

THE IMPACT OF DEEP SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES ON THE STABILITY OF DEMOCRACY IN ISRAEL

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of Israel's deep social, cultural, and political structures on the stability of its democracy. The central claim is that Israel's current political and constitutional crisis cannot be understood solely through short-term developments—such as repeated elections, unstable coalitions, or judicial reform—but must be analyzed in light of the long-standing contradictions embedded in the state's identity. To frame this analysis, the article draws on the metaphor of the “three-body problem” from chaos theory, which describes a system that cannot reach equilibrium when pulled by three competing forces.

The article identifies three main centers of gravity: Israel as a Jewish nation-state, Israel as a liberal democracy, and the rise of identity politics. These forces clash constantly: the Jewish national component emphasizes collective belonging and religious tradition; the liberal democratic component prioritizes individual rights, equality, and the rule of law; while identity politics fragments society into competing groups demanding separate recognition.

The analysis shows that the interplay of these elements produces structural instability, weakens democratic institutions, and prevents long-term equilibrium. The conclusion is that as long as these three centers coexist without resolution, Israeli democracy will remain fragile and subject to ongoing erosion.

Keywords: democratic backsliding, political and institutional instability, State of Israel, Three-Body Problem, centers of gravity, Jewish ethno-religious nation-state, identity politics, liberal democratic state

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, a global trend has emerged in many countries, shifting from democracy to authoritarian rule. Europe is particularly prominent in this process, as seen in Poland (the “Law and Justice” party, 2015), Hungary (the “Fidesz” party, 2010), and Turkey (since 2016). India has likewise experienced democratic erosion since 2014, while in the United States, concerns have been raised about the democratic future under Trump's rule. This phenomenon preoccupied scholars who seek to understand the causes and mechanisms behind transitions between regime types.

In recent years, the State of Israel has been characterized by political and institutional instability. The system has been challenged by external events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022), during which measures regarded as exceptional from a democratic perspective were adopted—restrictions on freedom of movement, the use of special surveillance tools, and a weakening of parliamentary oversight of the government. Likewise, the “Swords of Iron” war and the strikes in Iran led to widespread mobilization and the temporary loss of homes for some citizens, while

narrowing the space for public criticism. In addition, a lack the failure to establish a state commission of inquiry into the authorities' conduct during the war resulted in continued inadequate civilian oversight.

At the same time, domestic developments compounded the instability: the indictment of a sitting prime minister due to an inherent conflict of interest; measures that undermined institutions safeguarding democracy (such as the Supreme Court, the Attorney General [Legal Adviser to the Government], and the Civil Service Commission); the dismissal of senior officials at the highest levels of government; and the conduct surrounding the “judicial reform.” Finally, the government’s refusal to hold new elections after the events of October 7, 2023, and the ongoing hostilities underscore the challenges facing Israeli democracy (Cohen, 2015).

There is broad agreement among scholars that democracies tend to erode gradually, through protracted and sometimes barely perceptible processes. Nevertheless, several key factors driving this process are commonly highlighted:

Scholars of democratic backsliding highlight the following main factors: elected leaders who work to undermine democratic institutions (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018); the use of democratic instruments—such as legislation or emergency regulations—to curtail liberties and attacks on the media (Bermeo 2016); exploiting a parliamentary majority to distort the political “rules of the game” (Haggard & Kaufman 2021); deep political polarization, in which the electorate gives precedence to its party (the “base”) even at the cost of harming democracy (Svolik 2018); and anti-system populism that runs counter to the values of democratic institutions, widening the gap between liberal democracy and the “will of the people” (Mounk 2018). All of these are discussed through case studies such as Hungary, Turkey, countries in Latin America and Africa, and the actions of Donald Trump.

In the Israeli context, I wish to note the studies of Ilan Peleg and Ruth Amir (2025). In their comprehensive book, *The Crisis of Israel’s Democracy, 1948–2025*, they provide extensive explanations for the causes of Israel’s democratic crisis. For our purposes, the principal explanations in the book concern: an ethno-national structure lacking a full constitutional foundation; sharp social cleavages; and charismatic populism—with Netanyahu at its center.

