The Arab Minority in Israel: Motivations for Collective Action

by Eric J. Gust

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has dominated international headlines since the founding of Israel in 1948. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Israel gained possession of the West Bank and Gaza Strip along with all the Palestinian Arabs living on the land. For the past forty years, the Palestinians in the occupied territories have displayed unity and dedication in their fight against Israel. Throughout the violence and bloodshed, there has always been one vital group that remains relatively silent within Israel's borders. They are the Palestinians who refused to leave their land in 1948 and became citizens of the new state. Israeli Arabs are torn between their Palestinian identity and their Israeli citizenship. Azmi Bishara, a former Arab member of the Israeli Knesset, adequately explained the complex nature of Israeli Arab citizenship:

We got citizenship in order to stay on our land in 1948 after most of our people were driven out into exile. The people who stayed here did not immigrate here, this is our country. That is why you cannot deal with us on issues of loyalty. This state came here and was enforced on the ruins of my nation. I accepted citizenship to be able to live here, and I will not do anything, security-wise, against the state. I am not going to conspire against the state, but you cannot ask me every day if I am loyal to the state. Citizenship demands from me to be loyal to the law, but not to the values or ideologies of the state. It is enough to be loyal to the law.[1]

Many Israeli Arabs simply do not want to "rock the boat," as they only make up about twenty percent of Israel's population, but the Jewish majority also plays a role in keeping the Arabs politically ineffective.[2] Most studies of collective action and social mobilization would predict that repressed groups eventually mobilize if inclusion in the political process is denied. This has not been the case among Israeli Arabs because they are allowed to vote, but there are still many rights that are monopolized by the Jewish majority. This discrimination is evident in numerous aspects of Israeli society such as the declaration of the country as a Jewish state, "unequal funding of local [Arab] councils, education, and development projects," and expropriation of Arab lands.[3] Israeli Arabs are suffering from an identity dilemma, but the state is also trying to maintain its historical Jewish identity, which would explain many of the biased practices mentioned above. While Palestinians in the diaspora and the occupied territories have grievances against Israel, the legitimacy of the protests of these groups would increase with the consistent inclusion of Israeli Arabs. Among the three Palestinian groups, the Israeli Arabs seem to be in the best position to protest Israel's government and represent the other two groups in a non-violent manner. On the other hand, they also have the most to lose among the three groups if they take part in collective action against the Israeli government.

Is there a tipping point in discrimination for Arab citizens of Israel, causing them to relate theirs to the plight of Palestinian groups outside of Israel and disassociate themselves from their Israeli identities? In this paper, I attempt to answer this question by first examining the unequal practices

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of the Israeli government toward the Israeli Arab population. I then analyze the actions of Israeli Arabs during the second intifada and the causes for increased but still limited political mobilization and assertion of their Arab identity. Finally, I use social movement theory to examine the situation of Israeli Arabs up to the initial protests of the second intifada. After this point, the identity and collective action of the Israeli Arabs began to change. This stage is the subject of future research.

Maintaining the Status Quo

The majority of the discrimination against Israeli Arabs stems from the declaration of Israel as a "Jewish State" and the attempts by the government to maintain the demographic dominance of the Jewish population. In this context, advancement of Arabs within Israeli society, whether in the demographic, economic, political, or educational sectors, is viewed as occurring at the expense of the Jewish population and could be perceived as a threat to the Jewish nature of Israel. Several laws have placed limits on the Arab minority of Israel, namely the Law of Return in 1950, the Nationality Law of 1952, and Amendment No. 9 of Section 7A to the Basic Law in 1985. These three pieces of legislation laid the foundation for legal discrimination against Israeli Arabs. The rationale behind the legislation was to maintain a Jewish majority by restricting the growth of the Arab minority. These laws are imposed under the banner of security from outside threats, but they also imply a perceived internal demographic threat from Israeli Arabs.

The Law of Return states that any Jew, regardless of origin, can immigrate to Israel and become a citizen.[4] The law makes no reference to the Arab population or Arab immigration which essentially restricts their access into the country. However, the borders of Israel are open year round for Jews because it is a Jewish state.

