Collective Identity of Palestinians in Israel after Oslo

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Abstract

Based on two survey studies, conducted by the author on Palestinian students from Israel in 1988 and 2003, and on findings of other empirical studies, this paper examines the effect of Oslo Agreement, signed in September 1993 by the PLO and the Israeli Government, on collective identity of Palestinians in Israel. The paper shows that, while Palestinian identity remained after Oslo much stronger than Israeli identity, the former had been, to some extent, weakened and the latter had been, to some extent, strengthened, especially during the first few years after Oslo. This happened, primarily, as a result of the fact that Oslo Agreement had ignored totally the Palestinians in Israel, and, thus, affirmed their current political status as a part of the state of Israel.

Introduction

The Palestinians in Israel, forming about 18% of Israel's total population, not including East Jerusalem which was annexed to Israel after the June War of 1967, form a unique national minority. The main characteristics of this minority are the following:

1). This is an indigenous national minority that remained in its homeland, Palestine, after the establishment of the state of Israel on its people's ruins in 1948. The new state offered Palestinian Arab minority Israeli citizenship, on the one hand, and applied against it a policy of racial discrimination in almost all fields, including the educational and the legal systems, on the other (Haider, 1997: 39-114; Sultany, 2003: 19-54).[1] In contrary to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, finally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007, Israeli Political system (Knesset, government and major parties) denied the right of Palestinians in Israel to self-determination (article 3),[2] the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs (article 4), the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions (article 14), and the right to develop and control their lands, territories and resources (article 26. Israeli government denied these collective rights of the Palestinian Arab minority, and developed against it an extensive system of control, based on segmentation (isolation of Arabs from Jews and internal fragmentation of Arabs by religion, region and clan), dependence (reliance of Arabs on the Jewish majority for important economic and political resources, especially for work and various permits) and cooptation (through the use of "side payments" to Palestinian Arab elites, or potential elites, for purposes of extracting resources and maintaining effective surveillance of the Arab minority) (Lustick, 1980).

2) This is a former majority (or a part of the former Arab majority in Palestine) that overnight, as a result of 1948 Arab Jewish War, became a minority in an ethnic, or ethnocratic, settler state,[3] in which national identity is not inclusive of all the state's citizens, but rather is limited to the members of one ethnic group, the Jewish majority (composed of settlers or sons of settlers). As such, the access to centers of power, government resources, and full political participation are also limited to the dominant ethnic group (Abu-Saad, 2005: 237). Arab political participation is actually used as a very important source of legitimating the democratic façade of the Israeli system aimed at promoting exclusive Jewish ethnic hegemony (Jamal, 2009: 495). The exclusion of Palestinian Arab minority from Israel's national identity and from equal citizenship in that state, defined as the state of the Jewish people, makes its Palestinian and Arab identities (or sub-identities) a "natural alternative" (Abu-Saad, 2005: 238) .

3) Palestinians in Israel are citizens of a state that is in conflict with their Palestinian people and with most of their Arab nation.

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[1] The most important laws which discriminate against Arab citizens are the Law of Return, Law of Citizenship and several laws dealing with land expropriation.

[2] Although the Declaration does not define the phrase " right of self-determination", it is clear that an integral part of it is the right to autonomy and self-government.

[3] In 1947, and as a result of intensive Jewish settlement in Palestine during the Mandate period, the Jews in Palestine formed about 35% of the total population, and owned about 7% of the total lands. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 ended with about 750,000 Arab refugees from more than 400 Arab villages and towns that were completely destroyed during the war.

As such, they were perceived by Israeli governments and the Jewish majority as a "hostile minority" or a "fifth column" or a "security risk" or a "demographic bomb"[4]. This prejudiced perception has been used to justify Israeli policy of exclusion and discrimination applied against Palestinian Arab minority. Racism against this minority has escalated in recent years. According to the June 2007 Democracy Index of the Israel Democracy Institute, for example, most of the Jewish public support the idea that the state should encourage Arab emigration from Israel and oppose the inclusion of Arab political parties in the government (Haaretz.com, December 16, 2007). Racism against Arabs escalated even more under the rightist government of Benjamin Netanyahu, that was formed after the parliamentary elections in 2009. Since that time, tens of draft anti-Arab racist laws were proposed in the Knesset (Israeli parliament).

