

# Social Protest in Operation Protective Edge: A Civilian Attempt to Challenge the Political-Security Discourse

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This essay examines the new civilian protest movement formed in the western Negev during Operation Protective Edge, and its implications for the political-security discourse at the local and national level in Israel. Although this social movement arose out of a local security hardship, its activity is relevant to the country as a whole; the movement challenges the “rounds approach” that has emerged in recent years as the prevalent pattern of action in the context of the Israel-Hamas conflict. The movement tries to convey the message that using military means alone, as in the case in the last three rounds of fighting between Israel and Hamas, is hopeless at the strategic level as long as political efforts aimed at a long-term settlement between the warring sides are absent. From the movement’s perspective, such a settlement is meant to create the conditions necessary for a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Building upon the case in the Gaza envelope, another relevant message is that political action concurrent with military activity may be essential to forging a long-term settlement in any future conflict between Israel and Hizbollah during which the Israeli civilian front may face widespread missile attacks, similar and possibly even worse than those in the South.

**Keywords:** Operation Protective Edge, Gaza envelope, civil society, protest, new social movement, political-security discourse

From the perspective of the residents of the Gaza envelope, the period preceding the start of Operation Protective Edge was characterized by distrust and anger directed at both the local<sup>1</sup> and central government. These

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feelings emerged from the lack of government response to the dozens of mortar bombs and rockets fired by Hamas at Gaza envelope settlements over ten days during Operation Brother's Keeper to locate the three Israeli teenagers kidnapped in the West Bank on June 12, 2014. At that point, the residents felt they had been totally and completely forgotten. That perception changed when Operation Protective Edge was launched, and even more so when ground troops entered the Gaza Strip. Only then did the residents start to feel that their security had been placed at the top of the agenda of the nation's decision makers. During the fifty days of fighting, the residents experienced anxiety, tension, and worry from the well-known threat of high-trajectory fire, the emerging threat of attack tunnels (new in terms of their scope), and the endless alarms, thuds, and booms from IDF activity in the area, all occurring during summer vacation when children are normally at home. As expressed in the activity of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev, many local residents hoped that the situation that had persisted for fourteen years – emergency conditions and routines – would end with an attempt to create a different reality with some sort of political settlement. As far as they were concerned “real security will be ensured only by the institution of a political settlement.”<sup>2</sup>

This essay examines the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev from a broad political view, and asserts that, even though the movement emerged from a situation of local security distress and failed to generate real interest at the national level, its activity is relevant for the country as a whole. This relevance is manifested in the movement's central statement and the message it tries to convey. The movement states that the use of military power, as conducted in the last three rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip, is hopeless in and of itself. It is not enough to operate military means; rather, it is necessary to use political means as well, and convey the attendant message that a political resolution in the Gaza Strip can serve as a platform for resolving the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## Background

Since 1967, the Israeli political arena has focused mostly on relations with the Arab nations, the Palestinians, and the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>3</sup> Most Israeli political and social identities that assumed the form of protest were born out of and focused on war and peace.<sup>4</sup> One exception was the social protest in the summer of 2011, which presented a new form of political action and challenged some established understandings about

politics and society in Israel.<sup>5</sup> Other exceptions include protests dealing with fair distribution of resources, such as those of the Black Panthers and recently of the Ethiopian community. Overall, war and peace are the key issues in establishment and anti-establishment politics, which significantly define the social and political identities, voting patterns, and demands of many of the social movements such as Peace Now, the Bloc of the Faithful (Gush Emunim), the opposition to the withdrawal from Sinai, the opposition to the First Lebanon War, the opponents and supporters of the Oslo process, and those who objected to the disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005.<sup>6</sup>

Another feature of the Israeli political field, typical also of other Western democracies, is the alienation of the Israeli public from the established political system, even though political and social issues continue to interest the public.<sup>7</sup> When aware citizens conclude that the political system does not want or cannot provide an answer to their demands, they develop alternate channels of activity. Social movements are one manifestation of civil society's wish for change. They express a disappointment with organized politics, and use their actions to challenge the establishment's centralized hold. Social movements do not necessarily serve the good of their members as individuals; rather they serve the greater goals of the group and are interested in generating change in the broader sociopolitical context.<sup>8</sup>

