

Permanent Transitions: Collective Identity Formation in Israel, Jordan, and Palestine

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While the Israel-Palestinian conflict proceeds unresolved, the sixty years since the triumph of Israeli independence also marks the painful legacy of a Palestinian population dispersed in a seemingly permanent diaspora. Our present study inquires to what extent the Palestinian status as refugee shapes the circumstances in which they live and the types of identification that follow. In analyzing the ethnic Palestinian identity we examine three distinct regional (two of which are also national) sectors—Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories. A constructivist view would drive the expectation that under different political, economic and cultural circumstances, there will be observable changes to the ethnic identity repertoire. Three hypotheses follow: First, reconstructions of Palestinian identity will take place in states undergoing substantive efforts to integrate or assimilate the population, forming observable culture and loyalty shifts from ethnic to national identities. Second, states where Palestinians experience greater economic integration and upward social mobility will be more successful in producing a national civic identity. Our third hypothesis takes an opposing position, asserting that in the absence of sustained and substantive efforts to integrate the Palestinian population a more ethnically driven and primordially-defined identity will emerge through groups, such as Hamas and the early PLO movement. Ultimately, the research concludes that the tools for integration exist, but national leaders must be willing to integrate Palestinian minorities, otherwise over a prolonged period of repressive economic and political realities, alienation may lead again to ethnic violence as it has so many times in the past.

INTRODUCTION

While the Israel-Palestinian conflict proceeds unresolved, the sixty years since Israeli independence, or the “Nakba” (catastrophe) as Palestinians know it, marks the tremendous longevity of a population dispersed in a seemingly permanent diaspora. Palestinians reside outside of their homeland in huge numbers, with millions of people collected in densely populated urban blocs, some of which were little more than vast refugee camps that began as

fields of canvas tents and have since been edified into permanent structures. The unique nature of this suspended transition is evidenced by the exceptional manner in which Palestinian refugees are defined by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees—the first and only group whose descendents are also given legal refugee status.¹ To what extent does the Palestinian status as *refugee* shape the circumstances in which Palestinians live and the types of identification that follow? This question strikes at a fundamental issue of identity and integration and forms one of the central questions in this analysis. Palestinians share history, language, and religion in great numbers as well as a host of observable, “ascriptive” ethnic markers, yet the population is spread across a vast region of Arab and non-Arab states.² In order to address some of the looming questions of ethnic identity, our research takes a substantive look at the Palestinian diaspora across the borders of three regions—Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Using these case studies we hope to evaluate whether governance and economics of different regions will significantly change the self-identification of dispersed Palestinians acting within these different contexts.

A brief history of Palestinian identity would serve to color the context and adaptations over the last hundred years. For nearly four centuries from 1516 to the end of World War I, the residents of the area now known as Palestine were under the dominion of Turkish rule. With the establishment of the Nationality Law of 19 January 1869, peoples residing within the territories of Ottoman rule “had been equally Ottoman citizens.”³ Giving a legal account of the British period from 1917-1925, Mutaz Qafisheh’s account of Palestinian identity hinges on the legislative manifestations of British rule after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In this era, in the wake of World War I and the fall of the sultans of Istanbul, Palestinian identity flourished as a protectorate of the British Empire. The “British-run Government of Palestine undertook a

number of measures indicating the existence of the new nationality” and imbued a national, legal and internationally recognized distinction for residents of the territory of Palestine.⁴ Among these measures was the issuing of “certificates of Palestinian nationality,” which along with Palestinian passports offered international British Consular protection.⁵ In the aftermath of these changes, nationalism for post-Ottoman Palestinians of the modern era was confronted by waves of Jewish settlers. It is in this backdrop and the following century that an ethos of Arab as opposed to Anglo, Muslim as opposed to Jew, and Palestinian as opposed to Egyptian or Jordanian firmly took hold.

