**Introduction**

On April 25, 1978, the Israeli daily *Maariv* printed a caricature depicting the entrance to a house labeled as Europe with a revolving door at its entrance. A jubilant artist, microphone in hand, entered through the door, while a dejected soccer player exited, holding a piece of paper marked with the word “no.” The man entering, identifiable by his distinctive Afro hairstyle, was Izhar Cohen, who had won the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) for Israel just three days earlier.[[1]](#footnote-1)



“Europe,” *Maariv*, April 25, 1978

Cohen was the first Israeli to win the Eurovision, and Israelis enthusiastically celebrated this national victory. However, while Israeli artists found success on Europe’s glamorous pop music stage, the country's soccer teams were barred from participating in most European competitions, apart from the relatively minor European Intertoto Cup. The Israel Football Association (IFA) had been a member of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), but political pressure from Arab states led to its expulsion in 1974. Following this, the IFA sought affiliation with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). Coincidentally, on the same day Cohen won the ESC, UEFA denied Israel’s application for membership

These contrasting experiences on the European stage—Cohen’s Eurovision triumph and the rejection of Israel’s soccer team—were not isolated incidents. They sparked a broader debate within Israeli society, raising questions about the country’s relationship to Europe and its place within the geopolitical landscape. The search for continental affiliations ignited debates that extended far beyond sports and popular music. Just two days earlier, *Maariv* had published a deeply concerned editorial titled “People without a Continent.” The editorial argued that the coincidence of Israel’s Eurovision victory and UEFA’s rejection raised a crucial question: “Do we belong to Europe or Asia?” Answering himself, the author started: “The considerations upon which one decides if we are part of Europe or Asia, are not geographical, of course; they are first and foremost political.” There was, he claimed, no difference of opinion as to where the western borders of the Asian continent lay. Israel’s exclusion from Asian frameworks was motivated by strictly political considerations. In this context, Israel’s relationship with Europe became increasingly important. However, he lamented:

[Europe]… apparently does not know how to deal with us. […] We are allowed to be associate members of the common European market. [...] We are permitted to present the best song at the competition of European television and to win the competition... And we will even be allowed to host the next music festival of the European Broadcasting Authority... But in all other matters, we remain the “wandering Jew,” who, despite successfully putting down roots in his homeland, must still fight for the right to belong to a continent.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Israelis have ascribed major significance to cultural diplomacy in the form of international music or sport competitions, due to the ongoing conflict with their neighbors and the Arab states’ attempts to isolate the Jewish state[[3]](#footnote-3) internationally. The comment in *Maariv*, however, illustrates how considerations as to Israeli participation in these contests has gone beyond diplomatic and political ones, raising questions about the state’s sense of belonging and geo-cultural self-understanding as well as about the character and borders of Europe. The investigation of such debates is at the heart of this book.

Europe held profound importance for Israel in the second half of the 20th century, shaping its social, cultural, economic, and political ties. Previous research on Israeli-European relations has focused heavily on the negotiations for political and economic ties with the European Economic Community (EEC) and later the European Union (EU),[[4]](#footnote-4) as well as the body’s policies toward the conflict between Israelis and Arabs.[[5]](#footnote-5) This study, on the other hand, examines the perceptions and ideas that Israelis associated with Europe and its significance for their own state.[[6]](#footnote-6) It focuses on media debates and perceptions rather than the ins and outs of diplomatic negotiations and political disputes.

The first part examines discussions about the political and economic aspects of Europe, with a particular focus on the EEC/EU, which became the most central and powerful European institution over time.[[7]](#footnote-7) But while many commentators identified the body with Europe as a whole, for most of the years under consideration here, its scope was mostly limited to the western parts of the continent. Therefore, this study also considers how Israeli media portrayed Eastern Europe and discussed Europe's presence in the region in the context of colonialism.

Beyond politics and economics, Israelis also engaged with Europe through cultural interactions. As the debates over Eurovision and soccer illustrate, these were not merely forms of entertainment but also venues for discussing Europe’s influence on Israeli society. Such activities allowed the Israeli public to "experience" Europe directly, while giving commentators a chance to confront and analyze Israel's connections to the continent. Accordingly, the second part of the study examines three key areas where Israeli engagement with Europe was most visible: participation in European sporting events, the Eurovision Song Contest, and tourism to Europe.

Given Europe’s profound historical, cultural, and political significance to Israel, it is no surprise that these themes permeated the country’s public discourse. The investigation draws on the major Hebrew-language newspapers,[[8]](#footnote-8) focusing on the Jewish-Zionist sectors of Israeli society, where most discussions about Israel’s relationship with Europe took place. Ultra-Orthodox and Palestinian-Arab communities are addressed where relevant, but to fully explore each of their very different backgrounds and thus perspectives on Europe would require separate projects.[[9]](#footnote-9) While the two groups were largely marginalized for much of the decades under discussion, the Zionist sector was central to the establishment and governance of the state and its institutions.

The media served as a key platform for intellectual and political elites to express their opinions, and the high circulation of these newspapers suggests that such debates resonated widely among ordinary Israelis. Print media played a pivotal role in the formation and negotiation of the newly formed Israeli national collective, simultaneously constituting and shaping the public for which it claimed to speak. Against this backdrop, the book interprets media discussions about Europe both as a reflection on the Israeli-Zionist collective and as integral to the development of “Israeliness.”[[10]](#footnote-10) This process, however, has always been an evolving and multi-voiced phenomenon. To capture such complexities, the book draws upon a diverse array of newspapers from the Zionist sector, representing a wide spectrum of political, social, and cultural perspectives, and interpret them in a systematically comparative fashion. Additionally, the chapter on travel examines narratives found in several Hebrew-language travel guides to Europe (rather than guides focused on individual countries), published between the 1970s and the 2000s. Many of these guides were printed in large quantities and widely used by Israeli travelers, significantly influencing how they perceived the continent. *Europe through Israeli Eyes* thus focuses on the Hebrew public sphere in which Zionist segments of society debated the prospects and future of their state, in order to explore the various meanings of Europe for Israelis in the second half of the twentieth century.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Why Europe?**

