



Dead End: Israeli Militarism and the Dynamics of State Retribution

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Abstract

Based on sociological and historical research centered in Israel this dissertation interrogates *the centrality of retaliatory practices in Israeli security policy and culture of militarism*. More specifically I ask how is military retribution enacted, articulated and framed by state actors, social movements, public discourses and personal narratives. Most scholars traditionally interpret the mechanisms of retribution as either a rationalist strategy of deterrence, or as a culturalist logic of revenge and emotions. Transcending the duality of structure and agency, I conceptualize the "calculus of state retribution" as a relational process in which violent exchange is both a form of action and reaction – the generator and outcome of ethno-national conflict. Thus, state violence is conceptualized as a category of practice, namely as a set of repertoires and methods of retribution, as well as well as a discursive framing category which legitimizes and challenges the concept of *raison d'état*. Opening up the "black box" of political violence I propose an analytic model of retribution, which combines revenge, punishment and deterrence, categorical violence and passionate reprisal. These modalities of state retribution, I argue, are always entangled together and draw political and military strength precisely from such entanglement and elasticity. Drawing on discourse analysis of media sources from the turn of the 19th century to the present, as well as on in-depth interviews with policy-makers, generals, infantry soldiers and activists, the research employs frame analysis to engage theories of state rationality, state power, strategic interaction and emotions in politics. In the context of Israeli militarism, retaliation functions as a meta-frame and a total relationship, which mediates state action, across scales and units of analysis. Ultimately, the research points to the extension of the discourse on retributive justice to the radical (both right- and left-wing) fringes of civil society.

Jury:



Prof Donatella della Porta (EUI, Supervisor), Roni Dorot (Candidate), Prof László Bruszt (EUI), Prof Gil Eyal (Columbia University, by videolink), Prof James M. Jasper (City University of New York, by videolink)

Bio

Roni Dorot received a B.A in Sociology and Anthropology and a Masters degree with distinction in Public Policy from Tel-Aviv University, where she also served as a research and teaching assistant. Her MA research won the Sapir Prize for municipal studies. Roni conducted her PhD research under the supervision of Professor Donatella Della Porta and Professor Gil Eyal (Columbia University). In her work she examines the centrality of retaliatory practices in Israeli security policy and the culture of militarism by focusing on how they are articulated by state actors, social movements, public discourses and biographical narratives. She was awarded a scholarship from the Italian Cultural Institute, and won the EUI Open Competition Grant for two consecutive years. Her research interests include: emotions and the state; political violence; total institutions; agency theory; conflict management; political rituals and state performance; retribution, revenge and reconciliation.