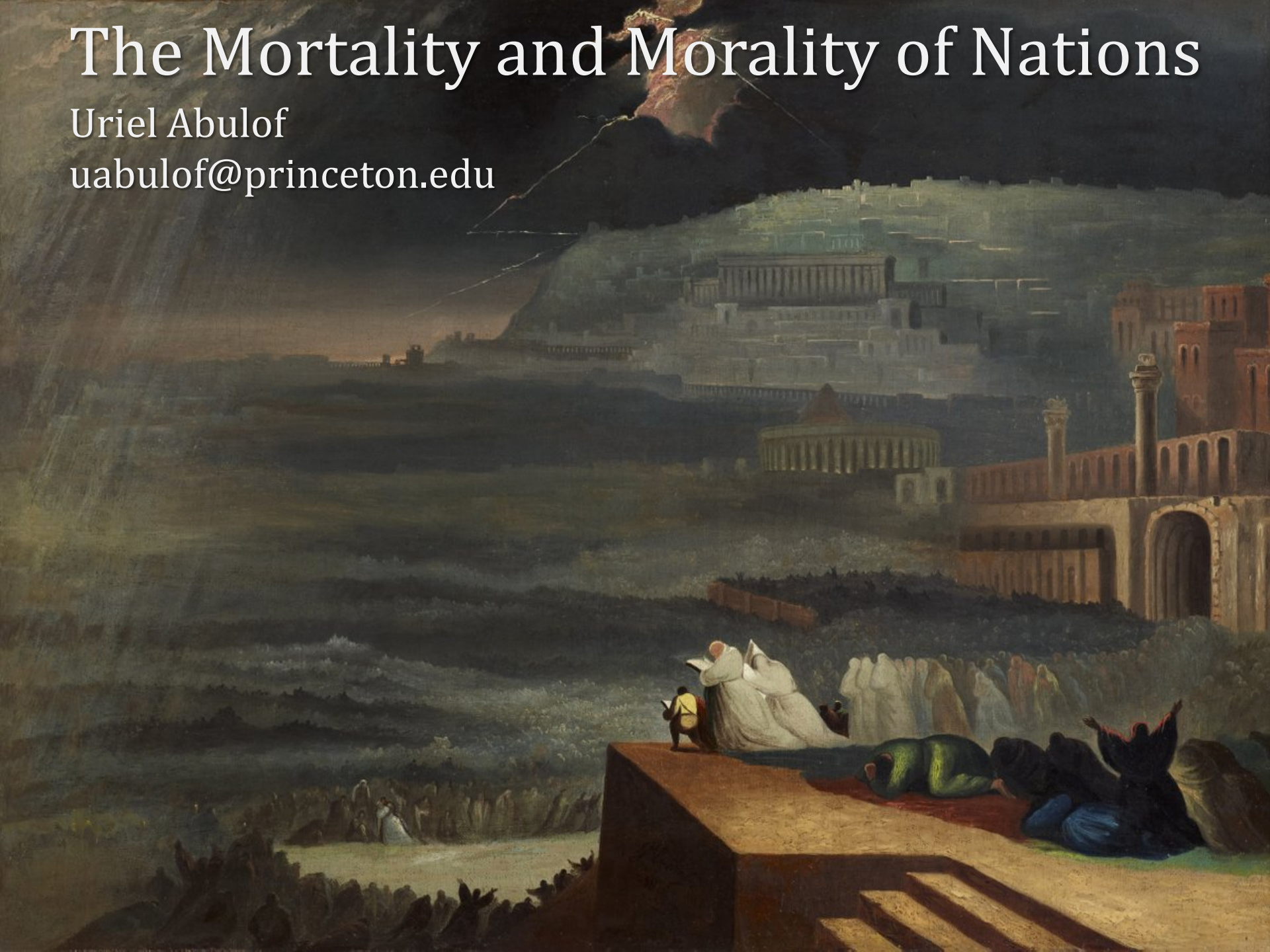


The Mortality and Morality of Nations

Uriel Abulof

uabulof@princeton.edu



Images

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Images



Azzam Tamimi,
Director of
Institute of
Islamic Political
Thought in
London

Hamas is a constant reminder to the Palestinian people that **the Zionist project is doomed**. It's a large—but cowardly—endeavor. The entire theft of a nation was a cowardly undertaking. What Jew can be proud of it? Already, **we are witnessing the beginning of the end of the Zionist project.**

Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, December 1998,
pages 23-24

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Images



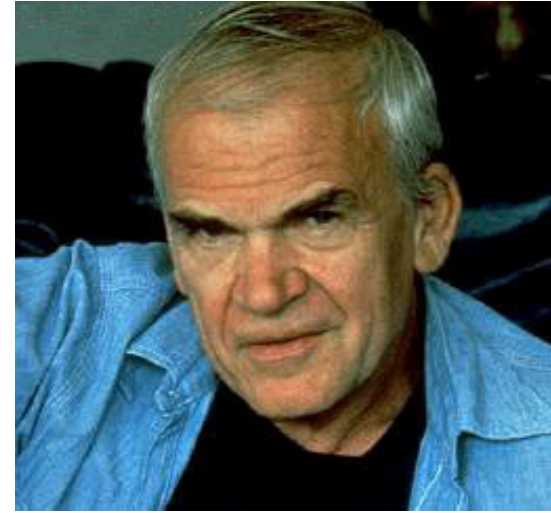
Gerard Araud
Former French
ambassador to
Israel
(2003-2006)

Ha'aretz,
September 29,
2006

A very respectable conference was held in Paris on the subject of “The Middle East in 2010.” There were people there from the highest levels of academia in the world, Israelis as well, of course. But none of the speakers discussed Israel. It seemed obvious to me that really the problem of the Middle East in the coming years is not Israel at all. Is there any lack of dangerous places? Then suddenly an Israeli woman diplomat came up to me, whose name I will not mention, looking very angry and insulted. I asked her what happened and she said: “I know why no-one has mentioned Israel,” she said. “Because none of you believes that Israel will be around in 2010.”

I was shocked. Who thinks something like that? That was the first time, but not the last, that I heard this fear. For us, the Europeans, it is difficult, almost impossible, to understand such deep existential fear, but I recognize it as one of the strongest factors impacting thoughts and decision making in Israel. Anyone taking this mood into consideration sees everything differently...

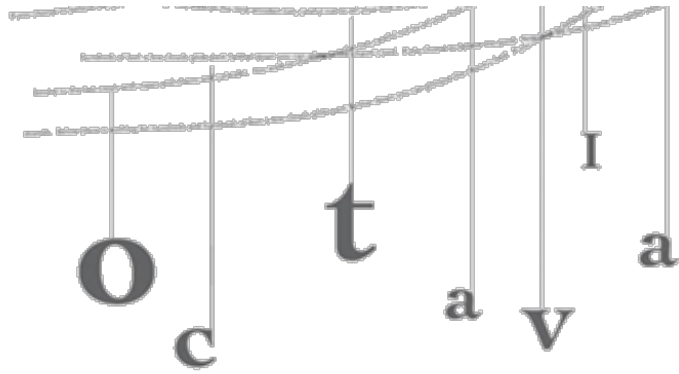
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Images



Milan Kundera,
Testaments Betrayed
1994

Small nations. The concept is not quantitative; it points to a condition; a fate; small nations lack that felicitous sense of an eternal past and future; at a given moment in their history, they all passed through the antechambers of death; in constant confrontation with the arrogant ignorance of the mighty, they see their existence as perpetually threatened or with a question mark hovering over it; for their very existence is the question.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Images



If you choose to believe me, good. Now I will tell how Octavia, **the spider-web city**, is made. There is a precipice between two steep mountains: the city is **over the void**, bound to the two crests

with ropes and chains and catwalks. You walk on the little wooden ties, careful not to set your foot in the open spaces, or you cling to the hempen strands. Below there is nothing for hundreds and hundreds of feet: a few clouds glide past; **farther down you can glimpse the chasm's bed.**

This is **the foundation of the city: a net** which serves as passage and as support...

Suspended over the abyss, the **life of Octavia's inhabitants is safer** than in other cities. They **know the net will only last so long.**

– Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, “Thin Cities” / Octavia

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Images

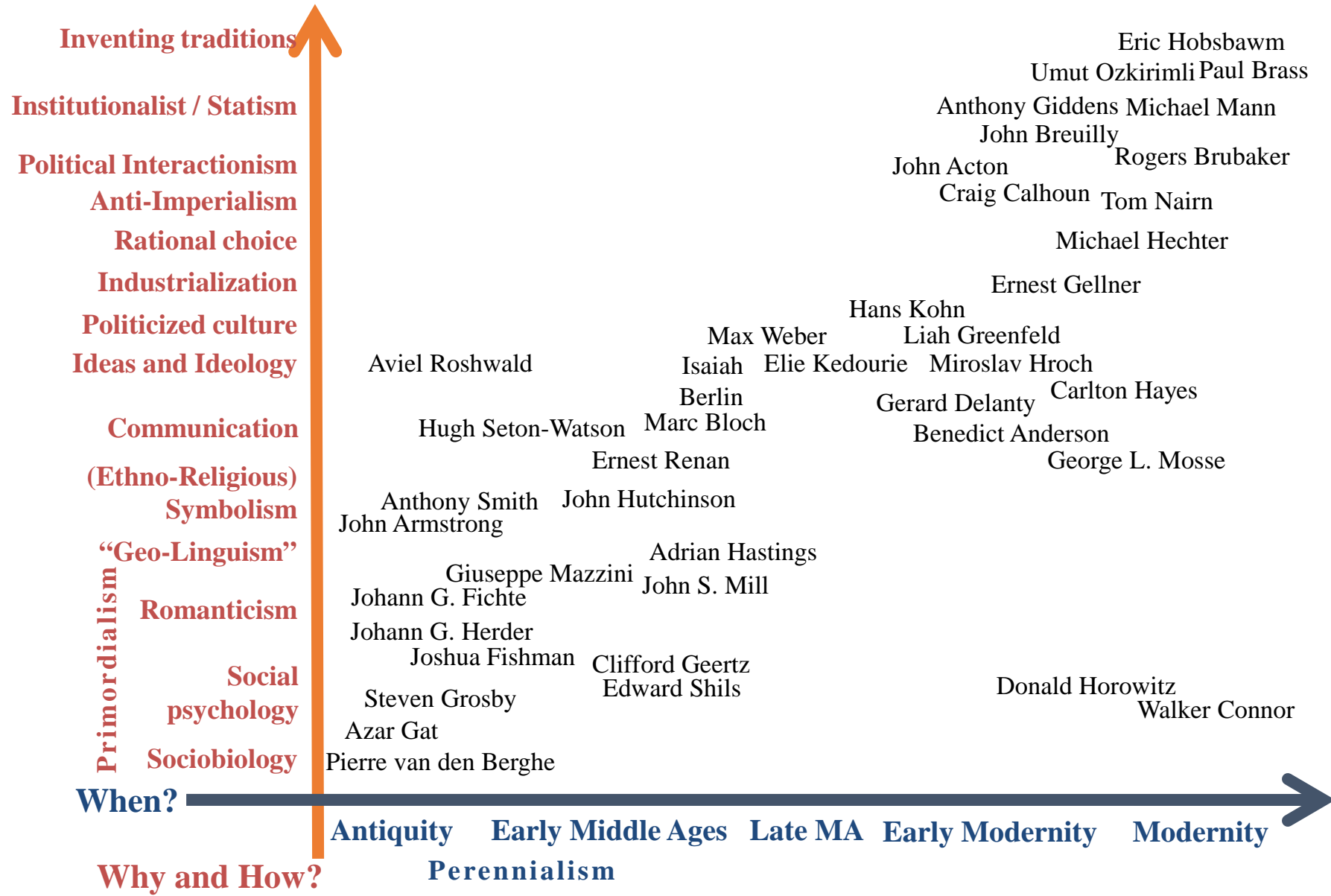
And God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. **The tree of life** was in the midst of the garden, and **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**.



