THE RESURRECTION OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST: THE CASES OF JORDAN AND ISRAEL

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Abstract

The recent theoretical debates on the politics of identity help to depict why different foreign policy behavior occurs in the divided societies of the Middle East. For instance, the degree varied from one country to another, but states in the region urged the necessity to incorporate supra-state loyalties, either Arabism or Zionism, as an integral element of their identity formation. Viewed from the approach that the international system and/or regional systems serve as catalysts in shaping and re-building the role of the politics of identity in invoking states’ preferences and behaviors, Jordan and Israel can be seen as the very epitomes of these debates within the framework of the Middle East realm. Given the permeable identity boundaries of the Middle East societies, it is vital to scrutinize the ramifications of different politics of identities in divided societies of the region. Among others, the Palestinian identity is one of the most salient identities in the Middle East. Since Palestinians and Palestinian-ness reveal the debates on the interplay of multifaceted identities in the region, Jordan and Israel are the very epitomes of determining the role and effects of resurgence of Palestinian-ness in making or unmaking identity politics.

Key Words

Jordan, Israel, Palestinians, politics of identity, al-Aqsa Intifada.

Introduction

Identity politics in the Middle East are multi-dimensional processes which are demarcated by different affinities and loyalties. Among the other identities, the Palestinian identity occupies a central place in the debates on citizenship, minority politics and civic culture due to its peculiar

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international, regional and local constituents in the Middle East. Given the permeable frontiers and ideologies that have bound and determined the polities of the Middle Eastern states, emphasizing how states’ interests are transformed and re-constructed by their politics of identity seems to be one of the relevant approaches in analyzing the re-formulation of identities of the region. Due to the existence of multiple affiliations in the region, namely Pan-Arabist, Islamist, Palestinian, Israeli, Israeli Arab and tribal, the process of nation-building has not been a fully complete project in nearly all societies of the Middle East. In addition, the idea that identities can be rebuilt during critical periods of internal unrest, regional crisis and international challenges, states’ identities can act as a backdrop in calling upon new interests and foreign policy behaviors. In view of that fact, the failure to settle the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, the ongoing tensions in the Occupied Territories and the future status of Palestinian refugees have instrumental roles in understanding and exploring the roots of states’ interests, preferences, future expectations and particularly identity conflicts in the region.

The recent theoretical debates on the politics of identity help to depict why different foreign policy behaviors occur in the divided societies of the Middle East. For instance, the degree varied from one country to another, but states in the region have urged the necessity to incorporate supra-state loyalties, either Arabism or Zionism, as an integral element of their identity formation. Viewed from the approach that the international system and/or regional systems serve as catalysts in shaping and re-building the role of the politics of identity in invoking states’ preferences and behaviors, Jordan and Israel can be seen as the very epitomes of these debates within the framework of the realm of the Middle East. Given that both Jordan and Israel are considered to be the two examples of having divided societies, analyzing debates on politics of identity in both countries is imperative to assess the ability of these states and the actors in framing issues, justifying foreign policy actions and assuring the populace in cases of internal unrest. Having been confronted by the demographic imbalance and internal tension due to their citizens of Palestinian descent, Jordan and Israel have been chosen in this study as the two significant cases of the Middle East sub-system. Thus the primary objective of this article is, on the one hand, to re-think the role and resurgence of a Palestinian identity in Jordanian and Israeli societies and to analyze the linkage between constant re-formations of identity in Israel and Jordan, as well as the impact of regional sub-systems on constructing
identities during periods of crisis, considering the aftermath of the al-Aqsa intifada in particular.

**Emergence of the Notion of ‘Palestinianess’ in the Middle East**

Given that the Palestinian identity developed after a specific event in history - the *Nakḥba*, or catastrophe, of the 1948 - 1949 Arab-Israeli war, the notion of Palestinianess (being Palestinian) has been central to invoking the Palestinian quest for statehood in the post–1949 era. Although the growth and emergence of the Palestinian identity has been a remarkably debatable and controversial issue within the context of Middle East politics, Rashid Khalidi argues that:

The assertion of Palestinian nationalism developed in response to the challenge of Zionism embodies a kernel of a much older truth; this modern nationalism was rooted in long-standing attitudes of concern for the city of Jerusalem and for Palestine as a sacred entity which were a response to perceived external threats ... The incursions of the European powers and the Zionist movement in the late 19th century were only the most recent examples of this threat. (emphasis added)¹

Khalidi clearly states that the construction of a Palestinian identity is an old phenomenon dating back to 19th century. In addition, the Palestinian identity evolved during the Westernization policies of the Ottoman Empire which were underway by the second half of the 19th century. Khalidi’s arguments are particularly centered on the notion of *fellahin* (peasants) who found themselves in a position to be aware of the impact and existence of Zionism on Palestinian territories. Palestinianess is, thus, associated with the struggle for land – Palestinian lands – vis-à-vis the new Jewish settlement invoked by Zionism. By the end of the First World War, the area of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria including Palestine during the Ottoman Rule) was then divided by the Mandatory Powers of Britain and France at the San Remo Conference of 1920. Britain took the control of the Palestinian territories until its withdrawal in 1947. In the aftermath of the 1948 - 49 Arab-Israeli War, Palestinian territories were partitioned by Israel, Jordan (the West Bank

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until 1967) and finally Egypt (the Gaza Strip until 1967). The partition of Palestine has been instrumental in energizing the quest for a national liberation movement, which led to the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964. In this respect, the annexation of the West Bank territories by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1950 would be watershed in invoking and strengthening the Palestinian identity vis-à-vis the Jordanian as well the Israeli one.

Construction of a Jordanian Identity from a Historical Point of View: Thinking the Unthinkable?

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been considered to be a bi-national country due to the influx of a huge Palestinian community in the aftermath of the 1948-49 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. Besides, the artificially-drawn boundaries of Jordan display the very foundations of interaction and salience of multiple identities in the country. The detachment of the West Bank territories from the Palestinian territories and subsequent annexation by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been highly instrumental in demarcating and determining the politics of identity in the Kingdom. In addition, the Jordanian regime’s strategic policy of the integration of Palestinians into Jordanian society has overlapped with the resurgence of Palestinian identity in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49 and following the formation of the PLO in 1964.

The Kingdom put forward the policy of co-opting Palestinians via four critical measures. For the most part, with the Unity Act of 1950, all Palestinians were granted the right to acquire Jordanian citizenship and passports which is a unique epitome in the Arab Middle East. The policy of granting citizenship in the Hashemite Kingdom principally coincided with the legitimization of the annexation of the West Bank territories and also the integration of the Palestinian community into the East Bank community of Jordan, thereby justifying the idea that ‘Jordan is a homeland’ for Palestinian-Jordanians. Secondly, unification of the two banks stimulated the Kingdom to take measures to form this identity through recurrent references to Arab nationalist goals and showing commitment to the Palestinian cause. The main aspect of bringing Arabist premises into play was derived from the

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necessity to manifest the fact that ‘Jordanians and Palestinians are forming an Arab nation’ and they all belong to the same familial bonds. The third aspect of the politics of identity in Jordan is associated with the loyalty to the monarchy and the perception of the King as the sole and complete patriarch of Jordanian society. In this regard, the generation and preservation of popular allegiance to the Jordanian Constitution were central for two reasons: bringing a resolution to Palestinian problem and reinforcing Arab unity in the region. Finally, the regime has utilized Islam as the main source of higher identity to hold together the Jordanian nation, regardless of origin.

