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Israel and Its Arab Citizens

Perspectives and Argument

One of the best ways of getting acquainted with a new setting is to skim through a local newspaper. The Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area is larger than any Israeli city. Even though the Twin Cities are cosmopolitan and politically aware, their news is heavily local and devoid of politics. However, the lead headline in the *Star Tribune* (the major local newspaper) on June 21, 2009, focused on the demonstrations against the rigging of Iranian elections. A second international item told the tale of the *New York Time*s journalist who escaped the Taliban. Aside from these articles, the remaining stories dealt with local issues.

In contrast, this was hardly the type of news the Tel-Aviv tourist that same day would read in the English edition of a Hebrew-language newspaper. The Internet page of *Ha'aretz* was much more internationally focused – only three of the twenty-seven items were local news. Seven of them dealt with Iran, including a piece that asked which of the two camps in Iran was more likely to "nuke" Israel, two dealt with Syrian-Israeli relations, and one reported on a car bombing in Iraq. Only one item – that the owner of Israel's largest bank was swayed by clairvoyant messages in dictating bank policy – could be described as both local and not inherently political.

Unsurprisingly, regional politics and violence loom large in the minds of Israeli readers. Coverage of the Middle East around the world in general and Israel in particular highlight this focus. Yet, despite Israel's precarious geostrategic setting, most scholars analyze the relationship between Israel and its Arab citizens almost exclusively as a domestic internal matter that minimizes or overlooks the larger regional context (Rouhana and Ghanem 1998: 321). After all, no major political actors – Israel's Jewish majority, Israel's Arab citizens, Palestinians across the former Green Line, or many segments of the Arab and Islamic world – share the perspective that Israel's Arab citizens are exclusively a minority within a Jewish state. In fact, Israel's Arab citizens are at pains to identify themselves as being an integral part of the Palestinian people and of the larger Arab nation. The second and third largest political parties in the Arab sector, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and

the United Arab List (UAL), the former by accentuating their Arab identity and the latter their Islamic and Palestinian identity, clearly subscribe to this point of view. Arguably, the largest party, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE), though clearly not avidly pan-Arab, would not deny the sentiment that Israel's Palestinian citizens are part of the larger Arab nation. All three refer to the Palestinian people as one indivisible whole (even though by their own account the bulk of its members live outside the State of Israel either under the Palestinian Authority or in Arab states and even more far-flung areas of the globe).

The Palestinian Authority (PA) reciprocated these feelings when Arafat finally ratified the Basic Law in 2002 after five years of procrastination. The Basic Law, as did the Palestinian Covenant before it, insisted that "Palestine is part of the large Arab World, and the Palestinian People are part of the Arab Nation [and] Arab Unity is an objective which the Palestinian People shall work to achieve" (Amended 2003 Basic Law 2003). Large segments of the Arab and Islamic world certainly regard Israel's Arab minority as part of the larger issue relating to Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. Even moderate Arab states, which by and large regard Israel's Arab citizens as an internal domestic matter, nevertheless, meddle in Israeli Arab affairs.

For Israel's Jewish majority, the regional dimensions of the relationship are probably even more acute. Israel, as a state with a Jewish majority within its borders yet a minority within the region, has been one of the most embattled political entities in the post–World War II era. It has waged six conventional wars and faced a bloc of twenty-one member states of the Arab League, which, for at least the first twenty-five years, denied Israel's right to exist. The Arab League's hostility has compelled the Jewish state to allocate resources to ensuring its security at a rate nearly four times the world average measured in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. The differential alone is what most developing states spend on education. Israel has been a recipient of over $100 billion in aid in nominal terms since its creation, mainly from the United States; this amount hardly offsets these military expenditures. Even if this aid can partially offset the military costs, it can do little to alleviate the pain emanating from the death of 20,000 Israelis killed since 1948 (equivalent to nearly a million American citizens). Not surprisingly, security concerns and public mourning rites characterize Israel's basic political and cultural agenda.