Civil society is an arena primed for new ideas. It contributes to the fair distribution of resources among citizens and is involved in decision-making. That is, civil society operates within the economy, politics, and culture, and contributes to the state, community, and individual; hence, its importance.<sup>9</sup> The test of civil society lies in the autonomy it assumes from the state, the type of demands it makes of the state, and its ability to motivate citizens to participate in public life and imbue them with civic values. Four types of organizations operate in civil society: interest groups, social movements, grassroots organizations, and volunteer organizations.<sup>10</sup> The common denominator of these organizations is that all engage in extra-parliamentary political activity, while the first two engage in what one could call anti-establishment political activity. Political activity outside the establishment's own setting is characterized by political protest events. Such activity seeks to generate political change and is aimed primarily at the authorities.<sup>11</sup> As part of civil society, individuals join together voluntarily in common action for attaining a shared interest. Political sociologists conceptualized this move three decades ago, calling it "collective action,"<sup>12</sup>

thus expressing their reservations with the concept of “collective behavior,” which dominated research on anti-establishment political patterns.<sup>13</sup>

“Social movements” and “interest groups” emerged as dominant terms used to describe people organizing collective action to promote their political objectives.<sup>14</sup> Of the many understandings of social movements, this article uses the following definition: “collectivities with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture or world order of which they are a part.”<sup>15</sup>

The field of research dealing with social movements includes several main theories.<sup>16</sup> This essay examines the activity of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev using the approach of “new social movements.” This approach emerged in the 1950s, and refers to voluntary organizations of individuals expressing the desire to create or prevent a change in the broader sociopolitical context. New social movements differ from traditional social movements in their strategies, goals, and manner of group participation. The initiators, leaders, and many of the supporters are young, middle, and upper-class students of higher education. The new social movements usually have supporters rather than members, and loosely communicate for the purpose of collective action. In principle, these movements reject establishment politics and engage in protest practices that express and emphasize this rejection. Fluid organizational structures with seemingly a lack of hierarchy; democratic patterns of decision-making with participation and debate; and creative and innovative protest actions incorporating humor, games, and theatrical performance, all play a central role.<sup>17</sup> New social movements are typical of post-industrial societies as they are inevitably a product of the changes in the social, economic, and political relations within these societies. These movements seek structural change rather than revolution, and therefore do not seek to dismantle existing political and economic structures.

The central strategies of the new social movements are empowerment and self-help. They seek independence rather than ways of connecting to an existing centralized political powerbase. Therefore, community participation in these movements strives for freedom from state institutions. The principles of social consciousness shaped by the new social movements are the involvement of regular people who, until now, were oppressed and have to make their voices heard to affect history; and social participation that gives

a voice to those who had been silenced in the public discourse – a voice that is, in their minds, necessary to improving the decision-making process.<sup>18</sup>

The importance of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev as a social movement lies in proposing an alternative to the traditional security doctrine, which manages the conflict with the Palestinians by military means.<sup>19</sup> According to members of the Movement, the last three rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip proved that this doctrine is hopeless, and that it is necessary also to use political means to resolve conflicts, including the one between Israel and Hamas. Broadly, this approach could be applied to a future scenario in which most of Israel's populated areas could be under persistent missile threat, a situation that could create social and perhaps also political pressure. The idea underlying the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev is that Israel should also create the conditions for a political settlement alongside the military responses used to deal with the security challenges on the different fronts. Moreover, the Movement seeks to apply a political resolution to not only the Gaza Strip, but also the West Bank; in practice, the Movement uses the concept of a political resolution in Gaza as a platform to renew negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in its entirety. This demand stands out, given the Movement's insistence on conducting direct talks with Hamas, which controls Gaza, and despite the general stance in Israel that one should not conduct negotiations with Hamas. The strength and legitimacy of this demand stem from the fact that the Movement's founders have lived for more than a decade within the political and security-based reality of high-trajectory fire.

