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Master Program in
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POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ITS
ARAB CITIZENS SINCE 2000

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Corinth, September 2017

Πανεπιστήμιο Πελοποννήσου

Σχολή Κοινωνικών και Πολιτικών Επιστημών

Τμήμα Πολιτικής Επιστήμης και Διεθνών Σχέσεων

Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών

« Μεσογειακές Σπουδες »

**Πολιτικές σχέσεις μεταξύ του Ισραήλ και των αραβικών
πολιτών του Από το 2000**

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Κόρινθος, Σεπτέμβριος 2017

Political Relations between Israel and Its Arab Citizens Since 2000

Keywords: Arab-Israelis, Israel, equality, democracy, intifada, Israeli political system, Arab minority, marginalization, Arabs in Israeli politics, Arab MK

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the political relations between Israel and its Arab citizens since 2000, identifying areas of Arab participation in the politics of the state and clarifying claims of marginalization and oppression by the state.

This paper would analyze the political framework of Israel, the base on which the political system of the state was established, which has determined its features. The extent of Arab participation in Israeli politics would be examined, as well as the issues surrounding marginalization, inclusion and equality in the political arena of the state. The relations between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority which largely controls the state would be analyzed, using current events and survey results, to determine the perception both harbour toward each other, how it has improved or deteriorated since 2000. The latter part would investigate how the state's policies have affected the Arab minority and their reaction toward these policies.

In conclusion, taking note of the conditions under which the state was established as a homeland for the Jews, making it a Jewish state, and its status as a democratic state, the hegemony of the Jews is clarified, meanwhile the constitutional rights of the Arabs as citizens have been upheld in accordance to the Israeli Proclamation of Independence. Considering the tense relations between the state and its Arab citizens, this paper recommends necessary compromise and efforts from both sides to gain each others' trust and to ensure a cordial and progressive relation between the two.

Πολιτικές σχέσεις μεταξύ του Ισραήλ και των αραβικών πολιτών του Από το 2000

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Αραβο-Ισραηλινοί Ισραηλινοί Ισραήλ, ισότητα, δημοκρατία, ιντιφάντα, Ισραηλινό πολιτικό σύστημα, αραβική μειονότητα, περιθωριοποίηση, Άραβες στην ισραηλινή πολιτική,

Περίληψη

Στόχος της εργασίας είναι να αναλύσει τις πολιτικές σχέσεις μεταξύ του Ισραήλ και των Αράβων πολιτών του από το 2000, εντοπίζοντας τους τομείς της αραβικής συμμετοχής στην κρατική πολιτική και αποσαφηνίζοντας τους ισχυρισμούς περιθωριοποίησης και καταπίεσης από το κράτος. Αυτή η εργασία θα αναλύσει την πολιτική δομή του Ισραήλ, τη βάση πάνω στην οποία ιδρύθηκε το πολιτικό σύστημα του κράτους, το οποίο έχει καθορίσει και τα χαρακτηριστικά του. Θα εξεταστεί η έκταση της αραβικής συμμετοχής στην ισραηλινή πολιτική, καθώς και τα ζητήματα γύρω από την περιθωριοποίηση, την ένταξη και την ισότητα στην πολιτική αρένα του κράτους. Οι σχέσεις μεταξύ της αραβικής μειονότητας και της εβραϊκής πλειοψηφίας που ελέγχει σε μεγάλο βαθμό το κράτος θα αναλυθούν χρησιμοποιώντας τα τρέχοντα γεγονότα και τα αποτελέσματα των ερευνών για τον προσδιορισμό της αντίληψης που έχουν ο ένας για τον άλλον όσο και πόσο βελτιώθηκε ή επιδεινώθηκε από το 2000. Το δεύτερο μέρος θα ερευνήσει πως οι πολιτικές του κράτους επηρέασαν την αραβική μειονότητα και την αντίδρασή τους απέναντι σε αυτές τις πολιτικές. Συμπερασματικά, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη αφενός τις συνθήκες υπό τις οποίες το κράτος ιδρύθηκε ως πατρίδα για τους Εβραίους, καθιστώντας το εβραϊκό κράτος, και αφετέρου το καθεστώς του ως δημοκρατικού κράτους, διευκρινίζεται η ηγεμονία των Εβραίων, ενώ τα συνταγματικά δικαιώματα των Αράβων ως πολιτών έχουν τηρηθεί σύμφωνα με την Ισραηλινή Διακήρυξη Ανεξαρτησίας. Λαμβάνοντας υπόψη τις έντονες σχέσεις μεταξύ του κράτους και των Αράβων πολιτών του, αυτή η εργασία προτείνει έναν απαραίτητο συμβιβασμό και προσπάθειες και από τις δύο πλευρές για να κερδίσουν την εμπιστοσύνη των άλλων και να εξασφαλίσουν μια εγκάρδια και προοδευτική σχέση μεταξύ των δύο.

Acknowledgment

The successful completion of this research work would not have been possible without the significant contributions of the people whose support has spurred me on to execute this task.

I would like to acknowledge the guide of my supervisor, Professor Sotirious Roussos, who provided me with a much needed guide throughout my work.

I would also like to acknowledge the entire academic and non-academic staff of the University of Peloponnese, Corinth, for their unwavering support and timely assistance throughout the course of my study, and research work.

The contributions of my family cannot go unnoticed, as they have supported my dreams and ambitions all along, motivating me to be the best that I can be.

I deeply appreciate the fervent support of Nadine Haumann, and her unflinching efficiency while assisting me through the entire research process and writing, providing an immense boost to the success of this work.

Finally I would like to say thank you to my friends and colleagues, with whom we have shared ideas and supported each other throughout the course of our studies.

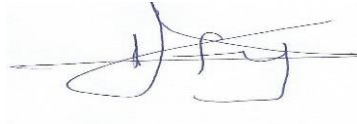
I thank you all.

Declaration of Responsibility

With this statement:

1. I expressly and unconditionally declare that my diploma thesis is the product of my own intellectual effort, does not violate the rights of third parties and follows internationally recognized standards of scientific writing, faithfully adhering to academic ethics.
2. The views expressed are the sole responsibility of the author. The Department and the University of Peloponnese do not necessarily adopt the expressed views or bear any responsibility for any errors and omissions.

I declare

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. J.', written over a horizontal line.

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Signature

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Citizens of Israel, which make up about 20.7% of the population in Israel, is the largest minority group in the state (Klinger, 2013). The Arabs of Israel have always been torn between two identities, as members of the Arab nationality and as citizens of the state of Israel, viewed by both sides with mistrust and suspicion, based on their affiliation to the two conflicting sides (Album 1995, p.12). Though an overwhelming number of the Arab population of Israel identify with the Palestinian cause, they still recognize their place as part of the Jewish state, and also participate in its civic, economic, and political affairs. The issue of Arab active involvement in the political arena of the Jewish state of Israel has always generated controversies, especially claims that the Arab citizens are marginalized and denied the right to active political participation in the state. According to the Declaration of Independence of Israel, the Arab minorities are given equal status by law. The Citizenship Law extended Israeli citizenship to everyone registered as a resident in the Population Registry by March 1952, also to a person who had been present since the establishment of the state, within territory under Israeli sovereign control, and to those who entered such territory legally during this period, including the Arabs that remained or returned during this period (Naor, 2016, p.137-138). By reason of this law, many Arabs have become citizens of Israel and have the same rights as the Jewish majority. Yet it cannot be conclusively reported that this is how it is today taking into consideration the events that have followed since the creation of the state of Israel. Since the 21st century, research works have been done aiming at defining the relations between the State of Israel and its Arab citizens. Scholars have projected several theories to explain the relations between the Arabs of Israel and the state, such scholars include Efraim Karsh, who in his article *Israel's Arabs: deprived or radicalized?* supports the theory that tags the Arab leadership as the primary instigator of tensions and violence between the Arabs of Israel and the state despite significant efforts by the state to assimilate the Arab population into the system. Other researchers such as Katie Hesketh, principal author of *The Inequality Report: The Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel*, on the contrary have expressed other views, blaming the Israeli government for fueling Arab resentment through oppressive policies. Among all literary works on this subject, one of the most notable is the publication titled *Towards Inclusive Israeli Citizenship* written by a research team of The Jerusalem Institute on Israel Studies, headed by Professor Yitzhak Reiter. This publication highlighted the initial principles on which the Jewish State of Israel was created, the reality of its practice today and how relations can be improved. It is in regards to this phenomenon that I would be analyzing further the issues on ground, aiming to find the balance between

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the place of the Arab minority as equals with the Jewish majority, and the alleged marginalization of the Arab citizens of Israel. I would further identify to what extent the policies of the government are oriented towards integration of the minority Arab group in accordance to the constitution of the state.

The purpose of my research is to analyze the genuine political challenges faced by the Arab minority of Israel, the efforts of the state of Israel so far since 2000 in bridging the gap between its Jewish majority and Arab minority in the political arena of the state, upholding the Proclamation of Independence, which is the constitutional induction that gives equality of status to every citizen of Israel irrespective of societal inclinations, and possible suggestions on ways to promote peaceful and progressive relations between the two. Making my research through academic papers, journals, official papers, surveys and books, this work would be geared towards answering the following questions: Is marginalization of the Arab citizens of Israel a myth or a fact? To what extent are the Arab-Israelis involved in the politics of the state? And how genuine are the efforts of the state in bridging the gap between the Arab-Israelis and the other groups within the state?

In order to provide answers to these questions, it is very important to understand the political framework of the Israeli society. The issues surrounding equality and relations between the state and the groups within it cannot be analyzed without first identifying the foundation on which the establishment of the state and its laws stand.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK OF ISRAEL

The political nature of any state is determined by its history, circumstance of creation and the nature of its pioneers. The Jewish State of Israel is not an exception. Prior to the UN Partition Plan¹, and the end of the British Mandate over the region, Jewish political institutions have been actively involved in politics throughout the Mandatory Palestine². These political institutions established the foundation of Israeli politics which became the core of the new Jewish state after the Declaration of Independence. This chapter would provide an insight to the political framework of Israel, its history, institutions, and democratic principles.

