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## General Background: Demographic, Social, Economic, and Political Aspects

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### The Ottoman and the British Mandate Periods

In 1914, there were approximately 600,000 Arabs living in Palestine. By the end of the Mandatory period (1947), their number stood at 1,294,000 (Gilbar 1989, 3), an increase over a period of three decades of 116 percent.

The primary reason for this impressive growth was a high natural increase, a demographic trend that had set in because of a decline in mortality rates. Improved medical conditions between 1922 and 1945 reduced mortality rates, in particular among infants, by nearly 60 percent (table 1.1; Gilbar 1989, 7). At the same time, when one analyzes the Muslim and Christian communities separately, a number of differences come to the fore. During the Mandatory period, 89 percent of the Arab population in Palestine consisted of Muslims and 11 percent of Christians (*Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1944–45*, 16). Among Muslims, 96 percent of the demographic growth was the result of natural increase and only 4 percent of migration, while among Christians these percentages were 72 and 28 respectively (*Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1944–45*, 17). Among the Jewish population in Palestine, demographic growth was primarily the result of immigration, i.e., 72 percent, while natural increase formed only 28 percent (*ibid.*).

This may also explain why the difference in age structure between the Arab and Jewish population in Palestine continued to

**Table 1.1** Birth Rates, Death Rates, and Natural Increase of the Arab Population in Palestine (per 1,000) in Selected Years during the Mandatory Period by Religion

	MUSLIMS			CHRISTIANS		
	Birth Rate	Death Rate	Natural Increase	Birth Rate	Death Rate	Natural Increase
1922-1925 average	50.20	26.93	23.27	36.29	16.14	20.15
1931-1935 average	50.34	25.36	24.98	35.85	15.00	20.85
1945	54.23	16.35	37.88	32.65	9.86	22.79

Source: *Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1944-45*. Eighth Edition, p. 26.

increase throughout the Mandatory period. In 1944, about 25 percent of the Arab population were of school age (5-14) as compared to nearly 17 percent among the Jewish population (table 1.2).

On the eve of the First World War, the Arab society in Palestine was mainly an agrarian one, ownership of land being the main form of wealth and social status (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990). Still at the beginning of the British Mandate in 1920 *fellahin* formed some 75 percent of the Arabs, 70 percent of whom were either landless or had insufficient land for even a subsistence living (*ibid.* 9).

The early 1930s brought a considerable change in Palestinian Arab society. Proletarianization led to a process of rapid surplus labor within the villages and a growing demand on the outside labor market, in particular because of construction projects instigated by the Mandatory government and growing urbanization (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990, 10). Through migration from rural to urban areas, the urban Arab population increased by 32 percent toward the end of the Mandatory period, double of what it had been at the end of the nineteenth century.

The urbanization process, too, shows a considerable difference in the way it affected Muslims and Christians. While the urban Muslim population increased from 16.4 percent in 1860 to 30.5 percent in 1946, the urbanization process among Christians

**Table 1.2** Age Structure of the Population of Palestine by Sex and Religion in 1926 and 1944 (per 100)

	MUSLIMS		CHRISTIANS		JEWS	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1926						
0-4	20.69	19.05	14.7	13.4	14.2	13.7
5-14	18.99	16.13	23.3	20.0	17.7	17.9
15-24	20.34	21.84	18.2	18.4	26.4	27.1
25-49	28.78	30.85	31.3	32.1	30.0	28.5
50-64	7.01	7.38	8.2	9.8	7.9	8.3
65+	4.19	4.75	4.3	6.3	3.8	4.5
1944						
0-4	19.08	18.43	12.8	12.6	11.4	11.1
5-14	25.22	24.45	21.4	21.0	17.4	16.8
15-24	19.89	18.71	18.2	17.0	17.0	15.6
25-49	24.11	25.26	36.3	33.4	41.1	42.6
50-64	7.81	8.88	7.7	10.6	8.6	8.9
65+	3.89	4.27	3.6	5.4	4.5	5.0

Source: *Statistical Abstract of Palestine 1944-45*. Eighth Edition, pp. 19-20.

was far more rapid than among Muslims; i.e., with an already higher urban population to begin with, 80 percent of the Arab Christian population lived in cities and towns toward the end of the Mandatory period. The Jewish population, on the contrary, underwent a relative de-urbanization process—while in the late nineteenth century virtually the entire Jewish population lived in urban centers, by 1946 some 26 percent lived in rural settlements (table 1.3).