If other variables were constant, these characteristics (the national indigenous character, the definition of Israel as an ethnic Jewish state and the continuing Palestinian Israeli conflict) weakens Israeli identity and make Palestinian identity central and salient among Palestinians in Israel. But in reality other variables are not constant, and many social, historical, military and even international factors may affect collective identity. As such, collective identity is not constant, and it may change over time from one period to another. The present paper studies, therefore, transformation of collective identity of Palestinian Arab minority in Israel, and tries to answer the following 2 questions:

1. How do Palestinians in Israel identify themselves? More specifically, to what extent they identify as Palestinian, as Arab and as Israeli? To what extent, also, they identify with their religious groups, clans and localities?
2. Had collective identity of Palestinians in Israel changed after Oslo Agreement, followed by formation of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip?

Importance of study

The importance of this study is derived from the fact that no previous survey studies, except that of Smooha (1998), examined empirically the effect of Oslo Agreement on identity of Palestinians in Israel. As for Smooha, he compared his data collected in 1988 and data collected in 1995, and concluded that Israelizarion overcomes Palestinization" among Palestinians in Israel after Oslo. I suspect Smooha's conclusion because of two methodological errors in his classification of identities. As we know, Smooha measured identity, primarily, by a closed question in which he asked his respondents to choose one of the following seven identities: Israeli, Arab, Israeli Arab, Palestinian in Israel, Israeli Palestinian, Palestinian and Palestinian Arab. In his analysis, Smooha classified these identities to three categories: non-Palestinian Israeli identity (including Israeli, Arab and Israeli Arab), Israeli Palestinian identity (including Israeli Palestinian and Palestinian in Israel), and non-Israeli Palestinian identity (including Palestinian and Palestinian Arab). The two errors in this classification are: (1) classification of "Arab" with non-Palestinian Israeli identity, which lacks any reason or logic. (2) classification of "Palestinian in Israel" with Israeli Palestinian identity. I think that the word "Israel" in the term "Palestinian in Israel" indicates a country of residence rather than Israeli identity. The lack of previous survey studies comparing collective identity before and after Oslo, and Smooha's methodological errors in classifying collective identity, make the present study scientifically important.

The Meaning of Identity

One of the most accepted definitions of identity is that proposed by **Miller (1963, 1983)** who defines the term as a set of observable and inferable attributes that identifies a person to him and to others. He differentiates between objective public identity (the person as seen by others), subjective public identity (the person's perception of how others see him) and self-identity (the person as he sees himself).

Stephan and Stephan (1996) differentiate between two types of main identity: (1) Personal identity, composed of those aspects of the self based on individual attributes such as personality characteristics. (2) Social identity, composed of those aspects of the self based on group membership. Stephan and Stephan (1996: 90) assert that a negative relationship exists between personal and social identity. If people emphasize themselves as unique individuals, they do not usually stress their group belonging and *vice versa*. In this paper I define collective identity as a sense of belonging to a group, or number of groups, in which membership is claimed. As such, collective identity is a subjective state, and can exist at many different levels from family unit to professional organization, political party, ethnic group, nation, state, or grouping of states as in the case of European Union and Arab nation. Although identity is a subjective state, it is generally affected by objective features, such as territory, language, history and culture.

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[4] The term "demographic bomb" or "demographic threat" is used in Israeli politics to describe the perceived threat that the high natural growth of Palestinian Arab minority pose to the maintenance of Israel's status as a Jewish state.

In most contemporary societies, collective identity is formed of several components (or sub-identities), representing several group memberships. The importance given to these components may vary from one period to another due to social and historical factors, such as state policy, social change, wars and interracial contact. Collective identity, as such, is multi-dimensional, socially constructed, and varies from time to time. Similarly, collective identity of Palestinians in Israel is formed of several components representing several group memberships. Besides being Palestinian, the Palestinians in Israel are: 1) Arab, sharing a common language, history and culture with the Arab World; 2) Israeli, as a result of being given Israeli citizenship and holding Israeli passports; 3) predominantly Moslem, with two minorities of Christians and Druze; and 4) members of narrow traditional groups, such as localities (villages and towns) and clans. The importance given to these components may vary from one period to another due to social and historical factors.