2.1 A brief History of Israel's political leadership

Israel as a state was founded on the basis of the demand of the Jews for a homeland. The pioneers of the political system of the present day Israel can be traced back to the very first Jewish immigrants who arrived at the area between the first and the second Aliyah³. Prior to the Second World War, the Yishuv⁴ had already established an organized system which showed functional features of a state. Even as early as 1920 the Yishuv had a thriving economy, infrastructure, free health care system, strong labour movement, rudimentary military force and a highly organized political structure (Arnow. 1993, p. 261). The Jewish leadership that eventually founded the state of Israel had already laid down the foundation for the future Jewish state long before independence, and this foundation has been the core of Israeli politics up to date.

The Zionist movement, which was championed by Theodore Herzl, grew strong in the late 19th century into the 20th century, aimed at securing a homeland for the Jews, who at that time were facing waves of anti-Semitic attacks across Europe. The movement resulted in the Zionist congresses, where Jews from across the world gathered to forge a way forward for the Jewish nation, and finding a homeland for the

¹ The UN Partition Plan was the resolution of the United Nations to create two states in Palestine, one for the Jews and one for the Arabs.

² British Mandate over Palestine was the period between 1920 and 1948 during which the region of Palestine was under British administration granted by the League of Nations.

³ Aliyah is the immigration of Jews in Diaspora to the land of Israel.

⁴ Yishuv is a term used to describe the body of Jewish residents in the land of Israel, dating from the Ottoman periods to the creation of Israel after the British Mandate in 1948.

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Jews. This quest prompted the development of efficient political structures to handle the affairs of such a state, when finally actualized.

The Mapai party, established in 1930 during the Mandate period, a merger between Ha-poel Ha-tzair and Ahdut Ha-avoda, grew to be the strongest political force prior to and after the Declaration of Independence (Goldstein, 2001, p. 85). The Mapai which was strongly influenced by Labour Zionism⁵ had been in control of the Institutions of the region even while it was part of the British Mandate. Mapai was vested with most of the administrative obligations and thus had firmly been rooted in the political system of the region. The political framework of Israel was constructed by its pioneers, the Labor Zionists, who were poised towards creating a cohesive Jewish state laying emphasis on mutual assistance and cooperation. From 1935 to 1977, the Mapai which later became known as the Labour Party in 1968, had dominated Israeli politics from 1935 to 1977 (Sandler & Frisch, 2010, p.2). The Labour party lost power to the Likud Party, which is strongly influenced by Revisionist Zionism⁶ in 1977 (Goldstein, 2001, p. 79). Contrary to the ideology of the Labour Zionists, the Revisionist Zionists, which took power as a result of the Likud bloc victory, tend to diverge from the principles of collectivity and the promotion of communal growth which was a basic feature of the Labour party, but rather emphasized capitalism over socialism and individuality over community. This has resulted in the distinct transformation of the Israeli society today, marked by a fading collectivity culture, in the face of an ever-growing individualistic-centered culture (Gross, 1998, p.106).

The Mapai/Labour party also adopted from Ahdut Ha-avoda the belief and support for mutual understanding and cooperation with the Arabs, willing to make a concession for a two-state-system, one for the Arabs and one for the Jews (Goldstein, 2001, p. 88). In contrast, the core political position of the Revisionists, and also the Likud party until this day, is to not accept any concession of territory to the Arabs, but laying a claim to the entire region as a sole right of the People of Israel who are to rule over the entire Land of Israel (Goldstein, 2001, p. 88). The different outlooks of the political leadership of Israel through history have determined the relations between the state and the Arabs within its territory. Since 1977 till date, Likud has been the dominant political force in Israel, and its ideologies have been firmly planted into the political affairs of the state through its leadership which has been strong through the years and has produced the current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. The hard line approach of the Likud party as demonstrated by its leader has had a very significant impact on the political relations between the state and the Arab citizens since his inception in 2009. The Likud Party is highly influenced by religious Zionism which has a core belief that the entire land of Israel is the right of the Jewish people as given by God, as their permanent heritage.

⁵ Labour Zionism is the left wing of the Zionist movement, which emphasizes on communal cooperation

⁶ Revisionist Zionism is the right wing of the Zionist movement

2.2 Israeli political system

Since 1977 (the latter part of the 20th century) the communal approach and mutual cooperation as projected by the Labor Zionists has changed. The Kibbutz system⁷ has gone into decline, and the agrarian Israeli society has gradually given way to industrialization, but the political framework on which the Jewish state of Israel was founded upon, based on its Declaration of Independence in 1948, has remained intact despite the political and leadership changes which has culminated in ideological leanings from the left to the right, affecting the relations between the state and its Arab citizens. Based on the Democratic principles as embedded in the words of David Ben-Gurion in the Declaration of Independence of Israel, which expressed the adoption of a Western European Democratic pattern for the new Jewish state, Israel has been and still operates a democratic political system with the basic features of a democratic state.

Following a West European Democratic pattern, which is characterized by public participation in local and national elections, multi-party system, and due process in election and inauguration of leaders, and a judicial system that upholds civil liberty, human rights and equality before the law, the state of Israel can be classified as politically democratic. This political system supports representative government where all the social and political groups are adequately represented.

2.3 Israeli electoral system

Israel operates an electoral system that gives every adult male and female citizen from the age of 18 and above a right to vote. The national elections are held at least once every four years, while the municipal elections are held at least once every 5 years (Jewish Virtual Library). The frequency of the elections is to maintain the democratic nature of the state. The whole state of Israel is considered to be a single constituency with a system of proportional representation where every party running for election presents a candidate list, and the percentage of support the list receives would determine the number of candidates that would make it into the House of Representatives (Jewish Virtual Library)

2.4 The Knesset

The Knesset is the legislative arm of the Israeli government; it serves as the House of Representatives, where all municipalities and demands of the Israeli citizens are equally represented. The Knesset consists of 120 members and among its function are the passing of laws, election of the President, supervising the affairs of the government and approving the cabinet. Acceptance of Israel as a Jewish

⁷ The Kibbutz is a collective Jewish community traditionally based on agriculture

state and upholding its democratic nature without any form of incitation of racism is a criteria which every party participating in elections must fulfil (The Knesset)

2.5 Democracy in Israel

Israel's Declaration of Independence declares it as a Jewish state, operating in accordance with the Western Democratic model of government which gives all citizens equal rights accrued to them as citizens of a democratic state. The democratic values on which the Jewish state of Israel stands on includes political pluralism, protection of civil rights, three tiers of government that provide a check and balance system, legal equality, and a democratic government based on elections (Reitner, 2009).

The Democratic setting of Israel also includes the Arab minority of Israel, who were officially first mentioned in the Proclamation of Independence of May 14, 1948, which called upon the “members of the Arab nation, inhabitants of the State of Israel, to preserve the ways of peace” emphasizing of the state's committment to “full and equal citizenship” of the Arab population and “representation in all its bodies and institutions” (Rekness, 2007, p.4). In the Declaration of Independence of Israel:

“THE STATE OF ISRAEL ... will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”

“WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.” (cited from The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2011, p. 7)

The state of Israel identifies itself as a Jewish and democratic state, anchoring its legitimacy as democratic through its political system that offers equality of social and political rights to all its citizens, equality before the law, protection of human rights, multi-party system that offers its citizens

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the choice to vote and be voted for, three tiers of government (the executive, legislative and judicial arms), that make room for a check and balance system of government.

The former head of the Supreme Court of Israel, Aharon Barak, had stated that:

“The state of Israel is a constitutional democracy. The state of Israel is a democracy since it is governed by the principle of majority rule, and since it affirms human rights . . . Our constitution is manifested in the Basic Laws [legislated by the parliament]. They determine the structure of [the] government’s authority. They secure human rights. True, the project of constructing the constitution is not completed yet . . . But the very core of the constitution is in existence and firm.”(Yonah, 2000,p.135)

The Declaration of Independence of Israel, which bears the strong reflection of a people who have been minorities everywhere else in the world for centuries, and suffered various dimensions of discrimination, oppression and even pogroms, is thorough about its democratic principles. Though it marked the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people, it has ensured that the democratic principles on which the state was founded upon is maintained (Rubinstein, 1998, p.208)

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONS, MARGINALIZATION, INCLUSION AND EQUALITY

The relations between the Arabs of Israel and the state have been a major point of controversy. The issues of marginalization, inclusion and equality are paramount issues that have shaped the perception of governments, scholars, and people toward Israel and its Arab citizens. This chapter would highlight the Arab political participation in Israel, areas of inclusion and areas of marginalization, shedding light on the state of relations between the Arabs and the government of Israel and to what extent equality has been a reality or myth in the relations between the two.

3.1 Arab representation in the Knesset

After the creation of the Jewish state of Israel, and the Knesset, the unicameral national legislature of Israel was instituted as its legislative arm, the Arab-Israelis have been duly represented since its first elections in 1949. The Knesset which is vested with the power to pass laws, elect presidents, and approve cabinet also functions through its committees and monitors the activities of the government. Laws are passed based on majority vote. With the representation of the Arab-Israelis in the legislative arm of the government, it can be said that the Arab-Israelis are also part of the political framework of the Jewish state of Israel, having the power to be a part of the law making process, election of presidents, approval of the cabinet and the supervision of government activities in the state. Though the Arabs are not a majority, their significance in the political framework of the Jewish state cannot be overlooked. This role of the Arab minority in Israeli politics generates the interest to understand deeper to what extent the Arabs as a part of the political framework are able to influence the political direction of Israel as a state and to what level it has grown as a force to contend with, making a comparison of the past, present and a projection of the future. However, Israel's Central Elections Committee has several times used patently political criteria to rule that Arab citizens whose views it found objectionable may not run in parliamentary elections, though overturned by the decisions of the Supreme Court in all cases, they contributed to anti-Arab hysteria and anti-democratic sentiment, which increased dramatically among Jewish Israelis after 2000 (Beinin and Hajjar, 2014, p.6).

3.2 Arab participation in Israeli Politics

Despite the pattern of administration in Israel which creates a liberal atmosphere where groups are given the liberty to control most of their own institutions, there is also a need for collective political involvement of all groups, including the Arab minority. In respect to this fact there have been Arab representatives since the inception of the Knesset, as stated above. The Arabs have voiced their demands through representatives and are allowed to fully practice their rights. Arab parties have also been created as windows of expression to voice out demands, pursue ideologies and to actively participate in the politics of the state. The major Arab political parties in Israel are the United Arab List, of which the Islamic Movement⁸ is a part of, the second is the Hadash which is dominated by Arabs but still has Jewish members and exists as an Arab-Jewish party, then thirdly there is the Balad, also called the National Democratic Alliance, whose quest is to create a democracy for all citizens despite ethnic or religious backgrounds.

