Introduction

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Australia and Israel are nations of immigrants, with the highest and second highest proportion of overseas-born amongst the industrialized nations. Some 34 per cent of Israel's population were born outside the country, compared to 24 per cent in Australia, 19 per cent in Canada, 12 per cent in the USA and 9 per cent in the UK. Despite a number of similarities, the two societies differ considerably in the composition of their populations, in the scope and history of migration flows as well as in their size, economic structures and in their social and migration policies.

In 2009 Israel's population numbered an estimated 7.5 million, Australia's population 21.8 million. While the differential in the populations of the two countries is in the ratio 3:1, the differential on many economic indicators is of the order of 4:1 or 5:1. Thus Israel's GDP is 25 per cent of Australia's, its budget revenues are 20 per cent of Australia's. The Israeli labour force of 2.95 million workers is 26 per cent of Australia's 11.21 million workers. Per capita income in Israel at US$28 200 is 75 per cent of the Australian per capita of US$37 700. Public debt as a proportion of GDP is 15.4 per cent in Australia and 75.7 per cent in Israel.

The purpose of this book is to examine similarities and differences in the incorporation of immigrants into the two societies. It considers the relative positions of the native born and the immigrant both within and across the two societies, and the extent to which societal and economic conditions and migration policies have produced differential patterns of social, political and economic integration of the immigrants to the country.

Both countries have substantial subordinate indigenous populations. Approximately 20 per cent of the Israeli population (1.2 million) are Arab. Most Israeli Arabs have lived in the region for generations, although some migrated to Palestine in the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century, as economic opportunities increased in the wake of Jewish immigrants. The Arabs living within Israel have citizenship rights and participate in the political system. Palestinians that live in the West Bank or Gaza Strip or in neighbouring countries claim the geographical area of Israel as their legitimate homeland.

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Australia has an indigenous population estimated at 517 200, or 2.5 per cent of the total, in 2006. This population is rapidly increasing, having grown from 458 500 in 2001, or by 12.8 per cent. The largest numbers live in New South Wales (148 200) and Queensland (146 400). Thirty-one per cent of the indigenous population live in major cities; 45 per cent in regional Australia; and 25 per cent in remote areas.

Modern Israel has characteristics typical of settler societies, for example in the pattern of relations between its immigrant and indigenous populations, Australia is a settler society. Jewish immigrants to Mandatory Palestine and the state of Israel have seen themselves, whatever their motivation, as returning to the land of their forefathers, to a land inscribed with historical and religious links extending over more than 3000 years. By contrast, the history of white Australian settlement, which had its beginnings as a British convict outpost, spans less than 250 years. Until the 1950s Australians of the middle and upper classes typically saw themselves as exiles and yearned to return to mother England and what they termed 'civilization'. To the present most immigrants arrive in Australia with little knowledge of the country, drawn solely by economic opportunity and the prospect of improved quality of life.

Dispossession of the indigenous population in Australia began with the first settlement in 1788 and continued well into the twentieth century. As late as the 1950s, in some cases at later dates, small bands of traditional Aboriginal people were being expelled from their lands. Indeed, both Aboriginal and Palestinian people have unsettled claims for sovereignty and for financial and other forms of compensation.

The relative scale of current conflict, which is much less in Australia, is explained not simply by the extent of problems and unresolved issues, which are substantial in both countries, but also by the smaller number and more limited resources of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and their relative lack of militancy. Also of importance for the failure to advance a range of Australian indigenous claims is the lack of support received, compared to support of Palestinians by Muslim nations and interest groups in the west, evident in the priority accorded their status in the forums of the United Nations and the mainstream media. This level of support often fails to meet Palestinian expectations, but is of a different magnitude to that provided to Australia's indigenous peoples.

