats, emphasizing that nation-states must adapt their security frameworks to mitigate these risks comprehensively and safeguard their digital and physical sovereignty.

### **Reevaluating the Concept of "Nation" in the Digital Era**

The digital era prompts a critical reassessment of the nation concept, as technological advancements, especially the internet, foster a globalized milieu that challenges the established territorial-based notion of nationhood. The interconnectedness facilitated by digital platforms enables the free flow of information, cultures, and social norms across borders, thereby questioning the traditional parameters that define national identity.

This era of heightened globalization, propelled by digital interconnectedness, tends to erode the conventional attributes that have historically characterized national identity. Access to global networks and the ubiquity of cross-border communication platforms have blurred the lines that demarcate national boundaries. Stovpets et al. (2023) articulate how the nation's concept increasingly reflects today's fluid, interlinked global landscape, suggesting a redefined understanding of nationhood that aligns with the contemporary context of pervasive global influences.

In the digital era, the relevance of territoriality as a cornerstone of nationhood is diminishing. Digital technologies promote a global interconnectedness that overrides geographical limitations, cultivating a community ethos and shared identity beyond physical boundaries. The rising dominance of digital platforms in molding political, cultural, and social narratives presents a challenge to the conventional nation-state governance model and its traditional notions of national identity (Kar et al., 2019).

Traditionally anchored in shared history, culture, and language, national identity undergoes a transformative redefinition within the digital sphere. The pervasive influence of digital media and the worldwide scope of the internet introduces alternate forms of identity and community, unconfined by national borders. This shift necessitates a reconsideration of the nation as an imagined community, conceptualized not through territorial bounds but through shared values, interests, and digital interconnectivity (Croucher, 2003). As the digital age advances, the nation-state concept must evolve in response to emerging global realities. The age-old basis of nationhood, centered on territorial sovereignty and unique cultural identities, appears progressively outdated against the backdrop of permeable boundaries, extensive global networks, and cultural intermingling. Addressing this issue requires a delicate balance between preserving national identity and embracing the dynamic shifts brought on by digital globalization, demanding a sophisticated reinterpretation of nationhood that aligns with the intricate nuances of today's interconnected world (Drobot & Semenets-Orlova, 2023).

### **The Disintegration of Nation-States**

The global landscape is witnessing a marked shift as traditional nation-state structures show signs of disintegration, moving towards what might increasingly be viewed as a relic of the past. This shift reflects deep transformations in the concept of statehood, highlighting the reasons behind the nation-state model's gradual decline.

The disintegration phenomenon is starkly observable in mass politics and international relations, where there is a noticeable trend of growing public disillusionment with the effectiveness and pertinence of international institutions and the traditional nation-state construct. Walter (2018) delves into this development, showing how Brexit and the surge of nationalist movements exemplify a broader disillusionment with the established nation-state and international cooperation frameworks. These instances are emblematic of a larger trend, indicating a transformative shift in the global political landscape, where the traditional allure of the nation-state is diminishing.

As Schimmelfennig (2018) elucidates, Brexit exemplifies the intricate dynamics contributing to the disintegration of nation-states, initially framed as a resurgence of national sovereignty but revealing the complexities of disentangling from a supranational entity. This episode underscores the limitations of conventional sovereignty, showing how severance from a collective union introduces new dependencies, thereby questioning the core concept of nation-state autonomy.

The breakdown of state structures in African nations like Liberia and Somalia offers profound insights into the weakening of national sovereignty, indicative of a broader global trend. Maxted and Zegeye (1997) analyze these instances, attributing the disintegration to a confluence of internal strife, governance failures, and external pressures, which collectively compromise the foundational stability of state governance. While prominent in these states, this collapse pattern symbolizes widespread challenges confronting the traditional nation-state paradigm, signaling a shift towards a future where the conventional construct of nation-states may no longer be viable amidst evolving global dynamics.

Afghanistan's political evolution post-2001 epitomizes the redefinition of the nation-state, where informal political networks have catalyzed a significant shift in governance and statehood concepts. Sharan (2013) explores this transition, showing how these networks, deeply ingrained in tribal, ethnic, or regional affiliations, increasingly eclipse traditional governmental frameworks, instituting an alternative governance model coexisting with or substituting the formal state machinery. The 2010-2011 Special Election Court crisis exemplifies this shift, highlighting instances where informal power structures outmaneuvered established state mechanisms. This suggests a move away from the fixed, territorially-defined nation-state towards a governance model marked by fluid, adaptable, and network-driven power dynamics. This reimagining of statehood in Afghanistan reflects a departure from the Westphalian model, embracing governance shaped less by territorial borders and more by the realities of informal, influential networks.