In the 2009 Knesset elections, the first female Arab MK Zeneen Houabi was elected under the National Democratic Assembly (NDA), an Arab party which signified a rise in female Arab involvement in politics (Koren, 2010, p. 125). In 2011, 13 of the 120 members of the Israeli Parliament were Arab citizens and there was also an Arab Supreme Court Judge. This figure has risen after the 20th Knesset. Today, out of the 120 seats of the Knesset, Arabs hold 17 (Harkov, 2015). Despite the Jewish dominance of political leadership in Israel, the Arab political leaders have also played significant roles and sometimes supported Zionist parties in the election of Jewish leaders who they found to protect their stake in the state, as observed in the case of the support by the Arab parties which kept Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in power. The ability of the Arab parties to form coalitions or offer support to Zionist parties reveals that integration and cooperation could be possible even in the political arena of the state of Israel.

Prior to both Intifadas, the Zionist parties enjoyed significant Arab votes, especially until 1988 through the satellite Arab lists such as the Democratic List of the Palestinian Minority (Ghanem, 2001, P 40-41). The second Intifada was a breaking point between the Arab and Jewish-dominated-state relations. After the October 2000 events⁹ where Arabs experienced severe brutality at the hands of Israeli authorities which created a deep rift in the relations between the Arabs in Israel and the State, the seed of resentment has been sown between the Arabs and the Jewish dominated state of Israel, which only became worse as the years passed by. The Lebanese war, the military operation “Cast Lead” in Gaza

⁸ This Islamic Movement in Israel is a movement that aim to advocate Islam in Israel

⁹ The October 2000 events were a series of uprisings, protests, riots and clashes sparked by the Arab citizens of Israel.

from 2008 to 2009, and the Israel Beytenu party which emphasized on loyalty to the state and harboured suspicion towards the Arabs, have all contributed in intensifying the gradual alienation of the Arab parties from the Jewish parties in the years that followed (Koren, 2010, p. 124). Since 2000, there has been a diminishing rate of Arab participation in parliamentary elections, and a steady rise in the rate of voting for Arab parties not aligned or in coalition with the Israeli government (Bligh, 2013, p.22). The parliamentary elections of 2006, 2009, and 2015 were symbolic in revealing the grievances and disappointment of the Arabs towards the Israeli government.

It was in the parliamentary election of 2006 that the drop of Arab votes for Jewish parties became overwhelmingly obvious as votes for Jewish parties in Arab dominated constituencies dramatically dropped to record lows. Unlike in previous decades where such parties as the Mapai/Labour party enjoyed substantial Arab support through votes, the elections after 2000 were marked with a total turnaround as the discontented Arabs of Israel withdrew and gradually alienated themselves from the Jewish parties.

3.3 Participating Arab parties in the 2009 Parliamentary Elections

For the 2009 Knesset elections, only three Arab parties crossed the 2% threshold to be allowed to participate in the election. These parties were the UAL-AMC, NDA (National Democratic Alliance/Balad), and Hadash. UAL-AMC and NDA were parties which consisted of only Arabs, while Hadash was an Arab-Jewish party. The nature of each one of these parties determined the voters' appeal they received in the elections.

3.3.1 Hadash (DFPE, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality)

Founded in 1977, Hadash is an Arab-Jewish party which supports social justice, and equality between the Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel (Koren, 2010, p. 133). Hadash draws its support from moderate Arabs and leftist Jews who believe in co-operation between the Arabs and the Jews, equity and mutual cohabitation among the two groups. Hadash supports the two state system and opposes the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel. Koren states that "Hadash endorses a principle of 'two states for two peoples' as a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and demands a return of all occupied territories and a 'just' solution to the Palestinian refugee problem" (Koren, 2010, p. 133).

3.3.2 Balad/NDA (National Democratic Alliance)

Founded in 1995 by Dr. Azmi Bishara, the NDA opposes the status of Israel as a Jewish state, but demands that Israel should be a state of all citizens, with equal rights and opportunities. It also

identifies with the quest for a Palestinian state, which would entail the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, a Right of Return for Palestinian refugees and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of the new Palestinian state (Koren, 2010, p. 133). The NDA upholds an ideology that supports a clear definition between state and religion, opposes the existence of Israel's Zionist institutions and demands the recognition of Israeli Arabs as a national minority (Koren, 2010, p. 133). Though the party supports a separation of religion and state, is assumed to be the most radical of the Arab parties given its aim to change the Jewish symbols of the state, and recognition of Israeli Arabs as a national minority, demanding that this minority be allowed to maintain cultural autonomy presided over by an elected assembly and executive (Koren, 2010, p. 134).

3.3.3 UAL-AMC (United Arab List – Arab Movement for Change)

UAL and AMC merged in 2006 for the 17th Knesset elections, they continued with the merger in the 2009 elections. The party is headed by Ibrahim Sarsour, the leader of the southern faction of the Islamic Movement which split from the northern faction and chose to involve itself in Israeli politics. The party tends to be different from the other more secular parties like Hadash and the NDA, as it is based on fundamental Islamic principles and is religious-traditionally inclined (Koren, 2010, p. 132). This party tends to be similar to the NDA only based on its support for the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem, and the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories.

In the 2009 elections, the party posed itself as the main representative of the Arab people of Israel, emphasizing on Palestinian nationalism, and solidarity of Palestinian Muslims, which was like a call to all Muslims of Israel to rally to its support in the polls.

In the parliamentary elections of 2006 and 2009, the UAL merging with AMC won more seats than the other Arab parties. This was a vivid indication that the Arab public became more attracted to the message of the UAL, which was the party under which the Islamic Movement ran for elections, headed by Ibrahim Sarsour, the leader of the southern Islamic Movement (Bligh, 2013, p.35).

The UAL-AMC had attracted so many votes due to the grievances of the Arab population towards the state of Israel since 2000. The party offered a medium of defiance and protection of the Palestinian heritage because it was perceived by most Palestinians as a true representative of the core values and traditions of the Palestinian people. Unlike the other secular Arab parties, the UAL-AMC takes a much harder line against the Israeli government, supporting the creation of a Palestinian state with its capital at Jerusalem, calling for a withdrawal from all occupied territories, and the guarantee of Palestinian refugees' right of return (Koren, 2010, p. 132).

The Islamic movement divided in 1996 over disagreements on the issue of political participation in the Israeli government, which resulted in the creation of the northern faction which rejects any political

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participation in Israel and the southern faction which considers political participation as a vital tool to pursue their goals and achieve the aims of the group. Though both factions are divided in their mode of operation it cannot be conclusively assumed that their ideologies differ as they seem to have a common ground on their commitment to the creation of a theocratic Islamic regime and one that would necessarily replace the State of Israel (Koren, 2010, p. 132). According to Koren, an important indicator that points to a similarity of agenda between both factions of the Islamic movement was the statement of Sarsour in a Jordanian newspaper, where he said “we believe in Islam, we believe in the rule of the caliphate and we do not support a separation between state and religion” which is a clear pointer to the fact that the southern faction, assumed to be moderate due to its stance in encouraging political participation, still nurtures an ambition to replace the presently constituted State of Israel with a state ruled according to Islamic law (shari’a) (Koren, 2010, p. 132).

The appeal the discontented Arab population of Israel had for the party and its message was the fuel that skyrocketed it to the top. The party steadily rose from the third place among Arab parties in 2003 (winning two seats) to first in 2006 after merging with Ta’al (AMC) (winning four seats) and in 2009 as UAL-AMC (winning four seats) (Bligh, 2013, p.35).

These factors also motivated an increased Arab participation in the following elections, so as to counter moves that seemed to be detrimental to them and protect their interest in the state (Koren, 2010, p.126). Some Arab parties hinged on this situation and sent radicalized messages to voters, messages that alerted Jewish parties who stressed the disloyalty of the Arab parties to their state and attempts to undermine it (Koren, 2010, p.126). Attempts were made to ban the Arab parties, but this in turn further spurred Arab voters to participate in the elections (Koren, 2010, p.126).

In the 2009 Knesset elections, the Israeli Arab voters were torn between the calls to not vote in elections, considering the ‘Israeli government’s policy of aggression’, and the call to vote so as to increase the Arab presence in the Knesset, in order to counter the Jewish parties and the rightists’ incitement against the Arab public (Koren, 2010, p.128). Raam-Taal (UAL-AMC), NDA, and Hadash called out to the Arab public to cast their votes. But the Islamic movement was yet still divided over participation in the elections. While the northern faction rejected it, the southern faction of the Islamic movement under the leadership of Ibrahim Sarsour called out to the Arab public to go out and vote to ensure that the rights of the Palestinian people are upheld, laying emphasis on casting their votes for UAL-AMC, which it projected as the Arab party that would represent the entire Palestinian people against Israel’s ‘policy of aggression’ (Koren, 2010, p.128-129). He expressed his position through this statement:

“Oh Gaza, we shall not forget you, not forget your children and women, not forget your shahids ... We must tell the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who vote for Zionist parties: ‘Do not vote for those who’ve killed your people and your children’ ... The aggression remains, the blockade is still enforced, and the ruins of buildings are still piling up, and

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you want us to forget Gaza, Gaza's shahids, and its children? Who trades in Gaza's blood? The Arabs are calling to boycott the elections in the name of Gaza's children and its suffering, and the same political position desired by the racist fascist Lieberman and by the Parties that reap the Arabs' seats and the votes of the Arabs who vote for them." (Koren, 2010, p.129)

On the contrary, the northern faction of the Islamic movement under the leadership of Sheik Raid Salah published a manifesto just before the election which stated:

"The Islamic Movement asserts that the Knesset is one of the fundamental components of the Zionist plan, which at its core is designed to provide a stage for protest against the Palestinian Arab public in Palestine... This Knesset denies us rights and robs us, for ever since the 'Nakba' we have been robbed of our history and national identity, and suffered religious persecution as part of a clear policy deliberately employed by the Israeli regime against us... We must each of us take a stand regarding the elections (boycott them) with the desire to please almighty God, in order to first expose the true face of the Israeli regime and to assist our Palestinian people in general and our Palestinian people in Gaza as the centre of power in particular, and also to expose the true face of the Israeli regime in order to satisfy our conscience according to our faith and our national sentiment." (Koren, 2010, p.129)

The effect of this divided approach towards the elections resulted to a drop in Arab votes compared to the previous elections. The Arab citizens' voting rate dropped by 3% in these elections (56.3% vs. 53.4%), while the voting rate in the general population increased to 65.2% in comparison to 63.5% in 2006, which showed a significant withdrawal of Arab voters, and their feeling of indifference towards the political arena of the state. (Koren, 2010, p.129).