The Jewish state has not known much respite from security concerns over the years. The signing of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty in March 1979 showed that interstate conflict abated, but guerrilla and terrorist warfare waged by nonstate actors increased (Ben-Yehuda and Sandler 2002: 131, 137–8). First, the PLO in Lebanon, then Iranian- and Syrian-supported Hizbullah, and lastly the Palestinians in the territories were all involved in unrelenting and often accumulative violence against Israel since the Yom Kippur War. The most lethal was the insurgency waged by the Palestinian Authority in September 2000, which killed 1,084 Israelis in the course of

five years (Suicide-bombing Terrorism 2006: 2). Ironically, the PA was created as part of the Oslo diplomatic process in which the Palestinians pledged to resolve future disputes by nonviolent means. Nevertheless, the security branches of the Palestinian Authority, the Fatah Tanzim (regarded by most Palestinians as the official party of the PA) and its military arm, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades were responsible for nearly one-quarter of the suicide bombings, which killed 525 Israelis during this period (ibid., 13). The overwhelming remainder were carried out by Hamas and the Jihad al-Islami within the framework of the Higher Committee of National and Islamic Forces in which the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades participated (ibid.).

At the same time that Israel waged a counterinsurgency against the Palestinians in the territories, Hizbullah conducted intermittent violence on Israel's northern border even after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. This included cross-border incursions, occasional lobbing of Katyusha rockets (more than 400 are reportedly aimed at strategic and populated areas in the north of Israel), and attempts, sometimes successful, to set up cells of recruits drawn from Israel's Arab population. Hizbuallah terrorism culminated in a cross-border kidnapping in July 2006 that led to the outbreak of a month-long Israeli campaign against Hizbullah.

Under such conditions, it is difficult to identify the group at risk. Is it Israel's Jewish majority or the Palestinian minority, which sees itself as part of the larger Arab nation yet feels numerical equivalence to Israel's Jewish population?

This book, rather than focusing on the relationship between the Israeli Jewish state and its Arab minority, turns the tables to explore the extent to which Israel's Jewish population faces considerable risk from the Arab minority. Not only is such an approach justified on the basis of the wider geopolitical picture, but it also has the additional advantages of representing the subjective view of many of Israel's Jewish citizens and conforms to basic Arab perceptions of the Israeli state (Hutchinson and Gilber 2007: 130–1; Ben-Dor, Pedahzur, and Hasisi 2003: 238). I will try to justify the argument that Israel's relationship to its Arab minority is largely informed by a sense of threat and security fears. These emanate from the strategic environment in which the dominant community is a majority within its own state yet a threatened precarious minority in the region.[1]

[1] The relationship between objective and subjective feelings of insecurity and domestic intolerance toward minorities is well documented, especially over territorial issues. Marc L. Hutchison and Douglas Gibler argue that on the basis of a study of the Using World Values Survey data collected from thirty-three countries the saliency territorial threat in determining individual political attitudes that privilege national unity over freedom of expression even after controlling for economic and institutional differences across the states sampled. Specifically, they demonstrate how the diffusion from territorial threats to domestic audiences results in a chilling effect on individual willingness to extend democratic freedoms (Hutchinson and Gilber 2007: 130–1).

Israel's predicament is hardly unique. Many ethno-national contexts are salient examples where understanding the regional context may be essential to understanding the ebbs and flows of the conflict and prospects for its resolution. Examples are Northern Ireland, Lebanon (historically), Cyprus, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Serbia/Kosovo, Bosnia, and the Baltic states. The Iraqi example may join the list as a "Shiite" Iraq will have to come to terms with its Sunni minority in a predominantly Sunni and highly complex geo-strategic environment. Indeed, historians will no doubt argue that the problem of a state majority and a regional minority have characterized Iraqi politics since the establishment of the Iraqi state in 1932.

The External Security Dimension in Studies on the Arab Minority

Even though Israel's external security profile is continually in the news and the subject of numerous studies in international relations, security studies and military affairs, most scholars who have written on Israel's Arab minority have analyzed its political experience almost exclusively from a comparative political perspective within the framework of state–minority or majority–minority ethnic relations. Israel's *external* security profile and its possible ramifications on the relationship between state and minority are almost completely overlooked. These oversights are more surprising since the (external) regional/international as well as domestic security dimension became increasingly central to the study of ethnicity and nationalism. The salience of the ethnic security dilemma imported from the field of international relations to describe the breakdown of multiethnic states and subsequent partition is one of the striking contemporary examples of the intertwining between International Relations and Comparative Politics to explain state–minority relations and interethnic relations (Gagnon, 1994–5: 130; Kaufmann 1996: Posen 1993).

