

# Ethnocracy and its Impact on Israeli Society and Security

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**Abstract:** Israel, from its very beginning, has been a widely hostile nation to the idea of Arabs as citizens, and pan-Arabisation as a socio-political principle. This perception of a state as its official decree has not gone through a change throughout the annals of time, even if it houses almost 21% Arabs, the majority of who are Palestinian Muslim citizens, parted from their homeland during the bifurcation in 1948. The Arab population<sup>2</sup> has been able to get basic citizenship rights from early on, but their political, economic and social position in the state still hangs on a thin rope. In fact, the rope has thinned even more after 1984, when the creation of a fundamentalist outfit – Hamas and the advent of Political Islam at Israel’s doorstep has created a sense of deep mistrust and discrimination, where Israel now looks at a part of its population as the perceived enemy and a threat to Jewish security in a Jewish homeland. The perception of threat, which is based on the imagination that the Israeli Arabs might swing towards fundamentalism, has made the right-wing Jewish parties peddle propaganda in the general mass.

**Keywords:** Ethnocracy, Ethnic democracy, Political Islam, Arabs, Jewish state, Democracy, Jews.

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## 1 introduction

Right from 1948, there has been no doubt in the international political arena that Israel as a state exists to safeguard the rights and lives of Jews around the world. In fact, looking at the various pogroms that Jews have been facing historically in European and Arab countries, it seems only fit to establish a state for Jews, of Jews and by Jews, founded on the guiding principles of Zion.

However, peering deeply in the contemporary world, Israel has now turned into a country Jews themselves would have been careful of during the period of their persecution. In order to establish itself as a Jewish state for its own security, it has carved a way of demarcating, marginalising, and discriminating against its ethnic minority in its political, social and economic structures. This dual character of Israel, to be a democratic and a de facto Jewish state, has not only made its geopolitics confusing and hard to grasp but has created a whole new different security dilemma with its Israeli Arab minorities. In turn, this has also led to a hard-lined dissent from the Israeli Arab community, where they accuse Israel of being ethnocratic, hence authoritarian. Factors such as these also threaten the core ideals of Zion, supposedly leading to the advent of Political Islam as an alternative political ideology for Israeli Arabs, as well as the rise of Palestinian nationalism.

Therefore, this paper, in an honest attempt to look at both the narratives in a so-called ethnocratic yet democratic regime, will look at factors where ethnocracy might lead to the advent of Political Islam, impacting Israel’s security and society. The paper will first look into the deeper meaning of ethnocracy and will try to exemplify it through the case study of Israel for

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better and transparent scholarly understanding. It will also analyse in the later sections as to how such ethnocratic sentiments, backed by Right-Wing Jewish political factions, affect or rather downplay the Israeli Arab identity. It will also be of great necessity that this paper addresses the rise of the Islamic movement in Israel and the much-needed respite it has given to the Israeli Arab identity, as well as the prospects that Israeli Arabs demand from the state of Israel.

## 2 Explaining Ethnocracy

Why are ethnic minorities, muddled up in a majority-minority geopolitical space, usually radicalised and possess lower trust in the majority government? How does historical ethnic division underline the power dynamics and relationship in a so-called democratic political system? It is no surprise that certain events in the modern world – the Christian vs Islam divide in Sudan, resistance in the Balkans, racial profiling in Hungary and India, do remind us that ethnicity and race still is and will be the major focal point of social, economic and political inequality. In fact, these challenges are often accompanied by a crisis of trust, seen through a significant difference in the generalisation<sup>1</sup> of majority and minority populations, mostly in deeply divided societies<sup>2</sup>.

