

Social Conceptions, Citizenship Rights and Protest: The Road to the October Events

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Abstract

The existence of a Palestinian minority in the Jewish State highlights the main contradiction in Israel's self-conception as Jewish and as democratic. By considering the status of the minority as the ultimate test for the true nature of the regime, various analyses have been presented which try either to legitimize the regime and underscore its virtues or to give expression to the unbridgeable gap between its rhetoric and practices. In the following, the mainstream research on the discussed topic will be critically analyzed. My argument is that this research has not been able to detach itself from existing power relations in the society and to present coherent alternatives to current reality. More significantly, it has contributed to the current reality wherein the Palestinians are considered second-class citizens, their disadvantaged position and their disempowerment are seen by the Jewish public and policy makers as understandable and even desired.

Palestinians in Israel: historical background

In 1948 the State of Israel was established over 77 percent of Palestine's territory - a much larger area than the territory allotted to the Jewish state in accordance with the 1947 UN Partition Resolution (Hadawi, 1967: 79-81). Inside Israel's boundaries only about 160,000 out of the 900,000 Palestinian inhabitants remained to become citizens of the Jewish state (Abu-Lughod, 1971: 139-163; Morris, 1991). Their existence created disappointment and concern among leading Israeli politicians. During the initial discussions on the fate of this minority, some politicians inquired about the plausibility of their expulsion (Segev, 1984: 59; Melman & Raviv, 1988: 19; Shahak, 1983), while Ben-Gurion, the first Prime-Minister of Israel, asked his aides about the possibility of converting Palestinian youth to Judaism (Benziman & Mansour, 1992: 59). However, quite soon it became clear that this minority would stay for the foreseeable future. Two policy lines have consequently emerged. The first stems from Israel's international obligations and the self-image it has endeavored to project. In accordance with the 1947 UN Partition Resolution (article 181 [11]), the Palestinian minority was promised equal rights. Additionally, since its creation, Israel has attempted to cultivate an image of democratic enlightened nation amidst a region that lacks progressive civilized values. On various occasions, Israeli and Zionist leaders expressed their commitment to grant

the non-Jewish population equal rights, such as Ben-Gurion's testimony before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine (1946) (Lustick, 1980: 37-8). These promises were also expressed in Israel's Declaration of Independence, which pledged "complete equality of social and political rights ... without distinction of creed, race or sex". Yet, according to the second policy line, the new reality was viewed in terms drawn from the near past; the Palestinians were conceived as an enemy-affiliated group, thus they should be marginalized, excluded and disenfranchised. The pursuance of this policy seemed quite natural for the new leaders, who until 1948 headed the Jewish organizations and led the struggle against the Palestinians militarily, politically, economically and in the labor market (Ibid: Ch.2). The result was the adoption of these two directions simultaneously.

The Palestinians were granted Israeli citizenship and formal political rights to vote and to be elected. However, these rights were emptied of their content. With the Declaration of Independence, the Knesset adopted the Mandatory Defense (Emergency) Regulations except those that limited Jewish immigration. These regulations, which were enacted to fight terrorism and were condemned by leading Jewish and Zionist figures, have become a main tool of governance by Israel. Until recently, they had been used almost exclusively against Palestinians (Jiryis, 1976; Kretzmer, 1987; Lustick, 1980). The military government, imposed over Palestinian areas between 1948 and 1966, was initially established to achieve three goals: Firstly, to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees and to expel those who succeeded in returning. Secondly, to relocate (and occasionally to transfer) the population of partly empty villages and neighborhoods, to relocate Palestinian villagers residing adjacent to the new borders, and to transfer of Palestinian owned lands to Jewish settlements. Thirdly, to establish political control over the Palestinians and segregate them from the Jewish majority (Segev, 1984: 64-5).

By the mid 1950s it became clear that the initial objectives had been achieved, and that new aims had to be defined. A top-secret memorandum from 1959 included one major goal - entrusted to the military government:

"The government's policy ... has sought to divide the Arab population into diverse communities and regions ... The municipality status of Arab villages, and the competitive spirit of local elections, deepened the divisions inside the villages themselves" (Ibid: 70).