The history of the State of Israel is inextricably linked to that of Europe. For many centuries, the continent was home to the largest Jewish community in the world. Since the heyday of Enlightenment and secularization, many European Jews began seeking emancipation and integration into surrounding societies. These efforts to integrate—and the tensions that arose—played a crucial role in shaping Jewish and later Israeli perceptions of Europe, both as a place of opportunity and exclusion. In this context, Jews assumed a pivotal role in the social, economic, scientific, and sometimes political spheres of the continent, becoming an integral part of European modernity. At the same time, however, many national movements and states displayed strong hostility towards Jewish integration. Against this background, the concept of a supranational Europe attracted enlightened Jewish thinkers, who no longer defined themselves solely in terms of religious tradition, but also experienced limited acceptance within the respective national cultures.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Yet also pan-European thinking was profoundly influenced by anti-Jewish sentiments. The dominantly Christian continent defined itself not least by distinguishing itself from the non-Christian world. In addition to Islam as the external enemy, this applied above all to the Jews as the largest and most enduring minority living in Europe itself. The Enlightenment, which laid the foundations for contemporary self-perceptions of the continent, had already revealed a complex and ambivalent relationship with European Jews. The processes initiated by these thinkers reflected these ambivalences in the future. Against this backdrop, sociologist Gerard Delanty has argued that the modern idea of Europe should be understood as the secularized equivalent of Christianity, rather than a departure from it. “The principal components of European identity,” Delanty writes, “were the ideas of progress, civilisation and Christian redemption. Antisemitism thrived along with these ideas and gave them an orientation.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

Exclusion and hatred were not least an important driving force behind the emergence of modern Jewish nationalism and in particular its Zionist variant. The latter negated the viability of Jewish life in the (European) diaspora and strove to establish “a national home” in Palestine for the Jews they defined as a modern nation. However, even this undertaking did not represent a final departure from the continent, but was deeply influenced in all its facets by ideas of European modernity. In essence, the Zionists sought to transform the Jews into a world-historic people by establishing a nation-state based on European models.[[14]](#footnote-14) The culture and society that would emerge as part of this endeavor was also in many ways the model of European national movements. “Altneuland,” Max Nordau famously wrote, referring to his close friend Theodor Herzl’s eponymous book and Zionist vision, “is a piece of Europe in Asia.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

The Holocaust ultimately seemed to vindicate the Zionist attitude toward Jewish life in Europe and to make a separate nation-state in the Middle East indispensable. Concurrently, the genocide changed the basis and conditions for the future state. The Germans and their collaborators had murdered a large proportion of the people who, in the eyes of the Zionists, were to form the basis of the new society. Moreover, in the wake of the creation of the state and the ensuing geopolitical tensions of the late 1940s and early 1950s, hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa immigrated to Israel. Such developments notwithstanding, the European foundations of the state remained of paramount importance, on the one hand in the form of institutions and foundations created by Ashkenazi Jews, and on the other through their dominance in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.[[16]](#footnote-16) Finally, due to Israel’s geopolitical isolation in the Middle East, the Western European powers became important allies. In addition to political and economic aspects, these relations were also highly relevant in cultural terms, all the more so as questions of geo-cultural belonging and the state’s imagined European identity quickly became the focus of public debate. These factors continued to influence Israeli society and the state even after the United States became Israel’s primary political ally in the 1960s and 1970s, and the country underwent a process of Americanization on various levels, most notably in the cultural sphere. Moreover, the memory of the Holocaust became central to Jewish-Israeli self-understanding, reinforcing Europe’s significance to Israel in the 20th century. Europe was thus in many ways of central importance to Israel in the second half of the 20th century.

Given this background, it is crucial to explore how these dynamics were reflected and debated within Israeli society. In particular, Israeli media played a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of Europe, serving as a key forum where ideas about the continent were constructed, challenged, and redefined. Such a project is situated within the broader body of literature that investigates how Europe is perceived, represented, and understood in different contexts; not as a geographical, political, or social reality, but as a subject that is constantly told and retold, described, invented, interpreted, and challenged through different narratives and discourses.[[17]](#footnote-17) In this context, scholars have increasingly questioned the Eurocentrism that has long been inscribed in narratives of the continent. Critical scholarship, as the literary scholar Shane Weller has noted, must begin by acknowledging “that the idea of Europe embraces both unity and diversity; both nationalism and internationalism; both republicanism and imperialism/colonialism; both democracy and totalitarianism (communism, Fascism, and Nazism); both human rights and genocide; both monolingualism and multilingualism; both tolerance and intolerance.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

From the perspective of Israeli Jews, the dual character of Europe is readily apparent. “It is very easy to be seduced by the side of Europe that consists of democratization and humanism,” Israeli journalist Ben-Dror Yemini noted in 1989. “But it always, always goes hand in hand with the ugly, threatening side of nationalism and antisemitism.”[[19]](#footnote-19) For Jews, Europe was both “glorious” and “accursed,” as Yehuda Reinharz and Yaakov Shavit have pointed out,[[20]](#footnote-20) a “wonderful, murderous continent,” in the words of Amos Oz.[[21]](#footnote-21) Such a juxtaposition presents a stark dichotomy between an unrestrained admiration and appropriation of an emancipatory political culture and technological progress on the one hand, and the experience of exclusion, hatred, and mass murder on the other. Yet the continent and its meaning are far more diverse than such a binary suggests. And while there have certainly been periods when more sympathetic views of Europe prevailed, and others when the continent appeared to Israelis in a much more adverse light, pointing to such tendencies alone is not sufficient.

What is more, when discussing Europe, Israelis consistently also debated their own society. The perception of the continent was of central importance to their self-image and served as a crucial reference point for the formation and development of the Jewish nation state and its society. This was not merely about adopting specific political, economic or cultural aspects and developments; it also involved a process of differentiation from and friction with Europe, both the concrete European powers and institutions, as well as the ideals the Israeli public associated with the continent. Moreover, this entailed struggles over the geocultural orientation of the Jewish state and the fabric of its society.

In light of this, *Europe Through Israeli Eyes* holds that while both Israel and Europe, as well as the perception of the continent in Israeli media, underwent great changes during the second half of the 20th century, the continent remained on many levels of central significance to Israelis throughout whole period. This study does not merely document shifts in Israeli perceptions of Europe; it delves into the complex and often contradictory ways that Israeli Jews engaged with the continent, arguing that for Israeli Jews, Europe took on a profoundly Janus-faced character, in which its positive and negative dimensions remained intimately intertwined, dynamically and reciprocally influencing and shaping the Jewish Israeli gaze. Consequently, the study offers insights into both Israeli discourse on Europe and the related internal societal debates and processes.

In addition to providing fresh perspectives on Israeli-European relations, this book contributes to the broader field of European studies. Challenging long-inscribed Eurocentric narratives of the continent, scholars increasingly examine the view of Europe from its margins.[[22]](#footnote-22) Conceptions of Europe, as most intriguingly and with such complexity and nuance demonstrated in the Israeli example in correlation with Asia, the Middle East, Asia more broadly, and the United States, are never formed in a vacuum. The book’s analysis of perspectives from Israel makes an innovative and distinctive contribution to these discussions. This is all the more significant as the Jewish state has played a central role in debates on the continent itself, not least because of the important legacy of European-Jewish history and the European interest in security and stability in its immediate neighborhood.

