

# Mordechai Vanunu: “The Atomic Spy” as a Nuclear Threat to Discourse in Israeli Society

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**Abstract**—Using the case of Israeli Atomic Spy Mordechai Vanunu as an example, this study sought to examine social response to political deviance whereby social response can be mobilized in order to achieve social control. Mordechai Vanunu, a junior technician in the Dimona Atomic Research Center, played a normative role in the militaristic discourse while working in the “holy shrine” of the Israeli defense system for many years. At a certain stage, however, Vanunu decided to detach himself from this collective and launched an assault on this top-secret circle. Israeli society in general and the security establishment in particular found this attack intolerable and unforgivable. They presented Vanunu as a ticking time bomb, delegitimized him and portrayed him as “other”. In addition, Israeli enforcement authorities imposed myriad prohibitions and sanctions on Vanunu even after his release from prison – “as will be done to he who desecrates holiness.” Social response to Vanunu at the time of his capture and trial was studied by conducting a content analysis of six contemporary daily newspapers. The analysis focused on use of language and forms of expression. In contrast with traditional content analysis methodology, this study did not just look at frequency of expressions of ideas and terms in the text and covert content; rather, the text was analyzed as a structural whole, and included examination of style, tone and unusual use of imagery, and more, in order to uncover hidden messages within the text. The social response to this case was extraordinarily intense, not only because in this case of political deviance, involving espionage and treason, Vanunu’s actions comprised a real potential threat to the country, but also because of the threat his behavior posed to the symbolic universe of society. Therefore, the response to this instance of political deviance can be seen as being part of a mechanism of social control aiming to protect world view of society as a whole, as well as to punish the criminal.

**Keywords**—Militarism, political deviance, social construction, social control.

## I. INTRODUCTION

MORDECHAI Vanunu was a technician in the Nuclear Research Center in Dimona, Israel. In September 1986, the London newspaper, *The Sunday Times*, published an exclusive interview with him, in which he exposed details about Israel’s atomic plans, including photos and sketches. A short time after the interview, Vanunu disappeared. On November 10, 1986, the Israeli government announced that Vanunu was being held in Israel under a court-issued arrest warrant. The statement also claimed that for reasons of *sub justice*, further details would not be released and the rumors that he was abducted on English soil were denied as baseless. However, a short time later, Vanunu successfully provided the curious Israeli public with the truth: on one of his trips to the

courthouse, he pressed his palm against the car window showing the following handwritten lines in English:

“Vanunu M  
was hi-jacked in Rome. ITL  
30.9.86. 21.00  
Came to Rome by BA fly 504”

Questions arise concerning how Mordechai Vanunu was represented in Israeli public discourse. To some he seemed to have been an ideological criminal worthy of denunciation and punishment and to others as an existential threat analogous to those that would compel setting off Doomsday weapons. This multifaceted issue is explored in the contemporary reports of his arrest, the way the trial was managed, sentencing and more. The limitations placed upon Vanunu (and those that were requested and denied) may have been a reflection of the actual danger he posed to Israel; alternatively, they may have represented a threat to Israeli discourse rather than a threat to the survival of the country. Supervision over the person of Vanunu, therefore, was either for the purpose of protecting Israeli society from him, or in order to protect the Israeli establishment’s militaristic and victim mentality. In other words, this was either a matter of physical protection or a form of cultural protection. Vanunu, therefore, can be said to have sinned twice: the actual sins of his actions and the symbolic sin such that he desecrated the “sacred” without expressing remorse.

This study is based upon materials gathered from print newspapers: *Yediot Aharonot*, *Maariv*, *Haaretz*, *Al Hamishmar*, *Davar*, *HaOlam Hazeh* for the period between September 1986, the time of his first interview with *The Sunday Times*, and June 2011, when reporting about him was at its peak. The qualitative methodology applied in the study includes two analysis methods: content analysis and literary linguistic analysis. Content analysis leads to systematically produced conclusions from a particular text, conclusions having validity that can be repeated [1]. The study is also based upon categorical analysis of the written material.

### A. Discourse as a Social Control Mechanism

The theoretical framework of this study concerns issues of social control and its various expressions. The central characteristic of social control is its all-encompassing nature, and it does not focus only on offender law enforcement. Knowledge and the spreading of knowledge by means of discourse can be regarded as elements of social control.

Foucault [2] views knowledge as something dispensed by those in power for the purposes of conserving existing societal power relations. It is not augmented by education alone, but it is produced and disseminated by a variety of agencies and

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practices. Knowledge, therefore, should not be regarded as a production of the minds of geniuses, but, rather, as a product of combining the search for information with power. Knowledge cannot be isolated from societal power relations and power brokers distribute knowledge to those without power; as a result, there are more studies on women, blacks, homosexuals and other minority groups than studies of those in power.