Methodology

The present paper is primarily based on two survey studies conducted by the author on Palestinian students from Israel. The first study was conducted in 1988 on a representative sample of 313 Palestinian high school students (grade 12), and the second study was conducted in 2003 on a representative sample of 167 Palestinian students in David Yellin Collage of Education at Jerusalem.

Collective identity was measured in the two surveys by the following questions:
To what extent do you feel Palestinian?
To what extent do you feel Arab?
To what extent do you feel Israeli?
To what extent do you feel Muslim or Christian?
To what extent do you feel belonging to your clan (or "hamula")?
To what extent do you feel belonging to your place of residence (town or village)?

The first question measured Palestinian national identity, the second measured Arab national identity, the third question measured Israeli identity, the forth question measured religious identity, the fifth question measured clan (or Hamula) identity, and the last question measured local identity. The answers to these questions in 1988 survey ranged in five categories (to a very little extent, to a little extent, to a moderate extent, to a great extent and to a very great extent), and in 2003 survey ranged in four categories (to a very little extent, to a little extent, to a great extent and to a very little extent). In order to know the effect of Oslo Agreement on collective identity of Palestinian Arab minority in Israel, we should examine this identity before and after Oslo Agreement.

Identity before Oslo

Collective identity of the Palestinians in Israel was not stable between 1948 and 1993. The relative importance of the components of identity had changed drastically after the June War of 1967. After the "nakba" (catastrophe) of 1948, the Palestinians who remained in the newly established State of Israel became an isolated national minority, separated physically, socially and culturally from the Arab world surrounding them and from the other sectors of the Palestinian people scattered in other countries. They lived in Israel without any national leadership, since all social (political, economic, educational and religious) elites, who had been concentrated in the cities, left the country during the 1948 war.

Israeli policy toward Palestinian Arab minority was determined by an overriding objective: to control this minority rather than to eliminate, integrate, absorb, or develop it **(Lustick, 1980: 64)**. This policy, applied primarily by a system of military regime, was made of three components: segmentation, dependence and cooptation. Segmentation refers to the isolation of the Arab minority from the Jewish population, on the one hand, and the encouragement of Arab minority's internal fragmentation on regional, clan (hamula) and religious lines, on the other. Dependence refers to the enforced reliance of Arabs on Jewish majority for jobs and other important economic, social and political resources. Cooptation refers to the use of side payments and privileges (or bribes) to traditional Arab elites (or potential elites) for purposes of surveillance and resource extraction (Ibid: 77).

The Palestinians in Israel, during the first two decades of the establishment of the state of Israel, formed a conquered, frustrated, fragmented, leaderless, isolated and oppressed minority. Under these circumstances, traditional (local, clan and religious) identities intensified, and Palestinian identity remained weak. Willing to improve their socioeconomic status through their work in the Israeli labor market, the Palestinians in Israel accepted the new political reality, and defined themselves in Israeli terms **(Mi'ari, 2008: 44-45, 1992: 42)**. In their study on identity of Palestinians in Israel before and after the June War of 1967, **Peres and Yuval-Davis (1969)** found that the order of identities (from strong to weak) before the war was: Israeli, Israeli-Arab, Arab and lastly Palestinian.

After the June War of 1967, a new period in the collective identity of the Palestinians in Israel has started as a result of two main factors: The abolition of the military regime in 1966 and the outbreak of the Arab Israeli war in 1967. The former increased social interaction and integration among Palestinians in Israel in their various regions (Galilee, Triangle and Negev), and the latter increased social interaction and solidarity between them and their brothers in the newly occupied West bank and Gaza Strip. As a result, Israeli identity has been weakened, Arab identity intensified and Palestinian identity awakened (Mi'ari, 1992). In the study mentioned above, Peres and Yuval–Davis (1969) also found that the order of identities amongst Palestinians after the war (from strong to weak) became: Arab, Israeli-Arab, Palestinian and finally, Israeli.

