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Consociational Democracy in Israel

Nirmolika Sangha[*]

Researcher of Political Science Alumnus, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, India.

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Abstract: Formed as a result of the Zionist movement, which emerged from anti-Semitism across Europe, Israel was envisioned as a state for Jews. However, the founders of Israel also saw it as a state where non-Jews would be equal citizens. Contrary to this vision, the Israeli state today has evolved into one that has marginalised and discriminated against its Palestinian Arab citizens. The emphasis of the state in maintaining its Jewish character has deepened divisions between the two communities and has alienated the Arab community in Israel. Arabs make up 21 per cent of Israel's population as of 2019 but have been excluded from the core of its territory and identity and have been accorded the status of second-class citizens. Discrimination against Arabs is also manifested in laws and regulations designed to only promote Jewish interests. Laws about issues like land ownership, education and distribution of resources all privilege Jews. When it comes to political participation, while Arab political presence has grown at the national level in the Knesset, no Arab party has ever been included in a governing coalition to date, leaving them out of positions of actual influence and the decision-making at the national level. In this context of exclusion, a consociational model of governance could enable the Arab community, at the periphery of Israeli society and politics, to have a larger say in the structures and processes of the state. On paper, this model allows Arabs more representation in a deeply divided society through governing coalitions, proportional representation, segmental autonomy and minority veto. Practical application of this model requires addressing the Jewish hegemony which is very deeply entrenched in the identity of the state and its Jewish citizens. This first calls for the state to foster better trust and a better relationship with its Arab minority.

Keywords: Israel, Israeli Arab, Consociationalism, Ethnic conflict, Democracy.

1 Introduction

"In our state there will be non-Jews as well – and all of them will be equal citizens; equal in everything without exception; that is: the state will be their state as well"
- David Ben Gurion, December 1947[1]
"The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people… By virtue of our natural and historic right…we hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel"
- Israel's Declaration of Independence, May 1948[2]
The above-mentioned quotes give an indication of what kind of state Israel was envisioned to be at the time of its independence in 1948. Formed as a result of the push by the Zionist movement, which emerged from the trauma of anti-Semitism and the pogroms faced by Jews in Europe, Israel was envisioned as a state for the Jews. This Jewish nature of the state was enshrined in its Declaration of Independence and has become a guiding principle for how the State of Israel conducts its domestic and external affairs. In spite of the Jewish nature of the state, the founders of Israel envisioned it as a state where non-Jews would be equal citizens and would have the right to call the state their own. In sharp contrast to this

[1] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. Israel's Palestinians. New York: Cambridge Univesity Press, 2011

[2] Yiftachel, O., *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,2006.

[*] Corresponding author E-mail: nirmolika30@gmail.com

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vision, the Israeli state in contemporary times has evolved into one that has categorically marginalised, segregated and discriminated against the ethnic minority – the Palestinian Arab Citizens of Israel[1]. Created on contested land amidst controversy and war, the Israeli state has been a deeply divided society ever since its formation in 1948. Israel's dual character of being a Jewish and a democratic state and its adamant emphasis on maintaining this Jewish character has deepened divisions between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority. This deepening division carries with it the threat of increasing frustration and alienation of the Arab community, which carries with it the possibility of radicalisation and the increase in Palestinian nationalism.

In this context, this paper aims to analyse the structure of governance in Israel and look at which other form of institutional governance can be adopted in Israel. The paper will try to analyse whether a consociational form of democracy could lead to more socio-political inclusion of its Arab citizens and help in reducing this Jewish-Arab divide. The paper will look at the Arab minority at the receiving end of Israel's politics of exclusion and its relations with the Israeli Jewish community. The paper will then look at Israel's system of governance since independence and how Arab political participation fits into this system as a dissenting segment against the authoritarian nature of the state.

2 Rationales

Israel is a society deeply divided along religious, linguistic, cultural and ethnic lines. Much of this division in popular discourse is analysed with respect to the external Israel-Palestine conflict and most discussion about the rights of Palestinian people is focused on the Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza. The discourse on Palestinian identity largely disregards the Arab citizens of Israel, who have been denied an equal status as the Jewish community in Israel. Israel's external conflict with Palestine is also intricately linked with the status of its own Arab citizens and any future peace process would have to take this into account. The increasing disaffection of the Arabs has also created a security dilemma for the state, which has caused it to become even more ruthless in its denial of equality to the minority, which is again deepening divisions. This, added with Israel's conflicting claims of being a Jewish state while also being a democracy, make it a fascinating case to study if consociationalism can ameliorate this divide.

