It Takes Two for a Culture War*

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This article examines the tense relations between religious and secular in Israel and the prospects for what has been described by different observers as a "culture war." Specifically, the consequences and implication of the challenges to church-state arrangements by social, economic, and demographic changes, and growing religious-secular tensions are studied. The empirical investigation of these issues relies on a survey ($n = 508$) of a representative, random sample of the adult Jewish population in Israel. Research findings indicate that the culture war scenario exaggerates the actual state of affairs because secularism in Israel is lacking coherence and commitment and alternatives that circumvent conflict are available. Rather than a culture war between the religious and secular camps in Israel, different battles are taking place, waged in different realms with different constituencies, tactics, strategies, and levels of commitment whose combined outcome is yet to be determined.

Relations between the religious and the secular communities in Israel are often described as being on the brink of a "culture war," with substantive ideological differences that have been dormant for many years threatening to erupt into open conflict (Ravitzky, 2000). According to this view, a deepening divide between religious and secular Jews poses a threat to Israel's social fabric (Etzioni-Halevy, 2002:1). Orthodox Jews determined to protect the "Jewish character" of the state face an increasingly secular public unwilling to abide by the old rules that no longer fit its world view and lifestyle. This tension is translated into struggles over issues such as marriage or observance of the Sabbath and is reflected in the political arena where parties representing the two sides are less willing to compromise over what they describe as principled issues. Observers have noted that the two sides "hardly have anything in common. Although the former and latter are Jews and speak Hebrew, they really speak different languages. They do not merely disagree with each other on any conceivable issue, but would hardly be able to understand each other, even if they were to make the attempt, which they do not" (Etzioni-Halevy, 2002: 3). The term "culture war" refers to a deep polarization and suggests an imaginary (or real) battleground where the religious and secular communities are pitted against each other. Deconstructing this image and exploring the supposed

secular-religious divide allows a more nuanced, though not necessarily a more optimistic, understanding of the situation as a series of battles, rather than a "war," battles waged in different realms with different strategies and varying levels of commitment.

The concept of a culture war, with religion at its core, is not unique to Israel. Globally, the term "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1993) also implies an inevitable collision between incompatible sets of values and a cultural battle along civilization fault lines. Religious and secular groups often clash over issues in the public sphere and private/public relations that are considered to be essential to their world views. In Western Europe, immigration and the transformation of countries into multicultural entities provoked heated debates over the "common good" and the public sphere, most notably in France. In the United States, this concept seems especially popular. There, the "internal" struggle between religious and secular groups has been described as a culture war over procedural norms and legal codes that define the limits of personal behavior and collective action, the nature and extent of political responsibility, and the regulation of interactions between different parties in the political arena (Hunter, 1991:52). Pat Buchanan, for example, has sent a clear message to his fellow Americans: "There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a culture war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this is a war for the soul of America" (quoted in Davis and Robinson, 1996).

Does the term "culture war" capture the essence of contemporary politics or does it exaggerate and ignore important nuances in religious-secular politics? Israel is a good test case with which to examine this question. As in the United States, in Israel there is an internal debate over the role of religion in public life, in which Orthodox groups attempt to defend a timeless moral code in the face of secular challenges. Our purpose, however, is not a comparison between Israel and the United States but rather to examine the concept of a culture war in a different setting in which relations between religious and secular are potentially more explosive.

Unlike in the United States, there is no separation of church and state in Israel, so the secularization of the public sphere (Ben-Porat and Feniger, 2009) erodes existing arrangements and (supposedly) challenges the sides to the conflict to take initiatives to define and redefine public and private life. Consequently, in the last two decades struggles over observance of the Sabbath, the sale of pork, or the right to civil marriage have all attracted a great deal of public attention. In addition, the religious-secular divide overlaps another, more central dispute between doves and hawks over the future borders of the state. Indeed, recent political clashes over settlements in the occupied territories or the withdrawal from Gaza positioned an overwhelmingly hawkish religious camp that used religious arguments to support its claims against more dovish secularists. It is tempting, therefore, to describe this conflict as part of a larger culture war that stretches beyond territorial debates.

While the description of a struggle between religious hawks and dovish secularists is certainly cultural, as many struggles are, it falls short of being a culture war for three main reasons. First, not all religious Jewish Israelis hold hawkish views and even among the majority that does, there are different interpretations and commitments to these views. Second, not all secular Jews hold dovish views, as many of them oppose territorial compromise for security reasons and national sentiments. And, third, while the territorial debate attracts a great deal of attention for obvious reasons, in other issues concerning religious-secular struggles, the picture is even more complex and nuanced, as we demonstrate in this work.

