The Nakba in Israeli History Textbooks: Between Memory and History

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Abstract

The aim of the present article is to delineate the way the Palestinian Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic), which was one of the consequences of the 1948 War, has been portrayed in Israeli history textbooks since the establishment of the State of Israel until the present. Based on the assumption that all history textbooks can be situated between the poles of history and memory, the article examines three main factors that determine the actual place of textbooks: academic history, the dominant ideology within the ministry of education and pedagogical norms. An examination of history textbooks that have referred to the 1948 War shows that the entire time span can be divided into three periods: first period, from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, in which the official Zionist view of the past prevailed; second, intermediary period, between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s, in which the official Zionist view was slightly modified; and a third period, between the late 1990s and the late 2010s, in which the textbooks became diversified – some presented the official Zionist version, while others presented an alternative, critical version.

Introduction: History Textbook Research

The Nakba in History Textbooks

The First Period: Memory

The Second Period: Between Memory and History

The Third Period: Memory and History

Conclusion

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Introduction: History Textbook Research

In his introduction to the collective volume of *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, the historian Pierre Nora makes a sharp distinction between memory and history:

> Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it. It nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic – responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again.[1]

The distinction Nora makes between collective memory as a form of social practice and history as an academic discipline is, of course, too dichotomous. Collective memory does not strictly abide by the needs of the present but is also rooted in the past – while history is not always critical and "secular." At times, the historian functions as an agent of memory, participating in the portrayal of a sacred past with which a community can identify. Nevertheless, Nora's is a useful theoretical distinction as it differentiates between two kinds of discourse about the past and positions them as hypothetical poles: one that follows strict academic rules, seeks to understand the past from a critical perspective, and is addressed to a relatively small audience; and another, free of any scientific consideration, which aims to evoke a sympathetic attitude toward the past and is addressed to the public.

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[1] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire," trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989): 8-9.

A third type of discourse combines elements of both poles: history education in schools. In the education system, schoolchildren become aware of the past through several channels: formal education, comprised of various school disciplines, and informal education, which includes activities such as commemorative ceremonies and tours of historical sites. History teaching as an educational discipline holds a special place among these activities as it is the only one exclusively concerned with the past. While it is a complex activity, involving curriculum planners, textbook authors, teachers and schoolchildren, the present article examines only one of its components: history textbooks. While the history textbook is central to the teaching process, it cannot tell us much about the attitude of schoolchildren toward the past, as this is influenced by many additional factors such as informal education, the family, peer groups and the media. However, the study of textbooks, which are generally official or semi-official documents approved by the ministry of education, can be instructive as to the national attitude toward the past.

Academic research of history textbooks began after World War I, as a result of the insight that the teaching of national history could increase hostility among nations. Hence, international revision of history textbooks seemed necessary in order to decrease the danger of future wars. The newly created League of Nations took the task upon itself and created in 1924 an "International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation" that developed a model of international consultation of textbooks, so as to avoid biases and inaccuracies.[2] After World War II the effort to advance international cooperation on the research and evaluation of history textbooks was renewed in 1946 by UNESCO, which created a Program for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials as Aids to International Understanding. Another initiative in the same domain was taken by the German historian and educationalist Georg Eckert, who founded an International Institute for Textbook Improvement in 1951, later named after its founder. This institute, located in Braunschwig, Germany, which closely cooperated with the UNESCO program, gradually became the main European center for the analysis and evaluation of school textbooks.[3]

While the institute advanced scholarly discussion of methodological issues of textbook analysis, another group of scholars across the Atlantic concentrated on

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[2] Falk Pingel, *UNESCO Guide on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*, (Paris-Braunschwig: UNESCO – Georg Eckert Institute, 2010), 9-10.

[3] *Ibid.*, 2-16; Jason Nicholls, "Methods in School Textbook Research," *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* 3/2 (2003): 11-26.

the question of the historical factors determining the content of textbooks. In a series of influential publications, Michael Apple, a sociologist of education, and his associates made the case for the study of curriculum and textbooks in the context of economic and social power relations, notably in the capitalist and liberal West. [4] Current research into school textbooks combines both approaches, and recognizes the need to study them in their multiple contexts. As Maria Repoussi and Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon put it, "any textbook is set simultaneously in educational projects and practices, in scholarly and school-related epistemological contexts, under institutional constraints, political and ideological demands, social requirements and representations."[5] However, one should add that these various contexts might pull the textbooks toward either the history or the memory pole. Where should history textbooks be positioned along this spectrum? Do they belong near the history pole or closer to the memory pole? The answer to this varies, depending on the interplay between the three above-mentioned main factors: academic history, the dominant ideology within the ministry of education and pedagogical norms.

At times, a history textbook resembles an academic book in presenting a complex, detailed and critical picture of the past. But more often, history textbooks cover broad historical subjects – major themes, long periods and numerous countries, which means that their authors must rely on the work of academic historians to create this synthesis. Furthermore, they rarely include a range of opinions or controversial viewpoints on the subjects they discuss. The transition from the academic history book to the history textbook therefore razes diverse historical perspectives and creates a unidimensional version of the past, similar to that of collective memory. The position of the ministry of education on this subject – from the minister himself to the various officials responsible for history education – is also of utmost importance. If the ministry emphasizes the discipline of history as such, then history instruction in the education system will inch closer to the history pole. On the other hand, when history instruction is treated as a means for cultivating the social or national identity of schoolchildren, it leans toward the memory pole. The third, pedagogical factor pushes history

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[4] Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, (New York: Routledge – Kegan Paul, 1979); Id., *Teachers and Texts. A Political Economy of Class and Gender Relations in Education,* (New York: Routledge – Kegan Paul, 1981); *The Politics of the Textbook,* eds. Michael Apple, Lynda Christian-Smith, (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[5] Maria Repoussi, Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon, "New Trends in History Textbook Research. Issues and Methodologies toward a School Historiography," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society* 2/1 (2010): 157.

instruction toward the history pole when it encourages historical thinking and the analysis of primary documents. However, when pedagogical demands are restricted to rote learning of historical facts, the outcome resembles the discourse of memory.[6]

These three factors form a kind of triangular field of forces that influence the manner in which history textbooks are written. Each factor is independent, but its emphasis – history or memory – and relative importance change over time. It is only by considering this triangle of forces that one can decipher the position of a history textbook *vis-à-vis* a given historical subject.