### **The Israeli Context**

Israel's nation-state identity is intricately tied to its distinct historical, religious, and cultural narratives. The 1948 establishment, underpinned by the Zionist vision, aimed to create a sovereign state for Jews, intertwining political aspirations with deep-rooted historical and spiritual elements, as Smith (2016) articulates. This vision, encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence, emphasizes the Jews' historical and ethical claim to their ancestral homeland, intertwining national identity with centuries-old traditions.

The notion of Israel as an ethnic nation-state, differentiating nationality from citizenship, reflects a broader historical pattern influenced by the 19th-century nationalist movements. The unique circumstances surrounding Israel's establishment offer insightful perspectives into contemporary nation-state dilemmas and the nuances of nationalism. Questions arise about nationalism's temporality, the balance between unique national identities and universal democratic values, the integration of significant minorities, and the management of

immigration. Zionism, representing an ancient people's national resurgence, along with the Jewish-democratic model, the Jewish-Arab dynamic, and laws governing immigration, provides a framework for examining these pressing issues, shedding light on the complex interplay between religion, nationality, and the evolving challenges of the modern nation-state (Stern et al., 2022).

Israel epitomizes a unique nation-state model, balancing its intrinsic Jewish identity with a steadfast commitment to democratic, liberal values. This dual ethos is encapsulated in the Declaration of Independence, which simultaneously reveres the nation's historical and cultural heritage and pledges allegiance to universal democratic principles. Distinct from both civic and conventional ethnic nation-states, Israel's uniqueness is deeply interwoven with the singular aspects of Judaism, merging shared heritage, culture, and the distinct religious tenets of Judaism into the national fabric. This integration is complex, as diverse interpretations of Judaism are embedded in Israel's public identity, influenced by millennia of diasporic existence without a unified political-religious state structure, presenting unique challenges in defining a modern Jewish state (Stern et al., 2022).

Israel's ongoing journey reflects a continuous endeavor to harmonize its foundational identity as a "Jewish and democratic state," a constitutional principle that embodies its core values. This balancing act involves navigating the inherent challenges of upholding a democratic ethos while fostering a distinct Jewish national character, a pursuit that remains central to the Israeli collective consciousness.

### **The Internal Contradictions Within Israel's Nation-State Identity**

Israel's nation-state identity embodies profound internal contradictions, shaped by the intricate dynamics of its diverse demographic composition, religious plurality, and political milieu, all of which bear significant implications for its societal and political fabric.

The country's demographic diversity includes a mosaic of Jews from various diasporas, Arabs, Druze, Bedouins, and other minority groups, each contributing to the national tapestry. DellaPergola (2018) notes the inherent challenges in this diversity as the state endeavors to preserve a Jewish majority while adhering to democratic principles. Rebhun (2020) further explores the issue by analyzing internal migration trends, showing how the movement of different ethnic and religious communities affects the demographic equilibrium and intensifies societal strains. Lewin-Epstein and Cohen (2018) investigate the nuances of ethnic background in shaping national identity, illuminating the political implications of these demographic evolutions. These factors collectively fuel ongoing debates around immigration policies, the Law of Return, and the entitlements of non-Jewish inhabitants, underscoring the delicate task Israel faces in reconciling its Jewish character with democratic values.

Israel's complex societal fabric, encompassing a spectrum from secular to ultra-Orthodox Jews, alongside significant Muslim, Christian, and Druze populations, often sees its democratic ethos in tension with its Jewish national identity. This friction manifests in debates over marriage laws, Sabbath regulations, and religious education's role in the public sphere. Harel (2020) examines the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, unveiling the delicate balance between reinforcing Jewish identity and upholding democratic values. The law's intent to cement a Jewish collective ethos simultaneously ignites controversies regarding democratic fairness, risking the marginalization of various community segments.

Ben Porat and Filc (2020) delve into the ramifications of religious populism in Israel, showing how the emphasis on Jewish identity not only differentiates Jews from non-Jews but also stratifies the Jewish community along religious lines. Their analysis reveals a growing trend where religious populism steers Israeli politics, often elevating Jewish religious tenets above democratic principles, thereby straining Israel's societal unity and potentially disenfranchising non-Orthodox and non-Jewish groups. Kontorovich (2020) contextualizes Israel's Nation-State Law within a global pattern of constitutional endorsements of a majority group's distinct identity but highlights its unique challenges in Israel's heterogenous and pluricultural context. The law's effects are significant, possibly recalibrating the national identity to favor Jewish heritage, a development that could deepen the country's religious and ethnic cleavages.