We begin with an overview of the concept of a culture war as it evolved in the United States, continue with a discussion of secularization and the secular agenda itself, and then move to our case study of Israeli secularization and the potential for a culture war. First, we ask whether a coherent secular agenda exists or whether secularism is divided by different values and political goals. Second, is there a strong, principled commitment among secularists in Israel to a culture war? The empirical investigation of these issues relies on a survey ($n = 508$) conducted in June 2004 of a representative, random sample of the adult Jewish population in Israel. The survey included questions regarding religious/secular beliefs, practices, values, and political agendas. In the analysis, we focus on two groups in the Israeli Jewish population: those who described themselves as "traditional" (about 37 percent of the sample) and those who described themselves as "secular" (about 52 percent of the sample). Based on the theoretical discussion in the first part of this work and our data presented in the second part, we make the following arguments: (1) secularism in Israel is a mixed bag of beliefs, group identifications, and practices that are often incoherent; (2) a general division can be made between "principled secularism" and "secularism of everyday life" with a limited commitment to a secular agenda; and (3) secularists have found alternatives that circumvent political struggles and allow them to achieve some of their goals. Consequently, what we find is not a "culture war" but different struggles with different strategies and commitments that are waged in different arenas.

The Culture War

Secularization refers to the disengagement of religion from the public sphere, political life, and aesthetic life and its retreat to a private world where it has authority only over its followers (Bell, 1978). However, the assumption (and often the hope) that in the process of modernization in which industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, and religious pluralism increase, religiousness *must* decline is contradicted by the continuous reality of religious-secular struggles (Hadden, 1987). Against the process of secularization, an increase in anti-secular ideologies and parties can be observed across the globe (Keddie, 2003). Indeed, religious politics and tensions between religion and secular

tendencies have been described as one of the characteristics of the post-Cold War era as religion reclaims its public status (Casanova, 1994; Jurgensmeyer, 1995). While the argument (Chaves, 1994) that secularization means not a decline in religious belief (which remains high) but a decline in the scope of religious authority (or the privatization of religion) might be true, the fact that religious belief remains strong has significant implications for religious authority, especially when and where religious belief is on the rise. Indeed, fundamentalist movements across the globe have reclaimed authority for religion and demanded the reinstatement of religious considerations in the public policy decision-making process (Shup and Hadden, 1989). Thus, the religious factor continues to affect many people's world views and, consequently, sharp conflicts between religious and secular attitudes to various issues persist (Kelley, Evans, and Headey, 1993).

Religions, as Casanova (1994:6) convincingly explains, enter the public sphere not only to defend their "traditional turf" but also to "participate in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundaries between the private and the public spheres, between system and life-world, between legality and morality, between individual and society, between family, civil society, and state, between nations, states, civilizations, and the world system." The rise of religious fundamentalism in the past decade in different parts of the world and against the background of globalization that supposedly erodes national and religious values has raised the specter of a culture war. Fundamentalists who feel that their tradition is at risk in a secularizing world take measures to protect their way of life from these threats (Fox, 2002). On a global level, the rise of fundamentalism was described by Huntington (1993) as a "clash of civilizations" in which religion plays a major role as a marker of civilization. However, these divisions also occur within civilizations and states, often when immigration undermines existing arrangements, sometimes adding to older, deep-seated divisions between the religious and secular communities.

American sociologist James Hunter (1991:42–44) described a culture war as a situation in which political and social hostility is rooted in different systems of moral understanding and different conceptions of a moral order. This division overrides religious denominational differences and sets conservatives or Orthodox members of different religions against liberals. Thus, religiousness is a better predictor of political attitudes than religion. These competing sets of principles and ideals defined as "Orthodox" and "progressive" provide a "source of identity, purpose and togetherness for people who live by them" and, therefore, lead to a crisis of moral authority. While Orthodoxy is distinguished by its belief in the existence of an "external, definable and transcendent authority," progressivism defines moral authority "by the spirit of the modern age, a spirit of rationalism and subjectivism." This disparity of views has been described as a new religious war and a conflict between an approach to citizenship based on rights and one based on duties (Johnson, 1995). In addition, it raises questions regarding the ability of democracy to

contain cultural conflicts where the sides are unwilling to compromise on what is perceived as essential principles (Hunter, 1993).

The description of a growing rift between the religious and secular communities in the United States underscores the perception of an evolving culture war. Critics of the culture war, however, find this description inaccurate and the predictions unlikely. The first factor that casts doubt on the assertion about an ongoing culture war in the United States, according to these critics, is the existence of a large, moderate center that prefers compromise. Morris Fiorina argues that the culture war thesis in America is largely a myth that has attracted a great deal of attention but has little if any empirical grounding. Americans, according to Fiorina and his colleagues (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2005), are divided, but not deeply divided. "Many of us are ambivalent and uncertain, and consequently reluctant to make firm commitments to parties, politicians, or policies. We divide evenly in elections or sit them out entirely because we instinctively seek the center while the parties and candidates hang out on the extremes." However, the existence of a large center does not in itself rule out a culture war between committed extremes. Moreover, other research demonstrates that, contrary to Fiorina's arguments, partisan polarization is not confined to a small group of leaders and activists. Indeed, there are sharp divisions between supporters of the two major parties, especially along religious lines and between the religious and secular communities (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2005).