Three additional objectives were later on revealed. Firstly, to prevent the establishment of Arab nationalist organizations. Secondly, to prevent "internal refugees" from returning to their villages and to stop Palestinians whose land had been confiscated from trying to re-establish their hold over it. Thirdly, to confine Palestinian workers to their villages, and to prevent them from competing in the labor market with Jewish immigrants (Schiff, 1962: 70-1; Sa'di, 1995: 432-433). MAPAI, then the major political force, sought to use the military government for the interest of "the state and the party". The political committee and secretariat of MAPAI in their meeting in 1952 decided to establish a system of patronage which would result in massive Arab electoral support for MAPAI. (Wiemer, 1983: 37).

Now, more than three decades after the abolition of the Military Government, its impact has not vanished. During the Military Government era, a whole set of structures, procedures, attitudes and ideologies that have been governing the majority-minority relations were laid down. This includes the establishment of official bodies for dealing with the Palestinians - such as an office that concentrates the state's

activities in the Arab sector, discrimination against the Palestinians in the entitlement for benefits and in the awarding of public funds, the establishment of particular departments in various ministries for dealing with the Arabs, the emergence of negative attitudes towards the Palestinians and an ideology that legitimizes their being awarded the status of second class citizens.

An Israeli Dilemma

Students of Israeli society frequently refer to the inherent contradiction in the state structure. Israel is self-proclaimed as both a Jewish and a democratic state. Already in the wording of the Declaration of Independence, Meir Wilner, the representative of the communist party, suggested to define Israel as a sovereign independent Jewish state and by that to limit the boundaries of the concept “the Jewish people” to those residing in Israel (Davis & Lehn, 1983: 145-6). However, his motion was rejected and a broad definition was adopted, wherein every Jew in the world has become a potential citizen of Israel. Consequently, three collectives that the state represents were created: the Jewish citizens of Israel, the Jews all over the world and the Palestinian citizens of Israel. This categorization reflects also a set of legal rights. The Jewish nature of Israel has been articulated through a variety of laws, regulations and policies. Not only that Jews enjoy the right to immigrate freely to Israel and to receive citizenship upon their arrival, but also International Jewish Organizations (The World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund) were assigned state’s functions.

Israel has incorporated the Palestinians, but due to its exclusionary foundation it will never be able to integrate them as equal citizens. Put differently, Israel in its current legal, ideological, organizational and symbolic structures will never apply universal criteria to all its citizens.

Mainstream Presentations of Jewish-Palestinian Relations

So far, mainstream scholarship on the Palestinians in Israel has been produced by Israeli social scientists, journalists and state’s officials who identify with and represent the ruling power. Any critical inquiry into the structure of the Israeli State and its relation to the Palestinian minority is fiercely attacked or silenced. For example, to avoid unwarranted criticism of his work, Ian Lustick (1980), in his book: *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel’s Control of a National Minority* (Austin: University of Texas, 1980) began by presenting his background as a credible alibi for the sincerity of his intentions.

“All my life I have been involved, as a participant, leader, and resource person, in Jewish and Zionist organizations. Because of my upbringing, my emotional commitments, and my involvement in Jewish affairs, I know from the inside - from inside myself and from inside the Jewish community - the painful issues which serious consideration of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel raises.... Published material can always be misused and quoted out of context...” (Lustick, 1980: XI).

Although the environment of bullying and intimidation against those who dare to criticize the official version of history is slowly fading, it has not yet disappeared. During the last decade a group of Israeli scholars, “new historians” and “critical sociologists”, who are revising Israel’s history by analyzing declassified archival material and bringing to the forefront subjects that had been considered non-issues, were accused by mainstream scholars of not being patriotic (Lustick, 1996: 196-7). In the next section, I will discuss the presentation of the state- minority by the official sociology.

1. *Modernization*

Modernization theory is one of the late models that the evolutionary thinking, of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, has produced. Two central themes run through this perspective. According to the first, modernization represents a project of integrating the various ethnic groups into the mainstream of society in order to achieve consensus and social harmony. While the second, describes an evolutionary development of societies and collectives from traditionalism to modernity.

In Israel, this theory has formed the basis for analyzing the “ethnic relations”, and S.N. Eisenstadt, the founder of Israeli sociology, has been a prominent functionalist theoretician. The modernization theory has been applied for analyzing the absorption of Oriental Jewish immigrants by the established European Jewish community through a policy of “melting pot” (*Kur Hitukh*). (Eisenstadt, 1973)ⁱ.