The Mandatory government tried to preserve and even to reinforce the local traditional system among the Palestinian community. This was aimed at minimizing the cost of the British control and maintaining social and political stability (Miller 1985). Preserving the status quo became increasingly difficult for the British, in view of the escalating national conflict, in which demographic and economic changes among the Palestinians went hand in hand with considerable political changes. Briefly indicated, these included a rise in national consciousness, the formation of

**Table 1.3** The Urban Population in Palestine by Religion (1860–1946) (%)

YEAR	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS	JEWS
1860	16.4	36.3	99.1
1922	23.2	63.0	81.7
1946	30.5	80.0	73.6

Source: Gilbar (1989).

nationwide organizations, and an increasing politicization process (Badran 1969), while the role of the urban intelligentsia became more evident and a new middle-class elite began to take the place of the traditional notables (Gilbar 1989, 14).

These changes, however, did not signify the disappearance of the traditional basis of the Palestinian society, i.e., the *hamula*. The wealthy landowning class branched out into trade, import/export agencies, and other commercial activities (Rosenfeld 1978, 377), whereby kinship affiliation continued to play a central role. The fact that this was true even for the national leadership shows how important family structure remained for Palestinian society (Porath 1973; Ghabra 1987).

Thus, though rapid, the process of social, economic, and political changes Palestinian society was undergoing toward the end of the Mandatory period should be seen as selective, i.e., as a process in which social change emerged while traditional elements continued to be adhered to.

### The Palestinian Arabs after the Establishment of the State of Israel

After the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, only 156,000 Arabs remained in that part of Palestine that had now become the state of Israel. Cut off from their kith and kin who now lived as refugees in other Arab countries, they formed a socially and politically much weakened group. Nearly all members of the Palestinian Arab middle and upper classes—the urban landowning mercantile, professional, and religious elite—were no longer present in Israel; if

they had not left before the outbreak of hostilities, they had done so during the war, while many others had been expelled (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990, 24). The vast majority of those who stayed behind were villagers, some 80 percent of whom lived in rural areas in the Galilee, the Little Triangle, and the Negev (Kanaana 1975). The former Arab urban population (about 200,000) had almost entirely disappeared as a result of the war and expulsion, and only 6 percent remained (Lustick 1980). Moreover, some 20 percent of the Arab population in Israel became "internal refugees," having been moved forcibly to new localities after their villages had been destroyed during and immediately after the war (Al-Haj 1988a).

### Demographic Changes

Since the establishment of the state of Israel, the Arab population has increased 4.4 times and reached 710,000 (or 15.6 percent of the total population—not including East Jerusalem) in 1990 (SAI 1991, 42), i.e., a 4.1 percent increase per annum throughout the period 1948–1988, as compared to 4.4 among Jews (SAI 1989, 39). While the demographic growth among the Arabs almost solely stemmed from natural increase, among the Jewish population 46.2 percent of the growth resulted from immigration (*ibid.* 38). The demographic transition among the Arab population in Israel, from high to low fertility rates, started only in the mid-1960s; until then Arabs had relatively high fertility rates as compared to the Jewish population.

Since the late 1960s, the Arab population experienced a steady, albeit gradual, decline in fertility, accompanied by family planning (Al-Haj 1987b). As during the Mandatory period, the Arab population has remained heterogeneous in terms of demographic characteristics. Muslims have throughout retained the highest fertility rates, followed by Druzes and Christians. Among the latter, the current fertility rate is even lower than that of the Jewish population (table 1.4).

As already mentioned, high natural increase among Arabs was a direct result of a marked decrease in mortality rates, in particular, among infants (Gilbar 1989). The Arab population consequently has a very young age structure, younger even than that which had existed during the Mandatory period. In 1955, the median age was 17.4 years among Muslims, 17.2 among Druzes, 20.4 among Christians, and 25.8 among Jews.

**Table 1.4** Total Fertility Rates among Arabs in Israel by Religion as Compared with Jews (1955–1990) (%)

YEAR	MUSLIMS	CHRISTIANS	DRUZES	JEWS
1955–59	8.17	4.56	7.21	3.56
1965–69	9.22	4.26	7.30	3.36
1970–74	8.47	3.65	7.25	3.28
1980–84	5.54	2.41	5.40	2.80
1990	4.70	2.57	4.05	2.31

Source: *SAI* 1989, Table III/17; 1991, p. 130.

