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The limits of dissent: Palestinian media in a Jewish ethnocracy

ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of new political communication strategies upon state policy towards Palestinian Arab media in Israel. While the majority of studies on Palestinian Arab media in Israel have tended to focus upon patterns of media production or consumption by the minority, little attention has been given to the relationship between the structural dimensions of power and inequality in society and the development of Palestinian counter-hegemony in Israel. This article examines the location of Palestinian Arab media within the broader system of Jewish ethnocratic control in Israel and argues that despite the diverse range of modern media at its disposal, the Palestinian Arab minority – together with its media – remains marginalized and limited in its ability to affect political change within Israeli society.

A NATIONAL MINORITY IN A JEWISH ETHNOCRATIC STATE

Following the armistice agreements of 1949, approximately 150,000 Palestinians became citizens of the State of Israel (Peleg 2004: 416–17). Today, this number has grown to over 1.5 million, representing 20 per cent of the total population (CBS 2010). While historically and culturally part of the wider Palestinian people, Palestinian Arabs in Israel have, since

1948, followed a unique political and historical trajectory as Israeli citizens. Variously referred to as 'Arab Israelis', 'Palestinian Arabs in Israel', '48 Arabs' or 'Insider Arabs' (*Arab fi Dakhil)*, they enjoy many of the same benefits and rights as Israeli Jews.

Despite these benefits, Palestinian Arabs in Israel have faced significant problems as a direct result of their national identity and the particular nature of the state. Marginalized as a non-Jewish minority and suspected as a potential fifth column, the presence of a sizable, indigenous Palestinian Arab national minority has posed an implicit, and sometimes also an explicit, counter-hegemonic challenge not only to the ideological concept of a Jewish state but to the future maintenance of a Jewish demographic majority within it.

It was within this atmosphere of fear and suspicion that the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel was subjected to eighteen years of harsh military rule (1948–66) (Peleg 2004: 417). Already weakened by a war which saw them significantly reduced in number and disconnected from each other in three main Arab enclaves in Israel (the Galilee, the Triangle and the Negev) – and without any form of political, intellectual, economic or cultural leadership to guide or represent their interests – military rule imposed tight controls which further restricted their ability to move, work, organize and speak freely. In addition to physical containment, political surveillance and censorship, military rule allowed the wide-scale expropriation of Arab lands by the state and its agencies, thereby facilitating Jewish settlement and undermining what were perceived to be residual Arab strongholds in the country (Jiryis 1968; Jamal 2009b: 29–32).

One of the first to focus on the discriminatory and instrumental nature of Israeli state policy towards the Palestinian Arab minority, and its broader impact upon state–minority relations in Israel, was Sammy Smooha. In his 1978 study, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict,* Smooha argued that the Israeli authorities were interested in engineering the 'pacification' of the minority through a combination of carrot-and-stick initiatives, whereby the 'carrot' of voluntary 'compliance' was understood to be based on recognition of the obvious benefits, incentives and rewards available to them as citizens of the state, and the 'stick' was based on their forced 'economic dependence' on, and 'political subordination' to, the Jewish majority (Smooha 1978: 45–46). Critically, Smooha made a radical departure from earlier and more traditional analyses of Israel as a liberal democracy by suggesting that Israel's policy towards its Palestinian Arab minority could, cumulatively speaking, be understood as 'an effective machinoy of control-exclusion, dependence and subordination' (Smooha 1978: 45). This he developed through his understanding of Israel as an 'ethnic democracy' (Smooha 1997: 199–200).

While Smooha led the way in challenging the hegemonic, or pro-establishment, Israeli academic view of the state as a 'normal' democracy, he nonetheless maintained that Israel is basically more democratic than ethnic in nature. This conclusion was, however, rigorously challenged by other Israeli academics, such as Oren Yiftachel, As'ad Ghanem and Nadim Rouhana, who argued that the presence of democratic features alone represents an insufficient criterion for defining Israel as a democratic state (Ghanem et al. 1998: 254). Having identified a basic dissonance between the concepts of 'democracy' and 'ethnicity', they argued that given the contradiction between democratic and ethnic principles and interests, an asymmetrical relationship, or hierarchy, exists between them, with the ethnic nature of the state dominating, or subordinating, the democratic strand when the two collide.