3 Israel's Palestinians

The creation of the state of Israel in British Mandated Palestine in 1948 caused 7,00,000- 7,50,000 Palestinians to flee the new state. Many of them did not flee voluntarily but were forced out by the Jewish forces. These Palestinians fled to the other side of the armistice line to the areas of West Bank and Gaza, while many became refugees in the neighbouring states. This left almost 1,50,000 Palestinians within Israel's borders and they were granted citizenship by the state, becoming a minority in a land they were previously a majority in. While Jews form a large majority, Arabs today are a significant and growing minority.

As of September 2019, Arabs make up 21 per cent of Israel's total population, while Jews make up 74.2 per cent of the population[2]. This Arab community is a heterogenous group, made up of different religious and ethnic groups – mainly Muslims, Christians, Druze and Bedouins. Muslims are the largest group amongst them, Bedouins are nomadic shepherds and a sub-group within the Muslim population, Christian Arabs are further divided into different sects and have had tense relations with the Muslims, and Druze are the smallest and most distinct group within the Arabs, many of whom don't consider themselves as Arabs at all[3].

The formation of the state of Israel as a Jewish nation state was achieved by the exclusion of the Arabs from the core of its territory and identity, according them the status of second class citizens[4]. Following the creation of the state, the majority of the Arabs in Israel were placed under military rule from 1948 to 1966. During this time, the Arabs lived under an authoritarian set up which restricted their political freedom and their social life, and monitored their behaviour and speech, ensuring their obedience to the state[5]. With the lifting of military rule, the Arab community has experienced significant socio-political development, improving their living standards, levels of education, employment, health, housing and income. However, these developments have not advanced equality amongst Jews and Arabs, and more importantly, have not matched

[1] The state refers to them as Israeli Arabs, but based on surveys, the most accurate collective identity for Arabs in Israel today is Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel by Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. They will be referred to simply as Arabs in the rest of the paper.

[2] Jewish Virtual Library, 2019. *Jewish Virtual Library.* Available at: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/latest-population-statistics-for-israel [Accessed 24 November 2019].

[3] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. Op cit, 2011

[4] Ram, U., Israeli Nationalism: Social Conflicts and the Politics of Knowledge. Oxon: Routledge, 2011.

[5] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. Opcit, 2011

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the rising expectations of the Arabs[1].

According to Yiftachel, Israel never sought to achieve equal citizenship between Jews and Arabs. This is evident in the fact that membership in the Jewish community is the criterion for the claim of state ownership and not citizenship, which contradicts the conditions of equal citizenship[2]. This view is echoed by Amal Jamal, who says that defining ethno-religious affiliation as a principle of citizenship negatively affects all citizens, but specially the Arab minority, institutionalising their second class status[3].

According to Arab scholar Nadim Rouhana, discrimination against Arab citizens is built into the fabric of the state and is manifested in a number of laws and regulations designed to promote only the interests of the Jews[4]. This discrimination is grounded in some of the most important Basic Laws of Israel, one of them being the 'Basic Law: Knesset (Section 7A). This law sets a condition for the right to run for parliamentary elections, limiting it to those who accept Israel's status as a state of the Jewish people. This law was amended in 2002, which prohibited the candidacy of any party or individual who 'supports (in action or speech) the armed struggle of enemy states or terror organisations'[5]. A law like this effectively stifles any critical opinion by non-Zionists, especially the Arabs. It also takes away the Arab community's sense of identification with the state, when the pre-requisite for political participation is acceptance of an identity that they do not associate with and a system that treats them as unequal.

In addition to the Basic Laws, there are several laws which deal with important issues like land ownership, education and distribution of resources, that privilege Jews. A major issue here, which is also at the heart of the larger Israel-Palestine conflict, is the appropriation of Arab land by the state and its settlement with Jews. Laws and policies have been designed to facilitate the transfer of ownership and control of lands from Arabs to the state. In addition, Arabs are often prevented from purchasing or leasing land in non-urban Jewish settlements[6]. These policies have denied the Arabs a basic right of access to residential areas and property and have also segregated Jewish and Arab spaces throughout the state. The state has provided unequal funding to Arab and Jewish municipalities, with Arab towns within Israel receiving even less development funds than Jewish settlements in West Bank[7]. The Arab school system, which is separated from the Jewish school system, suffers from a lack of resources, as compared to the latter, resulting in poor facilities and lack of proper educational services[8].