As the subsequent summary of the literature bears out, scarcely any of the articles or books on Israel's Arab minority refer to the international relations literature that deals with ethnic conflict despite the aptness of its approaches and subject matter. Most scholars on Israel's Arab citizens relate to events not from the lofty heights of the international system but from the more parochial confines of competing groups within the individual state or at best, from the vantage of the "nation" that transcends state borders.

Arabs in the Jewish state have been analyzed (Ghanem 2001) through three basic perspectives: (1) the internal colonial/control model (to borrow from the title of one of the earliest studies written in this vein), (2) the developmental/modernizing/democratization school, and (3) the distress model. Scholars belonging to the control school focus on how the state or the predominant community through state institutions controlled and extracted resources and shaped the Arab minority to the detriment of their collective welfare. The developmental/modernizing/democratization literature focused on how Israeli Jewish society impacted on its Arab counterparts within the framework of

(limited) integration. Studies written from this perspective look at patterns of convergence and divergence between the two societies. If the first category concentrates on the state or the dominant political community as the independent variable, the second focuses on society, and the third focuses primarily on the psychological distress wrought by the collective identity of the state and its institutions. The control and distress schools, in one form or another, accuse Israel of being an ethnic state that accords preferential treatment to the majority and discriminates against the minority. Common to all three schools is the absence of almost any serious attempt to come to terms either with Israel's security predicament or the transnational aspects of the minority's relationship to the region, except for some discussion of the role of Israeli Arabs in Palestinian politics.

Elia Zureik's "The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in International Colonialism" serves as an appropriate example of how the existing literature overlooked the salience of external security concerns in dictating the relationship between states and minorities (Zureik 1979). Internal colonialism is characterized by the acquisition of land by the predominant group, the transformation in the economic fabric that "creates identifiable pockets of hinterland in the midst of areas with native concentration" and "the dehumanization of the culture and way of life of the indigenous population" (ibid., 29) According to Zureik, Israel is a *settler society* comparable to South Africa (before the fall of apartheid) even though Israel's Arab citizens have enjoyed full political rights since the state's inception.

Those debating the legitimacy of such a comparison can find support for their argument in the book itself. For Zureik "the crux of the internal colonialism model, when applied to South Africa is that it stressed availability of cheap labor-power in the form of a non-capitalist commodity reproduced in African reserves" (Zureik 1979: 16). The statement is only comprehensible in an economy where the black Africans were the overwhelming majority of the labor force. Arabs in Israel (unlike the South Africa example) played a marginal role in the local Israel economy, and remained a minority in the 1950s and 1960s even amongst blue collar workers. One may also ask whether such an analysis really captures the nationalist substance underlying the Israeli–Arab/Palestinian conflict. Zureik needs to account for how he disregarded the extraterritorial dimensions of the conflict, especially since his theory of internal colonialism is an outgrowth and refinement of conflict theory. A focus on conflict should also include reference to the impact of Israel's regional political environment.

An equally (if not more influential work), Ian Lustick's *Arabs in the Jewish State* (1980) likewise focuses almost exclusively on the internal situation within the state and thus suffers from the same omission of disregarding the broader conflict. Lustick was intrigued by the lack of violence that characterized the relationship between Arabs and Jews after the establishment of the state compared either to the recurrent and intense violence that characterized Jewish–Arab relations during the British Mandate or to ethnic conflicts elsewhere.