Since obviously it is conversely related to fertility rates, the median age over time has increased among the Arab and the Jewish population, though the gap between them has remained. In 1990 the median age was 17.6 among Muslims, 18.8 among Druzes, 26.1 among Christians, and 28.2 among Jews (table 1.5).

One of the main results of this young age structure is the growing number of children of school age. Today some 38 percent of the Arab population are of school age (5–19), as compared to 28 percent among Jews. Taking into consideration that children at the ages 3–4 are eligible for precompulsory education, we may find that pupils constitute as high as 50 percent of the Arab population in Israel.

### Social Change

The Arabs in Israel have experienced conspicuous changes in the different areas, of which the rise in the level of education is probably the most salient. The rate of illiteracy among Arabs has decreased rapidly from about 50 percent in the 1960s to 36.1 percent in 1970, 18.9 percent in 1980, and to 15.2 percent in 1988 (table 1.6). At the same time, there has been a steady increase in tertiary education. While in 1961 only 1.5 percent of the Arab population aged 14 and over had post-secondary education, this increased to 8.9 percent in 1988.

This quantitative change was coupled with a change in quality and formed an encompassing process that included the various Arab religious groups, both the urban and rural population and

**Table 1.5** Age Structure of the Arab and the Jewish Population over Time (1955–1990) (%)

Age	MUSLIMS			CHRISTIANS			DRUZES			JEWS						
	1955	1965	1975	1990	1955	1965	1975	1990	1955	1965	1975	1990	1955	1965	1975	1990
0–4	19.7	23.2	20.8	16.2	15.0	15.4	12.8	9.8	20.0	20.1	18.7	15.1	13.6	10.5	11.5	10.4
5–14	28.2	29.5	31.3	30.1	23.5	25.0	22.5	21.4	25.4	29.5	29.9	29.0	20.3	21.8	18.4	19.5
15–19	10.4	8.6	11.9	11.9	10.9	9.5	10.7	9.8	10.1	8.7	11.4	11.4	7.4	10.7	9.1	8.3
20–34	19.3	20.1	19.4	23.4	22.2	22.2	22.5	26.0	21.0	19.5	19.2	23.9	22.4	19.1	24.0	23.1
36–44	7.0	7.0	7.2	7.8	8.3	10.6	11.2	11.7	8.2	8.7	7.8	7.9	13.2	12.0	10.1	11.9
45–64	10.0	7.7	7.2	7.9	14.3	12.0	12.7	15.5	10.5	9.1	9.0	9.0	18.4	13.6	18.2	16.6
65+	5.4	3.9	3.2	2.7	5.8	5.3	5.9	5.8	4.7	4.4	3.5	3.6	4.7	6.3	8.7	10.0
Median Age	17.4	13.8	14.2	17.6	20.4	20.0	21.2	26.1	17.2	15.2	15.6	18.8	25.8	25.0	25.7	28.2

Source: SAI 1986, p. 62; 1991, pp. 58–59.

Table 1.6 Persons Aged 14 and over by Group and Years of Schooling over Time

Year	ARABS						JEWS									
	0	1-4	5-8	9-10	11-12	13-15	16+	Median	0	1-4	5-8	9-10	11-12	13-15	16+	Median
1961	49.5	13.9	27.5	—	—	—	1.5	1.2	12.6	7.5	35.4	—	34.6	6.3	3.6	8.4
1970	36.1	13.7	35.1	—	—	17.0	0.4	5.0	9.3	6.3	31.7	—	39.7	10.7	7.0	10.3
1980	18.9	10.0	33.9	16.0	13.5	5.5	2.2	7.5	6.4	3.9	21.3	17.2	30.4	12.3	8.5	11.1
1990	13.0	6.5	30.8	17.4	23.2	6.1	3.0	9.0	4.2	2.4	13.7	13.5	38.0	16.0	12.2	11.9

Source: SAI 1991, pp. 604-605.

men as well as women. In 1987, women made up 22 percent of the Arab university graduates and about one third of the Arabs who studied at that time in the Israeli universities (Al-Haj 1988b).

Contact with the Jewish population, which for the Arabs is an agent of modernization, gradually increased. The Arabs in Israel have experienced profound bilingual and bicultural processes. This has facilitated their exposure to mass media and mass communication, including not just the Arabic but most of the Hebrew media as well (Smooha 1989).