According to Koren, Professor Majdi Al-Haj has suggested two main reasons for the fall in the Arab sector's voter participation, which are:

- *"An overall drop in voting rates within the general public, resulting from disappointment in the politicians, and specifically disappointment within the Arab public in the Arab leadership and Arab MKs, due to internal rifts and the Arab parties' inability to unite with each other.*

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- *The marginal status of Arabs in parliamentary politics, which has heightened the internal debate in Arab society concerning the efficacy of voting participation.” (Koren, 2010, p.129)*

Also Koren points out to some researchers, like Muhannad Mustafa, who claim that the trend of boycotting the elections by the Arab voters can be divided into three types:

- “An ideological boycott which is a rejection of the existing political regime
- A political boycott which is primarily a protest
- And a boycott that is driven by political passiveness.” *(Koren, 2010, p.129)*

All this trends have brought to light the level of dissatisfaction the Arab citizens feel towards the state and its political institutions. In recent years, the Israeli Arab community has been more estranged from the state, as several cases of state victimization against the Arabs have risen since the second Intifada that lasted from 2000 to 2005. Mistrust between the Arab citizens and the state of Israel has increased tensions between the two, more Arab voters have come to lose faith in the sincerity of the political institutions of the state, while others who still participate in the political arena do so to fight back against policies and agendas of the state that they feel has been unfavorable or outright oppressive to the Arab citizens of Israel.

The Arab parties had failed to unite and form a single political bloc which would have given them more power and seats in the Knesset, due to the different ideologies and opinions they have towards the state of Israel (Koren, 2010, p.131-132). These differences made it practically tedious for the political unification of the Arab parties to be successful, forming a single strong and efficient political force that would enhance the presence and influence of the Arab citizens of Israel in the political arena of the state. This herculean task was not accomplished until 2015.

The Arab minority is represented in the political arena of Israel, but still is in many ways subjugated to the overwhelming Jewish political dominance. This phenomenon has put the Arabs in an ambivalent position with the Jewish inclined political framework.

The very nature and history of the political establishment of Israel being strongly under the influence of the Zionist movement and a product of agitations for a Jewish homeland has tilted the balance in favor of the Jewish political cadre, giving no room for true equity in its political framework, even though the instituted constitution is based on democratic principles which should not align politics with ethnicity or religion, but to be hinged on competence, initiatives towards the progress, development, and protection of the national interests of the state as an entity. The political relations between the Arabs and Jews are purely ambivalent, creating an opposing stance between the two instead of a cohesive framework.

From the entire process and results of the 2006 and 2009 Knesset elections, the separation between the Arabs and Jews in their political orientation and support has widened greatly, and the Zionist parties have significantly being stripped of chances of political coalition with Arab parties, such as existed decades ago, and also the votes of the Arab public. Despite the fact that most Arab voters cast their votes for representatives from the Arab parties, they would still be unable to be a key part of any major decision making in the country given their unlikeliness to become members of any coalition government (Bligh, 2013, p.48).

3.4 Arab Joint List of 2015

Just before the 2015 Knesset elections something spectacular happened in Israeli Arab politics, previously thought to be impossible: The unification of the Arab parties, a historic alliance and the first of its kind since the creation of the Jewish state of Israel. On the 23rd of January 2015 the Arab parties announced the creation of the Joint List (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). The alliance of the Arab parties was a fulfilment of decades of Israeli Arabs longing for a collective and unified political representative framework through which their demands would be met. Prior to this unification agreement the Arab parties had mostly been divided over many issues, which caused the division of the Arab votes, thereby limiting any collective political representation that could yield any power to make impact in the Israeli politics.

Several developments made unification a necessity and not just an act of Arab solidarity. Though the major Arab parties differ in ideology, propaganda and mode of operation, they had something in common, which was the aim to defend the rights of the Arab citizens of Israel and protect their interests in the state. This common goal served as a base for unification despite the multitude of differences that exist between the parties.

The Knesset Election Law amendment of March 2014 raised the electoral threshold for the Israeli parliamentary elections from 2% to 3.25%, officially justified by the state as a means to increase stable governance in Israeli governments (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). The claim of the government as a reason to raise this threshold was very openly marginalizing in the view of many Arab citizens and was seen by many as a plot to completely weed off Arab representation in the Knesset, as such a requirement would have made it impossible for any of the Arab parties to have made it through as an individual party. The circumstances around this situation makes one wonder to what extent the Israeli government intends to integrate the Arab political cadre as an equal player in the state's politics.

According to Radai & Rudnisky, the unification of the Arab parties can be attributed to several factors.

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Firstly, the necessity of unification so as to cross the electoral threshold that was set just before the 20th Knesset. Without such a move, none of the Arab parties would have had any chance of crossing the 3.25% threshold. This Knesset Law amendment of March 2014 became the driving force to finally compel the Arab parties to unite for survival.

Secondly, the establishment of the Joint List was highly influenced by the growing power of young educated Arabs (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). In recent years, there has been a significant rise in public awareness through social networks and the internet, which has been fully utilized by the fast growing educated Arab youth population whose active civic involvement has peaked in the last decade, strengthening the voice of the Arab street in its demands for unity, new faces, and political representation for women and young people (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). Through the use of twitter, blogs and other social media channels the Arab youths have been able to share views on political issues, voice out their opinions and also conduct campaigns in reaction to policies of the state and to influence public opinion in regards to political, economic and social issues. The fervent and resilient action of the Arab youths has created an infrastructure of civic pressure on the Arab parties, which spurred them to run as a united list (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). The Facebook page Arab Muttahidun (“United Arabs”) that was set up by young Arabs immediately after the decision to advance the election date, resolutely states: “We will vote only for a united list,” which accumulated thousands of “likes” within days that expressed support and identification with this message, and several hundred “shares.” (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). The Facebook page made a publication in mid-December 2014 of a Facebook poll result, which indicated that 83% of the Arabs in Israel want a united list, and only 2% want the parties to remain as separate (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11). Due to the pressure of the Arab youth and the result of this Facebook poll which showed the overwhelming demand of the Arab youth for a united list instead of separate parties, the parties were catalyzed to unite and form the Joint List.

The culture of contention in the Knesset and the widening gap dividing the right-wing parties was the third factor that prompted the Arab parties’ decision to unite (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.11-12). The frequent attempts of the right wing to pass laws and policies that were perceived to be too detrimental to the welfare of the Arab citizens, mitigating against their rights, like the Praver Plan on Bedouin Settlement¹⁰, the Nationality Bill¹¹, calls to change the status quo on the Temple Mount, and encouragement of Christian Arabs to enlist in the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.12). Though none of these bills went through to become effected and implemented as laws, they succeeded in raising the tension of the Arab political cadre, and magnified the urgency of unification in the face of a looming threat over the entire Arab citizens of Israel.

¹⁰ The Praver plan was a bill formed in 2011 as part of a 5 years economic development plan that included relocating about 40,000-70,000 Bedouins from unrecognized settlements to recognized settlements.

¹¹ Nationality Bill of Israel states the criteria under which a person can be granted Israeli citizenship

Fourthly, the establishment of the Joint List was spurred by the collapse of Arab representation and party leadership in the municipal elections of 2013, where most of the major Arab parties lost elections to new parties that lacked the trust of the Arab public (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.12). In Nazareth, Mayor Ramiz Jaraisy of the NDPE (a party that had been in office for 28 years) was defeated by Ali Salam of Nasrati (“My Nazareth”), who also defeated MK Hanin Zoabi of the NDA who ran against him and won only 10% of the votes (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.12). Such defeats and sudden displacement of the key Arab parties alarmed most of the politically conscious among the Arab public. A message of mistrust was sent by the Arab citizens to the party leaders stating their lack of confidence in the current parties when it comes to handling local matters (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.12). This message featured repeatedly on social networks and the media and resulted in the resignation of several veteran politicians and the withdrawals of MKs Mohammad Barakeh, Afou Agbaria, and Issam Makhoul from the DFPE party’s list for the 20th Knesset elections, giving way for young and vibrant leaders to emerge (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.12). The revolution that ensued in the DFPE produced several new faces on the electoral platform, including Aida Toma-Suleiman and Aiman Ouda, the 40-year-old DFPE secretary general who heads the Joint List (Radai & Rudnisky, 2015, p.12).

A major benefit of the coalition between the Arab parties was that the Joint Arab List enjoyed massive public support from the Arab public which was evident in their votes. This time there were no major divisions or competition over votes for separate Arab parties, but a collective vote for the Joint List. The creation of the Arab Joint List has turned out to be a good venture for the Arab political community of Israel despite the seemingly oppressive circumstance that led to its formation. The Joint List has been a boost to the Arab electorate, giving them an edge in Israeli politics as they now are the third largest political faction in the Knesset with 13 seats. This position gives them a vantage point in the decision making of the state as their unification has swelled their political power and made them a significant force to reckon with in the Israeli parliament.

3.5 Arab-Jewish relations from 2000 to 2009

The Israeli Arab-Jewish relation in the latter part of the 20th century can be considered as tolerable from both sides, where they both managed to maintain a stable relationship between each other. The year 2000 happens to be an epoch in Arab-Jewish relations. It was a year that marked events which resulted in a severe deterioration of Arab-Jewish relations and has led to or at least significantly contributed to the current pattern of events among both groups today.

The bloody events of October 2000, which resulted in the death of 13 Arab citizens after clashes with the police, catalyzed the growing mutual alienation of Arabs and Jews in Israel (Rekness, 2014, p.190). These events can be considered to be a part of the Second Intifada (Palestinian uprisings), as it was a reaction in support and solidarity with the Palestinians.