The Nakba in History Textbooks

The aim of the current article is to delineate the image of the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) in Israeli history textbooks since the establishment of the State of Israel until the present. "Nakba" is the word used by the Palestinians to describe their exodus from Palestine during and after the 1948 War – a war termed by Israelis the War of Independence or the War of Resurrection. Any comprehension of the history of the State of Israel necessitates knowledge of the 1948 War and its consequences, including the Nakba. A study of the way the Nakba has been portrayed in history textbooks can, therefore, be indicative of the manner in which the educational agents of the state have wished to create such comprehension among schoolchildren. As research of national movements has shown, study of a nation's past is one of the important means of creating a sense of national identity and national pride.[7]

Israeli historical research of history textbooks was modelled after its European and American counterparts, but it began later. The delay was due to the fact that the first generation of Israeli historians of education, of the 1950s-1960s, concentrated on issues of institution building, notably the creation of the Zionist school system among the Jewish community in Palestine and in the State of

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[6] For analysis of the history and theory of history teaching in various national contexts see *Teaching History,* ed. Hilary Bourdillon, (London: Routledge – The Open University, 1994); Robert Phillips, *History Teaching, Nationhood and the State. A Study in Educational Policy*, (London: Casell, 1998); Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, Ross Dunn, *History on Trial. Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*, (New York: Vintage, 2000).

[7] Homi Bahbah, *Nation and Narration*, (London: Routledge, 1990); Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Israel, while adopting the Zionist normative point of view. Only the second generation of historians of education, coming of age in the 1970s-1980s, broadened its educational horizon to include cultural subjects such as textbook analysis, while adopting a critical distance *vis-à-vis* the official Zionist narrative.[8]

Among the books that have been written on the history of Israeli education since the turn of the 1970s, only four deal specifically with the history of history textbooks. The first two books, by Ruth Firer and by Eyal Naveh and Esther Yogev,[9] are general surveys of the content of Zionist and Israeli history textbooks, with an emphasis on the manner in which they presented the Zionist official version of the national past. Firer's book analyzes the various generations of history textbooks since the 1920s, and concentrates mainly on their narratives. In contrast, Naveh and Yogev devote a large part of their book to situating the textbooks in their political and social context, and to describing the debates that some of them gave rise to. Two other books, by Peled-Elhanan and Podeh, focus on the treatment of the Arabs in the textbooks.[10] Peled-Elhanan's book analyzes not only history textbooks, but also textbooks of other school disciplines, such as civics and geography, in order to show the negative image of Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. It consists of a close reading of the textual and visual evidence, but its historical dimension is minimal. Podeh's book also concentrates on the image of the Arabs in various school discipline textbooks, notably history and civics, but it is more historically oriented and pays attention to the question of the Nakba. However, Podeh situates the Nakba mainly in the context of the changing political circumstances, his periodization is different from the one that will be presented in the current article, and his overall narrative is overly optimistic: he compares the changes in the image of the Arabs to steps in personal maturation – from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

As argued above, in order to examine the way in which the Palestinian Nakba is presented in Israeli history textbooks, one must examine three different fields:

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[8] For a historiography of Israeli education see Rachel Elboim-Dror, "To Push the Rock to the Top of the Mountain and Roll it Down Again. The Beginning of the Historiography of Education in Israel," '*Iyunim BiTekumat Israel* 9 (1999): 1-36 [Hebrew].

[9] Ruth Firer, *The Agents of Zionist Education*, (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1985) [Hebrew]; Eyal Naveh, Esther Yogev, *Histories. Toward a Dialogue with the Past*, (Tel Aviv: Bavel, 2002) [Hebrew].

[10] Nurit Peled-Elhanan, *Palestine in Israeli School Books. Ideology and Propaganda in Education*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012); Elie Podeh, *Against Bewilderment and for Camouflage. The Israeli-Arab Conflict in the History and Citizenship Textbooks in Hebrew 1953-1995*, (Jerusalem: The Truman Institute of the Hebrew University, 1997) [Hebrew].

Israeli historiography of the 1948 War, the ideology characterizing the Israeli Ministry of Education and pedagogical assumptions among the educators in question. However, prior to addressing these factors, it is necessary to examine the deep structure of mainstream Zionist memory that underlies the Israeli perspective of the Nakba.

Zionist memory as a comprehensive national memory began its evolution in Europe parallel to the emergence of Zionism in the late nineteenth century. Its fundamental structure was somewhat altered by the formation of a Jewish Zionist community in Palestine during the first half of the 20th century and further modified by the establishment of the State of Israel, but remained essentially unchanged. This structure was based on a tripartite division of the Jewish past according to a dual periodization criterion, namely political Jewish sovereignty and Jewish presence in the Land of Israel. These two criteria effectively marked different facets of the same phenomenon as, for the Zionist Movement, Jewish sovereignty could only be concretized in the Land of Israel, where Jewish national identity had been formed. As a result, this periodization took on a qualitative aspect. The first period, the Biblical, which began with the conquest of the Land of Canaan by Joshua and during part of which the Jewish people lived independently in its country, was viewed as a time of economic and social expansion, cultural prosperity and national pride. By contrast, the second period, i.e. the one of diaspora – which began with the failed revolts against the Romans in the first and second centuries CE and saw the Jewish people dispersed throughout different countries, at times enslaved and consistently subjected to persecution and harassment – was largely seen as a dark time of national humiliation, passivity and social and cultural torpor. The third period, which began with the emergence of the Zionist Movement, was an era of renewed hope and national renaissance during which the Jewish people returned to its country, regained its sovereignty and was able to evolve socially and culturally much like in the Biblical era. As seen from this perspective, the Zionist Movement represented the legitimate return of Jews to their homeland in the Land of Israel. This land – Palestine – appeared in the Zionist narrative strictly in association with the Jewish people. The local Arab population was not totally absent from the Zionist narrative, but it played a minor role in it. The Arabs, who were usually considered as foreign invaders and people who had no real roots in the land, could therefore be largely ignored.[11]