This model could not be fully applied for analyzing the status of the Palestinian minority due to the absence of a secular Israeli nation that encompasses all citizens regardless of their religious affiliation. In the absence of a process of nation formation, the research has dealt solely with the “development” of the minorities. It has described the progress that has taken place in the minority’s various aspects of life: education, the stratification system, health, etc. (e.g. Eisenstadt, 1973; Landau, 1969; 1992; Cohen, 1990; Rekhess, 1976; Soffer, 1983). Even in its structure, the research is designed to mirror the unfolding evolutionary process of modernization. It begins by describing the degenerate conditions of the minority when the state was established. Then it presents indexes of comparisons between the past and the present, which always “reveal” that a change for the better was achieved; these changes are attributed to the modernizing role of the state and the Jewish majority who act as modernizing agents. Finally, it scantily dwells on the “gaps” which continue to exist between the majority and the minority; these gaps are explained by the different levels of modernization when the state was established as well as the barriers to modernization that the traditional values and institutions in the Arab communities pose. In the light of its premises and methodology, can this research accomplish anything more than self-fulfilling prophecies?

If, methodologically, this research is designed in a way to express the official version of politics and history, its ideological underpinnings are more far-reaching. First, by accrediting the state and the Jewish majority with the role of modernizing agents, it undermines the legitimacy of any struggle waged by Palestinians. Indeed, criticisms of the state or its policies are described by this research as signs of traditionalism, radicalism or alienation. Second, by defining the Palestinians as a “traditional” community, it determines that their frameworks of identification are primordial or religious, and therefore that they are devoid of nationalist consciousness (see Sa'di, 1992). Third, this research confines the discussion on the state to its public policy, thus leaving the structure of the state and its affinity to the various groups

without analysis; the fact that the state behaves as a sectarian structure rather than as a neutral arena is left without consideration. Fourth, by presenting the Palestinians as an object of modernization, their role - as a collective with specific cultural, national, class and regional characteristics - in influencing their history is abolished.

2. *Citizenship Right and Democracy*

In contrast to the research produced within the modernization paradigm, Sammy Smooha, in his voluminous writings, endeavored to present a solution to the inherent contradictions in the State's structure. Yet, he changed his position several times. In his first major work: *Israel: Pluralism & Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) he argued that Israel “posses[ses] deplorable features of a *Herrenvolk* democracy in the case of the Arab minority” (P.256), since “(t)he Zionist idea is inconsistent with an equal status for the Arabs” (P. 255). State's policy toward the Arabs is characterized by exclusionary domination and institutionalized inequalities. Thus, the Arabs compose a quasi-caste; they are subjected to control, exclusion, dependence and subordination. About a decade later he would present an opposing interpretation; in his book *Arabs and Jews in Israel* (Boulder: Westview, 1989, Vol.1) he not only described Israel as a liberal democracy but went as far as presenting the regimes' ideology as the yardstick for analyzing the political orientations of Palestinians. His typology of Palestinians' political attitudes includes the following categories: accommodationists, reservationists, oppositionists, and rejectionists. By presenting the regime's ideology as the criterion for judgment he abolishes it as a subject for inquiry and awards it a moral and canonized status, which stands above any questioning or criticism.

Since 1990, Smooha has been propagating the model of “ethnic democracy”, arguing that Israel represents a special type of democracy. According to this model, Israel has not adopted the principles of liberal democracy wherein citizens have equal right and direct affinity to the state. It has neither adopted the principles of consociational democracy, where representative bodies of the various ethnic groups mediate state/citizen relations, nor is it a *Herrenvolk* democracy like South Africa during the apartheid era, where only whites enjoyed full citizenship rights. The Israeli regime of ethnic democracy is characterized, according to Smooha, by control of the majority over the state, while allowing the minority to endeavor to achieve incremental improvement in its position through democratic means.

“Driven by ethnic nationalism, the state is identified with a ‘core ethnic nation’, not with its citizens. The state practices a policy of creating a homogenous nation-state, a state of and for a particular ethnic nation, and acts to promote the language, culture, numerical majority, economic well being, and political interests of this group. Although enjoying citizenship and voting rights, the minorities are treated as second-class citizens... At the same time, the minorities are allowed to conduct a democratic and peaceful struggle that yields incremental improvement in their status” (Smooha, 1997: 199-200).