Through a policy of controlled integration, the Kingdom- i.e. the Palestinian-Jordanian identity- was aimed at responding to the insurgence of a Palestinian counter-hegemonic identity. On the one hand, the Palestinian-Jordanian identity has been embraced by the majority of the Palestinians in East Bank of Jordan in particular. As Joseph Nevo indicates, “it [the adoption of Palestinian-Jordanian identity] was rather popular among the above mentioned urban middle class and members of the political establishment (cabinet ministers, members of parliaments, civil and military senior officials)”. The loyalty to this identity has been less among the Palestinians on the West Bank territories, on the other hand.

One of the significant foundations of the Jordanian identity has been state services, particularly in the realms of security services – mukhabarat (intelligence) – and the army. Although the Hashemites themselves were foreigners to the Jordanian entity, the Bedouins - who have been considered to be the true native inhabitants of Jordan - embrace the wave front of the identity building in the Kingdom where surprisingly the Bedouins of the East Bank comprise a slighter smaller part of the entire population of the country.

\textit{Palestinian – Jordanians on the West Bank}

As Névo has indicated, “even though Abdullah’s arrival had contributed to its [Jordanian identity] emergence, the nascent Jordanian

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item Ibid, pp. 2 – 3.
\item Laurie A. Brand, “Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity”, p. 48.
\item Joseph Névo, “Changing Identities in Jordan”, \textit{Israel Affairs}, Vol. 9, No. 3, (2003), p. 188.
\end{itemize}}
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identity [since the establishment of the Emirate] was not self-evidently pro-Hashemite”. Given the fact that the West Bank turned into a Palestinian entity in the aftermath of the First Arab-Israeli War, Palestinian-Jordanians of the West Bank have shared a common idea and sense of lost homeland on de facto Palestinian terrain. Although there were Jordanian-Jordanian businessmen and civil servants on the West Bank, the population of West Bank were largely dominated by the Palestinian descents. As compared to the Jordanian-Jordanians, the Palestinian descents of the Kingdom hold the distinction of being attached to both their place of origin and the nakhba- the catastrophe of the 1948 war. Their attachment to the notion of ‘return’ was the key to the formulation of the very foundations of the Palestinian identity on the West Bank of the Jordan, if not the East Bank as well.

It is central to state that the Palestinian community in Jordan has not been monolithic. Laurie Brand categorized the Palestinian community into four groups based on the criterion of attachment to the Kingdom of Jordan. The first category comprises the refugees of the 1948-1949 and 1967 wars that hold a Palestinian identity stronger than a Jordanian one. Nevertheless, they consider Jordan to be home, if not the homeland; most of them are opposed to the Jordanian monarchy and some still stay in refugee camps.

The second group of Palestinians is composed of middle class merchants and those who have acquired lower-level governmental posts in the country; these middle-class Palestinians are divided in their attachment to the Jordanian identity- those Palestinians who have benefited economically from the system are more prone to acquire Jordanian identity than those who have opted for Palestinian national liberation. The Palestinian-Jordanians who have achieved a substantial economic well-being in Jordan constitute the third category. Although their place of origin goes back to the West Bank Palestinian lands that are under Israeli control today, they became an integral part of Jordanian society in the aftermath of the Black September episode. This group does not differentiate a clear distinction between being Jordanian and being Palestinian. The last group of Palestinians is the 1990–1991 Gulf War returnees. As long as they traveled back to Jordan after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and hold Jordanian passports for practical purposes, the

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7Ibid.
9Ibid, p. 49.
Gulf War returnees are at a standstill but largely committed to Palestinian identity.

**Policy of Two People on One Land**

Islam has constituted the main communal bond between the Jordanian state and its society. As Adeed Dawisha has brought to mind, Islam plays a part as “a motivator, legitimator, or simply as justifier” in formulating Jordan’s identity.\(^\text{10}\) The Jordanian branch of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (the Muslim Brotherhood) was legalized by the Kingdom as a legal charity organization in 1945 and since then the *Ikhwan* has always been a reform-oriented organization pursuing the policy of using non-violent means. The events of Black September were instrumental in demonstrating *Ikhwan*’s neutral loyalty to the regime policies. In particular, the *Ikhwan* gave substantial support to the Kingdom in order to unify both banks in 1950.\(^\text{11}\) Besides, the *Ikhwan* backed the Kingdom in struggling with radical Islamic groups like *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* (The Islamic Liberation Party). One example to demonstrate the non-confrontational relationship between the state and the Brotherhood was Ishaq Farhan, a Jordanian of Palestinian descent who was the former head of the IAF.

In this context, the Jordanian branch of *Ikhwan* illustrates a situation that can rarely be found in the Middle East where an Islamist organization has acted collectively with a monarchical regime and attempted to build unity in a bi-national society. Therefore, as a ‘supra-state identity’, Islam played a role during the annexation of the West Bank territories and still plays a significant role in building a Jordanian identity within the Palestinian majority in the country.

**Toward a Palestinian-Jordanian Identity- *Urdustini*?**

A decisive change in the Kingdom’s policy toward the Palestinians began to be evident with the events of 1968 when the Palestinian Resistance Movement retaliated against Israel from the Jordanian border. The battle at

\(^{10}\)Quoted from Adeed Dawisha (ed), *Islam in Foreign Policy*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1986, p. 5.

Karameh led to the emergence of two distinguished peoples on the same land in which both Jordanian- Jordanians and Palestinian- Jordanians were proud of winning the same war. In this respect, as Joseph Névo argued, the war at Karameh and the subsequent events of 1970 and 1971 led to the crystallization of a Jordanian identity vis-à-vis a Palestinians identity. Nevertheless, the Kingdom has not stipulated a policy of two people on one land in the aftermath of the Black September episode, although questioning of Palestinian loyalty to the monarchy and the constitution has penetrated into the agenda of identity politics in the country.

Even though King Hussein put forward the policy of liberating Palestinian lands as being in the interest of the Palestinians in the country, it is actually a matter of common concern for the whole of Jordan. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Kingdom urged the necessity to practice ‘controlled integration’ of a Palestinian identity with the pursuit of “Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan” motto. However the events of 1970-1971 have obviously depicted the very fact that Jordan is so vulnerable and the insurgence of Palestinianess has been revealed as the main source of instability.

Given the presence of two conflicting ethnic groups and identities in the aftermath of the fedayeen episode, the loyalty of Palestinian citizens has been a controversial issue. Within this context, Wasfi al-Tall- Prime Minister of Jordan- inaugurated a new policy in the post-1971 era of the West Bank becoming the homeland for Palestinians and the East Bank becoming the homeland for Jordanians.