Meaning

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Meaning: Identity Politics (nationalism, peoplehood, ethnicity)



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Meaning: Identity Politics (nationalism, peoplehood, ethnicity)

- **Negative nationalism**
People's **purposeful rejection of foreign rule.**
It **predates modernity.**



Revolt of the Batavi, 69 to 70 AD

- **Positive nationalism**
The **people as the origin of political authority**, justifying the *polity (self-determination)* and the *authority (popular sovereignty)*.
Positive nationalism is **modern.**



Berlin, 1848

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Meaning: Identity Politics (nationalism, peoplehood, ethnicity)

- **Peoplehood** is a **necessary but insufficient** condition of **nationalism**—every nation is a people though not every people is a nation.
- **Peoplehood is a public speech-act**, a statement that creates a new reality. A people is a collective with a unique name, defined as such by its members and by others.

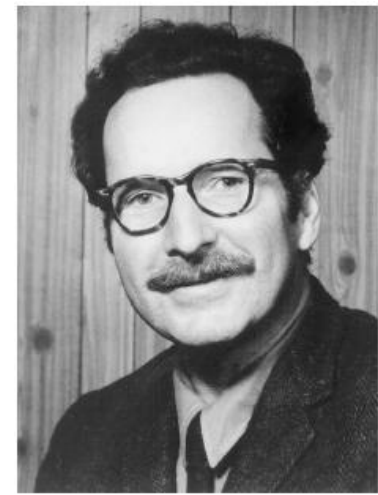
Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto *his people*, **Behold, the people of the children of Israel** are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

Exodus 1:8-10

ח וַיִּקָּם מֶלֶךְ-חֲדָשׁ, עַל-מִצְרַיִם, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדָע, אֶת-יֹסֵף. ט וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-עַמּוֹ: הִנֵּה, עַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--רַב וְעָצוּם, מִמֶּנּוּ. י הִבֵּה גַת־חֲכָמָה, לוֹ: פֶּן-יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה כִּי-תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסַף גַּם-הוּא עַל-שְׂנְאֵינּוּ, וְנִלְחַם-בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִן-הָאָרֶץ.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Meaning: Collective *causae-sui*

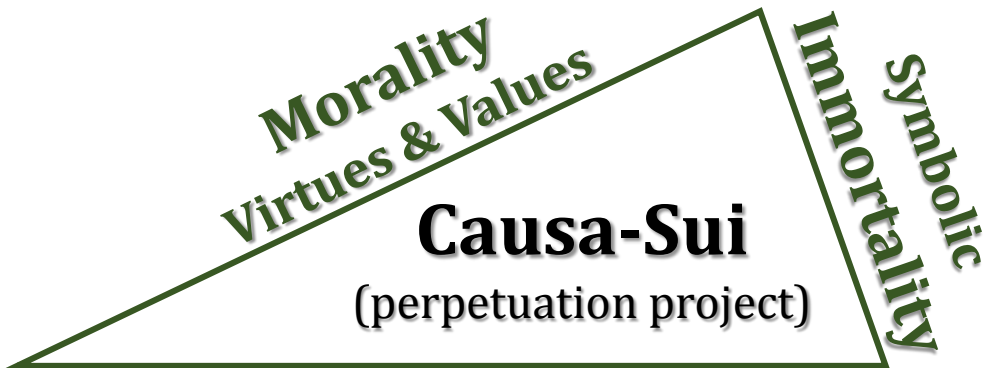


The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity—activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man [...] Man's best efforts seem utterly fallible without appeal to something higher for justification, some conceptual **support for the meaning of one's life from a transcendental dimension of some kind.** As this belief has to absorb man's basic terror, it cannot be merely abstract but must be rooted in the emotions, in an inner feeling that one is secure in something stronger, larger, more important than one's own strength and life... [thus] **using the cultural morality as the vehicle for his immortality.**

-- Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Meaning: The Moral Tree of Life



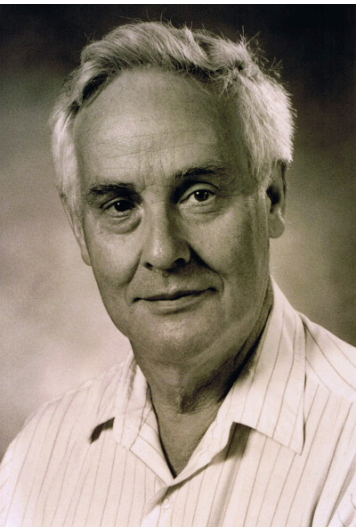
Materiality

Language
(narrative)

Search for Everlasting Meaning

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Meaning: Collective *causae-sui*



The century of **the Enlightenment**, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness... What then was required was a **secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning...**

Few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation. If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always **loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future.** It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny. With Debray we might say, 'Yes, it is quite accidental that I am born French; but after all, France is eternal.'

-- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1991), pp.10-12.

Nationalism has emotional power partly because it helps to make us who we are, because it inspires artists and composers, because **it gives us a link with history (and thus with immortality).**

-- Craig J. Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*



Mortality

The Mortality and Morality of Nations

Mortality: Death, Dread and Doubt in IR Discourse



Mortality does not equal death, but signifies **the awareness, in life, of the inevitability, availability, and indeterminacy of death**: it is bound to happen, but its exact timing is unknown, unless we choose to bring it on.

This is a unique human trait.



We search for immortality, and **the kind of immortality we seek** determines the kind of life we lead.

-- Hans J. Morgenthau, *Death in the Nuclear Age*

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Mortality: Death, Dread and Doubt in IR Discourse

IR Literature

Certainty = Knowing the Other's capabilities and intentions

Security = Safety against the threats posed by the Other

Premise: State personification

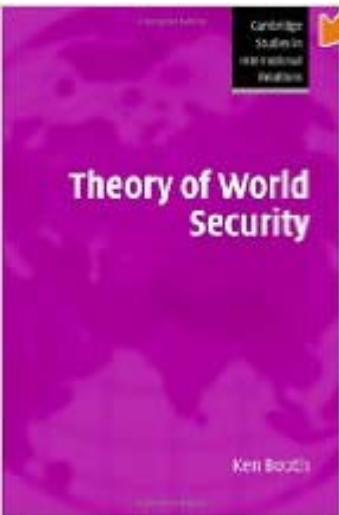
Small Nations

Security = Certainty about the existence of the collective Self

Premise: man's mortality-awareness; state de-personification

The Mortality and Morality of Nations

Mortality: Death, Dread and Doubt in IR Discourse

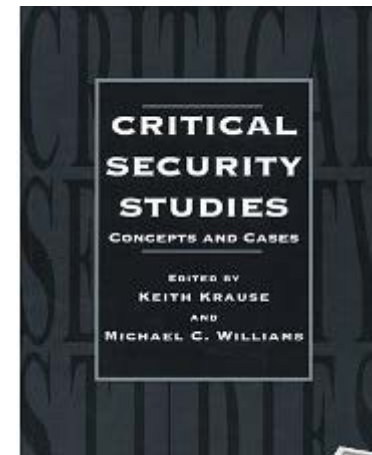


“Security” means the **absence of threats**. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those **physical and human constraints** which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do... Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security.

– Ken Booth

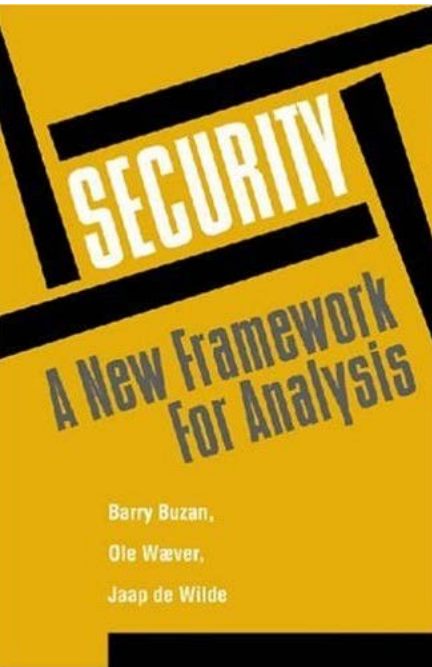
[s]ecurity or insecurity is defined in relation to **vulnerabilities**, both internal and external, that threaten to, or have the potential to, bring down or significantly **weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and regimes**

– Mohammed Ayooob



The Mortality and Morality of Nations

Mortality: Death, Dread and Doubt in IR Discourse



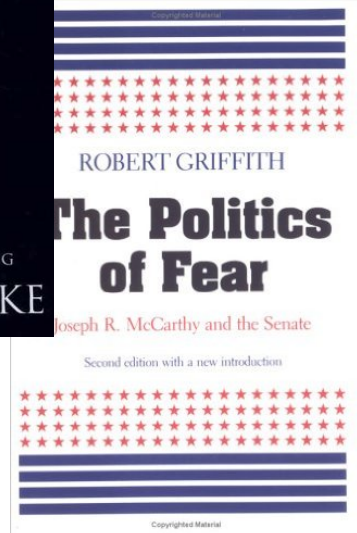
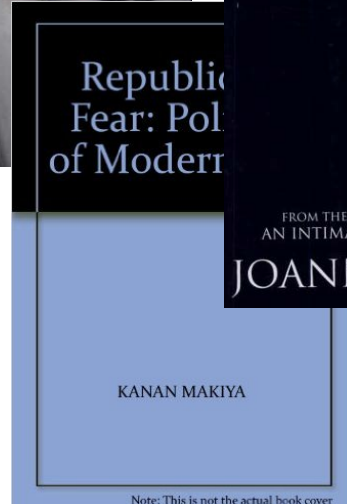
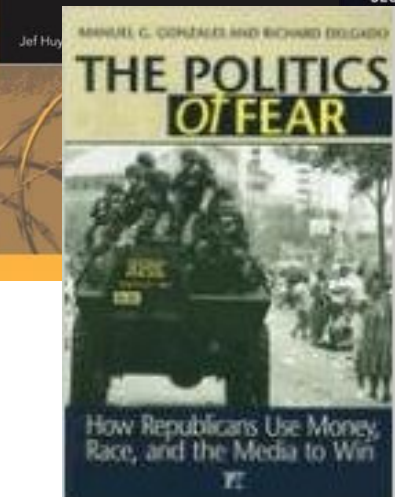
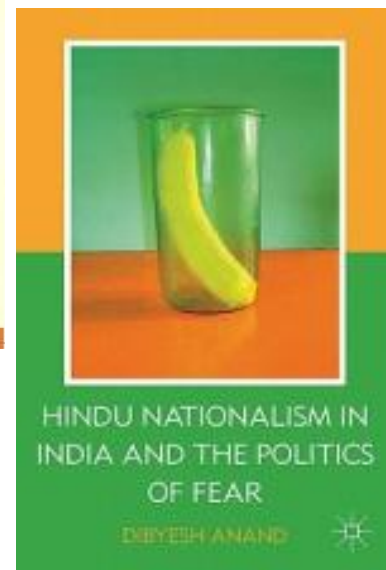
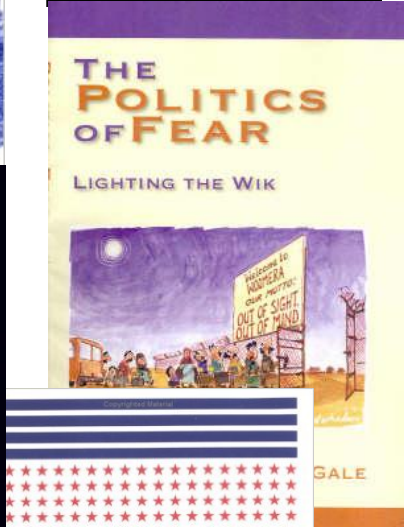
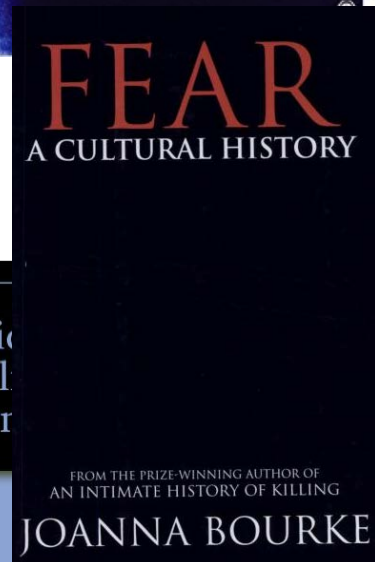
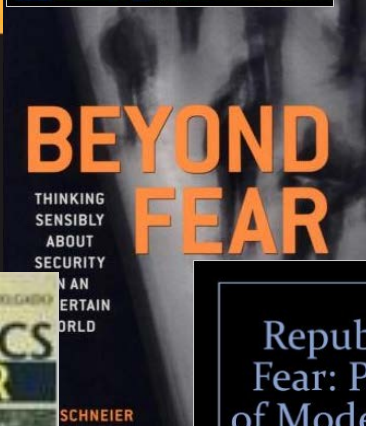
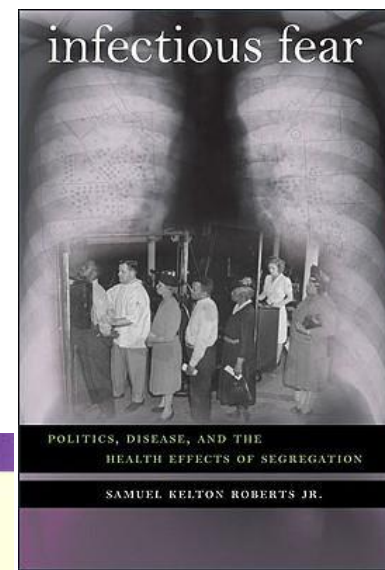
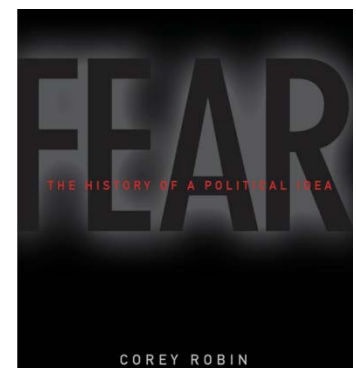
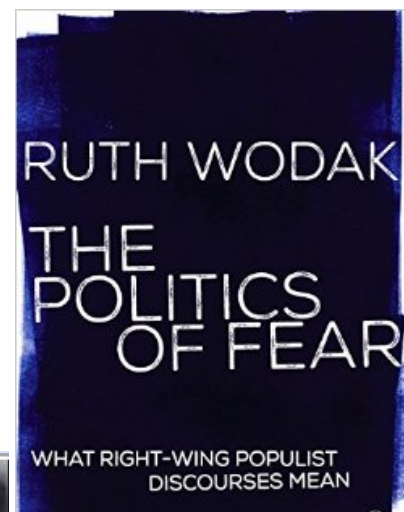
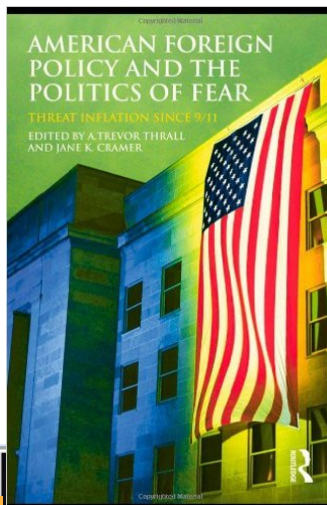
Intersubjective establishment of an **existential threat** with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects...