In his “Tribes” speech, President Reuven Rivlin (2023) argued that “demographic and cultural processes have reshaped the face of Israeli society in recent decades: from a society composed of a clear majority and minority to a society composed of four sectors, or tribes.”

Meir Elran and Kobi Michael (2023) describe an elite struggle as “a power confrontation conducted mainly, though not exclusively, between the new elite (which tends to the right) and the old elite (which tends to the center–left).”

THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM

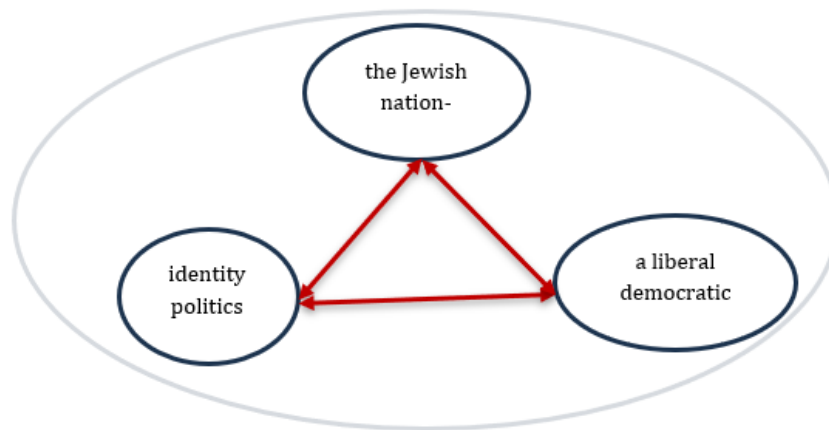
Briefly, the three-body problem is a well-known physics problem that describes a physical system moving under the influence of three centers of gravity (for example, three suns). Systems that move around three centers of gravity are characterized by persistent, extreme instability¹ (G. Borderes-

¹ Given three massive bodies (e.g., three suns) that exert mutual gravitational forces according to Newton’s law of gravitation, the question is: can their trajectories be predicted exactly over time? It has been shown, mathematically and physically, that there is no general analytic solution to this problem. In chaos theory, this is a system with three attractors, where an attractor is a state or set of states toward which the system tends over time. Here we are dealing with a strange attractor—a chaotic trajectory that does not repeat yet remains within a bounded region. When a system has three (strange) attractors, its behavior becomes highly complex. The system can “jump” among attractors depending on the initial conditions. The boundaries of the basins of attraction become intricate, making it difficult to predict which attractor the system will reach.

Motta, O. C. Winter, 2018). In chaos theory, a system with three centers of gravity (attractors) can be characterized as oscillating among three attractors.

In what follows, we model Israel's political-institutional system as one that behaves analogously to a physical system orbiting three centers of gravity and is therefore fated to a state of inherent instability. These centers of gravity are the three core principles on which Israel's identity rests: (1) a religious-nation state (Jewish), (2) a liberal-civic democracy, and (3) identity/tribal politics. Each of these centers has an underlying ideology, laws, and institutions that support it, yet among them, there are built-in, persistent tensions that appear, at least ostensibly, irresolvable.

The use of the three-body analogy is an extension—indeed a further extension—of a model in which populations behave according to laws of “social gravity” (Vecchia & Stewart, 2007). According to chaos theory, a chaotic system is non-stable and highly sensitive to change; that is, it exhibits the “butterfly effect,” whereby small differences in initial conditions (e.g., political, security-related, or legal events) can produce dramatic differences in outcomes. Schematically, the three-body problem as applied to Israel's socio-political structures can be presented as follows:



Israel as a Jewish ethno-religious nation-state

Essence of the principle:

The State of Israel is defined as a Jewish, religiously inflected nation-state, with its national-religious identity enshrined in law, symbols, and institutions (Book Review: Agmon, 2020).