Members of the Movement claim that the Israeli public, both in the Gaza envelope and elsewhere, should know that the decision makers seek to integrate military, political, and other means in finding or creating a solution to the existing political-security situation, and will apply it not only to the Gaza envelope, but also to the West Bank. This is, in fact, a demand to apply renewed (and creative) thinking to an old and familiar situation. The alternatives may go beyond common approaches, e.g., that Israel and Palestinians should have direct negotiations or the notion that the existence of two independent nations between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River can provide a solution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as fixed in the Oslo Accords.<sup>20</sup> An alternative is the proposal to accept the Arab initiative as the basis for mutual talks in negotiations with the Palestinians, or the proposal for Israel to join the moderate and

pragmatic Arab nations in order to solve creatively the Israeli-Palestinian issue, as well as other issues in which Israel has shared interests.

Thus, in the opinion of Movement members, the knowledge that decision makers do not rely solely on military solutions, but also integrate political means into possible solutions to the political-security situation (including some that have never been looked at before) would give the Israeli public a sense that it has not been abandoned and that its leaders will, in fact, make every effort both to resolve the political-security situation and prevent another round of fighting. This is important to the population's social resilience in a situation of persistent disruption,<sup>21</sup> and may even affect the public's attitude toward embarking on a future war and increase the public's preparedness for it.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Movement for the Future of the Western Negev as a New Social Movement**

The protest of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev arose out of anxiety, loss of control, helplessness, tension, worry, and threat to life and limb – the lot of most residents of the Gaza envelope during Operation Protective Edge. These feelings were fused with a lack of trust in the army (e.g., the “anemone speech” by the chief of staff, in which Lt. Gen. Benny Ganz urged the residents of the South to come home and assured them that the early August ceasefire would hold; it broke down a few days later) and the nation's decision makers. These feelings were present during the early stages of Operation Protective Edge and even before the residents were fully aware of the security situation to which they were subjected; the message conveyed was to continue the routine, which they did, even though Gaza envelope residents understood that attack tunnels were located close to their settlements. They also sensed that Hamas was controlling the ceasefire, that the Israeli political-security cabinet was divided and avoided making the decision to evacuate residents from the settlements abutting the border, and noticed that national leaders did not even visit and show solidarity with local residents.<sup>23</sup> It should be remembered that during Operation Protective Edge, three residents of the Gaza envelope were killed by mortar bombs: four-year-old Daniel Tragerman (August 22, 2015), Zeev Etzion, Kibbutz Nirim's security coordinator, and Shahr Melamed, the kibbutz's garage manager (both on August 26, 2015).<sup>24</sup>

Given this background, it is no wonder that many Gaza envelope residents felt abandoned, unprotected, and not in control of their lives. As



Haim Yellin, then head of the Eshkol Regional Council and currently an MK on Yesh Atid's slate, said, "The Movement for the Future of the Western Negev tried – and to a great extent succeeded – in giving many area residents strength because it provided the sense that they could control their lives. It therefore played a significant local communal role."<sup>25</sup> During the military operation, the Movement received the open support of two regional council heads, Alon Shuster, of the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council, and Yellin of the Eshkol Regional Council. "The Movement embraced the entire councils. There is support for the Movement – Alon's and my own," said Yellin.<sup>26</sup> Michal Shaban, spokeswoman for the Sha'ar Hanegev Regional Council, added that the council was working together with activists in the Movement.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the Movement was sending a clear message that it would be proactive in changing the reality of the region in which its members lived, and this message matched the narrative that the councils wanted to present. Although the Movement founders said that their struggle was not limited to the Negev, and that they were fighting on behalf of all Israelis, the mainstay of its support came from the region's residents, especially those who identified with the left and center in traditional Israeli party politics, and at whom the Movement aimed its messages.<sup>28</sup>

While old social movements organized around political bases, such as social class, ideology, or workers' rights (i.e., organized labor or equal rights movements), the new social movements unite around ethnicity, gender, or geographical community, and often combine identity, community and culture; a striking feature of such movements is the lack of class ideology.<sup>29</sup> In practice, the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev is a blend of several groups formed in the western Negev, including the Qassam Generation, Western Negev Women, No Stopping on Red, and Fly the Missiles from Gaza.<sup>30</sup> Although most share the same social class, their social class did not serve as the basis for organization or as a means of recruiting members; rather, it was the desire of those involved "to change the reality of their lives."<sup>31</sup>