**Which Europe?**

ִThis book explores the narratives and discourses surrounding Europe, recognizing that these discussions were shaped by geopolitical realities, economic dependencies, and power dynamics rather than existing in isolation. Moreover, Europe is not a fixed entity; its definition depends on specific interpretations and world views.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Therefore, it is important to understand the political, economic and societal realities that shaped Israeli perceptions of the continent. Throughout most of the period under discussion, Israeli discourse centered on Western Europe due to regional isolation and Cold War dynamics. After briefly considering non-alignment post-independence, Israel joined with the Western bloc. Since the United States had a rather ambivalent relationship with Israel in the 1950s, it was the Western European powers, Great Britain and France, that assumed the greatest importance. And despite lingering resentment toward Germany after the Holocaust, the Federal Republic became a key partner following the 1952 reparations agreement and the 1965 establishment of diplomatic relations.[[24]](#footnote-24)

As Israel navigated its complex relationship with Western Europe, the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 provided another significant avenue for Israeli engagement.[[25]](#footnote-25) The EEC quickly gained prominence as the most important pan-European organization and came to be perceived as representing Western Europe and, ultimately, Europe. With its six founding members - France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands - the EEC initially defined Europe in a rather narrow way, but with successive rounds of enlargement, this definition expanded steadily. Moreover, EEC’s vision extended beyond Europe’s geography, with early French efforts to include Algeria reflecting a broader definition.[[26]](#footnote-26) As a result, the EEC’s own understanding of Europe, and thus the external perception of the body, constantly evolved and developed.

Despite the EEC’s considerable influence, Europe was not constrained to this institution. This was true even in the political and economic spheres, where organizations such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), founded in 1960 by major Western European countries outside the EEC, offered differing definitions of the continent.[[27]](#footnote-27) Even more so did the diverse institutions in the field of sport and culture. For example, the early Israeli tourism industry focused on seven Western European countries—Austria, Belgium, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, and Switzerland—that were collectively marketed as “classical Europe.” Here, too, the focus widened to include not only much of Western Europe, but by the late 1970s also individual countries on the other side of the Iron Curtain, such as Romania and Hungary. In the Eurovision Song Contest, Israeli representatives faced Yugoslavian artists and, from 1975, Turkish musicians as well, until in the 1990s numerous additional East Central European states joined. Finally, the sports federations were among the few truly pan-European federations during the Cold War years.[[28]](#footnote-28) While UEFA admitted the IFA only in the 1990s, Israeli basketball teams competed in the International Basketball Federation’s (FIBA) European wing throughout this period. While UEFA did not accept the IFA as a full member until the 1990s, Israeli basketball teams played throughout the period in the European wing of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA).

Critical to the development of Western images of Europe after World War II was the division with the Soviet Union and its satellites.[[29]](#footnote-29) From a Jewish perspective, however, the countries now enclosed behind the Iron Wall had been crucial before the war, as they had been major centers of Jewish life. Many of the Zionist pioneers, and ultimately the political, economic, and social elites of the young State of Israel, hailed from these areas. At the same time, Zionists often adopted the critiques of Eastern European Jewry (Ostjuden) voiced by German Jews,[[30]](#footnote-30) viewing a shift toward Western European trends as essential to their vision. [[31]](#footnote-31) In this vein, historian Michael Harsegor posited in *Maariv* in 1989 that Zionism could not have taken root among typical Ostjuden. “We would not have immigrated to Israel,” he wrote, “if our gaze had not previously been directed toward Europe and Western culture.”[[32]](#footnote-32)

The Holocaust and Cold War turned Eastern Europe into a terra incognita for many Israelis. Despite initial Soviet support for the 1948 partition plan, geopolitical shifts and antisemitic campaigns strained relations. Still, Israeli leaders sought to develop economic ties with the countries in the region, some even hoping to offset the state’s enormous dependence on Western Europe, but these efforts faltered after the Six-Day War of 1967, when most Warsaw Pact states, except Romania, severed diplomatic relations.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Despite the diplomatic rupture after the Six-Day War, Israel maintained some ties with Eastern Europe through cultural and economic exchanges. Romania remained an important partner, and Israel’s cultural links with Yugoslavia continued, including through Eurovision. Israeli athletes, particularly in basketball, competed against Eastern European teams, including Maccabi Tel Aviv’s notable victory over CSKA Moscow in January 1977, which became a cultural touchstone. Subsequently, Maccabi Tel Aviv proceeded to play the final against the Italian club Mobilgirgi Varese in Belgrade. On this occasion, 2,000 Israeli fans traveled to the Yugoslavian capital on two specially chartered EL AL planes.[[34]](#footnote-34) In the 1980s, improving geopolitical conditions fostered closer economic ties with East Central Europe and increased Israeli tourism to the region. After the Soviet Union’s collapse, renewed diplomatic relations further broadened Israeli engagement with Europe.[[35]](#footnote-35)

This overview highlights the multifaceted nature of Israel’s engagement with Europe throughout the second half of the 20th century. From political alliances and economic ties to cultural exchanges and sporting events, Israeli perceptions of Europe were shaped by a complex interplay of geopolitical, economic, social, and cultural forces. Understanding this dynamic relationship is crucial to grasping the evolving Israelis ideas about Europe during this period.

**Between Europe and Asia**

European influence, however, did not stop at the borders of the continent. Several scholars, in fact, have suggested that Europe and European modernity cannot be understood without accounting for the continent’s colonial history.[[36]](#footnote-36) As Talal Assad put it: “Europe did not simply expand overseas; it made itself through that expansion.“[[37]](#footnote-37) As Europe’s colonial expansion played a central role in shaping the continent’s postwar identity, this legacy also profoundly influenced Zionism. The Jewish national movement adopted many practices and techniques associated with colonial settlement activities and maintained close ties with the British colonial power in Palestine, at least during the 1920s. In fact, it would have been difficult to conceive of the Zionist project without the context of European overseas expansion. At the same time, Zionism differed from classical European colonialism in numerous respects, for instance by the close connection of Jewish tradition to the land of Israel, as well as a continued presence of Jews there, or the lack of any imperial center. It did not fit neatly into the dichotomy of colonialism, and against this backdrop developed an ambivalent relationship to the European endeavors.[[38]](#footnote-38)

In the 1950s and 1960s, Israeli leaders sought cooperation with both France and Britain. Close ties with the two most prominent colonial powers further complicated the process of Israeli integration in the region. Moreover, by this time the European overseas empires were in sharp decline. The processes of decolonization transformed Europe itself and impacted on Israel’s relations with the European colonial powers, and thus on Israeli debates about Europe itself, as we will see in the following chapters.