Palestinians living in Israel and the Palestinian Territories are just under 6 million in number, with 2.4 million in the West Bank and 1.5 million in Gaza⁶, over 1.2 million living as citizens of Israel⁷ and another 3 million residing in Jordan, 1.7 million of whom are registered refugees.⁸ Except for a small Christian minority, the people we call Palestinian are a broadly homogeneous ethnic nation. Ostensibly, this reality could lead one to conclude that Palestinian identity operates primordially, with very limited room for adaptation or redefinition. If such a view is accurate, observers could anticipate that this ethnic nation, regardless of their ultimate residence, would not assimilate or integrate into a new national identity. If, on the other hand, there is enough evidence that identities are more malleable in Palestinian circles, evolving in response to structural obstacles and incentives, the paradigm of primordialism must be cast aside in favor of less rigid alternatives. To this end, our definition of identity is subject to the history of our subject matter. While “Palestinism is a recent creation,” it is “hardly an invented tradition ... one without any common past and collective memory.”⁹ Precisely because of its origins, this paper would argue that Palestinian identity is particularly prone to redefinition, being “constantly

reproduced and bolstered through invented traditions ... [and] the creation of national cultural canons.”¹⁰

Common memory is immensely powerful, and trauma even more so. Modern era Palestinians collectively share the spoils of the Nakba, an event so central to the Palestinian memory it is considered the “hallmark of their identity.”¹¹ Understanding this dynamic, our study defines identity as a personal connection and self-identification with an ethnic, racial, religious, and/or any other group. While self-identification and questionnaires are useful tools in determining the affiliation of a population, our objective is to test identification with a mindset towards successful state-integration. To do this we could further operationalize identity by observing the political opinions and actions of a given population. If it is true that “state-bound identities weaken the grievance-protest relationship” then “the closer one identifies with the state, the less likely one is to protest, even when significant grievances exist.”¹²

In the following pages our scrutiny of integration will focus on two main factors: political and economic integration. Successful political integration can be measured by a number of citizenship standards, including civil rights, collective minority rights, adequate representation in the political system, institutional support, and control of local language and education. Economic integration can be measured by unemployment data and beyond that would ideally be measured using economic differentials in GDP per capita organized by ethnic group, making very visible any large, inequitable discrepancies. For various reasons, some of these statistics are unavailable. Jordan, for instance, does not collect data for refugees or Palestinians separately. Due to these limitations, it would be difficult to quantify the precise degree of integration within these states. We must, therefore, rely on substantive qualitative analysis and additionally hope to encourage and enable more acutely measurable research on this subject in the future.

In order to formulate a productive examination of the Palestinian ethnic identity across national boundaries, this research proposes to review three cases of the population divided by region—in the Palestinian Territories, in The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and within Israel proper. Given the limitations of time in our present study the research will touch only briefly on Palestinian integration in relation to Jordan. In analyzing the ethnic Palestinian identity within three distinct regional (two of which are also national) sectors, a constructivist view would drive the expectation that under different political, economic and cultural circumstances there will be observable (and therefore governable) changes to the ethnic identity repertoire. The three hypotheses of this research are as follows:

Hypothesis One:

Reconstructions of Palestinian identity will take place in states undergoing substantive efforts to integrate or assimilate the population. Where institutions of socialization exist, we can observe tangible culture and loyalty shifts from ethnic to national identities.

Hypothesis Two:

States where Palestinians experience greater economic integration and upward social mobility will be more successful in producing a national civic identity.

The purpose of parsing the hypothesis in such a manner is to determine the varying degrees of efficacy that arise between structural, economic factors and political, institutional ones. Any astute critic could surely argue the need to combine these variables to get a clearer understanding of successful integration. In this respect, the present research is aware of the limitations before us, but part of the impetus for this examination was to determine which features of the political and economic environment are *more* likely to bring integration to

political minorities. In fact, one strong caveat that must be discussed is the possibility that neither Jordan nor Israel will be shown to have conducted any sustained and substantive efforts to integrate the Palestinian population. For this reason we assert a third and final hypothesis:

Hypothesis Three:

In the absence of sustained and substantive efforts to integrate the Palestinian population (and therefore a lack of national civic identity), a more ethnically driven and primordially-defined identity will emerge through collective action groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the body of literature on identity formation, there are clearly marked borders segregating the two major schools of thought—primordialism and instrumentalism. The primordialist tradition has been classified by its emphasis on *ascriptive* and identifiable traits that lock identity into a mold. This ethnic caste is established and perpetuated by group agreement on the notion of *the other*. One of the most controversial and widely known primordialist scholars is Samuel Huntington. As a prelude to his subsequent book, *Clash of Civilization*, Huntington introduces his theory of conflict among cultures in a 1993 article by the same name. What he calls the “return of traditional rivalries,” asserts that new waves of conflict across the globe in the 21st century will be a direct result of competing ethnic identities.¹³ Conflict will occur because differences among civilizations—a tapestry of language, ethnicity, family, nation, religion, common traditions and history—“are not only real; they are basic.”¹⁴ These differences of language, ethnicity, culture, and history don’t merely exacerbate conflict, they are the *cause*. Increased interaction, the argument continues, will “intensify civilization consciousness” and enhance group “awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.”¹⁵ This consciousness, the argument goes, leads to regional economic blocs and

further emboldens the civilizations with economic structures, entrenching and incentivizing the primordial spirit.

For Huntington, as interactions increase, conflict appears to be deterministic. An application of this theory to Palestine, however, is unfulfilling. A greater focus on history reveals that under far different circumstances both politically and structurally—before the inception of an Israeli state—Arabs and Jews had aligned themselves politically in a civil servant protest against economic policies of the British government.¹⁶ Huntington's brand of primordialism postulates that economics will follow ethnicity; however, in the following pages this research hopes to find ample evidence to the contrary. Instead, we argue that the strength in the structures of the economy and socialization from efficacious institutions will significantly shift loyalty and identity into a constructivist environment. This idea, we think, will emerge in the self identification of Palestinians with their states of residence and citizenship across both Jordan and Israel. If Palestinians in Israel begin to identify as Palestinian-Israeli, or Palestinian-Jordanian in Jordan, then we must acknowledge that a process of socialization has taken place; a process capable of reshaping the identity of a centuries old ethnic group¹⁷ to include and absorb a national identity that did not exist a mere century ago. If such evidence is present and observable, we are forced to cast off the excesses of primordialism and accept that the Palestinian case is more flexible than this theory claims.

Some of the literature on identity has moved away from the confines of primordialism to postulate that the circumstances of identity formation, especially those in a conflict environment, are subject to strong tendencies towards fierce ethnic identity. In environments of extreme conflict and contestation, scholars have observed that identification is often exacerbated and radicalized divisions of ethnicity enhanced. Herbert C. Kelman of Harvard University further

postulates that conflict “impedes the development of a transcendent identity by creating a state of negative interdependence between the two identities.”¹⁸ Within such a paradigm, identity is perceived as a zero sum game, where one group’s loss is the other’s gain. The nature of conflict may in fact be one of the more predictive and pervasive elements of Palestinian identity, contributing significantly to the appearance of stifled integration across all of our case studies.¹⁹ Given the circumstances of the Palestinian case, lacking a recognized homeland, the entire population is subject to the products of a conflict environment and a perpetual identification as refugees. With that in mind, researchers must strive to explain the elements and sectors of the Palestinian people that have been more successful in adapting to new national boundaries. If our research is able to observe a shift from ethnic to an evolving national identity, the features and rules of primordialism, at least for this case, ought to be cast aside as limited and too fixed.

Having expressed our reticence towards the primordialist literature, we shall proceed to the opposing school of thought whose views are captured by the instrumentalist tradition. The extremes of instrumentalism have argued for the near complete elasticity of ethnic identity, pointing to evidence of identities being little more than “the product of a radio program.”²⁰ Instrumentalist positions are often explained through the direction and motive of agential actors. In the case of Kenya, Collier points to the efforts of colonialism to refashion the ethnic dimension of identity and use it to their advantage. In this instance, for the British recruiters looking for local men willing to fight, radio was merely “the cheapest means of recruitment.”²¹ The agency position here has incorporated the framework of rational-choice theory to illustrate the malleability of group identity and the colonial interest therein. Collier makes a strong case for instrumentalism, one that is hard to ignore. It appears in this scenario that the British Foreign Office and military field operators succeeded in *creating* an ethnic identity out of thin air. In

many cases of agential manipulation, identity is simply recast or redefined based on existing myths, whether latent or explicit. Collier's study, however, points to one of the more instrumental moments in ethnic identity formation, one almost completely bereft of *a priori* "ascriptive" characteristics.