As all the founders of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev are residents of the western Negev, the communal-geographic basis of the organization represents a collective identity for its organizers. It is worth devoting some space to the movement's chosen name. The choice of the phrase "residents of the western Negev" rather than "residents of the Gaza envelope" may stem from the desire of the movement's founders not to define themselves in relation to something external, on the other

side of the border (Gaza), because that would constitute a confrontational definition determining the movement's identity; rather, they chose to define themselves in relation to something internal – the western Negev – as an inseparable part of the State of Israel. Moreover, the struggle of the Movement's founders was marked as a local one, defined as ensuring the "welfare and horizons for the region's residents." For them, the way to attain this goal was by implementing "a permanent solution in Gaza."<sup>32</sup>

To a great extent, the new social movements question the cultural and social identities of its members. In that process, they ask, who are we? How do we live as part of our movement and our society? What do we contribute to them? What do we get from them? What are our rights? At the outset, the members of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev chose to identify as a citizens' movement distinguished by their geographical location. Alongside the real distress experienced by the Movement's members and founders,<sup>33</sup> their journey began with an attempt to figure out who they were, how they identified themselves, and what their demands were, as clarified by Anat Hefetz, a member of Kibbutz Nirim and one of the Movement's founders.<sup>34</sup>

The founders of the Movement insisted on their right to speak and to be heard, and noted that this right was acquired through their suffering. On their message board they wrote, "After four years of living under missile threat, we swore we would not stay silent anymore."<sup>35</sup> This was, in fact, a demand, legitimized by years of suffering, to create a different reality, based on "peace, security and prosperity for the residents of the Negev."<sup>36</sup> The Movement's founders saw their demand as representing a different voice on the political-security situation in the Gaza envelope, a voice that they believed had not yet been heard within the public discourse.<sup>37</sup> This demand was directed towards the decision makers, while the Movement's founders gave a sense of urgency, saying, "We have no time to waste."<sup>38</sup>

In fact, central to the Movement's demand was to create an alternative to the "fighting rounds" paradigm, by holding talks with Hamas and creating the conditions for a political settlement in Gaza; and perhaps even to promote a process that would lead to a permanent resolution. This alternative was presented to decision makers not only for the western Negev, but also for the entire State of Israel. Movement members called upon the government to use Operation Protective Edge to promote a political settlement that would ensure peace and quiet for western Negev residents, and therefore, also for the entire state.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, the Movement



attempted to transcend its local community identity, but failed to leverage its core demand at the national level. Despite the relatively sympathetic coverage the Movement received in the press during Operation Protective Edge, its demand achieved neither prominence nor widespread support within the Israeli public as a whole.<sup>40</sup>

From its inception, the intention of the Movement's founders was to establish a social protest movement with continuity, because they knew they were "fighting for a stable, secure, personal, family, and economic *future* [emphasis added]." <sup>41</sup> However, the Movement's local emphasis may have undermined it, rendering it incapable of going beyond the local level in order to expand its circle of supporters. Moreover, the ceasefire declaration and the end of fighting bumped the Movement's struggle off the national and public agenda; now, a year after the military operation, its voice is barely heard at the national level. Current coverage of the Movement's activities takes place mostly within social media, and most of the people aware of the Movement are among its social media followers.

The founders of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev strove to formulate a proposal for a different discourse, one that lies outside of political parties and official state institutions. Although activists who clearly identified with political parties were among the Movement's founders, they chose not to join a political force with a partisan affiliation.<sup>42</sup> They chose to realize this desire by ensuring that they were economically independent, a factor that – in their minds – granted them political independence. Their source of funding was their group of supporters. The Movement used Headstart as a platform for online social recruitment, and crowdfunding for a range of different projects.<sup>43</sup> This decision to be politically independent, however, may not have helped the Movement expand its base of support, because the vast majority of supporters identified with left wing and centrist political parties, with a small-to-negligible minority identifying with the moderate right. It was, in fact, the clarification of the core demand ("a political settlement in the Gaza Strip") that led some activists – identified with the right wing of the Israeli political map – to leave the movement; in the Israeli political reality, an insistent demand for a political settlement and suggestion of an alternative to the approach that "there is no partner for peace" is identified with the left-wing political parties.<sup>44</sup>