The way to study securitization is to study **discourse** and **political constellations**: When does an argument with this particular rhetorical and semiotic structure achieve sufficient effect to **make an audience tolerate violations of rules** that would otherwise have to be obeyed? (1997: 25)

A successful securitization thus has three components (or steps): **existential threats, emergency action**, and the effects in inter-unit relations by **breaking free of rules**. (1997:26)

The Mortality and Morality of Nations

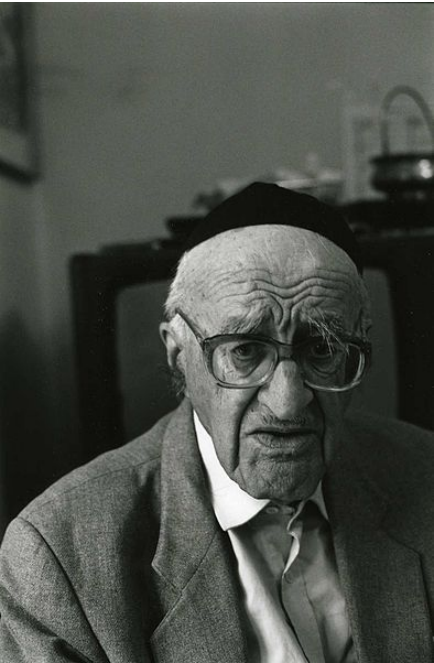
Mortality: Death, Dread and Doubt in IR Discourse



Note: This is not the actual book cover

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Mortality: Locating Small Nations



Yeshayahu
Leibowitz,
interview in 1966

There is **no existential security in the world** today. Perhaps there is assurance for the Chinese people because it is almost impossible to destroy them. But do the Poles have any assurance? ...The whole issue of prioritizing existential security has no meaning to me...

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Mortality: Locating Small Nations

- **Scope:** Who discusses the threats and for how long?
- **Sort:** What are the threats?
- **Scale:** How dangerous are they? (How deep is the abyss?)

A small nation continuously, widely and explicitly frames threats as probable and protracted, endangering its very existence.

Anxiety as unresolved fear:

Turning anxiety into fear, thus more concrete and manageable, might help us cope, but failing to cope might turn fear into yet greater anxiety.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Mortality: The Double Chasm

Abyss Within

Cultural-Societal

Past-based

("do we have a past?")

Validity (soundness)

Ontological (in)security

"To be or not to be-what?"

Losing Face

Ethnic Identity

Abyss Without

Physical-Political

Future-driven

("do we have a future"?)

Viability (survival)

Epistemic (in)security

"Will we be or not?"

Losing ground

National Polity



Morality

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Morality

The capacity and proclivity to **devise, and subscribe to, categories of good and evil**, involving conscience and feelings of shame, guilt, and remorse.

This stipulative definition **does not entail value judgment** and stresses morality as distinctively human.

It diverges from two **other prevalent definitions**:

- morality as “goodness,” which holds moral acts as virtuous
- morality as “benevolence,” which stresses animals’ “reciprocal altruism” and “fairness”

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Morality



Adolf Hitler

Who will refuse to see or even deny that today we find ourselves in the midst of a struggle that is not concerned merely with the problems of frontiers between peoples or States, but rather with **the question of the maintenance or annihilation of the whole inherited human order of society and its civilizations?...**

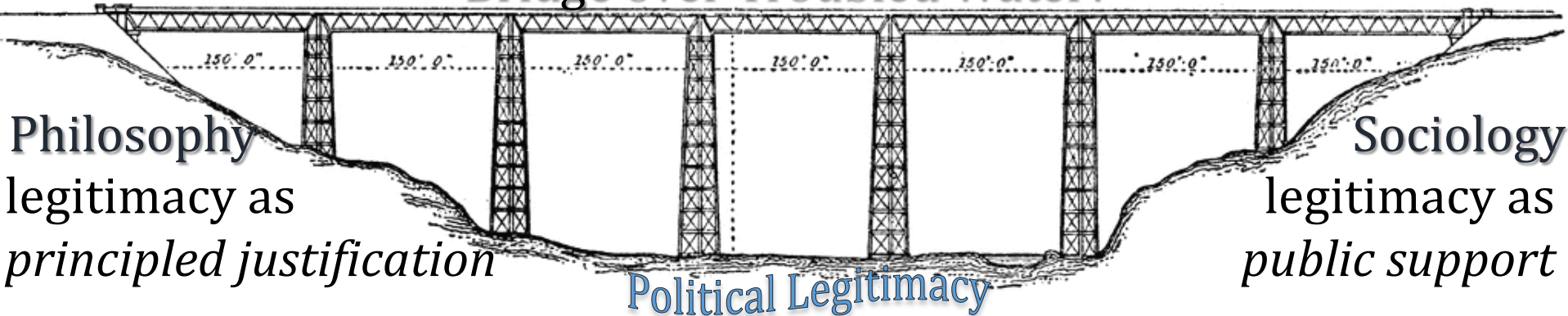
The discovery of **the Jewish virus** is one of the greatest revolutions that have taken place in the world. The battle we are engaged in is of the same sort as the battle waged during the last century, by Pasteur and Koch. We may be inhumane, but if we rescue Germany we have performed the greatest deed in the world...

The individual is transitory, the People is permanent.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Morality: Political Legitimation

Public Conscience: Bridge over Troubled Water?



Foundations

political philosophy, ideology, social imaginary, civil society, societal values, and public justification, public reason

Builders

Moral Agentation

Moral Structuration (Nomization)

Building Blocks

(en)Doxa: Deliberated Basic Beliefs

Discourse: The Language of Legitimation

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Morality: Political Legitimation

The four fronts of political legitimation:

- *Subject*: Who engages in legitimating (and delegitimizing) politics?
- *Object*: What (or who) is being legitimated?
- *Objective*: What is the end of legitimation?
- *Substance*: What is the legitimating message?

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Morality: Existential Self-Legitimation

By the nation, of the nation and for the nation's very existence.

Legitimizing Identity

- Community members may **turn from shame to shaming and blaming**. This blame game may embolden virtue-legitimation to the point of **sanctification**: consecrating the nation as an infallible “**chosen people**” who must expurgate its vicious elements to retain its virtuous integrity. Often underscoring **victimization** and involving **scapegoating**.
- The nation may **turn shame into guilt**. The nation morally reason out its “**collective conscience**,” deliberating its underlying values. Such a transformation may cause it to put the moral onus not on “who we are,” but on “**what we have done**,” which is more malleable. Most importantly, **guilt-driven responsibility, remorse and redress** might enhance peace within and without.
- The nation may rebuild its ontological security by **boosting its epistemic security**.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Morality: Existential Self-Legitimation

By the nation, of the nation and for the nation's very existence.

Legitimizing Polity – “Moral Lifelines”

	Righteousness	Rights	Raison D'être
Virtue (being)	“Chosen people” (Covenantal)	Race, Peoplehood, Survival	“Chosen People” (Missionary), Culture, Self- Actualization, Homeland, Survival
Values (doing)	Tradition, Religion, Regime	History, Law, Justice, Compromise, Force	Expedience, Democracy, Peace

Liberty

availability and viability of choice

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Liberty: Moral Malleability

Challenges to the Legitimation

(Potential for Legitimacy Crisis)

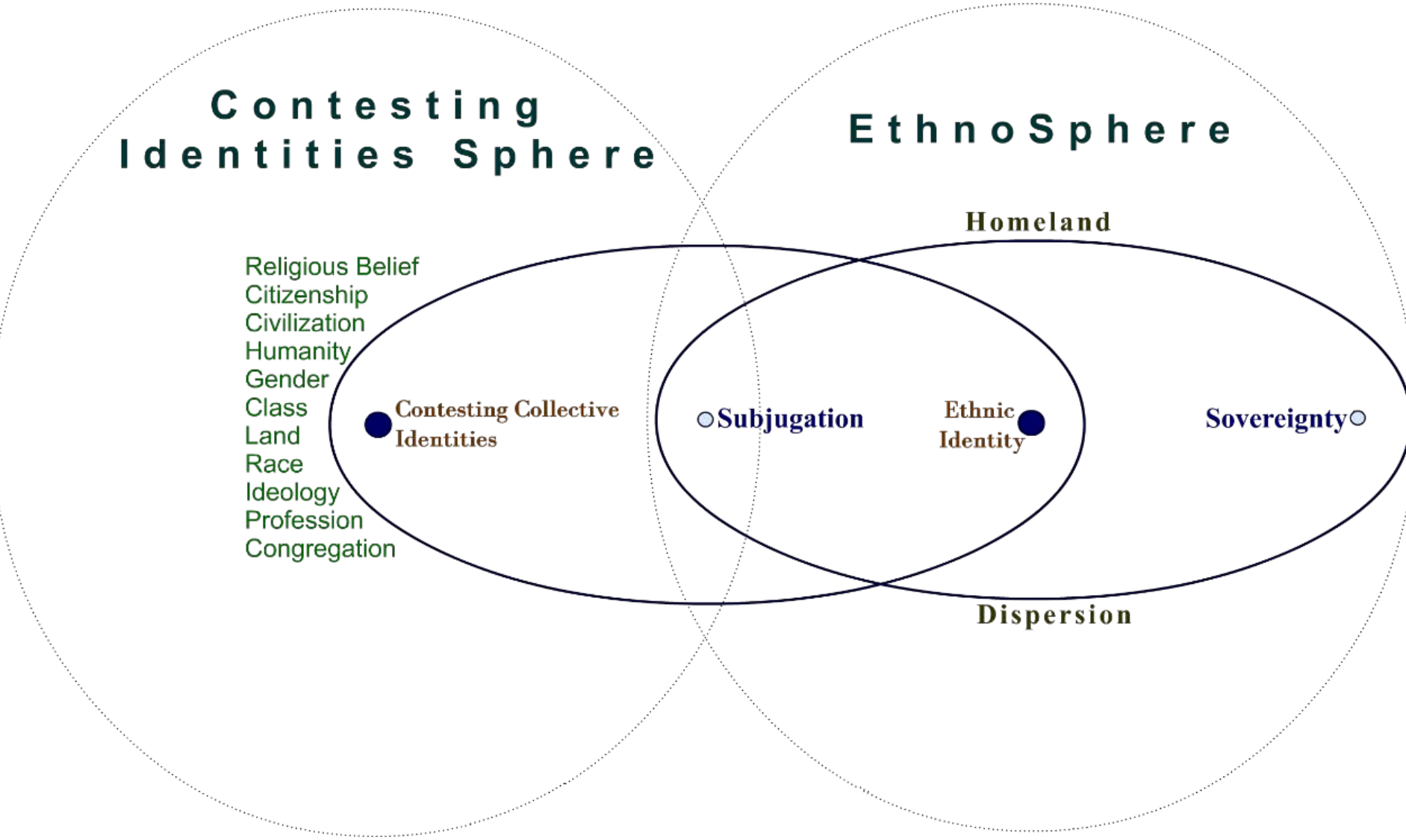
Challenges	Internal	External
Ideational	<i>Coherence</i> (internal contradictions)	<i>Cogency</i> (clash with global norms)
Practical	<i>Integrity</i> (deviational behavior)	<i>Feasibility</i> (clash with global practices)