ISRAEL

Israel is a multi-ethnic society inhabited by Jews who immigrated to the country from practically every corner of the globe, by non-Jews (mostly

Arabs who lived in the region for generations), and by overseas labour migrants who have begun arriving particularly in the last decade. Whereas Arabs can be viewed as indigenous to the region, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population is composed of either first- or second-generation immigrants. Most of the Jewish immigrants who arrived from the 1930s to the 1960s were refugees who came with little belongings and from a wide variety of countries of origin. The labour immigrants to Israel are part of the recent ever-growing flows of global migrants who arrive from a variety of less-developed and poor countries in search of better economic opportunities. Similar to other societies, labour immigrants in Israel have become a source of cheap labour mostly used to fill low-status and low-paying menial jobs. As will be argued and demonstrated in this book, the changing population of Israel and the immigration flows have resulted not only in a change in the composition of the population but also in rising socioeconomic inequalities among sub-populations and among ethnic groups.

Of Israel's 7.5 million residents, 75 per cent are Jews, 20 per cent are Arabs (mostly Muslims) who are citizens of Israel and the remaining are non-Jewish immigrants, including approximately 200 000 labour migrants who are neither permanent residents nor citizens. When these figures are put in an historical perspective, the dramatic increase in the population of Israel becomes apparent. Sixty-one years ago, when Israel gained its independence, its population numbered only 600 000 Jews and 156 000 non-Jews (mostly Muslim and a relatively small proportion of Christian Palestinian Arabs). Thus within six decades the population of Israel has increased by almost ten-fold and has become considerably more heterogeneous. Immigration has accounted for over 40 per cent of Israel's population growth and for approximately 50 per cent of the growth of the Jewish population.

Israel was established as the 'homeland for the Jewish people'. Consequently, the state of Israel relies on the criterion of *jus sanguinis* to determine the status of immigrants, providing for total inclusion and immediate acceptance of Jewish immigrants and their family members and exclusion of non-Jews. Unlike other immigrant societies, migration of Jews to Israel is viewed as a returning Diaspora rather than an economic migration. The returning Diaspora is characterized by two distinct features: first, immigrants feel affinity and sense of belonging with the host society even prior to immigration; second, the receiving society grants new immigrants immediate and unconditional acceptance.

The *jus sanguinis* system of inclusion is embodied in the Law of Return (1950) and the Nationality Law (1952), according to which every Jew (and family members of Jewish immigrants) has the right to settle in Israel and

to be awarded Israeli citizenship upon arrival. New arrivals are also provided with financial and institutional support to facilitate the transition from country of origin to country of destination. By contrast, Israel makes it almost impossible for non-Jewish immigrants to become permanent residents, let alone Israeli citizens. The definition of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and the supporting institutional structures are responsible for a large degree of the social, political and economic inequalities between Jews and Israeli Arabs and between citizens and non-Jewish labour migrants.

The Flows of Jewish Immigrants, Geocultural Disparities and the Role of Government

Since immigration has become a central defining characteristic of Israeli society and a major component of its collective identity one cannot understand social processes, especially the emergence of socio-economic inequalities and the stratification system in Israel, without considering the roles that immigration and immigration policies have played. There are five major periods of immigration and immigration policies that can be distinguished. These five periods are defined by specific historical periods associated with the establishment and development of the state. They are: pre-statehood immigration (until 1948); mass immigration immediately after the establishment of the state (1948–52); sporadic migration during the following three decades (1953–89); and mass migration of Soviet immigrants following the downfall of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) (1989–1995); scattered and declining Jewish immigration coupled by an increase of inflows of non-Jewish labour migrants (from 1996 to date).