*The Movement's Activities*

The Movement for the Future of the Western Negev is manifested in three major realms: public activity, consciousness-raising activities, and political involvement. Publicly, the Movement has tried to maintain a variety of activities, both during and after Operation Protective Edge. These include organizing demonstrations, putting up street banners, and holding parlor meetings.<sup>45</sup> The parlor meetings bring representatives of the Movement together with security and political experts to discuss various formats for a possible settlement with the Gaza Strip. In addition, the Movement holds meetings with various delegations and organizations, state representatives, and extra-territorial organizations. For example, Movement members met with the head of the National Emergency Authority, with officeholders in the Prime Minister's Office, tourist groups, schools, students, and more.<sup>46</sup> By accompanying tours, the Movement tries to disseminate its messages to the broader Israeli public and keep the Movement on the public agenda. Movement activists document their activities on their website<sup>47</sup> and on social media (Facebook and Twitter),<sup>48</sup> conveying their messages to the public at large. Although the Movement's Facebook page has received more than 6,000 "likes," the conversation is mainly among residents of the western Negev.

In terms of consciousness-raising activities – largely an extension of its public activity – the Movement tries to expose and make accessible "existing and new knowledge about handling the rear, security solutions, and various possibilities for a political settlement."<sup>49</sup> To this end, Movement members seek to arrange encounters between residents of the region and former security personnel, politicians, and researchers. For example, in November 2014, the Movement held a parlor meeting in Jerusalem, and hosted Alon Liel, former director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and a former ambassador to Turkey; two weeks later, the Movement hosted another parlor meeting with Gen. (res.) Gadi Zohar, a member of the Peace and Security Movement, and another meeting with Gen. (res.) Ami Ayalon, former head of the Shin Bet and a former commander of the Israeli Navy. By using security experts, the Movement attempts to create a basis of social legitimacy for their demand to "hear a different civilian voice," and promote a political settlement in the Gaza Strip. Using this method of action, they have tried, and continue to try to achieve both a broad consensus for their path and legitimacy for their approach.

The Movement's activities in the political sphere combine the public consciousness-raising activities described above and encounters with decision makers in order to promote its goal of a political settlement in Gaza, and to maintain the interest of politicians and the public at large. Movement activists meet with ministers and Knesset members and send them parliamentary questions. The election of Haim Yellin, former head of the Eshkol Regional Council, as a member of the twentieth Knesset may help the Movement to receive special attention. Yellin is identified – and self-identifies – as a representative of the region, and has on several occasions been heard to say that “a military move must have a political leg to stand on.”

In practice, because the Movement's public presence throughout Israel is limited, it has failed to break out of the local communal level in which it operates. Hence, the Movement's demands have failed so far to affect the public agenda in any significant way. Nonetheless, after many years in which residents of the Gaza envelope have been exposed to missile fire and after a decade of military operations in the Gaza Strip following the disengagement, it may be time to examine the movement's demand for a political settlement in Gaza from a broad political perspective. This would include a comprehensive examination of a potential situation in which high-trajectory fire is aimed at all of Israel, for which the use of the military option would be an insufficient response, as well as a reassessment of the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

If all of Israel is threatened by high-trajectory fire, the use of military means alone will not provide an adequate response to the political-security situation; it will be necessary also to apply political means. Although the Israeli public strongly wishes to view the conflict with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as a security problem only,<sup>50</sup> and, at times, to sever the link between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Israel's ability to bring about an era of calm, as part of a solution that includes a ceasefire / comprehensive reconstruction of the Gaza Strip - a very complex challenge indeed - can also mitigate the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is possible because the Gaza Strip, in broader political and geostrategic terms, continues to play a central role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>51</sup> This is the underlying message in the Movement's demand to promote a political settlement in Gaza. As noted, this message contains a request for a political settlement in Gaza, which has already been made in Israeli public discourse in the past; at the same time, it connects the existence of such a settlement to the

nation's ability to create a comprehensive solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and hence the relevance of the activities of this social movement for the country as a whole.