Of the features that characterize ethnocratic regimes and that distinguish them from other forms of governance, Yiftachel stressed that not only is ethnicity the overriding determinant of rights and privileges in an ethnocratic state, but that the 'charter' group, which Smooha refers to as the 'core ethnic nation', 'appropriates the state apparatus, determines most public policies, and segregates itself from other groups' (Yiftachel 1999b: 367–68). In addition to the institutional segregation and stratification of ethnic groups in society, ethnocratic regimes legitimize themselves not only through a supportive 'cultural and ideological apparatus' but also through the maintenance of 'selective openness', which, in turn, facilitates the operation of a complex and extensive system of control (Yiftachel 1999b: 367–68).

Yiftachel has primarily tested his understanding of Israel as an ethnocratic regime through several studies examining the discriminatory nature of the state's land policies, particularly with regard to urban planning, settlement and zoning strategies (Yiftachel 1995, 1999a and 1999b). His analyses, while focusing on recent policies, rely heavily on earlier contributions made by Ian Lustick in his groundbreaking work, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority.* Writing in 1980, Lustick was interested in exploring the 'seeming docility' of the Palestinian Arab minority and why 'Arab discontent' with discriminatory policies had not led to either an outbreak of ethnic conflict in society or to their political mobilization (Lustick 1980: 8, 15, 24). Lustick concluded that the reasons lay in 'the presence of a highly effective system of control which, since 1948, has operated over Israeli Arabs' (Lustick 1980: 25). Observing a highly sophisticated and predominantly extralegal system of control which operated alongside, but not subordinate to, official proclamations, declarations, laws and policies of the state, Lustick identified three main components or 'functional requisites' which define the Israeli control system: segmentation, dependence and co-optation which were reinforced and operationalized through structural, institutional and programmatic dimensions of power (Lustick: 1980: 77).

Seen cumulatively, Israel's system of control is understood to be based on the 'network of mutually reinforcing relations which has emerged from these structural, institutional and programmatic patterns' and the 'reciprocal interdependencies' which have been forged between them based upon each separate level of analysis (Lustick 1980: 77–78). While Lustick's systemic approach highlighted the complex, dialectical and evolving nature of control, as well as the capacity of the overall system of control to change and adapt itself over time in line with new circumstances and realities, the relevance of his approach to current understandings of state policy towards the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel has been weakened by two main factors.

The first factor concerns the temporal limits of his research and how he anticipated various 'challenges to the system' would ultimately become reconciled within it. Lustick's analysis focused primarily on the period of military rule. With the end of military rule in 1966, and the relaxation of the bulk of emergency regulations which had hitherto contained and repressed the Palestinian Arab minority, a new period of self-confidence and awareness emerged within the minority. Following renewed contact with Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) from 1967, the Palestinian Arab minority underwent a national revival, which was, in turn, reflected in the nature of their political engagement. The 'Palestinization' (Rekhess 2007: 7) of minority politics in Israel brought to a definitive end the notion of a 'quiescent' and 'docile' minority (Lustick 1980: 232–50). Faced with growing challenges to its control system,

Lustick forecast three different possible regime responses: 'system adaptation, breakdown or transformation'. Given the concomitant strengthening of democratic forces within society, and the emergence of important Israeli Jewish circles which were critical of the state and its policy towards the minority, Lustick and others forecast that the Israeli system of control was coming to an end (Lustick 1980: 252–65). This optimistic assumption undermined his previous understanding of the dialectical and dynamic nature of control in maintaining stability in deeply divided societies. It also overlooked the structural potential for a sophistication of control in line with changing circumstances and realities over time. Despite this, Lustick's contributions to systemic control theory continue to influence critical scholarship on the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel (see, for example, Falah 1991, al-Haj 1995 or Ghanem 1998).

The second major weakness of Lustick's analytical framework concerns the dated nature of the policy areas that he examined and the rigid nature of his analytical framework. While land policies, electoral politics and the politics of identity (and recognition) continue to play major parts of the state's control strategies today, little conceptual space has been provided in Lustick's analytical framework to accommodate changes over time, particularly with regard to the impact of new cultural and political developments and processes upon the nature and format of control. This is strikingly evident with respect to the role of the media.

The development of new political communication and media strategies, and its impact upon state policies towards the Palestinian Arab minority, has not been adequately dealt with either within the existing literature on the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel or within the broader literature on Israeli media. Traditionally subsumed within broader political studies of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel, the growing importance of new political communication and media strategies has, until recently, received very little in the way of focused or critical attention.