The early flows of Jewish immigrants to Palestine came mostly from East and Central European countries at the turn of the nineteenth century with the ideological goal of establishing the homeland for the Jewish people. These early immigrants have settled throughout Israel and established, for the most part, their own rural and urban communities as well as the pre-state political, civic and economic institutions. Although the Jewish institutions and communities were largely separated from the Arab community inter-ethnic competition over land and labour began early, many years before the establishment of the state of Israel. While the nature of the competitive relations between Arabs and Jews has changed over the years, it is still one of the major features of Arab–Jewish relations in Israel and one of the sources of inequality between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

The pre-state era of Jewish immigration to Israel was characterized by low levels of societal and economic resources and by a low level of

centralized control. However, in 1948, when Israel came into being, the state became intensively involved in shaping and implementing immigration and absorption policies. The central role of the state was apparent in all spheres of immigrant life, especially during the period of mass migration immediately after the establishment of the state and after the war of independence (1948–52). During this period Israel was flooded by a massive influx of refugees from two major geo-cultural regions. The first comprised European survivors of the Holocaust and the second comprised refugees from Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In a little over four years, the Jewish population of Israel was almost tripled, from 600 000 to 1.5 million. In the history of the state, the largest numerical intake of immigrants occurred immediately after its establishment.

Far-reaching state involvement was required to cope with the combination of huge numbers, destitution among the refugees and ethnic diversity. During this period the immigrants were highly dependent on the state, which established tent towns and then large housing projects, mostly on the outskirts of major cities. Later, the state adopted a population dispersion policy which directed new immigrants (disproportionately from the countries of North Africa) to newly established development towns in the peripheral northern and southern regions. These towns were characterized by labour intensive industries and by manual low-skilled and low-paying jobs. To date, these towns disproportionately house immigrants of North African and Middle Eastern origin, have a scarcity of high-skilled and high-paying jobs, and are viewed as one of the major sources of ethnic disparity in Israel.

Post-1948 immigrants from Europe were able to advance more rapidly. Their smooth economic and social integration, relative to Asian-Africans, can be attributed to several factors including favourable treatment from their compatriots who were in positions of power and influence, better social networks and connections, and more suitable cultural orientation and professional skills that were needed in the expanding and growing modern Israeli economy. By contrast, immigrants from Central Asia and North Africa suffered multiple disadvantages. They lacked the social connections in the new country, they were directed to peripheral communities, they were often looked down upon as their cultural orientation and customs were deemed inappropriate and 'inferior' by the dominant population. They also lacked the formal education that was required for high-paying jobs.

During the following three decades (1953–88) immigration to Israel declined, but the state's capacity to assist the newly arrived considerably increased. A range of financial benefits were generously allocated to assist

integration. They included language instruction, job training, stipends and cash grants, subsidies to purchase a home, loans on favourable terms and tax exemptions. The immigrants who arrived during this period came from a wide range of countries and their choice of Israel as their destination was mainly influenced by push factors in their country of origin (for example, political unrest in countries such as Argentina, South Africa and Iran). Indeed, during this period there was relatively less pressure on the labour and housing markets and immigrants enjoyed relatively smooth incorporation into the economy and society.

The year 1989 marked a turning point in immigration to Israel. Following the downfall of the Soviet Union, Israel became the destination for almost one million Jewish immigrants and their family members (400 000 of whom arrived within two years, 1989–91). During less than one decade the population of Israel increased by 20 per cent. Although the new immigrants were highly educated and many had professional occupations they experienced substantial difficulty finding jobs appropriate to their qualifications.

To assist the immigrants the state established and enacted a new policy of 'direct absorption'. Immigrants received a 'basket of absorption' – cash and services – and had more freedom than earlier immigrants to decide how to utilize the available support. The 'basket of absorption' included a financial payment of approximately $10 000 (depending on the size of the family), monthly rental support that could be converted for mortgage payment, tax exceptions, free academic education for qualified students, Hebrew language courses and retraining programs. The immigrants could choose from one of a number of retraining programs, where to live, whether to buy an apartment or to rent one, whether to buy a car, Hebrew classes and when to enter the labour market. Although Soviet immigrants have experienced downward occupational mobility upon arrival, intermediate assessments suggest that they are closing the gap with Jews of Asian-African origin and have already passed the Arab population.