Israel's political environment is marked by pronounced divisions, with debates on the nation-state's identity exacerbating polarization. These fissures extend beyond ideological lines, encapsulating deeper conflicts over Jewish statehood's nature and its democratic ethos, impacting various Jewish sects and the Jewish-Arab populace. Porat (2023) examines this escalating political polarization, highlighting its contribution to Israel's constitutional dilemma, where growing affective polarization—increasingly antagonistic public sentiments toward political factions—intensifies tensions between the government and judiciary, challenging the pillars of democratic governance.

Harel (2020) scrutinizes the legal affirmation of Israel's Jewish character, noting the contentious interplay between Zionist foundations and modern democratic principles. This codification risks sidelining non-Jewish communities, potentially undermining democratic equality. The effects resonate beyond the legal

framework, shaping societal attitudes and risking a compromise of democratic inclusiveness for ethnonational dominance.

Expanding this discourse, Patten (2020) critically evaluates Israel's designation as a Jewish state, probing the integration of an ethnic-national focus with democracy's universalistic values. Patten contends that privileging Jewish nationalism could erode civic solidarity, heightening the difficulty of cultivating a unified national identity that inclusively accommodates Israel's diverse populace. His analysis underscores how this emphasis on Jewish ethnicity influences not just the political sphere but also the daily lives of all citizens, especially minorities, challenging the construction of a cohesive societal fabric.

### **Support for the Nation-State Concept in Israel**

In Israel, the Nation-State Law, which delineates Israel as the Jewish People's Nation State, receives backing from diverse societal groups, each driven by varying motivations. Harel (2020) investigates the Basic Law, suggesting that many view it as vital for affirming Israel's Jewish essence, especially against demographic shifts and regional instabilities, thus aiming to secure a Jewish future within the nation's legal statutes.

Yakobson (2020) offers a nuanced critique, supporting the Jewish nation-state ideal but highlighting the challenges of harmonizing this with democratic norms and civil equality. His analysis reflects the views of intellectual and political proponents who endorse the nation-state ideology but advocate for incorporating democratic safeguards, aiming to balance Jewish national objectives with a commitment to inclusivity and equal rights for all citizens, including the Arab minority.

Jamal (2016) delves into the Jewish Nation-State Bill's ideological and political motivations, emphasizing its intent to solidify Israel's Jewish identity, possibly compromising democratic ethos and minority rights. This inclination aligns with nationalistic, religious, and conservative political entities favoring Jewish national interests, often perceived as essential for preserving Israel's Jewish character amid demographic evolution and security challenges. The critique interprets the bill as reflecting a majoritarian sentiment, intending to affirm Jewish preeminence while potentially marginalizing the state's democratic and multicultural dimensions.

Amar-Dahl (2017) offers an in-depth examination of the multifaceted elements reinforcing Israel's Jewish nation-state status, intertwining historical, ideological, and geopolitical threads. He scrutinizes Zionist ideology, revealing its significant influence on Israel's societal and legal framework, encapsulating aspirations from historical homeland connections to security and stability imperatives, resonating widely across the Israeli societal spectrum. This ideology garners support from various sectors, including Zionists with historical, cultural, and religious ties, security proponents, and religious factions, collectively advocating for a nation-state model that integrates national identity with historical, security, and religious facets.

Malach (2013) discusses the embedded support for the nation-state concept within Israeli society, rooted in historical affiliations, cultural heritage, and Israel's geopolitical context. This endorsement reflects a shared dedication to preserving Israel's distinctiveness, highlighting the convergence of interests among diverse groups. Notably, it encompasses Jewish citizens who perceive the nation-state law as crucial for reaffirming the Jewish people's historical land ties and ensuring the Jewish state's cultural and religious perpetuity. Political leaders and policymakers also favor this model to address security concerns and uphold national solidarity, aiming to harmonize the Jewish state's ethos with democratic values. The backing is fundamentally linked to historical bonds, cultural perpetuity, and Israel's geopolitical challenges, underscoring the nation-state model's significance in upholding the state's unique identity amidst the complexities of diversity and democratic governance.