Discourse is not language. Language comprises a collection of rules creating an objective description of reality, while discourse is the means by which language is used. Discourse makes use of language in order to highlight an issue of particular significance (esthetic, political, ideological) [3]. In examining discourse, Foucault [2] focuses on compulsion and limitation, and observes that, while individuals can express a number of sentences, they often do not choose to express them within a framework with narrow well-defined boundaries. According to Foucault, discourse is a kind of violence that is directed toward reality and therefore, he sees it as a social control mechanism. The place of discourse as a tool of social control allows us to understand, by means of Foucaultian arguments, there is no field that is not discourse; in other words, everything is constructed by means of discourse. Foucault did not ignore the existence of material objectivity, but he clarified that we can experience it only by discourse and therefore the size of one's body, for example, is estimated by means of shapes in a discourse that sketches out the complete shape of the human body.

Production of discourse in every society passes through a kind of control and at the same time it is also dispersed. The processes limiting discourse are many and complex, and Foucault [2] focuses on three: taboo, distinguishing between insane and sane, distinction between truth and lies. The first process, taboo, comprises the prohibition limiting discourse on specific topics, for example on sex or death, as well as limitations regarding the ways in which these are discussed. In the second process, distinction between the speech of the insane and the speech of the sane, the former does not count, only those of the sane merit attention. The third process is the division between truth and lies. Those found in positions of authority are perceived as experts and they are the ones who can tell the truth. Those who are not in power positions are regarded as those who do not speak truth. Foucault talks about truth as a concept supported by power brokers, such as universities, publishers, scientific institutions, etc. Discourse is not just the act of talking, therefore, but also the practice of power.

#### *B. Militaristic Discourse in Israel*

Consistent with Foucault's [2] view of discourse, the question arises regarding whether militaristic discourse is connected only with Israel's security needs or if it also encompasses the Israeli cultural world view. Social control apparently does not only include mechanisms intended to prevent perversion but also mechanisms that seek to fashion the individual in the spirit of the society. In Israel, Ben-Eliezer [4] argued that the army had an important role in engendering

nationalism, solidarity and a sense of belonging, a phenomenon characterized by the way Israeli society has been defined as "a nation in uniform". Interestingly, Ben Gurion's perception of security was very broad and included not only army activities, but also settlement, economic independence, professional training, industry and more. In a particular way, it appears that "a nation in uniform" was also the cultural framework within which generations of Israelis were educated.

Militarism in Israel has undoubtedly been linked with the image of Israel's powerful army and embodied in the image and qualities of the "New Jew." The New Jew is a clear symbol of national revival and Israeli culture that serves as an anti-thesis to European Diaspora culture represented by the "Old Jew", the weak, feminized Jew involved in nonproductive work. The distinction between the Old Jew and the New Jew was important in the early days of the State of Israel in many ways because it expressed the formative Zionist principle of "eliminating the Diaspora" from the Jewish psyche. As in every revolution, the Zionist revolution demanded burning bridges to the past, to the Diaspora. There were a variety of ways in which this was accomplished; for example, avoiding giving babies names that were associated with Diaspora Jews [5].

Militaristic discourse in Israel has also been connected with the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the most difficult expression of Diaspora reality and it supported the idea that it is virtually impossible for Jews to live a normal life in the Diaspora; Holocaust experiences, therefore, comprised a decisive lesson in security for the State in its formative years and is connected with the national imperative to protect Holocaust survivors and justify doing whatever necessary to protect other potential victims. This perception served to catalyze and crystallize development of militaristic discourse in Israeli society, and thus to fashion it as a central component in Israeli culture. The militaristic discourse and Israeli victim identity are interwoven and intersecting in many aspects, one particularly arising around the subject of the nuclear program.

#### *C. Mordechai Vanunu's Background*

Mordechai Vanunu was born in Marrakesh, Morocco, on October 13, 1954 and attended elementary school with both Jewish and Muslim children. In 1963, he immigrated to Israel with his family and he completed his schooling in Beer Sheva. After completing his army service, he began academic studies at Tel Aviv University but that was cut short by the Yom Kippur War and financial difficulties. In 1976, he was offered a technician job at the Nuclear Research Center and completed a technician course. At the same time, he began academic studies at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. His supervisors were pleased with his work and he was promoted to night shift team leader. The first Lebanon War, the Bus 300 Affair and relations between Arabs and Jews in university, all brought him to the decision to leave his job at the NRC and to tell others about what was going on there. Shortly before he resigned, he took photographs of various departments in which he worked [6].

In 1985, Vanunu left Israel to travel around the world. In Australia, he joined the Anglican Church and participated in groups discussing nuclear weapons. In September 1986, he contacted *The Sunday Times* in London. At first, he offered the newspaper anonymous information on the NRC, but when they refused to use it, he decided to open up. He was interviewed by scientists and a number of journalists for *The Sunday Times* [6].