## Conclusion

Although the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev is a social movement that emerged as the result of a local security adversity, its manner of action and the message it tries to convey within the context of the existing Israeli political-security discourse render the Movement relevant to the entire country. The Movement represents an alternative to the traditional security approach, which upholds that the conflict with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (and elsewhere) reflects a security problem only, and therefore must be managed by military means.<sup>52</sup> In light of the last three rounds of fighting in the Gaza Strip, the members of the Movement claim that this approach is strategically hopeless in the absence of a political effort aimed at a long-term settlement between the opposing sides. As noted, the Movement's relevance to the future of the western Negev stems both from the message it seeks to impart through its activities and its mission statement. The message links the demand for a political settlement in Gaza to the nation's ability to present a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and states that the use of military tools alone is hopeless and that political means must also be used.

In addition to this type of political-security message, an examination of the Movement's actions sheds light on the social-political message emerging from its activities. Accordingly, the public's knowledge that the decision makers are doing absolutely everything they can to integrate military means with political means will help the nation's citizens to gain the sense that they have not been abandoned and that they have someone upon whom they can rely. This sentiment could raise the citizens' level of preparedness to handle a situation of persistent fighting, and provide them with the knowledge that they can bounce back from this situation after the fighting – two elements that are the essence of the social resilience of a population living under persistent disruption.<sup>53</sup>

The formation and activities of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev restored among residents of the Gaza envelope the sense that they are in control of their lives, and imbued them with a great deal of strength.<sup>54</sup> Hence, the movement played a significant local community role. At the same time, the movement failed to break through the factionalism

that characterized its method of action. While it succeeded in enlisting many supporters among western Negev residents, it was unable to gain support from other Israelis, and thus failed to create a broad national support base. Nonetheless, binding a political settlement in Gaza to the platform of a comprehensive settlement between Israel and the Palestinians provides a possible alternative to the existing security-political discourse, thereby giving the Movement's demand national relevance.

## Notes

- 1 This essay is based on data gathered in two Gaza envelope regional councils: Eshkol and Sha'ar Hanegev.
- 2 Message page of the website of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev. <http://negevforce.project.org.il/cgi-webaxy/item?index>.
- 3 Despite the disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the debate about the future of this area in the context of relations with the Arab nations and the Palestinians has not been resolved.
- 4 Zeev Rosenhek and Michael Shalev, "The Political Economy of the 2011 Protest: A Class and Generational Analysis," *Theory and Criticism* 41 (2013): 45-68.
- 5 Ibid., p. 64.
- 6 Tamar Hermann, *The Israeli Peace Movement: A Shattered Dream* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), quoted in Rosenhek and Shalev, "The Political Economy of the 2011 Protest."
- 7 Omri Shamir, "Political Consumerism, Sociopolitical Entrepreneurs and Public Policy in Israel: Conceptual Framework and Case Studies," in *Studies in Public Management and Policy*, ed. Guy Ben Porat (Ben-Gurion University: Department of Management and Public Policy, Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business and Management, 2012).
- 8 Yael Yishai, *Between Enlistment and Reconciliation: Civil Society in Israel* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2003), pp. 22-49.
- 9 Yishai, *Between Enlistment and Reconciliation*; Elisheva Sadan, *Community Work: Methods for Social Change* (Tel Aviv: United Kibbutz Press, 2009), pp. 307-18.
- 10 For more, see Yishai, *Between Enlistment and Reconciliation*.
- 11 Eitan Alimi, "Calling It by Its Rightful Name: Differences (and Similarities) in Social Movements and Interest Groups," *Civil Society and the Third Sector in Israel* 2, no. 2 (2008): 29-51.
- 12 See the works of political sociologists such as Charles Tilly and William Gamson.
- 13 The research orientation of social scientists using the term "collective behavior" views the extra-establishment political activity as a threat to the normative social order and the political behavior of its members as a social deviation. By contrast, the research orientation of social scientists using



the term “collection action” stresses the strategy, planning, choice, and purposefulness of the collective action in question. See Alimi, “Calling It by Its Rightful Name.”