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15 The policy of “Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan” is also stipulated as the indivisibility of both Banks in that the Kingdom is in need of both Muhajirun – those who arrived to Jordan (Palestinians) – and Ansar – Transjordanians (native Jordanians). Please see Iris Fruchter-Ronen, ibid, p. 248.
The ongoing tensions between the two groups and the “political majority” of Transjordanians and “political minority” of Palestinian descents have been exacerbated, particularly after King Hussein’s decision to disengage from the West Bank territories.17 Nevertheless, Jordanian-Jordanians evidently dominate the positions in the political structure and they heavily control the public sector; on the contrary, the economic sector in the country is largely controlled by those of Palestinian descent. For instance, 60% of the companies are owned by Palestinian-origin Jordanians, including the prominent banks in the Kingdom such as the Arab Bank, the Cairo-Amman Banks and the Bank of Jordan.

**Debates on Politics of Identity in the Aftermath of *Al-Aqsa Intifada***

Jordan’s shift to serve its ties with the West Bank territories- if not also the Holy Places in East Jerusalem- denotes the beginning of a new era, not only in Jordanian political history but also its politics of identity. The modification in the long-standing Jordanian motto of “Jordan is Palestine” into “Jordan is Jordan and Palestine is Palestine” represented a lucid manifestation of nascent identity formation in the Kingdom which would also bring new deliberations on the future role and status of the Palestinians in the country.18

Since the growing opposition to normalization of relations with Israel and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000, Jordan has been caught between the necessities of the regional conjuncture and the increased bitterness among its Palestinian population. In this regard, Jordan’s democratization efforts since 1989 have been instrumental in empowering different groups in the country to organize themselves for the parliamentary elections. One of the most significant groups that have developed during this period was the IAF, which constitutes the main political party still today since its establishment in 1992. The Front’s political strength stems from two reasons: it has an organic link with the *Ikhwan* and also the Front is the only political party that has nation-wide organization and ideological base in Jordan.

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Re-Construction of Palestinian Identity: Two People on Two Lands

The onset of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000 embodied a prominent melting pot to illustrate the interplay of multiple identities in Jordan. The al-Aqsa intifada clearly represented how the Jordanian national identity and the Palestinian national identity are in constant transformation. Due to the ongoing tensions in Palestinian lands, the insurgence of Palestinian identity has become apparent in the East Bank of the River Jordan. Given the public outcry in support of the Palestinian uprising, the Jordanian regime has replaced its democratic opening initiative with that of de-liberalization, which was highly instrumental in leading to the transformation of the position of the Ikhwan and its political wing, the IAF, vis-à-vis the Jordanian regime. Although the Ikhwan has been the long-standing neutral ally of the monarchy, particularly after the fedayeen episode, the Organization has diverted its policies, particularly regarding the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, away from that of the regime during and after the peacemaking with Israel. Within the framework of an increased public unrest, the effects of the Al-Aqsa intifada can be examined under two main categories: the process of the re-formation of the Kingdom’s politics of identity and the setback in democratization efforts on the one hand and the resurgence of Palestinian-Jordanians and their expectations on the other.

The peacemaking with Israel and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, which exemplify two external challenges to the Kingdom of Jordan at the same time, represent the sources of reconstruction of Jordanian and Palestinian affiliations in view of the Palestinian problem. Immediately after the day of the intifada, a huge group of demonstrators condemned Israeli policies and called for the closure of the Israeli embassy in Amman. During this period, Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb incorporated the Palestinian-Jordanians into the cabinet to contain the emergence of Palestinian and Arabist opposition. In the early days of the uprising, the Jordanian regime permitted public demonstrations in support of the intifada. However, after a huge protest organized in the Baqaa refugee camp near Amman and the attack on the Israeli Embassy, the Kingdom renounced the public rallies in support of the Palestinian movement to promote regime survival.

In the aftermath of the al-Aqsa intifada, the Kingdom had tried to make any source of public discontent weaker, particularly those in the form
of anti-Israeli and anti-US rallies. In this regard, the regime responded to the repercussions of the intifada in two ways: by banning public rallies backing the Palestinian uprising and by de-liberalizing the political landscape, including an amendment to the electoral law in 2001. For that reason, it was not only the Palestinian-Jordanians who were affected by the de-liberalizing policies, but also the Jordanian-Jordanians who had been under the strict monitoring by the regime since the outbreak of al-Aqsa intifada. In addition, the National Charter that abolished the ban on political parties led to the emergence of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) as the sole political party in the post-1992 era, especially through its large organizational and ideological base in Jordan. The Front’s policy of non-discrimination19 in recruiting its members is allowing the Palestinian-Jordanians to benefit from the same public environment as the Jordanians in resisting the regime’s retreat from political liberalization and normalization of relations during this period. One significant manifestation of the merger of Palestinians and Jordanians in a unified front against the regime’s policies was the increase in support for the IAF in the 1993 and 2003 elections to organize the largest group in the Lower Chamber. In this regard, the Popular Campaign, that formed to resist normalizing ties with Israel, has been a melting pot in Kingdom’s political history.20 It was the first occasion that Palestinian-Jordanians and Jordanian-Jordanians merged to create a unified front opposing the Kingdom’s foreign policy.21 For that reason, the al-Aqsa intifada has truly precipitated the trend which has been underway hitherto.

The role of the IAF has been highly decisive in bringing both communities together given the fact that it is the major force opposing the Kingdom’s de-liberalizing efforts that call for the re-formulation and re-thinking of the Political Parties Law and the Electoral Law, which is a red line from the regime’s perception.22 The IAF efforts in leading the discussions on political reformation in Jordan demonstrate the very fact that although it is the political wing of the Jordanian branch of the Muslim

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19 Telephone interview with Toujan Faisal, a Circassian origin Jordanian women activist and former Member of Parliament, 20 October 2006.
22 The Jordan Times, 27 April 2003. For instance, the Front decided to run in the 2003 elections while changing its attitude not to boycott the parliamentary elections with a justification of “preserving national interest under regional circumstances”.