Israel 's Nationality Law states that "those who remained in Israel [after] the establishment of the State in 1948…became Israeli citizens by residence or by return."[5] Therefore, Arabs who lived in Palestine before the creation of Israel were welcome to stay and become Israeli citizens, but the borders were otherwise closed to non-Jews. The Nationality Law also states the criteria for citizenship through naturalization, but the ultimate decision is made by the Minister of the Interior which makes it unlikely for an Arab to gain citizenship through this route.[6]

Before Amendment No. 9 to Section 7A of the Basic Law was passed in 1985, section 7A outlined the individuals who were prohibited from applying for candidacy in the Knesset. The typical group of existing government officials, the President, military officers, state employees, etc., was listed in the terms of exclusion. In 1985, the following criteria were added to the exclusionary terms:

> A candidates' list shall not participate in elections to the Knesset if its objects or actions, expressly or by implication, include one of the following:

> • Negation of the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people;
> • Negation of the democratic character of the State;
> • Incitement to racism[7]

The first bullet that described Israel "as the state of the Jewish people" was justifiably met with outrage by the Arab population. It implied that any Israeli Arab who wanted to apply for candidacy in the Knesset had to subordinate himself to his Jewish peers and accept their domination of his homeland. The two additional directives that referred to the "democratic character of the State" and "incitement of racism" were disturbingly ironic. Arab members of the Knesset suggested that the amendment refuse candidacy based on "denial of the existence of the state of Israel" without the implication of a state only for the Jewish people. Another idea was to change the wording to "state of the Jewish people and its Arab citizens," but that was also denied by the Knesset.[8] It is unfortunate that Israel's *democratic* government still enforces a policy of alienation on its Arab

citizens who desire to serve in the Knesset. The amendment serves as a constant reminder to Israeli Arabs that they will never truly be embraced by the state.

The three examples of discrimination mentioned above are by no means an extensive list of policies and prejudicial practices against Arabs in Israel. There are many reasons why the Israeli government feels a need to promote discriminatory behavior. "The issue now at stake is nothing less than the Jewish character of the State. How can Israel continue to be a State of the Jews if twenty percent of its population is Arab?"[9] The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the fact that Israel is surrounded by Arab states only add to Jewish fears. Paradoxically, the unequal practices used to maintain the status quo in Israel may cause the Israeli Arab population to mobilize and absorb the collective identity of Palestinians in exile and in the occupied territories instead of an identity as Israeli citizens. Israel has every right to secure its borders and to identify valid threats, but failing to accept its own Arab minority as equal citizens will create internal opposition to the state that was formerly non-existent.

Opportunities for Mobilization

Since the creation of Israel in 1948, the Palestinian Arab population within the Jewish state has remained relatively passive politically despite its grievances against the Jewish majority. Although there is a history of violent demonstrations among the Palestinians in the occupied territories, the Israeli security forces have dealt with a minimal amount of internal protests by Arab Israelis. Indeed, mobilization is not given once grievances exist, but rather mobilization is usually rare and difficult to achieve. Tilly expressed the common difficulties of social mobilization by saying "people vary continuously from intensive involvement to passive compliance, interests vary from quite individual to nearly universal."[10]

Abundant dissent is only one of several factors that are necessary for social mobilization. During the first intifada, Israeli Arabs and Palestinians outside of Israel shared common grievances against the Jewish state. Military occupation and the encroachment of Jewish settlements onto Arab lands were only a few of those grievances.[11] However, the proper mobilizing structures and frames were never in place and the result was a weak foundation for collective action. In this section, I discuss the differences between the two intifadas and explain the factors that resulted in quiet opposition during the first uprising compared to violent protests in the second.

The outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000 marked a turning point in the passive mentality of Israel's Arab minority. The sequence of events was started when Ariel Sharon, surrounded by armed bodyguards, visited the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem on September 28, 2000.[12] Massive demonstrations broke out both in Israel and the occupied territories that resulted in over a dozen Israeli Arab citizens killed by Israeli police and security forces. While Sharon's visit to Haram al-Sharif was the incident that sparked the riots, there were many underlying tensions that led up to the protests. Some of the more commonly cited motivations were:

1. The racial discrimination to which Arabs have been subjected;
2. disappointment in Ehud Barak's government;
3. the religious dimension of the al-Aqsa issue;
4. the Arab national dimension and empathy with the Palestinians of the occupied territories; and
5. the mounting anger at the Israeli police and their habitual practices against Arab citizens.[13]

These explanations seem valid, but they beg the question of why the Israeli Arabs failed to play a significant role in the first intifada? Between 1948 and the first intifada in 1987, the above explanations were applicable in everyday Israeli Arab life except for the disappointment with Ehud

Barak's government and the al-Aqsa issue. Immediately after the first intifada, one Israeli Arab explained the difference between Palestinians inside Israel versus those outside by saying "there is a difference between players and fans. We are fans. Our goal is to live in Israel with equal rights, while the aim of the residents in the West Bank is to form a separate state."[14] In other words, the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza was worthy of Israeli Arab support as long as direct involvement was not necessary. However, the indirect loyalty that Israeli Arabs gave to the political process did not gain the trust of the Jewish majority. The Israeli government continued to show the same amount of distrust toward Israeli Arabs as it did toward Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territories. This became a contributing factor to the tensions that would lead to the second intifada when the Arabs inside and outside of Israel came as close as they ever would to collective action.