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[11] On Zionist collective memory, see Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots. Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). On

While the dimensions and causes of the Nakba are controversial issues among historians, there is growing consensus regarding the merit of the work by Israeli historian Benny Morris, one of the first academic historians to base the history of the Nakba and the Palestinian refugees on archival documents.[12] Although Morris published a revised edition of his first book on the subject with additional information, he did not significantly change his position: the Palestinian exodus was due mainly to the actions of the Israeli army, which expelled the inhabitants of conquered cities and villages, at times by brutal force. There were also several indirect causes for this exodus, such as the early flight of the Palestinian urban elite, which prompted a sense of defenselessness among the lower classes, the atrocities committed by the Israeli army, which incited fear among the Palestinians and the exhortations of certain local leaders to flee rather than surrender. Morris also underscores the refusal of the State of Israel to allow the refugees – estimated by him to include 600,000 - 700,000 persons – to return to their homes after the war ended, for fear of cultivating an enemy from within. Morris regards the Nakba as largely inevitable due to the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a struggle between two national movements, each striving to establish a homogeneous state while the two coexist in mixed cities or neighboring villages. Though it has not been static and has undergone various changes, the official version of events according to the Israeli Ministry of Education, as relayed in most history textbooks, differs from this account.

Israeli historians of education ordinarily divide the history of Israeli school textbooks according to wars between Israel and its Arab neighbors, such as the 1948 War, the 1967 Six Day War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, as they consider these major turning points.[13] However, while wars may bring about quick political and territorial changes, educational systems change at a slower pace. Even if an educational initiative is imposed from above in a centralized system, it may take several months and even years before it is implemented by teachers in the classroom. The same applies to changes in school textbooks. These are usually modified in light of new curricula, which correspond to a shift in one or

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the Zionist attitude towards the Arabs, see Yosef Gorni, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882-1948. A Study of Ideology,* trans. by Chaya Galai, (New York: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[12] Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Id., *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[13] Firer, *The Agents of Zionist Education*; Podeh, *Against Bewilderment and for Camouflage*; Naveh, Yogev, *Histories*.

more of the elements composing the above-mentioned "triangle:" the academic discipline, the ideology of the ministry of education and the pedagogical ethos. Considering the slow production pace of history textbooks, which usually include visual elements such as maps and photos, their periodization differs from that of wars or political upheavals.

Thus, the history of the textbooks in question should be divided into three periods, based on their approach to Arabs in general and the Nakba in particular: the first period, from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, in which the official Zionist view of the past prevailed; the second, intermediary period, between the mid-1970s and the late 1990s, in which the official Zionist view was slightly modified; the third period, between the late 1990s and the late 2010s, in which the textbooks became diversified – some presented the official Zionist version, while others presented an alternative, critical version. The last period also witnessed several intense public debates concerning the teaching of the Nakba. Generally, the first period was homogeneous in presenting a discourse of memory, the second period witnessed some deviation from this discourse and the third period was heterogeneous and reflected both discourses – that of memory and that of history. The history textbooks examined in the current article are those of junior and senior high schools, as they address the exodus of the Palestinians more extensively than those of elementary schools. All books in question were those used in the Jewish-Zionist educational sector, the largest in Israel. Two others, minority, sectors, were not included in this study: the anti-Zionist, Jewish-Orthodox sector, in which history was not learned as school discipline, and the Arab sector, which had its own history curriculum and textbooks. The latter sector was under the direct control of a special department of the ministry of education, which monitored its curricula and textbooks in order to stifle any Palestinian-nationalist identity.[14] Most of the textbooks that were consulted were either published or authorized by the Ministry of Education, and the remainder had the tacit approval of the Ministry and were used in the classroom.[15]

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[14] On the Arab sector and its history curriculum, see Majid Al Hj, *Education, Empowerment and Control. The Case of the Arabs in Israel,* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995); Id., "History Curriculum in Jewish and Arab Schools in Israel: Ethnocentrism versus Controlled Multiculturalism," in *History, Identity and Memory: Images of the Past in Israeli Education,* ed. Avner Ben-Amos, (Tel Aviv: Ramot – Tel Aviv University, 2002), 137-154 [Hebrew].

[15] In certain cases, in which the Ministry of Education was not satisfied with the books, they were officially banned, as was the case in the beginning of the 21st century. See notes 44 and 45 below.

The analysis of a textbook poses special challenges. By its very nature, a textbook – such as a history textbook – is a complex object, which includes both textual and visual matter, and is often accompanied by a pedagogical supplement. Researchers of textbooks use either quantitative or qualitative methodologies of various sorts to determine the meaning of the textual and visual material they encounter.[16] Because of the variable nature of the texts, which were published over a relatively long period of time, I chose a qualitative method of analysis, which was more sensitive to the shifting meaning of the portrayal of the Palestinian exodus within the context of the other historical issues addressed in each textbook.[17]

The First Period: Memory

During the first period, the nature of the three factors that usually determine the characteristics of a history textbook – ideology, pedagogy and academic history - was such that they produced a discourse of memory. However, there was also definite overlap among the three domains. For instance, Ben-Zion Dinur, the minister of education during the 1950s and member of the ruling Mapai (Labor) party, was also a prominent historian at the Hebrew University and chief editor of the official history of the Hagana – the main para-military force of the pre-1948 Jewish community and the precursor of the Israeli Defense Forces.[18] Dinur therefore played a central role as both an academic historian and an influence on the history curriculum.

The delay in the publication of this curriculum and its particular nature can be attributed to efforts toward state and nation building during Israel's first two post-independence decades. The pre-state political institutions of the Jewish community had to be developed and adapted to the new situation, with the education domain among the last to fall under the authority of the State. In fact,

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[16] On the various methodologies of textbook analysis see Pingel, *UNESCO Guide on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*, 67-79; Nicholls, "Methods in School Textbook Research," 12-25.