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Brotherhood Society in the region, the members of the Front and its current secretary-general Ishaq Farhan-a Palestinian-Jordanian-have attempted to formulate their ‘opposing’ discourses and activities on the basis of non-violent measure. These measures have been steadily in line with the Jordanian Constitution in the post–al-Aqsa intifada period. One clear expression of such a non-violent policy is evident when the IAF re-called the government in 2006 to resume the dialogue on the elections law. The head of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Shura Council, Abdul Latif Arabiyyat-a Bedouin-origin Jordanian from Salt, has noticed the unequal representation of the constituencies and said that “the new law must also pave the way for the creation of a Parliament capable of guiding, monitoring and questioning the government”.\footnote{Mohammed Ben Hussein, “IAF Calls for Democratic Election Law”, \textit{The Jordan Times}, 24 January 2006.}

Likewise, an IAF chief once said that;

We hope the king will go further to order the change of the election law so that a newly-elected house can spearhead the required reforms, including combating corruption.\footnote{“Jordan Opposition Welcomes Dissolution of Lower House”, \textit{Middle East World News}, 24 November 2009.}

It is apparent that the Palestinian dimension and Palestinianess constantly invoke identity debates in the country. The establishment of Palestine’s Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in 1988 as an outgrowth of the Palestinian Ikhwan and the IAF’s growing ties with Palestinian Ikhwan have brought about speculation concerning the future role and composition of the Front.\footnote{“Rifts in the Muslim Brotherhood”, \textit{Arab Reform Bulletin}, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (June 2008).} In co-opting the resurrection of Palestinian national and Arabist identities, the Hashemite Kingdom has urged the necessity to reformulate the very definition of being Jordanian. Under this framework, the motto of ‘Jordan First’ that has been in force since 2002, put forward the argument that:

Jordan is for all Jordanians and we appreciate the role of the opposition when it is for the interest of Jordan and its political
development and when it works to improve citizens’ standards of living and developing Jordan.\textsuperscript{26}

For that purpose, “the Jordan First, Arab Second Campaign” is a nation re-building project to overcome internal unrest, insurgence of the Palestinian phenomenon and a regional pressure posed by the al-Aqsa \textit{intifada}. The Campaign is primarily aimed at putting forward the criteria “to be an ideal Jordanian citizen”. It is quite evident that the concept of dual citizenship would not be accepted after the foundation of a Palestinian state under the Kingdom’s new identity politics. Accordingly, the electoral victory of Hamas in 2006 in Palestine and the Islamization of the Palestinian national movement, both in Jordan and in Palestine, has recently alerted the Kingdom to detain the Islamist groups in the country. Nevertheless, while the Palestinians have found considerable space in the stratification of the IAF bodies without renouncing their place of origin, the Front apparently serves as a catalyst in building bridges between Jordanian and Palestinian preferences and expectations.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, the non-violent political opposition of the IAF, at the moment, plays a crucial role in co-opting and internalizing the Palestinians into the growing Jordanian civic culture in the post–2002 era rather than labeling Palestinianess as the \textit{other} of the Jordanian society.

The main discussions in Jordan have centered on the issue of “to what extent Palestinians are loyal citizens of the Hashemite Jordanian state”.\textsuperscript{28} Given the fact that many Palestinian-Jordanians still believe that a Jordanian is the one who is not Palestinian,\textsuperscript{29} the prevailing interplay of multiple allegiances in the country- Jordanian, Palestinian, Arabist and hybrid (\textit{Filastini-Urduni}, i.e. \textit{Urdustini}) identities- reveal the debates on how suprastate, national or local identities constantly re-demarcate the meaning and scope of affiliations in the country. Nevertheless, it was not the Palestinians who have chosen Jordan as their homeland, so the loyalty of the

\textsuperscript{26} www.mfa.gov.jo [last visited 15 September 2004].
\textsuperscript{27} For instance, there were no candidates from IAF’s list in the 2007 parliamentary elections who could be labeled as \textit{Hamas Liner}. Oraib Al-Rantawi, “Elections Without Surprises”, \textit{Arab Reform Bulletin}, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (October 2007).
\textsuperscript{29}Ibid.
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Palestinians to the Hashemite monarchy has always been kept under stringent observation.

**Identity Politics of the Palestinians in Israel**

Identity has been an important issue in the relationship between the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel and the Israeli political community. The Palestinian Arab community has referred either to the distinctiveness of its identity or the integrity of its identity with the Israeli identity, vacillating in line with shifts in its opinionated positioning towards the Israeli political system. Khalidi argued that the Palestinian identity never has been defined only by conflict with Israel and Zionism.\(^{30}\) The identity politics of the Palestinian community in Israel have passed through various stages over time; these stages have been analyzed from different theoretical perspectives. Among these, the mainstream approaches have focused on the study of the collective identity of the Palestinians in Israel. While the mainstream approaches focused more on the assumptions of the modernization theory and the study of collective identity of Palestinians in Israel, the critical approaches analyzed the position of Palestinians in Israel in terms of the power relationships between the majority and minority while focusing on the structure of inequalities between the two national groups with the historical roots and dynamics.\(^{31}\)

The subsumption of Palestinian identity is obviously related to the longstanding disparity in the relative power and status of Israeli Jews and Palestinians. While the former are citizens of an established nation-state, most of the latter live under alien (and often repressive) rule, whether within or outside their historic homeland, and as people are still denied national self-determination in any part of Palestine.\(^{32}\)

Especially Seliktar's emphasis on the necessity of intracommunal and perceptual ‘consensus’ within the context of the system of controls and the

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formation of the collective identity system of the Arab minority\textsuperscript{33} can be interpreted as a contribution to the literature of a hegemonic relationship in its further stages. Rekhess's counterargument, on the other hand, highlights the continuing crisis of hegemony by stressing the process of radicalization of the Palestinian Arab community since the 1960s. His argument is mainly based on the "continued strengthening of the Palestinian component in the Arab Minority's national identity, a trend which contributed to growing alienation between Arabs and Jews"\textsuperscript{34} and thus made the functioning of hegemonic patterns less probable.

Referring to another dimension of the majority-minority relations in Israel, Rouhana discussed the relationship within the dichotomy between Jewish ethnocracy and bi-national democracy.\textsuperscript{35} In his human theory perspective, he argues that as long as an ethnic state like Israel falls short of fulfilling basic human needs for equality and political participation, power sharing and identity for the excluded minority, it would only be possible to maintain ethnic policies by employing various forms of control or by force rather than by the consent of the ‘inferior’ minority.\textsuperscript{36}

According to Jacob Landau, it is possible “to discuss the identity of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel in four concentric circles (the Israeli, the Arab, the Palestinian, and the Islamic), which often intersect with one another, but distinguishable in characteristics”. Lowrance added to Landau’s categorization by stressing the impact of these identity categories on the political behaviors and positioning of the Palestinian Arab citizens towards the Israeli state and political community.