The second factor that casts doubt on the existence of a culture war concerns its scale. Are we looking at a full-blown conflict or just political divisions in which the religious and secular communities are not necessarily on opposite sides? Davis and Robinson (1996) maintain that religion is an important source of political division in the United States but that the effect of this division is primarily on gender and family and related issues about children, schooling, sexuality, reproductive rights, and women's involvement in the family and the workplace. Not only do most Americans occupy a middle ground between the extremes of religious Orthodoxy and moral progressivism, but the religious right also expresses little political uniformity on many significant political issues. Religious conservatism is either uncorrelated with economic attitudes or is correlated with liberal attitudes about social justice that negate the culture war thesis. Similarly, members of the religious community rally around a theological flag that is not antithetical to the banner of political and social justice raised by the liberals (Warner, 1988). The alignment along a common conservative–liberal dimension is partial among elites and weaker among the general public (Olson and Carrol, 1992). The metaphor of war itself, as Rabkin (1999) claims, "imputes an absurdly inflated sense of discipline and purpose on each side." And, thus, "[t]he truth about America seems to be far messier than a 'culture war' between 'Orthodox' and 'progressive' forces. We are in the midst of many overlapping and cross-cutting social conflicts."

Finally, there remains the question of the degree to which the sides in the conflict are politically committed to their moral positions. The label

"religious right" that implies a broad-based, monolithic conservatism among the religiously Orthodox might in reality not exist (Davis and Robinson, 1996). In addition, a comparative study of surveys conducted in 1988 and 1998 indicates that the polarity between the religiously progressive and the Orthodox remains strong but falls short of a culture war and amounts to a "cultural standoff" where evangelicals focus on different skirmishes that maintain their distinctiveness (McConkey, 2001). Evangelicalism, therefore, is "not a disciplined, charging army, but something more like a divided and hesitant extended family" (Smith, 2000). This point may be even more clear on the other side of the divide where it is argued that there are not enough liberal-religious and secular Americans who would actively support a liberal agenda (Olson and Carroll, 1992). This assertion brings us to an examination of the relationship between secularism and liberalism, central to our Israeli case study.

To study the culture war thesis in Israel, we develop the critical points raised above and focus on the secular side of the divide to provide four arguments against the thesis. The first, well established in the existing literature, is the existence of a large center, which does not identify itself as liberal/secular or religious. Throughout this article, we maintain that a multidimensional bricolage describes Israeli society better than a linear religious–secular continuum. In addition, the secular camp has little in the way of a commitment to a coherent agenda. Finally, the opposition to religion's hold on public life is often not translated into political conflicts but rather underscores the emergence of alternatives that bypass the formal political process and provide solutions to many secular desires and demands. Thus, on the one hand, the secular camp is made up of a large majority with little commitment to struggle and an ideological minority with limited power. On the other hand, alternative solutions dissipate the political energy that is generated by particular issues of concern to secularists in everyday life.

Secularization as Bricolage

The resurgence of religion and new forms of religious/secular identity underscore new interpretations of secularization as a more complex, multidimensional process, with important implications for the culture war thesis. Secularization is "multidimensional" (Dobbalaere, 1981) because religious authority and its possible decline can be measured at different levels, from personal belief to institutional arrangements. Norris and Inglehart (2004) suggest three dimensions for the measurement of secularization: (1) religious participation that involves collective religious practices and the erosion of individual religious practices; (2) religious values that pertain to the goals that people prioritize for their society, community, and themselves; and (3) religious beliefs that refer to the faith in the core beliefs held by different world theologies. The different levels of secularization have been described

as a "bricolage" of beliefs, practices, and values (Beckford, 2003; Dobbalaere, 1999; Luckman, 1967). In practice, this implies that questions of belief, belonging, and practices receive answers that are not necessarily coherent in terms of the religious-secular divide. In other words, the secular-sacred boundary becomes less clear as the religious community becomes less obviously religious and the secular less obviously secular (Heelas, 1998).

The bricolage formation of secularism has significant implications for its political agenda and, consequently, for the liberal-Orthodox divide that supposedly underscores a culture war. Secularism presents itself as crucial to private freedom, democracy, and individual rights, all of which are predicated on the separation between church and state. The "wall" established between church and state in the process of secularization, according to Walzer (1984), was the source of new liberties and equality. Similarly, the release of people from the control of the gods afforded them greater control over their own lives. Finally, the separation of church and state has been viewed as a prerequisite to a democratic, free society based on liberal values that include a commitment to individual rights, respect, and tolerance (Sartori, 1995). However, often secularization is not an ideological battle between tolerance and liberalism but a set of practices associated with everyday life and, more recently, an emerging consumer culture. While consumer culture often contrasts with a religious way of life, these contrasts are not necessarily related to broader secular beliefs and commitments and are essentially nonideological. In other words, secularization can be divided into practices of everyday life and an ideological commitment to secular values that develops separately. Thus, the advent of a secularism based on practices of everyday life and consumerism may have limited interest in a wider secular agenda and a culture war, especially if the demands of everyday life can be satisfied without political involvement, commitment, or a struggle.