Palestinian identity intensified more, and Israeli identity declined more, in the 1970s and the 1980s as a result of external developments (that are not directly connected to Palestinians in Israel) as well as of internal developments. Among the external developments are the following **(Mi'ari, 2008: 46):**

1. The October War of 1973 which, unlike previous Arab-Israeli wars, did not end with an overwhelming Israeli victory, but rather with some kind of balance. This war destroyed the myth of the "unconquered Israeli army," and renewed Arabs' self confidence.
2. The wide international recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This recognition was reflected by a number of resolutions taken by the United Nations General Assembly, among which the acceptance of the PLO as an observer-member in the United Nations in 1974.
3. Egypt's withdrawal from the circle of Arab-Israeli conflict as a result of Camp David separate peace agreement with Israel in 1978. The PLO, as well as all Palestinians, opposed this agreement.
4. Several massacres against Palestinians were committed by Arab regimes and parties, the ugliest of them were "Sabra and Shatila" of 1982 in Lebanon.
5. Israel, especially since the late 1970s, intensified its aggression against Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The peak of this aggression was Israel's invasion to South Lebanon in 1982, and the repressive measures it applied against the Palestinians there.

Internal developments among the Palestinians in Israel also contributed to the intensification of Palestinian identity. Among these are **(Mi'ari, 2008: 48-49):**

1. The transformation of Palestinian peasants into wage laborers working primarily in construction in Jewish cities (today about 55%). This change, accompanied with exposure to various forms of discrimination in the labor market, weakened their identification with their traditional groups such as the clan (hamula) and intensified their identification with the Palestinian people.
2. The widening of a Palestinian educated stratum formed primarily of university graduates and students (Al-Haj, 200: 15). These educated Palestinians are sensitive to the various forms of discrimination applied by the Israeli governments against Palestinian citizens.
3. The formation in Israel of nation-wide Palestinian organizations defending Palestinian citizens' rights, such as the Committee of the Heads of Arab Local Councils (1994), the Committee for the Defense of Arab Lands (1975) and the Union of Arab students (1975). Besides, two political movements appeared in the 1970s: the Islamic Movement and the Sons of the Village. Later on, several Palestinian political parties appeared and entered the Knesset (Israeli parliament). These organizations emphasized the Palestinian national component in their collective identity.

These factors contributed to the intensification of Palestinian identity, and to the weakening of Israeli identity, among Palestinians in Israel in the 1970s and the 1980s. A survey study conducted by the author **(Meari, 1978)** on identity of Palestinian university graduates from Israel in 1976, had shown that Arab and Palestinian identities were the strongest, followed, in order, by local identity (place of residence), religious identity (Muslim or Christian), Israeli identity and lastly clan (hamula) identity. Another survey study, conducted also by the author **(Mi'ari, 1992)** in 1988, during the first *Intifada,* amongst Palestinian high school students in Israel, found that 66% of those questioned defined themselves as Palestinian or Palestinian-Arab, and only 15% defined themselves as Israeli, as Israeli Arab or as Israeli Palestinian. Furthermore, 14% defined themselves as Arab and 5% gave a different answer. In reply to the question regarding each component of identity (whether it strengthened, weakened or remained the same during the *Intifada*), most respondents (83%) estimated that their Palestinian identity strengthened and a simple majority (52%) thought their Arab identity strengthened. In contrast, most participants (71%) believed that their Israeli-Arab identity weakened during the *Intifada* (**Mi'ari, 1992: 50-52, 2008**: 54). Other studies confirmed the intensification of Palestinian identity in the 1970s and the 1980s **(Rouhana, 1984; Smooha, 1984; Tessler, 1977).** The intensification of Palestinian identity in the 1970s among Palestinians in Israel was reflected by their demonstrations in the Land Day at March 30, 1976, protesting Arab land expropriation, and in which six Palestinian citizens were killed and tens were wounded by Israeli police.

While in the 1980s, Palestinian identity was clearly reflected by the solidarity with the First Intifada (uprising), that exploded in the West bank and Gaza Strip in December 1987. This solidarity was expressed by demonstration, strikes, collection of donations in money, food and medications to their people in the West Bank and Gaza.