[17] This method was developed by Agnes-Fischer Daradi, Laszlo Kojanitz, "Textbook Analysis Method for the Longitudinal Study of Textbooks Contents," in *Yearbook of the International Society for the Didactics of History. Analyzing Textbooks. Methodological Issues,* eds. Elizebeth Erdman, Susanne Popp, Jutta Schumann, (Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag, 2011), 47-66.

[18] *The History of the Hagana,* ed. Ben-Zion Dinur, (Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot – 'Am 'Oved, 1954-1972) [Hebrew]. For the historiographical role of Dinur, see Uri Ram, "Zionist Historiography and the Invention of Modern Jewish Nationhood," *History and Memory* 7/1 (1995): 91-124.

it was not until 1953 that the three pre-state, politically-oriented educational school streams were abolished and a national Israeli educational system came into being. As a result, the first national high school history curriculum was only published in 1956,[19] and the first textbooks based on that curriculum did not appear until 1959. The dominant pedagogical approach of this period, upheld by Dinur, was rote learning, with little encouragement of independent and critical thought. Although the young state regarded itself as the mere armature of a pre-existing nation, it was struggling to establish a unified nation on the foundation of diverse Jewish communities from different origins around the world, each with its own language, customs and memories. One method of molding national consciousness was the projection of a common national past, with which the entire population – schoolchildren included – could identify. The ongoing conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians who had settled in refugee camps not far from state borders, also shaped the official memory of the recent past. Israel, governed by those who fought and won the 1948 War, placed responsibility for the Palestinian exodus on either the Palestinians themselves, claiming they had willingly fled from the war, or on Arab leaders, who had ostensibly encouraged the Palestinians to leave their homes in order to avoid combat and return as victors. According to this version, the Israeli army made several attempts to hinder them from leaving, but to no avail. This official, hegemonic version was disseminated through various channels: newspaper articles, official booklets and pamphlets, memoirs by veteran soldiers and history books.[20]

As a result, the history textbooks of the first period included only the official, Zionist version of the 1948 War, which hardly mentioned the Palestinians. On the rare occasions when the Palestinians were mentioned, usually in the context of the pre-1948 period, a parallel was drawn between them and the traditional anti-Semitic persecutors of Jews in the diasporic period. Thus, the national Palestinian revolt of 1936-9, which mainly targeted the British, was referred to as "the events of 1936-9" in order to deny its national character. The anti-Zionist violent acts it involved were described as "pogroms" – the Zionist historiographical term for European anti-Semitic violence. The Palestinians were

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[19] On the first national history curriculum, see Yehoshua Mathiash, "Under the Sign of National Education: History in the Jewish-Secular Sector," in *History, Identity and Memory*, 15-46.

[20] On the State's attitude towards the refugees and the official Israeli version of the Palestinian exodus, see Shelly Fried, *They Do Not Return. The Problem of the Palestinian Refugees and Israel's Diplomacy in the First Years of Statehood*, (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2018) [Hebrew]; Rafi Nets-Zehngut, "Israeli Memory of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," *Peace Review* 24 (2012): 187-194.

usually portrayed as "savages" or "bandits" who operated in "gangs," and thus framed as criminals rather than politically motivated individuals. This helped to uphold the image that Palestine, i.e. the Land of Israel, was an empty land waiting for the Zionist Movement to modernize it and establish the homeland of the Jewish people within its borders. The textbooks simultaneously acknowledged the presence of the Palestinians and rendered it insignificant, as they did not regard them as a people – but rather as a collection of backward individuals. They narrated the 1948 War strictly from a Zionist point of view, and placed responsibility for the exodus squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinians. According to this narrative, it was only fitting that the Palestinians should be the victims of the war they themselves instigated. The following is an example of a typical paragraph from one the textbooks in question:

> The Arabs of the Land of Israel declared their adamant objection to the establishment of a Jewish state. This objection led to the War of Independence and the refugee problem… The Arabs claim that they were forcibly and cruelly expelled from their homes, but this is not true. In most conquered localities, including in big cities such as Haifa, the Jews asked their neighbors to stay, but they preferred to leave rather than accept Jewish rule. The Arab leaders had encouraged them to flee, deluding them with promises that in a few weeks they would be able to return along with the victorious Arab armies. Moreover, these same leaders were the first to leave.[21]

The textbooks did not use terms such as "expulsion" or "transfer," and claimed that the Palestinians had "left," "fled" or "evacuated." Generally, the exodus of the Palestinians was described as part of a larger population flux involving the replacement of the Palestinians with Jewish immigrants from the Arab countries of North Africa and the Middle East.[22]

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[21] Netanel Lorch, "Israel in the International Arena," in *The State of Israel and the Jewish Diaspora in Our Time*, ed. Michael Ziv, (Haifa: Yovel, 1966), 47-8. All textbooks cited in this article are in Hebrew.

[22] The examined textbooks include: Binyamin Ahia, Moshe Harpaz, *History of the People of Israel. From the Longing of Generations to the Rise of Zionism and the Establishment of the State of Israel*, (Tel Aviv: Shrebrek, 1959); Israel Cohen, Nathan Gelber, *A Short History of Zionism from Its Beginning to the Present*, (Jerusalem: D. Mass, 1962); Moshe Katan, *The History of the Jews from the First World War to the Present*, (Jerusalem: Kolat, 1970); Shmuel Kirshenboim, *The History of the Jewish People in the Last Generation*, (Tel Aviv: Institute for Learning, 1974); Yosef Ron, *The History of the Jewish People in the Last Generations in Israel and Abroad*, (Tel Aviv: Av Eyal, 1967); Eliezer Rieger, *The History of the People of Israel in the*

The Second Period: Between Memory and History

In the second period, which began in the mid-1970s and ended in the late 1990s, the official Zionist version of the Nakba continued to dominate history textbooks. However, in several instances, new, historical elements began to appear. The mixed narrative of this period reflected the political and educational tensions that had risen following the watershed of the 1967 Six Day War.