The Israeli "Culture War"

The culture war scenario in Israel is predicated on the erosion of formal and nonformal agreements known as the "status quo" established in the prestate period and the early years of the state when looming religious-secular tensions threatened to tear the country apart. Since the early period of Zionism, the controversy over the status of religion has been debated under the threat of an internal breakup or a Kulturkampf (Horowitz and Lissak, 1989). The potential conflict between the largely secular Zionist movement and its religious supporters and opponents was generally avoided by a series of concessions, tradeoffs, and deferral of decisions about issues that threatened to tear apart the delicate consensus. A series of pragmatic agreements in the prestate period was formalized in the early years of statehood and came to be known as the "status quo." In essence, the status quo was a consociational-type arrangement based on the "freezing" of the early agreements between the religious and

secular communities and new compromises made in the same spirit. Thus in the new state, it was decided that kashrut (Jewish dietary rules) would be observed in public institutions, the Sabbath would be respected, ultra-Orthodox men and religious women would be exempted from army service, and the religious establishment would have the monopoly over issues such as marriage arrangements, conversion to Judaism, and burial. While the status quo did not resolve all issues of conflict, it created some flexible guidelines that acted as a starting point for negotiations—"They present a kind of a default position with presumptive validity. Deviation is clearly possible, but it requires cogent justifications" (Cohen and Susser, 2000:19).

Since the mid-1980s, the consociational agreements have been challenged by social, economic, and demographic changes that undermined their position. First, social-economic changes associated with globalization underscored the evolvement of a global consumer culture, at times indifferent to religious constraints. Second, mass immigration from the former Soviet Union brought many secular Jews and a large number of non-Jews to Israel. These new developments have given new force to the earlier demands of secular Israelis and, according to some scholars, have led to a crisis-dominated relationship between secular and religious Jews. "Rather than an accommodation of each other's needs in the interest of preserving national unity, a majoritarian, winner-take-all style has grown more and more dominant" (Cohen and Susser, 2000:xii).

Governments throughout this period were unable to restore the status quo or create new arrangements due to the steadily increasing power of the Haredim (Orthodox Jewish parties), which was matched by the increasingly militant secular camp that opposed them (Cohen and Susser, 2000:70–71). Bitter confrontations between religious and secular politicians have received significant media coverage that strengthened the public's perception of a culture war. Thus, debates over the conscription of religious Jews, gay rights, the sale of nonkosher food, and commercial activity on Saturday are all part of the religious-secular struggle that seems to defy any attempt to find new modes of consociationalism. Separate ways of life underscore the growing alienation between the religious and secular communities, and, consequently, the polarization of Israeli society (Schweid, 1997).

The Moderating Center and an Overarching Consensus

The existence of a moderate center, similar to the one described in the United States (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope, 2005), is often used to counter the culture war thesis. The majority of Israelis, when asked to define themselves, choose neither "religious" nor "secular" but rather a middle category of "traditional." This large, if relatively silent, category of "traditionalists" is largely supportive of compromise and the consociational agreements and, consequently, can prevent the potential culture war (Cohen and Susser, 2000:73–74). Detailed

surveys conducted in 1991 and in 1999 by the Guttman Institute demonstrate clearly the existence of a middle category. In these surveys, about 36 percent of the respondents described themselves as observant/strongly observant, 40 percent as somewhat observant, and only 20 percent described themselves as nonobservant. Similarly, about 78 percent defined themselves as "traditional" or "nonreligious" compared to a minority that defined themselves as "secular" or "religious." Moreover, only 8 percent supported a theocracy, while 21 percent favored the abolition of religious legislation. Thus, a large majority supported compromise (Levi, Levinson, and Katz, 2002).

The "traditional" category many Israelis choose to describe their religiosity is not necessarily a comfortable middle position but also an identity rooted in ethnicity and culture of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa (Mizrahim) and their descendents (Shokeid, 1984). This model is based on a tradition that is open to variations in beliefs and practices and an oral tradition (different from Ashkenazi formality and its written tradition). This pattern, however, may be not an adaptation or a weak form of religiosity but rather an "imported" pattern and an independent model that developed among Jews in Muslim countries and is sustained in the second and third generation of Mizrahim in Israel as well. While flexible in some of its practices, the group maintains a conservative position regarding the role of religion in its community and is strict in its observance of rituals (Leon, 2009).

Finally, Israeli Jews share a common set of symbols or imagery that transcends their differences and provides the basis for a common discourse (Liebman, 1997). A vast majority of Israeli Jews agree that Israel is a "Jewish state," even if they disagree over the meaning of the term (Ben-Porat, 2000). Israeli Jews also share many cultural symbols, from holidays to history, and even more important, common security concerns. However, as argued above, the existence of a large and moderate center and even shared common symbols and concerns does not preclude the possibility of a culture war between those who are positioned in the religious and secular camps. In the following section, we will examine secularism as a potential combatant in a culture war.