Key characteristics:

- Law of Return (1950): Grants every Jew worldwide the right to immigrate to Israel and receive citizenship automatically. Israel views itself as the state of the entire Jewish people, not only of its current citizens.
- Language, flag, emblem, and anthem: Hebrew as the official language; the flag, emblem, and the national anthem Hatikvah emphasize Jewish identity.
- Days of rest and Jewish law: The Sabbath and Jewish holidays are official days of rest; elements of Jewish law are integrated into the legal system.
- Chief Rabbinate: The official authority for marriage, conversion, and kashrut for Jews.
- Hebrew law (Jewish law): Serves as an inspiration for legislation in Israel, in accordance with the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty.
- Jewish settlement: Laws encourage Jewish settlement in various areas, including Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).

- Education system: Includes Bible, Jewish history, and heritage studies.
- National institutions: The Jewish Agency and Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (JNF) hold an official constitutional status.

Israel is a liberal democratic state²

Essence of the principle:

Israel is a liberal democracy that combines popular sovereignty (encompassing free and competitive elections, political representation, and the alternation of power) with institutional protection of individual and minority rights through the rule of law and the separation of powers. It is not enough that the majority decides; the majority's authority is limited by a constitution/Basic Laws, judicial review, and parliamentary and public oversight—so that fundamental liberties (freedom of expression, religion, association, press, due process, and property) are preserved for all. (Coglianese 1990)

Key characteristics³:

- **Parliamentary democracy:** an elected government, separation of powers, and protection of civil rights.
- **Equality before the law:** all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of religion or nationality.
- **Freedom of religion:** freedom of religion is guaranteed and there is no religious coercion; everyone may believe—or not believe—as they wish.
- **Rule of law:** binding on everyone, with the courts protecting individual rights.
- **Free elections:** free elections for all citizens are held every four years.
- **Independent judiciary:** the High Court of Justice protects civil rights.
- **Basic Law:** Human Dignity and Liberty ensures rights such as personal liberty, equality, and freedom of expression.
- **Right to protest:** the right to demonstrate and to criticize the government.
- **Appointment of the Chief of Staff:** rests with the government alone; the military has no authority over the state.
- **Free press:** serves for scrutiny and oversight.

Identity Politics

Essence of the principle:

Identity politics is a mode of political organization and discourse in which individuals and groups formulate public claims primarily based on identity affiliation (ethnic/national, religious, gender, sexual, racial, and more), arising from experiences of deprivation, exclusion, or lack of recognition. It aims to secure **recognition** of identity and collective dignity, **fair representation** in institutions, and, at times, **redistribution** of resources and powers—not in terms of the “universal citizen,” but in terms of a distinct group. (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2002)

Key characteristics:

² It has not been definitively resolved, legally or socially, whether Israel is a liberal democracy or another type of democracy (conservative, authoritarian). For the purposes of this discussion, however, we will assume that the definition of a liberal democracy is the appropriate “center of gravity” for our purposes.

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- **Focus on group identities:** identity politics centers on the identities of specific groups. (Taylor, 1994)
- **Group affiliation:** individuals are identified as members of groups with distinctive interests. (Will Kymlicka, 1995) • not only as equal citizens.
- **Response to discrimination:** identity politics arises as a response to discrimination or exclusion.
- **Redressing past wrongs:** it aims to remedy historical injustices and secure recognition, rights, and equality for the marginalized.
- **Affirmative action:** at times, it justifies affirmative action to offset historical inequality.
- **Shifting the focus of debate:** the political agenda shifts from class and economics to cultural, gender, and ethnic identities.

The Conflicts Among Israel's Centers of Gravity

The tensions among the three centers of gravity are fundamental, persistent, and seemingly irresolvable, waging a constant struggle over the state's identity and character.