Xiao Yu and Zenghui Ji (2018) revisit the international influences on Israel's nation-state identity formation, especially the early backing from the Soviet Union, elucidating how global geopolitical interests and Zionist ambitions have critically shaped the nation-state concept. This external support underscores the intricate correlation between worldwide political maneuvers and the intrinsic quest to establish a Jewish homeland, illuminating the diverse motivations that underlie Israel's nation-state concept.

### **Nation-State vs. Democracy**

Incorporating Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People into its constitutional fabric marks a critical juncture, reflecting the intricate endeavor to harmonize the state's Jewish character with democratic tenets. Harel (2020) critically assesses this legislative act, noting its intention to underscore Israel's Jewish identity while simultaneously igniting concerns about undermining democratic values. He suggests the law might herald a pivot in Israel's democratic path, veering towards authoritarianism under the pretext of reinforcing the nation-state ideology. Harel's critique is pivotal for dissecting the law's dual pursuit: cementing the Jewish nature of the state potentially at the detriment of Israel's longstanding democratic framework.

Dowty (2018) navigates the nuanced intricacies of Israel's polity, particularly the coexistence of its Jewish character with democratic values. He meticulously evaluates the nation-state notion, spotlighting the dilemmas it

poses, especially regarding Arab-Israeli citizens' civic rights amidst the Arab-Israeli conflict. His inquiry addresses a fundamental question: Can Israel maintain its Jewish identity while honoring democratic equality and justice for all citizens? This examination is crucial for grasping the tension between nationalism and democracy in Israel's distinct sociopolitical milieu, offering deep reflections on the nation-state law's ramifications for Israel's democratic integrity.

Weizman (2019) scrutinizes the subtle discord between the nation-state law's aim to affirm Israel's Jewish identity and its implications for democratic governance, particularly concerning Palestinian citizens' rights. He contends that the law steers towards exclusionary constitutionalism, where Jewish national priorities might eclipse the inclusivity of non-Jewish groups, challenging the principles of shared citizenship and equality. Weizman's analysis is critical to understanding the complex interplay between the nation-state law and Israel's democratic ethos, emphasizing the critical discourse on reconciling a distinct national identity with democratic inclusiveness. His insights shed light on the potential democratic compromises entailed in enshrining a specific national identity that might sideline the democratic rights of all residents.

Smocha (1996) explores the intricate discussions around Israel's nation-state identity and its alignment with democratic principles, focusing on balancing a Jewish national character and the adherence to democratic ideals, particularly concerning minority rights. The examination points out that Israel's endeavor to harmonize its Jewish essence with democratic governance encounters persistent challenges, especially in guaranteeing equal treatment for all citizens within the framework of its ethno-national core. These challenges encapsulate broader debates on a state's ability to uphold a distinct national identity while nurturing a democratic setting that honors and safeguards the rights of every individual, including minority groups. Smocha's insights are crucial in dissecting the dynamic tensions between nationalism and democracy within Israel's unique and complex socio-political context.

## **Transnationalism**

### **The Rise of Transnationalism**

The emergence of transnationalism marks a pivotal transformation in the global schema, transcending the conventional nation-state framework. This concept encapsulates the sprawling influence of social, political, and economic undertakings across national frontiers, underscoring the significance of non-state entities and international coalitions in steering global affairs (Faist & Bilecen, 2019). Robinson (1998) contends that grasping this shift necessitates a new epistemological approach, reflecting worldwide ontological changes. His work sheds light on various facets, including the impact of economic globalization, state, and political transnationalization, and the unification endeavors seen in entities like NAFTA and the EU, illustrating the intricate, interconnected nature of our current global environment.

Clavin (2005) probes the core of transnationalism, spotlighting its influential role in reconfiguring global interactions and questioning traditional state sovereignty. The analysis presents how transnational dynamics instigate substantial shifts across societal, political, and economic spectrums, contributing to an era where borders become more fluid and identities grow increasingly complex. This shift accentuates the crucial function of transnationalism in enabling novel forms of global connectivity and reimagining the structure of international relations, positioning it as a transformative element in the worldwide context.

In the digital age, transnationalism's relevance has been significantly amplified, fostering unparalleled levels of communication, information sharing, and cultural amalgamation. Tedeschi et al. (2020) examine how digital platforms are pivotal in nurturing transnational connections, allowing individuals and communities to preserve and enhance their societal, economic, and cultural affiliations across extensive geographical expanses, thus redefining their sense of identity and belonging. Additionally, the exploration of digital intimacy and expatriate life underscores how digital tools assist expatriates in sustaining close ties with their home nations, promoting a transnational lifestyle that weaves together personal, local, and global dimensions, challenging conventional perceptions of home and community (Patterson & Leurs, 2020).