The information he exposed related mainly to the quality and extent of materials produced in Dimona. He provided details about the reactor capacity and indicated that capacity had risen to 70 megawatts and later to the level of 150 megawatts; in other words, capacity rose by a factor of four or five over the years [6]. With this information, it was possible to conclude that the filter system of the reactor may have been changed to one operated by heavy water.

Vanunu also reported information about the amount of lithium prepared in Dimona over the years, which reached 170 kg between 1984 and 1987. Vanunu did not tell – apparently did not know – which nuclear weapons were in Israeli hands. He assumed that the State of Israel had developed nuclear weapons for battle [6].

On September 30, 1986, he was abducted in Rome by Mossad, and on October 5, *The Sunday Times* published a huge article on the NRC. The article included photos Vanunu had taken at the NRC and information he had shared with British scientists. The article concluded that Israel is the sixth largest nuclear power in the world after the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France. According to *The Sunday Times* article, Israel possessed between 100 and 200 atomic bombs, thermonuclear bombs and neutron bombs.

## II. VANUNU'S ARREST, THE TRIAL AND CONDITIONS OF HIS RELEASE

### A. The Arrest

At the end of October 1986, the Prime Minister's Office published an announcement claiming that nothing was known of the fate of Mordechai Vanunu, that according to *The Sunday Times*, he was brought to Israel and was being held there [7]. It was later reported [6] that the Australian vicar, Rev. John MacKnight, arrived in Israel to search for Vanunu. On November 4, 1986, Police Minister Haim Bar-Lev stated that Vanunu was not being held in any police facility or prison. On November 10, about two weeks after this statement, the government of Israel announced that Mordechai Vanunu was being held in Israel legally with a court order issued after a discussion in the presence of a defense lawyer he chose for himself. Holding Vanunu clandestinely in jail is not illegal; both Criminal Procedure Law and The Courts Law allow for clandestine imprisonment in certain cases and the conditions for that apparently existed in this case. On November 11, a senior official in the Prime Minister's Office stated: "We will not disclose how Vanunu was transported."

Various individuals, among them former security officials, chose to respond to the conduct of the government and security agencies in this case. For example, MK Yossi Sarid

wrote:

"All that happens to Vanunu legally is coming to him, but one thing must not take place – he must not disappear as if the earth opened up and swallowed him [...] In a reputable country people do not disappear, even if they are traitors and enemies of the people. The Christian priest is allowed to look for his sheep who shamefully lost his way and we are not compelled to give him an accounting, but they must tell us where our black sheep is because we are not a herd. The veil of secrecy is not lifting for some reason, and it is still heavy. Who wants to hide behind it?" [8].

A few days later, there was a more strongly worded criticism:

"There was a time when it was possible to abduct Israeli citizens abroad and to bring them secretly to Israel and imprison them for long periods of time without their friends and family knowing a thing about it. [...] There was a time when it was possible to build secret plants and security roads in the dark of night and even in the light of day without the residents of Israel having a clue about it. [...] But those days are gone and not just in Israel but in the entire Western world, it is almost impossible to keep secrets for long. [...] On Sunday, thank God, the government announced that Vanunu is in Israel. [...] The text of the announcement as it was read by Elyakim Rubenstein shows that the government wants to keep Israelis in the dark [9].

### B. The Trial

Vanunu's trial began in Jerusalem District Court on August 30, 1987. It was conducted behind closed doors. Vanunu was brought to court wearing a motorcycle helmet and police car sirens blasted at the entrance to the court in order to muffle his shouting out to reporters. For security reasons, the trial was conducted on the ground floor of the District Courthouse on Salah-el-Din Street in Jerusalem. The windows were sealed shut with large wooden boards, rope was stretched out along the path leading to the courthouse entrance and the corridor to the courtroom was blocked as well in order to prevent any possibility of seeing Vanunu or making contact with him.

The judges and all those involved in the trial complained about the heavy heat in the sealed room but security officers refused to remove the wooden planks from the windows. Before each session, Vanunu was brought to the courthouse early in the morning before anyone was present in the building and he waited in a special room set up for him in the courthouse jail [10]. It was also reported that he was transported in a police van with the windows painted white. Other police cars with sirens accompanied the van, and they prevented any contact between the suspect and the many journalists that amassed around the building.

Vanunu was in absolute isolation, and in July 1995, the Beer Sheva District Court decided that he would remain in solitary confinement. A representative of the prosecution, Nili Arad, determined that Vanunu was liable to cause much damage to state security and therefore they needed to treat him

differently from other prisoners [11].