1. **Conflicts between Israel as a Jewish–religious state and Israel as a liberal–democratic state**
 - A. **Constitutional conflicts.**

The State of Israel defines itself as both Jewish and democratic, yet there are built-in tensions and conflicts between these two components. A Jewish state is intended to serve and preserve its Jewish character, whereas a democratic state requires equal rights for all its citizens regardless of their religious or national identity. Examples of how this conflict is manifested include:

- **Law of Return (1950):** grants every Jew worldwide the right to immigrate to Israel and receive citizenship (Ben-Gurion, 1950).
- **Citizenship Law (2003):** restricts the naturalization of Palestinians in Israel through marriage.
- **Nation-State Law⁴:** enshrines, at the level of a Basic Law, the national rights of the Jewish people and the Jewish character of the State of Israel. The law does not guarantee the rights of other national and religious minorities (Druze, Arabs, Circassians, and Christians).

Based on these laws, there have been repeated attempts to disqualify Arab public representatives from running for the Knesset on the grounds of statements perceived as undermining Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.⁵ Proposals to define Israel as a “state of all its citizens,” rather than as the nation-state of the Jewish people, have likewise been rejected (Hassan & Bishara, 2019). All of this creates structural discrimination in favor of Jews and undermines the democratic principle of equality. There is also discrimination against non-Jewish minorities regarding land ownership (the Kaminitz Law⁶).

B. The judicial system—religious legislation vs. personal liberty

⁴ Basic Law: Israel—The Nation-State of the Jewish People (commonly called the “Nation-State Law”) was enacted by the Knesset on July 19, 2018 (7 Av 5778).

⁵ Notable cases: Haneen Zoabi, Mohammad Barakeh, Azmi Bishara; more recently Ayman Odeh; and the attempt to disqualify the Balad party list ahead of the 2022 elections.

⁶ On October 25, 2017, an amendment to the Planning and Building Law—known as the “Kaminitz Law”—entered into force.

As a Jewish state, Israel anchors laws based on the Jewish religion, for example, in the realm of marriage and divorce. A democratic state, however, requires freedom of religion and individual rights for all citizens. At present, there is no civil marriage in Israel, which infringes upon the rights of secular people, LGBTQ individuals, and interfaith couples.

Example—marriage and divorce in Israel: marriage and divorce are conducted through the religious courts in accordance with Jewish law (halakha). A secular person or an LGBTQ individual cannot marry in Israel, but only through civil marriage abroad. This creates a tension between the state as a Jewish state (upholding religious law) and the democratic state (personal freedom).

C. Religion vs. Individual Freedom

The conflict: preserving the Israeli public sphere with a Jewish–religious character. The Sabbath as a National Day of Rest entails restrictions on commerce and transportation on Sabbaths and Jewish holidays. A liberal democratic state, by contrast, upholds freedom of movement, commerce, and work according to citizens’ wishes. Sabbath laws generate tension between religious, traditional, and secular populations.

2. Conflicts between identity politics and Israel as a liberal–democratic state

Israel, as a liberal–democratic state, is founded on principles such as individual rights, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and full equality for all citizens, regardless of origin, religion, or identity. Identity politics, by contrast, divides society into distinct groups based on ethnic, gender, religious, and cultural characteristics, and demands recognition of each group’s particular rights and interests.

The conflict: A Jewish state is founded on a collective identity shared by all Jews, with national, religious, and cultural characteristics. Identity politics divides society into sub-identities (women, LGBTQ, Arabs, Mizrahim, immigrants from the former USSR, etc.) and demands equality for all identities.

Example—the identity question in the Nation-State Law, a Basic Law that defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people (2018). Supporters of the law argue that it strengthens the state’s Jewish identity. Critics of the law (primarily from an identity-politics perspective) contend that it excludes non-Jewish groups, such as Israel’s Arab citizens, and infringes on the rights of non-Jewish groups in the state. The Law of Return grants automatic citizenship to Jews from around the world. From an identity-politics perspective, this law discriminates against the Arab population, which does not receive comparable rights.

A. Freedom of Expression vs. Group Sensitivity

The conflict: A liberal–democratic state requires broad freedom of expression, even when it may offend the sentiments of certain groups. Identity politics demands protection for marginalized groups and limits on expressions deemed offensive toward them. It also maintains that “safe spaces” should be preserved so that marginalized groups are not exposed to content that could harm them.