The discrimination against Arabs also extends to the sphere of identity, where the state's public culture has made it difficult for its Arab citizens to associate with it. The state's main symbols like the flag, national anthem; the observance of Jewish holidays all stress the Jewishness of the state, not leaving much room for an Arab identity[9].

4 Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs

Jewish attitudes towards Arabs in Israel have been characterised by ambivalence. Most Jews support equality between Jews and Arabs in theory and Jewish-Arab coexistence, but they also want to maintain Jewish supremacy in the country. Most Jews also do not want Arabs to have a say in decision making at the national level, especially over matters of the character of the state and its borders. In addition to this, while many Jews want Arabs to become integrated in certain spheres of the state, they do not want Arabs to live in Jewish neighbourhoods or attend Jewish schools[10].

Most Jews also carry negative stereotypes of Arabs, much of which originates from the first Zionist settlers who arrived in Palestine at the end of the 19th century, in their feeling of cultural superiority over non-European people. This has transcended generations of Israeli Jews. An addition to these pre-existing negative perceptions of Arabs was the Israel-Palestine conflict, which created the perception of Arabs as competitors for the control of land. Israeli attitudes towards Arabs can be best described as a tolerance – Jews tolerate the Arabs as long as they keep to themselves and live in their own

[1] Yiftachel, Op cit, 2006
[2] Ibid
[3] Spektorowski, A.,. Nationalism, land and religion in Israel. In: F. Requejo & K. Nagel, eds. *Politics of Religion and Nationalism*. Oxon: Routledge, 2015. pp. 66-77.
[4] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. Opcit, 2011
[5] Yiftachel, Op cit, 2006
[6] Ibid
[7] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. Opcit, 2011
[8] Ibid
[9] The collective identity of Arabs in Israel has changed over time, responding to internal and external developments. There has gradually been a shift from an Israeli Arab identity to a Palestinian Arab identity, especially after the war of 1967. With the growing of Palestinian nationalism, Arabs have rejected the Israeli Arab identity that the state tried to cultivate and have adopted a Palestinian national identity. This is especially visible among the younger Arab generation, who have become more Palestinian in their self-identity. This generation has also adopted Israeli culture, without assimilating into it.
[10] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D. Op cit, 2011

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communities[1]. Another result of the Israel-Palestine conflict has been a suspicion of the Arab community by both the state and Jewish citizens. They increasingly view the Arabs as a threat that would probably join Israel's enemies in the event of a war, or will support terrorism against the state[2].

This security fear has become more pronounced as Palestinian nationalism has increased amongst the younger Arab generation, due to structural discrimination and alienation by the state. With Arabs becoming more assertive in their demand for equality, and in their support for the Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza, Jewish fears over a radicalised minority have increased[3]. The radicalisation fear and the events of October 2000 triggered a backlash against the Arab community. A stern discourse emerged amongst the Jews who felt that Israel had dealt too softly with its Arab minority, and they began supporting policies like population transfer, more land confiscation and more Jewish settlement to curb the Arab threat[4]. This led to gradual decline in relations between the two communities, and also translated to decline in support by Jewish population for equal political rights for Arabs.

More recent surveys on Arab-Jewish relations have shown conflicting results. Research by sociologist Prof Sammy Smooha on 2017 showed that Jewish-Arab relations are getting worse, with each group becoming less tolerant of the other. The survey also found a drop in the legitimacy of the state among Arabs and a drop in the legitimacy of the Arabs among the Jewish population[5]. Another survey by Hebrew news site Local Call in 2019 showed that amongst the sample of Jews and Arabs surveyed, most Jews said that in their day to day lives, relations among Arabs and Jews are mostly positive. The same sentiment was echoed by almost three quarters of the Arabs surveyed[6].

These conflicting results reinforce the ambivalence in Jewish-Arab relations in Israel, and while the two communities may report positive interactions amongst each other, the fact remains that the Arab community still remains an alienated 'other'.

5 Israel's Political System

In accordance with the UN resolution for the creation of the state of Israel, its Declaration of Independence included a decision to draw up a formal constitution, to be done by a Constituent Assembly, which was to be elected in 1949. However, the after its election, the Assembly passed a decision transforming it into a parliament with ordinary legislative powers, called the Knesset. The Knesset did not adopt a formal written constitution but enacted a set of Basic Laws embodying essential components of a constitution, such as the law of citizenship, the law determining the democratic election system of the state[7]. The President is the head of the state, while the government is headed by the Prime Minister.