### *C. Conditions of Release*

In February 2004, after having served 18 years in prison, it was decided to release Mordechai Vanunu under restrictive conditions. Yechiel Horev, Director of Security of the Defense Establishment (Malmab) recommended that Vanunu enter administrative detention immediately upon his release from prison but this was rejected in March 2004 by the Attorney General Manny Mazuz and the State Prosecutor Edna Arbel. The government decided that Vanunu would be required to inform the police of his place of residence, that he would not be issued a passport, and that he could not hold meetings in person with foreigners or be in contact with them by means of fax or email.

Horev then fought to prevent the released prisoner from leaving Israel, and to put him under supervision and restrictive conditions that effectively constituted house arrest. Horev was considered the strictest of all security officials in Israel, mainly in what touched security of institutions such as the nuclear reactor or the Israel Institute for Biological Research in Nes Ziona. He suspected that if Vanunu left the country, he would continue to harm, harass or arouse public discourse on nuclear policy of Israel and the nuclear weapons he argued she possessed. Security sources agreed with Horev that Vanunu continued to pose a potential risk to state security [12]. Horev fired Amiram Levine from his senior position in Malmab because, according to him, Levine failed to perform his duties and did not sufficiently censor the Vanunu case protocols released for publication by the Supreme Court [13].

About three months after his release, the Supreme Court rejected his appeal against the restrictions placed upon him. Among other things, the Court determined that:

“There is no doubt that Vanunu still wishes as strongly as before to expose secret details about the Nuclear Research Center and remains determined to do so. His long period of imprisonment did not diminish, or cause him to forget, his desire and intention to expose and publicize secret information that he had gathered” [14].

It appears that Vanunu’s preoccupation with his lack of freedom of movement became central to discussions of the seriousness of his actions. Vanunu repeatedly violated the terms of his release: he did not provide information about those with whom he met, did not get permission to talk with foreigners, he tried to leave Israel twice and he participated in chats and used email. There was a kind of couples dance going on between Vanunu and the establishment, whereby the former systematically violated almost all the restrictions placed upon him and the latter quickly swooped down upon him as if they had just discovered buried treasure. In April 2005, after he was told that the Interior Minister signed an order lengthening by one year the prohibition against leaving Israel, Vanunu boycotted the discussion held in the Knesset Law and Justice Committee concerning the restrictions placed on him.

On July 2, 2007, the Jerusalem District Court sentenced Mordechai Vanunu to six months in prison for violating the

conditions of his release. In the verdict, Judge David Tzur wrote:

“The prisoner has not expressed remorse for his actions. I gave him the opportunity to speak to the court at the end of the trial and he chose to remain silent. At the same time, it is not easy to hand down a prison sentence for his repeated crimes.” [15].

Dan Eldar presented the position of the Prosecution when he said:

“It is not a happy moment when a man who has already sat in jail is sentenced to additional prison time, but there was no real choice. He mocked Supreme Court orders. The information this person has is dangerous for each and every one of us, and therefore the orders handed down to him are proper and proportional” [15].

Vanunu was presented as a dangerous “other” thereby drawing a clear boundary between him and Israeli society as a whole. His conversion to Christianity did not help attenuate this view of him as “other”. By publicizing his family’s rejection of him, his outsider status was cemented. His father had once said:

“I do not acknowledge Mordechai as my son, I have not seen him for years. Thank goodness I have other children [...] Even if Moti will spend years in jail, I will not visit him.” [16].

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“The Israel government’s abuse of Vanunu, entering its fifth year, is without precedent and perverts all legal norms. From a proud nation marking 60 years since its establishment and that prides itself on following legal norms and the morals of the enlightened world, it would have been expected to show courage and allow Mordechai Vanunu to finally be given his freedom” [17].

On December 28, 2009, Vanunu was arrested in Jerusalem after having met with a Norwegian professor, thus violating the order prohibiting him from meeting with foreigners. In July 2009, the Supreme Court rejected Atomic Spy’s appeal against the extension of the order prohibiting him from leaving Israel that would expire in October 2010. In this session, Vanunu said: “Give me a passport and let me travel in the world and get out from under the control of the Shabak and the Mossad. I am a human being and I want my freedom.”

“The relationship of Israeli society with Vanunu raises the question regarding what is more dangerous to Israel: Vanunu or the bomb?” [4, p. 16]. One can add that the Israeli Mossad did not permit public discussion, not even related to illnesses contracted by reactor employees or the safety of nuclear reactors. The essence of the discussion was silence and any violation of that was accompanied by more silence.

### III. VANUNU AND THE NATURE OF DEVIANCE

#### *A. Medicalization of Deviant Behaviors*

Medicalization involves attaching the label “ill” to the political pervert. Conrad and Schneider [18] argue that health and illness are defined in accordance with cultural knowledge and adaptation to society. This position provides important

insight into determinations of mental health and mental illness. The sociological perception sees in illness and disease factors that follow a process of social construction; that is, they do not exist without societal recognition whereby disease is a physical phenomenon and illness is its societal expression, the societal definition. The ill need medical help.