- 14 Alimi, “Calling It by Its Rightful Name.” According to Alimi, the existing terms in the literature describing such movements are: challenging groups, protest groups, pressure groups, mass movements, and political movements. The choice of one term over another is thus a direct derivative of the discipline from which the social scientists hail, as well as of the paradigmatic approach they use.
- 15 David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, “Mapping the Terrain,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 11.
- 16 These theories include early theories dependent upon psychosocial approaches of collective behavior belonging to the functional-structural tradition in sociology; organizational theories of resource management based on conflict theory and rational-economic theories; the structural theory of political opportunities; the “new social movements” approach; and the examination of social movements as the foundation for the establishment of new collective identities and generation of an alternate culture. See, e.g., H. Blumer, “Social Movements,” in *Principles of Sociology*, ed. L.A. McClung (New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1951), pp. 199-220; W.A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990); C. Tilly, *Social Movements, 1968-2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004); A. Swidler, “Cultural Power and Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. H. Johnston and B. Klandermans (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- 17 Rosenhek and Shalev, “The Political Economy of the 2011 Protest.”
- 18 “The demand is directed at the government that happens to be in charge, the decision makers whoever they might be, to promote a settlement in the Gaza Strip.” Interview with Anat Hefetz, April 21, 2015.
- 19 Uri Ben Eliezer, *Through the Scope: The Creation of Israeli Militarism, 1936-1956* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1995).
- 20 See, e.g., Gideon Sa’ar, “To Calculate a Political Track Again,” *Yedioth Ahronoth*, June 7, 2015.
- 21 Meir Elran and Alex Altshuler, “The Civilian Front in Operation Protective Edge,” in *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge*, eds. Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom (Tel Aviv: The Institute for National Security Studies, 2014), [http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/ZukEtanENG\\_final.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/ZukEtanENG_final.pdf).
- 22 This is reinforced by the fact that 82 percent of the Israeli public expects another conflict with Hamas, according to a survey conducted by Mina Tzemach and the Midgam Polling Research Center, and published on June 7, 2015, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4665484,00.html>.
- 23 Yizhar Sha’ar, “A Look at the Emotional-Experiential Sphere of the Residents of the Eshkol Regional Council” (The Educational Psychological Service,



- Eshkol Regional Council, 2014), <http://www.eshkol.info/1637-he/Eschol.aspx>.
- 24 These three deaths had a devastating psychological effect on residents. As Haim Yellin said, "As long as we don't have to face funerals, we can take anything. The minute we have to deal with funerals, it's a different story." Interview with Haim Yellin, May 31, 2015.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 "The Movement for the Future of the Western Negev has done a good job. It's an extra-establishment movement, but [it] works with the council. The messages are similar. Its message was taking our fate into our own hands and not relying on the establishment. The council's message was that we are a strong community. There are difficulties, and difficulties are there to be resolved. Give us the tools to do what we know how to do in the best way possible." Interview with Michal Shaban, May 29, 2015.
- 28 "There was intensive work on the ground . . . to build regional strength. Because if you build something *for the long term*, you have to be connected to the region" [emphasis added]. Interview with Avi Dabush, April 29, 2015.
- 29 It is important to note that the expression "social movements" is more commonly used by researchers in the field of sociology, whereas the term "protest movements" is more commonly used by researchers in the field of political science. I follow the activity of the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev from the sociological perspective, and therefore distinguish its characteristics and activity as a social movement; from a theoretical perspective I discuss its features as a new social movement.
- 30 In theoretical terms, these are interest groups. See Alimi, "Calling It by Its Rightful Name."
- 31 "We started seeing that throughout the region protest initiatives were forming . . . People were being interviewed and writing on Facebook . . . The dissatisfaction reached a critical mass and there's the potential for joint organization." Hefetz, interview.
- 32 Message page of the website of the Movement.
- 33 In this context, it is important to note that when the Movement first was founded, most of the activists were parents of young children. This fact had a decisive effect on the way in which they acted in face of the situation in the Gaza envelope. For more on this, see the essay published in this issue.
- 34 "We asked ourselves the direction this thing should take, what we see in our mind's eye, and we said it cannot be an association only of kibbutz members or leftists who speak about peace and love . . . For it to be real and effective and powerful it has to be with people from the entire Gaza envelope, and it has to be as varied as possible in terms of the population – religious, Mizrahi, Ashkenazi – because the goal was to create a group that, on the one hand, reflects the heterogeneity of the Gaza envelope and, on the other hand,

shows solidarity and a stance that in some way takes responsibility for our own fate.” Hefetz, interview.