This conception is alien to the idea of democracy as developed over centuries. Various theoreticians, such as Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, and Tocqueville, warned against the control of any group of society over the state. Proponents of the democratic type of government attribute the higher moral ground of this regime to the neutrality of the state. The state is viewed as a neutral arena where various groups compose changing coalitions to promote their goals. In this dynamic process all groups of society can organize themselves, participate in coalitions, and achieve some of their goals, thus giving expression to the principle of equality (Almond, 1960: 3-64; Darryl, 1970; Dunleavy & O'leary, 1988: 13-46). So far, Smootha is the first to declare that democracy could contradict equality.

Smootha's characterization of the state as an institution whose function is to advance the interests of one group has been advocated long ago by theoreticians and politicians who dismiss the democratic type of government. This position is well known in the Marxist tradition, which views the liberal democratic state as a part of the super-structure of capitalism. For example, Marx and Engels wrote in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*: "The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx & Engels, 1991: 37). Thus, Smootha cannot present himself as a champion of democracy and at the same time adhere to the position of those who dismiss it.

At the practical level, the implications of the model of ethnic democracy are disturbing. It legitimizes the dominance of the majority over the state but fails to delineate the boundaries of this rule. If the majority decides the prime objectives of the state, then the claims voiced by right-wing politicians and publics regarding the need to take decisions, on fundamental issues, by a Jewish majority sound not only legitimate but reasonable too.

In the model of ethnic democracy, minorities are disadvantaged but can improve their position through politics of wheeling and dealing. This means in practice that achievements are not accumulative. Besides the possibility of gains, there is the probability of loss and marginalization; for example, during the Netanyahu Government, the Palestinian minority lost most of its "gains" under the Rabin-Peres rule. Indeed, the Palestinians could be driven back to square one each time that a right wing coalition comes to power. Moreover, Smootha does not pay attention to the high price of the politics of wheeling and dealing that leaders of the minority have to pay. However, even if they choose to collaborate, what could they anticipate? Smootha himself wrote that "only limited improvements in the Arabs' status can be expected" (Smootha, 1978: 252).

Moreover, Smootha argues that the Palestinians were awarded civil and political rights, although in many occasions these rights were violated. Yet, he points to a trend of continual improvement. The changes, however, are not going to bring about social integration and inclusion, nor can they enrich the Palestinians' experience of citizenship. This suggests that only the formalistic side of citizenship is what has been present, and that the Palestinians will continue to be on the margin. If this is the case, then what is the intent of citizenship?

The model of ethnic democracy falls apart when Smootha analyses the foundations of the regime; this regime persists uninterruptedly not because of its fairness, neither by its moral qualities, nor by the practicality of its procedures. Rather force and force alone is what guarantees its continuance: "*For the foreseeable future, however, the Jews, being a strong, determined, and self-righteous, will no doubt decline to relinquish their dominance*" (Ibid: 236; emphasis added).

Beyond this kind of criticism, Smooha and his many critics agree that the ethnic democracy model is a precise description of the Israeli regime. This raises fundamental questions regarding the functioning of the various State's institutions. **If the major objective of the state is to further Jewish goals, then the various institutions should function accordingly. That is, the police should behave as an "ethnic police", and this principle can also be applied to the legal system and the public utilities. The term "ethnic" does not refer here to the social composition of the employees in the various institutions rather to their main goals and underlying assumptions.**

Presentations of Palestinian Identity and Political attitudes

In order to show how a public and academic social discourse in Israel constructed a set of "common sense" notions regarding the Palestinian minority, which eventually resulted in tragic consequences, and the emergence of voices that blame the Arabs themselves for these results, I will present a brief critical analysis of the research on the Palestinian identity.