In the political and ideological domain, this period was characterized by several contradictory developments. The sudden Israeli victory of 1967 generated a euphoric atmosphere and a sense of national superiority among the Jewish population, but also enabled close contact with the Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories. The setback of the 1973 Yom Kippur War was, for Jewish Israelis, a humiliating experience that demonstrated the limits of their power, but it also led to the 1978 Camp David agreement with Egypt and to a more congenial attitude toward the Arabs. Finally, the 1982 Lebanon War and the 1987 Palestinian Intifada exacerbated the conflict within Israeli society surrounding the future of the occupied territories. The victory of the right wing Likud party in the 1977 elections prompted certain changes within the Ministry of Education, but these were not decisive. The new government's first minister of education, Zevulon Hammer, belonged to the right wing national-religious Mafdal party (1977-1984), while his successor, the dovish Yitzhak Navon, belonged to the Labor party (1984-1990), which took part in the National Union government.

In the pedagogical domain, the most important development occurred in 1966 with the establishment of the Curricula Department at the Ministry of Education, whose core personnel was sent to study in the US, where they were influenced by the modernizing curriculum theory of Jerome Bruner.[23] The department mixed staff consisted of officials who came from the field of education as well as others with advanced academic degrees, and they established close connections with university professors from various disciplines, notably education. They promoted the idea that the education system should prepare schoolchildren for higher education, and as a result, placed emphasis on

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New Era, Vol. 3, (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964); Yosef Spivak, Menahem Avidar, *The People of Israel in Its Land and Abroad,* Vol. 4, (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1960); Ephraim Shmueli, *The History of Our People in the New Era,* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1958); Michael Ziv, Shmuel Ettinger, Jacob Landau, *History of Our Time,* vol. 4b, (Tel Aviv: Yovel, 1964).

[23] Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education,* (Cambridge – Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960).

imparting the internal logic of each discipline (the "structure of knowledge") as it was studied at the university level. They did not consider this scientific and neutral approach a contradiction to the earlier, nationalist approach, as they claimed that strengthening higher education was a means for strengthening the nation.[24]

The history discipline was also modified, and according to the 1975 curriculum, its aims were not only patriotic but also academic, and included instruction in historical thinking and historical concepts. Additionally, the structural reform of the educational system in the 1970s, which separated junior and senior high schools, shifted the emphasis from elementary schools to the more academically oriented high schools.

This period also witnessed a major historiographical event with the publication of historian Yehoshua Porat's book, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929*.[25] For the first time, a mainstream Jewish Israeli historian, who taught at the Hebrew University, regarded the Palestinians not as primitive peasants or a violent mob but as a people capable of forming a national movement with an independent political identity. Several additional historical publications came out during this period that presented the Palestinian exodus in a more nuanced way. For example, in his book *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1967*, Nadav Safran wrote: "Until roughly the end of May - beginning of June, the refugees fled from areas under Jewish control despite consistent efforts on the part of the Jews to convince them to stay. Subsequently, they were expelled from almost all new territories under Jewish control."[26] A later history book by Païl and Zamir also deviated from the official version of events: "There were three main reasons for the flight of the Palestinians: a third fled because they were afraid for their lives…, a third fled as a result of encirclements, bombings and the conquests of the Hagana and the IDF, and a third were expelled after the conquest."[27] In contrast with scholarly publications, school textbooks do not

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[24] On the Curricula Department see Yehoshua Mathias, "Curriculum between Politics and Science. The Case of History in Israel after the Six Day War," *Political Crossroads* 12 (2005): 47-65; Yehoshua Mathias, Naama Sabar Ben Yehoshua, "Reforms in Curriculum Planning in Israeli Public Education and the Battle over Identity," *Megamot* 43/1 (2004): 84-108 [Hebrew].

[25] The book was published in English by Frank Cass in 1974, and in Hebrew by 'Am 'Oved in 1976.

[26] Nadav Safran, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1967*, (Jerusalem: Keter, 1969), 30 [Hebrew].

[27] Meir Païl, Avraham Zohar, *Israel's Wars in the Twentieth Century. The War of Independence*, (Tel Aviv: Ramot, 1985), 43 [Hebrew].

normally include footnotes or bibliographical lists, and the history textbooks examined in this article are no exception. It is impossible, therefore, to determine whether the books mentioned above directly influenced the textbook authors. However, it is possible to surmise that these books had at least an indirect influence, since the ideas presented in them could also be found in some history textbooks.

As a result of these developments, textbooks began to present a less stereotyped and more subtle image of the Arabs, acknowledging the great social and national variety within the native population of the Middle East. This included the Palestinians, who were now presented more extensively as a national entity in the histories of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate. It therefore became impossible to continue regarding Palestine as an empty land waiting to be inhabited and modernized by the Jews. Discussion of the Palestinian exodus of 1948 also underwent certain changes. Most notable among these was a reference to the Hagana's "Plan D," which was carried out during the months of April and May 1948. The plan involved transition into an offensive stance following the failure of the defensive policy implemented in previous months, and preparation for the invasion of the Arab countries after the termination of the British mandate in mid-May. The underlying logic of the plan was to establish Jewish territorial continuity in the areas allotted to the Jewish State by the UN partition plan of November 1947. In order to establish and maintain such continuity, the Hagana had to seize hostile Arab villages, and in cases of armed opposition, destroy them and expel their inhabitants – which it did in the Jerusalem and northern regions.[28] Yet the textbooks did not include the full details of Plan D and its implications. For example, one mentioned only that, "the Israeli armed forces did not resist the flight of the local Arab population to neighboring Arab countries, and at times even encouraged it."[29] Another book referred more explicitly to the plan, and to the "cleansing of Arab villages" after their conquest.[30] A textbook by the Curricula Department gave a balanced account:

> The IDF evacuated the Arab population from certain areas during battles or prevented refugees from returning after they had ended... During the Ten Day Operation [9-18 July 1948 – A. B-A.] special effort

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[28] On Plan D, see Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited,* 163-166.

[29] Avigail Oren, *The Jewish People, the Land of Israel and the State of Israel 1919-1977,* Vol. 2, (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1988), 230.