Another explanation for the Israeli Arab participation in the second intifada is the relative exclusion of Arabs from the political decision-making process after the victory of the Labor Party in 1999. The Arab community embraced the political process and was swayed by the slogan "The State for All" of the Labor Party.[15] The words were obviously aimed at the Arab population who sought equality as Israeli citizens. However, once Prime Minister Barak was in power, the Arabs were bitterly disappointed when a majority of the campaign promises went unfulfilled. Louer argues that the bitterness from the 1999 elections was still fresh in the minds of most Israeli Arabs when the intifada began a year later. After watching Israeli security forces use live ammunition against Arab demonstrators at the al-Aqsa mosque, the Arab population gave up on the political process and met violence with more violence.[16] The violence transitioned to Arab unity at the polls in the form of a boycott during the February 2001 elections for prime minister. The importance of the Arab vote was solidified when the Labor Party eventually lost most of its political power to Likud. Since the boycott, the percentage of Arabs who take part in elections has gradually declined which sends signals of hopelessness in the political process. Yiftachel adds that "the chasm between Jewish and Arab political space has thus widened significantly in the recent past, seriously shrinking the ability of Palestinian Arab citizens to mobilize within the confines of Jewish tolerance and Israeli law."[17] If this is true, Israeli Arabs may eventually see violence as their only alternative.

An additional aspect of the second intifada is the structure and organization of the Palestinians during their protests. One of the most obvious differences between the two intifadas is the preponderance of violence in the second one. The Israeli Arab struggle for equal rights was consistently overshadowed by the violence in the occupied territories. This is largely due to a fractionalization in the leadership of the Palestinian people which resulted in a lack of clear goals for the movement. Almost two years after the start of the second intifada, a large group of Palestinian scholars and public figures signed a petition in order to curb the reliance on senseless violence against Israeli civilians. They had seen the effectiveness of peaceful protests during the first intifada and wanted to steer the second intifada in the same direction. In reference to suicide bombings, the "Petition of the 55" stated "we see that these bombings do not contribute towards achieving our national project which calls for freedom and independence. On the contrary, they strengthen the enemies of peace on the Israeli side…"[18] There were two main factors that doomed the petition to failure: it was sponsored by the European Union and many of the Israeli Arabs who signed it lacked legitimacy in the resistance. Also, the western sponsorship of the petition tainted its validity in the eyes of many Palestinians and the signatories were believed to have ulterior motives. In reference to the signatories, a student leader in the PFLP commented that "those are the people whose interests are connected with the existence of the occupation. During peacetime, they are living a good life and working well, but when there is resistance, it works against their interests, they gain nothing."[19] The failure of the petition to gain public support demonstrated the divide between the educated Palestinian elites and the rest of Palestinian society both inside and outside of Israel. This divide resulted in unorganized protests that quickly turned violent and gave the Israeli defense forces an excuse for massive retaliation.

Despite the initial violent displays of collective action by Israeli Arabs that marked the start of the second intifada, the uprising eventually became isolated in the occupied territories. The 2000 uprising was far more violent than the first intifada in 1987, but the Arabs in Israel continued to play a minor role in relation to Palestinians outside Israel's borders. If anything, the violence by the Israeli Arabs was a show of frustration for several built up grievances, but not necessarily grievances shared by Palestinians in the occupied territories. Once the Israeli Arabs lashed out in anger and made their objections known to Israeli society, they returned to non-violent measures to challenge the state. Many reverted to political parties and religious movements while most used the boycott of elections as a show of political unity. Any resemblance of Arab mobilization within Israel was through a political means. The result was, and continues to be, an ineffective movement that is easily controlled within the boundaries of the political process.