In *When Victims Become Killers*, Mamdani links the history of the Rwandan genocide to the physical and legal violence of colonialism. By casting race and ethnicity in political and legal terms, the colonizers infused a system of violence *in potentia*. That early definition cast upon Rwandans held firm in the political institutions and penetrated the culture with its ethnic categories and also its material gains or losses. The colonizers used race to define groups politically and economically, not the other way around. Mamdani argues that the impetus for this type of violence, and even genocide, emerges in history simultaneously with the organization of power.²² For Palestinians, the nineteenth century gave rise to a growing sense of Palestinian nationalism in response to Ottoman repression. In the aftermath of World War I, the colonial imprint was laid by the British Mandate and the increasing wave of Jewish immigration fulfilling the Zionist ethos of repopulating ancient Judea.²³ For three decades the Palestinians were subject to the Foreign Service Office, leaving a lasting impression on economic and structural designs that have held for some time.²⁴ It is clear from our reading thus far, however, that Palestine is not Kenya, nor is it Rwanda. The British did not *create* an ethnic Palestinian identity from scratch, but they certainly made the world a "smaller place" and more prone to interaction among Europeans, Palestinians and Jewish settlers.²⁵ The emergent conflict of subsequent generations may illustrate that conflict has ebbed and flowed in concert with a greater structure of things, and not simply as a result of ancient hatreds, nor as the imperial legacy of colonial masters. To supplement the preceding theories and address the lingering question of Palestinian identity, the

following case studies will assume the position of a constructivist viewpoint, one amicable to Palestinian history and fundamental to understanding the governing principles of identity formation.

THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

Those Palestinians who have remained in what are referred to as the Palestinian Territories are in a unique position of non-statehood. The war of Israeli Independence, an event Palestinians call the “Nakba,” meaning *catastrophe* in Arabic, is estimated to have displaced 750,000 Palestinians from their places of residence and means of livelihood.²⁶ Much of the population reconstituted in refugee camps across several countries, many moving to different parts of the West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria. Those who remained within the Israeli portions of the 1948 Armistice lines were absorbed into Israel, becoming citizens. The very establishment of Israel created distinct new identities—hundreds of thousands of refugees, Arab-Israeli citizens, and of course Israeli-Jews. From the outset, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been administered by different nations, Egypt and Jordan respectively.²⁷ In the aftermath of a political civil war, the territories continue to be governed separately, now by Hamas and Fatah.²⁸ Seemingly following history’s precedent of separate administration, the cultural connections forged as a result of separate administration have had a lasting effect. West Bankers feel a much stronger connection to Jordan than do residents of the Gaza Strip, who are more affiliated with Egypt.²⁹ Manuel Hassassian identifies two non-ascriptive marks of identity that he considers of great import in “Historical Dynamics Shaping Palestinian National Identity.” In the article he argues that “two factors have influenced the development of Palestinian identity: Palestinian Diaspora after the 1948 war, coupled with Jordanian and Egyptian rule over the West

Bank and Gaza.”³⁰ Due to their divergent directions, it may be more useful to compare the West Bank and Gaza Strip experience with distinction.