Of particular importance was the juxtaposition of the supposedly well-defined and bounded entities of Europe and Asia. Scholars have long pointed to the profound mutual dynamics and connections that were constitutive for both continents. For Europeans, Asia, and especially the Islamic world, was an important arena against which they had long defined their own European collectivity.[[39]](#footnote-39) In the wake of Edward Said’s pioneering work on Orientalism,[[40]](#footnote-40) historians have sought to unravel the multiple Zionist conceptualizations of the Orient and to illuminate the profound ambivalence that Zionists have historically exhibited regarding their position within this cultural landscape.[[41]](#footnote-41) While a significant portion of the Zionist leadership saw its role as facilitating a “European” presence in the “East,” some intellectuals and activists argued that the desired return to the historic homeland ought to be accompanied by a reintegration into the local culture and the formation of a “pan-Semitic” union with the region’s Arab populations.[[42]](#footnote-42)

In light of the geopolitical developments of the 1930s and 1940s, these ideas seemed to fade into oblivion. In European countries, Jews had been vilified as “half-Asians” by opponents of emancipation. In Asia, they seemed to have at last become Europeans. The immigration of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa (Mizrahim) after Israel's founding further complicated these categories. Ashkenazi elites, now a minority among their brethren from the Arab-Islamic region and the non-Jewish Arab/Palestinian inhabitants of the state, sought to ‘westernize’ or ‘Europeanize’ Mizrahi Jews, often adopting Orientalist and condescending attitudes. “We cannot turn into a Mizrahi people,” novelist Haim Hazaz characteristically declared in 1966. “We traveled for two thousand years to become a Jewish European cultural entity. We cannot now turn back the wheel and accept the culture of Yemen, Morocco and Iraq. We are approaching the abyss with regard to Levantinism.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

As Ashkenazi elites aimed to preserve a European identity amid a growing Mizrahi population, notions of racial and cultural superiority emerged. They often aligned Israel with Europe’s 'whiteness,' contrasting it with the 'blackness' of Africa and 'yellowness' of Asia, reinforcing Eurocentric views. This racialized discourse reinforced Eurocentric ideas within Israeli society. Inspired by the pioneering research of Stuart Hall as well as the growing field of critical whiteness studies in the United States in recent decades, scholars have examined the continued relevance of race as a category of social stratification and exclusion, despite the discrediting of racism after World War II and the rapid changes in European societies.[[44]](#footnote-44) Some Ashkenazi voices echoed such ideas and included Israelis in them, for example in stereotypical depictions of light-skinned Israelis in cartoons (tellingly, in the cartoon discussed at the beginning of this introduction, even Izhar Cohen is depicted as white, despite his Afro and Yemenite heritage, to say nothing of the blond light-skinned soccer player), or in comments such as those made by journalist Josef „Tommy“ Lapid: „The Asians,” he stated in November 1974 regarding continental affiliations of his country, “[…] say we are ‘Europeans.’ Maybe because we are ‘white,’ even if our skin is sometimes darker than theirs; maybe because we come from the West; maybe because we are new to the region. And not only in our minds, but among ourselves, we know they are right.”[[45]](#footnote-45) In doing so, Lapid and other commentators portrayed themselves as European, and Europeans as white. At the same time, the commentary makes clear that such representations were not only, or even primarily, about skin color or physiological characteristics, but were associated with specific attributes, behaviors, and cultural traits that were assumed to be inherent or “natural“ to Europeans and Israelis. These aspects will be considered, while also addressing the differences in narratives of European whiteness, shaped by Israel’s specific historical, geographical, and cultural context. [[46]](#footnote-46)

During the last decades, scholars have conducted important work in identifying the Eurocentric perspectives that have historically shaped state and societal norms, and in exposing the pervasive discrimination faced by Mizrahi Jews and Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel.[[47]](#footnote-47) Yet notwithstanding the substantial value of this literature, there is still a need for a more in-depth examination of Israeli perceptions of Europe. Ella Shohat, for example, who has been instrumental in advancing these discussions, speaks in truncated terms simply of “Euro-Israel.”[[48]](#footnote-48) The term has indeed become a common shorthand in scholarship that seeks to deconstruct Eurocentric representations of Israel.[[49]](#footnote-49) This view, however, essentializes European influences as well as Europe itself, much like the Eurocentric worldview of those it rightly criticizes. After all, Ashkenazi Jews are not simply Europeans, much less Western Europeans. By deconstructing the notion of “Ashkenazi Jewry” as (Western) European, scholars have begun to inquire how Israeli Jews of Eastern and Central European heritage became secularized and “Western.”[[50]](#footnote-50) Ashkenazim, as has already become clear, held deeply ambivalent feelings about the continent. With this in mind, this study examines the Ashkenazi dominated debates on Europe with a critical eye on Eurocentric perspectives and, wherever possible, attempts to make Mizrahi voices visible. The analysis is centered on the discussions within the Zionist sector, while critically taking into account the fact that these discussions often excluded, and even ignored, the existence not only of Mizrahim, but even more so of Arab/Palestinian and ultraorthodox Israelis as component of Israeli society. Such a reading draws on the criticism of Zionism by Mizrahi scholars, yet simultaneously challenges the simplistic and totalizing notion of “Euro-Israel.” In this way, it demonstrates that Zionist Israel should not be simply understood as an “outpost of the West” and reveals the deep ambivalence of many commentators towards such geo-cultural affiliations.