3.5.1 Background to the Second Intifada

The Second Intifada which was sparked by Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa mosque on 28 September 2000 spread like a wildfire through Jerusalem, the Palestinian Territories and throughout Israel. Ariel Sharon's visit was supposedly intended to show a commitment to mutual respect between the Jews and Arabs, a sign of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. But unfortunately it didn't turn out as expected as this visit sparked a protest among the Palestinians, who attempted to push through to Ariel Sharon's convoy, which quickly turned into riot as protesters hurled stones toward the Wailing Wall. The next day, on 29 September 2000, after Friday prayers, a new wave of violence erupted as protesters threw stones at Jewish worshippers praying at the Wailing Wall, which necessitated the intervention of riot policemen, who tried to quell the riot but got a fair dose of rocks, which resulted in the injury of many of the officers. The police responded by firing rubber bullets into the crowd to dispel them, but when the Chief of Jerusalem's Police Force Yair Yitzhaki was knocked unconscious by a rock, the policemen switched to live fire (Shindler, 2013. P. 283). The violent clashes between the protesters and police that day resulted in the death of seven Palestinians and about 300 others injured (Klein, 2003, p.97). The police also suffered casualties, as seventy officers sustained various degrees of injuries during the clash (Klein, 2003, p.98). This marked the beginning of the second Intifada which would last until 2005.

The second Intifada was not secluded to Jerusalem and the occupied territories alone, but it also spread in Israel, championed by Arab citizens who mounted several protests, demonstrations and strikes across the country. This group of events has come to be known as the "October 2000 events" which culminated to several days of uprisings between the Arab citizens, Jews and the Israeli police. Among the dead were thirteen Arab citizens of Israel. During the first month of the second Intifada, 141 Palestinians were killed and 5,984 others were wounded while 12 Israelis were killed and 65 wounded (Sergio, 2008, p.104-106).

3.5.2 The October 2000 events

The events that led to the build-up of the October 2000 events as highlighted in the "Or inquiry-summary of events" by the Ha'aretz newspaper in Israel, can be traced back to Northern district police commander Alik Ron's request on 12 September 2000 for the authorization of the head of the investigations department, Yossi Sedbon, to begin an investigation of Hadash chairman, MK Mohammed Barakeh, who was suspected of inciting Arab citizens in the north of the country to attack policemen (Haaretz, 2001).

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The Supreme Follow-up Committee of Israeli Arabs convened in Kafr Manda on 13 September 2000 in response to the decision to investigate Barakeh where the meeting ended with a statement by MK Abdulmalik Dehamshe (United Arab List) who says: "We will beat or forcefully attack any policeman and we will break his hands if he comes to demolish an Arab house... we are on the verge of an Intifada among Israel's Arabs following Alik Ron's incitement." (Haaretz, 2001)

On 14 September 2000, a total strike in Nazareth following the murder of Nabieh Nussier, in protest of the "police's incompetence in handling violence and crime" took place (Haaretz, 2001).

In solidarity with Palestinians, the Arab High Monitoring Committee proclaimed a general strike in protest of the death of Arab rioters who lost their lives in the turmoil in Jerusalem. The rioting of the Israeli Arabs spread like wildfire through Umm al-Fahm, Nazareth, Acre, Fureidis, and throughout the entire region of northern Israel, where the police were shot at and attacked by demonstrators with Molotov cocktails (Haaretz, 2001). The violence that ensued resulted in the use of tear gas, rubber and live ammunitions by the police to gain back control and pacify the region.

The Arab riots continued, shops were looted, public infrastructure, houses, and vehicles were also destroyed. Many protesters were arrested by the police and some lost their lives. On 6 October, some Jewish youths in Tiberias responded to the waves of rioting and violence sparked by the Arab citizens, hurling burning tires into mosques and attempting to physically assault Arabs. On the same day dozens of ultra-Orthodox youths hurled stones at Arab vehicles passing through Shmuel Hanavi Street and Ma'alot Daphna Street, while Haredi youths also attacked Palestinian workers in Shmuel Hanavi Street (Haaretz, 2001). The Palestinians were later rescued by the police, unharmed.

On 7 October 2000, dozens of Jewish and Arab youths exchanged stone throws near the shopping mall in Upper Nazareth, which is close to the eastern neighborhood of the Arab part of the city (Haaretz, 2001). In Akiva a confrontation erupted between Jews and Arabs at a shopping mall, which prompted the intervention of the police, who rushed to the scene and were attacked by the belligerents (Haaretz, 2001).

The next day, two Arabs from Nazareth were killed in scuffles between Arabs and Jews in Upper Nazareth, of which the police denied responsibility, and it was suspected that these acts were perpetuated by the Jewish demonstrators (Haaretz, 2001).

On October 8, 2000, in the Hatikva neighborhood in Tel Aviv, three apartments belonging to Arabs were set on fire as hundreds of the neighborhood's residents confronted police, chanting "death to the Arabs." (Haaretz, 2001). The demonstrators set fire to the Avazi restaurant after forcing the Arab employees of the restaurant to evacuate the building. Two Arab owned vehicles parked in front of the restaurant were also set ablaze. The rampage continued in Jaffa, Bat Yam and Petah Tikva (Haaretz, 2001)

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The violence continued on October 9, 2000, when hundreds of Jewish residents entered the shopping mall at the southern entrance to Nazareth, breaking windows and burning two vehicles (Haaretz, 2001).

About 1,000 Jews rampaged in Karmiel on the same day, and according to a police report, Mayor Rafi Eldar, who came to the area in an effort to calm the violence down, was attacked and lightly wounded (Haaretz, 2001). Also on the same day, some Jews rampaged and damaged Arab-owned property in Bat Yam and Petah Tikva (Haaretz, 2001).

The incidents of October 2000 marked the beginning of a new form of tension between the Arab citizens of Israel and the state including its majority Jewish population. Deep mistrust was sown between the two. The Arab citizens were now perceived by the state as the enemy within, who lacked loyalty to the state and would take sides with its enemies to undermine it at any given opportunity. On the other hand the Arab citizens of Israel after the incident developed an attitude of being unnecessarily victimized by the state, which was claimed to have used excessive force to quell the demonstrations and riots. This hardened the resolve of the Arab population to alienate themselves from close political association with the Jews, who they came to consider as a people who wished them no good, and wanted to exterminate them through social, economic, and political suppressions, marginalization and the use of brute force.

On the Jewish side, the incidents of October 2000 led to the strengthening of the right wingers, who had a boost to their claims towards their suspicion of the Arabs of Israel as potential traitors who seek the downfall of the state and would ally with its enemies to see to its demise. The Arab riots which turned violent fueled these claims, and resulted in the embitterment of a large number of the Jewish population towards their Arab fellow citizens. The right wing has swelled its ranks and grown in power and influence in Israeli politics, using the event as a springboard to further its popularity in the political arena.

The rift created by the second Intifada and the October 2000 events has not been mended despite the years that have passed since it ended, but has grown wider. Though without any further major confrontation, the mistrust existing between both groups has heightened, evident in the political atmosphere of Israel. Alliances between Jewish and Arab parties, which were common in previous decades, have become very rare in recent years and soon turned into blurry history of a fading distant past.

Among all the governments of Israel since its establishment, the government of Yitzhak Rabin was the most promising for a true collaboration and mutual cooperation between the Arabs and the Jews as he was committed to bridging the gap that kept both groups distant from each other. Unfortunately his assassination in 1995 was a big blow to a possible Arab-Jewish harmony. Ever since Rabin's assassination, the Arab-Jewish relations have nosedived, propelled most especially by the events of October 2000, the second Intifada, failure to solve the Palestinian question, and the continuous claims of inequality that exists between the two groups, economically, socially and politically.

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According to the Arab-Jewish index of 2012 by Sammy Smooha, 70.5% of the Arab citizens of Israel say that the government today treats Arabs as second class citizens or as hostile citizens who do not deserve equality (Smooha, 2012, p.14). Also, most Arabs respond aggressively to the laws, acting against the commemoration of the Nakba, granting authority to admission committees of communal villages to reject candidates, punishing supporters of the boycott of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and other similar laws and motions (Smooha, 2012, p.14). According to this same index, 76.2% of Arab respondents in 2011 felt these laws diminished their confidence in coexistence with Jews, and 75.6% reported that these laws undermined their belief in Israel's right to exist (Smooha, 2012, p.14).

A 2012 survey did not show any improvement to the situation as the data of the survey showed that the Arabs still harbored the feeling of being threatened and alienated by the state, as 55.5% said that as Israeli citizens they feel estranged and rejected (54.3% in 2003), 62.4% felt that it is impossible to trust most Jews (55.6% in 2003), 77.8% feared grave violation of their basic rights (71.1% in 2003), and 68.0% were afraid of population transfer (55.4% in 2003) (Smooha, 2012, p.14).

The proportion of Arabs denying Israel's right to exist as a state was 20.5% in 1976, then reduced to 6.8% in 1995 (during the second Rabin government that is considered the Golden Age of Arab-Jewish relations), it rose to 11.2% in 2003, and doubled to 24.5% in 2012 (Smooha, 2012, p.16).

Judging from the figures provided by the survey, it can be vividly observed that Arab-Jewish relations in recent decades, especially since 2000, have taken a spiral plunge, without any visible sign of a peaceful and cooperative coexistence in sight. The increasing disapproval of the Arabs to the Jews and the Israeli government has further fueled suspicion on the part of the state toward its Arab citizens. In an interview of Arab Israelis concerning their identity, conducted by Smadar Bakovic, this was the response of an Arab Israeli child: "The Palestinians are the same people as we are. We have the same blood. We are Muslims, just like them. And we also share the same land, Palestine. We are really one people . . . The Jews want to separate us, but they won't succeed because we know that this land is going to be Muslim" (Bakovic, 2006, p.238). This shows that even from early childhood, the Arab Israeli children are oriented toward resenting identification with the state of Israel, but rather adhering to a Palestinian Muslim identity.