The Knesset comprises 120 seats, the election for which is direct, where the entire country is treated as a single multi-member constituency. Parties nominate a list of 120 candidates, and these nominations are controlled by the party elites. Elections for the Knesset are based on votes for the party as a whole and not on individual candidates, and each party receives seats proportional to its percentage of the total number of votes cast [8]. Following the elections, the party with the majority vote is invited by the President to form the government. Interestingly, no single party has ever won the majority vote in elections since Israel's formation, which has created a system of coalition governments. This system of coalitions has been criticised, as it enables smaller parties at the periphery of Israeli politics to wield disproportionate influence as part of a coalition[9]. As a result of this system of coalitions, the invitation to form the government is not extended to the party

[1] Ibid

[2] This fear stems from the Jewish self-perception of a minority that is regularly pitted against the hostility of the Arab world, and the larger Islamic world.

[3] One major event of Arab dissent was what came to be known as the October Events of 2000. In October 2000, thousands of Arabs came out to the main roads across the country to protest against Israel's policies in Jerusalem and throughout the country. The protests turned violent and the state cracked down lethally on the protests, with 11 Arab demonstrators being killed by the police. The protests were seen by many Jews as Arab expressions of solidarity with the Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza. They were also shocked by the rioting and violence during the protests.

[4] Yiftachel, Op cit, 2006

[5] Lynfield, B., *The Jerusalem Post*. 2018. Available at: https://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Survey-Israeli-Arab-Jewish-relations-rapidly-deteriorating-544594 [Accessed 30 November 2019]

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controlling the most seats in the Knesset, but to the party believed to be the most capable of forming the government[1]. The coalition system also suffers from a lack of stability due to lack of unity in fragile coalitions, which makes it impossible to devise consistent policies. Governments are also being prone to being brought down if smaller coalition partners believe that their interests are not being sufficiently met[2].

In addition to Israel's system of governments, questions have been raised over the nature of its democracy and many scholars are of the view that Israel does not fit into a strict model of democracy. In Israel, control implies the creation and preservation of strict hierarchies based on a majority, where there is a confluence between democracy and ethnically coloured citizenship[3]. This system gave rise to the definition of Israel as an ethnic democracy, a model which was first proposed by Sammy Smooha. According to Smooha, "an ethnic democracy is a system which combines the extension of civil and political rights to individuals and some collective rights to minorities, with the institutionalisation of majority control over the state"[4]. Oren Yiftachel, while taking Smooha's definition into account, argues that Israel has evolved into an ethnocratic regime. He defines an ethnocracy "as a type of regime that facilitates the expansion, ethnicization and control of a dominant ethnic nation over contested territory and polity"[5]. Much of what has been discussed about Israel's Arab citizens in this paper falls into Yiftachel's definition of Israel as an ethnocracy. Others have argued about the Israeli state's lack of stability. The stability here is one that is grounded in the voluntary consent of individuals to abide by the basic political principles that determine the functioning of a state. In this context, the Israeli political system is not stable due to its structure that does not promote a public culture shared by all its citizens[6].

6 Arab Political Participation in the Jewish State

The participation of Arabs in the political system of Israel has evolved considerably since 1948 and can be characterised into three distinct phases – 1950s and 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and 1990s and 2000s – which will be discussed below.

With the Arab community under military rule, Arab political participation in the first phase was characterised by repression and was limited. In spite of this, Arab nationalist groups and individuals remained active and tried to strengthen the Arab national identity amongst the minority population. Al-Ard, a nationalist movement established during this time, became the first Arab nationalist movement in the state to call publicly for equal rights of Arabs in Israel and to end discrimination against them. In 1965, it also organised as the Arab Socialist List to run for Knesset elections, but was disqualified by the Supreme Court[7]. Another important vehicle for Arab activism during the first phase was the Arab-Jewish Communist Party, which was able to stay within the structure of acceptable discourse while still expressing Arab nationalism and anti-Zionist sentiments[8].

The second phase was marked by an Arab Awakening, with the Arab population becoming more politicised. National institutions to represent the Arabs were established beginning from the 1970s, followed by the establishment of Arab political parties in the 1980s and 1990s. Hadash (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), an Arab-Jewish party, was established in 1977, which called for Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, Israel's recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), and full and equal rights for all citizens. Hadash garnered strong appeal amongst Arab voters, winning about 50 per cent of the Arab vote in 1977 and 1981, indicating a major change in Arab electoral support from the Jewish Labour Party. In 1984 another Arab-Jewish party – Progressive List for Peace was established and in 1988, Israel's first all-Arab party – the Arab Democratic Party was established[9].