In this context, it is necessary to consider the political and economic power relations mentioned above. Sociologist Tomasz Zaryck notes that in Central and Eastern Europe, defining oneself as 'Western' is almost unavoidable due to regional dependencies. He writes, “rejection of Westness is practically impossible; it would be seen as nihilism or extreme nationalism.” Similarly, Israel’s dependence on Europe and the West recurs in debates amid regional tensions and its geopolitical isolation.[[51]](#footnote-51) In this sense, a comment made by Julius Margolin, a Pinsk-born writer, in the context of the non-alignment debates of the early 1950s, that “the West will not recognize us until we cease to arouse skepticism through policies directed at the Levantine mob and the Soviet fifth column,” can be read both an example of unbridled Eurocentrism and at the same time as a reflection of the profound dependence on such relationships.[[52]](#footnote-52) Translating such feelings into concrete policies, in 1952 Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett stated that by mostly cultivating ties with Europe and the US, Israeli leaders were “simply obeying and iron law of our national existence.”[[53]](#footnote-53) As we will see, Mizrahi intellectuals, despite criticizing Israel’s Eurocentrism, did not reject Western influences outright. Instead, they advocated for a balanced relationship that respected ties to both Europe and the Middle East, while challenging the hierarchical power dynamics imposed by Ashkenazi elites. “We want a Western society,” wrote Iraqi-born journalist Ahron Geva in Davar in 1976, “and the argument that Ashkenazim come from the West is irrelevant. […] What counts is that the vast majority of people, representing all ethnic groups, without exception, want to live in such a society.”[[54]](#footnote-54)

Building on Dipesh Chakrabarty’s influential “provincializing Europe,” [[55]](#footnote-55) postcolonial scholars have increasingly challenged Eurocentric notions, questioning a universal path to modernity and dismantling rigid binaries like Europe/Asia, East/West or colonialists/colonized. In this context, Walter Mignolo coined the term “border thinking,” which aims to critically question both Western universalism and Eastern challenges and nationalism, thereby overcoming the “love/hate attitude toward the Western core.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Such approaches are increasingly being adopted in other fields as well.[[57]](#footnote-57)

Discussions about Israel and its position in the Middle East have historically often been characterized by the establishment of precisely such rigid binaries.[[58]](#footnote-58) Moreover, these dichotomies have also been reflected in academic discourse, as evidenced by phrases such as Israel being “from Europe but not in Europe” or “in the Middle East but not of the Middle East.”[[59]](#footnote-59) These dichotomies are especially relevant to the debates surrounding Zionism and colonialism, where Israel is often cast as either a settler-colonial state imposed on indigenous Arab peoples or entirely disconnected from colonial frameworks, as Derek Penslar has pointedly criticized.[[60]](#footnote-60) A critical analysis of Israeli images of Europe challenges these simplistic representations, highlighting the complexity of Israeli perceptions and self-images.

The book highlights the dynamic and fluid nature of these perceptions and their interplay with other affiliations.[[61]](#footnote-61) By way of example, in the context of the challenges facing Israeli soccer in Asia, numerous commentators constructed a highly positive image of European civilization and subtly incorporated Israel into it. In contrast, Israeli basketball’s integration into European leagues highlighted tensions around their European identity, as they were seen as “an Asian team playing for European trophies with an American team.”[[62]](#footnote-62) Similarly, at the Eurovision Song Contest, Israelis did not simply present themselves as a Europeans either. Rather, participation in sports and cultural events provided space for debate about the continent’s significance to Israel. What is more, through their participation in sports and music, Israelis not only debated their affiliation with European culture, but actively contributed to and shaped it. This study explores the multifaceted images of Europe in Israeli discourse during the second half of the 20th century, examining how Israelis positioned themselves and defined their society in relation to Europe.

**Chapters**

A central challenge to systematic research on Israeli perceptions of Europe lies in the very nature of the term itself. Europe represents not just a geographic entity but a fluid and contested concept, one that eludes easy definition. There is no one Europe; there are many competing ideas and narratives, often conflicting and at odds with each other. As a result, scholarship on Israeli attitudes and ideas has often been limited, focusing on attitudes toward individual countries rather than Europe as a cohesive idea. This book seeks to address that gap by exploring how Israeli discourse engaged with the broader, often ambiguous notion of Europe.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Recent scholarship on Europeanization highlights the discursive nature of these processes, suggesting that Europe exists wherever it is discussed, sung about, or memorialized.[[64]](#footnote-64) This book similarly views Europe as a discourse rather than a fixed entity.While acknowledging the material and social factors that informed this discourse, it recognizes the inherent ambiguity and malleability of any idea or concept related to the continent. This approach allows us to explore the many layers of meaning associated with the continent, examining how these ideas coalesced in specific media debates, political discussions, and cultural interactions. Accordingly, the formation of perceptions of Europe is understood as the result of complex and ongoing processes of social negotiation. The ambiguity of Europe at the same time facilitated its adaptability to different voices and opinions in Israeli discourse, contingent on their specific personal background, and historical or ideological perspectives.

To capture the full complexity of Israeli perceptions of Europe, this book examines six frameworks where media discourse converged, each highlighting a different aspect of Europe’s significance to Israel in the latter half of the 20th century. It explores what Europe represented to Israeli commentators, the ideas and influences they associated with it, and their evaluations. While some voices consciously reflected on Europe, many debates assumed its presence, unconsciously shaping ideas about the continent. This implicit construction makes press debates and travel guides valuable sources.

The chapters that follow do not claim to be exhaustive, nor do they cover all Israeli discourses on Europe. Nevertheless, I hope that the reader will gain an appreciation for the complexity and dynamism of these discourses and their profound significance for Israeli society and state. The period under study encompasses the second half of the twentieth century, beginning with the establishment of the state in 1948 and extending to the turn of the millennium, which witnessed a multitude of political and social changes, such as the expansion of the EU on the one hand, and the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the outbreak of the Second Intifada on the other, that significantly altered the nature of Israeli-European relations and consequently affected Israeli perceptions. The chapters vary in their temporal focus. While some, such as the chapters on the EU and Eastern Europe, cover the full range of these decades, others concentrate on specific periods due to geopolitical or organizational circumstances.

The book is divided into two parts, each comprising three chapters. Part one focuses on Israeli discourse about European political and economic frameworks, shaped by the East/West and North/South divides. It examines debates on the EEC/EU’s development, Israeli views on the Soviet sphere, and discussions about European colonialism and decolonization in Asia and Africa.

Chapter I traces Israeli discussions about the creation and development of the EEC/EU up to the Oslo peace process in the 1990s and the EU’s Association Agreement with Israel in 2000. It examines how Israeli media discussions and about the body were shaped by a complex interplay of economic, political, and historical considerations. Economic interests, such as access to European markets and trade partnerships, often clashed with the political realities of Europe’s evolving stance on the Middle East conflict. The memory of the Holocaust, a persistent theme in Israeli political discourse, further colored perceptions of Europe’s role as a political actor. The chapter highlights conflicting attitudes toward the postwar European project, arguing that it was Western Europe’s profound importance to the Jewish state due to its geographical and, in many ways, ideological proximity to it that created this ambivalence.