According to Smooha

"The deepening of the Arabs' distress, disaffection with the continued government policy toward them, indignation about the protracted occupation, and the toughening of their attitudes toward Jews and the state are unequivocally expressed in the agreement of 58.6% of respondents with the statement that "it is justified that the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip start a third Intifada if the political stalemate continues," and the agreement of 58.2% of respondents with the claim that "it is justified that Arab citizens in Israel begin an Intifada of their own if their situation does not improve significantly." Moreover, only a small and declining minority feel that affiliation to

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Israeli citizenship, as compared to religion and Palestinian people, is their most important identity—dropping from 29.6% in 2003 to 12.2% in 2012.” (Smootha, 2012,p. 18)

The estranged Arabs of Israel have become torn between loyalty to the state, loyalty to the Palestinian nationality and religious solidarity. In recent times the state seems to have received less appeal in comparison to the other two causes to which the loyalty of the Israeli Arabs have come to be channeled. According to the above data, more and more Arabs have a negative view of the state and would rather stand in religious and national solidarity with the Palestinians against the state of Israel, of which they are citizens of, and demand from their full rights accruable to them as citizens. This has resulted in a situation where the Arabs make demands of a state which it is not willing to support, contribute to or protect its interest. In the following survey, the research team proposed sixteen steps which Arabs should take so as to be treated by the state with dignity, equality and trust, but all sixteen steps were rejected (Smootha, 2012, p.27-28)

Figure 1. Steps that Arabs are willing to take so that the state and the Jews will relate to them based on equality, dignity, and trust – Arab respondents, 2009–2012 (percent) (Smootha, 2012, p.26)

	Arabs			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Peace and the Palestinian question				
Arab citizens would not identify publicly with the Arab side if Israel were attacked verbally or physically	32.0	27.0	33.2	23.2
Arab leaders would unequivocally condemn violent acts of Arabs against Jews in Israel	46.9	33.2	46.5	35.7
Arab citizens would consider Israel their country, and support it in the event of a conflict with a Palestinian state	32.3	25.6	25.1	20.3
Transitional justice				
Arab citizens would not publicly mark Nakba Day	23.8	30.8	19.2	17.5
Arab citizens would not demand that the displaced (internal refugees) be permitted to reestablish their destroyed villages	22.1	25.2	20.2	18.8
Arab citizens would not see the Jews as foreign colonizers who stole the country's lands from the Arabs	34.2	30.3	28.3	29.0

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→	Arabs			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Equal duties				
Arab citizens would fulfill some form of mandatory service to the state	43.0	34.2	47.0	34.4
Means of struggle				
Arab citizens would refrain from protesting overseas against the state	33.9	28.3	27.9	31.0
Arab leaders would refrain from harsh statements against the state	44.4	36.2	42.0	33.6
Identity				
As long as there is no peace between Israel and the Palestinians, Arab citizens would not define their identity as "Palestinian Arabs in Israel"	27.3	30.9	30.4	26.3
Arab citizens would not demand recognition as a Palestinian national minority	21.6	23.2	23.7	19.3
Legitimacy of Israel				
Arab citizens would accept Israel as a Jewish and democratic state	40.3	34.8	38.8	35.3
Arab citizens would accept Israel as the state of all Jews worldwide, and not only the Jews in Israel	25.7	27.1	24.6	22.8
Arab citizens would refrain from fighting to change the Jewish-Zionist character of the state	25.2	20.9	26.3	27.8
Arab citizens would waive the right of return of Palestinian refugees to the State of Israel	19.1	20.4	16.5	16.7
Arab citizens would recognize the right of the Jews to determine the language, culture, symbols, and policies of the state while recognizing the needs of Arab citizens	41.5	38.0	41.1	35.9

Contrary to the hardening of the Arab attitude towards the Jews and the state, the attitude of the Jews has remained constant, and slightly more tolerant and moderate towards the Arabs. According to the same survey which produced the data above, steps were also suggested that Jews are willing to take to

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improve Arab-Jewish relations and to make the Arab citizens feel that Israel is their country where they have equal rights as citizens. These steps were listed and used in the survey of the Jewish population of Israel, and here was the outcome.

Figure 2. Steps that Jews are willing to take so that Arab citizens feel that Israel is their country and they are citizens with equal rights, or to improve Arab-Jewish relations – Jewish respondents, 2009–2012 (percent) (Smooha, 2012, p.29-32)

	Jews			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Peace and the Palestinian question				
Jews and Palestinians would make painful concessions, and a Palestinian state would be established on the 1967 borders with the option of territorial exchange	42.0	43.5	43.5	42.3
Israel and the Arab states would make painful concessions, and achieve normal relations and peace	74.2	66.5	64.8	68.0
There would be no differences between Arabs and Jews in security checks at border crossings	33.2	25.8	27.2	26.9
Transitional justice				
As part of peace with the Palestinians, the state would provide compensation in land or money to Arab citizens for lands confiscated from them	49.6	44.1	49.8	44.0
The state would recognize its responsibility for the Nakba (the catastrophe that happened to the Palestinians in the 1948 war)	15.5	14.4	15.6	12.7
Mosques and Muslim cemeteries would be restored	56.0	51.1	*	*

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	Jews			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Civil rights				
The state would guarantee the rights and security of its Arab citizens, and take firm measures against anyone who threatens them	88.9	78.1	80.4	82.0
Jewish leaders would refrain from harsh statements against the Arab population	86.9	73.8	72.4	73.7
The state would ensure that Arab citizens could live in any community that they choose	42.0	37.6	37.2	42.8
Resources				
The state would grant recognition to the "unrecognized" Arab communities, which currently have no official status, and allocate resources to them (e.g., hooking them up to water and electricity) that recognized communities receive	65.1	55.1	55.2	51.9
The state would mandate by law that Arab citizens receive suitable representation in all state institutions and public bodies	66.3	52.4	56.3	54.9
The state would mandate by law that Arab citizens receive funding in the state budget in proportion with their share of the population	69.0	54.9	51.0	55.9
The Arab parties would be invited to participate in government coalitions, as the Jewish parties are	54.6	48.1	44.0	49.9
The state would implement an emergency program to close the gaps between Arab and Jewish citizens	61.6	51.3	49.6	51.0
New mixed neighborhoods would be established where Arabs and Jews would live together	38.4	39.2	37.0	43.4

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	Jews			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
State lands would be allocated to develop communities in the Arab sector	44.1	38.0	38.7	40.5
A state authority would be established for Jewish-Arab equality and coexistence	62.9	54.9	*	*
Affirmative action				
Preferential treatment would be given to Arab citizens in hiring at state institutions and acceptance to universities and colleges	34.9	29.0	27.2	29.9
Preferential treatment would be given to all Arab communities in the state to reduce the existing disparities	35.3	30.8	31.1	33.1
National minority status				
Arabic would be used in state institutions on par with Hebrew, and would be a mandatory subject in Jewish schools	51.2	49.5	47.7	48.5
It would be required by law for public services to be given in both Arabic and Hebrew	*	63.7	*	*
The state would recognize Arab citizens as Palestinians, and ensure their right to maintain ties with the Palestinian people and the Arab nation	35.0	30.9	27.5	28.2
It would be required by law for all signs to be in both Arabic and Hebrew	68.8	66.4	*	*
Autonomy				
The state would allow Arab citizens to manage their educational, religious, and cultural affairs independently	60.6	51.3	49.3	55.8

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	Jews			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
The state would recognize a top body elected by Arab citizens to represent them	55.7	43.8	43.3	47.5
The state would be required to consult ^{**} with the leaders of Arab citizens on important decisions affecting the Arab population	80.1	65.0	60.7	65.8
The state would recognize, and support the establishment of, an Arab university on equal standing with other universities in Israel	45.3	39.8	38.6	39.4
Character of the state				
The state would grant Arab citizens suitable expression in its symbols, flag, and national anthem	36.3	22.4	27.2	24.5
The Law of Return (which grants only Jews the right to immigrate to Israel and immediately receive Israeli citizenship) would be abolished	19.8	16.1	*	*
An annual state holiday commemorating coexistence between Arabs and Jews would be instituted	64.1	55.0	*	*
A symbol that Arabs can identify with would be added to the national flag	16.5	12.7	*	*

* Question was not asked.

** In 2009, the wording was "the state would consult."

The survey data highlights the Arab and Jewish respondents' attitudes toward the recommended steps proposed by the survey to improve Arab-Jewish relations, which shows that, while Jews are open to a degree of change, the Arabs perceive themselves as the absolute victim, thereby expecting all concessions from the Jewish population, while refusing to take any steps toward winning the trust and goodwill of the state and of the Jews or to motivate the latter to affect change. (Smooha, 2012, p.26)

Most Jews have consented to the suggested steps, on the condition that it does not jeopardize national security, nor risk changing the Jewish identity of the state, or require affirmative action of the Arabs (Smooha, 2012,p. 21).

CHAPTER 4

STATE POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE ARAB MINORITY

In Israel, the Arab citizens are officially regarded as full citizens and therefore are vested with equal rights as every other citizens of the state. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the Israeli society, the state pursues policies that have affected the different groups within its boundaries in different ways, this has brought to focus cases that tend to question to what extent these policies are fair and unbiased.

The Arab minority in Israel is given the liberty to maintain most of its own institutions. In this regard, it is supposed that the Arabs are given full rights in the state. But this has come to be contested in many ways by sources claiming that the state deals with its Arab minority as second class citizens anchoring on the premise that the policies of the state are biased towards the Arabs and tend to undermine them in one way or the other in favour of other groups, especially the Jews.

Many of these claims have been supported by reports such as The 2004 U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which notes that:

"Israeli-Arab advocacy organizations have challenged the Government's policy of demolishing illegal buildings in the Arab sector, and claimed that the Government was more restrictive in issuing building permits in Arab communities than in Jewish communities, thereby not accommodating natural growth."

"In June, the Supreme Court ruled that omitting Arab towns from specific government social and economic plans is discriminatory. This judgment builds on previous assessments of disadvantages suffered by Arab Israelis."

"Israeli-Arab organizations have challenged as discriminatory the 1996 "Master Plan for the Northern Areas of Israel," which listed as priority goals increasing the Galilee's Jewish population and blocking the territorial contiguity of Arab towns."

"Israeli Arabs were not required to perform mandatory military service and, in practice, only a small percentage of Israeli Arabs served in the military. Those who did not serve in the army had less access than other citizens to social and economic benefits for which military service was a prerequisite or an advantage, such as housing, new-household subsidies, and employment, especially government or security-related industrial employment. The Ivri Committee on National Service has issued official recommendations to the Government that Israel Arabs not be compelled to perform national or "civic" service, but be afforded an opportunity to perform such service."