Arab social and political movements also emerged during this phase, notably the secular nationalist movement Abna Al-Balad, which called for the establishment of a secular Palestinian state in the whole territory of historic Palestine[10]. Alongside this secular movement, this phase also saw the rise of the Islamic Movement, a socio-religious movement aimed to encourage the Arabs to return to Islam. The rise of the Islamic movement became a worrying factor for the state and the Jewish community, due to its ideological roots in Hassan al-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamic Movement adopted the

[1] Ibid
[2] Bain, A., 2011. *Middle East Institute*. Available at: https://www.mei.edu/publications/israels-flawed-electoral-system-obstacle-peace-and-democracy [Accessed 1 December 2019].

[3] Spektorowski, A., Op cit.
[4] Yiftachel, Opcit, 2006
[5] Ibid
[6] Yonah, Op cit.
[7] It was disqualified on the grounds that it did not accept the Jewish nature of Israel and identified with enemy Arab states.
[8] Peleg, I. & Waxman, D., Op cit.
[9] Ibid
[10] Ibid

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Muslim Brotherhood's goal to build an Islamic society based on Sharia[1]. A segment of the movement took a radical turn in the 1970s, influenced by the Iranian revolution and the rise of Islamism in the region, who formed a clandestine terrorist organisation which aimed at turning Israel into a Muslim state by toppling the Jewish political order. The movement undertook volunteer community improvement projects and by increasing local conditions, it became popular throughout the 1980s. By entering local politics, it began chipping away at the hegemony of the Communist Party in Arab politics. The movement fragmented into two groups in 1996, primarily over participation in the national elections, giving birth to the hard-line Northern Branch and the Southern Branch, which was ready to work within the state framework[2].

The third phase saw a shift in the focus of the Arab political movement from ending Israel's occupation of the territories to improving the conditions of Arabs within Israel. This shift was a result of the exclusion of the Arabs in Israel from the Oslo Accords – the peace process which acknowledged the existence of the Palestinian people and the PLO as their legitimate representative[3]. This transformation of the Arab political agenda in the 1990s rejected the subordination of the Arab community and called for complete equality of the two national groups, in addition to the dismantling of the Jewish State. The focus also shifted from protesting against unequal resource allocations to protesting against the nature of the very state. Arab political leaders began to challenge Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state, wanting it to become a "state for all its citizens", a term coined by Arab politician Azmi Bishara, who established the Arab nationalist party Balad.

Arab intellectuals and political activists of this new generation also began to call for the recognition of the Arab minority as a distinct, separate nation in Israel, and granting of collective rights to this minority. Towards the second half of the 1990s, Arab politicians also began to demand cultural autonomy, giving them control over their cultural and educational affairs[4].

The demands of the Arab political community have changed significantly over the last few decades, where they have become bolder and far-reaching. In spite of these developments and in spite of political representation at the national level in the Knesset (albeit small), no Arab party has ever been included in a governing coalition to date. This has effectively left them out of positions of actual influence and the decision-making mechanism at the national level. The state's recent general elections in September 2019 provided a glimmer of hope, with four Arab parties running together as the Joint List winning 13 Knesset seats. The Joint List also recommended that incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's chief rival Benny Gantz get the nod to form the governing coalition. Being the third largest bloc in the Knesset after Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party and Gantz's centrist Blue and White party would have put the Joint List in the opposition and making its leader the first Arab opposition leader had Netanyahu and Gantz come together to form a unity government[5]. With the current government in limbo due to the inability of any leader to form the governing coalition, the future of the Joint List also seems uncertain and one has to wait and watch how the crisis develops.

7 Consociationalism – Better socio-political inclusion of Arabs?

The paper has examined the socio-political status of the Arabs in Israel, detailing their exclusion from the identity of the state and its politics. In light of this exclusion, a consociational model of governance could enable the Arab community, at the periphery of Israeli society and politics, to have a larger say in the structures and processes of the state, that affect and shape their lives as much as they affect the Israeli Jews.

Consociationalism is a model of power sharing proposed by Arend Lijphart best suited to societies deeply divided along ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides. This type of set up, also known as a consensus democracy implies the both the existence of segmental cleavages and elite cooperation. This system of power sharing is includes a number of characteristics, of which four are important – a power sharing executive or the existence of governing coalitions; proportional representation of all groups in the executive, parliament and judiciary based on the size of the groups; segmental autonomy for groups; and a minority veto[6].