Haim Koren, for example, has analysed the development and consumption of media by the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel according to four different categories: domestic (Israeli) media (including Arabic media in Israel), Palestinian media (in Israel and the OPTs), regional (Arabic) media and international (Arabic) media. This study, which frames its analysis within the pro-establishment discourse of the 'identity problem' of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel as 'a minority (Arab citizens of Israel) inside a minority (Jews of Israel inside the Arab Middle East) inside a majority (Arabs in the entire Middle East)', ignores the ethnocratic nature of the state entirely and analyses the development both of Palestinian Arab media as a largely independent and free-floating institution (Koren 2003: 213).

By contrast, Michael Dahan's short study examining the impact of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) upon Palestinian media in Israel focuses on the relationship between new technologies and media production. Identifying new 'possibilities for empowerment' that these new ICTs have created for the minority, he acknowledges that 'the political and cultural hegemony of the Jewish majority in Israel is maintained in spite of the democratic potential of CMC [computer-mediated communication] and ICTs'. Whilst recognizing that the 'democratic potential' of ICTs is stuck between the 'rock' of 'discrimination within Israeli society' and the 'hard place' of 'lack of infrastructure, training and investment in IT in the Arab sector in Israel', his analysis falls short of accounting for the systemic role of state controls in limiting the capacity of ICTs for the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel (Dahan 2003).

The go-to scholar on Palestinian Arab media in Israel, Amal Jamal, has also thrown important light on the 'structural opportunities' provided by the globalization of mass media to minorities 'to overcome state control and surveillance policies and develop counter-hegemonic public spheres that meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the minority' (Jamal 2009b: 1–2). Jamal's work is, however, primarily concerned with the consumption of Palestinian Arab media by the minority itself. While identifying Israel to be a 'nationalizing state' that is based on a hegemonic 'core nation' (Jamal 2009b: 23–24), Jamal fails to address either the impact of the minority's counter-hegemonic discourse upon state hegemony or the response of a 'nationalizing state' such as Israel to the minority's counter-hegemonic discourse. By choosing to focus on Palestinian Arab media in isolation from its wider structural context, the dialectical nature of the relationship between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in Israel is minimized, as is the capacity for understanding changes to the systemic nature of state control over time.

This article will contribute to the existing literature by charting state responses to the development of counter-hegemonic Palestinian media over time and analysing the impact that these responses have had on the systemic nature of ethnocratic control in Israel today.

THE EVOLUTION OF PALESTINIAN ARAB MEDIA IN ISRAEL

The most widely distributed newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century were *Filisteen, al-Karmel, al-Difa'a* and *al-Mufid* (Jamal 2009a: 562; Jamal 2009b: 40). While readership of these newspapers remained restricted to the Palestinian elites – a trend caused by large gaps in education, literacy and general socio-economic standards between different segments of the population – their existence played an important part in a broader process of political development that saw the emergence of modern Palestinian national consciousness as a distinct communal and political identity in the region (Khalidi 1997: 42).

The development of distinct Palestinian media was interrupted with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Following the first Arab–Israeli war, only one Arabic newspaper, *al-Ittihad/Unity,* was to survive in Israel (Jamal 2009: 41). Founded in 1944 as the Arabic organ of the Communist Party, the survival of this newspaper was in significant part due to its former marginal role within the Palestinian political elite and the mixed Jewish–Arab ranks of the Communist Party (Kaufman 1997: 26–28). Until the early 1980s, *al-Ittihad* dominated the Arabic print press scene in Israel and became not only the principal 'Arab national newspaper for Insider Arabs' but was also considered to be the 'authentic representative' of Arab national views in Israel (Koren 2003: 215–16).

Given the absence of competition, *al-Ittihad* was in the paradoxical position of being both counter-hegemonic and hegemonic at the same time. As one of the few opposition newspapers (and the only Arabic newspaper) allowed to legally operate in Israel, it had exclusive and, for several decades, unrivalled dominance in the Palestinian Arab media sector. It was the only newspaper in Israel, or the Middle East for that matter, to provide critical coverage of issues relating specifically to local and national Palestinian Arab affairs, which it did from its own political perspective. As the dominant voice of dissent within the minority, it provided a showcase for several renowned Palestinian writers and poets, including Emil Habibi, Emil Touma, Hana Ibrahim, Tawfiq Ziad, Samih al-Qasim and Mahmoud Darwish.