The evolution, changes and development of group identity among the Palestinian citizens of Israel have been a focus of research on this minority since 1967. The seminal research of Peres & Yuval-Davis (1969) which was conducted just before and after the six days war of 1967 have set the agenda and the methodology of discussion for Israeli and non-Israeli scholars alike. Since the publication of this article, a considerable amount of research has been published which, largely, adopted the same theoretical framework and methodology. At the theoretical level, this research is established upon the postulations of the functionalist theory, which views social development in evolutionary terms. Alongside the progress of social groups from traditionalism to modernity, their members widen their frame of identification, from identification along primordial, religious or local lines to identification with imagined social categories, primarily the nation - an overarching secular entity. This process is comparable with Piaget's notion of cognitive development, whereas natural maturation of individuals is accompanied by a gradual transition from concrete to abstract thinking. Meanwhile, at the methodological level the bulk of this research draws its findings from surveys' results. Typically, Palestinian interviewees are asked to choose the most appropriate social construction that describes their identity from a list of images. In most cases, the labels included range from Israeli to Palestinian with various religious, local and mixed images falling in between. This conceptual and methodological framework has been presented as scientific, objective and neutral. Yet, the results obtained are usually interpreted in political terms as indicating radicalization *versus* accommodation or as pointing to a trend of Palestinization *versus* Israelization.

The findings of this research have frequently been brought to the attention of the Israeli public, politicians and civil servants in the context of debates over State's policy towards the Palestinian minority in a whole range of issues such as land confiscation, regional planning, demographic growth, etc. This research could be divided into three main categories according to political and methodological criteria, whereas methodological and empirical debates between scholars who adhere to different trends come quite often to mask political positions. The first category includes the research conducted within what came to be known as the **radicalization perspective**. Proponents of this theory argue that the "Israeli Arabs" have been

departing since 1967 from a position of acceptance of their status as a minority in the Jewish state towards a radical alternative of Palestinian identification, which entails a challenge to the fundamental premises of the state. This shift is manifested by a change in a whole set of political attitudes and behaviors such as - decline in their support of Zionist parties, increase in the volume and intensity of legal and extra-legal protest, revival of Palestinian culture, growing support to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and their struggle etc. (Rekheiss, 1976; Shokeid, 1980; Layish, 1981; Soffer, 1983; Cohen, 1990; Landau, 1969; 1992).

The second category includes the studies conducted by John Hofman and his collaborators. Unlike the bulk of previous research, which was mainly produced by Orientalists, this research falls within the realm of social psychology; it was conducted at the department of psychology in Haifa University, and employed methods of attitude testing through questionnaires. The main conclusion that Hoffman stressed repeatedly is that the Arabs are a collection of minorities, with different affinities to the overarching Arab identity (Hofman, 1974; 1978; 1987; Hofman & Debbiny, 1970; Hofman & Rouhana, 1976). In his study with Debbiny, they concluded that: "to be an Arab means first of all to be a Moslem. Arab nationalism may well leave Christians at the periphery" (Hofman & Debbiny, 1970: 1014). In another article with Rouhana (1976), they reported that for Christians "Arab nationalism does not follow quite as readily from their own past and tradition as it does for Moslems" (P.78). When following criticism (Peres, 1980), he added the concept of Palestinian to the list of images, however, his conclusion remained almost unchanged. He only substituted the term Palestinian identity for that of Arab identity, thus inferring that "there is in fact some evidence to show that Muslims and Christians are distinct types of Palestinians" (Hofman, 1987: 22).

The third category includes the research, which has been conducted by Smootha, over a period of two decades. He developed his thesis of Politicization through a debate with and opposition to the radicalization perspective. Following Zak's (1976) orthogonal conception of identity, Smootha tested two dimensions of Palestinians' collective identity, Israelization and Palestinization. Contrary to the main contention of the radicalization thesis, he reported that the Palestinians are becoming more politicized - and not radicalized - arguing that the two dimensions of their identity are independent and simultaneously evolving. Yet, the Israeli dimension is deeper and more inclusive than the Palestinian's is (Smootha, 1989).

The research on Palestinian identity is not detached from the issues, which are of concern for Israeli politicians and the wider public. Questions that are often originated in the public debate include: Have the Arabs in Israel accepted their status as minority in a Jewish state? Do they recognize Israel's right to exist in its current structure? Could they be trusted? The research on identity gives a general framework for these inquiries, and connects current concerns with the historical debate within Zionism over the "Arab problem" (*Haba'iah Ha'aravit*).