Apt and resonating frames are necessary for a movement to create a shared identity among its members and to gain empathy for its cause. "Palestinian nationalism" is a common term among Israel's Arab population, but the implications of its meaning are either misunderstood or wrongfully applied by Arab elites. According to Snyder, nationalism is "the doctrine that a people who see themselves as distinct in their culture, history, institutions, or principles should rule themselves in a political system that expresses and protects these distinctive characteristics."[20] Therefore, it would be fair to say that Palestinian nationalism entails a unified desire for the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state where its people share a similar history, culture, and representative institutions. In contrast, Israeli Arabs are seeking equal rights, education, and economic opportunities as citizens of Israel. Additionally, a large majority of Israeli Arabs would choose to stay in Israel if a Palestinian state was formed in the future.[21] The attempts of Israeli Arabs to identify with Palestinian nationalism in order to further their own unrelated struggle against Israel has been ineffective in the past, but the proper framing of the movement could give it new life.

A cost-benefit analysis of the second intifada shows that Palestinian Israelis did not find it in their best interest to continue the violence in the same fashion as their Palestinian brethren in the occupied territories. Many authors have argued that Israeli Arabs initially resorted to violence due to a lack of political representation. However, the motivation that was necessary for sustained violent collective action did not exist among Israel's Arab population. As long as Israeli Arabs continue to enjoy a better lifestyle and comparatively more rights than Palestinians in the occupied territories, they will show great reluctance to truly identify with the Palestinian national cause. The Palestinian identity and the Palestinian cause of a sovereign state go hand in hand, but Israeli Arab leaders are trying to separate the two in order to use the Palestinian identity for their own political grievances. Meanwhile, the benefits of maintaining a relatively positive, yet discriminatory relationship with the Israeli state greatly outweigh the risks of collective action.

> …citizenship played a fundamental role in the molding of the Arab citizens into a community. This was a consideration all the more important when, on the one hand, any mobilization was liable to be the object of police repression, while on the other, the Arab citizens were able to exercise from within a degree of influence on the political decision-making process. It is precisely because they enjoyed voting rights, within a system in which more than elsewhere politics is the pre-eminent sphere of decision-making and influence, that the Arabs made a position for themselves within the political process.[22]

Based on this observation, the Israeli Arab leaders might find more success by embracing their identities as Arab citizens of Israel with unequal rights rather than with the Palestinian cause of a sovereign state. A valid reason for the reassessment of identities is that the title of "Palestinian" has been reinforced with its own frames since the beginning of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli Jews are more prone to gather connotations of terrorism or violence at the mention of the term "Palestinian." When the Arab population in Israel chooses to label itself with a Palestinian identity, the Israeli government and the Jewish majority react with suspicion and distrust.[23] In the minds of the Jewish population, it also justifies feelings of discrimination and inequality

because it sees the Palestinians as a security threat. Also, "the state of Israel has historically avoided the term "Palestinian" because of the implied recognition of the existence of such a national group and its rights."[24] Arabs who embrace their identity as Israeli Arab citizens might not stir up the same emotional undertones brought on by the title of "Palestinian." This would allow them to further their cause for equal rights as Israeli citizens without bringing up the negative connotations that are common with the Palestinian identity in Israel.

Lastly, while many Israeli Arabs may embrace Palestinian nationalism, they are not officially represented by Palestinian organizations such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization or the Palestinian Authority. This was a result of Yasir Arafat's signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.[25] Therefore, the only time when Palestinians in Israel or the occupied territories identify with one another is when it is in their own respective best interests. If given the choice between the struggle for equal rights through Israeli citizenship or the Palestinian cause of an end to Israeli occupation and a sovereign state, Arab Israelis should not have a problem making a decision based on their own best interests.

Social Movement Theory

Despite consistent discrimination by the Jewish majority, the Israeli Arab pattern of protest is inconsistent at best and it is difficult to pinpoint vital factors that could ignite future collective action. The dominant trend is that protests by Arabs in Israel have increased in number and intensity since 1975, but the entire community seldom unites under a common identity.[26] There are several theories on conflict and protest that provide further insight into situations similar to Israel's, but the most applicable theory for the Arab Israelis is Social Movement Theory (SMT). SMT scholars that include Tilly, McAdam, and Tarrow stress three necessary factors of "political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes" for collective action to occur.[27] Political opportunities asserts "that social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities" within their respective countries.[28] Mobilizing structures refers to the necessary "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action."[29] Framing processes are the development of "shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation."[30] In this section, I address historical events in Israeli Arab society that include forms of the three factors above in order to determine the probability for future collective action. Israel has successfully used co-optation to create political opportunities for segments of its Arab population that has in turn reduced their ability to build strong mobilizing structures. I use two significant events to exemplify this point: the Zionist co-optation of the Arab Druze population through military conscription and the voluntary service of Palestinian Arabs in the IDF. I then use the second intifada to explain how proper framing processes began to create a more organized and definable Israeli Arab identity.