To explain the puzzle, he argued that Israel built an elaborate framework of control based on structural, economic, and programmatic underpinnings. Economically, the Arab minority who remained was weakened by the flight of the urban Arab elite (and the urban population in general) in the first months of the 1948 war. They were predominantly rural and uneducated, divided along confessional lines between Muslims, Druze, and Christians. Typically in industrial societies, rural inhabitants are dependent on urban areas for work as farming becomes mechanized engendering a surplus labor pool. Those who remained sought their fortune in the modern urban economy. All of the major cities in Israel, its industry, trade and services were predominantly, if not overwhelmingly, Jewish. Structurally, Israel was a Jewish state that naturally not only devoted its resources to the Jewish majority but also expended major efforts to increase their numbers through encouraging large-scale and, for the most part, unselective immigration. Programmatically, the state's organs or those affiliated with it, such as the Histadrut, or The General Federation of Labor, adopted policies of segmenting, coopting, and making the Arabs dependent on the state. "Segmentation" refers to the isolation of the Arab minority from the Jewish population and the Arab minority's internal fragmentation. "Dependence" refers to the enforced reliance of Arabs on the Jewish majority for important economic and political resources. "Cooptation" refers to the use of side payments to Arab elites or potential elites for purposes of surveillance and resource and resource extraction (Lustick 1980:77).

According to Lustick, the military administration imposed on the Arab sector until 1966 was the most salient instrument of such policies. Not only was freedom of movement curtailed for security reasons, it was also used to monitor Arab labor flows; the Israeli authorities curtailed Arab labor flow in times of economic downturns in order not to compete with Jewish labor and expanded the flow when obverse conditions prevailed. Lustick stresses that these mechanisms were effective only because structural and economical conditions made them *"susceptible* to control based on techniques of segmentation, dependence, and cooptation." (ibid.).

In a work in which control is such a key concept, one expects that the external sources of security concern for the state exercising such control would be prominent. Yet, cases in which this nexus appears prominently, such as Ceylon (later Sri Lanka), Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Kashmir (albeit its salience emerged after the writing of Lustick's book), receive no attention. In his discussion of Harold Wolpe's work on the relationship between external and internal imperialism in South Africa, he gets close to acknowledging security concerns and their external sources by suggesting its promise but then fails to follow through with a typology or analysis that takes external variables into account (Lustick 1980: 75).

It is only in the concluding chapter that Lustick acknowledges the importance of external security concerns. He writes:

> There can indeed be no question that a reduction in tension between Israel and the Arab world, on whatever scale, would tend to make the day-to-

> day relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel less fraught with fear and suspicion. Peace agreements would defuse the security issue, and the emergence of a Palestinian political entity would no doubt ease the psychological identity problem of Israeli Arabs (Lustick 1980: 267).

Unfortunately, the importance of that dimension does not figure in his theoretical framework. There are also other drawbacks to his analysis. Lustick's framework is a typology of possible influences. It is not a causal model that explains the variation of policy outputs over time regarding Israel's Arab citizens and why they occurred. The control framework subordinates when intact, and does not when it withers. We are left with no answer as to why it declined and occasionally reasserted itself. Once the control framework broke down, he predicted Israel's Arab citizens would unite politically. In his typology, there was little place to analyze the effects of the 1982 Lebanese War on Druze, Christian and Muslim relations within Israel, or even the effects of West Bank Muslim religiosity (especially its political aspects on Israel's Arab citizens) which arguably reduced solidarity rather than increased it. In Chapter 2, I will show how as Israeli control declined, segmentation, dependence, and (to a certain extent) even cooptation did not decline. As Shmuel Sandler has shown, economical factors and the strength of the state, which created deterrence compared to the weakness of the Arab community, were much more important factors in explaining Arab political behavior than the control framework Lustick claims existed in Israel (Sandler 1995: 934–5).

Nevertheless, Lustick is basically correct that Israel implemented a policy of control, though not nearly as predetermined and logical as he describes it. Alan Dowty, a seasoned scholar of Israeli politics, doubts whether Israeli policy makers were ever consistent in their policies towards the Arabs in Israel and thus questions the veracity of the control, modernization, or internal colonialism paradigms (Dowty 1998). What Lustick does not explain is why this commitment to control weakened. I will try to argue that policies and mechanisms of control intertwined comfortably with policies of state centralization in the early 1950s even though many challenged its sagacity at the time, especially regarding Israel's Arab citizens. Israeli leaders thought that such centralization enhanced Israel's military security against the Arab states along its borders. The control framework over Israel's Arab citizens declined as soon as Israel's elite felt that the benefits of centralization had been exhausted and had become counterproductive to achieving security, ushering the need for a more capitalist economy and a more liberal society to promote technological innovations.