At the same time, a parallel transformation took place in family life styles. The large-scale transition from agricultural work on the family farm to hired labor outside the village has caused the splitting up and weakening of the typical extended family. With it came the erosion of the patriarchal regime within the family. The distribution of a family's inheritance, once an effective means of control the patriarch could wield over his sons, has gradually lost much of its function. Due to government expropriation of lands, splitting up of property, and use of existing land reserved for building, the number of families that have little or nothing to bequeath has risen significantly. The marginality of income from agriculture has led to the marginality of lands as an economic source. More important, outside sources of employment have greatly reduced the dependence on inheritance, and few parents now use inheritance as a means of assuring the continued dependence of their sons. In turn, the social benefits provided for the elderly have taken away some of the concern of parents about how to support themselves in their old age.

At the level of the nuclear family, studies show that parents, with no exceptions, strongly aspire for their children to have a higher education (Mari and Benjamin 1975). The rise in the standard of living and the heavy exposure to the influence of the Jewish population and to the media have led to a variety of new consumption patterns among the Arab population. The individual needs of family members have come to play an important part in determining these patterns, and women and children whose influence in this area was limited, even marginal, in the past, now have an important role in the decision-making procedures of the family (Al-Haj 1987b).

The individual's relations with the hamula (kinship group) have also undergone a fundamental change. In traditional society, an individual's status was always closely tied to that of the hamula in the community. Members of the hamula intervened in matters directly concerning the individual, and conversely, the

interests of the hamula took on a high priority in the considerations of the individual. The control exerted by the hamula limited people's actions and forced rigid norms upon them that centered around the hamula collective and often pushed the individual into a marginal position. For the Arabs in Israel today, the influence of family connections on the individual's socioeconomic status has considerably weakened; instead the achievement factor has become more important (Rosenfeld 1980).

Together with a profound shift in their identity, i.e., from one derived from local traditional forms to one based first and foremost on a national consciousness, the Arabs in Israel have experienced a wide politicization process. The awareness of their status as a national minority has become eminently strong (Miari 1987), while the traditional leadership has been increasingly replaced by a young, educated, and sophisticated leadership (Rouhana 1989).

However, the change among the Arab population outlined above has been restricted to the individual-local level. It has been less obvious in the nationwide institutional level. While education is considered one of the main achievements of the Arab citizens, the returns from education are relatively low. The Arab intelligentsia has been absorbed neither into senior governmental positions nor into the Jewish private sector (Rekhes 1989; Ben-Rafael 1982). Arab university graduates are facing severe problems of unemployment and underemployment. A recent study revealed that 42 percent of the Arabs who graduated from the University of Haifa during the period 1982-1987 are either unemployed or have taken up blue-collar jobs (Al-Haj 1989b). While the Arabs proportionately form one-sixth of the population, only 1 out of 60 senior government positions is occupied by an Arab (Shipler 1986, 439). As of the early 1980s, there was not one single Arab among the 625 senior officials of the Prime Minister's Office, the Bank of Israel, the State Comptroller's Office, and the other ministries (*ibid.*).

While social change among Arabs has increased aspirations for socioeconomic mobility, the ethnic stratification in Israel is such that it has placed a clear mobility ceiling where the Arab citizens are concerned (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1986). The rise in the standard of living has not resulted in a diminishing gap between the Arab and the Jewish population. Instead, this gap continued to exist in several fields and in some cases has become even wider (Haidar 1990b; Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990). The educational gap, for example, is still very wide. As table 1.6 shows, the level of education among the Arabs today (1990) is lower than it had been among the Jewish population in the early 1970s. That is

to say, in the field of education, Arabs are lagging over two decades behind Jews. Moreover, the individual modernization among Arabs has not resulted in the formation of new modern social and political institutions, nor in genuine integration into the existing nationwide ones.

The shift of the focus of economic dependence from the local to the national level has meant a narrowing of the class structure of the Arab population and has included a decrease in class differences between and within hamulas. As a result, hamulas that were previously peripheral because of their low economic standing are now beginning to compete for control of the local center of power. These changes, together with the demographic concentration of the Arab population, eventually reinforced the political role of the hamula, mainly in local elections. Most of the lists in these elections are hamula-affiliated (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990). This redistribution of the hamulas, then, is to be seen in the context of economic and sociopolitical changes that have taken place over time (Rosenfeld 1980).

Social change among the Palestinian Arabs in Israel has been restricted by three main factors: social localization, economic delocalization, and political marginalization. These factors are the outcome of the low starting point of the Arabs in Israel, the formal policy of control adopted toward them, and their asymmetric relations with the Jewish majority.