Transnationalism catalyzes the erosion of traditional national borders and identities, cultivating connections surpassing nation-states' established confines. Yeoh (2022) articulates how transnational engagements foster cross-border relationships and activities, challenging the traditional functions of nation-states and giving rise to diverse, fluid identities within global interconnectedness. These transnational bonds disrupt the straightforward narratives of national identity and citizenship, proposing a layered comprehension of belonging across various territories and dimensions.

The transformative influence of transnational politics and the rise of an "imagined global diaspora" illuminate new forms of nationalism and identity that exceed fixed territorial limits. Kastoryano (2018) identifies this trend as a significant redefinition of nationhood, where communities, though geographically dispersed, form transnational solidarities based on shared cultural, ethnic, or religious affiliations, challenging the conventional nation-state's governance frameworks. This shift fundamentally alters the prevailing notions of territory, authority, and identity in an era of extensive global connectivity.

Transnationalism heralds a paradigm shift towards comprehensive global interconnectedness, questioning the sovereignty traditionally held by nation-states. It envisages a realm where borders are permeable, and identities, communities, and governance structures are interwoven through expansive transnational networks, transforming the nature of social, political, and economic exchanges (Faist & Bilecen, 2019). This changing environment suggests a future where established state-centric governance models are redefined to accommodate the intricate realities of transnational interactions, paving the way for an epoch of intensified global integration and collaboration (Bloch, 2017). The discourse extends to examine how individuals cultivate complex cross-border ties, forming transnational social fields that influence identity development, community ties, and political engagement, forecasting a future where the significance of physical borders is increasingly diminished, with global interconnectedness becoming the cornerstone of societal organization (Villa-Torres et al., 2017).

The trajectory toward transnational identities significantly impacts Israel, suggesting an evolution from traditional nation-state frameworks to a model that mirrors its unique societal composition, marked by varied diasporic backgrounds, international ties, and rich cultural diversity. This shift towards transnationalism proposes an inclusive Israeli identity that embraces the complex tapestry of its citizens' histories and experiences, enriching its national narrative.

Adopting a transnational perspective offers Israel an opportunity to cultivate a multifaceted identity that reflects the intricate realities of its inhabitants, encompassing Jews, Arabs, and other groups. Such an identity, grounded in transnationalism, champions an expansive sense of belonging that eclipses conventional ethnic or nationalistic boundaries. This approach could foster greater integration, enhancing cohesion and mutual understanding across Israel's diverse population. It advocates for recognizing Israel's cultural and historical plurality, promoting embracing its societal diversity as a source of strength and unity.

### **Cultivating an Israeli Transnational Identity**

The intricate notion of an Israeli transnational identity gains importance given the nation's diverse societal composition, encompassing various groups such as European and non-European Jews, Arabs, and immigrants from the former Soviet Union, among others. This diversity is pivotal in navigating Israel's socio-political terrain, offering challenges and prospects for harmonizing its multifarious populations.

Israel is a critical case study examining multiculturalism within deeply divided societies. Its stark divisions—spanning national, ethnic, religious, and social lines—are epitomized in the persistent Jewish-Arab conflict. It significantly influences many societal aspects, including the educational sector, where historical narratives mirror the larger national discourse.

The concept of ethnic democracy in Israel underscores the peculiar scenario where the prevailing national identity complicates the assimilation of non-Jewish, particularly Arab, populations into the mainstream Hebrew culture, thereby challenging traditional democratic norms in ethnically varied societies (Berent, 2010). The complex interactions among various Jewish factions and between Jewish and Arab communities are instrumental in sculpting Israel's social fabric, affecting integration approaches and collective identity perceptions (Peres, 1971).