In the political aftermath of the 1948 war, the shifting political and national scene rocked the Palestinian community and dispersed the greater portion of the population in a flux of political ambiguity. Palestinian national identity has its foundations in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, being absorbed into the legal and international auspices of the United Kingdom, and with them, Palestinian Arabs became legally defined as culturally and ethnically distinct from their Arab neighbors.³¹ Decades later, the pan-Arabism movement led by Gamal Abdel Nasser sought to blur the divisions of Arab ethnic identity, but in response to Egypt’s failure to solidify a Palestinian state, elites began to abandon the larger Arab movement and focus greater energy on Palestinian nationalism and the goal of statehood.³² In the aftermath of the 1967 war, known as the Six-Day War, and the devastation of the Arab armies and a new wave of Palestinian refugees, the desperate need for institutional support was addressed. Repeatedly, Jordan “sought to speak for the Palestinians at the expense of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.”³³ Early association with Jordan was repeatedly disjointed by the perceived use of Palestinians as a commodity. Eventually the PLO won the battle over representation and emerged as the spokes-entity for the Palestinian people. After the Israeli military dominance of the Six-Day War and under the tremendous stress of occupation and confinement, the PLO managed somewhat successfully to address the needs of its population in flight. These early institutions are perhaps the mechanism that helped fuel Palestinian nationalism for the next thirty years.

The structural and institutional evidence found in the Palestinian Territories are defined largely by their historic circumstances. The West Bank was annexed by the Jordanian Kingdom

in 1948, and all West Bank Palestinians were granted Jordanian citizenship.³⁴ Increasing waves of Palestinians coming into Jordan and the growing strength of the PLO frightened the Jordanian monarchy, which caused huge ripples across the Palestinian population. Black September was a Jordanian military assault on the more radical elements of the Palestinian refugee camp movements ending in the death of an estimated 3,000 Palestinians, the expulsion of the PLO, and in 1988, the disengagement of Jordan from the West Bank.³⁵ Despite a rocky history, surveys of West Bank Palestinians show a majority support a joint state with Jordan; Palestinians in Jordan prefer a confederation with the West Bank and Gaza Strip that preserves the Jordanian state as a Hashemite monarchy, rather than absorption into Greater Palestine.³⁶ Since 1967 both West Bank and Gaza have been subject to the intense scrutiny and will of Israeli political and military leadership. West Bank is a landlocked territory and Gaza's borders and Mediterranean coast are policed by Israeli Defense Forces. To make an example of the international community's preference for Palestinian moderates, Israeli leaders have supported Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah government by easing their economic restrictions. Since the separation from Gaza, the West Bank has gone from an unemployment rate of over thirty percent to a relatively booming economy with unemployment now just over sixteen percent.³⁷

It is clear, however, that the crucial political and economic levers we are looking for are controlled more by Israel than the Fatah government. Much scholarship has pointed to three key features of social control and political culture formation: the army, tax collection, and the courts.³⁸ In both the West Bank and Gaza, Israel collects taxes and allocates funds to the Palestinian Authority to pay its civil servants. As recently as 2007, taxes were withheld for political reasons.³⁹ This led to the starving of the civil servants industry as well as the government and NGOs that are a source of crucial employment for the Palestinian economy.⁴⁰

Lacking a state, Palestinians have no unified army, leading to a splintered coalition of sub-national militias subject to the ideologies of various movement leaders. Identity in such a context is driven by movement activists and political leaders looking for opportunities in a highly contested political landscape.⁴¹ It appears that at least in the case of the Territories, a lack of autonomy coupled with continuing military occupation and economic control means Palestinians are given limited avenues for pluralist socialization. Recent survey data gathered in 2005, after the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip, suggested a greater feeling of security and personal control in Gaza over the West Bank, and a decreased feeling of efficacy in terrorist activity.⁴² Although no current data after the Gaza War of 2008 is available, this change in feeling may have reversed significantly with the vastly improved West Bank economy and the suffering Gaza economy (a 2008 UN estimate of unemployment showed a level of 45 percent, the highest in the world).⁴³ Gaza has been frequently referred to as the largest prison in the world.⁴⁴ Since the Israeli blockade implemented in 2007, two-thirds of Gazans are said to be “food insecure” with 80 percent of them living in poverty.⁴⁵ In such an environment of frequent power outages and insufficient infrastructure for sewage treatment and fuel supplies, conflict is constant and highly influential for identity formation and may explain an increased fervor around Palestinian identity since 1992.⁴⁶