Looking at Israel's system of governance, it only satisfies one characteristic of consociationalism – the existence of

[1] Rubin, L., *Islamic Political Activism in Israel,* s.l.: The Saban Centre for Middle East Policy at Brookings, 2014.

[2] Ibid

[3] While the PLO claimed to champion the cause of the entire Palestinian nation, it largely ignored the Arabs in Israel. The Arabs in Israel who believed that the peace process would bring about an improvement in their status were left wondering about their status if a Palestinian state was created in the future.

[4] Control over their own education system was important to Arabs as they believed that the state was trying to control the system to undermine the Palestinian identity of Arab students and instil an Israeli identity amongst them.

[5] Hendrix, S. & Eglash, R.,. *The Washington Post,*2019. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/are-arab-israelis-having-their-political-moment/2019/09/24/8d88bdb4-de3a-11e9-be7f-4cc85017c36f_story.html [Accessed 28 November 2019].

[6] Schneckener, U.,. Making Power Sharing Work: Lessons from Successes and Failures in Ethnic Conflict Regulation. *Journal of Peace Reasearch,* 39(2), 2002, pp. 203-228.

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governing coalitions. This too, partially fits into Lijphart's model, as the governing coalitions in Israel have only included the majority group, effectively defeating the idea of power sharing. Inclusion of Arab parties in a governing coalition would extend an equal platform of power to the Arab minority, giving them a seat at the state's leadership. This will foster better political participation from Arabs, who for a very long time have stood outside the government structure due to Israel's policies but are looking for a way to engage with the system in order to demand equality. The prospect of seeing Arabs in the government would also spur participation amongst Arab voters, who have often boycotted elections as they don't identify with the agendas of the Jewish political structure. Inclusion in the governing system of the country would create a sense of ownership of the state amongst the Arabs, a sentiment that is lacking in the current set-up.

While proportional representation in the Knesset is based on the number of votes a party receives, having a kind of quota system of representation based on the size of the Arab minority would ensure sufficient representation of the community and enable them to have a seat in the system at all times. By staying out of the system of governance, these Arab parties are not in a position to affect any change to their status and having a say in the decision-making process is a major step in this direction.

The demands for autonomy have already been expressed by the Arab political community in the sphere of culture. While Arabs in Israel are territorially too fragmented and dispersed to be given territorial autonomy, cultural autonomy is a vital component for the preservation of their identity. The state's constant efforts at 'Israelisation' of the Arabs undermines their Palestinian national identity, and with the recent rise in Palestinian nationalism, it is only makes sense to extend this autonomy to the group. While they have increasingly adopted their Palestinian identities, Arabs in Israel are still unwilling to shift to a future Palestinian state, if one is created, preferring to still remain Israeli citizens. Suppression of this Palestinian identity and its marginalisation would only serve to alienate the group more, entrenching the Palestinian identity further, which could be manifested through increased radicalisation.

The system of minority veto would give significant power to the minority to have a serious say in decisions that may affect it. The Arab community in Israel has effectively been kept out of the decision-making structure and policies have been implemented with no consideration of the effect on the community. As seen above, many laws and policies have only served to discriminate against and marginalise the Arab community further. The minority veto provision would bring the disaffected Arab community to a more equal footing with the Jewish community.

8 Conclusions

As this paper has discussed, the structure and identity of the Israeli state is fraught with contradictions over its very nature, claiming to be Jewish but also democratic, democratic but also authoritative with respect to its Arab minority. With divisions running deep through the Israeli society, a consociational model of power sharing seems appropriate to address the tyranny of the Jewish majority, as expressed by Yiftachel, and to include Arabs into the larger structure of the state and society. While this model in Israel looks good in theory, its practical implementation does not seem feasible in the Israeli context. Jewish hegemony is so deeply entrenched in the state system and also in the mindset of the Jewish majority, that any kind of compromise to this hegemony seems difficult to achieve. With the Jewish identity ingrained in the very reason for the existence of the state, a shift in this identity would prove difficult to achieve in practice. In addition to this question of identity, deep mistrust of the Arab community by the state and the Jewish population would make systems like minority veto and proportional representation hard to achieve.

The problem that Israel would need to then address first would be to foster trust and better its relationship with its Arab minority through reconciliation and civil society approaches, as was done in Northern Ireland. This could prove to be a crucial first step in accepting their right to equal treatment and an equal share of power.

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