In 1991, when immigrants from the FSU were arriving in massive numbers, Israel was actively rescuing tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews (joining those who were rescued in 1984). The Ethiopians, unlike the 'Russians' had a very low level of formal education and professional training and came from a region characterized by adherence to traditional values. Similar to the Soviet immigrants, the Ethiopians received generous government support, somewhat larger than that given to the 'Russians' and with more supervision by the government. They continue to face considerable difficulty adjusting to Israeli society.

Non-Jewish Labor Migrants and Asylum Seekers

In recent decades Israel has become a destination for a large number of global labour migrants. Similar to many European societies, Israel has begun importing and recruiting non-citizen 'guest workers' to fill low-paying and low-status menial jobs that the local population is reluctant to take. Israel began relying on non-citizen labour after the 1967 six-day war, as increasing numbers of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip joined the Israeli labour force. The non-citizen Palestinian workers were concentrated in a few industrial sectors and were highly segregated in a relatively small number of blue-collar and low-status occupations. The Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank were day workers, mostly employed in construction, agriculture and services. By 1987 the number of daily commuters reached over 150 000 persons and comprised about 10 per cent of the Israeli labour force.

Following the first 'Intifada' (the Palestinian uprising in 1987) Israel enacted a policy of recruitment of foreign guest workers to replace Palestinian workers whose employment in Israel had become more problematic. Temporary guest workers from Romania, Turkey and later from China were recruited for construction; workers mostly from Thailand were brought in for agricultural jobs; and workers from the Philippines were imported for domestic services and care of the elderly. In 1987, the number of work permits issued to foreign workers by the Israeli Ministry of Labour numbered 2500, increased to 9950 in 1993 and reached over 100 000 by 1996. Along with the documented contract workers, many labour migrants from African, Latin American and several Asian and East European countries began arriving without work permits. Most of the undocumented foreign workers in Israel live in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area with very little possibility of becoming citizens.

Although non-citizen labour migrants have become an integral part of Israeli society and have established their own organizations and associations, they do not benefit from the Israeli welfare system. The foreign workers live in the poorest neighbourhoods of the city; work in the least desirable occupations; take low-paying menial jobs, quite often below the minimum wage and without any benefits. Not only do they suffer from the worst working conditions, but the undocumented are also under a constant threat of deportation. Nevertheless, similar to the experience of other labour-importing countries, labour migrants and asylum seekers (mostly from Darfur) continue to arrive, changing the ethnic composition of the Israeli labour force. Currently the number of guest workers in Israel is estimated as 200 000 (10 per cent of the Israeli labour force), half of whom are undocumented.

In recent years the number of asylum seekers, arriving mostly via Egypt, has increased markedly: from a recorded 502 in 2005 to 7703 in 2008. The issue is regarded as a 'temporary problem'. Some nationals, including Eritreans and Sudanese, are treated as deserving of asylum; others, when captured, are taken to their supposed point of entry and simply expelled, as were 122 people during June 2009. In 2008 it was planned to remove some 3000 illegal immigrants from Eilat, but an appeal to the High Court stalled the expulsion. In public discussion there is a blurring of the categories of asylum seekers and illegal labour immigrants.

AUSTRALIA

Over 40 per cent of Australians are either immigrants (24 per cent), or Australia-born with one or both parents born overseas (18 per cent). The overseas-born number 4.4 million, a majority of whom (62 per cent) have come from outside the main English speaking countries.

Like Israel, Australia had a very high intake in the immediate post-war years, its highest in per capita terms in the second half of the twentieth century – but whereas this intake more than doubled Israel's population between 1948 and 1952, the Australian intake over the same period, of a similar magnitude in numerical terms, increased the population by under 10 per cent. At only one time in Australia's history was there immigration on a scale to match Israel's intake in the period 1948–52; this occurred during the gold-rushes of the 1850s, when the population of the colony of Victoria increased sevenfold from 76 000 to 540 000.

In the more than 60 years since 1945, Australia's population tripled. The peaks in the intake were in the immediate post-war years, the late 1960s, the middle years of the 1980s and since 2003.