B. Civil Equality vs. Group Representation

The conflict: A liberal–democratic state seeks equal treatment of all citizens before the law, regardless of their identity group. Identity politics calls for affirmative action and differentiated representation for certain groups that have been historically disadvantaged.

C. Separation of Religion and State vs. Religious Rights (Gavison 2014)

The conflict: A liberal–democratic state aspires to separate religion and state so that each person can choose their way of life without religious interference. Identity politics allows religious groups to demand recognition and accommodation of their distinctive needs, even when this comes at the expense of individual liberty.

D. Education and Identity—Liberal Education vs. Identity-Based Education

The conflict: A liberal–democratic state views education as a means of cultivating critical and free citizens, irrespective of personal identity. Identity politics demands that students be educated in accordance with their ethnic or religious identity.

3. Conflicts between identity politics and Israel as a Jewish nation-state

General background: Israel is defined as a Jewish and democratic state, but identity politics challenges the definition of Israel as a Jewish state. Whereas the Jewish state is grounded in nationality, religion, and the shared history of the Jewish people, identity politics seeks recognition of diverse, equally valued identities within the state.

The conflict: A Jewish state is based on a collective identity shared by all Jews, with national, religious, and cultural characteristics. Identity politics divides society into sub-identities (women, LGBTQ, Arabs, Mizrahim, immigrants from the former USSR, etc.) and demands equality for all identities.

Example—the identity question in the Nation-State Law, a Basic Law that defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people (2018). Supporters of the law argue that it strengthens the state’s Jewish identity. Critics of the law (primarily from an identity-politics perspective) contend that it excludes non-Jewish groups, such as Israel’s Arab citizens, and harms the rights of non-Jewish groups in the state. The Law of Return grants automatic citizenship to Jews from around the world. From an identity-politics perspective, this law discriminates against the Arab population, which does not receive similar rights.

4. Conflicts within the democratic center of gravity (between Israel as a democratic state and Israel as a liberal state)

The State of Israel is defined as a democratic state, but not necessarily a liberal one. There are several salient differences between a liberal democracy and a conservative democracy⁷.

A. Source of legitimacy

Liberal: popular sovereignty + universal fundamental rights.

⁷ Wikipedia: “It is a form of democratic government that emphasizes freedom and equality for all individuals, and is characterized by the rule of law, universal suffrage, and the protection of civil rights.

Conservative: popular sovereignty + traditional continuity, communal norms, and national identity.

A democratic state enables the elected government to legislate laws that reflect the people's will. A liberal state places limits on the will of the majority in order to protect individual freedom. Democracy without liberalism may lead to populist laws that restrict liberty.

B. Limits on majority power

Liberal: strong checks and balances, active judicial review, binding constitution/Basic Laws.

Conservative: preference for majority rule and for parliament; judicial restraint; suspicion toward "rule by judges."

In other words, a liberal democracy operates by the principle of majority rule—yet liberalism emphasizes protecting minority rights even against the majority. When the majority adopts decisions that harm the rights of individuals or minority groups, the question arises: should democracy limit itself to preserve liberal principles?

Example—Nation-State Law (2018): conflicts with liberalism because the law harms the language and identity rights of the Arab minority, which does not enjoy the same legal and civic status.

C. Rights and liberties

Liberal: priority to the rights of the individual and minorities—even vis-à-vis the majority.

Conservative: greater weight to the "values of the majority," to tradition and social order; willingness to limit liberties at contentious margins.

That is, a liberal democracy seeks to maintain public order and prevent incitement to violence. Liberalism is based on freedom of expression—even when the opinions are extreme or unwelcome to most of the public. When laws restrict freedom of expression to avoid offending public sensibilities, the question arises: what is more important, maintaining public order or freedom of expression?

D. Religion–state/identity

Liberal: relative separation and pluralist tolerance.

Conservative: a more pronounced identity/religious presence in the public sphere.

Democracy in Israel recognizes a special status for the Jewish religion; hence, there are laws grounded in halakha. Liberalism demands the separation of religion and state, so that every citizen can live according to personal belief.