Bricolage—Israeli Secularism

Secularism, in Israel like elsewhere, is a complex concept that can be measured through identities, beliefs, or practices that yield different observations. Liebman and Susser (1998) describe the Israeli secular community as "postmodern (in the consumerist, permissive, individualist sense)" and "Western before it is Jewish." However, as the authors themselves acknowledge, for a majority of secularists, the picture is more complex, so a consumer culture, on the one hand, and commitment to a Jewish state, on the other, are not incompatible. Moreover, rather than a singular secularism, Israel abounds in a plurality of "secularisms," the result of the economic, social, and

demographic changes of the past two decades. We can point to four particular expressions of secularism, each of which varies in its focus. First, "ideological secularism" favors the separation of church and state and supports religious freedom. Second, "everyday life secularism" refers to consumer culture and opposes religious restrictions imposed by the state. Third, "ethnic secularism" is associated with the Russian immigrants who arrived in the 1990s. Many of them are not Jewish by Orthodox standards and are concerned about their integration into Israeli society. Fourth, those who favor alternative expressions of Jewish identity oppose the monopoly of Orthodoxy in Israel on issues such as marriage and conversion and demand equal recognition for non-Orthodox Jewish movements.

The various secularisms are analytical distinctions that sometimes overlap and may share commonalities, but also differ in their goals and strategies. Consider, for example, Russian Jews who are ideological secularists or "everyday life secularists" who have some ideological commitment to alternative expressions of Jewish identity. The majority of secularists define themselves as Jewish, which is hardly surprising because Judaism in Israel (or "Jewishness") is not necessarily a doctrinal belief but often a marker of national identity and group membership, as well as of inclusion/exclusion. When we examine people's practices, we see how complicated the picture really is. People who define themselves as secular or behave in a secular manner also perform practices and rituals that can be considered religious. Thus, religious practices often coexist not only with secular practices but also with a secular identity.

As Table 1 demonstrates, many of those who define themselves as secular observe some religious laws and perform religious rituals, such as observance of the laws of kashrut (avoidance of nonkosher food, especially pork), occasional attendance at synagogue, and fasting on Yom Kippur. As expected, the numbers are higher for those who describe themselves as traditional. The observance of religious rituals and rules by secular individuals can be explained by the traditional-cultural value attributed to them, not necessarily the religious one, and the overlap between Judaism as religiosity and Jewishness as a national identity. Thus, secular individuals who attend synagogue or fast on Yom Kippur might be demonstrating their allegiance to Jewish tradition and a sense of national belonging, rather than a doctrinal belief. Similarly, many secular Jews will avoid eating pork, which they perceive as an anti-Jewish symbol. By the same token, secular practices blur the difference between those who describe themselves as secular and those who say they are traditional. As Table 2 demonstrates, a vast majority of those who define themselves as secular drive on the Sabbath (93.3 percent) but so do the majority of those who define themselves as traditional (67.2 percent). Similarly, almost 40 percent of those who define themselves as traditional shop on the Sabbath, compared to 60 percent of those who define themselves as secular.

The boundaries of the secular camp, therefore, are blurred not only between secular and traditional but even between secular and religious. In other words,

TABLE 1

Percentage Who Eat Kosher Meat, Attend Synagogue, and Fast on Yom Kippur
by Level of (Non) Religiosity

	Eat Kosher Meat	Attend Synagogue (Often or Sometimes)	Fast on Yom Kippur (Always or Sometimes)
Traditional	87.2%	78.2%	88.8%
Secular	39.8%	33.7%	56.0%

TABLE 2

Percentage Who Drive on Saturday and Shop on Saturday
by Level of (Non) Religiosity

	Drive on Saturday	Shop on Saturday
Traditional	67.2%	39.2%
Secular	93.3%	60.3%

secularism, defined by self-identity or practices, is a loose category with many variations. Thus, self-identification as a secular person is often accompanied by traditional behavior that includes (some) observance and (possibly) participation in religious rituals or prayer. While the motivations for this behavior are not necessarily "religious," they blur the demarcations between religious and secular. Similarly, people who define themselves as traditional display what can be described as secular behavior, such as driving and shopping on the Sabbath, again blurring the demarcations. Overall, if we treat secularism as a coherent category that includes beliefs and practices, the secular camp shrinks, a fact that becomes even more obvious when values and commitments are added.

Secularism: Liberal Values and a Liberal Commitment

The most significant arena for a religious-secular culture war is where values clash in political life between the secular-liberal ideology and the religious one. In theory, secularism and liberalism are related and secular people engage in political struggles for more freedom in public life, for greater equality, and for the separation of church and state, which would guarantee freedom and equality. While a large majority of secular Israelis express support for the separation of church and state, it remains to be seen, first, how committed are they to the cause and, second, the extent of the liberal freedoms in which they are interested. Thus, we begin this section by examining the political commitment of secularists and the political energy they are willing to dedicate to secular struggles. Then, we examine whether Jewish secularists are concerned

TABLE 3

Percentage Willing to Participate in Political Struggles Over Church-State
Arrangements and Percentage Actively Participating in Political Demonstrations
(of Any Kind), by Level of (Non) Religiosity

	Willing to Participate in Political Struggles	Actively Participate in Political Demonstrations
Traditional	33.3%	1.7%
Secular	30.9%	4.0%

with their own freedoms or whether their liberalism also extends to minorities and disadvantaged groups.