### Social Localization

The Arabs in Israel live in three geocultural areas: the Galilee, the Little Triangle, and the Negev—the vast majority, about 85 percent, in separated Arab localities and only some 15 percent in mixed Jewish-Arab localities (SAI 1989). Even in the latter, the Arabs live in segregated neighborhoods (Waterman 1987; Ben-Artzi 1980).

In most developing societies, the proletarianization process has resulted in a large migration from rural areas to urban centers (Goldscheider 1987; Todaro 1976). Such a process has not taken place among the Arab population, where most of the Arab labor force commutes from Arab villages to Jewish industrial centers (Rosenfeld 1978; Jubran 1988). One of the main factors that produced this social territorialization was the imposition of the military government on the Arab population between 1949 and 1966, which severely restricted the movement of Israel's Arab citizens.

The result was not only the isolation of the Arabs from the Jewish population, but also the isolation of the Arab localities from one another (Kanaana 1975; Jiryis 1976).

The only major migratory movement that took place among Arabs was the forced migration of internal refugees and Bedouins. The former was collective in nature—in most cases an entire original community, or large parts of it, were moved together and settled at a new locality. These internal refugees have found themselves up against grave problems of adjustment, locally as well as in Israeli society at large, and have actually been pushed to the status of a “minority within the minority” (for a detailed analysis of the internal refugees see Al-Haj 1988a)

The Bedouins were concentrated in the framework of a sedentarization plan initiated by the government. This plan aimed at severely restricting their traditional nomadic movements and has resulted in the localization of almost the entire Bedouin population. Through the sudden transition from dry farming and cattle grazing to being a wage labor force, the Bedouins have seen their traditional life style disrupted in a way that has negatively affected their capacity to meet their needs. In addition, localization has eradicated their historical economic base and thereby greatly increased their dependency on the Jewish center (Alafenish 1987; Falah 1989).

The late 1970s saw a considerable demographic movement from Arab villages to mixed Jewish-Arab or even exclusively Jewish cities (Gonen and Khamaisi 1992). Several factors contributed to this phenomenon: the abolishment in 1966 of the military government, the relative integration of the Arabs into the Israeli-Jewish labor market, the growing shortage of land and housing in the Arab localities, and the increasing social confidence among the Arab minority as a result of demographic growth and social modernization. The increasing accessibility of the Jewish population may also have had something to do with this trend (Smoocha 1989). Likewise, the presence of Palestinian workers from the occupied territories in the Jewish cities, albeit temporary, may have formed a pull factor for Arabs in Israel by creating distinctive Arab social enclaves within these cities (Soffer 1988, 15). As a result, the number of mixed Jewish-Arab localities increased within the span of two decades from seven to nearly thirty (*ibid.*).

This trend, however, has met with vigorous opposition from large segments of the Jewish population, including a number of government officials. It has often been described as an “invasion” of settlements originally established as exclusively Jewish commu-

nities (Bar-Gal 1986, 51), and hence has been perceived not only as a threat to the "uniqueness" of those Jewish homogeneous areas, but also as contradictory to the basic ideology behind the settlement policy in Israel (Soffer 1988).

Paradoxically, the social localization of the Arabs contradicts formal government policy, which aims at diluting existing Arab population concentrations (Smootha 1982). Israeli policymakers invariably have viewed the demographic growth of Israel's Arabs together with territorial continuity as a security risk and repeatedly declared that such a situation could motivate the Arabs to demand autonomy and even separation from Israel (Soffer 1988; Smootha 1982). It was on this principle, e.g., that they instigated the "Judaization" of the Galilee, which was aimed in fact at promoting and facilitating the deterritorialization of the Arab population (Rosenfeld 1978).

Formal government policy toward the Arabs thus actually includes two contradictory elements: social localization and deterritorialization. This policy has not always been successful; social localization inevitably has led the Arabs to search for better ways in which to utilize their milieu, which through the increasing exposure of the Arab communities to one another has come to include the formation of cooperative networks between them. Today several Arab municipalities that are in each other's vicinity share educational, health, and other services as well as social and cultural activities. Also, villagers have been paving roads between the villages in order to establish better communication (Al-Haj and Rosenfeld 1990), while roads that essentially were paved between Jewish settlements as part of the Judaization of the Galilee paradoxically have helped facilitate interaction between Arab villages in the north and have further strengthened the contact between them (Soffer 1988).

The lack of a large urbanization process among the Arab population, in terms of migration to urban centers, has resulted in latent urbanization (Meir-Brodnitz 1971). The built-up areas in the Arab settlements have been conspicuously expanded, even in many cases leading to territorial continuity between different communities (Soffer 1981).