While it is very difficult to establish democracy in such deeply divided societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, once established, it either becomes majoritarian or consociational in nature<sup>3</sup>. In both cases, the state is expected to be neutral to its diverse ethnic characters<sup>4</sup>. In majoritarian democracies, states navigate through ethnic cleavages by forging a sense of deep nation-building. They not only allow for acculturation and assimilation but emphasise on individual merit, civil rights and personal exercise of political options<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, consociational democracies take ethnic cleavages to be the principal factor for organising the political base of the state. Even if they allow moderate judgment of individuals on the basis of merit, they also recognise the existence of ethnic groups and officially grant them certain rights such as education and public offices. In consociational democracies, both the state institutions and ethnic institutions are kept separate but allow individuals to intermingle through specified laws and regulations. These laws, in turn, are run by elites<sup>6</sup> through accommodating and compromising between different ethnic groups<sup>7</sup>.

But beyond the ethnically neutral political setting, there are types of democracies where the state and its elite side with one ethnic group in a plural society. It is different from *Herrenvolk* democracy<sup>8</sup> in the sense that there is no ethnic master race and democracy is not forcibly denied to minorities. In fact, even if it is contradictory to the democratic political setting, there is no coercion at all, but a sense of moral accommodation or resentment in the political environment. This type of democracy in a plural society, where the dominance is institutionalised over the state by one ethnic group with certain collective rights to minorities, is called as an ethnocracy or multi-ethnic democracy<sup>9</sup>. But, even after certain political rights to minorities, the process of ethnicization by a dominant group in an ethnocracy takes place through the expansion of territorial resources<sup>10</sup> on the behest of its minorities or neighbouring states.

Ethnocracy, as mentioned earlier, is often drawn with sharp contradictions to democracy. As mentioned by Oren Yiftachel, “it promotes the expansion of the dominant group on contested territory and its domination of power structures while

<sup>1</sup> This generalisation is facilitated through migration, national origin, lack of assimilation of culture, demarcation of identities etc.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkes, R., & Wu, C., *Ethnicity, Democracy, Trust: A Majority-Minority*. Vancouver: Social Forces, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Peled, Y. Ethnic Democracy and the Legal Construction of Citizenship: Arab Citizens of the Jewish State. *The American Political Science Review*, 1992. 86(2), 432-443.

<sup>4</sup> The neutrality can be maintained by separating democratic institutions from dominant ethnic institutions.

<sup>5</sup> This is mostly seen in US, UK, France and other first world countries.

<sup>6</sup> Most the Government or the Judiciary

<sup>7</sup> Dowty, A. (2007). Consociationalism and ethnic democracy: Israeli. *Israel Affairs*, 2(5), 169-182.

<sup>8</sup> Type of democracy found in Apartheid South Africa till 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Smooha, S. Minority status in an ethnic democracy: the status of the Arab minority in Israel. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1990, 13(3), 1-25.

<sup>10</sup> Mostly land.

maintaining a democratic facade”<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, it encourages the terminology of “ours v/s theirs” to facilitate separation and proper demarcation of the territorial border between majority and minority in the same state. This eventually leads to alienation and dissatisfaction, allowing the minority to look for alternatives in neighbouring states or in a different socio-political arrangement, which in turn can lead to political instability. In fact, ethnocracy is not only limited to democracy and emerges in a variety of forms. There have been strong cases of ethnic dictatorships implementing strategies of ethnic cleansing and genocide as occurred in Rwanda, and Serbia, and control and exclusion as occurred in Sudan, and pre-1994 South Africa<sup>2</sup>.

Ethnocracy, in a 21st-century contemporary era of nation-state, claims to be embodied in the political system of countries that are national, sovereign and democratic in their constituents<sup>3</sup>. This understanding can be further read and assessed in terms of countries such as Israel, India, Hungary, among many others. These countries, albeit having a nominally elected democratic regime, are systematically or traditionally discriminating, where they actively favour the dominant ethnos through policies or awarding territories for expansion. It is from the above-mentioned details we can assume that ethnocracy, in layman terms, lies somewhere between full autocracy and its desire to be a subset of democracy. But why, in contemporary nation-states following ethnocracy, is there formal stress to accept democracy and follow the guidelines based on it? The basic understanding of it lies in the onset of a liberal globalised world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ethnocracies looking for claims of recognition do not look at the democratic system as camouflage, but actively want it for their worldwide legitimacy, where it is fine for the dominant ethnos to flesh out some democratic rights to its minority.