In the case of Mordechai Vanunu, relevant parts of his personal diary were disclosed. Various newspapers, among them *Headline*, presented interpretations and analyses of the diary. Vanunu's diary, wrote Nachum Barnea in *Headline* [19]: "reflects the torture of the lonely man with low self confidence, who was miserable in his single years, miserable in his family and is anxious around women."

"The only conclusion possible from all this [from reading the diary] is that more than the reactor in Dimona requiring improved vigilance on the part of security officials, he needs a good psychologist. Mordechai Vanunu's diary is a long and detailed, sometimes heart rending, call for help. It does not show a man responsible for his actions but a man who needs therapy. It appears that Vanunu himself was aware of this need, and sees in the writing of his diary a form of therapy. Keeping a diary promised him that they would go easy on him" [19].

There was a clear attempt to present Vanunu's complex personality and instability, and mainly his being an extremist. For example:

"The picture that appears is of a Yeshiva student who was born into Jewish religious observance in Marrakech but who was baptized in Sydney. A student from a depressed neighborhood who arrived on campus a Kahanist hawk but later founded a student cell supporting a Palestinian state [...] a junior technician working at the Dimona reactor in the Negev, a holder of atomic secrets of his country having lofty ideals but who sold his exalted principles for half a million bucks" [20].

The prosecutor in his case, Uzi Hasson, described him thus:

"The suspect is introverted, egocentric and lonely. His psychological make-up is complex and complicated, and over his life it became clear that he did not find his place in Israeli society or in the state. As the suspect's movement to the left grew and his ideas approached those of the Arab world, his hostility toward the Nuclear Research Center grew; it strengthened yet more during the Lebanon War. Leaving work at the NRC, and the humiliating experiences that preceded that, cemented in the suspect's heart the decision he had made in 1985 to totally disengage from the state and everything connected with it and to develop a new life in another country and it awakened within him the desire for revenge with everything that caused him harm [...] Vanunu is an intelligent man who, in spite of the social background in which he was raised, made huge efforts to advance and achieve for himself a respectable status higher than that of his parents. Unfortunately, he did not succeed and at a quite early age, still found himself straying in life. The routine of his work as a technician at the NRC and the

lack of expectation or prospect for advancement at work led him to the conclusion that he would not achieve anything in his lifetime. From here, awoke within him the desire for fame, to do something significant that would take him out of his gray anonymity and prove to everyone his unique value" [21].

The verdict also noted that in his personal diary there was no support for his claim that he acted from strong ideological impulses. "He tried to show strength by exposure" was the title of an article in *Yediot Aharonot* published the day after his release from jail.

"Before Mordechai Vanunu became famous for revealing nuclear secrets, he had looked for other ways to become well known. For purposes of exposure, or perhaps also as a source of income, he offered his services as a nude model for art classes at Beer Sheva University of the Negev [...] without blushing, the beginner model disclosed for this writer every detail of the workshops and how comfortable he felt with strange eyes scanning his body while he stood naked as the day he was born on the raised platform. The only thing that bothered him, he told her, was that the room was cold. But the workshop students were not happy with him as a model... Following this disappointment Vanunu cancelled the nude photos that were about to be published in a newspaper, and not long afterward, he left Israel, where he began his new career in exposure" [22].

An article published in *Maariv* on January 19, 1986, reported that Vanunu confessed in his diary: "Losing millions in the stock market broke me. . ." and in his notes he appeared to be a lonely man who was unable to relate to women: "I remember weighing whether or not to sue the television for invasion of privacy." It was also said that Vanunu wrote his diaries mainly during the night shift at the reactor in Dimona. In the writings we see the image of an indecisive man. Among his many psychological problems, his loneliness stands out and his inability to establish relationships with women: "Vanunu's hostility to the state was derived from his personal frustrations and his emotional loneliness and from his sense of failure" [23].

An article profiling Vanunu, entitled, "The Man Who Crossed All Boundaries" concluded that:

"The Devil entered him and started to kick. What pushed Mordechai Vanunu? I think a kind of inner force to compensate for deprivation and lack. To overcome his self-image and change his image totally. The Arab students gave him what he wanted and he rewarded them by managing zealous battles. You saw before you a man who was undergoing a metamorphosis [20].

The Supreme Court also chose to assess the sources of his behaviors, his hostility toward the state arising from his personal frustrations and emotional loneliness and sense of failure [23].