The ethnic make-up of its editorial ranks, together with its clear political and counter-hegemonic attitude towards the authorities, galvanized the negative reputation that it had with an Israeli establishment, which saw it as a tool of political radicalization and extremism within the minority. Due to its important communicative and representative function on behalf of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel – and for a certain period on behalf of the Palestinian population of the West Bank also – the authorities employed a number of different carrot-and-stick measures to limit or offset its counter-hegemonic capacity.

The strategies adopted to counteract the influence of *al-Ittihad* varied, but initially followed a crude and unsophisticated format. Following the establishment of the state, the newly created Ministry of the Interior ordered the office of the newspaper to be closed for a brief period and in May 1952 the newspaper's office was once again closed by the authorities (Stendel 1996: 213–14). In both cases, closure was justified by the authorities on 'security' grounds. The closure of 1952, for instance, followed an article which *al-Ittihad* published criticizing the government's position on the Korean War. The article – which was originally run in its Hebrew-language counterpart (*Kol Ha-Am)* – resulted in both newspapers being closed for fifteen days on the grounds that they were 'endangering public safety' (Stendel 1996: 213–14).

Such measures, however, did not go unchallenged. The decision to close the newspapers' offices in 1952 was lifted following a successful petition by both newspapers to the Israeli Supreme Court. The petition represented a landmark case in Israel and in Israeli law. The petitioners charged the authorities for breach of freedom of speech, and won, thus illustrating not only the tensions between the ethnic and democratic interests of the state but the effective use of democratic channels to protect the counter-hegemonic discourse of Palestinian Arab media in Israel. This landmark decision, however, had another important consequence. Illustrating the reflexive and reciprocal nature of power in society, the control strategies employed by the authorities to curb the counter-hegemonic capacity of Palestinian media adapted to become more cautious, sophisticated and intelligent.

Aware of the democratic limits of control based on crude strategies such as military censorship and closure, the government launched a series of pro-state Arabic newspapers that sought not only to challenge the dominance of *al-Ittihad* but to encourage 'accommodationist' elements within the minority. *Al-Yawm/Today* was launched in 1948 by the Histadrut, the General Federation of Labour (later integrated into the Arabic Press House, within the Office of the Prime Minister), as the official Arabic-language organ of the Mapai government in order to fill what it perceived to be an 'information vacuum' within the Palestinian Arab media sector in Israel (Yu and Cohen 2009: 191; Jamal 2009b: 42–43). The newspaper, however, lacked credibility and readership within the Palestinian Arab sector and was shut down in 1967.

Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which served to further undermine the credibility of the state amongst Palestinians in Israel, a new Arabic publication, *al-Anbaa/The News* was launched by the authorities as 'the mouthpiece of Israeli official propaganda' (Yu and Cohen 2009: 191). Unlike *al-Yawm,* however, *al-Anbaa* was primarily focused on Palestinian readers in the OPTs, and while it attempted to offer a more conciliatory tone to the minority by allowing some space for criticism of state policies within its pages, it ultimately failed to attract readers and was closed in 1984 (Jamal 2009b: 46).

Mapam, the main opposition Zionist party in Israel at the time, also ran an Arabic weekly newspaper called *al-Mirsad/Observation Post*. Established in 1951, it employed local Palestinian journalists and accommodated criticism of Mapai policies within the framework of its own political opposition. As a publication affiliated with a Zionist party, however, its ability to reflect the national and political sentiment of the minority was constrained and, as a result of a diminishing volume of readers and growing financial concerns, the newspaper was finally closed in 1976 (Magal 2010: 115–16).

The crude control strategies of closure and the more sophisticated control measures of state propaganda were unable to bring about the type of long-term results desired by the state, namely the promotion of an accommodationist and quietist Arab minority in Israel that would forego its national identity and rights and accept the political status quo of an ethnocratic state dominated by its Jewish 'core nation'. For some analysts, this illustrated the resilient and effective nature of Palestinian Arab counter-hegemonic strategies and the gradual democratization of state policies towards the minority. Such accounts, however, overlook two things. The first is that closures continued to take place, albeit sporadically, in later years despite the increased democratic openness of society (Ghanem 1998: 437). Such closures, as will be shown later on, were justified according to the traditional terminology of 'security', thus contradicting or at the very least undermining the notion of a linear pattern of policy development. The second dimension, which is often overlooked in analyses that centralize the democratizing nature of Israeli policy over time is the resilient and adaptive nature of an ethnocratic state and its ability to respond to and deal with challenges to its hegemony from within. The decreasing significance of crude and direct control strategies did not signify an end to state control. While certain measures were largely abandoned, other more sophisticated, selective and indirect control strategies were gradually introduced over time, which limited the capacity of the minority's counter-hegemonic discourse to upset the political status quo in a more efficient and effective way.