The democratic system in an ethnocratic regime cancels out its authoritarian understanding where the regime, for the sake of sustenance, accepts the structures of parliaments, elections, an independent judiciary, and free media<sup>4</sup>. This collated system confuses the democratic nation-state ideal of people’s self-determination in their own territory with that of ethnic self-determination in a shared territory, where a hierarchy of ethnic groups is used to ethnicize society in favour of dominant groups, using a variety of social, political, religious, historical, and legal frameworks<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, even after ethnocratic regimes give the appearance of an ordinary democracy, on the outset they are still deeply anti-democratic, where the rules of democracy are applied to the benefits of a dominant ethnos and not all people in a defined territory. In fact, the rules for this democracy are made by these dominant elites who reap the result of ethnocratic and democratic conflation disproportionately, excluding the least favoured minority in the process<sup>6</sup>. Thus, it allows for cleavages between majority and minority to be the definitive character of the state, threatening greater exacerbation and instability between majority and minority, as well as different sects of the majority<sup>7</sup>.

### 3 Ethnic Cleavages in the Israeli Society

As elucidated above, maintaining democracies in divided ethnic societies happen to be the most salient political problem in the contemporary world. Unlike the situation in the 1950s or 1960s, nation-building in ethnically divided societies have not only failed in Third World countries but is crumbling equally in Second and First World countries<sup>8</sup>. One prime example of such a deeply divided, yet systematically democratic society is Israel. Democratically, it will be no surprise when the Western world looks at Israel as the “Oasis of religious freedom in the Middle East”. In fact, Israel’s declaration of Independence, issued in 1948, clearly extends such religious freedom to its minorities by stating “The State of Israel will ensure religious freedom to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture”<sup>9</sup>. But, in 1992, the Knesset shocked the world when it passed the Basic Law on

<sup>1</sup> Yiftachel, O. *Ethnocracy - Land and Identity politics in Israel/Palestine* (10th ed.). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Mann, M. The Modern Tradition of Ethnic and Political Cleansing. In *The Dark Side of Democracy* (pp. 18-45). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Northern Ireland before the 1998 Belfast Agreement, Apartheid South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> This is not a compulsory case in all ethnocratic regimes and changes according to the whims of elites.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, J. ETHNOCRACY: Exploring and Extending the Concept. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies*, 8(3), 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Hints towards the political divide between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews in the right-wing electoral politics.

<sup>8</sup> Peled. Op cit

<sup>9</sup> Constitution for Israel - The Knesset. (n.d.). *The Knesset*. Retrieved May 10, 2019, from

[https://knesset.gov.il/constitution/ConstOpening\\_eng.htm](https://knesset.gov.il/constitution/ConstOpening_eng.htm)

Human Dignity and Liberty, referring to Israel as a “Jewish and Democratic state”<sup>1</sup>. Until then, it was widely believed, not only among Jews of Israel<sup>2</sup> but around the world, that Arab citizens, as the refugees of a geopolitical<sup>3</sup> conflict, will be entitled to equality and protection as Israeli minority.

However, as time passed by, this protection for the Arab minority became more clarified and hedonistic. The unsaid, hidden conditionality for protection in a so-called democratic state asked for them to be stripped of their original identity, culture, language, and heritage to declare their loyalty for values they do not relate to (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2010). This later created an ethnocratic divide, which Kimmerling mention as “an analysis of the effects of a reciprocal influence between two collectivities on the process of crystallisation and the building of society and the identity within them”<sup>4</sup>. The collectivities in question are the Jews in the Land of Israel and the local Arab population or the so-called Israeli Arabs.