- 35 “We Have No Time to Lose,” The project for the Movement for the Future of the Western Negev, <https://www.headstart.co.il/project.aspx?id=12164>.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 “We felt that a strong, clear civil voice had to be raised.” Avi Dabush, one of the founders of the Movement, in an interview with Nahman Gilbo’a. Nahman Gilbo’a, “With the Renewal of the Fighting: Tension and Protest at the Kibbutzim of the Gaza Envelope,” *Ynet*, August 20, 2014, <http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4560722,00.html>.
- 38 “We Have No Time to Lose.”
- 39 Ariel Delumi, “The Political Deadlock Dangerous to Nahal Oz,” *Ynet*, November 3, 2014.
- 40 Media coverage greatly affects the ability of any social movement to garner public support because “the chances of protests groups that are not covered, or whose coverage is negative, to get attention and sympathy from the public and the establishment are very low, especially when their demands clash with the establishment’s policies.” Tamar Hermann, 1996, quoted in Z. Israeli and Y. Orbach, “Headline-Seeking ‘Doormats’ and VIPs: Protest, the Media and National Security,” *Connection* no. 47 (2015): 61-75.
- 41 “We Have No Time to Lose.”
- 42 “We clearly said that we would not be identified with a political party. We did not want to be a marginal group but a group that would enlist the support of the wider public.” Hefetz, interview.
- 43 Funding was needed to pay the salary of the Movement’s coordinator. All the other activists, including Nissim Duek, the group’s media consultant, worked and continue to work on a voluntary basis.
- 44 At first, the movement sought – and still seeks – to appropriate the needs of the western Negev residents as they see them, and to demand a political settlement for the residents of the western Negev and the State of Israel as a whole, and together their aspiration, is to reach the general public. This issue places a challenge before the members of the Movement. One of the ways of the Movement to deal with this issue is through the existence of a strategic process in which they will try to “gather anew around goals” and to examine how “to speak with the pragmatic feasibility of some settlement in Gaza and it is the greatest interest of the residents of the region . . . in a way that won’t sound leftist.” Hefetz, interview.
- 45 For example, on Friday, August 22, 2014, at the beginning of its activities, Movement representatives set up a protest tent across the street from the Prime Minister’s residence and invited him, telling him “to sit with us and discuss a permanent settlement for the Gaza Strip.” About a month later, just a few days before the end of the ceasefire, Movement members organized a ceremony at the Sha’ar Haneguv Junction with the demand “to

care for our security in the face of the rocket and tunnel threats” and “to work towards achieving a political settlement.”

- 46 “We succeeded in becoming almost the first stop for people coming to hear about the Gaza envelope . . . to position ourselves as the authoritative body on the issue . . . as a movement that can provide the civilian perspective . . . [But] we are conducting a discourse about the solution, thereby doing more than someone who [just] talks about life here.” Hefetz, interview.
- 47 The Movement’s website: <http://negevforce.project.org.il/cgi-webaxy/item?harshama>.
- 48 The Movement’s Twitter handle: @SouthIsraelHope.
- 49 Message page of the website of the Movement.
- 50 See also Yoav Zeitun, “There Is No Military Solution for Gaza’ – Head of Operations Division Says Goodbye,” *Ynet*, June 19, 2015.
- 51 Benedetta Berti and Anat Kurz, “Gaza First (Again?),” *INSS Insight*, No. 710, June 6, 2015, <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=9906>.
- 52 Ben Eliezer, *Through the Scope: The Creation of Israeli Militarism*.
- 53 Elran and Altshuler, “The Civilian Front in Operation Protective Edge.”
- 54 “What happened with the Movement was healthy. It’s to feel that you’re in control of your life. That’s important. And if they managed to bring someone in to visit or gained the support of the council’s head, that gives strength, and they give strength to the civilians in the Gaza envelope.” Yellin, interview.