The title of the article, "State Secrets on a Silver Platter", signifies more than anything the contrasts between Vanunu and loyalty versus militarism. Israel's first president, Haim Weizmann, had said that the state was not given to the people

on a silver platter, a statement that was also used by Nathan Alterman in his poem, "The Silver Platter", that was perceived as part of poetry that glorified the military:

"After retiring from his job he decided to travel outside the country and disconnect himself from everything associated with Israel and from being a Jew. In Sydney, he converted and there met a man named Jarraud who was connected with PLO member Sirtawi who was later murdered. Vanunu told Jarraud about his work at the NRC and Jarraud convinced him that the story was worth a lot of money and that he must expose it" [21].

#### *B. Politicizing the Act*

Classifying Vanunu's acts as political comprises assigning ideological attributions connecting his behaviors and symbolic world as being in conflict with the Israeli symbolic world and, of course, the government perception of security discourse as a symbol of the degree of Israeli collective belonging. Such ideological attribution allows delegitimization of Vanunu and also of the group to which he belonged. For example, students who knew him said that "He was an activist for the extreme left and talked in favor of the PLO" [24]. Even more cynically, "Member of Knesset Geula Cohen turned to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and asked him to check if there are leftists in the security forces. Leftists, according to Geula Cohen, poison the wells, they are traitors, they are a true national security threat" [25]. In an editorial in the newspaper, *Al HaMishmar*, a different approach was presented:

"Vanunu failed because he erred in his analysis of the problem. He thought that people do not know enough about nuclear development in Israel and that if they knew the truth, they would rebel [...] The problem is different: the Israeli public does not want to know" [26]

In the Supreme Court verdict, the judges refer to ideological offences and their characteristics. In his comments, Moshe Negbi wrote that the climax of the verdict lies in President of the Supreme Court, Meir Shamgar's open confrontation with the phenomenon of criminal ideology. Shamgar points out that in Paragraph 16 of the Criminal Code the motive for a crime does not increase or decrease the issue of criminal responsibility. However, he chose to emphasize that ideological crime is not just against the law but also stains our democratic foundations. Judge Shamgar added that criminal ideology is a recipe for anarchy and that the victim is the general public, innocent citizens who the criminal turns into experimental subjects for the realization of his ideology [23].

Vanunu's brother, Meir, also related to the reasons for his actions: "He acted on his beliefs. He operated from belief and the idea that he can break the conspiracy of silence in all that concerns nuclear weapons in Israel" [27]. Vanunu, himself, repeatedly emphasized his ideological motives:

"Everyone knows that I am in jail, not because I committed rape, robbery or murder. I am sitting in jail because of my ideology. Considering my background and the things that I know, it was inevitable that I would do what I did. That is why I did not and do not intend to enter into any deals. In the end, they gave in, and they let

me out of isolation. I beat them [...] I took care of this society, in spite of the fact that Israel likes to present me as public enemy number one and as a monster. I wanted to save the Israeli population from disaster of nuclear war, and they turned me into a traitor and spy [...] I want to live in the United States. I want to work for peace organizations. I will continue to fight against nuclear weapons but without breaking the law" [28].

This process of attributing political motives to Vanunu and his actions was limited to the courtroom or among his friends and relatives. The political and security establishment took care to present his behavior as having potentially disastrous implications for Israeli society and his pathological motives.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The Vanunu Affair raises a number of questions: why did the State of Israel not request his extradition? Why was he held in isolation for 11 and a-half years, more than any other prisoner? Why did the regime refuse to allow his picture to be taken? In fact, many years after he disclosed the secrets of the reactor, is Vanunu still seen as a threat or is this just what happens to someone who violates the "sacred"? In this regard, it is worth remembering that the name Vanunu turned into a code name. For example, in the trial of General Yitzhak Yaakov, Malmab Director Yechiel Horev said that Yaakov was worse than Vanunu. Similarly, opacity became a sacred goal to the point of losing all sense of proportion. Reuven Pedatzur wrote that:

"even the illnesses of the reactor employees in Dimona became state secrets and more seriously, in Israel there is no talk about the dangers inherent in a nuclear accident or the level of security in the nuclear plant next to Dimona [...] The many mishaps that took place in Dimona should have turned on a warning light" [29].

In his writing on militarism, Kimerling [30] illustrates that military might is nothing more than a tool in service of a goal, the goal being acquisition of security for citizens of the state. In Israel, this goal is apparently part of a more complex reality in which the militaristic society is recruited to promote cultural goals, and because of this there is the need to invoke the concept of national security even when there is no real threat.

When the IDF was founded and decisions made regarding the nature of the army, the leadership considered various possibilities. They decided to establish a popular army as opposed to a professional one, and to prefer quantity of recruits over quality. The idea of building a popular army was undoubtedly related to the perception of the IDF as a tool for building national identity and unity. Mass enlistment is presented as related to national security, but it has a social role. Consistent with this, following the Six Day War, when security considerations were mixed in with ideological considerations, members of Gush Emunim, filled with messianic passion, also presented national security arguments when they settled in Yehuda and Shomron and Gaza.