These two collectivities have been in interaction under a common political framework<sup>5</sup> since the first Jewish settlement in 1947. The interaction which happened under the colonial watchdog laid its emphasis on mutual interaction in factors of economy, society, and policy. But tensions grew between Arab countries and Israel<sup>6</sup> due to Arab countries’ negative reaction towards the bifurcation of Mandated Palestine<sup>7</sup> into two separate countries for Jews and Palestinians. This further deteriorated into a separate Israel-Palestine conflict<sup>8</sup> in 1984, leading to interactions between Jews and Arabs becoming more and more hostile in the state of Israel<sup>9</sup>. These Israeli Arabs, consisting of 21% of the Israeli population, are the vestiges of the original 15% of Palestinian citizens left behind during the 1948 bifurcation when the state of Israel was created. These Arabs, who were once considered mutual to the existence of Israel along with the Jews as Israel’s prime minority, are seen to be drifting away from Israel’s ethnocratic policies since the 1990s. Once accommodating, they have now become disenchanted, alienated, drifting away from Israeli society. This has not only raised the question of reconciliation in the future but has also questioned the stability and security of Israel, once these alienated Arab minorities start radicalising themselves to confront Jews<sup>10</sup>. In fact, the ways to radicalise Israeli Arabs are surrounding the state of Israel in the form of Political Islam from Iran or Syria or the very case of sympathising<sup>11</sup> with the cause of Palestine itself. Also, with the recent skirmish between Jews and Bedouin<sup>12</sup> in the Negev, with Bedouin siding with the Arabs for minority rights, the radicalisation and threat to Israel’s security seem imminent.

In February 2009, Israel’s Benitau party came up with a slogan “No citizenship without loyalty”. This slogan, which was later picked up by Jews with a lot of enthusiasm, once again asked the Arabs to accept Zionist narratives as well as submit their loyalty to the vision of the Zion. Furthermore, it also proposed changes which in their very tenets were racial, inhumane<sup>13</sup> and a blow to Israeli Arab or Arab identity in a democratic country (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2010). Some of the proposed electoral prospects were

1. Revoking citizenship for those who celebrate Nakba.
2. Loyalty to the religious laws of Israel. Loyalty to the vision of Zionism.
3. Oath of affirmation to the Zionist vision for Arab members elected to Knesset.
4. A new Citizenship Law denying full citizenship rights to Israeli Arabs who were historically Palestinians.

<sup>1</sup> Kronish, R. D.. *The Holy Land: Jews, Christians and Muslims*. New York: American Committee for the Weizmann Institute of Science, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The majority in the State of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> Israel-Palestine conflict

<sup>4</sup> Kimmerling, B. *Clash of Identities - Explorations in Israeli and Palestinian Societies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Historically first under the Ottoman Empire and then the British Mandate.

<sup>6</sup> Leading to the Arab-Israeli wars in different timelines – 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1982

<sup>7</sup> Aftermath of UNSC Resolution 181.

<sup>8</sup> Timeline attached to it starts from 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Daoud, S. A. Israel and the Islamist Approach. *American Political Science Association*, 19(3), 2018, Pp55-80.

<sup>10</sup> Smootha, Op cit

<sup>11</sup> Historically after the breakup of Palestine, the Israeli Arabs have never shown sympathy to the cause, until recently.

<sup>12</sup> A historical nomadic community in the Negev desert.

<sup>13</sup> Contrary to the Basic Human Rights Law Act of 1992.