[30] David Shahar, *From Diaspora to Sovereignty. The History of the Jewish People in the Last Generations,* Vol. 2, (Rehovot: 'Idan, 1990), 246.

was made to prevent the flight of the Arab population, especially in the regions of Lod, Ramla and Nazareth.[31]

The textbooks published during this period also differed from their predecessors in form. In line with the new pedagogical policy of the Curricula Department, they now included more visual materials – photos, cartoons, maps and diagrams – that served as important didactical instruments, and questions that encouraged analytical thinking. Special attention was also paid to including textual or visual primary documents, which history instructors could analyze with their pupils in order to demonstrate the process of historical investigation.

However, despite these innovations, there was no profound change in the portrayal of the Nakba narrative in these textbooks, and the pervasive discourse remained primarily memory-oriented. Arabs, Palestinians included, were still presented strictly through the lens of the Israeli-Arab conflict and depicted as enemies whose sole wish was to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state. The new didactic material also reinforced this perspective, as evidenced by maps of Palestine during the British Mandate period that included only Jewish settlements. According to these textbooks, Arab leaders were largely responsible for the flight of the Palestinians, having urged them to leave so as not to interfere with the invading armies with promises of a victorious return once the battles ended.[32]

The Third Period: Memory and History

In the third period, which spanned from the late 1990s to the late 2010s, the textbooks oscillated between the poles of memory and history: some still maintained the official Zionist version of the Palestinian exodus, while others introduced a critical narrative. This divergence reflected the profound political and historiographical changes that characterized this period and aroused

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[31] Shifra Kulat, Ruth Klienberger, Yehoshua Mathias, *The Jewish National Movement and the Establishment of the State of Israel,* vol. 4 (Jerusalem: The Ministry of Education, 1979), 128-129.

[32] Additional textbooks examined: Yosef Affek, *Not on a Silver Platter. From a Homeland to a Sovereign State, 1939-1949,* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1984); Ada Moshkovits, Shifra Kulat, Asia Ramberg, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict,* Vols. 10 and 13, (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1975); Shifra Kulat, *The Zionist Idea and the Establishment of the State of Israel,* (Jerusalem: Ma'alot, 1985); Moshe Lifshitz, *The History of the Jewish People in the Last Generations. The National Movement,* Vol. 2, (Tel Aviv: Or 'Am, 1985).

insurmountable tensions. Moreover, history textbooks of this time became a conflictual public arena and the subject of debate and controversy among politicians and intellectuals. In certain cases, disruptions of the hegemonic Zionist discourse of memory even prompted an official ban on "deviant" textbooks by the Ministry of Education.

The major political event that marked and influenced this period was the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. As a result of the Accords, a Palestinian Authority was established in parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and a peace process was set in motion with the aim of achieving a peace treaty. The Palestinians transitioned from being enemies to being partners with whom Israelis could cooperate, and the 1994 peace accord between Israel and Jordan was yet another step in this direction. In addition, during the years of Yitzhak Rabin's government, the Ministry of Education was headed by members of the leftist Meretz party: Shulamit Aloni (1992-3) and Amnon Rubinstein (1993-6). However, the Second Intifada in 2000-5, which involved acts of extreme violence by both the Jewish and the Arab sides, nearly put an end to the Oslo peace process, and increased mutual mistrust.

In retrospect, the publication of Benny Morris' *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949* in 1991 seems an apt prelude to the Oslo Accords. Although critical versions of the Palestinian exodus had already appeared in Hebrew books during the 1980s, they were partial and embedded in the broader, official narrative of the 1948 War. Morris' book was the first Hebrew study by an Israeli historian dedicated entirely to this issue and based on archival research. Although it aroused great controversy, the study was eventually supported by the research of other new historians and its critical version of events was gradually accepted by Israeli historians.[33] In addition to this, civil society organizations, such as the NGO Zokhrot, began to establish a new kind of "memory activism" by using symbolic acts to inculcate the memory of the Nakba in the Israeli public.[34] These developments around the memory of the Nakba caused tension within Israeli society, resulting in the government's passing the "Nakba Law," which stipulated that state-funded organizations can be fined for

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[33] Nets-Zehngut, "Israeli Memory of the Palestinian Refugee Problem."

[34] Yifat Gutman, *Memory Activism. Reimagining the Past for the Future in Israel-Palestine*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2017).

commemorating "Independence Day or the day when the State of Israel was established as a day of mourning."[35]

The pedagogical domain, too, was characterized by opposing tendencies during this period. On the one hand, the Curricula Department remained active and continued to implement its policy, preparing pupils for higher education by emphasizing the academic principles of respective disciplines. An innovation in the history curriculum came about in 1994, when the separation between Jewish and non-Jewish history, which had characterized previous state curricula and was typical of the discourse of memory, was eliminated. This separation was based on the assumption that Jewish history was unique, and that Jews could be studied in isolation from their non-Jewish social and cultural environment. In contrast, the new curriculum integrated both histories to create one coherent narrative and gave them equal attention, thus enabling pupils to place the history of the Jews and the State of Israel within a wider context. This changed in 2003, when the history curriculum shifted its emphasis once again; although it maintained the integration of the two histories, about eighty percent of its educational content revolved around the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Moreover, the mandatory historical subjects and periods covered in the final history matriculation exam reflected the mainstays of Zionist memory: the Jewish people in the period of the Second Temple when it was sovereign in the Land of Israel, the Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel, and the Holocaust.[36]

While some textbooks published during this period continued to present the official Zionist narrative of the Palestinian exodus,[37] others were influenced by political and historiographical changes and adopted a historical discourse.[38] The

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[35] On the Nakba Law, *Ibid.*, 90-98.

[36] Edna El'azary, Hana Eden, *History Curriculum for the Upper Division. Secular Jewish Sector*, (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 2003) [Hebrew]. According to the curriculum, teachers could choose between two subjects: the Second Temple and Cities and Communities in the Middle Ages. Almost all teachers, however, chose the former (personal communication, Orna Katz, History Supervisor, Ministry of Education, June 26, 2019).

[37] For example, Shula 'Inbar, *Rebirth and State in Israel and in Other Nations in the Modern Era,1945-1970*, (Tel Aviv: Lilach, 2000); Eli'ezer Domka, *The World and the Jews in the Last Generations,* Vol. 2, (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1999).