Israel's nuclear capability was not a subject of public discussion and the silence had wide consensus. Even questions

regarding the safety of the nuclear reactor were removed from the public agenda, even though they represented, according to Kimerling, a serious existential problem no less than national security itself. The silence led to a circle of secrecy. Vanunu was a member of the circle but he did not internalize the taboo and he acted out against it.

Vanunu, the son of immigrants in Beer Sheva, a junior technician working at the Nuclear Research Center in Dimona, made fun of the security arrangements at this sensitive plant and made it clear that he did not agree with the attitude of silencing. At the end of his training course, Vanunu said a number of participants were let go, one because of substance abuse, two because of relatives who were leftists and another whose father worked at HaBima (a theatre company in Tel Aviv).

The state that sanctifies the principle of national security called Vanunu to account, not only for his actions, but for the symbolic significance of them as well. The state and its agents applied social supervision for which the essence and purpose comprised the consequences for the individual who violates the sacred.

Berger and Luckmann [31] speak about the concept of symbolic universe. This is the world that is taken for granted by everyone, individuals and groups. The symbolic world includes values, norms, perceptions of the world, myths and life-styles. When individuals take their world for granted, other symbolic worlds are felt to be threatening.

Perversion, according to Berger and Luckmann, are related to a variant life-style. People can apply various mechanisms in order to protect their symbolic world: One possibility is therapy whereby the other is induced to change and adopt the accepted symbolic world and then there is no threat. The second is extermination; this does not mean physical extermination but symbolic extermination, an attempt to show that living according to other symbolic worlds is not to be taken seriously, that there is nothing to relate to in them. The degree of our response to perversion does not arise from actual damage but from symbolic damage caused merely by raising questions and putting them onto the public agenda [31]. Here the perversion is not just crossing boundaries, but questioning them, and therefore there is a harsh response to that.

In light of this perspective, it is thus possible to say that the Israeli establishment, especially the security establishment, got rid of Vanunu symbolically mainly by means of medicalization, but at the same time, reacted in a way that signaled that there needs to be protection from danger. In other words, the symbolic extermination is a means of preventing physical extermination (even if not expressed openly) of the Jewish people. The nuclear facility, apparently, was meant to protect the Jewish People who already experienced extermination during the Holocaust period, and not inconsequentially made Ben Gurion face the security issue as top priority and also speak about the potential danger of extermination and the extermination that had already taken place. In one of his letters, Ben Gurion wrote to Israeli scientist Shmuel Sambursky:

“The dead will not praise God and if we are in danger

of extermination, sadly we are in danger, and Hitler’s Holocaust was just the largest and most horrid episode of all attempts to exterminate us throughout our history – to a certain extent this is the most fateful of our existence” [32].

Mordechai Vanunu took part in the militaristic effort and even worked at the “sacred site” until he decided to talk with a different voice, subversive and anti-militaristic, that presents the reactor as a danger to Israel and the world. There are those who say that his actions harmed one of the deterrence foundations of the State of Israel and for that reason it was necessary to punish him in order to deter others within Israel from causing damage and destruction and to make clear that hurting the circle of secrecy will be punished.

Militaristic discourse is part of discourse of hegemony in Israeli society and its significance is much broader. In the spirit of Antonio Gramsci’s perception [33], one could say that in every society there is a hegemonic group controlling not by means of force but by broad agreement among the citizens of the state with goals the state seeks to achieve. Such a hegemonic group can be said to apply three-pronged control: of central state institutions, of central civil institutions and by nesting central contents into the culture. Of course, one can talk about the control over the consciousness of people living in the society. Such, for example, the rate of recruitment to the IDF is not the result of law enforcement strictly speaking, but by the influence of cultural mechanisms of great intensity.

In the framework of this social control, the hegemonic group succeeds in formulating the frame of thought including that transmitted by the majority of citizens of the state. This frame of thinking motivates the other groups and is presented as a perception reflecting the general will of the people. Gramsci’s central argument was that world perception of the hegemonic group is internalized by the citizens by means of daily activities, such that it appears as part of common sense, certainly not like something that can be seen to be a result of powerful processes of cultural production, distribution and internalization.

Gramsci saw ideology, which is in the general conceptual framework, transmitted broadly to citizens of the state, a means of preserving hegemony. He did not see it as a tractate of ideas developed by a group of theoreticians and transmitted by means of formal study, but believed that it was a collection of opinions, of understandings, of trends and of internalized sense by means of participation in practices that play the role of the ideology, that is, it is possible to talk about the high level of correspondence between the ideology and daily experiences of the citizens within it. For Gramsci, the term, ideology, is similar to the term, habitus, coined by Pierre Bourdieu [34]. He talked about this factor as representing and organizing the range of possible activities.