Israel's societal landscape, characterized by pronounced divisions along national, ethnic, and religious lines, epitomizes the intricacies inherent in a multicultural society, especially manifest in the nuanced dynamics of Jewish-Arab relations. Palestinian Israelis, with their layered identity—rooted in indigenous heritage, Arab ethnicity, and Israeli citizenship—epitomize these complexities. Their identity encapsulates the tension between Israel's democratic ideals, its Jewish-Zionist core, and security-centric policies, often resulting in a challenging navigation of state loyalty and ethnic affiliations against the backdrop of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The nuanced understanding of this multifaceted identity is vital, highlighting the challenges Israel faces in crafting a unified national identity that respects and weaves together the diverse narratives and legacies within its society, thereby influencing its social unity, policy formulation, and broader aspirations for peace and equality (Al-haj, 2002). Expanding beyond the predominant Jewish-Arab narrative, Israel's societal fabric includes a rich array of ethnic identities, each adding layers to the complex national identity. The interactions between European and non-European Jews shed light on the internal ethnic dynamics within the Jewish community, historically marked by disparities yet bonded by a collective identity and shared resilience in facing external adversities (Peres, 1971). The Russian-speaking immigrants from the former Soviet Union represent another facet, preserving their cultural distinctiveness while assimilating into the broader Israeli society, embodying the nation's multifaceted ethnic composition (Al-haj, 2002). Furthermore, Ethiopian Jews navigate their dual African and Jewish identities, challenging conventional societal norms and expectations in Israel and illustrating the intricate negotiations of race, culture, and identity within the Israeli framework (Ben-Eliezer, 2004).

Israel's demographic diversity underscores the importance of recognizing and integrating a complex ethnic identity within its socio-political fabric, marked by historical, national, ethnic, and religious cleavages, particularly reflected through the Jewish-Arab conflict. This narrative elucidates the contribution of various



groups, including European and non-European Jews, Arabs, immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and Ethiopian Jews, to Israel's multicultural ethos. It underscores the imperative to develop a comprehensive national identity harmonizing Israeli society's myriad narratives, histories, and loyalties. The interplay of democratic principles, Jewish-Zionist identity, and rich ethnic diversity shapes Israel's sociopolitical environment, emphasizing the necessity for an inclusive approach that acknowledges and integrates the diverse identities of all its inhabitants, fostering societal cohesion and propelling the collective endeavor toward peace and equality.

### **Education as the Catalyst for Change**

In the multifaceted socio-political context of Israel, education is a pivotal force for transformative change, with multicultural and bilingual education initiatives from kindergarten playing a significant role. Integrating Hebrew and Arabic bilingual programs is foundational to cultivating mutual respect, understanding, and peaceful coexistence between Jewish and Arab communities.

The inception of bilingual education in Arabic and Hebrew at the kindergarten and primary school levels is instrumental in connecting communities, promoting respect, and building a unified society. Embracing a flexible bilingualism approach, which includes translanguaging and code-switching techniques, proves particularly beneficial in these educational frameworks. Such methodologies facilitate linguistic proficiency and encourage cultural interchange and active participation among students, especially in a setting where Arabic is often perceived as a less dominant language within Israel (Schwartz & Asli, 2014). The co-teaching framework in Hebrew-Arabic bilingual preschools showcases an innovative strategy where educators jointly navigate challenges, share pedagogical duties, and enhance the educational milieu. This approach highlights the significance of teachers' flexibility and cooperative tactics, ensuring that children receive immersive exposure to both languages, thus promoting a comprehensive and inclusive learning experience (Schwarz & Gorgatt, 2018). The pioneering bilingual Palestinian-Jewish schools in Israel stand as beacons of education's potential to instigate societal transformation in areas plagued by conflict. These schools commit to upholding dignity and equality, inspiring students to acknowledge and respect their varied cultural backgrounds. Their distinct pedagogical model extends beyond bilingualism to encompass a deep engagement with multicultural education and intergroup empathy, which is essential for alleviating societal discord and fostering a collective sense of community (Bekerman, 2004).

The educational models in integrated schools significantly challenge the entrenched societal divisions, fostering narratives of coexistence and mutual acknowledgment among students. This holistic educational strategy profoundly influences students' self-perceptions and views of the 'other,' contributing constructively to the wider discussions on peace and reconciliation within Israeli society (Bekerman & Habib, 2011). The practical application of these models showcases the delicate equilibrium between upholding cultural distinctiveness and nurturing a common identity, with the overarching goal of knitting a unified yet diverse societal tapestry (Meshulam, 2019).

Such educational environments offer pivotal platforms for engaging with the 'other' and proactively redefining historical narratives and collective memories that perpetuate conflict. A curriculum centered on critical thinking, mutual respect, and shared experiences equips students to interact critically with their own and others' histories, cultivating a future generation inclined towards peace and coexistence (Bekerman, 2003). Reflecting on the triumphs of multicultural education systems, particularly in immigrant-rich countries, sheds light on efficacious strategies that hold global adaptation and implementation potential.