E. Policy and social change

Liberal: openness to reforms in the name of equality and rights.

Conservative: caution and institutional conservatism; preference for slow, incremental change.

F. Typical institutional design

Liberal: strong checks among branches, independent media, and a vigorous civil society.

Conservative: executives/relative centralization; preference for governability and normative homogeneity.

Therefore, a liberal democracy seeks to maintain public order and prevent incitement to violence. Liberalism is based on freedom of expression—even for extreme or uncomfortable opinions. When laws restrict freedom of expression to prevent offense to public feelings, the question arises: what is more important—maintaining public order or freedom of expression?

Conclusion: From these conflicts, the democratic-liberal center of gravity is the weakest of the attractors because it is effectively split into two sub-attractors (it is unclear which is stronger): the democratic-liberal attractor and the democratic-conservative attractor. The result is a weakened democratic-liberal center of gravity.

The drive to undermine democracy in Israel.

In the preceding sections, we presented the three centers of gravity (attractors) around which the State of Israel operates, as well as the built-in conflicts among them. These conflicts undermine the foundations of democracy in Israel—some by eroding the standing of the three branches of government, and others by subverting accepted democratic norms. The erosion is carried out by actors with vested interests; by governmental institutions that attack other institutions; and by segments of the public driven by particular interests or anti-institutional sentiments. Below, we present phenomena, each of which constitutes a drive against Israeli democracy. In our view, these phenomena form the superstructure that expresses the conflicts among the three centers of gravity outlined above.

1. Undermining the Israeli judicial system

The judicial system is supposed to be independent and not subordinate to the other branches of government, and its role is to guarantee the three principles of a democratic state: liberty, justice, and equality before the law for the state's citizens.

Identity politics undermines the legitimacy of the judiciary.

The judicial system is perceived as illegitimate because it is seen as failing to properly represent the various identity groups—the Israeli “tribe” of Jews of Mizrahi origin claims underrepresentation, especially in the Supreme Court (Barzilai, 2022); the ultra-Orthodox claim that the Court consistently rules against them on religion–state issues. The legal system is portrayed as the last bastion of the Ashkenazi elite, preserving its supremacy against the new Mizrahi and religious elites (Haaretz, 2021).

B. Noncompliance with the law for religious reasons, chiefly noncompliance with laws on military service.

C. Undermining the legitimacy of the judiciary arising from conflicts between a liberal–democratic state and a conservative (authoritarian) democracy, with the claim that the judiciary does not faithfully represent the political majority. This erosion is manifested in what is called the “judicial reform,” which includes legislative attempts to narrow the powers of the Supreme Court, as well as harassment of legal and democratic gatekeepers.

2. Undermining civil rights.

Civil rights are the basic rights in a democratic state. In Israel, there is a constant drive against basic civil rights for the following reasons:

A. Undermining civil rights as an expression of the conflicts between a national–religious state and a liberal–democratic state. Examples include restricting freedom of movement for religious reasons on Sabbaths and Jewish holidays, and the right to marry and be buried in a non-religious manner consistent with individual choice.

B. Undermining civil rights for national motives: from right-wing circles—challenging the right of Israel’s Arab citizens to be full participants in the political game; challenging the right of Palestinians to settle throughout the West Bank; challenging the Bedouin’s property rights to land in the Negev; and the Kaminitz Law aimed at curbing the property rights of Israel’s Arab citizens and the Druze minority.

C. Undermining civil rights by state institutions: the police violate the right to protest and use violence against demonstrators who oppose the judicial reform; the government, via the Knesset, acts to restrict freedom of the press through a law to neuter the public broadcasting authority (radio and television).

3. Undermining governing institutions in Israel.

Undermining state institutions means undermining Israel’s democratic structure. All such actions express the conflicts between a liberal democracy and a conservative (authoritarian) democracy.

A. The settlers’ undermining of the IDF as the sovereign in the West Bank, by virtue of Israel’s control over the West Bank, is defined as occupied territory under international law. This undermining stems from nonrecognition of the state as sovereign.