After almost sixty years of living within the state of Israel, the Arab minority is still excluded from conscription in the military. However, the Druze population is the one exception to the rule because they are no longer labeled as Arabs by the Jewish state. It all started when the Israeli army created the "Minorities Unit" in 1948 in order to co-opt the Druze population. The new unit provided negligible combat power for the military, but it gave the Druze a sense of belonging within Israeli society. In 1949, the Druze were recruited for the Israeli police forces as well.[31] The integration of the Druze into the Jewish state was part of a calculated plan by the Israeli government to divide and control the overall Arab minority. "The policy aimed at weaning them away from the larger Palestinian Arab community by fostering 'Druze particularism,' the notion that Druze ethnicity and identity make them distinct from other Arabs."[32] The Druze chose to identify with their religion instead of their Arab ethnicity because, in return, they were guaranteed a higher status in Israeli society. The Israeli government went to great lengths to ensure that an entirely new identity was created for the Druze separate from their former Arab identity. Furthermore, the willingness of the Druze elite to accept the offer of co-optation forever alienated their people from the rest of the Arab minority.

Shaykh Jaber Mu'addi was one of the first collaborators to approach the Zionist movement in 1948 due to his political aspirations and a desire for increased status in the Druze community.[33] He rallied support among the Druzes for "the obligatory conscription law of May 1956" which basically made it mandatory for Druzes to serve in the military once they turned eighteen years of age.[34] Once the act was passed, it was met with massive objection by the Druze community, but the law is still in affect today. The Druze community did not always welcome the actions of the Druze elites, but the community still partook in the benefits that arose from the co-optation. Advantages of their new identity included a better education system, more job opportunities, and higher class status.[35] The change in identity that the Druzes went through in order to increase their opportunities within Israel was irreversible and their split from the rest of the Arab Israeli population was a constant reminder of the government's attempt to prevent the Arab minority from forming a cohesive unit. As many SMT scholars would argue, the Druzes changed their identity because it improved their situation. However, recent events show that the dissent of the Druze population toward the state is reaching a boiling point. Although the state formed the relationship with the Druze long ago, the alliance has been weakened by continued discrimination, Jewish settlement expansion into Druze territory, and police brutality in the Druze village of Peki'in.[36] If this trend continues, the Druze might seek other opportunities based on a united Arab identity with the Palestinians. Whether or not the Palestinians choose to include them is another story.

While the Druze population was co-opted through military conscription, there are also thousands of Palestinians in Israel who have voluntarily joined the army and security forces as well. There is limited research on this unique group of Palestinians in Israel, but Kanaaneh states that "an estimated 5,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel currently volunteer to serve in the Israeli military."[37] The topic is virtually untouched by Jewish Israeli scholars as Kanaaneh implies in her work. Upon asking a Jewish Israeli academic for assistance on the subject of Palestinians serving in the Israeli military, Kanaaneh received the following reply:

> I don't know what…you're talking [about]. Except [for] about a dozen…volunteers no Palestinians serv[e] in the Israeli military. Druze and Circassians are drafted and several hundreds of Bedouins (and perhaps some Arab Christians) serv[e] as volunteers. However [to the best of my] knowledge none of them perceived themselves as 'Palestinian.' If you're searching for ARABS in the Israeli military, this is another issue.[38]

The difference between declaring oneself Palestinian or Arab is a choice of identity, to join the collective identity of Palestinians elsewhere or to remain distinct. A Palestinian serving in the Israeli army may effortlessly change his identity several times a day.

To be honest with you "How do you identify yourself?" is not a good question—it depends on where I am. If I am at the tax office or in the [Jewish] Mall I'm not going to go around shouting, "Hey, look at me, I'm a Palestinian." I'm not stupid. There, I identify myself as an Israeli Arab. If you ask me here in my village among the people of the village, I'll tell you I'm a Palestinian Arab. Everybody tailors his answer to the situation he is in. This is the reality.[39]

These Arab citizens walk a fine line by joining the institution that has become a symbol of repression to Palestinian Arabs inside and outside of Israel. However, many of them believe the benefits of voluntary military service outweigh the costs, so they embrace their multiple identities. This phenomenon is not unique to Palestinians in Israel because people around the world do the same thing every day in their jobs, social groups, and religious gatherings. The ability of Palestinian Arabs to voluntarily change identities based on various circumstances is detrimental to the overall effort of collective mobilization. A unified uprising against the Israeli state by its own Arab citizens is an option that would require the recognition of one identity regardless of the impending hardship that it might entail. At this point, the majority of Arab Israelis embrace various identities that will improve their situation in the short term, but this prevents them from mobilizing under one common identity to force positive long term changes.