These draconian prospects, carrying a punishment of withdrawal of Israeli citizenship or ousting from the state, were not new for the marginalised Arabs in Israel. In fact, many such similar movements, discrimination, electoral prospects, especially in the occupied territory (e.g. events of October 2000<sup>1</sup>, spraying chemicals on Bedouin crops)<sup>2</sup>, aimed at Israeli Arabs were a grave highlighting of the point that Israel has indeed transformed into a full ethnocratic regime where Jews will be a dominant majority. This also raised questions among Israeli Arabs on their security, and the fact that they can be hurt with impunity damaged the already fragile trust between Israeli Arabs and the Jewish state. Thus, this ethnocratic divide, fuelled by mistrust, not only unveiled the duplicity of Israel's celebrated democracy but allowed the Israeli Arabs to turn into a failing but favoured political system for supporting their dissent against the political regime of the Jews. The political system talked about here is Political Islam and it comes straight from the heart of both West Bank and Gaza<sup>3</sup>, from brethren Israeli Arabs stopped calling their own long back.

#### 4 A perceived Security Dilemma

The result of all the above-stated paradigms of ethnocracy in Israel and the disadvantage it poses to the Israeli Arab identity is one major development that has taken shape over the course of many years. This particular development has led to the rise of fundamentalism among Israeli Arabs against what they call an ethnic Jewish state. This process of religious awakening and revival has been adopted from the universal ideology of Political Islamic revival or Islamisation, where the Jewish context of Israel<sup>4</sup> has been bedevilled by the Islamic movement in neighbouring West Bank and Gaza, in order to gather support and mobilise the tainted Israeli Arabs in the process. This phase not only reflects a greater ideological revolution but is also an outcome of social, political and economic discrimination against Israeli Arabs by their Jewish co-nationals<sup>5</sup> (Ali, 2004).

In fact, this fundamentalism has not only been limited to the movement but has crept into facets of research and public discourses, right from its beginning in the early 1970s. Most of its mandate has revolved around extreme rhetorical or political conduct spewed by Jews to marginalise Arabs in Israel. However, the way Jews in Israel look at it is a stark contrast to what it actually has been or desired to be. It is no doubt that such Islamic movements in Israel or around the world have been greatly homogenous<sup>6</sup>, it is of no further doubt as well that such movements have been stereotyped as a wave of religious fundamentalism. In fact, failure to understand such movement's social and inner dynamics has allowed for it to be perceived as a radicalised religious tendency, seen through a narrow lens of political and security-oriented rationale.

Nonetheless, before we move into the bigger question as to if these Islamic movements pose any threat to Israeli security, it is better to understand the initiation and characteristics of the movement. The Islamic movement in Israel is considered to be one of three socio-political trends among Israeli Arabs<sup>7</sup> and has had an important presence in Israeli politics. It has also garnered the support of the Bedouins when it won a mayoral seat and municipal seats from the Negev in 2013<sup>8</sup>. But the recent origins of the Islamic movement are traced back to the 1970s as a prominent socio-religious movement that aimed to encourage the Israeli Arabs to not give up their tradition in the new Jewish state, amidst reports of ethnic atrocities from the Jews at a socio-political level. It is believed that it worked under a mandate similar to that of the Muslim Brotherhood, inspired by Hassan al-Banna<sup>9</sup>. In fact, similar to the Brotherhood, the movement initially aimed to reform the Arabs in accordance to the social values of Islam<sup>10</sup>. But beyond that, it also aimed to protect holy sites sans Jerusalem, strengthen the Arab identity in Israel, as well improve the Jew-Arab nexus, which according to the Movement was under continuous threat from the Jewish political elite and their greed to create an ethnocratic regime. It wasn't until the 1990s that the movement garnered huge support from Israeli Arabs and went on to represent the Arabs in the Knesset. In 1996, the movement got divided into two factions, the hard-liners, known as the Northern Branch, who went on to support the Palestinian radical

<sup>1</sup> Policemen killing 13 Arabs in the occupied territory and later not being prosecuted

<sup>2</sup> Yiftachel, Op cit.

<sup>3</sup> The occupied territory of Gaza.

<sup>4</sup> Jews as the dominant ethnicity in the state of Israel.