This increased identity as Palestinian has its roots in the educational opportunities and aspirations of the Palestinian community. To a population in flux, education is a powerful and, more importantly, portable means of living.⁴⁷ Education is among the strongest tools for socialization and its success or failure hinges on the environment once these students are educated. The highly contested administration of education in the Israeli-Palestinian discourse reflects its import.⁴⁸ With the establishment of universities in the West Bank in the 1970s,

Palestinian youths became acutely aware of their existential paradox and the *relative deprivation* compared to their occupiers. Without the national and economic tools at the state's disposal, sub-national groups could dominate the discourse. In many cases sub-national groups are borne from the schools themselves. Some of the recent scholarship testing the readiness of the Palestinian community in West Bank and Gaza shows a strong reticence towards interaction with Jews.⁴⁹ Interestingly, the research empirically refutes the notion that ethnic or religious identities are the strongest indicators towards an apprehension for social interactions with their Jewish neighbors; rather, party identification is the key determinant of this feeling.⁵⁰

This research puts us squarely back in the political arena, where politics can trump ethnicity. The Palestinian Territory's dubious position—as a non-state entity lacking an army, under military occupation, without cohesive national leadership, and dependent on Israel and the international community for economic survival—are of grave normative concern, and empirically offers little evidence for any scholar to expect positive mechanisms for socialization and identity formation. Conflict environments are subject to what Brenner calls “geopolitical identity disorder” which afflicts both the Palestinian and Israeli ability to recognize similarities and common interests with “the other.”⁵¹ In the Territories, identity has formed in waves dynamically responding to the political and social environment. Under these circumstances, Palestinian identity has formed as a reaction to the diaspora and occupation, with a pillar of identity formation in schools and universities, which sustain the ethos of national Palestinian aspiration.

ISRAEL

It is evident from the previous discussion that it is impossible to consider the situation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as separate from the Israeli occupation and control over

key aspects of socialization. There is much scholarship examining the role of Arabs, who constitute twenty percent of the state of Israel's 7.2 million citizens.⁵² Palestinians within Israel proper are full citizens, but their disjointed integration stems largely from the constitutional ethos of the Zionist aspirations of the Jewish people. These aspirations imbue and guide the formation of policies and institutions, which are characterized by their explicit desire to support the Jewish people. The more substantive body of literature and positive evidence here aids our examination greatly. Again, based on the previous literature and political ideologies of the Jewish state, we anticipate a fractured and anemic effort to integrate Palestinians in Israel. However, if we can detect and observe a trend towards integration fueled by Palestinians in search of more political freedom or economic security *within the Israeli framework*, we may be able to conclude with some confidence that economics and politics can effectively shift identity.

To continue the socialization focus of citizenship in the utility of education, a special attention must be paid to the stratified system of education between Palestinians and Jews in Israel. Administration of education is handled entirely by the Interior Ministry of Israel. Within this organization there are separate branches for Arab and Jewish education—Jewish education is further split into secular and religious schools.⁵³ Children are segregated not just by geography, but institutionally segregated along religious and ethnic lines. Overall Palestinians lack integration and “are discriminated against socially, educationally, economically, and politically.”⁵⁴ Segregation is enhanced and entrenched by the different curriculum given to the students, one designed to tamp down the sentiment of Palestinian nationalism within the Arab population. The design, it is argued, is to subdue Palestinian aspirations to a sympathy and subordination to the rightful character of the Jewish state.⁵⁵ This propagates the “system of control” that further denies collective rights, maintains prohibitions against marriage through

religious institutions, forces subjection to massive confiscation of Arab lands and dependence on the Jewish sector for employment.⁵⁶

Alienation and isolation from the mainstream culture curbs assimilation and fuels an irredentist, primordial spirit. As we have seen, military occupation has a similar effect. Palestinians within Israel are concentrated disproportionately within “blue collar, less well-paid, and insecure jobs.”⁵⁷ The economic integration of the minority Arab economy is managed by stratification of education, geography and structural features. Qualifying these issues, some scholarship furthers the relevance of citizenship and discrimination, defining the issue based more on the “political position of the Palestinian minority.”⁵⁸ This dimension illustrates the institutional discrimination present against the Palestinian minority. With all these caveats and negative sources of reinforcement for Palestinian integration into Israeli society, recent survey data reveals a striking fact: 16 percent of the 1.4 million Palestinians within Israeli borders identify first and foremost as Israeli.⁵⁹

