

To: The Academia and Politics Research Group in The Institute for Zionist Strategies
From: Udi Lebel, Research Director

Subject: The beginning of research into 'Post-Zionism in Israeli Academia'

As part of the research project under construction, I have already started the empirical work that will lead to the completion of two of the future parts of the research. In the following, I shall describe the nature of each of the parts and its contribution to the final research.

1. The political economics of Post Zionism

This part plans to address the profile of the funds, grants, and research prizes available to researchers in the fields of the social sciences, the humanities, and law in Israel. Mapping and identification of the ideological dimension (generally covert) of these institutions may contribute to an understanding of the trend being researched. This means, that in contrast to individual-focused research (those relying on the identification of the personal standpoints of the writers, while examining their national stances in questionnaires, in-depth interviews, or textual analyses of their writings), an institutional-ideological approach will be adopted here, that assumes that "social facts" (in this case, research prizes and grants) influence a social dialog and even individual positions.

In this way, in addition to the widespread concept, based on the assumption that the spread of Post Zionism indicates that an increasing number of persons holding anti-nationalist (generally anti-Israeli) views are joining the ranks of the Israeli Academia, an axiom will be employed here (if only for analytical purposes). The axiom maintains that these Post Zionism stances reflect interests (conscious or sub conscious) of researchers who are required to put into words research aimed at identifying Israel as responsible for a variety of wrongs and failures. This would play a part in the decision making process intended to lead to the bread-and-butter of academic survival: international publications, research budgets, and leading academic platforms.

As a first stage, lists will be collected of funds and institutions providing financial support for the Israeli research community. We shall look at those who support research directed at international relations, studies of Israel, studies of Judaism, Middle East and Mediterranean studies, political sociology, political science, etc. They will be mapped, based on a range of parameters, while collecting historical and ideological information about them. For this purpose, the following multi-disciplinary practices will be required:

- 1 Review of organizations – Location of support funds and institutions, university databases, articles and publications indicating the supporting institution, Internet, etc.
- 2 Institutional history – Historical elements about the active funds.
- 3 A profile of the personalities heading funds that have been active for multiple years.
- 4 Textual analyses of all the position papers, research, and publications addressing the subject of Israel (directly or indirectly).
- 5 Interviews with senior decision-makers in these funds. (Interviews held by the research team, remarks found in archive searches in the media, and in academic panels throughout the world.)

- 6 Budgetary estimates regarding the magnitude of the support provided by each of these funds and institutions for Israeli research as a proportion of the total existing financial support.

The range of parameters will be entered into a computerized database and will be segmented into the following categories:

- * The country in which the fund is located.
- * The period of activity.
- * Ideological dimensions, etc.

2. What do Israeli students learn? Analysis of reading lists: Comparative research

As part of the understanding that the student experience is a significant element in the crystallization of the citizen's ideological identity, we will examine the reading lists, and the changes to it over the years, in the dominant mandatory courses of the faculties of the humanities, social sciences, and law. The intention is to conduct in greater depth the research I have carried out in the past. This is in order to understand to what extent the trend of the adoption of anti-nationalist items (which are Post Modern in nature) in the Israeli learning experience is spreading. The research will be conducted on a historical basis while comparing reading lists taken from a representative sample of all the Israeli universities as well as the academic colleges (those that began activities at the beginning of the 1990s). Courses of an ideological nature will be examined, such as: Introduction to Political Thought, Introduction to Politics and Government, Introduction to Sociology, etc.

Subsequently, we will examine seminars offered by all of these departments, and determine the number of those based on Post Zionism axioms as compared to those that are not.

Statistical evaluation will indicate the weight of the post nationalist narrative in student socialization, based on segmentation of all details of the material read. This will be done after definition of criteria that will be formulated for the purpose of analyzing the various texts. The data will be compared to the results of research to be conducted in parallel (that will include analysis of the reading lists over an identical period of time) in foreign universities, both in departments of social science and the humanities and in studies of Israel and Judaism, in Europe and the US. In this way we can discover whether this is merely the adoption of a world-embracing fashion, or whether the Israeli proportions produce de-legitimization of nationalist concepts to a greater or lesser extent than in the Western world.

These two parts in the research will be commenced at the beginning of June by a team that I shall lead. In order to prepare for proper execution of the research, and to avoid methodological pitfalls, I shall be pleased to receive cooperation in the form of meetings, email correspondence, and by any other means. Furthermore, any active cooperation, including help in creating databases (both for the academic support funds and for locating reading lists) will be welcomed.

The empirical work, comprising both qualitative and quantitative elements (creation of databases and of statistical segmentation) will be carried out by a team of research assistants. Here also, if one of you wishes to participate, or send one of their assistants or students who show interest in the matter, they will be welcomed.