- (1) Dismiss
- (2) Reaffirm
- (2) Reframe
- (3) Replace

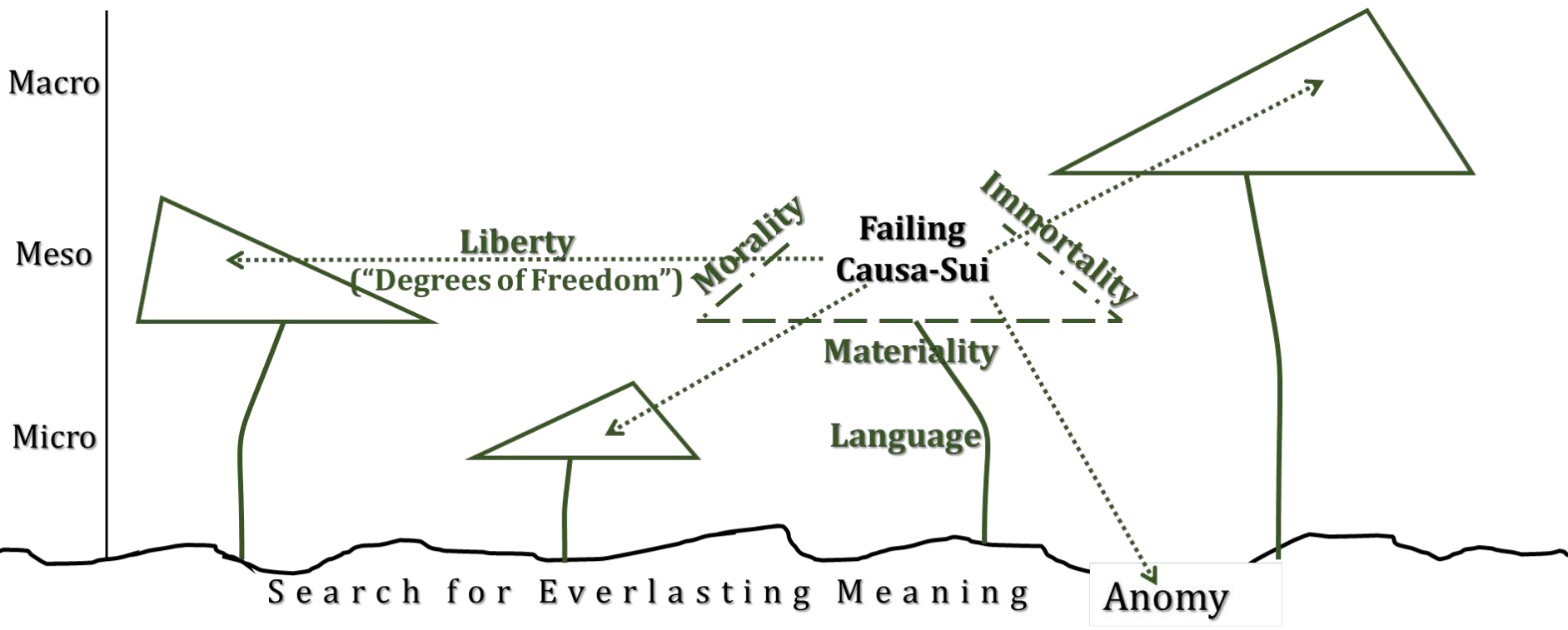
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

Liberty: Evolving Ethnosphere



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Theory

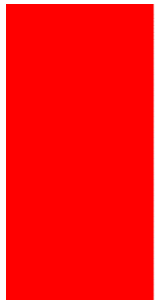
Liberty: Evolving Ethnosphere



French Canadians

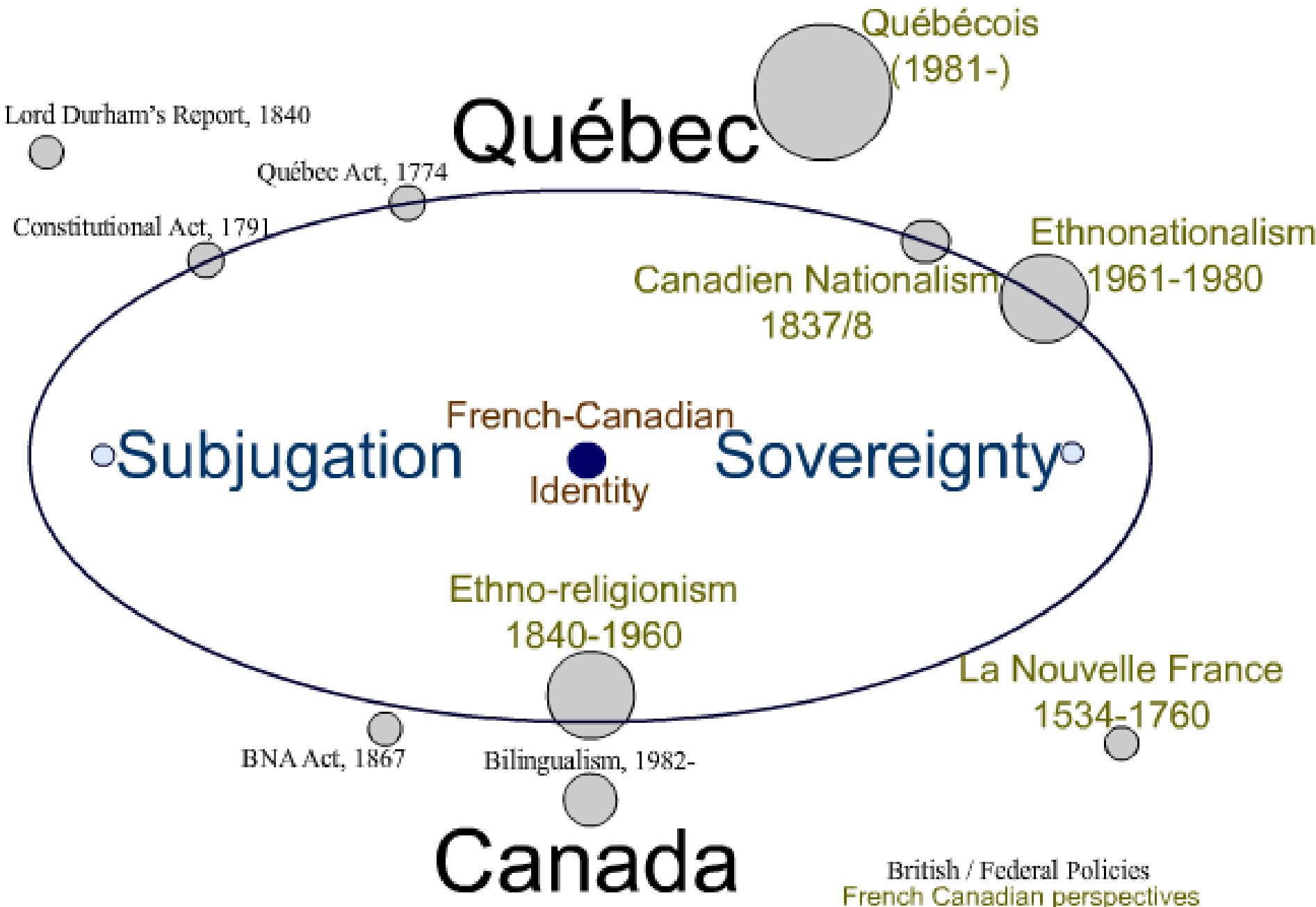
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / French-Canadians / Québécois



“Je me souviens” [I remember] is the official motto of Québec / Canada. Appearing since 1978 on all provincial license plates, it replaced the old motto of “La belle province” [the beautiful province].

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

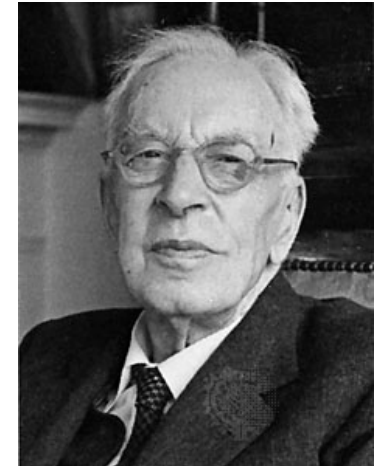


The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / French-Canadians / Québécois

Whatever the future of mankind in North America, I feel pretty confident that these French-speaking Canadians, at any rate, **will be there at the end of the story.**

-- English historian Arnold Toynbee (1948)



Over 400 years have passed since Jacques Cartier discovered Canada (1534), and it is almost four centuries ago that Champlain founded Québec (1608)... Why then is there, today more than ever, a “Québec question”? [...] We need to explain, why a group of New World Frenchmen are still asking, in 1969, the question **“To be or not to be?”**

-- sociologist Marcel Rioux (1978)

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / **Canadiens** / French-Canadians / Québécois

Indeed it seems to be a favourite object with them to be considered as a **separate Nation; La Nation Canadienne is their constant expression**, and with regard to their having been hitherto quiet and faithful subjects, it need only be observed that **no opportunity has presented them an encouragement to show themselves otherwise.**

-- The British governor to Canada, writing to London in 1810



The Battle of Saint-Eustache, Lower Canada (1837)

Louis-Joseph
Papineau
addressing a
crowd



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois



French Canadians... are indeed a nation. Providence has given each nation a **mission to accomplish**. The mission of the French-Canadian people is to serve as a centre of Catholicism in the New World... The **saving of our nation** depends... on our **constant, unyielding adherence to Catholicism**

-- Louis-François Richer Laflèche (1866)

There is real **selfishness** in these two words **language and blood**... One can never think of a people's language as an element of a nationality. Blood even less so, since it changes continually in modern times.

-- Gonzalve Doutre, president of *Institut Canadien*, (1864)



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois

How and when will the French-Canadian people **assume the place to which they are so evidently called** among the **autonomous nations** of the earth? That is God's secret. But sooner or later that hour will certainly strike if we remain true to the **Providential mission which He has assigned to us**. This mission consists of carrying on in North America the work of **Christianization and civilization**... This providential hour will strike, be certain of it, for it is inconceivable that God could not have willed to **make a true nation of the French-Canadian people** whose birth and youth he has so visibly protected. It is folly to believe that the destiny of this **prolific and vigorous race**, which has acquired such strong roots in the St. Lawrence Valley, is to merge with its surrounding elements or to remain eternally in this violently **unnatural state of a race distinct but not independent**.