The evolution of Arab-Israeli identity is found in a number of interesting areas, both institutional and local. Identity repertoires have undergone a significant change during the sixty-year history of the Arab-Israeli context. Studies show the malleability of overlapping identities where Palestinian association with their ethnic identity generates a feeling of pride, while identification with their Israeli identity is associated with the benefits of citizenship.⁶⁰ Arab members of the Israeli Knesset frequently utilize their dual identities in symbolic and methodical efforts to legislate. When advocating for collective Arab rights as a political minority, parliamentarians will speak in Arabic, but when introducing legislation of communal and pluralist concern they speak in Hebrew.⁶¹ In a fascinating grass-roots example of the shifting discourse and political utility of opportunities and aspirations, Arab football within the Israeli

Football Association has produced an “integrative enclave” based on ideals of meritocracy.⁶² These clubs and their thousands of attendees are disproportionately Palestinian and contrary to the fears of some, football has become a very peaceful and pluralist tool for Palestinians to enrich themselves, achieve cooperation and respect from the majority, and craft an arena where identity is formulated on the merits of one’s ability, not ethnic identity.⁶³ These shifting dynamics refute the confines of primordialism and sharpen our understanding that despite institutional obstacles and political limitations for Palestinians, the Arab-Israelis have not remained static. Rather, they have adapted and sought new ways to achieve both economic and identity equity from the majority population.

CONCLUSION

The research done here leaves much unsettled and should be continued in greater depth. An inclusion of Egypt, Lebanon and the Gulf States would enhance the clarity of identity formation in a community spread across a vast region of national differences. In brief, the Jordanian Palestinians have experienced a combined set of circumstances similar to their counterparts in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Jordanian legal rights are differentiated among the waves of refugees flocking across Jordan’s borders—100,000 in 1948 and 380,000 in 1967—240,000 of whom were considered *displaced persons* and not refugees because of Jordanian administration of the West Bank during the exodus.⁶⁴ The flood of Palestinians has significantly changed the landscape of Jordanian politics, where Palestinians are a demographic majority but politically subordinate.⁶⁵ Despite this, they compose a lion’s share of the private sector in Jordan. Here, like Israel, economic successes and potential have translated into a more joint Palestinian-Jordanian sense of self identification.⁶⁶ But in Jordan too, political turmoil and violence has fractured trust. The violence that killed 3,000 Palestinians in what has come to be

known as Black September has defined the discourse and relationship between Jordanians and Palestinians since.⁶⁷ Recently, revocations of citizenship from Palestinians living in Jordan⁶⁸ have been supplemented by residency revocations of Palestinians living under occupied East Jerusalem.⁶⁹

In all of this, we see interchanging identities strengthened by economic incentives and, where available, enhanced by institutions. Unfortunately, as the perceptions of looming progress in a two-state solution have sharpened, they have led to the recent spike in revoking the citizenship of Palestinians. The discourse of Israel's current right-wing government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, has furthered the political argument that Jordan *is* Palestine. This definition offers a relocation program for Palestinians into the Jordanian state as the best solution. In Hillel Frisch's estimation, "the fact that each group prefers a slightly different political outcome that conforms to their respective material interests seems to confirm the rational-actor approach" that are governed by national rules and environments.⁷⁰

The normative implications of this research are promising because they refute any attempt to define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as intractable on account of insurmountable ethnic and religious differences. In fact, what we see is that in spite of collective efforts of political administrators to stifle meaningful integration, Palestinians in significant numbers continue to perceive a mixed identity and pursue a new national identity when there are economic benefits from doing so. Ultimately, the tools for integration exist, but national leaders must be willing to integrate these minorities. Otherwise, over a prolonged period of repressed economic and political freedoms, alienation may lead again to ethnic violence as it has so many times in the past.

NOTES

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