Respondents were asked two questions regarding their political activism. The first question was about intentions: "Would you engage in a political struggle including participation in demonstrations and signing of petitions in order to promote your views on issues of religion and state in Israel?" The second question attempted to assess actual participation: "In Israel, many demonstrations are held on various political issues. Do you participate in demonstrations that reflect your political opinions?" The two questions were separated in the survey so that respondents would not make the connection between them. As Table 3 demonstrates, only a minority of secularists (30.9 percent) and traditionalists (33.3 percent) indicated that they would participate in political activity. In terms of actual participation, the figures are much smaller—only 4 percent of secular respondents and 1.7 percent of traditional respondents engage in such political activities. Thus, in spite of the high profile of secular-religious debates, there seems to be limited political energy for translating these debates into real struggles.

The second issue about liberal attitudes and commitments is also significant, as a liberalism that extends into many issues of political and social life is also likely to provoke more confrontations with its opposition. In Israeli society, often characterized as an illiberal democracy, tolerance toward Arab citizens and homosexuals and commitment to equality provide a good test case for liberalism. The preference for Jews over non-Jews in Israel is anchored in laws that deal with immigration, the use of state land, and semigovernmental institutions as well as in Israel's basic laws that underscore the Jewish character of the state. Such laws perpetuate various aspects of inequality between Arabs and Jews (Rouhana, 1998; Yiftachel, 1996). Consequently, full equality for Arabs not only challenges the mainstream political commitment to a Jewish state but also requires affirmative action to promote equality. Gays and lesbians in Israel have achieved significant improvements in their legal status in the past two decades. Yet, attempts to grant homosexual couples a status similar to that of heterosexuals (for example, in the recognition of same-sex marriage) have succeeded only through the Supreme Court's rulings. In addition, homosexuals,

TABLE 4

Liberal Attitudes Among Members of the Secular Community

	Separate Religion from the State	More Opportunities for Arabs in the Civil Service	Gay Marriage
Support	77.3%	48.7%	42.8.0%
No opinion or against	32.7%	51.3%	57.2%

in spite of political gains, suffer from discrimination and harassment (Harel, 2000). The attitudes of secular individuals about liberalism were measured by three questions—(1) "Do you support/oppose the separation of church (religion) and state?" (2) "Do you support/oppose affirmative action strategies in the public sector for the Arab minority that is underrepresented?" and (3) "Are you in favor of/opposed to gay marriage?"

The results displayed in Table 4 demonstrate the limited liberal commitment of secular Israelis. A vast majority of secular individuals supports the separation of church and state, a change that would introduce religious freedoms currently missing in Israel and would free the secular community from the jurisdiction of the Orthodox rabbinate. However, when it comes to minority rights, the liberal commitment of the secular community is far less evident, as only a minority of this community's members has expressed its full support for affirmative action that would promote equality for Arabs or support for the recognition of gay marriage.

The Israeli secular camp, therefore, is narrow both in commitment and scope. Secularists appear to be more concerned with their own rights and freedoms—hence, the support for the separation of church and state—but far more reserved in extending freedoms and equality to minority groups. Moreover, even for causes that are of concern to this public, its capacity to organize effectively is constrained by its limited commitment. What can explain this lack of political energy? One possibility we explore in the next section is the development of alternatives that may be less than ideal but can satisfy enough of the secular community's demands without political struggles.

Political Alternatives

The issue of marriage, which is the focus of a major secular-religious controversy in Israel, provides an excellent example of how alternative arrangements have taken the steam out of the secularists' political energy. The Law of Rabbinical Courts (Marriages and Divorces)—1953 establishes that Jews in Israel, whether citizens or residents, are under the exclusive jurisdiction of rabbinical courts. Marriages between Jews are to be performed "in accordance with the law of Moses and Israel," which means by Orthodox rabbis authorized by the

state. Weddings performed in Israel by non-Orthodox rabbis do not entitle one to a marriage certificate, cannot be registered, and may lead to a loss of various economic benefits. Thus, the Orthodox monopoly prevents people from choosing how to marry and even whom they can marry, as intermarriage is impossible (this includes marriage to those who are not recognized as Jewish according to Orthodox law). Secular individuals cannot choose to have a civil marriage ceremony, nor can non-Orthodox Jews have their own rabbis marry them. The Orthodox monopoly is especially problematic for secular and non-Orthodox women who regard the religious ceremony as unequal or even demeaning because it is the man who takes the woman to be his wife. Furthermore, divorces are also handled by the rabbinical courts, often in a manner that secular individuals find unsuitable and women find discriminatory. Consequently, since the establishment of the status quo, secular individuals have tried to change the laws in order to permit other forms of marriage. They were joined later on by Conservative and Reform rabbis who have demanded that the state recognize the marriages they perform.