## Economic Delocalization

In a situation different from that of their social localization, the Arabs in Israel have been subjected to a continuous process of eco-

conomic delocalization. This process is reflected in the eradication of their local economic base and the tightening of their dependency on the Jewish center (Rosenfeld 1978). Land confiscation by the government formed an important factor in this policy. Land under Arab ownership was reduced to less than one third of what it was during the Mandate period (Abu-Kishk 1981, 31). The major part of these lands was confiscated during the first decade after the creation of the state when the Arabs were in an especially vulnerable position and under the tight control of the military government. The Israeli government issued a series of laws and regulations, among them the Absentee Property Law of 1950, which made it legal to confiscate the property of Palestinian refugees, including those who had remained in Israel and were known as the "present absentees" (Cohen 1989). Later, the military government used several regulations to transfer Arab lands into the state's possession, namely, the regulations of the "closed areas," "security zones," "cultivation of waste lands ordinance," and the defence (emergency) regulations of 1945 (Jiryis 1981).

The expropriation of much of their lands and the concomitant internal social processes outlined above resulted for the Arabs in the radical transformation of their economy, which became predominantly based on wage labor instead of on agriculture. While in 1955 about 49 percent of the Arab labor force worked in agriculture, this decreased to 40 percent in 1967, to 17 percent in 1977, and to only 7.2 percent in 1989 (Tel-Aviv University 1979, 11; SAI 1990, 352).

The Arab worker is situated at the bottom of the labor force ladder, i.e., he is mainly employed in services and construction in addition to manual jobs in industry (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1986). Economically, Israel's Arab minority is considered an underdeveloped group (Ben-Shahar and Marx 1972, 11). While a broad Jewish middle class has developed and prospered in such areas as finance, import/export, industry, and entrepreneurship of every size and description, essentially it is a middle class that, created and subsidized by the state, excludes Arabs, although some Arabs have succeeded in entering its periphery and others share in its benefits (Rosenfeld 1978).

No industrial or other economic local base ever developed in the Arab settlements to replace the agrarian one. A survey conducted in 1986 revealed that there are only 400 "production units" in the Arab localities in Israel, most of them run on a very low technological level (Jubran 1988, 30). Only 19 percent of these production units can be defined as factories demanding professional

training and these are mostly owned by Jewish businessmen. The vast majority of the production units consist of small factories for textile and construction materials, and together they employ only 6 percent of the Arab labor force (*ibid.*).

The Arab business sector is also limited, characterized by a large number of small businesses in the fields of trade, subcontractors, crafts, and transportation. In addition, a large part of the economic means that have accumulated in the Arab sector are not exploited for the development of an economic base in Arab localities. Rather, they are invested in the Jewish sector via government, Histadrut, or private companies (Haidar 1990b, 130), mainly because of the lack of industrial infrastructure in Arab localities and the exclusion of large Arab communities from governmental development plans (*ibid.* 131).

Despite the relative upward mobility of Arabs in the Israeli labor market, the gap between them and the Jewish population has remained stable over time and in some aspects has even grown wider (Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1986, 350). The Arab population as a group has remained dependent on the Jewish majority, who control the economic center and the national opportunity structure (Rosenfeld 1978).

### Political Marginalization

As citizens of Israel, the Arabs from the outset were granted the right to vote in free democratic elections for the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. Nevertheless, their share in the national power center has remained limited. The circumstances in which the Arabs found themselves in the aftermath of Israeli statehood greatly facilitated their political control. The absence of a national leadership, together with a low level of political consciousness among the Arab citizens during the first years of the state, furnished the base for the promotion by the government of the traditional local hamula leadership. This policy aimed at gaining control over the entire Arab population via a few key people while simultaneously preserving and encouraging internal divisions so as to counteract the formation of a collective national identity or even any approachment toward political left-wing parties (Rosenfeld 1978).

The instrument used was the military administration (Cohen 1965; Lustick 1980). As the ruling political party, Mapai controlled the military apparatus, and this gave it a strong hold over and tremendous influence on the Arab communities in their local

authorities. The military administration excluded from the start those members of the local leadership who showed resistance to the establishment. In many cases new *mukhtars* (community leaders) were appointed in addition to those already serving as such, in an effort to foster new leadership and thus to establish and reinforce the trend of collaboration with the authorities and also to increase competition between the various factions (Lustick 1980).