[38] These books include: Elie Bar-Navie, Bruria Ben-Barukh, *The Twentieth Century. History of the Jewish People in the Last Generations* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Books, 1998); Eyal Naveh, *The Twentieth Century. On the Threshold of Tomorrow*, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv books, 1999); Ktziya Tavivyan, *A Journey to the Past. The Twentieth Century. The Right to Liberty,* (Tel Aviv: The

latter presented the Zionist and Palestinian points of view in a relatively balanced manner in the context of the British Mandate period. They also adopted Benny Morris' conclusions regarding the Palestinian exodus, and included them – some briefly and others in a detailed manner. One example is the below paragraph from the textbook by Elie Bar-Navie and Bruria Ben-Barukh:

> The refugee problem arouse due to the collapse of Palestinian society. The departure of the Palestinian elites, the confusion among the Palestinians, the attacks of the Hagana, Etzel and Lehi [Zionist paramilitary organizations – A. B.-A.], the inability of the Palestinian armed forces to defend their villages, these – respectively and jointly – led to the Palestinian exodus. In certain cases, there was also intentional expulsion. The psychological factor was crucial. Years of conflict and hostile propaganda expanded the gulf of hatred between the communities and made Palestinians fear Jewish rule in the State of Israel. Hostility and fear were also common among the Jews. Although no political authority decided to expel the Palestinians, it is certain that to great degree, local commanders had carte blanche. From the Palestinian point of view, the 1948 War and its aftermath are perceived as a catastrophe, the Nakba. Not only did the Palestinians lose their land, but they also became a nation of refugees, and as we will later see, formed their collective identity around aspirations of return.[39]

The same textbook includes a special paragraph on the massacre of Deir Yassin, which was committed by units of the Etzel and Lehi on April 9, 1948, in a village near Jerusalem, and was among the reasons for the flight of the Palestinians. The authors regard the massacre as "one of the stains upon the Jewish community's fight for survival and independence."[40] The didactic appendices of these textbooks also present a complex picture. For example, in Bar-Navie and Ben-Barukh's textbook, the map of the 1948 War indicates both Jewish and Palestinian settlements that were evacuated during the war. In addition, a photo

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Center for Educational Technology, 1999); Dany Ya'aqoby, *A World of Change*, (Jerusalem: Ma'alot, 1999). Later books include: Eyal Naveh, Na'omi Vered, David Shahar, *Knowing History. Nationalism among the Jewish People and among the Nations. Building a State in the Middle East*, (Even-Yehuda: Rekhes, 2009); Yigal Mishol, *Building a Jewish and Democratic State in the Middle East*, (Tel Aviv: Center for Educational Technology, 2014).

[39] Bar-Navie, Ben-Barukh, *The Twentieth Century*, 195.

[40] *Ibid.*, 184. On the Deir Yassin Massacre, see Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 237-240.

included in the book shows the miserable living conditions in a Palestinian refugee camp.[41]

The new approach of these textbooks, and the manner in which they disrupted former beliefs concerning the 1948 War that prevailed among Israel's Jewish population, incited major controversy.[42] This controversy, which began in 1999 around issues relating to history education and the memory of the Nakba, quickly became a wide-reaching, fierce conflict that touched on deep-rooted questions regarding Jewish identity and the future of the State of Israel. This conflict transpired mainly in the popular media – the printed press and television – and reached the Knesset Education Committee as well. Attacks against the new textbooks came from the political right, which regarded the new, historical discourse they presented as either completely false or – even if true – as one that undermined Zionist legitimacy and endangered national security by demanding sympathy for the Palestinians. The conflict waned in 2000 with the outbreak of the Second Intifada, which shifted public attention from the past to the present. However, the representation of the 1948 War and the Palestinian exodus in history textbooks did not cease to be among the major concerns of the Ministry of Education. Additionally, new, controversial books and bold decisions in the educational arenas still made newspaper headlines from time to time – indicating that public interest in these issues was enduring.

During the first decade of the 21st century, shifts in ministers of education prompted pendulum swings between the poles of memory and history in the context of the 1948 War and the Palestinian exodus. In 1999-2000, Minister of Education Yossi Sarid, who belonged to the left wing Meretz party, approved the new history textbooks that presented a historical, critical discourse of the Palestinian exodus. He also decided to include poems by two Palestinian poets, Mahmud Darwish and Siham Daoud, in the literature curriculum. Sarid was then replaced by Limor Livnat of the Likud Party (2001-6), who claimed that the critical textbooks were post-Zionist, and that although they might be acceptable at the university level, they should not be taught in schools. She established a committee to examine Dany Ya'aqoby's textbook, which – among other shortcomings – was found to be too lenient toward the Palestinian refugees and banned as a result.[43] The next minister of education, Ya'el Tamir (2006-9) of the

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[41] Bar-Navie, Ben-Baruk, *The Twentieth Century*, 190 and 194.

[42] On the controversy, see Naveh, Yogev, *Histories.*

[43] Ya'aqoby, *A World of Change,* Naveh, Yogev, *Histories,* 96, 143.

Labor Party, decided to re-introduce the pre-1967 border between Israel and Jordan (the Green Line) into history and geography textbooks, and to authorize textbooks used in the Israeli-Arab educational sector to include references to the Nakba.[44] Subsequently, Gideon Sa'ar (2009-13) of the Likud Party changed the orientation of the Ministry once again. He prohibited any mention of the Nakba in the Israeli-Arab educational sector, and banned three textbooks in the Israeli-Jewish sector due to their approach toward the Palestinian exodus. The first of these, by Eli'ezer Domka, Tsafrir Goldberg and Hanna Orbakh, was published by an established, mainstream publisher and had received official Ministry approval.[45] Nevertheless, post-publication, Sa'ar decided it should be banned due to its inclusion of a quote by a Palestinian historian who claimed the IDF had implemented an ethnic-cleansing policy during the 1948 War. The book was only re-authorized after the quote was removed.[46]