While Australia's years of peak intake have matched Israel's, the low points of the intake have not been as marked. In Israel the annual intake fell below 20 000 on 13 occasions, with a low of 9500 in 1986. In Australia the net annual intake since 1947 has fallen below 40 000 in only four years and below 60 000 in only 11 years.

Refugees and Selection Policy

Both countries have had a large intake of refugees since 1945, but the proportion was higher in Israel in the first decade after Independence. Australia's refugee intake was also at its peak in the post-war years, with the arrival of 170 700 displaced persons from Europe during 1947–52, compared to 199 000 refugee arrivals over the next two decades. There

was, however, no open door to refugees, who had first to pass a strict selection process and in the initial post-war period accept employment as directed by government officials. In the period 1975–85, 95000 refugees were admitted from Indo-China, most of whom came from Vietnam. Since 1985 Australia has maintained an annual humanitarian quota in the range of 11000 to 13000 for refugees and asylum seekers.

The problem of uninvited asylum seekers reaching the north-west of Australia in small boats (primarily from ports in Indonesia) has been a major political issue. Australia's policing of borders is perhaps the most rigid (and effective) in the western world, with an estimated 48 500 undocumented residents in Australia in 2008.

To deal with the small number of asylum seekers arriving by boat, since 1992 Australian governments (both Labor and Conservative) have developed the most draconian deterrent policies in the democratic world. These policies are rarely extended to those who arrive in Australia by air and having been admitted for a short-term visit to lodge claims for asylum. The elements of the policy have included mandatory detention of asylum seekers (including women and children) behind barbed wire and in remote locations while their claims to asylum were assessed (a process that could take up to three years). Detention centres were located inland, thousands of kilometres from major cities, and on islands off the Australian mainland, including a detention centre in Nauru. Those who were released into the community and subsequently lodged an appeal following adverse primary determination of their right to asylum were denied the right to work and to obtain welfare pending the outcome of their appeal – they survived on the support of church groups and others. While elements of the policy have been liberalized since 2005, mandatory and offshore detention remained in place in 2009.

For much of its history, while it focused on recruitment from the UK, Australia (like Israel) had difficulty in attracting sufficient numbers of immigrants and was required to invest heavily in recruitment and in providing subsidised travel. The quest for immigrants from the UK began in the 1830s and continued in times of high labour demand for 140 years. In the 1920s there were attempts to attract immigrants by the promise of cheap land, in the 1950s and 1960s government campaigns were based on the attractions of the Australian climate and £10 ($20) fares.

Australia did not have a Law of Return, but a *jus sanguinis* policy that bore similarity with Israel's criteria: where one policy was based on religion, the other was based on race (as understood at the time). Preference was particularly directed to nationals of the founding group, the British. By contrast, the peoples of Asia, Polynesia and Micronesia, Australia's immediate neighbours, were excluded, together with peoples from other

parts of the world designated 'coloured'. Alongside the British, the so-called Aryan peoples of Europe were welcomed; other Europeans were barely tolerated until after World War II, when a racial policy of 'Populate or Perish' led to admittance of large numbers of low-status 'white' immigrants from southern and eastern Europe to provide unskilled labour for economic growth and the human stock to make the country more defensible should future wars in the Asian region threaten.

Responding to international currents which made overt racial discrimination unacceptable by the 1960s, Australia avoided the pariah status imposed on the South African apartheid regime, gradually repealing the discriminatory legislation which controlled the lives of the indigenous peoples and the administrative practice which denied permanent residence to 'coloured' immigrants. A high point of change was reached in 1975 with the enactment of the Racial Discrimination Act section 9(1), which made it unlawful for any person to do any act:

> involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

In the 1960s and 1970s Australian policy thus underwent substantial change, in contrast with the lack of change in Israel, where major regional wars and their consequences dominated life in these years. While overt racial discrimination was removed from Australian legislation, vestiges remained in immigration policy and in the treatment of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. While some states passed legislation restoring land to indigenous Australians, the promise of uniform national legislation remained unfulfilled and the hoped for formal reconciliation of peoples did not eventuate.