Attempts to change the law and abolish the Orthodox monopoly have failed. While resentment against the monopoly has grown, the religious political power was sufficient to maintain the status quo. Religious leaders and parties argued that the enactment of other forms of marriage would endanger the Jewish character of the state or the very existence of the Jewish people. More importantly, they have used their political power to make clear that the Orthodox monopoly over marriage is of critical importance to them and to reject any proposed changes. Thus, over the years, various attempts to change the laws of marriage have failed. The Orthodox rabbinate, however, has been under growing attack since the 1980s by secular people who found the power wielded by the Orthodox establishment unacceptable in general and noxious in particular with regard to the laws of marriage and divorce.

In the 1990s, another challenge was added by the mass immigration of over a million people from the former USSR. The large majority of these immigrants were secular, and many of them were not Jewish according to Orthodox law. This difference was the result of the discrepancy between the Israeli law that grants automatic citizenship to people who can prove Jewish ancestry and the laws of Orthodox Judaism that recognize as Jewish only a person born to a Jewish mother or someone who has converted to Judaism. As a result, many of those granted citizenship were not recognized as Jewish. Thus, not only were the secular immigrants alienated from the Orthodox establishment and unlikely to prefer Orthodox marriage, but many of them, not recognized as Jewish, could not marry without converting.

In this new context, the demands for change were greater, as was the resentment toward the Orthodox rabbinate. This struggle of principles positioned the religious and secular world views against each other. From the religious point of view, any change in the marriage law threatened the existence of the Jewish people and the Jewish state. Civil marriage would allow intermarriage, break down the barriers that defend the Jewish people, and undermine Jewish

unity. From the secular point of view, the state should not enforce any particular ceremony, marriage should be a choice left to individuals, and people should not be prevented from marrying because of religious laws they do not accept. This struggle also translated into the secular political parties' commitment to ending the status quo, separating religion and state, and permitting civil marriage. All attempts to change the laws, however, have failed and the Orthodox monopoly has remained intact, at least formally, but significant changes have occurred elsewhere.

The principled secularism of Israelis who struggled against the Orthodox monopoly over marriage received support not only from the mass immigration from the Soviet Union but also from what can be described as "postmaterialist values," or the growing concern with personal freedom based on a high level of material affluence. In Israel, these values translated into concerns about various life rituals among the educated middle class who often were no longer willing to accept existing rituals as a given. The combination of an old guard of secular ideology, a young cohort interested in designing its own rituals, and a large number of politically powerful immigrants unable to marry because of the Orthodox monopoly could be a trigger for a culture war. Yet, not only did such a culture war not erupt, but even a serious political crisis was avoided. The majority of secular Israelis accept, if reluctantly, the rules of the game and continue to be married through the Orthodox rabbinate. For those who refuse or are unable to do so, new alternatives developed that circumvented the rules rather than directly challenged them.

The struggle for civil marriage in Israel included demonstrations and petitions that stressed the right to choose and the plight of young immigrants not allowed to be married in Israel, and attempted to pressure the political parties to amend the law. Israeli couples who either could not or did not want to be married by the religious establishment, however, did not wait for the politicians or the courts. Instead, they took advantage of existing alternatives. The two options—marriage outside of Israel and cohabitation—-were always available but in the past two decades have been chosen by an increasing number of couples. These options allowed people, on the one hand, to design their marriage according to their belief system and, on the other hand, circumvent the Orthodox monopoly and avoid conflict. If in the past Israelis were concerned with the consequences of marriage outside the mainstream (namely, Orthodoxy) or of not being registered as married, for many young couples this is no longer the case.

Thus, the expansion of legal alternatives combined with postmaterialist values and economic entrepreneurship have led more and more couples to avoid Orthodox marriage. The result, therefore, was not a conflict or a "culture war" but rather its circumvention.

Israeli couples who marry abroad can register their marriage afterwards in Israel. For a long time, this option provided an alternative for couples who either refused to be married in an Orthodox ceremony or whose marriage violated Jewish religious precepts, such as the marriage of a *kohen* (a man

of priestly descent) and a divorcee, marriages involving illegitimate children, and intermarried couples. To this list were added some 250,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not Jewish or whose Jewishness was regarded by the religious establishment as doubtful. The common option used by many couples was Cyprus, an hour away by plane from Israel, which offered instant civil marriages that could be registered in Israel. While prior to the 1990s the number of Israelis married in Cyprus was just a few hundred, it reached a record of 8,442 during the period of the mass immigration from the former Soviet Union, dropping back to 5,321 in 2006. Many travel agents organize the entire event, including the bureaucratic paperwork, for $1,500 to $2,000. With the growing demand, more options were created through tourist packages with different standards of hotels, different locations in Cyprus that offered marriage services, and activities beyond the official ceremony in the city hall.