For despite all one might say or do, the French Canadians do form **a people apart** in Confederation and **unless they are renegades to their mission** they will never allow themselves to be assimilated.



Jules Paul Tardivel,
"Changing
Perspectives," *La
Verity* March 18,
1893.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois

When a race ceases to express its thoughts and feelings in its own language ... it is lost as a race. **The preservation of language is absolutely necessary for the preservation of a race**, its spirit, character, and temperament.

In order to preserve and consolidate the moral unity, without which all our efforts would be in vain, **the most essential things are a filial obedience to the teachings of the Church and a complete submission** to the authority of the leaders who represent among us the power of the Church.

We must sometimes recall – the whole hierarchy of duties is upside down these days – that **religion comes before patriotism**, and the preservation of the faith and morality is more important than that of our tongue.

I believed for a time in democracy and parliamentary government. **Not in the sovereignty of the people as a source of authority. That is absurd**, as unworkable in practice as it is wrong in theory.



Joseph-Napoléon-Henri
Bourassa (1868-1952)

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

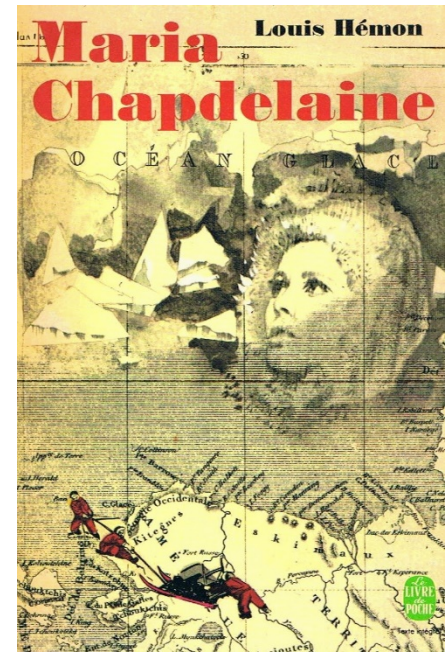
French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois

Maria ... said to herself: **“And yet it is a harsh land, this land of ours ... Why should I linger here?”**

Then it was that a third voice, mightier than the others, lifted itself up in the silence: **the voice of Québec—now the song of a woman, now the exhortation of a priest.**

It came to her with the sound of a church bell ... Thus spake the voice:

“Three hundred years ago we came, and we have remained ... if it be true that we have little learned, most surely nothing is forgot ... **One duty have we clearly understood: that we should hold fast—should endure.** And we have held fast, so that, it may be, many centuries hence the world will look upon us and say: These people are of a race that knows not how to perish ... We are a testimony.



Louis Hémon's
1913 novel Maria
Chapdelaine

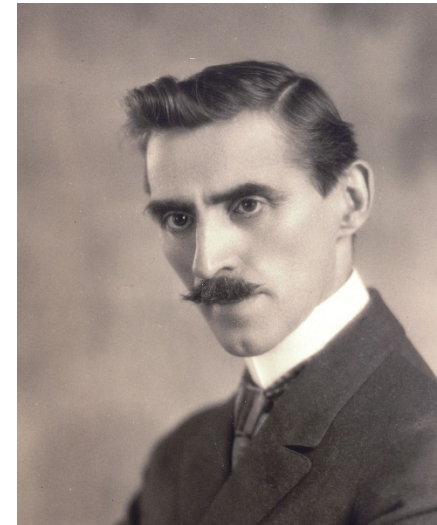
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois

The sun was setting; in gold dust passing through the cosmopolitan crowd ... the setting sun, the street that I had seen twenty years ago entirely French ... this crowd is now of races hostile to our destiny, a **babble of languages, and our race is mainly represented by drunkards and twelve year old prostitutes** ... all of this now struck me! We were still facing the window. I drew Ferland to the curb, and with a gesture pointed out the sun and the foreign crowd: **“Look Ferland” I said: “you can watch French Canada dying.**



Artist/poet Charles Gill described a chance encounter with poet Albert Ferland in May 1911, at a window overlooking Saint Laurent Boulevard



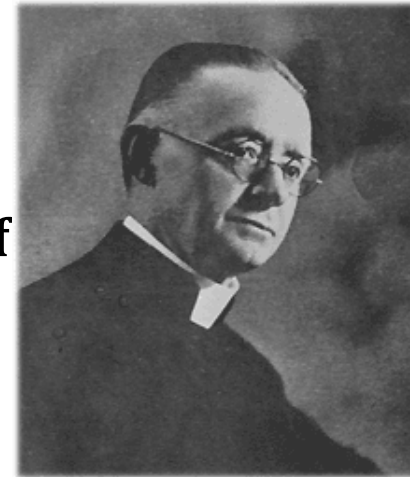
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois

An imprudent break with history and the past, the nefarious influence of those who wish to uproot our entire nation, and, above all, **political and moral colonialism**: these are the causes for the almost complete **annihilation of national feeling in our people** ... Such a mutilation of our conscience nevertheless contains grave dangers ... Worse still: at times it almost seems **as if our nation has lost its instinct for preservation**... What is there still lacking for us to feel attached to this land and to determine to stay here at home?

first we must be ...**we must cease to be a shadow of a people**, a shadow of Frenchmen, a shadow of human beings, and stand out as great French Canadians [...] **To be! To be ourselves. To be vigorously!**

The Church ... the states of this world must subordinate themselves to her, for she is the fount of all power.



Abbé Lionel Groulx
(1878–1967)

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / **French-Canadians** / Québécois

A change in vocation is a great upheaval for a people. They experience it profoundly, without admitting what is happening. Helplessly they stand by and watch **the crumbling of old social frameworks**, which are not immediately replaced. In vain the people **tries to reaffirm tradition**, but slowly realizes it is speaking empty words. Then it **begins to doubt itself**, and has periods of despair followed by bursts of irrational faith. Instead of seeking within itself the answer to new problems, it opts out temporarily either by repeating ineffective clichés like a deaf man or by ponderously importing ready-made solutions. **When tragedy strikes a people whose existence has already been precarious, it produces the sensation of falling into an abyss.** Only little by little will the crisis be overcome and the people gain a **new equilibrium.**

André Laurendeau,
1952

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / French-Canadians / **Québécois**



Pierre Elliott
Trudeau (Prime
minister of
Canada, 1968–79,
1980–84), 1964

Nationalism will probably fade away by itself... in advanced societies, the glue of nationalism will become as absolute as the divine right of kings [...] Federalism represents the most sophisticated form of the judicial nation and embodies the **exercise of reason in politics**... the triumph of old **universalist ideals** could be guaranteed only by marrying rational policy with pan-Canadian sentiment of belonging.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / French-Canadians / **Québécois**



René Lévesque ,
Premier of Quebec
(1976-1985)

Being ourselves is essentially a matter of keeping and developing a personality that has **survived for three and a half centuries...** More is involved here than simple intellectual certainty. This is a physical fact. To be unable to live as ourselves, as we should live, in our own language and according to our own ways, would be like living without an arm or a leg-- or perhaps a heart... [once self-determination is obtained] we would have within our grasp **the security of our collective 'being'** which is so vital to us, a security which otherwise must remain uncertain and incomplete

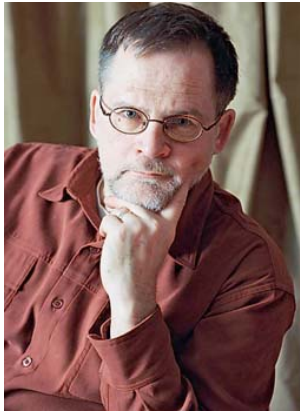
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French / Canadiens / French-Canadians / **Québécois**



A people that does not assert itself will perish.

-- Pierre Vadeboncoeur, Essayist and Writer (1980)



[This] oblivion represents a collective memory crisis in which both the identity and the future of the nation are at stake... What is hidden behind this epistemological rupture whose consequences fill the shelves of our libraries? **Shame of being ourselves? Shame of our past?**-- Serge Cantin, Philosopher (2000)

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

French / Canadiens / French-Canadians / **Québécois**



the French Canadians, especially among the upcoming generations, experience modernity (or postmodernity) in **the uncertainty of a poorly anchored identity**, an uncertainty just as sterile as and even more pathetic than in the past.

-- Léon Dion, *Teacher and Intellectual* (1995)

A primary characteristic of the Québécois identity has become its refusal to resolve the contradictions inherent to overlapping identities and nationalities. This is how most Quebecers see themselves, this has become a national characteristic of Québec and most Quebecers are **comfortable with these overlapping identities.**

-- Matthew Mendelsohn, *Political Scientist* (2002)



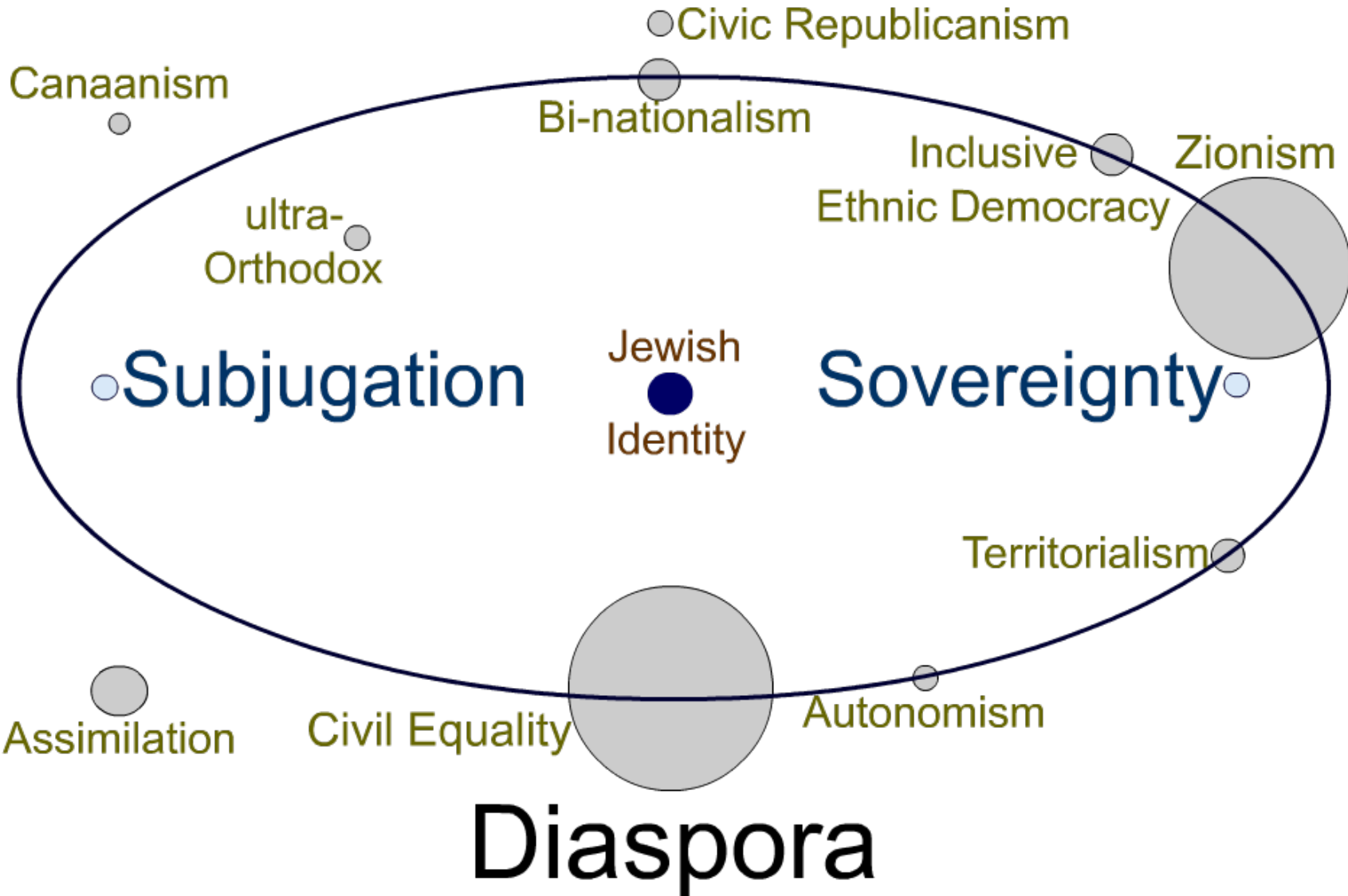
Zionism

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism



Land of Israel / Palestine



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism



Simon Rawidowicz
(1869-1957),
*The Ever-Dying
People* (1948)

The world has many images of Israel, but Israel has only one image of itself: that of an expiring people, forever on the verge of ceasing to be... He who studies Jewish history will readily discover that there was hardly a generation in the Diaspora period which did not consider itself the final link in Israel's chain. Each always saw before it the abyss ready to swallow it up... Often it seems as if the overwhelming majority of our people go about driven by the panic of being the last.