For those individuals who identify with the state and its goals (as Israeli), grievances have a relatively small impact on system-challenging behavior. This suggests that affective identification with the state – through meaningful Israeli identities – may be


\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
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essential for reducing or preventing ethnic conflict. The converse also applies: for those who identify with anti-establishment identities (as Palestinian), grievances play a very large role in promoting system challenging behavior. This finding suggests that the state can play an important role in promoting ethnic stability by cultivating favorable identification among minority groups.37

Asad Ghanem also categorized the Palestinian citizens of Israel in four groups as accommodationists, reservationists, oppositionists, and rejectionists.38 This categorization also reflects the differences in the interpretation and implementation of identity politics among the various groups within the Palestinian community of Israel. Among these groups, the accommodationists established their political identity by referring to the interplay between their Palestinian and Israeli identities. In other words, they do not use their Palestinian identity as a means of struggle against the political structures of Israel.39 They rather accept the possibility of creating split identities based on their civic and cultural affinities, respectively; in the political sphere they ardently support the Jewish parties. The reservationists (i.e. Democratic Arab Party) have not internalized the ideological dominance of the Israeliness of the political structure designed by the Jewish political community in the country.40 They mobilized their supporters through the effective utilization of identity politics without structurally challenging the legal and political boundaries of the Israeli system; instead, they tried to change the nature of system by utilizing its mechanisms. The oppositionists have serious concerns about the character of the Israeli state. Therefore, oppositionist groups such as the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, the Israeli Communist Party, and the Progressive List for Peace fight against the definition of Israeli identity by ignoring the Palestinian Arab citizens within Israel.41 The last group, rejectionists, do not believe in the possibility of change from within the system. Therefore groups such as the Sons of the

39Ibid. p. 33.
40Ibid. pp. 33-34.
41Ibid. p. 34.
Village reject the very existence of the Israeli state with its existing Jewish and unequal nature. Since this rejectionist stance is based on the prominence of the Palestinian identity, identity politics effectively operate among the members of this group as a part of their struggle against the dominant structures of the Israeli state and political system. The various forms of identity affiliations among the Palestinian Arab citizens also indicate the character of different ideological streams within the Palestinian Arab community.

**Historical Development of Identity Politics among the Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel**

A dichotomy of isolationism versus the integrationist realization of Zionism has occupied an important place within the Zionist establishment among the Jewish political elite from the very early days of the Israeli state and even before it. While the former approach, supported by Ben Gurion and his followers, was mainly based on the idea of gradual segregation of Jewish society from the Arab population to form an Arab-free territory and purely Jewish state, the latter stood for development of the country as a whole in order to benefit all of its inhabitants. This second ‘constructivist-revolutionary’ line of thought, which was represented by Chaim Arlosoroff and Pinhas Lavon, was mainly built on the ideal of convincing Arabs to integrate into the processes of state formation and to participate in the political and socio-economic systems that would be established within the state of Israel. From this point of view, Arab consent was necessary for the development of Zionist enterprise. In line with this second approach, it has been argued that traditional Jewish isolationism at its extremes found its most suitable milieu in the ghetto and cannot be fully sustained either in the freely democratic countries of the Jewish diaspora or in sovereign Israel. In this respect, since Israel already had an identity shared by both Jew and Arab, the consent of the Arabs and their absorption by Israeli and Jewish socio-economic and political institutions was a *sin a qua non* for the full

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42Ibid. pp. 34-35.
44Ibid.
45Ibid.
sovereignty in Israel.⁴⁷ In fact, despite his hard-liner stance, Ben Gurion also felt the necessity to employ the second option from time to time, when the issue of integration or co-existence of the Arab minority within Israel became a serious concern both prior to and after the establishment of the State of Israel within the Jewish institutions. It was this necessity that had an impact on the above-mentioned differentiation between practice and discourse within the state. Nevertheless, this dichotomy between isolationism and the integrationist realization of Zionism in Israel prevailed among the dominant Jewish political elite and came to the front especially during the crises of control over the Arab minority and debates regarding the future Palestinian state.

In this respect, as Sandler maintained, in the early stages of this relationship the Jewish community seemed to be ready to hold the governmental power before it actually held it. In fact, it functioned 'as a state even prior to receiving formal sovereignty' over the other side, "which had undergone an identity crisis prior to having succeeded in developing a socially integrated community".⁴⁸

The period between the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the end of military rule in 1966 were the years of a search for identity by the Palestinian Arab community in Israel. They tried to overcome the trauma of turning into an overpowered and banished minority under a system of control which was exerted by the new Jewish state. The absence of vibrant Palestinian Arab political leadership and the Israeli state’s severe suppression of identity politics among the Palestinian Arabs further curtailed the prospects of mobilizing the community as a manifestation of the Palestinian identity.

Following the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, the Palestinian people who stayed in their lands, which then had become a part of Israel, struggled with the post-traumatic submissiveness that emerged as a result of turning from a majority into a minority.⁴⁹ In the 1950s, the Palestinian Arab community passed through a stage of isolationism. Given the fact that the community was governed by Israeli military rule, its area of movement was seriously restricted in the new Israeli state. This led to a lack

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⁴⁷Ibid.
of interest and political [un]consciousness, which kept Arabs out of the newly emerging political system. Consequently, the non-participation of Arabs in the foundational efforts of the Israeli state and its political system later on appeared to be one of the causes of their subordinate position within the political system of Israel. In this period, identity did not serve as a politically mobilizing tool among the Palestinian Arabs of Israel to unify against the Jewish political elite and the Israeli political structure. It rather became a constituent of silent isolationism from the existing Jewish-dominated political structure.

In this respect under the Israeli military rule, the Palestinians did not find opportunities to express their identity in their relationship with the Israeli authorities. Since the military rule allowed the Israeli ruling elite to suppress and contain any intellectual and activist movement which could be inspired by the markers of the Palestinian identity, the Palestinian Arab community was not able to establish a vigorous political sphere within the newly established Israeli political structure. Various laws and regulations allowed the Israeli political elite to control the Palestinian Arab community and enabled the pacification of identity-based anti-system movements among the Palestinian Arabs in the new state. Among them, the Defense Emergency Regulations of 1945, which were implemented by the Israeli political elite, severed the intra-communal political communication within the Palestinian Arab community. These laws and regulations severely restricted the activities of the Palestinian Arab political, social, religious, and municipal institutions.\textsuperscript{50} In addition, the Law of State Education, which came into force in 1953, clearly declared that promoting the dominant values of the Jewish culture as well as loyalty to the Jewish state and the Jewish people, would be one of the main concerns of the Israeli education.\textsuperscript{51} It was openly mentioned that any attempt to create a value system alternate to the dominant one based on the identity would not be welcomed by Israeli authorities.

To sum up, during the 1950s and early 1960s, almost all the avenues of identity politics for the Palestinian Arab community were seriously restrained by the coercive measures of the Israeli ruling elite during the


military governance. Local socio-economic and political formations based on the kinship became more affective among the Palestinian Arab community. They dominated the political sphere of the Palestinian Arab people of Israel during this period. In this respect, strong political leadership and organization based on the mobilization of the Palestinian Arab identity among the community did not appear until the end of military rule, apart from some exceptions such as the Al-‘Ard movement.