The two other banned textbooks were published by marginal publishers and were more radical and comprehensive in their discussion of the Palestinian exodus. One, *Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative. Palestinians and Israelis*, edited by Sami Adwan and Dan Bar-On, was written by a mixed group of Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian teachers and historians. It presented the Jewish and Arab narratives of the Israeli-Arab conflict alongside one another, including the 1948 War and the Palestinian exodus, in order to familiarize each side with the narrative of the other.[47] The initial aim of the group was together to create a unique narrative based on the model of the Franco-German history textbooks published after World War II, but due to their failure, they settled on two separate narratives.[48] However, two historians, an

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[44] Or Kashti, "The Green Line Will be Marked in the Textbooks in Spite of the Objection of Members of the Knesset Committee of Education," *Ha'aretz,* January 1, 2007 [Hebrew]; Lilakh Wiesmann, Diana-Bahour Nir, "Tamir Authorized Including the Nakba in the Textbooks," *Globes,* July 22, 2007 [Hebrew].

[45] Domka, *The World and the Jews in the Last Generations*; Tsafrir Goldberg, Hanna Orbakh, *Building a Nation in the Middle-East*, (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 2009).

[46] Or Kashti, "Who Is Afraid of the Nakba?," *Haaretz*, April 27, 2013 [Hebrew].

[47] *Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative. Palestinians and Israelis*, eds. Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, (Beit-Jallah: Prime, 2006, Hebrew version, 2004).

[48] For the Franco-German initiative see Mona Siegel, Kirsten Harjes, "Disarming Hatred: History Education, National Memories and Franco-German Reconciliation from World War I to the Cold War," *History of Education Quarterly* 52/2 (2012): 370-402.

Israeli Jew and an Israeli Palestinian, later succeeded in creating a history book that told the story of the 1948 War as they both interpreted it.[49]

The third banned textbook, *How Do They Say Nakba in Hebrew?,* was published by the NGO Zokhrot and based on an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Nakba that incorporated history, art, photography and theories of collective memory.[50] Both of these last two books were pedagogically innovative, as they aimed to encourage active learning and self-reflection among pupils regarding their attitude toward the past. In order to enforce the ban, the Ministry formally reprimanded teachers who used these books as well as their school principals.[51] The next two following ministers of education, Shai Piron (2013-2014) of the center-right party Yesh 'Atid and Naftali Bennett (2015-2019) of the national-religious party HaBayit HaYehudi, did not change the policy of the Ministry of Education regarding the teaching of the Palestinian exodus. During their terms, mentioning the Nakba was half-heartedly tolerated in the Israeli-Jewish educational sector, but forbidden in the Israeli-Arab sector.

Conclusion

The story of the shifts in the image of the Nakba within the Israeli educational system cannot be told as a simple, linear narrative that begins in the 1950s at the pole of memory and ends in the 2010s at the pole of history. Rather, it is a complex narrative that begins with a unidimensional view of the Palestinian exodus, which denies the Nakba and upholds the official Zionist version of the 1948 War, continues with a slightly modified account that introduces elements of historical discourse, and ends with a pluralistic picture in which different versions of the Palestinian exodus are presented depending on the textbook. However, even this eventual pluralism had certain limits, as demonstrated by the official ban on textbooks whose version of events proved unacceptable to the Ministry of Education. An apt metaphor for this narrative would be that of a closed Japanese fan that slowly unfolds until it is almost fully opened, displaying most, though not all, of its imprinted images.

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[49] Motti Golani, Adel Manna, *Two Sides of the Coin: Independence and the Nakba 1948. Two Narratives of the 1948 War and Its Outcome,* (London: Republic of Letters, 2011, in English and Hebrew).

[50] Amya Galili, *How Do They Say Nakba in Hebrew?,* (Tel Aviv: Zochrot, 2008) [Hebrew].

[51] Revital Blumenfeld, "The Teachers who are not Afraid to Teach the Nakba. 'The Refugees Did Not Disappear'," *Walla-News,* April 1, 2015 [Hebrew].

How to explain this complex narrative? First, it seems inevitable that the perception of a major event such as the Palestinian exodus would become less simplistic overtime. In the initial post-1948 decades, the generation that had fought the War still held the power in the State and wished to impose its own version of events. This included the leaders of the Labor Movement, whose hegemonic power over the public discourse about the War controlled the educational sphere as well. In addition, the return of the Palestinian refugees was still an urgent question at this time, and the Israeli government was unwilling to recognize the IDF's role in their expulsion for political reasons. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, a new generation came to power and the Labor Movement lost its hegemonic role. Moreover, although the problem of the refugees was not yet resolved, the status of the territories occupied after the Six Day War became more urgent. Another change occurred in the academic domain during this period with the opening of historical archives, which helped shift the issue of the Palestinian exodus from the discourse of memory to the discourse of history by allowing historians to look into original documents. In turn, their studies influenced school textbooks. However, as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued, the question of the Nakba became a kind of screen upon which political camps projected their viewpoints. Therefore, any acknowledgement of the Nakba by oppositional players on the political left was met with a riposte by government forces on the right, who tried to suppress the presence of the Nakba in public discourse – either through the Nakba law or the ban of radical textbooks. Yet, as the publication of the Zokhrot textbook indicated, the government no longer had the monopoly over the teaching of the past, and new players, who belonged to civil society, entered the field.[52]

The picture that emerges from this article of the knowledge of Jewish schoolchildren in Israel about the Nakba is complex. Only some of them were exposed to the updated, historical version of the 1948 War as it was taught in the last twenty years. However, due to lack of information about the textbooks actually used in classes, it is impossible to know the exact numbers. Moreover, as mentioned above, a schoolchild's image of the national past is not determined only by history teaching but also by other factors, such as informal education, the family, the peer group and the media. Further research into these domains is, then, necessary in order to figure out how Israeli schoolchildren have grasped the

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[52] For the role of Zokhrot and other "memory activists" in the battle over memory of the 1948 War, see Gutman, *Memory Activism*.

Nakba. Nevertheless, it is evident that the Ministry of Education tried to restrict their historical knowledge of the 1948 War and the Palestinian exodus, but its success was only partial.

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