Australia, like almost all countries of immigration, has adopted a policy which is designed to ensure that its established traditions are not altered as a consequence of immigration. Thus, applications for settlement in Australia begin with a statement of principles:

> The English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society. Australian society is also united through the following shared values: respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual; freedom of religion; commitment to the rule of law; Parliamentary democracy; equality of men and women; a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good; equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background.

Those seeking citizenship must take an oath to uphold the democratic traditions of the country and must pass a test taken in English requiring some knowledge of the country's history and culture.

There is a further element little recognized in the context of the discussion of the Australian settlement policy. One national group, has automatic right of residence in Australia, subject to health and character test: New Zealanders – citizens of another nation – need only to present their passport to gain entry and ongoing residence. No visa or selection test is involved. There are some 7 million Jews living outside Israel who have automatic right of settlement in Israel; there are over 4 million New Zealanders who have automatic right of residence in Australia, but they are, of course, not the only group entitled to permanent residence and citizenship. In 2008 there were an estimated 521 000 New Zealanders resident in Australia.

As Australia removed discriminatory racial criteria from its immigration policy it found that there was no longer a need to provide financial assistance to attract sufficient numbers in preferred immigrant categories. Indeed, the numbers seeking settlement in Australia have consistently exceeded the number of available visas. Australian governments have consequently been free to focus on developing selection criteria to maximize the economic benefit of immigration. Israel, with its priority to protect the Jewish character of the state, has been largely dependent on the operation of push factors.

A market driven change in both countries is the introduction of visas for workers admitted on a temporary basis to work in specific occupations. A major difference is that labour immigration in Israel is focused on unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, a major component of Australia's long-stay program is directed to meeting labour demand in a range of skilled occupations.

State Involvement in Immigration and Settlement

Immigration and settlement programs in Australia and Israel have been characterized by a high level of direct government involvement, but at a higher and more sustained level in Israel.

The peak of Australian government involvement was in the post-war decades. The government tightly regulated industry, supported new developments with tariffs, sent recruitment and selection teams overseas, provided on arrival accommodation for British and refugee immigrants, controlled employment placement of refugees and provided English language programs free of charge. Although some categories of immigrants were directed to work in rural areas in their first years, in the long term

the great majority settled in the capital cities. There were no develop-
ment towns to house immigrants on the Israeli model, although the urban
centres have become increasingly segmented into immigrant and native
born regions, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne with their combined
population in excess of 8 million and with the overseas born comprising
over 30 per cent of the total.

Since the 1970s there has been a decrease of direct state involvement
in the Australian economy and in the settlement (although not selec-
tion) of immigrants, with the exception of the refugee program. The
family reunion program requires support from family members and the
skilled intake operates on the basis that those admitted have immediately
employable skills and will establish themselves with minimal assistance
from the state. There is no Australian equivalent to match the generosity
of the 'basket of absorption'.

Status Hierarchies

There are hierarchies in all immigration programs. Hierarchies are based
on ethnicity (or race), language, educational attainment, recognizable
occupational qualifications, and cultural proximity to the dominant socio-
economic groups of the host society. In the immediate post-war period
the high status immigrant groups in Australia were Anglo-Celtic and
northern European, more highly regarded than the immigrants recruited
to fill unskilled and semi-skilled occupations from southern and eastern
European countries and some countries of the Middle East, notably
Lebanon and Turkey.

When immigration became possible from Asian countries the status
hierarchy underwent some modification. For a time Asian immigrants
were, in the eyes of many, assigned the lowest rung on the hierarchy, par-
ticularly while refugees from Indo-China dominated the intake from Asia
and sparked a major debate in 1984. A broad range of Asian countries
have been represented in the intake of the last two decades. Significant
numbers of these immigrants have qualifications which fit them for
middle-rung occupations and many have come with capital sufficient to
enable purchase of housing distant from traditional immigrant suburbs.
The hierarchy was further disrupted over the last decade by the association
in the public mind of the threat of terrorism and Islam. Surveys indicate
that there has been a shift in the status hierarchy, with the lowest ranking
of immigrants from the Middle East and Muslim countries.