Findings: Identity after Oslo

Weakening of Palestinian identity

Few survey studies conducted in the early years after Oslo Agreement, signed in September 1993, indicate that Palestinian identity had weakened and Israeli identity had strengthened among Palestinians in Israel. **Smooha (1998: 43)** reported, for example, that the percentage of Arab respondents in his surveys who consider the term "Israeli" as fitting to describe their identity increased from 46% in 1988 to 63% in 1995, while the percentage of those who consider the term "Israeli Palestinian" as fitting to describe their identity decreased from 68% to 60% respectively.[5] Another survey study conducted by Ghanem in 1994 (Ghanem and Ozacky-Lazar, 2003: 275-276) had shown that about 68% of Arab respondents said that the term " Israeli" fits Arabs and Jews in Israel, and 28% said it fits Jews only. And when the respondents were asked a closed question to define their identity, the majority of them (75%) chose definitions which include the term "Israeli".[6]

It seems that the relative weakening of Palestinian identity after Oslo continued during al- Aqsa Intifada (uprising), which exploded in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in September 2000. Comparison of data collected in 1988, during the First Intifada, from a representative sample of Arab high school students (grade 12) with data collected in 2003, during al- Aqsa Intifada, from a representative sample of Arab students in David Yellin College of Education at Jerusalem, despite our reservation on it,[7] shows that Palestinian identity relatively declined, and traditional identities relatively intensified. Table 1 shows that while Palestinian identity with Arab identity were the strongest two identities in 1988 survey, Palestinian identity declined in 2003 survey, and became weaker than Arab and all traditional (religious, local and hamula) identities, but it remained much stronger than Israeli identity (74% versus 18%).

Table 1: Arab students feeling of belonging to diverse groups, 1988 and 2003 (percentages)*

Extent of feeling belonging to various groups	1988 survey on high school (grade 12) students	2003 survey on students of a college of education
Feeling belonging to clan (hamula)	63	85
Feeling belonging to place of residence	74	80
Feeling Muslim or Christian or Druze	70	83
Feeling Arab	85	92
Feeling Israeli	07	18
Feeling Palestinian	83	74

*Percentages of those who answered "feeling to a great extent" or "feeling to a very great extent".

With the decline of Palestinian identity and the strengthening of Israeli identity after Oslo, the number of Arab volunteers in the various Israeli security forces (in the army, police, civil guard and national civil service) had increased. In 2008, the number of Arabs in the Israeli army, excluding Druze Arabs who are obliged to serve in it, reached to about 4-5 thousands (Almarsadnews, 2008), and the number of volunteers in the national civil service reached to more than 11000, most of them in education and health and a small minority (5%) in security service (State of Israel, Office of prime minister, 2008).[8] Besides, the number of Arabs in the Civil Guard reached in 2007 to more than 7000 (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, 2007). On the other hand, it should be emphasized that this phenomenon is still limited, and is opposed by almost all Arab political leadership, the three Arab parties represented in the Knesset and the big majority of the Arab public in Israel.

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[5] I wonder why Smooha did not ask about (or did not report) the extent to which the word "Palestinian" fits in describing respondents' identity.

[6] The respondents defined their identity as follows: Palestinian 4.9%, Arab 11.5%, Israeli 13.1%, Palestinian Arab 8.4%, Israeli Palestinian Arab 28.1%, Palestinian Arab Israeli citizen 34%.

[7] We have some reservation on this comparison because of two reasons: (1) the research population of the two surveys is different: high school (grade 12) students in 1988 survey versus students of a college of education in 2003 survey (2) the number of categories of the questions measuring identity in the two surveys is different also: five categories in 1988 survey (feel to a very little extent, feel to a little extent, feel to a moderate extent, feel to a great extent and feel to a very great extent) versus four categories in 2003 survey (feel to a very little extent, feel to a little extent, feel to a great extent and feel to a very great extent).

[8] National civil service is planed to be an introduction to recruiting Arabs to the Israeli army and police, as Israeli internal security minister, Izak Aharonovich, has explained (Haaretz 17 December 2009).