<sup>5</sup> Ali, N., Political Islam in an Ethnic Jewish State: Historical Evolution, Contemporary Challenges and Future Prospects. *Holy Land Studies*, 3(1st), 2004, Pp69-92.

<sup>6</sup> The leadership revolving around an Ulama of a particular Islamic sect.

<sup>7</sup> The other two in lesser popularity being Palestinian Nationalism and Communism.

<sup>8</sup> Rubin, Op cit.

<sup>9</sup> The founder of Muslim Brotherhood in 1928.

<sup>10</sup> Unlike the brotherhood, this reform denounced Sharia in order to not complicate the scenario in a Jewish majority state

groups Hamas and Fatah, and the more politically involved Southern Faction, who rested their faith in the improvement of relations among Jews and Arabs through social, political and economic channels<sup>1</sup>. However, the rise of a voluntary hard-liner agenda from the moderate Islamic Movement did affect its reputation. In fact, what was once regarded as a popular political front, now got shamed as a radicalised militant organisation. The moderate Southern Faction also bore the brunt of this unpopularity among Jews, which once again led to widespread discrimination against Israeli Arabs and helped the Jewish political right-wingers to paint the Israel-Palestine conflict as radically Islamic in nature<sup>2</sup>.

However, do these accounts aim at radicalised Israeli Arabs and their loss of identity as part of a political mechanism as a threat to Israel's security? Modernisation theory, being widely accepted than all the other theories, does predict that. It says that radicalised Israeli Arabs have moved up the ladder in confronting the Jews and the state of Israel with Islamic political discourse rather than accommodation. Therefore, this theory has been used the most by pro-Israel social scientists, since it pushes all the blame of radicalisation to a pre-state tradition of ethnic constituents in the state of Palestine, rather than looking at the factors of greater neglect and ethnocratic behaviour among Jewish political elites<sup>3</sup>.

They unfortunately also state that it is the integration and incorporation of Arabs into Israeli society after the formation of Israel that gave them the desired exposure to confront Jews, somehow hinting that the only way to deal with such a situation is to oust the Arabs from Israel.

Luckily, the use of control theory<sup>4</sup> to look at the situation does put some onus of the blame on the nature of the Jewish state. Israel, as the theory states, has emerged to look after the cause and serve the ideals of Zionism, whereas its institutions exclude and discriminate among Arabs, even after they are coerced to be a part of it. But historically, speculating a threat from its own Arab population, the state has time and again used divisive politics to create a huge safety margin between not only Arabs and Jews, but also within different Arabs groups. It henceforth made Arabs heavily dependent on the Jewish political system, where Arab political parties were also left on the mercy of Right-wing Jewish parties<sup>5</sup>. In fact, the political self-determination of Arabs stopped mattering in Israeli electoral politics. Therefore, such policies bred resentment among Arabs, who in turn stopped accommodating themselves but looked at the state itself for acceptance. Not only that they looked for acceptance, but they also formed a militant-like radical movement to make the government recognise their dissent first-hand. But unfortunately, as the radicalisation increased, fuelled indirectly from Palestine, Israel became more Jewish in order to quell the situation and will continue to be so, leaving the Arabs more dissatisfied and alienated<sup>6</sup>.

It is no doubt that there is an undeniable agreement between what has been described as a security challenge in Israel and what indeed is happening in contemporary Israel, on ground zero. In fact, the pictorial narrative from different media houses – both Israeli and non-Israeli, is so compelling that it has become the general Jewish consensus on the behaviour of Israeli Arabs and their negative implications on the idea of Zion, and the idea of a Jewish state. This has not only furthered the cause of Israel being more defensive against its minority, discriminating against them till the point of ousting but has also fuelled electoral policies of Right-Wing Jewish parties in Israel to ignore that identity as a whole and create a strong ideological, political and social ethnocratic barrier to further marginalise and radicalise it. But, beyond this traditional understanding, Smootha explains this process as a mere “politicisation of Israeli Arabs”<sup>7</sup>. Here, what the Arabs are actually doing is asking for proper democratic means to improve their status in the Israeli society and not to coerce them into following the ideals of Zion. In fact, unlike the sentiment shared by researchers, Israeli Arabs deeply feel that their life and their ultimate livelihood is tied to the state of Israel, therefore destruction of the state of Israel is beyond their political mandate<sup>8</sup>. Their fight, they believe is for political space and sustenance of their identity, for which they are willing to act more like an opposition to the Jewish Right-Wing parties, but not a radicalised militant resistance, full of life-threatening notoriety. Therefore, their

