

I. Introduction

In this chapter we examine the nature of the Israeli labor force, in terms of peculiar characteristics that derive from the settler-colonial nature of this social formation. We focus on the prominent features prevalent since the 1967 war, believed to have affected the militarization of the Israeli economy and, indirectly, the growing demand for Palestinian labor.

We focus first on the sources and composition of the labor force: the ethnic/national composition of the labor force; the civilian/non-civilian dichotomy in the process of economic transformation. We interpret the participation rates and patterns and describe the various segments of this labor force and their different modes and locales of reproduction. Finally, we examine prospective sources of labor in light of the conflicting investment versus immigration incentives. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the implications of the structure and composition of the labor force for the prospects for proletarian alliances.

To understand the internal structure of the working class as well as the class-locations of the various segments of the labor force in later chapters, we reconstruct a holistic picture of the labor force as a unity (a fragmented unity) within the unity of the division of labor. Identification of the origins and characteristics of the labor force reveals some of the determinants underlying the differential locations of its various segments in Israel's economic structure as well as specifically in the social division of labor. Most importantly, this chapter helps us to establish the extent to which segmentations of the labor force by ethnic origins, religious affiliations, national identities, as well as on the basis of managerial dichotomies are, in the last instance, superseded by or co-