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"According to a 2003 University of Haifa study, a tendency existed to impose heavier prison terms to Arab citizens than to Jewish citizens. Human rights advocates claimed that Arab citizens were more likely to be convicted of murder and to have been denied bail."

"The Or Commission of Inquiry's report stated that the 'Government handling of the Arab sector has been primarily neglectful and discriminatory,' that the Government 'did not show sufficient sensitivity to the needs of the Arab population, and did not take enough action to allocate state resources in an equal manner.' As a result, 'serious distress prevailed in the Arab sector in various areas. Evidence of distress included poverty, unemployment, a shortage of land, serious problems in the education system, and substantially defective infrastructure.'"

While The 2007 U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices notes that:

"According to a 2005 study at Hebrew University, three times more money was invested in education of Jewish children as in Arab children."

These reports cannot be easily dismissed as mere accusations, as they have been made by US, an ally of Israel. Such reports have raised concerns on the situation of the Arabs in Israel. The Israeli security forces have been repeatedly reported to have handled Arab citizens harshly especially during the October 2000 events. The standard of living of the Arabs has been noticed to be significantly lower than that of the Jews. These have caused a lot of doubt on the adherence of the Israeli government to Human Right practices and the policy of equality.

The Arabs are given more autonomy compared to other minority groups, but the grievances of the Arab population over a number of issues still remain. A vivid example would be the policy of National Service, which until 2007 was only mandatory for the Jewish, Druze, and Circassian citizens of Israel, exempting the Arabs who were not required to be conscripted. This was to prevent a scenario of an outcry of oppression and forceful conscription by the Arab public. In response to the Ivri Committee recommendation on National Service, and a bid to ensure inclusivity and extending a sense of belonging to the Arab youths, finally in 2007 the government created a national service option to substitute for military service. Among the Arabs that volunteered were also women, who were mostly assigned to agencies within their villages (Cherry, 2014, p.83). National service has been heavily criticized by the Arab leadership, which has engaged in vigorous campaigns to prevent Arab youths from participating, even to the extent of physically threatening participants (Cherry, 2014, p.83). Despite these campaigns, based on survey data, Sammy Smootha told reporters: "Most Israeli-Arabs look positively on national service as a voluntary contribution to their communities and the state"

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(Cherry, 2014, p.83). The number of Israeli Arabs in national service continuously increased from 289 in 2006, to 3,000 in 2012 (Cherry, 2014, p.83).

The Jewish state does not impose on the Arab minority and does not compel conscription of Arab youths due to its stance to promote liberty of choice without infringement of the rights of the Arabs to maintain their own way of life. In regards to this, Arab involvement in National Service is strictly voluntary, offering a choice for Arab youths to participate and enjoy the benefits accrued to National Service. The Arab volunteers are generally allocated to Arab populations, where they assist with social and community matters. According to sources in the national service administration, Arab leaders are counseling youths to refrain from performing services to the state. According to a National Service official: "For years the Arab leadership has demanded, justifiably, benefits for Arab youths similar to those received by discharged soldiers. Now, when this opportunity is available, it is precisely these leaders who reject the state's call to come and do the service, and receive these benefits" (Magnezi, 2010). For years and until now, the Arab leadership has incessantly protested and demanded for the same benefits as accrued to Jewish, Druze and Circassian citizens who have fulfilled their national service obligations to the state, and yet they refrain from offering this same service or encouraging the Arab youths to participate. An explanation to this scenario could be that the Arab leadership has mostly frowned at the idea of National service due to the impression it has about the Israeli government as a ploy to use Palestinians against their own people. According to the *Haifa Declaration*.

“We believe that the policies that require us to perform “civil service” and the steps that could lead to our involvement in Israeli militarism and the distribution of the spoils of wars are incompatible in our case with the principle of equality, because they disfigure our identity and disregard historical injustices.” (Haifa Declaration, May 15, 2007, Haifa)

Arabs who go ahead to volunteer for national Service are faced with challenges within their society. MK Jamal Zahalka, head of the Balad party, warned, “A young woman needs to know that if she performs national service, there is a chance no one will marry her and she will be ostracized” (Cherry, 2014, p.83).

In regards to employment and income, the Arabs earn less than the Jews despite the fact that in recent years, according to statistics, Arab men have a higher employment rate than their Jewish counterparts (Karsh, 2013, p. 10). This is most especially true among the Bedouin Arabs, who do not easily have access to education, or are inhibited due to their way of life and are only able to get unprofessional jobs and earn less than Jewish men who are mostly professionals therefore and earn more. The Equal Opportunities in Employment Law of 1988 prohibits discrimination between job-seekers on the basis of their nationality (Hesketh, 2011, p.9). Despite this law, there have been numerous claims of segregation against the Arabs in the employment sector and according to *The Inequality Report: The*

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Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel by ADALAH (The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel), unemployment rates remain significantly higher among Arabs than among Jewish citizens, and the rate of labor-force participation among female Palestinian citizens of Israel, at just about 20%, is among the lowest in the world (Hesketh, 2011, p.9). Contrary to this report, data and figures from other sources show that there has been a steady increase in Arab men employment, taking for instance a survey from 2009, which shows that the unemployment rate in the Arab sector was 8.5% compared to 10.8% in development towns, with 76.5% of Arab men having a full-time job compared to 69.7% of their Jewish counterparts (Karsh, 2013, p. 10).

Figure 3: Percentages of employees engaged in selected industries, 2008. Source (Hesketh, 2011, p.26)

	Arab employees (%)	Jewish employees (%)
Construction (males) ⁶⁶	28.4	5.4
Unskilled workers	14.6	6.4
Business activities	5.6	14.3
Managerial positions	2.3	7.3
Banking, insurance and finance	0.8	4.3

Also Arab Muslim women tend to have a higher rate of unemployment in comparison to the Jewish secular women, which can be attributed to cultural difference and not a factor of discriminatory policies. There have been complaints that Arab women are marginalized in employments, in comparison to their Jewish counterparts. In reality, both Arab and Jewish women have equal rights in workplaces. Lower rate of Arab women employment may be attributed to cultural factors as most Arab societies still operate a patriarchy system where the men are head of the families and the women who are regarded to be inferior, are compelled to tend to lower domestic duties at home instead of taking up active positions in politics or as official authorities of law and order, employing the means of control over women that include customs, conventions, honor values, shame and violence (Rinawie- Zoabi, 2006, p.22-23). In most Arab communities, it is frowned at for a woman to take up a real job; this in fact explains why fewer Arab women are employed in comparison to other groups in the state. This obviously nullifies the claim of any discriminatory policy to economically suppress the Arab woman, as the Arab woman is in fact suppressed by the Arab society.

The prediction that someday in the future the Jews would become a minority given the high birthrate of Arabs in Israel has sparked fears in the Jewish society and its leaders. Many Jewish politicians have been advocating ways to curb the future Arab domination of Israel, among whom the most notable is Avigdor Lieberman of Yisrael Beiteinu who advocates for the land swap strategy, where large Arab towns inside Israel close to the West Bank would be exchanged for Jewish settlements inside the West Bank (Benn, 2005). Despite these fears, not all Jewish political leaders support the Lieberman Plan or

any such advocacy to undermine a cohesive relation between the Jews and the Arabs. Nevertheless the fear of the eventuality of an Arab majority in Israel has not spurred any policy to undermine the Arab minority yet.

4.1 Reaction of the Arab minority to the policies of the State

One of the laws of Israel that has always been a cause for Arab grievance has been the Law of Return of 1950, which gives every Jew in the world a right to immigrate to Israel (Herzog, 2017, p.4). This law is specifically for the Jews, and does not apply to the Arabs, not even those who fled their homes during the Nakba, this has caused so much outcry among the Arabs of Israel and the Palestinians who have been advocating for a Palestinian right of return also.

The home demolition policy which involves the demolition of unrecognized Bedouin villages by the government and the ploy to relocate the Arabs to urban centers has not been a welcome policy for the Arabs as most of them find it hard to cope in an urban setting. The claim that these Arab villages are demolished so as to build new Jewish settlements has further fuelled the anger among the Arab minority. Also issues like under-funding of projects for the Arabs, insensitivity of the government to the plight of Arab citizens, use of excessive force during protests, under-funding of the Arab education sector and the wide gap of socio-economic status of the Arabs as compared to their Jewish counterparts has nurtured the feeling by most Arab-Israelis that they are being treated unfairly by the state. This has led to the conclusion that the Arab minority would always be treated unfairly as second class citizens if Israel remains a Jewish state unless the definition of Israel as a Jewish state is abolished and replaced by a “state for all its citizens” (The Mossawa Center, 2016).

Though the demolition of unrecognized Bedouin villages by the state authorities has caused a lot of hardship for Arabs living in such villages, the recognized Bedouin towns have fared much better in recent years from new government policies. Rahat was selected to be the site of the first government-funded industrial zone in the Bedouin communities, and public transportation networks have been expanded in four of the other seven recognized towns, linking them with Beer-Sheva (Cherry, 2014, p.87). In coordination with JDC-TEVET¹², the government has budgeted 21 employment centers

¹² JDC-TEVET is a developer of employment services for minority groups in Israel

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(These one-stop centers provide employment referrals, counseling services, soft skill workshops, and referrals to vocational training programs) in the Arab communities, eight of which will be in the Bedouin south, and another four for Bedouin communities in the north (Cherry, 2014, p.87).

In 2012, in addition to funding a number of programs to increase industrial employment of Negev Bedouins, and allocating funds for their vocational training, practical engineering studies, including paying tuition fees and providing living stipends, the government has also enhanced its general employment subsidy given to firms that employ Arab and Bedouin workers from 25% to 35% of wage costs for up to thirty months (Cherry, 2014, p.87).

The improved public transportation system to Beer-Sheva has greatly improved the lives of the inhabitants of the Bedouin communities who are now relieved of the stress of traveling all the way to Hebron to shop, but can now find easy access to their needs within Beer-Sheva. This has most especially been beneficial to the Bedouin women who are now offered the opportunity to expand their horizon beyond their tightly controlled communities (Cherry, 2014, p.87).