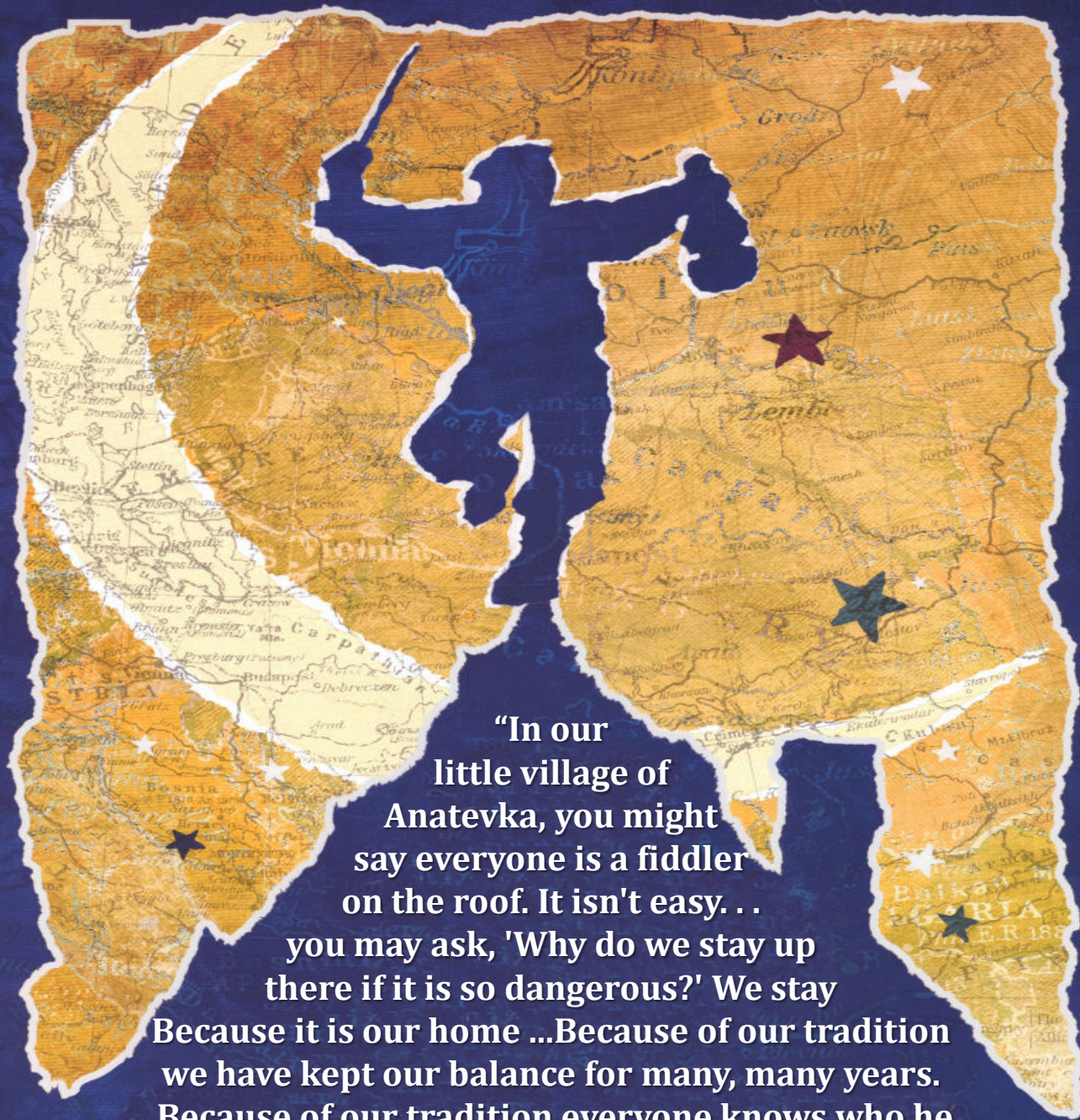
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Zionism



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“In our little village of Anatevka, you might say everyone is a fiddler on the roof. It isn't easy. . . you may ask, 'Why do we stay up there if it is so dangerous?' We stay because it is our home ...Because of our tradition we have kept our balance for many, many years. Because of our tradition everyone knows who he is and what God expects him to do.”

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Ontological Insecurity

Netanyahu is good for the Jews



Israel is strong with Peres



*The Left, Rabbi, has forgotten **what it is to be Jews.***

Ben-Simon: What happened in these elections?

Peres: We have lost.

Ben-Simon: Who is “we”?

Peres: **We are the Israelis**

Ben-Simon: And who has won?

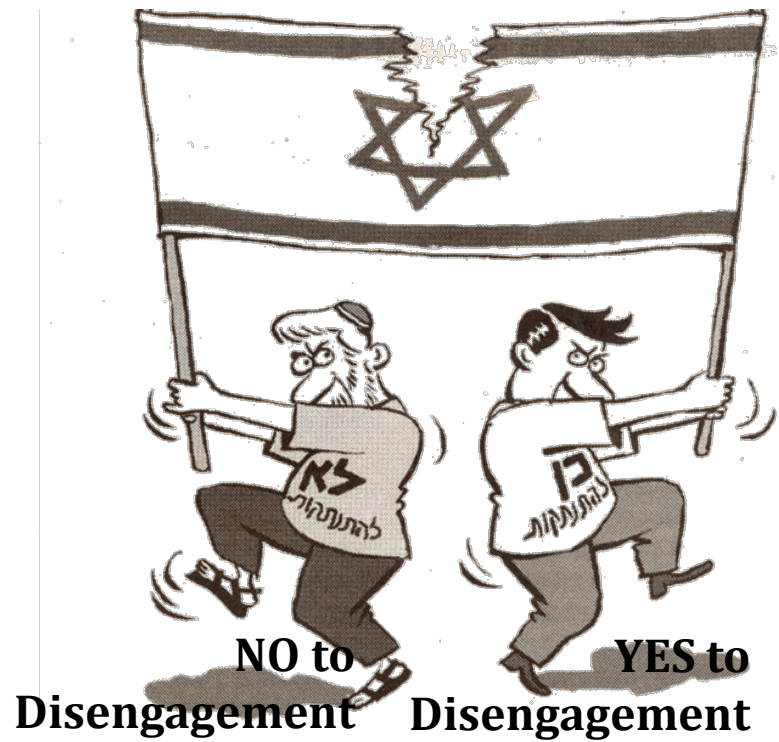
Peres: All those without an Israeli mentality

Ben-Simon: And who are those?

Peres: **You can call them the Jews**

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Ontological Insecurity



יְהוּדִי מְבַרְכֵן יְהוּדִי

A Jew Does Not Expel A Jew.

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Zionism: Ontological Insecurity

“We are two different peoples... We are the **Jewish people** and you are the **Israelis**. We have nothing in common, and eventually we will win...We will defeat you with the wombs of our wives”

-- Jewish settler from Hebron, *Haaretz*, 21 October 2005.



Cave of the Patriarchs, Hebron

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Zionism: Ontological Insecurity

it looks like **the Israelis** want a state without **Jews**. We are living in an **anti-Jewish state**.



They, the descendants of ancient zealots, who twice already brought about our downfall, want only one thing: to bring about destruction and exile for a third time... **I and they** are not of the same religion.

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity

Will Israel survive as a Jewish state 60 years from now?





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Israel at 60: Proud but facing an uncertain future

From the Associated Press
11:08 AM PDT, May 7, 2008

JERUSALEM -- A Jewish astronaut greets Israel from space. Revelers try to set a record for the most people singing a national anthem. To celebrate turning 60, Israel is staging fireworks, air force flyovers and a birthday bash for anyone born on the day the Jewish state was founded.



A youth waves an Israeli flag as fireworks explode in the sky over Rehavia Square in Tel Aviv.

which will provide, depending on your religious views, either "the dawn of (messianic) deliverance," or, at the very least, a point from which to safeguard the physical wellbeing of Jews.

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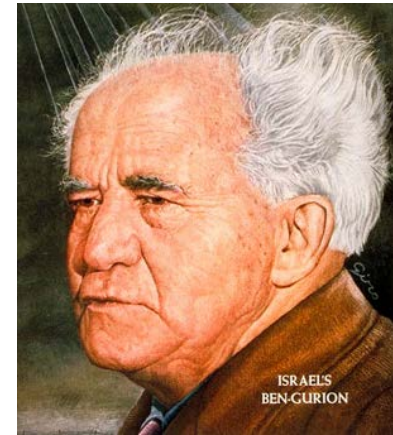
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threats)

We must never forget that the security problem Israel faces is unlike that of any other country. This is not a question of borders, sovereignty – but a matter of **physical existence per se...**

While it may not come about today or tomorrow, **I am not certain that the State will continue to exist** for long after my death.

A letter to American President John Kennedy about the Israeli nuclear project (May 1963)

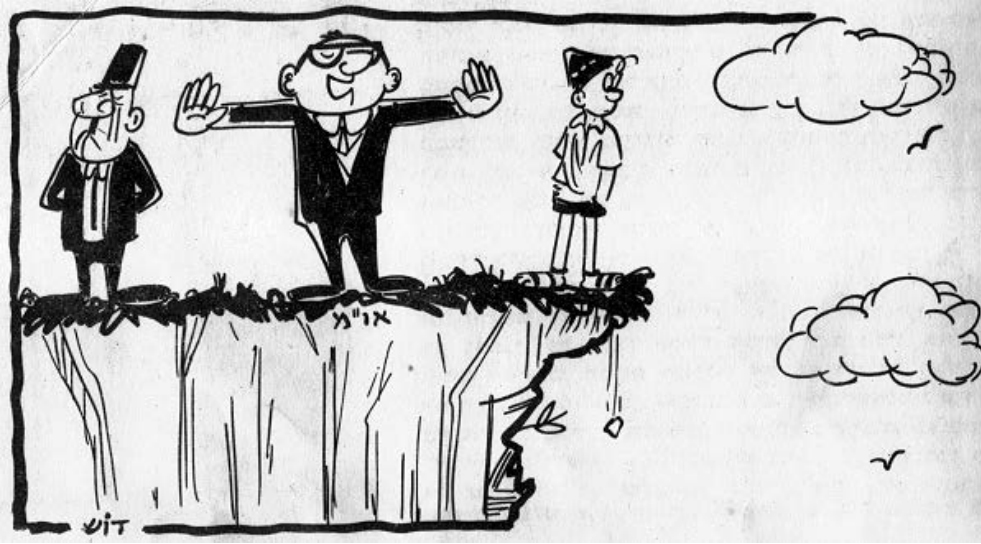


David Ben-Gurion, Israel's PM (1948-55, 1956-63)



The Israeli self (and the Jewish one before it) is **an existential hypochondriac**. It requires, as part of this hypochondria, double and triple safety belts, both physical and psychological, to ensure that the holocaust will not recur.

-- Israeli poet David Avidan



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Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threats)



What most frightens me is that **I am no longer confident of Israel's existence.** That doubt was always there. I think that everyone who lives here also lives the alternative that maybe Israel will cease to be. That's our nightmare... The possibility exists that the great, heroic experiment that took place here will cease to be. That frightens me very much.

-- David Grossman, Haaretz daily (7 January 2003)



Can Israel cease to exist? ...It might not happen in my lifetime, but it can certainly happen in one or two generations.

-- Benni Zipper, Haaretz daily (January 13, 2005)

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threats)

it's a pretty world really
it's the new Middle East
this is Jaffa-Tel Aviv
and it's only a week of unease
it's a bubble teeny-weeny
and it's you and it's me
all that glitters is not gold
touch the bubble, it'll explode

Yehuda Poliker,
“living in
a bubble” (2002)



15.2.2002, ארבעת ימים
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סופה

האם יש לנו עתיד?