The second intifada in 2000 marked a rare period when Palestinian Arab citizens in Israel joined Palestinians in the occupied territories in violent protest. It also solidified a new regional Palestinian identity that was separate from Palestinian nationalism in the occupied territories. After over fifty years of living inside Israel, the Arab population finally began to realize the importance of framing their own situation as separate from the nationalistic Palestinian identity in Gaza and the West Bank. In 1997, Yiftachel conducted a study on Arab protest in the Galilee and found that "the emergence of a regional Palestinian identity in Israel and in the Galilee is still in its infancy but the process has the potential to influence the relations between Arabs and Jews in Israel during the critical years to come."[40] The second intifada was the culmination of several repressed Arab grievances against the Jewish state, but it also served as a maturation period for the regional Palestinian identity. The Palestinian and Arab Israeli identities shared a common culture and background, but their objectives were different. Ashkenasi hints that during the first intifada, "socioeconomic concerns of Arabs within Israel may have more to do with self-identification than with the intifada."[41] However, at that point the Arab Israelis were still caught between the national Palestinian cause and their own regional issues. The emerging regional Palestinian identity was still in its initial stage, but it was developing and gaining legitimacy among the Arab population. At the advent of the second intifada, the major concerns of Arab Israelis were equal rights and fair treatment within the Jewish state and the uprising provided an outlet for their dissent. By framing their own struggle around the intifada in the occupied territories, the Arab Israelis were able to capitalize on the Palestinian identity to rally support for their own cause. The increase in violent protest during the second intifada showed that the new Palestinian identity within Israel was gaining statewide momentum.

Conclusion

The identity dilemma that Israeli Arabs face is a key obstacle to their collective mobilization, but if properly utilized, it could unify the Arab population. The increase in Israeli Arab violent protest from the first to second intifada serves as evidence of an increase in awareness of a regional Palestinian identity that is separate from the national struggle in the West Bank and Gaza. A national Palestinian identity provides a common bond to Arabs inside and outside of Israel, but close identification with the Palestinian national struggle does not resonate with Israeli Arabs. More recent events since the second intifada have begun to push the Israeli Arabs into embracing a closer identification with external Palestinians. The extent of this process remains to be seen, as this group balances its domestic interests with its sympathy for the Palestinian national cause.

It is crucial for the regional Palestinian identity to consist of regional issues such as equality that are strengthened by national issues of occupation. This proper framing will ensure that the identity is applicable to a wider audience. Once the identity is solidified, the Arab population will need to overlook the various short term identities that enable them to function every day in an ethnocentric society and embrace one common identity that can unite them against the state for long term change. This is a difficult proposition because it would force many Arabs in Israel to come out of their comfort zone for the benefit of the entire movement.

Furthermore, opportunities provided by the state have historically diminished mobilizing structures within Arab society. If Israeli Arabs take advantage of non-political opportunities at the local level, then a unified consensus on grievances against the state is plausible. SMT scholars stress political exclusion and resonating frames as necessary factors for social mobilization, but the unequal political access given to Israeli Arabs has not resulted in collective action. This is due to controls within the political process along with the failure of Israeli Arab leaders to properly frame the situation of their local constituencies. Political parties try to unite the Arab populace at the polls, but it only creates temporary loyalty for the party platform. On the other hand, groups like the Islamic Movement have discovered the importance of gaining support at the grass roots level. Social and religious movements gain support through charitable organizations and civil services before transferring that loyalty to votes at election time. Arabs in Israel need a grass roots

organization, religious or secular, with a charismatic leader who can combine the language of Palestinian nationalism with the issues of a regional Palestinian identity. Unification of the Arab population at the local levels can lead to the state level as more people identify with the regional Palestinian struggle. Although violence is not necessary to unify the Arab community, it could create stronger bonds and instill a hardened mentality within a future equal rights movement. After six decades of discrimination against its Arab population with no intention of changing its outdated ethnocentric policies, the Jewish state of Israel has left non-political collective action as the only viable option for its Arab minority. If the Israeli Arab population embraces the emerging regional Palestinian identity and allows long term goals to take precedence over the short term, it will be closer to collective mobilization against the state. Future research focused on Israeli Arab protest after 2001 will investigate the effect of regional and domestic changes on the identity and activism of this group.

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