Overlooking external security concerns also characterizes research published since Lustick's seminal book. Oren Yiftachel (an especially prolific writer on Israel's Palestinian citizens) like Zureik claims that Israeli state institutions deliberately stymied the physical growth and expansion of the Arab localities, isolating them by surrounding them with Jewish urban and rural development (Yiftachel 1992; 2004: 771). Dan Rabinowitz, in a study on the development of the Jewish development town of upper Nazareth, comes to

very similar conclusions (Rabinowitz 1997; 2001: 67). For all three, the state is essentially an instrument for promoting almost exclusively Zionist goals for the Jewish population. Yiftachel calls Israel an ethnocracy – a regime dedicated to the advancement of the predominant community only. He argues that the persistence of such a regime will inevitably lead to spiraling conflict between the minority and the predominant community in the state. He counsels Israel to adopt consociationalism as a basic model to attenuate the tensions between the two communities (disregarding its breakdown in Lebanon and Cyprus). In all fairness to Yiftachel, he notes the predicament of Israel's Jewish majority as a regional minority but is silent about how that fact affects the relationship.

Nevertheless, his concern with regional scope or external security considerations is so minor that in a more recent article with As'ad Ghanem on ethnocracies that compares – Estonia (with its sizable Russian minority), Sri Lanka (whose Tamil minority are Hindus like the majority in neighboring India), and Israel, he ignores perhaps the most striking common denominator of all three cases – that they consist of states with majorities that are minorities within the region facing a threatening external actor (Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004: 761–6).[2]

The second school, the developmental/modernizing/democratization, which includes studies by Smooha (1989; 1990) Landau (1969; 1993) Rekhess (1977; 1998) and Haidar (1995), acknowledges the importance of external variables without exploring in depth the relationship between Israel's external security needs and internal dynamics. Rekhess analyzed the political linkages between Israel's Arab citizens and the Palestinians in the territories, leading him to conclude by the 1970s and 1980s that they were radicalizing and "Palestinizing" (Rekhess 1977). In his latest book on the subject, Landau agrees with Rekhess (Landau 1993: 191–3). Smooha has argued, on the contrary, that Israel's Arab citizens became effectively more Israeli in part because the Jewish community became more liberal (Smooha 1990). Their political activism was a sign not of radicalization but rather of politicization, working within the system rather than against it. Normatively, Smooha calls Israel an "ethnic democracy." Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel (among others) feel that this term is much too generous (Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel 1998: 257). Israel's Arab citizens have been far less violent because of political rights, as Smooha has argued. All in all, it is the differences (rather than similarities) between Palestinians and Israel's Arab citizens that are striking.

While these scholars focused on institutions and policies promoting state building among the predominant community and fragmentation in the other,

[2] To recall, the Tamils form a subgroup amongst the Hindus, the Sinhalese are Buddhists who face predominantly Hindu India, which includes the state of Tamil Nadu, in which Tamils form the vast majority; the Estonians are a majority within the state with a sizable minority of Russian settlers facing a Russia with potential ambitions to recreate an empire.

Ghanem and Rouhana focused on the distress Israel's Arab citizens suffer living in a state whose symbols they cannot possibly share:

> A minority in an ethnic state is confronted by uncomfortable political and existential situations that stem from the ethnic structure of the state. An ethnic state by definition excludes national-ethnic collectivities other than the dominant group from the national objectives and affords the dominant group a preferential treatment anchored in the legal system. (Ghanem, Rouhana, and Yiftachel 1998: 8)

In several articles, they claim that an exclusive Jewish ethnic superstructure puts the Palestinian citizens in a predicament that is manifested in three ways: they cannot achieve either symbolic or material equality within the Jewish state, their relationship with the rest of the Palestinian nation is marred, and their internal development as a national community is thwarted. This predicament can develop into a crisis in the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian citizens (Rouhana 2001: 66). Sometimes, Rouhana clearly overstates his case. In an article on citizenship and the parliamentary politics, Rouhana claims that "equal citizenship in multiethnic states entails that citizens, regardless of ethnic affiliation, have equal influence on the political system through voting and other forms of political participation." (Rouhana 1989: 39) Were this statement true, it would obviate much of the study of politics almost everywhere. After all, one of the central concerns of the study of history and the social sciences is establishing the reasons *inequality* is so pronounced in almost all political systems.