The relative weakening of Palestinian identity after Oslo is explained primarily by Oslo Agreement, which ignored totally the Palestinians in Israel. So, when the refugees question was raised, the internal refugees, forming about a forth of the Palestinians in Israel,[9] were not mentioned at all. As a result, Palestinians in Israel felt that they have been marginalized not only in Israeli society, but also in Palestinian society. This dual marginality led some Palestinian researchers (Rouhana, 2001/ 2002; Rouhana and Ghanem, 1998) to describe the Palestinians in Israel as "not fully Israelis and not fully Palestinians". This feeling of negligence by Palestinian National Movement lightly weakened Palestinian identity, lightly strengthened Israeli identity, and encouraged the political elite of the Palestinians in Israel to focus its struggle after Oslo Agreement on issues of citizenship, equality and civil rights in Israeli society (al- Haj, 2005: 835). Also, Palestinian Authority, which was established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to Oslo Agreement, encouraged the process of integration in Israeli society among Palestinians in Israel, because it perceived Israelization as serving the peace process. As such, Palestinian Authority encouraged in the 1990s Palestinians in Israel to vote in Knesset elections for Israeli Labor Party.

Palestinian identity remained dominant

Smooha **(1998: 41-44)** concluded from his two surveys, conducted in 1988 and 1995, that "non-Palestinian Israeli" identity became the strongest identity among most of the Arabs in Israel after Oslo, and that "non-Israeli Palestinian" identity declined. As such, a trend of Israelization, that is increasing integration in Israeli identity and politics on the one hand and separation from Palestinian identity and politics on the other, took place in this period. But comparison of data of our two surveys shows that while Palestinian identity has relatively weakened, in relation to Arab and traditional identities, among Palestinians in Israel after Oslo, it remained much stronger than Israeli identity. Table 1 shows that 74% of the respondents in 2003 survey feel, to a great extent or to a very great extent, Palestinian versus 18% only who feel Israeli. This finding refutes Smooha's thesis that in this period "Israelization overcomes Palestinization".

Other survey studies support our finding that after Oslo, especially in the last decade, Arab identity remained the strongest among Palestinians in Israel, and that Palestinian identity remained much stronger than Israeli identity. A survey conducted by the Information and Research Center of the Knesset **(Berda, 2002: 1-2),** and in reply to a question "to what extent does each one of the three definition (Israeli, Arab and Palestinian) describes identity of Palestinians in Israel?", revealed that Arab identity was the most describing (average score 9.32 on a scale ranging from 1 to 10), followed by Palestinian identity (8.36) and that Israeli identity was the least describing (6.01). Another survey conducted by Avi Yaar and Efrat Peleg **(Ynet 4/11/2007)** from Tel Aviv University, before and after Israeli War on Lebanon in Summer 2006, revealed that Palestinians from Israel put their patriotism to Israel (average score 3.9 on a scale ranging from 1 to 10) much lower than their patriotism to Arab nation (8.6) and Palestinian people (6.1). The survey revealed that patriotism to Israel weakened even more after the war.

As such, Palestinian identity, despite its slight weakening, continued to be much stronger than Israeli identity after Oslo. Two main factors kept Palestinian identity dominant:

(1) Israeli repressive policy applied against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during and after al-Aqsa Intifada, which exploded there in September 2000. Among repressive measures applied: mass arrests, shootings, house demolitions, hundreds of military check points, hard limitations on movement, assassination of leaders, and use of airplanes and tanks in bombing activists and civil targets. The Palestinians in Israel expressed their solidarity with their brothers in West Bank and Gaza Strip through strikes, demonstrations, and donations in money, food and medications to the aggrieved population by Israeli measures. The most important solidarity activities was that known as "habbat (flaw of) October" in 2000, during which 13 Palestinians in Israel were killed by Israeli police.

(2) Escalation of Israeli policy of discrimination and exclusion, applied against Palestinian minority in Israel since the formation of Benjamin Netanyahu's government in 1996. This escalation is clearly reflected in the field of legislation. Since the late 1990s many anti-Arab law amendments passed by the Knesset. For example, on May 15, 2002, several amendments, aiming to delegitimize Arab minority in Israel and its political leadership, passed (Sultani, 2003: 21). Among the most important law amendments was that of article 7A in Basic Law: The Knesset. Before the amendment this article read:
"A candidates' list shall not participate in the elections to the Knesset if its objects or actions, expressed or by implication, include one of the following:

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[9] The term "internal refugees" refers to Palestinian Arabs who were forced to leave their villages as a result of 1948 War and remained inside the state of Israel.. Their number in 1950 was about 40000, and in 2000 was about 250000 (Wakeem, 2001: 93).