One area which illustrates the development of a system of control that is based on more sophisticated, selective and indirect measures is the Israeli legal system. While strategies of controlling Palestinian Arab media through legal means have become more typical of today's media environment, they are not of recent origin. In the early years of the state, attempts at media censorship through legal exclusion emerged spontaneously and on a largely ad hoc basis. This is demonstrated by the response of the Israeli authorities to the al-Ard/ The Land movement. Following violent clashes with Israeli police in Nazareth in May 1958, the al-Ard movement was established in Israel. Taking a more overtly nationalistic stand than the Communist Party on issues relating to the minority, al-Ard publications succeeded in attracting Arab journalists and readers alike who were disenchanted with both the state and with the narrow political interests expressed in *al-Ittihad*. From the outset, the authorities viewed the al-Ard movement as a distinct and radical threat. Despite several appeals to the Supreme Court, the movement was refused a legal permit to register itself as a party and, as a result, they were also denied a legal permit to publish. In an attempt to defy the state's ruling, al-Ard publications were distributed illegally. Demonstrating, however, the practical and economic pressures and obstacles which result from the lack of legal recognition, such publications could only be issued irregularly. Aware that the absence of legal recognition jeopardized their ability to survive politically, the movement

sought to challenge the state by lobbying its case internationally. This media-based counter-move, however, did not succeed. In 1964, the Supreme Court declared the movement illegal and three of the movement's leaders were arrested (Zureik 1979: 172–74; Jamal 2009b: 49–50). The Court's decision to make the al-Ard movement illegal was justified in the Israeli press in national hegemonic terms for 'ignoring the will of the Jewish majority in Israel as well as the State's authorities' (Zureik 1979: 174), which illustrates the growing confidence of the establishment to protect the ethnic nature of the state, even when such decisions contradict democratic norms and expectations.

With the termination of the worst excesses of military rule in 1966 and the re-establishment of contact between Palestinians in Israel and in the OPTs in 1967, the political engagement and national awareness of the minority increased substantially. Despite its elitist nature, *al-Ittihad* continued to play a major role in formulating and galvanizing dissent against state policies both in the OPTs and within Israel proper. In 1976, for instance, Palestinian poet and long-time mayor of Nazareth, Tawfiq Ziad, who also served as Minister of Knesset (MK) for the Communist Party (Rakah), used the newspaper to effectively organize Palestinian strikes throughout the country against the government's programme of wide-scale land expropriation in the Galilee (dubbed the 'Judaization of the Galilee' or *Yehud ha-Galil* in Hebrew). The strikes of 30 March 1976, which have since become commemorated as the first Land Day (*Yawm al-Ard*), resulted in the death of six non-armed Palestinian Arab citizens by security forces (Kaufman 1997: 55–57).

The negative attitude of the authorities towards the Communist Party (Rakah) and *al-Ittihad* was exposed in a confidential and internal ministerial memorandum that was leaked to the Israeli press in September 1976. The leaked report, known as the Koenig Report, was written just one month prior to the Land Day strikes and laid bare the attitude of the authorities towards the party and the minority as a whole, and made a range of policy recommendations to contain and control them (MERIP 1976: 12). Although the Koenig Report confirmed many of the suspicions of the minority regarding the state's attitudes and intentions towards it, many of the policy recommendations that it put forward had, by that time, become increasingly impractical to implement. This is not to suggest that they were totally abandoned. In 1988, for instance, Israeli Prime Minister and acting Minister of the Interior, Yitzhak Shamir, ordered the offices of *al-Ittihad* closed for six days 'as he was convinced that it was a factor inciting public riots along with the anticipated demonstrations' of the minority in the run up to the Land Day commemorations and against the backdrop of the first intifada which had commenced the year beforehand (Stendel 1996: 217). But from the late 1970s, and particularly from the 1980s, new obstacles to control emerged in Israel which followed processes of change in local politics, on the one hand, and transformations of Israeli media law, on the other, and which necessitated changes in the level and nature of engagement by the authorities.