Singapore exemplifies a remarkable multicultural and multilingual education model, successfully integrating a diverse population, including Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other ethnicities, into a cohesive educational structure. The Singaporean system, which prioritizes bilingualism with English as the instruction medium and the respective mother tongues as second languages, has effectively nurtured a unified national consciousness while honoring the richness of ethnic diversity.

Singapore's educational success is notably attributed to its foundational emphasis on multicultural and multilingual learning, initiated as early as preschool. The educational framework is meticulously designed to cultivate proficiency in English alongside students' native languages, simultaneously embedding multiculturalism and mutual respect from a young age (Goodwin & Low, 2017). The curriculum thoughtfully mirrors Singapore's diverse cultural landscape, integrating various cultural, religious, and historical elements, thus fostering a profound respect and understanding of the nation's rich diversity.

Layne and Teng (2022) highlight the significance of nurturing intercultural mindedness within the educational sphere, particularly through experiential learning in Singaporean secondary schools. Their study underscores the value of immersive intercultural experiences, showcasing Singapore's vibrant multiracial and multicultural essence. Such educational strategies deeply influence students' comprehension and respect for diverse cultures, cultivating a societal ethos characterized by inclusivity and harmony. This educational philosophy resonates with the envisaged reforms in Israel's education system, advocating for an early and

consistent emphasis on multiculturalism and bilingual education to enhance integration and foster a shared understanding.

Singapore's approach extends its effectiveness to integrating immigrant students, providing substantial support to ensure they meet high educational standards while assimilating into the nation's multicultural context. Tailored support initiatives and policies are in place to promote inclusivity and positive reception towards immigrants, guaranteeing that all students, irrespective of their origins, have equitable opportunities to succeed academically and socially (Hastedt, 2016). This model offers valuable insights into creating an educational environment that upholds high academic expectations and champions a cohesive, multicultural society.

In the United States, bilingual education initiatives assist English Language Learners (ELLs), facilitating language proficiency and academic achievement while preserving students' cultural legacies (Thomas & Collier, 2002). These programs are pivotal in enabling students to maintain their linguistic heritage while gaining fluency in English, promoting a balanced educational experience that respects and nurtures cultural diversity.

Canada's educational strategy, underpinned by values of equity and inclusivity, tailors its pedagogical approaches to accommodate its students' varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds, significantly enhancing their academic performance and cultivating a respectful, inclusive educational milieu (Cummins, 2001). This approach underscores the effectiveness of embracing diversity within educational systems, highlighting how acknowledgment and support of student's cultural and linguistic identities can lead to improved educational outcomes and a harmonious school environment.

The American and Canadian models serve as exemplary frameworks for implementing multicultural education, showcasing the vital role of bilingualism and inclusive policies in promoting educational fairness and cultural integration. These strategies underscore the importance of creating educational environments that honor and integrate the diverse backgrounds of all students, thereby enriching the educational landscape and contributing to a more inclusive, respectful, and interconnected society.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### **The Path Forward for Israel**

##### **From Nation-State to Civil State**

The evolution from a nation-state to a civil state in Israel represents a thoughtful adaptation to the contemporary national identity challenges, increasingly pertinent in the digital globalization era. Rebro et al. (2021) highlight the necessity of this transformation in responding to the shifting paradigms of statehood, where traditional geopolitical boundaries are continuously redefined by digital interconnectivity. Paterson and Hanley (2020) further underline the significance of this shift, pointing to how the digital age, with its inherent cyber threats, compels a strategic rethinking of national security and identity.

This reevaluation aligns with a global trend where the concept of "nation" is being reconsidered, influenced by the expansive reach of digital platforms that transcend conventional state borders, thus challenging the established nation-state framework (Croucher, 2003). Israel, with its rich historical and religious lineage, as depicted by Smith (2016) and Stern et al. (2022), is at a pivotal juncture. The state is prompted to envisage a new model that integrates its distinct national ethos with the principles of democratic inclusivity and a broader global engagement.

The intricate tensions within Israel's current nation-state identity, reflecting its diverse demographic, religious, and political fabric (DellaPergola, 2018; Rebhun, 2020; Lewin-Epstein & Cohen, 2018), highlight the pressing need for this transition. Harel's (2020) and Ben Porat and Filc's (2020) scholarly contributions advocate for a rearticulated Israeli identity that acknowledges the country's complex social mosaic. They propose a reimagined civil state framework that respects democratic principles, acknowledges Israel's Jewish roots, and accommodates the rich diversity of its population, thus paving the way for a more inclusive, harmonious, and resilient societal structure.