Cohabitation is another alternative used by more and more Israeli couples who form families without registering their marriage. According to the New Family organization, a human rights organization dedicated to advancing family rights, some 42 percent of families in Israel fall outside the parameters of the traditional family—single-parent families, gay/lesbian, mixed couples, non-Jewish families, and common-law couples who live together without being legally married. The latter, according to the organization's data, constitute about 5 percent of Israeli families (http://www.newfamily.org.il/text/english). Cohabitation for most couples is a temporary period that ends in marriage but some couples form families, including children, without marriage. Legal struggles have resulted in various rights being granted to cohabitants even if they fall short of being officially recognized as a family, for example, for tax purposes. Cohabitation is often underscored by a legal agreement that defines the obligations of the couple toward each other and can also be used to establish various legal claims vis-à-vis the state.

It is important to stress again that a majority of Jewish Israelis prefer Orthodox marriage. In a recent survey, 80 percent of the respondents, including the majority of secular individuals, stated they plan to be married by an Orthodox rabbi (YNET, 10.13.2006). However, the options of cohabitation and marriage abroad that have gained social legitimacy have also created an alternative to an Orthodox Jewish wedding ceremony without a struggle against the Orthodox establishment. For example, every year hundreds of couples choose to be married in a Reform ceremony and afterwards go to Cyprus to register their marriage. In recent years, more alternatives have been created for marriage ceremonies by organizations advocating "secular Judaism" (namely, a cultural approach to Judaism rather than a religious approach), secular organizations that have developed different ceremonial rituals, new age versions of Judaism, and even celebrities performing marriage ceremonies. Thus, couples uninterested in or unable to use Orthodox services can choose their own ceremony and supplement it by a legal contract or by a marriage registered abroad.

Marriage is just one example of the ability of secular people to satisfy their desires, at least partially, without having to wage an all-out war against the establishment. A similar process of circumvention is evident in burials where private cemeteries provide alternatives to the state-owned ones under the control of the Orthodox rabbinate. Once again, non-Jewish immigrants who cannot be buried in an Orthodox cemetery or secular individuals who want a different ceremony have an option that, like marriage in Cyprus, might be more expensive, but is more in keeping with their feelings. Similarly, the growth of the consumer society and the changing demography have led to expanded consumer options for Israelis, who can now shop on the Sabbath, eat in nonkosher restaurants, or purchase pork in various supermarkets. This is of course, a partial solution that in the case of marriage does not address, for example, the dire situation of women whose husbands refuse to grant divorce and cannot be married. Nor does this solution engage with the state's refusal to recognize non-Orthodox Judaism. The strategy of marriage abroad or cohabitation, therefore, allows many to have the marriage of their choice but falls short of providing free and equal marriage.

Nonpolitics and the Culture War

A culture war assumes a deep ideological divide between groups committed to defending their way of life and unable to compromise over what are perceived as essential values. With no separation between church and state and long-standing struggles over the status of religion in political and social life, Israel provides a test case to examine the culture war thesis. As elsewhere, the descriptions of a culture war in Israel seem to overlook complexities and nuances and ignore the change in politics itself. A closer look at the secular group in Israel reveals internal fragmentation, limited commitment, and the use of alternatives that circumvent political struggle, all of which cast doubt on the culture war scenario. Earlier formulations of Israeli secularism were largely principled or ideological and were aimed at the separation of church and state and the annulment of the Orthodox monopoly over public life. Later formulations of secularism focused on the "practices of everyday life" associated with the development of a consumer society and the changing demography in Israel. Finally, the immigration from the former Soviet Union added other voices that were concerned both with matters of everyday life (such as the availability of nonkosher food) and with principled issues such as marriage.

Israeli secularism is a mixture of beliefs, practices, values, and ethnic identification that translates into different priorities and desires and to different levels of commitment. First, the boundaries between secular, traditional, and religious are often blurred, as secular behavior and even self-identification often coexist with the observance of religious rituals and practices. Second, Israeli secularism has limited commitment to liberal values and limited commitment to a political struggle. Consequently, it seems an unlikely candidate

for a culture war. Third, this group's lack of political energy can be explained by alternatives that emerged that satisfied some of the secular community's demands without paying the price of political struggle. Global and local changes, in other words, not only accentuated the difference between the religious and secular communities, but also created alternatives that circumvented the political arena and reduced the possibility of conflict. Thus, the opening of commercial centers on the outskirts of the major cities allows citizens to shop on the Sabbath with the reluctant acceptance of religious people. Similarly, the options of marriage outside the country and the social legitimacy of cohabitation allow secular people to avoid Orthodox marriage and the rabbinical courts (at least if they do not divorce).

The changes described above are at most partial and fail to address the needs of minorities and individuals who suffer from the current status quo. They also fall short of principled secularism's goal of the separation of church and state and freedom of choice. They do, however, provide alternatives that dissipate potential secular political energy. All of the above does not rule out the possibility of a future culture war, nor does it downplay the existence of tensions and contradictions. The contradictions between the economic and demographic changes in Israeli society and the existing Orthodox monopoly as well as the growing secular resentment are likely to continue and even expand beyond the ability of the political system to contain them. Rather than a culture war between the religious and secular camps, moderated by a traditional center, however, we are witnessing different battles, waged in different realms with different constituencies, tactics, strategies, and levels of commitment. Their combined outcome is yet to be determined.

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