From the beginning days of the state, the army was perceived as a tool for building the people and the nation and because of that its role exceeded the strict role of an army that is meant to protect and defend. In Israel, an entire culture developed around the army and this militarization was expressed by distributing musical victory albums after

successful operations, having an army radio station, in the grooming of army choirs whereby for the soldiers serving in them it was an entry ticket into the world of the Israeli entertainment industry, by turning battle sites into hiking spots for school pupils and so on. This cultural militarization influenced the fashioning of the collective consciousness of Israeli society. Cultural militarization has a two-fold purpose and when necessary, it is enlisted and it enlists. It is enlisted in order to produce unity and it enlists the collective consciousness during any given time. This process of enlistment takes place, apparently, even after disclosure of Vanunu's acts during the trial, his imprisonment, and after his release.

What would have happened if they had not put Vanunu under the various restrictions and followed up by spying on his every move? What would have happened if they simply had allowed prisoner number 1005962 to leave prison and go home? Nothing. At most he would have given an interview in a number of newspapers around the world and after a day or two, he would have been forgotten. There are always new stories and more interesting stories. But whoever defined Vanunu as a ticking bomb created for the international media an ongoing drama. And it will continue to follow him. If *The Sunday Times* was once skeptical regarding the truth of Vanunu's report, they are no longer skeptical. After all, the security system determined: This man knew. He is a real treasure trove of news stories. Therefore, he must be followed at all times. A story that could have died after one day will live on for a long time. Aspects of this media failure will be taught, it seems, for many years [22].

It is difficult to understand the response to Vanunu's actions without considering the fact that discourse regarding the Israeli nuclear was connected with the experience of extermination. The Jewish People already experienced one Holocaust and therefore the nuclear bomb was intended to protect them from a second Holocaust. Preventing the next Holocaust was also the reason behind the attack on nuclear weapons of other countries, first of all Iraq. The policy toward Vanunu and his very conditions of imprisonment, the way his trial was conducted and the supervision placed on him after his release testify to the level of anxiety the establishment felt about "solving the puzzle" of the Israeli nuclear bomb. The suspicion was that solving the puzzle would expose other puzzles and give rise to other voices. Vanunu was punished repeatedly for the same crime. Repeated punishment for the same crime is not characteristic, certainly not worthy, of a democratic country, and it becomes possible and legitimate only when its significance is protection against an actual existential threat.

#### V. SUMMARY

Israeli discourse is victim discourse, depending on the Holocaust and the reality of the security situation. This victim discourse sees the Holocaust experience as the source of legitimacy for Israel's security activities and her freedom of action to protect herself [35]. In the first decade, Holocaust discourse was characterized by silence but from the beginning

of the 1960s, when open discourse on the Holocaust began, this discourse was singular in content. Only in the 1980s did a debate about the nature of the lessons to be learned begin, but the debate focused mainly on the Palestinian issue and not on the question of the nuclear bomb.

Vanunu refused to participate in the chorus and chose to sing with a different voice that was subversive and jarring, and the establishment saw it necessary to silence him with a "loud shout", and to leave him bound even after he had done his time -- such was done to the man who had violated the muteness. Silencing is the punishment for one who chooses to violate the silence. Vanunu chose to talk in a different voice that was not mainly victim-like, a subversive voice that chose to demonstrate the power of the victim as well. And thus he touched the soft nerves of Israeli society. Vanunu, who saw himself as a victim of ethnic deprivation, refused to participate in the collective victim discourse that presents Jewish history as the source of legitimacy for the development of the Israeli nuclear bomb and to support the silence that fell on this subject.

Vanunu seems to personify shattered dreams. Born in Morocco, immigrating to Israel with his family with the mass immigration that took place in the 1950s, he lived in the capital city of the Negev and chose to work in a security plant in another Negev city – to this point, the dream. But the dream was shattered: the son of immigrants participated in the settlement and security industries and became party to the circle of secrecy. He decided to break the silence, to disclose the secret to the world and to warn about the power of Israel. Vanunu exposed absurdity in the state security arrangement in which the sanctity of security reached the level of a fine art.

"If Israel is a modern Chelm [in Jewish folklore, Chelm is an imaginary city of fools], Vanunu is the King of Chelm. Publication of Vanunu's disclosures in *The Sunday Times* in London exposed the disgraceful neglect bordering on the ridiculous of security arrangements in Israel's nuclear reactor [...] it turns out that on the site, a minor technician in a junior and marginal position walked about and visited every place and freely photographed with a camera he successfully brought into the plant [...] Afterward, he left Israel with all the photographs in his possession, traveled with them around the world, arrived with them in Australia, talked about them with friends, brought them to London, gave them to a British newspaper" [36].

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