In this respect, it is possible to argue that the identity politics of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel were curtailed by both structural and traditional restraints that were imposed by the Israeli and Palestinian political spheres such as protracted isolationism, dependence on the Jewish lists for political representation in Israeli political arena, and *hamula* (extended family or clan) domination of the intra-communal political sphere. The reasons behind these restrictions were rooted in several factors such as the trauma of turning into a minority, the absence of experienced political leadership, the unfamiliarity with the language and the new rules of the political game (which would be shaped by the Jewish political elite), the restrictive nature of the Israeli military administration and finally the unwillingness of the Jewish political organizations to welcome them into their ranks.\(^{52}\)

The abolishment of the military government in 1966 meant a departure from the isolationist approach and loosening of the limitations on the identity politics among the Palestinian Arab community. After the traumatic period and following the relatively relaxed political environment with the end of military governance, newly emerging but more organized political representative bodies of the Arab minority appeared to realize the potential of a minority in a pluralistic polity. This led them to start to learn how to use the new rules of the game of politics adeptly within the Israeli political arena. As Ghanem argued, the Palestinian Arab community, especially because of its contact with the Jewish public and institutions, has matured into a democratic and pluralistic political community, comprising many social trends, political parties and movements, which have adopted

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democratic norms and behavior at most levels, including the family and clan as a part of their integration into the broader political and social systems.\textsuperscript{53}

The end of military rule also marked the beginning of a continuous dilemma between the simultaneous processes of radicalization towards Palestinianization and adoption to the Israeli political culture in order to express the interests of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. Elie Rekhess argued that the 1960s witnessed the radicalization of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel; this radicalization mainly took place through continued strengthening of the “Palestinian component” in the national identity of the Palestinian Arab community.\textsuperscript{54} In fact, the Palestinianess of the identity became an important component of a group consciousness within the political sphere of the Palestinian Arab community. However, this did not result in a total isolationism or disintegration from the Israeli socio-economic or political structures. Until its split in 1965, the Communist Party, which focused on the problem of inequality between the citizens of Israel irrespective of their ethnic identity, remained as the most organized alternative to the traditional kinship-based political sub-structures within the Israeli political system. Following its split in 1965, the emergence of Rakah signified a process of Palestinianization within the communist opposition discourse. The 1967 War and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Israeli forces assisted the development of a political consciousness on the basis of identity among the Palestinian Arab community\textsuperscript{55} in Israel as well as their counterparts in the Palestinian Diaspora.

The rise of the Abna Al Balad- The Sons of the Village- was an important indicator of the growing nationalism and revitalization of Palestinian political identity in the early 1970s. Abna Al Balad, which was established in 1969, followed a radical Palestinian nationalist ideology enriched with a firm socialist stance and concentrated its activities on the community problems of Palestinian Arab villages in Israel. In this respect, it presented an alternative ethico-moral leadership to the Palestinian Arabs in 1970s whose ideology was based on Palestinianess against the dominant ideology of Israeliness. Its ideological and moral commitment was based on

\textsuperscript{54}Rekhess, “The Arab Minority and the 1992 Election: Integration or Alienation”, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{55}Clive Jones and Ami Pedahzur, Between Terrorism and Civil War: The Al-Aqsa Intifada, Abingdon, Routledge, p. 34.
the objectives of developing class-consciousness and political mobilization among Palestinian Arab masses to struggle against the dominant “Zionist” system”. Thus it represented a socialist-nationalist move towards consolidating a Palestinian Arab identity among the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. Accordingly, rather than legitimizing the existing dominant structures and processes of ‘Israeliness,’ it opted for a political struggle which would target preservation of the Palestinian Arab collective national identity, human rights and equality within the imposed dominant structure, and provide self-sufficiency among the Palestinian Arab masses. Thus it appeared and operated as a countermovement throughout the 1970s and 1980s with its rejectionist stance against the adoption of Israeli identity. The success of Abna al-Balad in Umm al-Fahem in the municipal elections of 1973, which was followed by the adoption of its organizational and ideological model in a number of other Palestinian Arab villages, represented an increased mobilization of Palestinian Arab villagers against the dominant Israeli structures based on local unity and national identity in this period.56

In this respect, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the emergence of a split identity among the Palestinian citizens of Israel whose components, namely Israeliness and Palestinianness/Arabness were defined as either clashing or mutually-discarding identity affiliations. Within this context, the intra-communal consciousness about the Palestinian identity politics aroused among the Palestinian Arab citizens a response to the alleged irreconcilable split between their civic and national affiliations to the Israeli state and the Palestinian people. In fact, there was a growth of the Palestinian sense of identity, especially among the youth of the Palestinian Arab community within Israel during this period.57 However, according to McDowall, this growth of Palestinian political identity was accompanied by a growth of the Israeli cultural identity.58 In other words, the 1970s were not simply characterized by the Palestinization of the identity politics among the Palestinian Arab community; in fact, by the end of the 1970s most of the Palestinian Arab citizens were bilingual and bicultural.

58Ibid. p. 154.
It was possible to observe the affects of this integration in the civic behavior of the members of Palestinian Arab community as well. As Lehman–Wilzig argued, based on empirical data from their analysis of protest behaviors of the Palestinian Arab community, the Israeli Arabs were becoming more Israeli in their civic behavior and copying the Jewish majority in their protest behaviors against the Israeli system.\(^{59}\) The political protest of the Palestinian Arab citizens took place in line with the rules and regulations of the Israeli state within the political arena of Israel rather than in forms of violence outside of it. Within this context, for instance, even after the bloodshed of Land Day on 30 March 1976, the protests took place according to the Israeli legal and political norms and procedures.\(^ {60}\)

The acceleration of the political organization of the Palestinian Arab identity between the years 1969 and 1990 was also accompanied by a parallel development of Israeli civic identity among the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel with the establishment of numerous political and non-governmental organizations within the Israeli legal and political structures. As Ghanem argued:

During the seventies and eighties the Arabs in Israel established a variety of representative bodies, such as the Follow-up Committee for Arab Affairs (in Arabic: Lujnat Al-mutab'a Al'ulia Lashoon Al-Jamaher Al'Arabia), which was founded in 1974, and the Committee to Defend the Land (in Arabic: Lujnat Al-diffa'an al-Arradi Al-'Arabia) in 1975. These groups gradually became recognized as representative bodies and added to local institutions and authorities of the Arab Minority in Israeli political arena.\(^ {61}\)

Apart from the above-mentioned institutionalization processes within the Palestinian Arab community, these inter-war and inter-conflict years, which witnessed the important phases of Arab-Israeli conflict such as the Yom Kippur War, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Intifada were the

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years of two controversial but parallel process concerning the relationship between the Israeli state and Jewish majority on one side and the Arab minority on the other. Influenced by the dominant trends of reforming its identity after the end of the military government, the Arab minority from the 1970s to the 1990s is reported to have rejected the Israeli national consensus of opposing the Palestinians as a nation, withdrawal to pre-1967 borders, recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as representatives of the Palestinians, formation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, repeal of the annexation of East Jerusalem, and the right to repatriation of the Palestinian refugees. While opposing and criticizing the so-called national consensus on these issues, however, the stance of the political representative bodies of the Arab minority was not totally a rejectionist one. Thus, this period saw the occurrence of two controversial but interconnected processes of integration and radicalization, or in Gramscian terms, consolidation of the dominant identity of Israeliness and crystallization of its crisis at the same time.