At the national level, partisan participation among the Arabs was only minor. One reason was that Arab citizens were not particularly eager to join existing parties and thus enter nationwide politics (Landau 1969), but even more important was the total absence of a political organization that could have appealed to them. Arabs were not accepted as members in the Zionist parties, nor could they, of course, identify with the basic ideology of these parties (Nakhleh 1975; Landau 1969).

Some of the most efficient instruments of channeling Arab votes, in particular until the late 1960s, were the Arab-affiliated lists initiated and backed by Zionist parties—mainly the Labor Party (Landau 1969; Abu-Gosh 1972). Their purpose was not the political mobilization of the Arab populations, but rather the “catching” of Arab votes through the traditional means of persuasion (Landau 1969). The structure of the Arab-affiliated lists was tailored to fit the deep social localization of the Arab population and its traditional character (Nakhleh 1975). Until the seventh Knesset elections (1969), the Arab-affiliated lists were the major political framework among the Arab minority, collecting between 30 and 50 percent of the Arab votes (table 1.7).

However, from the early 1970s onward, the Arab-affiliated lists began to lose influence. They did very poorly in the tenth Knesset elections in 1981, and none of them were elected to the Knesset (Al-Haj and Yaniv 1983), and afterward they disappeared altogether from the national political arena.

At the same time, several factors account for a deepening of the politicization process among the Arab population and an increasing tendency to take full part in the competition for a share of the national power center. Social change led to a growing political awareness of their own potential in this respect and of the importance of the available democratic means for the improvement of their status. That is to say, since as a result of high fertility and a change in age structure their proportion among the total number of voters increased, so did the political value of the Arab sector. In the last elections, in 1992, Arabs constituted some 12 percent of the total eligible votes. Therefore, large parties counted on

Arab voters to determine the outcome of the competition between the right and the left (*Yediot Ahronot* June 22, 1992).

The abolishment of the military government in 1966 and the growing accessibility of the Jewish majority population have facilitated the contact between the Arabs and the Jewish center. The increasing level of education among the young Arab generation and their growing number have made them more aware of the rules of the "political game" whereby the traditional methods of persuasion have lost their influence (Rosenfeld 1978; Smooha 1989).

The early 1970s witnessed a strong national awakening among the Arab minority in Israel. The renewed contact between the Arabs in Israel and their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 Israeli occupation, the rise of the Palestinian National Movement and the increasing international recognition of the PLO, and the results of the 1973 war, which did much to restore feelings of pride and dignity among the Arab minority (Rekhes 1989), were all contributing factors.

This national awakening, which some scholars have called "Palestinization" (Smooha 1984), has been accompanied by an increasing demand among the Arab citizens for integration into the Israeli society. The growing perception by the Arabs in Israel of their future as firmly linked to the state of Israel has in turn increased their attempts to participate in the decision making on all matters that concern them directly, including the allocation of resources and the shaping of their political future.

However, the aforementioned politicization of the Arab minority and its eagerness for political integration in the overall political system have not brought them a share in the national power center (Rosenfeld 1978; Lustick 1980). That is, the Arab minority has remained excluded from Israel's nation-state building, which is one of the factors that have led to a growing process of political separation. As repeatedly emphasized, the formal policy toward the Arabs in Israel is directed by three contradictory principles: the state's democratic feature, its Jewish-Zionist feature, and security concerns (Smooha 1982; Lustick 1980; Rouhana 1989). While the first principle propels toward equality and integration of Arabs, the other two pull in the opposite direction, i.e., toward inequality and separation. When considered together, it is clear that of these three features the Jewish-Zionist one and security concerns gain the upper hand (Carmi and Rosenfeld 1989).

The legal status of the Arab population in Israel includes different forms of direct and indirect discrimination. While there are