Various images are used to denote the Arab population: non-Jewish population; Arabs (without any peculiarity); Arabs of the land of Israel; minorities; Arabs and Druze; Muslim, Christians, Druze and Bedouins. These various constructs are used to justify the proclaimed nature of Israel as a mono-national state, i.e. a Jewish State (and the denial of the national identity of the Palestinians). Despite that, the Palestinians have been treated as a national minority, as a minority that should be constantly watched, restrained and put under control. Referring to the multiplicity of images used to denote the Palestinian minority, Rabinowitz (1993) remarks that "[t]he labels 'Israel's Arabs' and 'Israeli Arabs' are an Israeli invention that shifts attention

from locus (Palestine) to culture (Arab). This emanates from deep Israeli anxieties regarding the authentic bond between Palestinians and the land” (p.179). Furthermore, he adds that “[t]he fact that the expression ‘Israeli Arabs’ has become an integral part of spoken Hebrew does not make it neutral” (ibid.).

The system of control that the state has imposed over the minority has been described by various researchers (Lustick, 1980; Smooha, 1978; 1980), who also pointed to the existence of two trends within the establishment, which is in charge on Arab affairs. The first favors the use of a heavy handed policy of suppression which includes surveillance, the use of punishment against dissidents, land confiscation, etc., a trend which is connected with names such as Ariel Sharon, Amnon Levan, Uri Lubrani, Moshe Arens, Israel Koeing, etc. Meanwhile, the second stresses the role of economic dependency, the incorporation of educated Arabs in the bureaucracy and state's support of “positive” elements. Those who adhere to this school - such as Shmouel Toledano - argue that, through improvement in the economic well being of the minority and its segmentation, and by way of political manipulation, it is possible to achieve its quiescence and even its passive collaboration.

Existing political, social and ideological realities quite often affect the interpretation that researchers give to social events and phenomenon, particularly when they are engaged not only as observers but as participants as well. Personal feelings and collective sentiments prevailing in the society could lead the researcher to pursue a certain line of analysis and not another. In the discussed issue, it is difficult to overlook the similarities which exist between political positions and research results. The radicalization thesis, which describes the minority as becoming more militant, subversive and increasingly dangerous, lends support to the activist policy line which views suppression as the appropriate way of governance. Meanwhile, Hofman sticks to the long-standing position, which denies the existence of a national consciousness among the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Hofman's research is more policy-oriented than what could be gleaned from a formalistic reading of the texts. One sensible conclusion that could be drawn from his research is that state's policy of dividing the minority on religious, geographical and clan bases is justified and supported by evidence gathered from Arab interviewees.

Contrary to Hofman's suggestive remarks on State's policy, Smooha tackled this issue in various works (Smooha, 1978; 1980; 1989). Building upon his conception of Palestinian identity, Smooha has recently developed his thesis of “Ethnic Democracy”. According to this model, the Palestinians would be considered a quasi-national group, a position which embodies an uneasy contradiction; they will be awarded some group rights but within the framework of absolute Jewish domination over the state and its use for the advancement of Zionist goals. The asymmetric relations between the majority and the minority are reflective of the incomplete recognition of the minority's identity. Smooha emphasizes that within the existing structure of power relations, members of the minority can struggle to achieve some incremental improvement in their socioeconomic conditions, yet this should stay far below their being awarded equal rights.

To take the discussion on the relations between conceptualisations, political attitudes, and public discourse one step further, I will bring conceptions of two Israeli-Jewish public figures regarding the Palestinian minority. The first statement is on the dispute around the boundaries of Arab villages, made by Ariel Sharon, in 1977, in his capacity as a Minister of Agriculture:

“National land is actually robbed by foreigners.... Although there is talk of the Judaization of Galilee, the region is regressing into a Gentile district ... I initiated a strong action to prevent aliens from taking the state lands” (quoted in Smootha 1980:26).

Another form of the de-territoriality of Palestinian identity is found in Amos Kenan's science fiction: *The Road to Ein-Harod* (London: Al-Saqi books, 1986). The novel is about the odyssey of a young leftist Jewish man who fled Tel-Aviv in the aftermath of a rightist military take-over of the Israeli State. The hero, Rafi, meets on his way to *Ein-Harod* - the last position of resistance - Mahmoud, a young Palestinian man. On their journey they discuss, among other things, the question: to whom does the country belong? Understandably, each of them accredits his nation. Mahmoud points to superficial and even negative signs to validate his claim: cactus trees, which remained on the sites of Palestinian villages that were destroyed during the 1948 war, and a swamp! Meanwhile, Rafi supports his claim by antique Jewish religious instruments made thousands of years ago that they find deep in an ancient cave. If the territorial aspect of identity resonates authenticity, then Palestinian identity according to both Sharon and Kenan is superficial and lacks historical depth. Moreover, both of them, despite their opposing political stands, reject the notions of equality and of having shared possession of the space.