Analyzing the era from the perspectives of ‘radicalization of discourses’ and ‘crisis of hegemony’, as Sandler argues, dominant trends among the Arab minority were a clear decline in Israeli identity, a dramatic increase in Palestinian identity and a highly conflictual perception of Palestinian Arab and Israeli identities. It is in fact questionable whether the Arab minority had internalized an Israeli identity that much, as mentioned by Sandler, which would be subject to a decrease during the 1970s. In many ways, especially at the discursive and ideological levels, the hegemonic character of the relationship seemed to be in a deepening crisis due to the heavy Palestinianization and radicalization of the discourse of the Arab minority in a manner supportive of the political demands of Arabs in general and the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in particular. The consequences of the Arab-Israeli wars and conflicts dramatically influenced the discourse of the Arab minority in this period. On the one hand, they tried to become a party to the Israeli-Arab conflict with the recognized status of a ‘national minority’ through forerunning initiatives and declarations such as the ‘June 6 Document of September 9, 1980’. On the other hand, inspired by

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the Palestinian resistance in the West Bank since the mid-seventies, they actively participated in the demonstrations and meetings to protest the Israeli strong-arm policies towards the Palestinian people living in the Occupied Territories.  

However, the Rejectionist Front, which claimed the replacement of the State of Israel by a democratic-secular state in all of Palestine, remained only at the margins of the entire population of the Arab minority. In fact, as stated by Smooha and confirmed roughly by the voting patterns of the Arab minority in the 1977 elections, the rejectionists were not more than the 10% of the Israeli Arabs. Moving from this assertion and checking the remaining findings of Smooha’s surveys with regard to the attitudes of the Arab minority, one can argue that almost half of the Arab population, who were categorized as “accommodationists- ready to work through the system as it is (11%)”- and “reservationists- who seek to change some aspects of the system from within the existing framework (39%)”- seemed to accept the extensive patterns of the politically hegemonic structure, even in the 1970s, while the 40% of the population, who were called oppositionists, did not oppose the existence of the Israeli state but the Jewish nature of it. 

The 1980s were a decade of political activism mobilized by the increased consciousness of the identity issues among the various segments of the Palestinian Arab community. Following the pre-eminence of the communist party over the identity politics among the Palestinian Arab citizens throughout the 1970s, new movements that emerged in the 1980s signified a variance of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary spectrum. In fact, the increased references to the nationalist sentiments, exceptional adoption of nationalist discourse among all segments of the Palestinian Arab population and augmented emphasis on national identity politics were revealed in the amplified diversity of the political movements in this decade. This diversity represented a multiplicity of interpretation and 

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66 Laurence Louer, To be an Arab in Israel, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 35.
67 Ibid.
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expression of national consciousness within the context of identity politics. As Louer put it:

Palestinian identity does not entail in deterministic fashion a particular type of political behavior. After the pattern of all systems of signification available within a society, this identity is in practice inextricably bound up with the usage made of by the actors. [...] political actors are able to pursue different political objectives, and to practice very different modes of action. In this way, during the period when the Communist Party held its monopoly over the language of nationalism, Palestinian ideology was no more than a way of giving a positive connotation to the stigma attached to the Arab citizens. [...] In the case of ADP [Arab Democratic Party], on the contrary, Palestinian identity clearly did duty as a springboard for integration to political process.[through mediation between the Palestinians and the Israelis and legitimate representation of Arab community to the Israeli establishment].

The religious constituent of the Palestinian/Arab identity added another dimension to the identity politics in this period. Consequently, Islam also became an important marker of identity among the Palestinian citizens of Israel from 1980s onwards. Amplification of their Islamic affiliation did not challenge the immensity of nationalism; it rather accompanied and buttressed nationalist building blocks of the Palestinian Arab political identity in Israel (Kook 2002). In fact, even after the split of the movement in 1993 into northern and southern wings, which pursued pragmatic in-system methods and militant rejectionist methods in their resistance against the Israeli state, respectively, the Islamic movement continued to help uniting the Palestinian people on an ethno-religious basis.

In the 1980s, the attitude of the Palestinian citizens of Israel towards their identity could be characterized as a multifaceted identity which was composed of a civic affiliation to the Israeli state and a national affiliation to the Palestinian people as well as a religious affinity.

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69 Louer, To be an Arab in Israel, p. 49.
Unlike the late 1960s and the 1970s, when they [the Palestinian citizens of Israel] were conscious of a conflict and fissure in the Arabs’ identity between the Israeli component and the Israeli component, in the 1980s they postulated two affiliations- Israeli and Palestinian-Arab- which together constitute a single complex identity in which the two parts march together and work synergistically rather than overpowering the other. This view of identity as complex rather than a bisected stemmed from a growing awareness of their simultaneous affinity with two spheres, the state of Israel and the Palestinian people, and the desire to preserve both of them. Hence it was emphasized that the civic and legal affiliation was totally Israeli while the emotional and national affiliation was Palestinian-Arab.\textsuperscript{71}

Even during the first Intifada, which took place in the last stages of this period as a serious challenge to the State of Israel, the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel did not seriously reject their civic identity. In fact, notwithstanding the increase in the number of politically related acts of violence attributed to Israeli Arabs from 69 in 1987 to 208 in 1988, most of the protests were organized in line with the legal requirements and procedures for demonstrations. Thus most of these activities appeared as moral support to the intifada within the limits of Israeli law rather than an active challenge to Israeli authorities.\textsuperscript{72} In this respect, despite the fact that the intifada created all the means for the further Palestinianization of the Palestinian Arab community in Israel at the political level, it did not exceedingly decrease their attachment to their Israeli civic identity. Such diversity and multiplicity of the adoption and utilization of the Palestinian identity within the Israeli political sphere continued even during and after the al-Aqsa intifada as well.

The 1990s signified a new phase in the consolidation of the hegemony over the political actors of the Arab minority with their inclusion into the coalition politics. After the 1992 elections, despite one of the lowest turnouts of Arab voters, the Arab voters came closest to influencing policy, not only with their support given to the Meretz and Labor coalition to win over the Likud, but also with their five representatives in the Knesset to be a

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid. p. 53.
\textsuperscript{72}Dowty, The Jewish State: A Century Later, p. 206.
blocking power. In this sense, for the first time in Israeli political history, Arab support became crucial for an Israeli government in its efforts to hold governmental power. In 1996, with the new system which allowed the use of cultural and national identity as a political source to mobilize support, Palestinian Arab citizens became members of the “coalition of minorities” in power with its increased potential for influencing the policy-making mechanisms of the Israeli legislative and executive bodies.\textsuperscript{73} Up until the 1996 elections and the political relaxation which was created by the positive impact of the Oslo accords, the Arab political parties remained excluded from participation in the government and national power centers.\textsuperscript{74} Despite the fact that the 1996 elections did not seem to change much, the increased power of the Arab parties within the Israeli political arena had some implications for their inclusion in the system.