**Table 1.7** Distribution of Arab Vote Over Time

Knesset	Total Eligible Votes	ARAB VOTERS			BREAKDOWN OF ARAB VOTE										
		Eligible	%	Valid	Communist Party Since 1977, DFPE		Arab-Jewish Parties		Arab Lists Aligned with Mapai		Labor Party Mapai, Latter Alignment		Total Zionist Parties		
					N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
1st	506,567	33,250	6.6	26,332	79	5,750	22	—	—	7,383	28	3,633	10	—	—
2nd	924,885	68,914	7.5	53,984	86	9,432	16	—	—	32,288	55	6,786	11	15,600	26
3rd	1,057,795	86,898	8.2	77,979	90	11,847	15	—	—	37,761	48	10,829	14	18,089	23
4th	1,218,483	96,608	7.9	81,764	85	8,813	11	—	—	34,353	42	8,046	10	21,164	26
5th	1,271,285	104,884	8.3	86,843	83	19,308	22	—	—	35,376	40	8,558	10	25,499	29
6th	1,499,709	129,909	8.6	106,342	82	24,618	23	—	—	39,394	38	13,353	13	28,963	27
7th	1,748,710	146,823	8.4	117,190	80	34,858	28	—	—	46,374	40	20,746	17	32,200	27
8th	2,037,478	173,292	8.5	133,058	77	49,326	37	—	—	35,699	27	17,065	13	38,000	29

## ARAB VOTERS

## BREAKDOWN OF ARAB VOTE

Knesset	Total Eligible Votes	Eligible	%	Valid	%	Communist Party Since 1977, DFPE		Arab-Jewish Parties		PLP	Arab Lists Aligned with Mapai		Labor Party Mapai, Latter Alignment		Total Zionist Parties		
						N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%	
9th																	
1977	2,236,293	198,137	8.9	145,295	74	71,718	50	—	—	—	23,502	16	16,327	11	30,756	21	
10th																	
1981	2,490,014	242,748	9.8	164,862	68	60,397	37	—	—	—	20,590	12	47,379	29	74,988	45	
11th																	
1984	2,654,613	276,973	10.4	199,968	72	63,397	32	35,214	18	18	(Arab Demo- cratic Party)		51,546	26	100,936	50.4	
12th																	
1988	2,894,000	347,000	12.0	241,601	74	81,714	34	32,879	14	14	26,385	11	41,636	17	100,624	42	
13th																	
1992	3,409,015	351,646	11.8	261,077	69.7	60,954	23.2	23,678	9.2	9.2	39,868	15.2	52,983	20.3	136,503	52.3	

Source: Al-Haj and Yaniv (1983), p. 143; Al-Haj (forthcoming).

overtly discriminatory laws (such as the Law of Return), there is also legislation that facilitates covert forms of discrimination (like privileges linked to military service) and legislation that allows certain forms of institutional discrimination (Kretzmer 1990). The result is that Arabs have only "partial membership" in Israeli society (Ben-Rafael 1982, 206). They are excluded from its main national organizations and from its legitimate core political culture (ibid.; Lustick 1980). While non-Zionist ultraorthodox parties are considered legitimate partners in the government coalition, the Arab parties are not (Galnoor 1989, 40).

The political separation of the Arab minority is also affected by the nature of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. Most of the interpersonal relations between Arabs and Jews are formal, technical, and characterized by asymmetric minority-majority relations (Hofman 1988). This asymmetry is also reflected in the political sphere. While large-scale well-organized Jewish parties and associations have continuously penetrated the Arab minority, there has never occurred a corresponding effective penetration of the Jewish majority by the predominantly Arab parties (Cohen 1965).

Although political separatism on the whole is imposed on the Arab minority in Israel, some Arab political groups have refrained voluntarily from participation in the parliamentary politics and have established themselves as extraparliamentary organizations. Most prominent among them are Abna el-Balad (the Sons of the Land) and the Islamic Movement. Rejecting the right of Israel to exist as a Zionist-Jewish state, Abna el-Balad have repeatedly declared that the Israeli Parliament and its elections are illegitimate (Al-Haj and Yaniv 1983). Abna el-Balad, however, have failed to expand their base among the Arab population and remain a marginal group even in local Arab politics (Smooha 1989, 108).

Unlike Abna el-Balad, the Islamic Movement did succeed in attaining a position of strength and influence among the Arab population. While participating in local politics, the Islamic Movement so far has refused to take part in parliamentary elections. This stand was also evident in the recent parliamentary elections (June 23, 1992), where the Islamic Movement was not an active partner. However, the Islamic Movement did not boycott these elections, but rather called upon its followers to use their right and vote (*Haaretz* May 14, 1992). In an interview (January 1992), the mayor of Um el-Fahm and one of the prominent leaders of the Islamic movement, Sheikh Raid Salah totally rejected the possibility that his movement might run in the Knesset elections.

In this chapter, we have presented the various aspects of the development of the Arabs in Israel and their status as a minority population. This background will serve us for the understanding of the contextual factors affecting the education system among Arabs at the local and national levels. In the next chapter, we shall provide a brief survey of the education system among the Palestinian population in the pre-state period as compared to the Jewish population.