By far the most important work of the social distress school is Rouhana's *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict* (Rouhana 1997). It also goes further in taking external factors and the issue of security into account. Rouhana argues that Palestinian collective identity is influenced by three dimensions: the formal-legal, the political, and the social-cultural. The Jewish majority's security concerns justify limiting the rights of the Arab minority, from their perspective. Politically, the rise of pan-Arabism, its defeat in 1967, and its replacement by a Palestinian particularistic nationalism constructed and promoted by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the reconnection of the Palestinians in Israel with other Palestinians after the 1967 War, all had a major impact on collective identity. (Rouhana 1997: 71). Subsequent events, such as the Islamic upsurge and the Oslo peace process, also had considerable influence (Rouhana 1997: 75).

Rouhana's treatment of security concerns is impressive, especially his identification of Palestinization and the peace process as two important reasons for increasing radicalization and confrontation with the state and its predominant society, but his causal linkage falls short in explaining the complex pattern of variation of the relationship. In part, this may be due to the fact that he focuses on the minority rather than on the total interaction among the state, the majority, and the minority.

Defying inclusion in any one of the three categories of books outlined previously is Ronald Krebs's *Fighting for Rights: Military Service and the Politics of Citizenship* (2006). This work is important because it is one of the few books focused on the Arabs and military service in Israel and probably the only work that looks at the security relationship through a theoretical lens. Krebs claims that Israeli recruitment policies in the early years of statehood signaled clearly to Israel's Arab citizens that they (with the exception of the Druze, the smallest denomination within the Arab sector) were to be excluded from the boundaries of first class citizenship by not being included in the army draft (Krebs 2006: 48, 63, 185). Although Krebs acknowledges the crucial importance of Israel's security predicament in his empirical treatment of the subject (Krebs 2006: 69, 71), there is absolutely no reference to these external security concerns in his elaborate and long theoretical exposition of the issue, in his basic thesis, or in his findings. The work suffers then from the same myopia of most of the previous works analyzed in this chapter.

Krebs's assumed rather than proved the relationship between military service and citizenship rights and preferential treatment; this assumption will be challenged in Chapter 3, which claims that Christians who served only as volunteers in the army in fact exacted the most benefits from the state. This had nothing to do with "signaling" by the state; rather this variance was the result of the differential bargaining power of the religious denominations with the state. The Druze (as the poorest and smallest subsector, bereft of fruitful links to outside states) felt compelled to serve, whereas the Christians who had the greatest bargaining power (as a subsector that commanded the concern of foreign powers vital to Israeli security such as France) could easily avoid it. Catholics, as the larger, more important sect in Lebanon in the early years of statehood, also figured prominently in Ben-Gurion's regional policy of facilitating a coalition of regional minorities against the growing hegemony of pan-Arabism.

The same disregard for Israel's geo-strategic predicament and the impact of foreign relations on state–minority relations can be found in literature bordering security studies, such as policing and criminology. In an article by Hasisi and Weitzer on police relations with Arabs and Jews in Israel (Hasisi and Weitzer 2007), there is no theoretical reference to the possible impact of external relations on internal relations between the police and Israel's Arab citizens.

How External Security Factors Affect Domestic Politics

The importance of international and regional security in influencing and even determining domestic politics, including state–minority relations, may be credited to two scholars. Otto Hintze proposed in the 1920s the seminal idea, provided the finding, and placed it in comparative perspective, and Peter Gourevitch's widely cited article (1978) placed the insight within international relations theory. Hintze, in his "Military Organization and the