(1) Negation of the existence of the state of Israel as the state of the Jewish people;
(2) Negation of the democratic character of the state;
(3) Incitement to racism" **(Basic Law: The Knesset, Amendment No. 9).**

This article was amended to:
"7A. A candidates' list shall not participate in elections to the Knesset, and a person shall not be a candidate for elections to the Knesset, if the goals or actions of the list or the actions of the person, expressed or by implication, include one of the following: 1. Negation of the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state; 2. Incitement to racism; 3) Support for armed struggle by a hostile state or a terrorist organization against the state of Israel **(Basic Law: The Knesset, Article 7A).**

Similar amendments in other laws (such as laws related to Parties, Elections to the Knesset and Citizenship) passed by the Knesset. A recent anti-Arab and racist legislation was the governmental proposed Loyalty Bill, which passed by the Knesset, in the first vote, on May 27, 2009. Aiming at Arab minority, the bill requires an oath (swear) of loyalty to Israel as a Jewish state, and of loyalty to "its symbols and values", or risk loosing citizenship. Another new provocative and racist move was the decision of Israeli Transportation Minister, Yisrael Katz, in July 13, 2009 to Judaize (or Hebraize) the Arabic place names on road signs, that is to change the names of Arab villages and towns in Israel to Hebrew names (despite the fact that Arabic is considered an official language in Israel).[10]

The escalated policy of discrimination and exclusion, in addition to Israeli repressive measures applied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, deepened the feeling of alienation and marginality in Israeli society, and contributed, despite Oslo Agreement, to keep up the centrality of Palestinian identity, in comparison to Israeli identity. As **Rekhess (2002)** observed that while Palestinization after Oslo has weakened in its external dimension (identification with the PLO, Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Diaspora), it has strengthened in its internal dimension (inside Israel). As a result, a trend of localization of their national struggle has developed among Palestinians in Israel after Oslo. This trend is reflected in three fields: (1) Rejection of the Jewish character of the state of Israel, and raising alternative models, such as state of all its citizens, bi-national state and autonomy. (2) Official recognition of the Palestinians in Israel as an indigenous national minority with collective rights. (3) Opening the Nakba file, including issues such as historical memory, land confiscation, internal refugees and destroyed villages.

Strengthening of traditional identities

Table 1 also shows that traditional identities (especially clan identity) intensified after Oslo, and became little stronger than Palestinian identity. This finding is supported by the fact that since the early 1990s, political activity of the clans in the elections for Arab local councils intensified. Educated young Palestinians, many of them university graduates, started to lead clan lists. Actually, since 1993 clan (hamula) lists control most of the seats in the elections for most Arab local councils, and that most of the heads of these councils are elected as a result of clans' support **(Ghanem & Abu Sharkiea, 2003: 13-15).** It seems that the feeling of marginality, which strengthened after Oslo, among Palestinians in Israel, and the failure of Arab parties in Israel to affect government's policy toward them and toward Palestinians in general,[11] contributed to the strengthening of traditional identities, especially clan identity, in Oslo era.

Discussion

This paper focuses on collective identity of Palestinians in Israel after Oslo Agreement, signed in September 1993 by the PLO and the Israeli Government. The paper shows that, while Palestinian identity remained after Oslo much stronger than Israeli identity, the former had been, to some extent, weakened and the latter had been, to some extent, strengthened, especially during the first few years after Oslo. This happened, primarily, as a result of the fact that Oslo Agreement had ignored totally the Palestinians in Israel, and, thus, affirmed their political status as a part of the state of Israel. It is not surprising, therefore, that the new Palestinian Authority had called the Palestinians in Israel, especially in Israeli Knesset elections carried out in the 1990s, to vote for Labor Party, hoping that this party would promote the peace process. The strengthening of Israeli identity and the weakening of Palestinian identity after Oslo did not continue for a long time. Since the late 1990s, and particularly since the Second Intifada, which exploded in September 2000, Israeli governments activated their policy of discrimination and exclusion against Palestinian Arab minority.

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[10] Despite the harsh criticism of the decision, especially by Arab parties and Meretz, the Transportation Ministry is expected to publish an updated list of about 2500 Arabic names of both communities and places, which will now be written according to Hebrew transliteration.