B. The government, via ... (text continues in the original and appears to be truncated here).

C. The government, through the Minister of Justice, is acting to weaken the judicial system by attempting a political takeover of the process for appointing judges and by turning legal advisers into political, trust-based appointments.

The chaotic implications of the socio-political structure with three attractors

Because of these three opposing centers of gravity, the political system is a chaotic, unstable system that oscillates among the three attractors. In such a chaotic system, “butterfly-effect” phenomena appear—meaning that small changes cause the system to shift unpredictably among the three attractors.

The following chaotic phenomena can be identified in Israeli politics:

1. **Cyclic alternation of power and sudden shifts.** Israel’s political system undergoes sharp swings between different approaches: periods of more liberal rule (for example, Begin, Rabin, Olmert) → shifts to governments that emphasize Jewish identity (Netanyahu, right-wing governments). Political upheavals recur without long-term stability. Israel has experienced periods of security calm that ended in sudden military confrontations. Major social crises in Israel erupt **in the blink of an eye**; for example: the 2011 social protest (cost of living) began as a small housing protest and grew into a massive national protest, as did the protest surrounding the judicial reform.

2. Can Israel reach equilibrium among the centers of gravity?

A system with three centers of gravity will never stabilize; rather, it will continue to oscillate chaotically around these attractors. Therefore, to achieve political–social stability, the State of Israel must converge to a system with **no more than two** centers of gravity. A stable state will emerge if one attractor weakens significantly. According to the foregoing analysis, the **weakest** attractor is the **democratic-liberal** center of gravity. It appears that, in Israel as in the wider Western world, there is a process of democratic erosion—a shift from liberal democracy to conservative and even authoritarian democracy. Given the social and political strength of the national-religious center of gravity and the growing force of identity politics, the decline of liberal democracy in Israel seems almost irreversible.

Projected outcome: the Israeli political–social system will stabilize around the **national-religious** center of gravity and **identity politics**. At the end of this process, Israel would rule over millions of Palestinians without political rights and would therefore **not be a democracy**, likely an **apartheid state**.

Summary of the reasons for the weakening of democracy in Israel

This article argues that in recent years, Israeli democracy has been undergoing a continuous process of erosion. Contrary to earlier studies that claimed democracies weaken because of agents (rulers) who strive for authoritarian rule and, through their actions, undermine democracy—and/or because democratic and judicial institutions were weak to begin with and thus easily challenged by political and social actors—we contend that Israel’s socio-political system is unique in that it does not organize around a single center of gravity. It is neither a nation-state like most states in the world nor a “state of all its citizens” like the United States. Rather, it organizes around **three centers of gravity**. This three-attractor structure renders Israel’s socio-political system permanently unstable. Powerful political actors exploit this instability to strengthen their rule and to erode democratic governing institutions. The executive branch itself acts consciously and deliberately to weaken the other branches of government, above all, the judiciary.

The representative political sphere is relatively exposed to a takeover by **identity politics** (as is indeed happening), which fractures the governing parties at the center of public life and thereby weakens Israeli democracy. The Jewish national-religious center of gravity collaborates with identity politics, each reinforcing the other at the expense of the democratic center of gravity. Structurally, the **democratic attractor** is the weakest of the three, because it contains unresolved conflicts between **liberal-democratic** conceptions and **republican-democratic** conceptions (Mautner 2012). In addition, the liberal-democratic center of gravity rests on rational principles of human rights, whereas the other two centers of gravity rest on national-religious and ethnic emotions and on feelings of discrimination (victimhood) of various kinds. History teaches that in clashes between emotion and reason; the side grounded in emotion generally prevails. In practice, then, Israel is moving toward a **non-democratic** state with **authoritarian** rule.

To prevent Israel’s slide down a slippery slope toward becoming a non-democratic state—one in which there would no longer be a Jewish majority and, ultimately, the Zionist dream of a home for the Jewish people would fade—the convergence of the State of Israel toward the dangerous centers of gravity described above must be halted through **forceful and determined action**.

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