CONCLUSION

Immigration has posed greater challenges for Israel than Australia, which is not to downplay the major difficulties faced in Australia in the management of its large immigration program. Israel's immigration intake at its peak from 1948–52 and 1989–94 was higher than the peak intake in Australia, measured in terms of per capita and, in some years (1949, 1990), in absolute numbers.

Israel has been less selective than Australia in its Jewish intake; indeed, selectivity in its settlement program has been almost entirely limited to encouragement of immigration from specific countries rather than selection from amongst an eligible pool of applicants, given the entitlement of all Jews to settle. As a consequence, Israel has had to integrate large numbers of immigrants with very little economic resources, some national groups characterized by low educational attainment and poor employment prospects. Further, Israel has had to meet these greater challenges with a markedly less developed economy, particularly in the immediate post-war decades.

Australia's harsh asylum policies developed in the 1990s point to a similarity with Israel. In both countries there is a long-standing fear of being swamped, in Australia by uncontrolled movements of peoples from Asia, in Israel from the Arab world, most immediately from the Palestinian population resident in the occupied territories and neighbouring countries. Israel has more immediate justification of fear in the context of ongoing armed conflict. Rigid policies adopted in Israel include the denial of residence to those Palestinians who fled their homes during war (notably during 1947–48) and the prevention of family reunion. The fear of being swamped is triggered differently in the two societies and manifests itself in different policies. In Australia disproportionate reaction is triggered by the arrival of unauthorized boats. In Israel there is no short-term trigger, rather an established policy which has its origin in war and conflict of long duration.

Australia's fear of Asia no longer leads to a denial of the right of immigration – indeed, in recent years immigrants from Asian countries have made up more than 30 per cent of the intake. The issue is now one of control (and fear of the loss of control) rather than the exclusion of whole categories of people. In Israel a total ban on the right of re-settlement and settlement to Palestinians and non-Jewish immigrants from the Arab world remains in place.

The major streams of immigration to Israel have resulted from push rather than pull factors – as in the case of the waves of refugees in 1948 and years immediately following and the migration following the collapse

of the Soviet Union. Since 2000 immigration has been a result of the linked factors of economic difficulty and antisemitism in South America, South Africa and Europe. Israel has, however, far from monopolized Jewish migration, even at times when the push factors were of maximal force. Thus, the United States attracted a higher proportion of immigrants with high educational qualifications from the Former Soviet Union than Israel. In recent years Australia has been the country of first choice for Jewish emigrants from South Africa.

In Australia pull factors are the key determinants. Given its attractiveness to immigrants, Australia is in a position to select carefully those best qualified to meet its immediate labour needs and it rejects more applications than it accepts. Its immigration system has become ever more market driven, with many costs transferred to the would-be immigrant. Thus applicants wishing to migrate to Australia must pay a fee for assessment of their application, entitlements of immigrants have been cut back, and new long-stay visa categories have been introduced.

In Australia, unlike Israel, those with temporary long-stay visas have the right to apply for permanent residence. This option facilitates optimal selection of permanent residents, for those with temporary visas have been able during their period of residence to provide evidence of capacity to integrate, unlike those selected overseas and without experience of Australia. Israel's denial of the option of permanent residence to labour immigrants may protect the Jewish character of the state, but it further compounds the difficulties of meeting labour demand with the best available workers. Australia's developing selection policy thus enhances the prospect of selecting 'quality' entrants, understood in terms of human capital and level of education and qualification, to meet the immediate needs of the labour market. Israel bears much higher recruitment and integration costs per settled immigrant, and immigration is less geared to optimize economic performance. Rather, it continues to focus on ethnicity as the basis for nation building, maintaining a process which once defined Australian policy.