Integration of the political representative bodies of the Arab minority into the political system of Israel was accompanied by a parallel process of integration of the Arab voters into the Israeli system. As Rekhess argued, the substantive vote for Zionist parties of various affiliations in the 1992 elections (Labor 17%, Meretz 10%, Likud 9%, and the Shas 5% of the total Arab votes) indicated that voting behavior of the majority of the Arab minority was effected by the pragmatic daily considerations as residents and citizens of Israel rather than their ethnic and other affiliations with the Palestinians in the occupied territories and Arabs outside the borders of Israeli state.\textsuperscript{75} Notwithstanding the growing pragmatism among the Palestinian citizens in Israel, their critical stance towards the dominant political and civic structures remained to preserve a strong sense of Palestinianess which was fueled especially during the periods of hegemonic crisis between the Israeli state and its Palestinian Arab citizens. The al Aqsa intifada was one of those hegemonic crises of the dominant Israeli structures over the subordinate Palestinian Arab citizens.

\textsuperscript{75}Rekhess, “The Arab Minority and the 1992 Election: Integration or Alienation”, p. 154.
Al Aqsa Intifada and Identity Politics among the Palestinian Arab Community

The *al Aqsa intifada* was considered to be

[A]n expression of the direct confrontation between the Palestinians from all demographic and geographic groups, including the leadership itself and the state of Israel. These events have crystallized the feeling of Palestinian identity on an emotional and ideological level, and have placed Israeli Palestinians – or Israeli Arabs – in a new context of challenges and problems, and have affected their political behavior, patterns of activity and methods of protest.\(^{76}\)

A poll conducted by the Judeo-Arab Center for Peace in 2000 indicated an intensification in the self-expression of the Palestinian identity among the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. The poll also signified a growing consensus among the Palestinian Arab community on the subject of Palestinian identity.\(^{77}\) Within this context, the *al Aqsa intifada* was an important breakthrough in the political mobilization of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel on the basis of a collective identity. The active involvement of the Palestinian Arab citizens in the protests pointed to the reinforcement of Palestinian national identity in Israel in line with an increased political identification with the political developments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on the basis of identity-based affinities.\(^{78}\)

The signs of a collective identity of Palestinians living as citizens of Israel have been either ignored or avoided in the public and political debates in Israel for a long time. Yet, as mentioned above, the late 1990s witnessed a process of revitalization of the Palestinian collective identity and national consciousness among the Palestinian citizens of Israel. This process gained impetus in the early years of the 2000s and it was supported mainly by the increasing mobilization of the political and civil societies within the Palestinian community in Israel. Consequently, the post-Al Aqsa period

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\(^{77}\) Louer, *To be an Arab in Israel*, p. 35.

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witnessed a revitalization of debates and activities on identity politics among the Palestinian Arab public sphere in Israel. Within this context, numerous Palestinian Arab non-governmental organizations sponsored various activities to increase the community’s consciousness about Palestinian affairs as well as identity politics, mostly within the legal boundaries of the Israeli political sphere. For example, the Arab Center for Applied Social Research – al-Karmal (MADA), which was founded in 2000, declared one of its main objectives was “providing institutional base and an intellectual climate to study the needs and collective future of the Palestinians in Israel, their relationship with Israel, the Palestinian nation and the Arab world”. The MADA also conducted a project, entitled ‘Constructing the Historical Narrative of the Palestinians in Israel,’ which was an important step towards creating a collective consciousness about the Palestinian identity. The identity-based, consciousness-building activities of civil society organizations were either accompanied or supported by the acts of the Palestinian Arab political sphere in the Israeli political structure in the period after the Al Aqsa intifada. Balad, led by Azmi Bishara, was very active in expressing the Palestinian Arab national identity in its political acts while challenging the Jewish character and symbols of the Israeli state as well as suggesting cultural autonomy and collective rights for the Palestinian Arab community.

The Islamic Movement in Israel also referred to the Palestinian identity while operating within the legal boundaries of the Israeli political sphere. However, Islamic components were more dominant in the discourses of the political parties, such as United Arab List, led by Sheikh Ibrahim Sarsur. Especially following the consecutive political successes of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas in the region, the Islamic political parties focused on activities emphasizing the Islamic identity, accompanied by the Palestinian identity, for mobilizing the Palestinian Arab community in Israel.

However, the Islamic Movement has been divided and it could not turn into a monolithic counter-hegemonic bloc against the dominant Israeli

80Ibid., pp. 370-3.
81Ibid., pp. 373-4.
civic and political structures. In fact, the more moderate south wing of the movement had already adopted the Israeli political system and began to operate within it as early as 1996, as shown by its participation in the Knesset elections that resulted in the split of the movement.\textsuperscript{82} The north wing, on the other hand, rejected getting involved in the Israeli political and civic structures until the imprisonment of its leadership in 2005. Before this period, it tried to establish a counter-hegemonic Islamic-Palestinian space by creating autonomous areas in Palestinian Arab localities in Israel. However, this policy was abandoned in 2005. Furthermore, consequent to the detention of its leadership, the north wing began to change its discourse and transformed its policy line gradually towards a more moderate stance.

Overall, Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel from all ideological backgrounds (communist, liberal, religious, etc) gradually accepted the legal boundaries of Israeli political and civic structures over time. In this respect, apart from certain movements such as \textit{Al Ard, Abna al Balad}, and the north wing of the Islamic Movement, the Palestinian identity did not effectively serve to create a unified counter-hegemonic bloc of Palestinian Arab community against the Israeli hegemonic bloc. Therefore, identity politics of the Palestinian Arab people in Israel have gradually become adjusted to operate with these civic and political boundaries during the post-Al Aqsa Intifada period, especially after 2005.

As Efraim Karsh and P. R. Kumaraswamy have argued, the Palestinian identity is salient in both the political entities of Israel and Jordan. However, this salience may be affected by the differences in the goals and interests, which might be shaped by the different incentive structures offered by the political entities in these two countries.\textsuperscript{83} In return, these interests may also influence the attitudes and behaviors of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel and Jordan.\textsuperscript{84}


\textsuperscript{83}Frisch, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid, p. 82.
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Conclusion

Repercussions of the Al Aqsa Intifada on Palestinian Identity in Jordan and Israel

Notwithstanding the differences among the internal dynamics shaping politics in both countries, otherization by and from the dominant identity (Israeliness and Jordanianness) has prevailed and thus the persistence of the Palestinian issue has the capacity of revitalizing re-politicization of the Palestinian national identity in both cases. In the case of Israel, the radicalization of Palestinianness declined with the adoption of a multi-faceted Israeli citizenship and Palestinian civic identity within the Israeli system. Nevertheless, Palestinian-Jordanians and their loyalty to the regime have historically been a matter of concern in the case of Hashemite Kingdom, particularly with the bombings in Amman in 2005. The Jordan First strategy has turned into Security First approach. Besides, the integrationist policy of the IAF – Jordan’s largest political party – in recruiting its members with a non-discrimination policy has enabled Palestinians to benefit from the internal political contestations and to articulate their interests in public sphere.

Obviously, the establishment of a Palestinian state will add new dimensions to the Palestinian identity politics in the Middle Eastern countries in general and Israel and Jordan in particular. Within this context, the regime’s prospective responses concerning the politics of identity and civic culture in these countries should be assessed by referring to crucial issues such as dual citizenship, return of refugees, responses and reactions of the diaspora to the soon-to-be-created State of Palestine in the future debates.