The emergence of what became the EU generated a powerful Israeli focus on the continent’s West, while Central and Eastern Europe disappeared behind the Iron Curtain. Yet, as Chapter II shows, the Warsaw Pact countries remained extremely important to Israelis, in terms of both national policy and the Jewish heritage of many there and their links to the Jews who were still there. The chapter examines the ideas Israelis associated with Central and Eastern Europe and how these changed throughout the Cold War and after the demise of the Soviet Union. The rupture with Central and Eastern Europe and the construction of the Soviet Union as an “other,” I argue, consolidated Israelis’ sense of themselves as belonging to a Western-style state and furthered their estrangement from the former centers of Ashkenazi Jewry.

At the same time, Israeli self-perceptions were influenced also by the broader dynamics between Europe and the global South. As decolonization reshaped relations between Europe, Africa, and Asia, Israeli commentators grappled with their own place between these worlds. Not only did numerous Asians and Africans view Israelis as Europeans, but many Israeli themselves, especially the Ashkenazi elite, felt a sense of belonging to what they perceived to be the Western Europe culture sphere, and at the same time, an alienation from the state’s immediate surroundings. What is more, during the 1950s and 1960s, the state was closely aligned with the two colonial powers, Great Britain and France. Chapter III traces the media debates about European colonialism and its legacy, as well as the related self-positioning of the Jewish state between Europe and the global South in general, and Asia in particular. It does so with an eye to intra-Israeli tensions between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim and the question of geocultural belonging, as well as to racial notions of different continental cultures. These tensions, as well as the broader dynamics between Europe and the Afro-Asian world, I argue, complicated Israelis’ ability to find their place on the continent. Emphasis is placed on the 1950s and 1960s. Due to geopolitical shifts, in particular the decolonization of large parts of Asia an Afrika and Israeli territorial conquests in the war of 1967, such debates subsequently receded into the background.

The second part of the book is devoted to three contexts through which a wider Israeli public experienced Europe in a more direct manner: Israeli participation in European sports leagues; the media spectacle of Eurovision; and travel to Europe. In all of these contexts, Israeli commentators discussed what Europe meant to them, both conceptually and geographically, and what influence the continent had or should have on their country.

Chapter IV looks at debates about the fate of the two most popular team sports in Israel: Soccer and basketball. Israel’s problematic geopolitical circumstances found a very real expression in the country’s international sporting affiliations. While some athletic disciplines, like basketball, were integrated into European frameworks early on, other athletes joined Asian leagues, most prominently the country’s soccer teams. However, Arab soccer organizations started joining the leagues during the late 1960s and early 1970s which had been dominated by teams from eastern Asia. Against the deteriorating standing of Israel in the global south after the Israeli-Arab wars from 1967 and 1973, Arab sports administrators managed to push out the Israeli Football Association (IFA) in 1974. The IFA subsequently attempted to enter European leagues which, due to fierce Soviet opposition, succeeded only in the early 1990s. Israeli sports, one commentator bemoaned, fell between all the stools. Chapter IV demonstrates that these issues sparked debates about Israel’s geocultural orientation and allegiances far beyond the sports arena. These debates illustrate that Israelis of the period always discussed Europe in the context of and in dynamic interaction with other geocultural connections and influences. Israeli images of Europe, the chapter makes clear, must therefore be understood in the context of these dynamics.

Just as sports leagues provided Israelis with a platform to engage with Europe, the Eurovision Song Contest became another key venue for cultural interaction, which Chapter V explores. Due to their membership in the European Broadcasting Union, Israel was eligible to participate in the Eurovision Song Contest, which Israel has done regularly since 1973. Eurovision participation challenged Israelis, their country one of the few participants from outside of the continent (except for Turkey), to grapple with their different affiliations with Europe and its institutions. In fact, since the winners of the contest are easily determined, the spectacle is often accompanied by debates about a particular country’s results and what can be inferred from the support or lack thereof of other countries. Against this backdrop, Israelis regularly interpret the placement of their artists on the pop stage in light of issues such as historical and contemporary antisemitism or political friction over the Arab-Israeli conflict, sometimes in a highly caustic manner, sometimes with humor and irony, in the process addressing not only their relationship with the continent but also their own country’s cultural outlook. Focusing on these issues, I argue that participation in the annual spectacle became an important ritual that helped Israelis come to terms with their complex relationship with the continent.

Israelis participated in the European cultural sphere also quite concretely through travel. Israel’s proximity to the continent and its highly developed tourism industry turned it into the most popular leisure tourism destination for Israelis which became a mass phenomenon during the 1970s. Europe is home to many places of great historical significance to Jewish tourists, but the particular memory of the Holocaust made it impossible for Israeli visitors to enjoy the continent’s attractions without reservation. Hebrew-language guidebooks, which emerged in response to the increased tourism in the 1970s, directed Israeli travelers to sites of particular interest, provided advice, and both reflected their experiences and steered their expectations, thereby constructing a specific Jewish-Israeli view of Europe. Chapter VI analyzes four such guidebooks that enjoyed enormous popularity, arguing that the tensions between leisure and heritage aspects of Jewish-Israeli tourism were crucial in shaping Hebrew guidebooks’ perspectives on the continent. It examines how each of these guides produced a specific image of Europe while attempting to shape and reinforce a specific idea of Israeli-Jewish identity among its readers.

A brief epilogue summarizes the findings, highlighting the enduring tensions and ambivalences in Israeli views of Europe. It shows how these dynamics remain relevant despite significant changes since the 2000s, offering insights into contemporary Israeli-European relations.