[11] Arab parties have been excluded from all Israeli collative governments. Rabin's government in 1992 was the only one government that relied on support, but from outside, of two Arab parties.

This policy was reflected by Israeli police response to Arab citizens' demonstrations of solidarity with al-Aqsa Intifada in October 1, 2000, during which 13 Arabs were killed and many others were wounded. This policy is primarily reflected by several anti-Arab law amendments that were passed by the Knesset, emphasizing the exclusive Jewish character of Israeli state. This policy, applied against the Palestinians in Israel, in addition to Israeli policy of repression against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during and after al-Aqsa Intifada, strengthened Palestinian identity and weakened Israeli identity. The re-strengthening of Palestinian identity in the 2000s is clearly reflected by the decrease of voting percentage among Palestinians in Israel in Knesset elections in the last decade (from 75% in 1996 and 74% in 1999 to 59% in 2003, 56% in 2006 and to 52% in 2009) (Cohen, 2006: 175; Unis, 2009: 5). In addition to the changes in Palestinian and Israeli identities after Oslo, traditional, especially clan (hamula), identities have intensified in this period, and became equivalent to (if not stronger than) Palestinian identity. This was reflected by the fact that since the early 1990s, clan lists controlled the majority of the seats in most Palestinian local councils in Israel. It seems that the feeling of dual marginality (that is marginality in Israeli society as well as in Palestinian society), which intensified among Palestinians in Israel after Oslo, and the failure of Arab parties in Israel in affecting Israeli policy toward Palestinian Arab minority, and toward Palestinians in general, have contributed to the intensification of traditional, especially clan, identities in Oslo period.

It should be noted that while Palestinian identity was few decades ago, especially in the 1970s, negatively correlated with traditional identities, in the last decades this negative relationship has disappeared (Mi'ari, 1992: 53-54), as a result of the fact that Palestinian identity has diffused among all social strata (religious and non religious, traditional and non traditional) of Palestinian minority in Israel. This means that, unlike Palestinian and Israeli identities which are antagonistic, Palestinian and traditional identities today are not. As such, Palestinians in Israel today strongly identify with their Palestinian people as well as with their localities, clans and religious groups. All these collective identities are much stronger than Israeli identity.

The constitutionalization of the exclusive Jewish character of the state makes Israeli identity as an exclusive ethnic identity rather than inclusive and civic one (Jamal, 2009: 503). It makes Israeli identity synonymous to Jewish identity and to some extent to Zionist identity. As such, it is very difficult for Arab citizens today to identify with the state that defines itself as Jewish and Zionist, prioritizes Jews, citizens and non-citizens, over them and actually excludes them from equal citizenship and from real participation in the political process.[12] Arab citizens today differ from those who lived in 1948-1967. They are much more educated, politically organized, nationally identified and socially interacting with the Palestinian people and the Arab World through globalization and interpersonal contact. In order that Arab citizens truly identify today with Israeli state, this state must transform itself from an exclusive Jewish ethnic state to a state of all its citizens, in which both Jews and Arabs can accommodate their individual and collective rights.

A state of all its citizens will strengthen Israeli identity among Palestinians in Israel. In order that this will not come on account of Palestinian identity, and in order that Palestinians in Israel continue to have some kind of continuity with the rest of their Palestinian people, any permanent and just solution to the Palestinian Israeli conflict must take them into consideration, and guarantee their participation in social and political life of the Palestinian people. Since the ideal solution of one Arab-Jewish state in Palestine (democratic or bi-national) is not realistic in the visible future, and since the parties in the conflict accepted in principle the two states solution (Israel and Palestine), I suggest that granting the Palestinians in Israel a dual (Israeli and Palestinian) citizenship will help them to participate socially and politically in both Israeli society and Palestinian society. This solution (transformation of Israel to a state of all its citizens and granting its Arab minority a dual citizenship) will weaken the feeling of dual marginality among Palestinians in Israel, and make their Palestinian and Israeli identities reconcilable and not antagonistic.

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[12] It is true that Arabs in Israel has the right to vote in Knesset elections, and that the big majority of them vote in the last decades for Arab parties. But, as Jamal (2009: 497) has explained , Arab parties and Arab Knesset members are more of an ornament demonstrating the democratic façade of the Israeli regime than a means to give Arab citizens real power in the political process.

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