Notes on Social Protest

People usually leave their ordinary engagements and participate in acts of social protest when various conditions exist. 1) Inability to put their grievances before the policy makers. Indeed, in the case of the Palestinian population, representatives of the Arab parties have been excluded from the ruling coalitions in Israel since 1948. Still further, they have been viewed as an illegitimate political force. Only during the last Rabin government could the representatives of the Arab population come close to the center of power, but were not allowed in as a part of the ruling coalition. 2) A long history of inflicted injustices. This condition applies also to the Arab population. Between 60 – 70 per cent of the lands owned by the Palestinian residents of Israel were confiscated by the State and then transferred to Jewish ownership and use (Abu-Kishk, 1981). Furthermore, about 20 per cent of them are either internal refugees or their descendants. The Palestinians in Israel have also been suffering from a systematic policy of discrimination in the awarding of public funds. And they are concentrating in the lower stratum of the Israeli social structure. They are less educated, work in less desirable and rewarding jobs. They are over-represented among the poor population and the unemployed. “Arab towns” in Israel, excluding Nazareth, are, in fact, no more than over-sized villages lacking modern infrastructure and employment opportunities which exist in the Jewish towns and cities. 3) The absence of any real opportunity for a constructive treatment of the grievances. Since 1948, all the governments have assured the Palestinian citizens that their complaints would be addressed, and that the “gaps” between them and the Jewish population would be gradually closed. However, they learned that these promises are not meant to be realized. Rather, these promises were but cynical manipulation to gain their electoral support. Eventually, they became cynical regarding the ability of the politicians to solve their impending problems through the official political channels.

The election year was called by them “*Sanat al-Marhaba*” (The year of Hello). Indeed when looking at the young men who were killed during the “October events” they were third-generation Palestinian citizens of Israel. They were disenchanted with the will or the desire of the ruling forces of Israel to consider their grievances and sensitivities seriously.

4) The role of the leadership. The role of the leadership is not decisive for the eruption of social protest. Indeed in many recorded cases in history, protests began without leaders and only in later stages did leadership emerge. Moreover, one should bear in mind that leaders don’t create the dissatisfaction that leads to the protest, rather their main role as leaders is to formulate prevailing feelings of inflicted injustice into concrete political demands. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr. did not establish the Civil Rights Movement, rather he gave an eloquent voice to its demands. Leaders who fail to do so are either abandoned by their constituents or betray their mission; in either case they cannot assume the position of leadership.

5) The immediate cause for the protest. Immediate causes are thought to be a poor guidance for the explanation of either the timing or the intensity in which protest takes place. Thus, detached analyses usually fail to comprehend the significance of such causes. Contrary to this common-sense view, I think that one should carefully look at both the symbolic significance of the immediate causes from the viewpoint of the disadvantaged group and its affinity to the grievances of the subordinate group. If one looks at Sharon’s visit to *Al-Aqssa* mosque through this perspective, one can comprehend this event being perceived as immense symbolic violence by the Palestinians, both the citizens of Israel and those living under its direct or indirect control.

Conclusion

Social protest usually unveils deeply rooted problems in the society and gives expression to unanswered claims of socially marginalized groups. Thus, such acts could either become a line base for corrective policies or be treated as deviant behaviors. I think that an understanding of the October events necessitates a serious soul searching regarding the most fundamental questions relating to the Israeli political system and the prevailing political culture, in which the political leaders of the Palestinian minority are treated as illegitimate partners in the ruling coalitions. Moreover, these events should call into question the prevailing conceptions of the Palestinian-citizens in the social sciences as well as in journalism. The producers of the images, concepts and dogmas, I believe, are not less responsible for the tragic consequences than those who fired at unarmed civilians. The protest of the Palestinians, to my understanding, reflects both their powerlessness and their unanswered long-standing political, moral, social and cultural claims. Their citizenship rights, such as the right of property ownership and the right to equal treatment by state’s institutions, have been severely damaged. Finally, an onslaught on their most sacred places, by politicians seeking to further their own goals, seems totally unjustified and unwarranted.

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