Once isolated and disconnected, the Palestinian Arab minority became reconnected with Palestinians in the OPTs in 1967. With the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty of 1979, these new contacts gradually expanded to include Arabs throughout the region. This period saw not only new levels of exposure and access to Arab media in the region as a whole but also witnessed the growing diversification and privatization of Palestinian Arab media as a whole. Several new Arabic newspapers were established in the 1980s which broke the monopoly which *al-Ittihad* had held over Arab readers and challenged

its dominant political representative function on behalf of the minority. This period also witnessed a shift in the typical format and content of newspapers in Israel. Once dominated by a Hebrew and Arabic 'political press' (Magal 2010: 139), unaffiliated private and popular press became the new leaders of the print-press industry in Israel. The first in this new generation of private Arabic newspapers was the weekly *as-Sinaara/The Lighthouse* newspaper, which was established in Nazareth in 1983 as a marketing tool for a local advertising firm. *As-Sinaara* was followed four years later by *Kul al-Arab* (1987) and one year later by *Panorama* (1988). These three newspapers followed the commercial model set by Hebrew tabloids such as *Yediot Aharanot* and *Maariv* and have come to dominate the majority share of the Arab newspaper market in Israel (Jamal 2009b: 65–67).

The diversification of the Arabic print-press industry in Israel in the 1980s is frequently cited as proof of the modernization of Palestinian media in Israel and as a testimony of the democratization and liberalization of Israeli state policy towards the minority. Given the new plurality and diversity of Arabic media, or media in Arabic, it is implied that the ability of the state to control its minority is significantly diminished if not removed entirely. The veracity of this statement is, however, challenged by a closer examination of the content and format of these new Arabic media.

It has already been observed that the emergence of a new dominant generation of commercial press came directly at the expense of politically affiliated newspapers. This shifting dynamic, however, has had critically important consequences not only for the content of newspapers, but for their perceived level of threat by the authorities. As Jamal has noted, newspapers such as *as-Sinaara* 'have introduced a new school of journalism that is not politically or ideologically committed but is motivated by profit' (Jamal 2009b: 66). These profit-driven newspapers that minimize or steer clear of overtly political content in order to capture the widest demographic of Arabic readers possible are 'more commercial than informative' in nature (Jamal 2009b: 68). In order to satisfy the need for profit, these newspapers have created new patterns of Arabic media production and consumption that represent less, rather than more, of a 'threat' to the state.

While the marginalization of political content within Arabic print press in Israel is in large part due to the commercial interests of the newspapers themselves, it is also determined to a significant degree by structural disparities in the media landscape that have been emphasized, rather than overcome, by technological changes and that have transformed both the media landscape and the demands and expectations of Arab audiences as a whole. A brief look at the development of broadcast media in Israel illustrates this point.

Until the 1980s, Arabic broadcast media remained highly regulated and underdeveloped in Israel. The first Arabic radio channel in Israel, Sawt Israel/Voice of Israel, which was opened in 1958 and is still in operation today, was established by the Prime Minister's Office and run by Mizrahi Jews (Arabic-speaking Jews) to reflect the official line of the state (Jamal 2009b: 50–51). With the deregulation of the Israeli economy and the development of new broadcasting technologies in the 1980s, and the growth of Hebrew proficiency amongst the minority, Palestinians could tune in and listen to a growing number of Hebrew radio channels (notably Reshet Bet and Gali Tzahal) as well as any number of Arabic radio channels broadcast from around the Middle East (notably Sawt al-Arab from Cairo and Ajyal from Ramallah) and from Europe (BBC and Monte Carlo).

These broadcasts, which exposed Palestinians in Israel to alternative perspectives on various political issues relating to Israel and the region, undoubtedly contributed to the development of a distinct Palestinian counter-hegemonic discourse in Israel. They also, however, served to conceal the deeper structural obstacles that were in place and which limited the development of Palestinian media inside Israel. The diversity of radio broadcasts that are available to the minority in Arabic ignores the fact that the only independent and locally based Arabic radio station based in Israel today (Radio Ashams) was created only recently, in 2003. An attempt to launch a radio station (Radio 2000) in Nazareth in 1997 failed when the Jewish and Arab owners of the station fell out and the authorities withdrew the station's licence subsequent to its coverage of the October 2000 demonstrations in which thirteen Palestinian citizens of the state were killed by Israeli police and security forces (Jamal 2009b: 71).