1. *Maariv*, April 25, 1978, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Maariv*, April 23, 1978, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The term ‘Jewish state’ is used in this book as a substitute for Israel, with an understanding of its exclusionary and contentious implications. This terminology mirrors the self-identification of many voices in the Zionist media debates that the book examines, without endorsing it as a normative concept. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For some examples, see: Efrayim Ahiram and Alfred Tovias, *Whither EU-Israeli Relations?: Common and Divergent Interests* (Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang, 1995); Klaus Boehnke, *Israel and Europe: A Complex Relationship* (Wiesbaden: Deutscber Universitätsverlag, 2012); Raffaella A. Del Sarto, *Israel and the European Union: Between Rhetoric and Reality* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Emmanuel Navon, “Israel’s European Dilemma,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 12, no. 3 (2018): 325–31; Sharon Pardo, *Normative Power Europe Meets Israel: Perceptions and Realities* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters, *Uneasy Neighbors: Israel and the European Union* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009); Caroline du Plessix, “The European Union and Israel. A Lasting and Ambiguous" Special" Relationship,” *Bulletin Du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem*, no. 22 (2011); Alfred Tovias and Amichai Magen, “Reflections from the New near Outside: An Israeli Perspective on the Economic and Legal Impact of EU Enlargement,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10, no. 3 (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Among many others: Muriel Asseburg, “The EU and the Middle East Conflict: Tackling the Main Obstacle to Euro-Mediterranean Partnership,” *Mediterranean Politics* 8, no. 2–3 (2003): 174–93; Timo Behr, “Enduring Differences? France, Germany and Europe’s Middle East Dilemma,” *European Integration* 30, no. 1 (2008): 79–96; Del Sarto, *Israel and the European Union*; Nathalie Tocci, *The EU and Conflict Resolution: Promoting Peace in the Backyard* (London: Routledge, 2007); Haim Yacobi and David Newman, “The EU and the Israel-Palestine Conflict,” in *The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Power of Integration and Association*, ed. Thomas Diez, Mathias Albert, and Stetter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 173–202. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Two exceptions are Jehuda Reinharz and Yaacov Shavit, *Glorious, Accursed Europe: An Essay on Jewish Ambivalence* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2010); Howard M. Sachar, *Israel and Europe: An Appraisal in History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010). For a critique, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In this book, I use the term EEC/EU to refer to the body that evolved into the European Union. This terminology acknowledges the organization's progression from its initial formation as the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, aimed at fostering economic integration, through various stages including the establishment of the European Community (EC) in 1992, and its eventual consolidation as the European Union (EU) following the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The one exception is the English-language Jerusalem Post, which I consulted in addition, as it was a central voice for translating Israeli debates into English during the period under study and thus served as a source of information for many immigrants, especially from the Anglo-American world, as well as a link to the biggest and most important diaspora community. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For the observation that ultra-Orthodox and Palestinian Israelis have very different predispositions and traumas than the Zionist mainstream and therefore require separate studies, see also Gad Yair, “The Germans: Cultural Trauma and the Israeli Habitus,” *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 3, no. 2 (2015): 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For the emergence and development of various forms of “Israeliness”, see Baruch Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For discussion of the Jewish public sphere, see Derek Penslar, “The Press and the Jewish Public Sphere,” *Jewish History* 14, no. 1 (2000): 3–8; Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2012), 141–71. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. In detail, see Reinharz and Shavit, *Glorious, Accursed Europe: An Essay on Jewish Ambivalence*. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, vol. 66 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 69. Delanty, 69. See also David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013); Shane Weller, *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In detail, see Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007); Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Exile, History, and the Nationalization of Jewish Memory: Some Reflections on the Zionist Notion of History and Return,” *Journal of Levantine Studies* 3, no. 2 (2013): 37–70; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Orientalism, Jewish Studies and Israeli Society: A Few Comments,” *Philological Encounters* 2, no. 3–4 (2017): 237–69; Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West, and the Politics of Representation* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Ella Shohat, “The Invention of the Mizrahim,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (1999): 5–20. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cited after Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Oakland: Univ of California Press, 2001), 17. See also Steven Aschheim, “Zionism and the Idea of Europe,” in *Die Gegenwärtigkeit Deutsch-Jüdischen Denkens*, ed. Julia Matveev and Ashraf Noor (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2011), 303–19. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A large number of studies have emphasized the myriad influences of Europe on the emerging state and its society and culture, ranging from institution building and political culture to music and fashion on the one hand, and even Orthodox Jewish theology on the other. To name but a few, see Anat Helman, *A Coat of Many Colors: Dress Culture in the Young State of Israel* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011); Alexander Kaye, *The Invention of Jewish Theocracy: The Struggle for Legal Authority in Modern Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Orit Rozin, *The Rise of the Individual in 1950s Israel: A Challenge to Collectivism* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011); Yfaat Weiss, “The Golem and Its Creator, or How the Jewish Nation-State Became Multiethnic,” in *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: German and Israeli Perspectives on Immigration*, ed. Yifat Weiss and Daniel Levy (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 82–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Among many others: Delanty, *Inventing Europe*; Vladimir Biti, Joep Leerssen, and Vivian Liska, “The Idea of Europe,” 2021; Frank Bösch, Ariane Brill, and Florian Greiner, eds., *Europabilder Im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012); Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, *Imagining Europe: Myth, Memory, and Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Catherine Lee and Robert Bideleux, “‘Europe’: What Kind of Idea?,” *European Legacy* 14, no. 2 (2009): 163–76; Peter Hearns Liotta, “Imagining Europe: Symbolic Geography and the Future,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2005): 67–85; Anthony Pagden, ed., *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Hans-Jörg Trenz, *Narrating European Society* (Taylor & Francis, 2017); Weller, *The Idea of Europe*. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Weller, *The Idea of Europe*, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Yediot Aharonot*, December 12, 1989, add. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Reinharz and Shavit, *Glorious, Accursed Europe: An Essay on Jewish Ambivalence*. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. E.g. Mehmet Döşemeci, *Debating Turkish Modernity: Civilization, Nationalism, and the EEC* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Benjamin Drechsel et al., eds., *Bilder von Europa: Innen-Und Außenansichten von Der Antike Bis Zur Gegenwart* (transcript Verlag, 2010); Bilge Fırat, “Negotiating Europe/Avrupa: Prelude for an Anthropological Approach to Turkish Europeanization and the Cultures of EU Lobbying in Brussels,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey*, no. 9 (2009); Shannon Jones and Jelena Subotic, “Fantasies of Power: Performing Europeanization on the European Periphery,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 5 (2011): 542–57; Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other:" The East" in European Identity Formation*, vol. 9 (U of Minnesota Press, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Lorraine Bluche, Veronika Lipphardt, and Kiran Klaus Patel, *Der Europäer–Ein Konstrukt. Wissensbestände, Diskurse, Praktiken* (Wallstein, 2009), 14; Martin Conway and Kiran Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5; Klaus Eder, “Europe’s Borders: The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9, no. 2 (2006): 255–71; Liotta, “Imagining Europe.” [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In detail on Israeli foreign policies, see Uri Bialer, *Israeli Foreign Policy: A People Shall Not Dwell Alone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Gadi Heimann, “The Need to Be Part of Europe: Israel’s Struggle for an Association Agreement with the EEC, 1957–1961,” *Israel Studies* 20, no. 1 (2015): 86–109; Sharon Pardo, “The Year That Israel Considered Joining the European Economic Community,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 5 (2013): 901–15. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For a critical look at this aspect of the EEC, see Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For more on the various competitors and the gradual dominance of the EEC, see Kiran Klaus Patel, *Project Europe: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. On the significance of such pan-European aspects, see Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Patel, *Project Europe*; Neumann, *Uses of the Other*; Weller, *The Idea of Europe*. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For a by now classic work on this divide, see Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. In detail, see: Arieh Bruce Saposnik, “Europe and Its Orients in Zionist Culture before the First World War,” *Historical Journal*, 2006, 1105–23. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. *Maariv*, December 18, 1989, add.7 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For an overview, see Yaacov Ro’i, “Soviet Policies and Attitudes Toward Israel, 1948–1978—An Overview,” *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 8, no. 1 (1978): 35–45. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. In detail, see Chapter IV. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For an overview of the political relations, see: Yosef Govrin, *Israel’s Relations with the East European States: From Disruption (1967) to Resumption (1989-91)* (London ; Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. E.g. Delanty, *Inventing Europe*; Johan Fornäs, *Europe Faces Europe: Narratives from Its Eastern Half* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2017); Ute Frevert, *Eurovisionen: Ansichten Guter Europäer Im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert* (Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 2003); Peo Hansen, “In the Name of Europe,” *Race & Class* 45, no. 3 (2004): 49–61; Mahmood Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2020); Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011); Anthony Pagden, *The Pursuit of Europe: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Talal Assad, “Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe represent Islam?,” in Pagden, *The Idea of Europe*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. In detail, see Derek Penslar, “Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?,” in *Israel in History: The Jewish State in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2007), 90–111. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Gerard Delanty, *Europe and Asia beyond East and West* (London: Routledge, 2006); Wang Hui, “The Idea of Asia and Its Ambiguities,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 4 (2010): 985–89; Tobias Metzler, “Entangled Refractions Global Perspectives on Europeanism and Asianism,” in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference Europe in Discourse: Identity, Diversity, Borders Athens, September 23-25, 2016*, ed. Juliane House and Themis Kaniklidou (Nashua, NH: Helenic American University, 2017), 193–204; Srilata Ravi, Mario Rutten, and Beng-Lan Goh, *Asia in Europe, Europe in Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Among many others: Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Jonathan Penslar, *Orientalism and the Jews* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2005); Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. In detail, see: Hanan Harif, *Anashim Achim Anachnu. Ha-Pniya Misraha Be-Hagut Ha-Tsyionit (For We Be Brethren. The Turn to the East in Zionist Thought)* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Cited after Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East* (Metropolitan Books, 2007), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978). For an introduction to European whiteness studies and examples, see: Nicholas De Genova, “The ‘Migrant Crisis’ as Racial Crisis: Do Black Lives Matter in Europe?,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 10 (2018): 1765–82; Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2007); David Theo Goldberg, “Racial Europeanization,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (March 2006): 331–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Maariv*, November 19, 1974, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. On whiteness and processes of self-whitening in Zionist-Israeli society, see e.g. Eitan Bar-Yosef, “Zionism, Apartheid, Blackface: Cry the Beloved Country on the Israeli Stage,” *Representations* 123, no. 1 (2013): 117–53; Sara Chinski, “‘Eynayim Atsumot Le-Revacha:’ Al Tismonet Ha-Lavkanut Hanirkeshet Be-Sade Ha-Omanut Ha-Yisraelit [Eyes Wide Shut: The Acquired Albino Syndrome of the Israeli Art Field],” *Teoria Ve-Bikoret [Theory and Criticism]* 20 (2002): 57–87; Orna Sasson-Levy, “A Different Kind of Whiteness: Marking and Unmarking of Social Boundaries in the Construction of Hegemonic Ethnicity,” *Sociological Forum* 28, no. 1 (2013): 27–50; Shohat, “The Invention of the Mizrahim.” [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. E.g. Sami Shalom Chetrit, *Intra-Jewish Conflict in Israel: White Jews, Black Jews* (Routledge, 2009); Aziza Khazzoom, *Shifting Ethnic Boundaries and Inequality in Israel: Or, How the Polish Peddler Became a German Intellectual* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2008); Bryan K. Roby, *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel’s Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle 1948-1966* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015); Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims,” *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988): 1–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel.” [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See e.g. Giulia Daniele, “Mizrahi Jews and the Zionist Settler Colonial Context: Between Inclusion and Struggle,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 461–80; Smadar Lavie, “Where Is the Mizrahi–Palestinian Border Zone? Interrogating Feminist Transnationalism through the Bounds of the Lived,” *Social Semiotics* 21, no. 1 (February 2011): 67–83; Shoshana Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict: The Yemenite Babies Affair* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Avi Shoshana, “Major and Minor Languages of Ethnicity,” *Social Analysis* 55, no. 1 (2011): 48–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See e.g. Chinski, “Eyes Wide Shut”; Sasson-Levy, “A Different Kind of Whiteness.” [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Tomasz Zarycki, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014), 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. *Herut*, October 20, 1950, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Cited after Uri Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel’s Foreign Policy Orientation 1948-1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Davar*, July 18, 1976, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History,” *Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (October 1992): 337–57. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories-Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. For examples from East Central Europe, see Merje Kuus, “Europe’s Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 4 (August 2004): 472–89; Attila Melegh, *On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006); Zarycki, *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. For a critique of such tendencies, see Arie M. Dubnov, “Notes on the Zionist Passage to India, or: The Analogical Imagination and Its Boundaries,” *Journal of Israeli History* 35, no. 2 (2016): 177–214. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. For a critique of such descriptions, see also Dan Diner, *Gedächtniszeiten: Über Jüdische Und Andere Geschichten* (München: CH Beck, 2003), 204–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Penslar, “Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?”; Arieh Saposnik, Derek Penslar, and Stefan Vogt, *Unacknowledged Kinships: Postcolonial Studies and the Historiography of Zionism* (Boston: Brandeis University Press, 2023). See also Atalia Omer, “*Hitmazrehut* or Becoming of the East: Re-Orienting Israeli Social Mapping,” *Critical Sociology* 43, no. 6 (September 2017): 972. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Similarly on the relation character of distinctions between Occident and Orient in Zionist debates, see Dafna Hirsch, “‘ We Are Here to Bring the West, Not Only to Ourselves’: Zionist Occidentalism and the Discourse of Hygiene in Mandate Palestine,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 4 (2009): 577–94. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. *Maariv*, June 18, 1979, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Sachar divides his study into chapters about Israel relations with single European countries. See Sachar, *Israel and Europe*. Reinharz and Shavit portray Israeli views of Europe as a remarkably stable part of broader Jewish perceptions of the continent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also tend to focus heavily on individual countries in different sections. Siehe Reinharz and Shavit, *Glorious, Accursed Europe: An Essay on Jewish Ambivalence*. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. On these arguments, see Bösch, Brill, and Greiner, *Europabilder Im 20. Jahrhundert*, 10; Conway and Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century*, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)