גיליון היוחד בהשתתפות:
אמנון דנקנר • ח"כ יוסף (טוהי)
לפיד • פרופ' ארנון סופר • אדם
ברוך • ח"כ בני אלון • ד"ר עוזי
ארד • ח"כ תמר גוז'נסקי • שלום
ירושלמי • חשה פרל • סחי שלום
שטרית • ישראל אייכלר • הרב דוד
הרטמן • ד"ר אבי בקר • שמחה
דיניץ • ח"כ נחמה רונן • ד"ר יצחק
קדמן • פרופ' יאיר קארו • ד"ר דני גוטוויין • ד"ר דוד פסיג • ס. יזהר
שרי מקובר • חשה זונדר • חן קוטס'בר • אריה בנדר • אילאיל שחר

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threats)

Israel, which has both nuclear power and the strongest air force in the region, is **weaker than a spider's web.**

Speech delivered at **Bint Jbeil** (al-Manar Television, 6 June 2000)



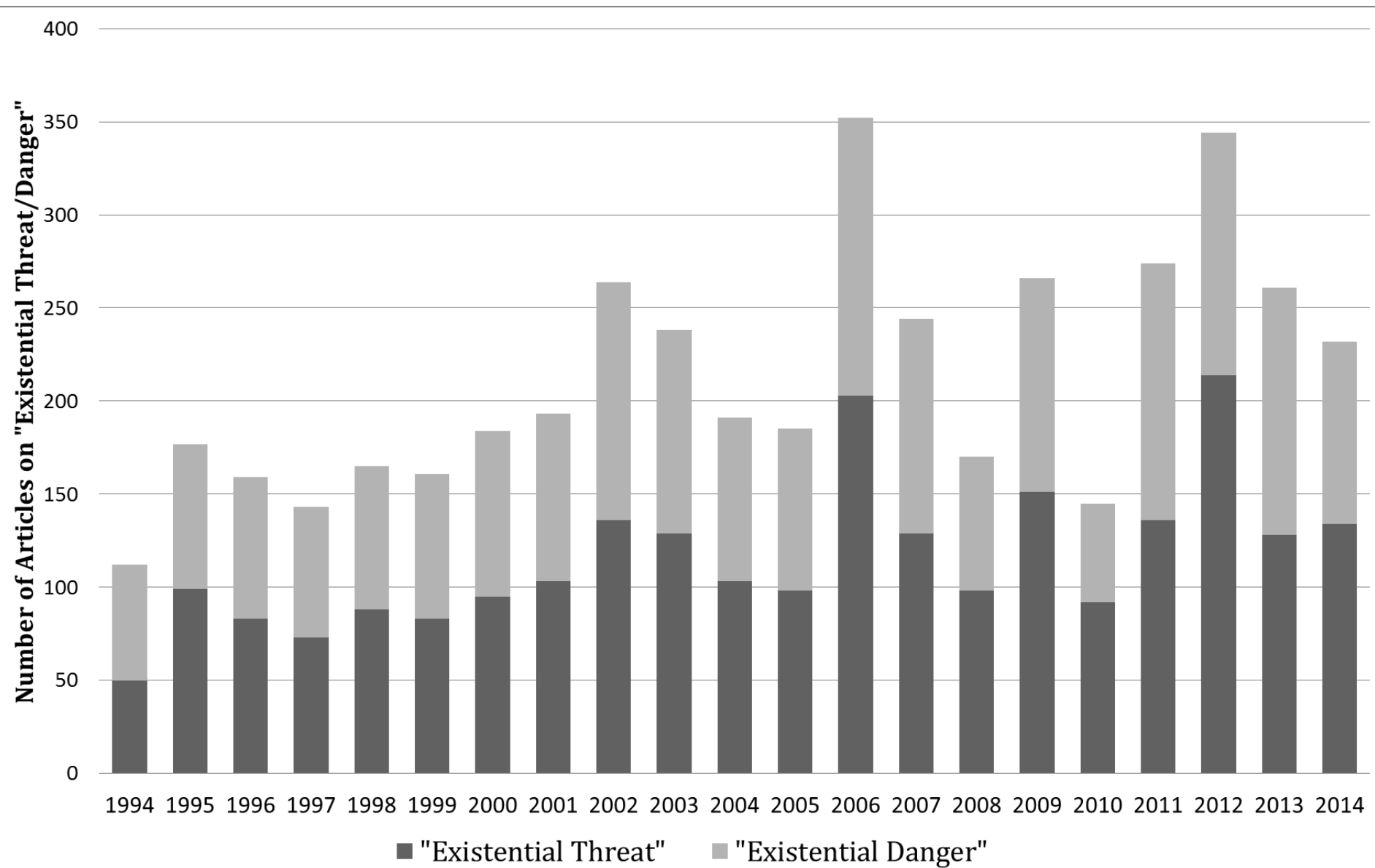
Hizbullah's leader Hassan Nasrallah



Bint Jbeil, following Israeli military operation “**Steel Web**” (27 July 2006)

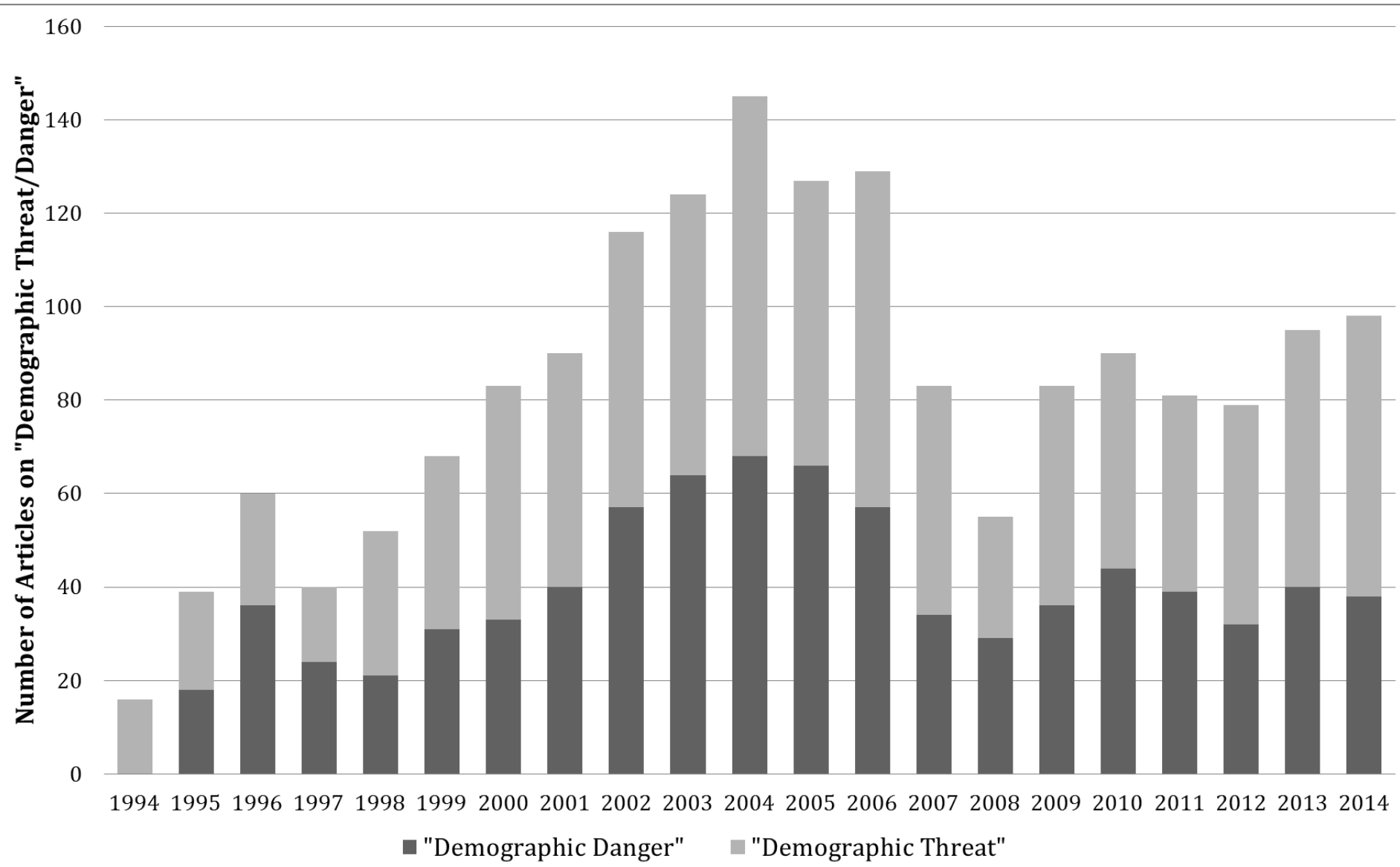
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Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threats)



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Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threats)



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threads)

Our national sentiment is the reason for our existence, but our heart... cannot find peace knowing the reason alone. It also yearns for an underlying purpose to our existence... [The Jew must know] that he **lives and suffers not only because he cannot die but because he must live.**

Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg [Ahad Ha'am] (1856-1927)

Some of the Jewish youth doubt the justice behind our arrival in Eretz Israel, the justice of Zionism... and view our actions with that same doubt. This is most dangerous... **if we do not sense the justice** of coming to a deserted land, which has space for the development of another **people—we will also lack the fortitude to carry out this [Zionist] endeavour.**

Eliyahu Golomb (1893-1945), a leader of Jewish self-defence forces in Mandate Palestine, 1944

I am shocked that **there are those among us who cast doubt on the just nature of our cause.**

PM Golda Meir, responding to "The Letter from 12th Graders," 1970

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Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threads)

The **Land of Israel** was the birthplace of the Jewish people... Here they first attained to statehood, created **cultural values** of national and **universal significance** and **gave to the world the eternal Book of Books**.

After being **forcibly exiled from their land**, the people **kept faith with it** throughout their Dispersion... Pioneers, immigrants and defenders, they **made deserts bloom**, revived the **Hebrew language**, and created a thriving community **controlling its own economy** and culture, **loving peace** but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the **blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants**, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.

This right was recognized in the **Balfour Declaration** of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the **Mandate of the League of Nations** which... On the 29th November, 1947, the **United Nations General Assembly** passed a resolution ...

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - **the massacre of millions of Jews** in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State...

This right is **the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State...**

[THE STATE OF ISRAEL] will be based on **freedom, justice and peace** as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure **complete equality of social and political rights** to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex...

WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of **peace and good neighbourliness...**

[The Israeli Declaration of Independence, 1948]

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threads)

An agreement with the Arabs (who are an “indigenous people”) would be possible **“only when there is no longer any hope of getting rid of us, because they can make no breach in the iron wall.”** Zionism’s patient perseverance would eventually prompt the Arabs to “drop their extremist leaders, whose watchword is ‘never!’ and **pass the leadership to the moderate** groups, who will approach us with a proposal that we should both agree to **mutual concessions.**”

Ze’ev Jabotinsky, 1923, *The Iron Wall*

Morality “comes before everything else,” even if necessitating the use of force, and the **Zionist cause is “moral and just.”**

“National self-determination” is a “sacred principle,” which justifies a Jewish state. It stipulates that “human society is built upon **reciprocity.** Take away reciprocity—and justice turns into a lie. **That man walking in the street has a right to live only because and insofar as he recognizes my own right to live;** but if he is determined to kill me then, in my opinion, he has no right to exist—and **the same rule applies to peoples as well.**”

Ze’ev Jabotinsky 1923, *The Ethics of the Iron Wall*

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Zionism: Epistemic Insecurity (existential threads)

Challenges	From within	From without
Ideational	Reciprocal self-determination? Demanding rights for Jews while denying them to Palestine's Arabs (the original formulation and after 1967, more so since 1987)	Israel—Jewish and democratic? Western liberalism challenges the ethno-national character of Zionism and Israel (esp. since the 1980s)
Practical	Corrupting occupation? Trampling the “lesser evil” by employing excessive force against the Palestinians (esp. since 1987)	Two States for two Peoples? “Arab rejectionism” framed by Zionists as innate (esp. since 2000)

Afrikaners

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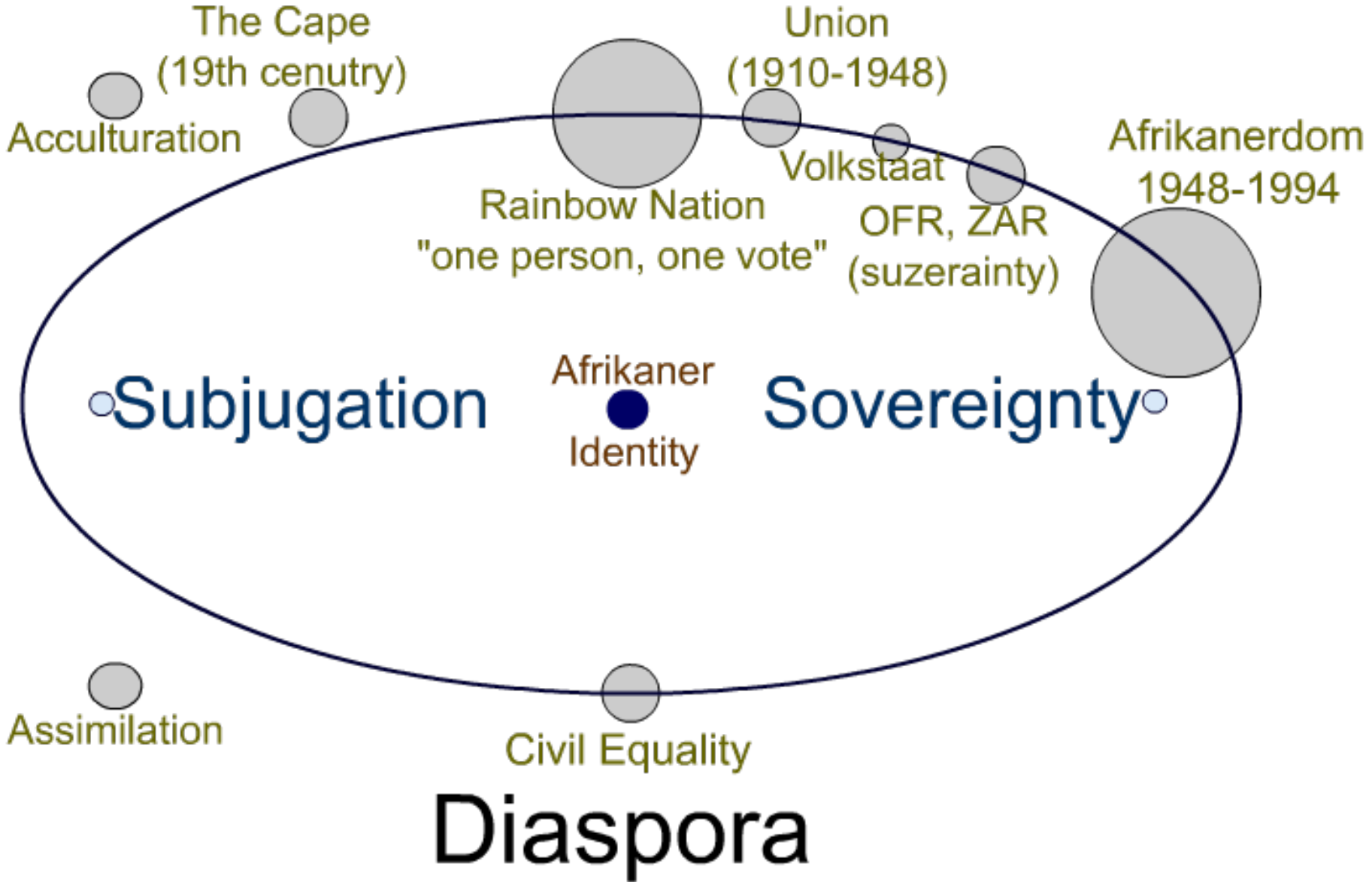
Afrikaners



Sources
Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, *Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)
Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, (London: Macmillan, 2000)



South Africa



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Afrikaners

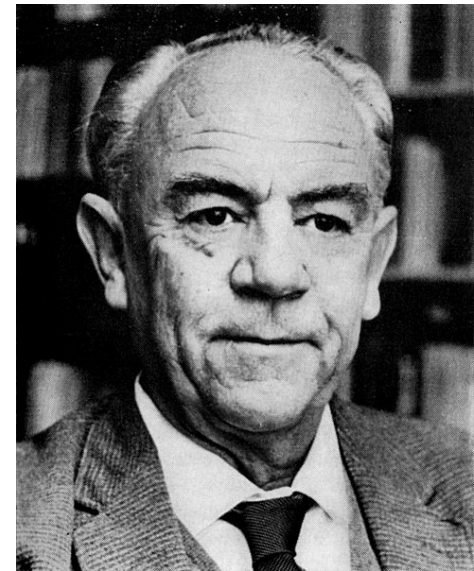


Such a unique human species is **the true South African Boer**... He becomes fully comprehensible only when we recognize the fact that **he is a survival of the past**; that the peculiar faiths, habits, superstitions, and virtues now peculiar to him were once the common properties of all European peoples.

-- Olive Schreiner, South African author (1896)

Can a small Volk survive for long if it becomes something hateful, something **evil**, in the eyes of the best in—or outside—its fold?

-- N.P. Van Wyk Louw, Afrikaner Poet (8 August 1952)



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Afrikaners

It is an error that we have frequently opposed to suppose that as British subjects we are compelled to adopt a British nationality. **A colonist of Dutch descent cannot become an Englishman, nor should he strive to be a Hollander.**

De Zuid Afrikaan (1830-1904), the Cape, 1835



I do not wish to submit myself to any British or any other power in the world. And I am not British, and I hope and trust never to become that... [I hope **the trekkers**] presently wandering around will **still become a *volk* and live in His honor.**

-- Piet Retief, a Boer leader of the Great Trek, a *Manifesto*, 1836

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Afrikaners



Memorials to The Battle of Blood River, December 16th 1838, The 64 wagons Laager (wagon circle)

The covenant of 1838

My brethren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we **stand before the holy God** of heaven and earth, to **make a promise**, if He be with us and **protect us**, and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we **shall observe the day and the date** as an anniversary in each year, and a **day of thanksgiving** like the Sabbath, in his honor; and that **we will build a temple** to His honor where we may worship him; and that we shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for a remembrance even for our posterity.

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Afrikaners



Daniel François Malan, "*The New Great Trek*",
Ossewa Trek, 1938;
The Centennial of
The Battle of Blood
River

Here at [the] Blood River [battlefield] **you stand on holy ground.** Here was made the great decision about the future of South Africa, about Christian civilization in our land, and about the continued existence and responsible power of the white race...

There is still a white race. There is a new People. There is a unique language. There is an imperishable drive to freedom. There is an **irrecusable ethnic destiny.** Their task is completed...

Their freedom was . . . the freedom to preserve themselves as a white race.

You stand here upon the boundary of two centuries. Behind you, you rest your eyes upon the year 1838... Before you, upon the yet untrodden Path of South Africa, lies **the year 2038,** equally far *off and hazy.* **Will South Africa still be a white man's land?** Will South Afrikanerdom be one and free? **Will your people still know God?** This century ahead will provide you an answer. The year 2038 will judge you.

Afrikaners



Hendrik
Verwoerd, PM
1958-1966 (6
September
1966)

I question the morality of forced assimilation or absorption of peoples... Must the white population be assimilated and lost; must all that they possess and have gained be lost? Would this be right for them? Would this be right for the Coloured and the Indian minorities who would also have to be absorbed in spite of their differences, their own ambitions, partially their own religions? Must they be assimilated and lost? And for the Bantu, would it be right for them to become the dominating group, but in the course of that process to lose their various national identities and perhaps languages and customs? [...] Would it be moral to create the semblance of freedom, but in fact allow living conditions of slavery?

[This Republic] is built on the high values, the high moral values, which Western Civilization has created through centuries and centuries of endeavour.



Racism is a sin... As a moral aberration it deprives a human being of his dignity, his obligations and his rights.

The NGK commission's report *Kerk en Samelewing* (Church and Society), 1986

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Case Studies

Afrikaners

In the 1980s, the Afrikaners faced **acute challenges** to their national legitimation of Apartheid.

From within:

- **Afrikaner intellectuals questioned the justice** of Afrikanerdom (Afrikaner ethnic domination), exposing its self-contradictory propositions (*coherence*)
- **Apartheid practices** (especially in the economic domain) deviated from the alleged normative adherence to separate development (*integrity*)

From without:

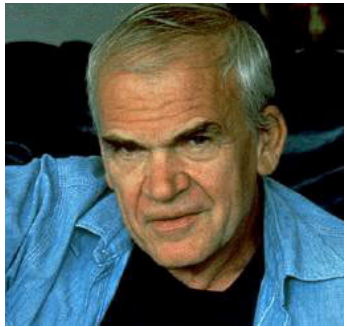
- In the West, **anti-racism** ascended (*validity*)
- Mounting **international sanctions** challenged the Afrikaners' ability to practically sustain Apartheid (*viability*)

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Afrikaners

- The *coherence* challenge at first prompted the Afrikaners to **reaffirm Apartheid via the Bantustan** policy (1959-94).
- When the Bantustans were later exposed as a sham, challenging Apartheid's *integrity* and *feasibility*, the Afrikaners tried to **reframe it by granting electoral privileges to the "coloreds"** (The Tricameral Parliament, 1984-94). But to no avail.
- The mounting challenges eventually propelled most of the Afrikaners to **renounce the idea, and subsequently the practice, of Apartheid.**

The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Epilogue



The significance of the Czechoslovak autumn may even surpass the significance of the Czechoslovak spring... What happened is something that no one expected: **a new politics has endured this frightful conflict.** It has retreated, true, but it has not broken down, it has not collapsed. **It has not reestablished a police state...** If its political representatives must work with the possibilities as they exist right now, people from all walks of life, especially the young, are preserving within themselves a consciousness of the pre-August goals in their uncompromising entirety. **And in this there is enormous hope for the future. And not for the distant future, but for the near one.**

-- Milan Kundera, "The Czech Lot," *Listy* (1968)

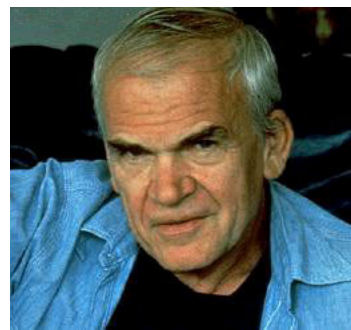
The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Epilogue

I do not believe in this fate, and I think that first and foremost **we ourselves are the masters of our fate**; we will not be freed from this by pleading selfishness nor by hiding behind our geographic position, nor by **reference to our centuries-old lot** of balancing between sovereignty and subjugation... If we accepted the premise that Kundera has outlined for us – the notion that **tiny, ill-placed, good, intelligent, tormented and condemned-to-torment Czechoslovakia**... so that the only thing that remains for it is its spiritual (and cultivated in private, apparently) superiority over them – if we accepted this kitschy notion of our “lot,”... we would furthermore fall into **national self-delusions that could paralyze us** -- as a national community -- for decades....

-- Václav Havel, “The Czech Lot?” *Tvar* (1968)



The Mortality and Morality of Nations / Epilogue



If Havel declares that the Czech lot is a fate in which he does not believe, there is no more reason in that than if he were to declare that he does not believe in the human lot and then decided not to grow old. **A lot is what is allotted. Man is mortal and Bohemia is in the middle of Europe. Czech politics must flow from recognition of the Czech lot and the possibilities contained in it...**

Havel does not have just any sort of act in mind, but -- as he calls it -- **a risky act; an act, in other words, that does not fear the risk of failure**, which probably (indeed, let us remind ourselves once more: no hopes endured!) does not even count on success... Such action thus has only **a twofold aim: (1) to unmask the world in all its irreparable amorality, and (2) to display its author in all his pure morality**. In this way what was originally a purely moral attitude (the rejection of the unjust world) has turned into pure moral exhibitionism. **The effort to publicly demonstrate the beauty of one's own morality outweighs the effort to change things for the better...**

-- Milan Kundera, "The Czech Lot," *Listy* (1968)



The End