<sup>1</sup> Rubin, Op cit

<sup>2</sup> The narrative was backed by the second intifada where the Hamas and Fatah along with the help from PLO and the Northern Faction killed almost 1010 Israeli Jews.

<sup>3</sup> Smootha, S.. Arabs in the Jewish State. *Middle East Journal*, 1987, Pp 3-8.

<sup>4</sup> Kempf-Leonard, K., & Morris, N. (2012). *Oxford Bibliographies*. Retrieved May 14, 2019, from <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396607/obo-9780195396607-0091.xml>

<sup>5</sup> As seen from the electoral trends of 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Smootha, 1987, Op cit.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Smootha,1990. Op cit

dependence on the state of Israel and the ultimate belief on Israel's democratic ideals<sup>1</sup> not only eases the security tension posed by them to Israel but makes them so much different from their radical brethren beyond the green line<sup>2</sup>, with who they do not identify with<sup>3</sup> nor claim to be their traditional diaspora.

## 5 Conclusions

Thus, from the accounts elucidated above, it is very clear that Israel as an ethnocratic state will not only create a divisive border wall between Jews and its Arab minority but in longer terms might end up radicalising the relationship through political and social narratives. It is no doubt and in fact, it is of no contention among the Israeli Arabs, that Israel as a state was created to cater to the protection and self-interest of Jews, who before that were easy prey to religious persecution in most of Europe and the Arab world for various reasons. What is really necessary to ask is how Israel, as a declared democracy with an ethnic Jewish character, will reconcile its principle of Jewishness and democracy? In fact, it is not really a surprise that a state can be ethnically Jewish and still recognise the minority status of Arabs who embraced Israeli citizenship after 1948. What is actually necessary to consolidate such recognition, so as to incorporate Israeli Arabs into the society and increase their economic and political leverage, is a written constitution, laying out rules to deal with minorities, and an end to the Emergency rules of Israel, which gives the government endless power to deal with its minority as they deem fit.

Israel, in the four salient decisive features of democracy, might feature in a flawed military democracy, with arbitrary powers over its minorities, for the sake of security. These arbitrary powers, time and again, have been used by Right-Wing Jewish parties to exclude and discriminate against Arabs. In fact, such exclusion has also time and again threatened to pave way for Political Islam in the state of Israel as a political alternative for Arabs, much to the fear of Jews. But it can be changed through societal and political restructuring of the state to go hand in hand with contemporary democracies, where blurring of boundaries will not only encourage Arabs to look up to Israel as their sole homeland, discouraging them to alter and destroy its socio-political structure but will also provide an interpretation of Arab political behaviour, where their attitude can be altered to make them mutually accommodating to the Jewish state of Israel with equal accepting reciprocation<sup>4</sup>. This concern now should be the highlight of co-existence in Israel, because the question at the end of the day that is answered here is not that if Israel should be a Jewish state or not, but with growing subtle polarisation and confrontation between Jews and Israeli Arabs, what kind of Jewish state will best suit it – democratic or authoritarian.

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<sup>1</sup> Which they believe can be restored again.

<sup>2</sup> West Bank and Gaza.

<sup>3</sup> The Arabs in Israel are comfortable in being Israelis rather than Palestinians, therefore being subjected as traitors in West Bank and Gaza.

<sup>4</sup> Dowty, Op cit.

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