Incorporating these insights leads to advocating for a civil state model in Israel that resonates with inclusivity, equality, and pluralism, aligning proactively with global shifts that challenge the conventional nation-state paradigm. This model seeks to reconcile the internal tensions within Israel's existing framework, envisaging a future where the state survives and thrives amidst the digital and transnational challenges of the 21st century. It proposes a reimagined Israeli identity that accommodates the complexities of its societal fabric, ensuring that democratic values, diverse cultural heritage, and the country's unique historical narrative coexist harmoniously, fostering a resilient and inclusive national community.

##### **Mandatory Military Service: National Unity and Shared Responsibility**

The proposal to extend mandatory military service to all Israeli citizens, inclusive of groups currently exempt, such as specific ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities, stands as a significant measure aimed at bolstering national unity, shared responsibility, and social solidarity. This policy could serve as a crucial

mechanism for social integration, connecting various segments of society and cultivating a shared sense of identity and collective purpose. Incorporating every community into the military framework emphasizes a national ethos of collective security and mutual responsibility, mirroring a democratic principle where civic duties and privileges are universally shared.

However, implementing such a policy demands a nuanced strategy that respects different communities' distinct identities, beliefs, and traditions, ensuring the military's inclusivity and reflecting Israel's rich cultural diversity. While the challenges are considerable, the potential rewards are significant, promising enhanced societal integration, deeper mutual understanding, and cooperation across diverse groups, reinforcing a unified Israeli national identity.

### **The Role of Education in Facilitating Transition**

Education plays a crucial role in steering Israel toward becoming a multicultural, bilingual society, where foundational initiatives such as Hebrew and Arabic bilingual education programs commencing from kindergarten are key in connecting diverse community groups. These programs encourage mutual understanding and respect, fostering a cohesive societal fabric (Schwartz & Asli, 2014; Schwarz & Gorgatt, 2018). This transformative potential is embodied in integrated bilingual schools, which uphold values of dignity and equality, promoting a collective societal ethos while addressing prevailing societal cleavages (Bekerman, 2004; Bekerman & Habib, 2011).

Such educational environments are instrumental in advancing language proficiency and instilling a profound respect for cultural diversity. They prepare students to approach various narratives constructively, promoting critical engagement with their own and others' histories. A curriculum enriched with principles of critical thinking, mutual respect, and shared experiences is pivotal, enabling students to contribute actively to reshaping historical narratives and collective memories, thus nurturing a future generation committed to peace and coexistence (Bekerman, 2003).

Adopting this educational paradigm signifies a broader commitment to reevaluating and expanding educational frameworks to represent the narratives of all communities inclusively, fostering a reinforced sense of collective citizenship and mutual respect. This approach is instrumental in creating an educational landscape that respects diversity and actively celebrates it, laying the groundwork for a more integrated, peaceful, and cohesive society.

### **Summary**

The article presents a narrative that challenges the traditional notion of Israel as a purely "nation" state, arguing for a significant transformation toward a transnational, multicultural identity. It posits that the existing nation-state model is increasingly untenable, especially in an era where digital globalization and transnational dynamics erode the relevance of fixed national borders, thus rendering a singular national identity outdated. The call is for Israel to undergo a profound shift, particularly within its education system, to embrace early, multicultural, and bilingual education to cultivate an inclusive national ethos.

The advocated educational reform is seen as essential for integrating Israel's diverse ethnic compositions, thereby laying the foundation for a society that is cohesive, adaptable to global changes, and conducive to the long-term stability and unity of the nation's populace. This approach is a critical mechanism for fostering a unified Israeli identity that can navigate the complexities of the modern world, suggesting that such a paradigm shift is indispensable for Israel's successful navigation of the contemporary global landscape. Furthermore, the article delineates the necessity for Israel to reconcile the seeming dichotomy between a rigid nation-state construct and the principles of genuine democracy, advocating for a civil state model that unequivocally separates religion from state affairs and promotes universal military service. Drawing inspiration from successful models of multicultural integration like Singapore, the narrative underscores the importance of such transformative measures in facilitating Israel's evolution into a society that truly reflects its multicultural, multiethnic, and democratic ideals. This transition is portrayed as vital for ensuring the nation's resilience, democratic integrity, and social harmony in an increasingly interconnected and transnational world.

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