The Israeli government in response to the outcries of the Bedouin communities has embarked on major future plans to improve the living conditions in the Bedouin communities. As noted by Cherry:

“The government has initiated an ambitious five-year plan to improve infrastructure in Negev Bedouin communities. It will allocate NIS 277 million, divided equally between developing the public transportation system and transportation infrastructure for the region. An additional NIS 100 million has been allocated to upgrade of the public transportation system in 13 Arab localities nationally including Rahat, and NIS 68 million has been allocated to provide access roads to service centers and educational facilities in the Negev Bedouin areas.” (Cherry, 2014, p.87)

Though in the 21st century, apart from a number of cases of violence since the October 2000 events, there has been relative calm in the relations between the Arabs and the Jewish majority leadership, but this calm does not eliminate the storm building up beneath the surface as many ongoing factors militate against a lasting solution to the marginalization allegations of the Arab minority on the Jewish state.

In the case of the Bedouins, which has been a major issue on which claims of Israeli government marginalization has hinged on, the government has intensified its efforts to improve their living conditions and extend the dividends of their democratic rights through several inclusive and developmental policies. It is expected that such progressive policies would soften the attitude of the Arabs towards the state and encourage more support for its initiatives, but unfortunately, in all recognized villages, less than 20% of the residents pay their municipal taxes, and in some even lower than 10% (Cherry, 2014, p.87). The low rate of tax paid reflects the victimization mentality which most Arabs of Israel have come to adhere to. In the absence of funds, the municipalities lack the resources to maintain the provision of basic amenities and services such as sanitation, water supply, street prepare, public infrastructure, which in turn frustrates the attempts of the government to integrate the Arabs,

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especially the Bedouins as functional part of the state, not only as beneficiaries, or a group that seeks only the state's benefits but also as a group that supports and contributes to the progress and welfare of the state.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Providing answers to the research questions of this paper, it must be established as a fact that the foundation of Israel as a Jewish state, and the circumstances that led to its creation, taking note of the UN Partition Plan, on which the legitimacy of the state stands, being a homeland for the Jewish people. Israel being a settler society bears the same characteristics as other settler societies, which develops a frontier culture, expanding the control of the dominant group in the region (Yiftachel, 1998, p.2). Dominant groups maintain their hegemony by employing the use of class, national, religious and other interests, just as it is in the case of Israel where the primary field of hegemonic exclusion is ethno-national (Kopelowitz, 2001, p.168). The Jewishness of the state cannot be erased, and as long as this persists, the Jews would always be more equal than every other group within the state including the Arabs in terms of priority. The state of Israel would always defend its Jewish nature, and the recognition of Israel as the sovereign state of the Jewish people is a prerequisite for candidates who intend to contest in the Knesset elections (Rekness, 2002, p.7).

Also, the Jewish state has lived up to its claim as a Jewish and democratic state, as it maintains a hegemony of the Jews but offers full democratic rights to its other citizens, including its Arab citizens. The Arabs are allowed to actively participate in the politics of the state, with the right to make and counter motions in the parliament. Arabic is designated as an official language in Israel, non-Jewish religious holidays are officially recognized while cultural, educational, judicial and religious autonomy is granted to the Arab citizens of Israel, which places them among the foremost minority groups with more formal prerogatives than anywhere else in the democratic world, not to mention the Middle East and the Muslim world (Karsh, 2013, p.7).

The UN Partition Plan, taking into consideration the fact that when a dual state between the Jews and the Arabs would be created, there would be minorities in both states that would fall into either side of the boundary, called upon the parties not to discriminate on the grounds of race, religion, language, or sex in their respective states (Susser, 2009, p.109-110). According to this plan, minorities were to be allowed unrestricted use of their language, and each state was required to “ensure adequate primary and secondary education for the Arab and Jewish minority, respectively, in its own language and its cultural traditions.” (Susser, 2009, p.109-110). The partition plan was not successfully implemented, and a Palestinian state was not created, but the state of Israel has tended to extend more rights and liberties to Arabs within its territory quite similar to those proposed in the partition plan, as compared to Jews in

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the territories that remained under Arab control on the aftermath of the 1948 war. Every Jew that was found within this territory was either killed or expelled and all their settlements were razed (Susser, 2009, p.109-110).

Israeli Arabs have been endowed with the full spectrum of democratic rights – including the right to vote for and serve in all state institutions. From the designation of Arabic as an official language, to the recognition of non-Jewish religious holidays as legal resting days for their respective communities, to the granting of educational, cultural, judicial, and religious autonomy. Despite this remarkable record, it must also be noted that for as long as Israel remains officially recognized as a Jewish state, there would be no true equality between the Arabs and the Jews. According to the *Future vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel*, the official definition of Israel as a Jewish State created a fortified ideological barrier in the face of the possibility of obtaining full equality for the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (Rinawie- Zoabi, 2006, p.13). Vivid illustrations of this inequality are such laws like the Law of Return (1950), and the Citizenship Law (1952), which only applies to Jews and exempts the Arabs.

Politically, there have been no laws restricting Arab participation in Israeli politics. Eligible Arab citizens are allowed to vote and be voted for. Since 2000, despite the turbulence that ushered in the 21st century, The Arab community of Israel has thrived politically, for the first time in history holding seventeen seats in the Knesset, boasting of the first female MK, and also a Supreme Court Judge. These are proofs that the Arabs are fully involved in the politics of the state, without any restriction on the basis of their religion or ethnicity, in accordance to the Israeli Declaration of Independence, which specifically stated that the State of Israel “will maintain complete social and political equality among its citizens with no distinction based on religion, race or gender.” (Peleg, 1998, p.238). Despite this political progress, there is still a lot of tension between the Arabs of Israel and the government of Netanyahu especially since the ban of the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, a group many Palestinian Arabs consider as a protector of Islam. This has caused alarm among most Arabs of Israel who have come to be threatened by the attitude of the government towards them. This can be said to be a motivation for numerous attacks in Israel like the July 14 2017 attack on two police officers by three Arab citizens of Israel (Mhajne, Sept 12, 2017). It is a possibility that if the state continues with its hardline approach in dealing with its Arab citizens, there would be an increase of violent confrontations between the state and its Arab citizens.

Inasmuch as the current policies of the state towards the Arab minority have taken a hardline approach under Netanyahu, many policies of the state towards the people could be subjective to their attitude towards the state or to structural marginalization. This is clearly illustrated using the case of the Bedouins in the recognized and unrecognized villages. Residents of recognized Arab villages are supported by the government which provides them with allocations and development funds, while those living in unrecognized villages are most times cut off from public infrastructure and are under a constant threat of demolition and forced relocation, even excluded from the map of settlements

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recognized by the 1965 Planning and Building Law (Payes, 2003, p.71). In this case, these are same people, but receive different treatments. Despite the efforts of the Israeli government to develop Arab communities there have also been cases that show otherwise. For instance, the state budget for 2008 allocated a total sum of NIS 215 million for developing industrial zones, of which only NIS 10 million was allocated to Arab towns and villages, far less than the amount that the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor committed to allocate in previous years, at NIS 25 million (Hesketh, 2011, p.29). So, marginalization of the Arabs in Israel by the state cannot be said to be absolute, neither can it be considered as non-existent, but somewhere in-between. The Israeli government tends to be actively bridging the gap that has existed for decades between the Arabs and the Jews. It has showed some commitment toward those who adhere to the laws of the state and are willing to make positive contributions to it. Just like in every other state, exercising both external and internal sovereignty demands of its residents and citizens to keep law and order, demonstrating political loyalty and their commitment to the welfare of their host state (Sheffer, 1997, p.125).

All political movements in the Arab sector reacted against the decision of the Israeli Minister of the Interior to revoke the citizenship of two Israeli Arabs who were involved in terrorism, protesting against the decision and claiming that the Israeli government was persecuting the Arab minority (Hitman, 2013, p.127). The actions of the Arab political leadership can also be said to be responsible to the suspicious and cautious attitude of the state towards the Arabs. Many Arab politicians have publicly supported movements against the state. In regard to the second Intifada, MK Mohammed Barakeh was quoted in a newspaper as saying that the violent struggle should continue as it was the most effective way of causing the dissolution of the Israeli government (Hitman, 2013, p.127). Also, former Knesset member Taleb Sana justified the Intifada, claiming that it was not terrorism but legitimate resistance, while Azmi Bishara wrote that only struggle would help Palestinians achieve political goals, and not negotiations (Hitman, 2013, p.127). These were words of members of the Knesset, political representatives of the Arab citizens, who expressed their support for attacks on the state and even as far as its dissolution. This creates an impression that the Arab minority seeks the demise of the state, and this in turn has affected the response of the state towards its Arab citizens, increasing its suspicion and mistrust.

The relations between Israel and its Arab citizens require efforts from both sides, both have to show a willingness and commitment to ensure mutual cooperation. The Arabs need to accept the sovereignty of the state, and play their role as citizens, putting more effort in showing their willingness to protect the interest of the state and be a progressive part of its institutions. The state also needs to show its commitment toward the welfare of its Arab citizens, assuring them of the state's commitment to grant them the full benefits of their rights as citizens and bridge the gap of inequality between the Arabs and the Jews of Israel.

As most Israeli Arabs would prefer a one-state solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinians conflict, because of the fear of losing their Israeli citizenship and a possible population swap in an eventual

creation of a Palestinian state, this has spurred their demand for an Israeli state of genuine equality without special privileges to only the Jews. Most of these agitations have been documented in the article *The Future Vision of Palestinian Arabs in Israel*. Since the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has failed to become a reality over the decades, individuals and groups from both sides are increasingly supporting a one-state solution. But this solution varies from one group to another. Hamas envisage a united one state encompassing the entire region, which would be governed according to Islam, just as a majority of Jewish rightists who tend to favor a one-state solution would support this provided the Jewish nature of the state is retained.

The increasing development of new Jewish settlements in the West Bank has further inhibited any hope for a two state solution in the future, as expressed by Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat who has mentioned that the only way forward in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations would be to refocus their attention on the one-state solution where Muslims, Christians and Jews can live as equals (Hamilton, 2009).

Putting every option into consideration, with the one-state solution becoming more likely, a possible agreement between both sides would be a major victory for peace in the region, and secure a harmonious and stable relation between the Arabs of Israel, the Jews and the State.

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