The situation of televised and satellite media in Israel tells a similar story. For almost three decades following the first televised broadcasts in the 1960s, only one (Hebrew) television channel operated in Israel (Jamal 2009b: 71). With the relaxation of government regulation of media from the late 1980s, however, Israel emerged from economic recession as a global leader in the production of communications-related hardware and software and as a regional power in the area of satellite industries. A second channel (Channel 2) was created in 1992, followed by another channel (Channel 10) ten years later in 2002 (Jamal 2009b: 71). To this can be added dozens of external Arabic channels that Palestinians have access to today: LBC, al-Jazeera, Rotam, MBC, Future, al-Arabiyya, al-Manar, etc. (Jamal 2009b: 115). Despite this dizzying variety of channels, there is still not a single Arabic television channel in operation inside Israel today.

How can this underdevelopment of Palestinian broadcast media inside Israel be explained? The answer lies in a combination of pragmatic and ideological factors. On the one hand, it is evident that there is an underlying discrimination against Palestinian media with regards to development, investment and regulation opportunities in Israel, which is obscured by the diversity of external Arabic media that are available to the minority. This 'pluralistic façade' (Jamal 2009b: 52) conceals discrimination against Palestinian Arab media in Israel and promotes a positive and liberal image of the state at home and abroad, thus satisfying one of the important bases of ethnocratic control – 'selective openness'.

Practical factors connected with the asymmetrical development of Arabic media inside Israel have also played an important factor in the development of underdeveloped Palestinian media in Israel. Palestinian print and broadcast media are, due to their small demographic, unable to compete with better-equipped and better-financed globalized and electronic-based Arabic media, which are often both cheaper and more easily accessible to Palestinians in Israel than Palestinian media themselves. Jamal's analysis of patterns of media consumption reveals that Palestinian media are not the main go-to source for 'hard' news in Israel. The vast majority of Palestinians in Israel (81.7 per cent) switch on their televisions and tune into al-Jazeera and Channel 2 to receive the latest news (Jamal 2009b: 112–15). This pattern of media consumption is underscored by the fact that the three most popular Arabic newspapers in Israel today are not daily, but rather weekly newspapers. Only 9.3 per cent of the Palestinians he surveyed read Palestinian Arabic newspapers on a daily basis (Jamal 2009b: 74). This has increased the dependence of Palestinian

Arabs on external media sources which has, in turn, aggravated the marginality and underdevelopment of Palestinian media. Given that big networks now command the lion's share of the Arabic media market in Israel, particularly where 'hard news' is concerned, local Arabic newspapers in Israel have become increasingly depoliticized and, from the point of view of the authorities, increasingly negligible.

With the introduction of the Internet and other related online media in the early 1990s, the image of an open and vibrant media landscape in Israel has become more pronounced. Indeed, Israel is 'among the world's leading countries in broadband Internet penetration' today (Brown 2008: 304) and with 72 per cent of its population connected to the Internet, it is second only to Bahrain in Internet usage within the Middle East as a whole (Internet World Stats 2010). This high rate of online connectivity has resulted in new patterns of media consumption in Israel demonstrated by the fact that, by 2008, the Internet had become a go-to source for news second only to television (Brown 2008: 304). In two well-known surveys on press freedom, Israel has – despite the impact of military censorship – fared exceptionally well compared to its Middle Eastern neighbours, thus underscoring the image of Israel as a 'free' media environment (Reporters Without Borders 2010; Freedom House 2010).

Such positive reviews of press freedom in Israel have also filtered through to academic analyses. In a 2008 survey of Internet filtering in sixteen different MENA countries, for example, Deibert has described Israel together with only four other countries in the region as demonstrating 'no evidence of consistent technical filtering used to deny access to online content' (Deibert et al. 2008: 207). The absence of Internet censorship involving the use of digital filtering and blocking technologies such as IP address-based packet filtering, DNS poisoning, cache filtering and keyword searches, has satisfied many that Palestinian Arab media in Israel is, indeed, open, free and relatively privileged. Such general conclusions are, however, flawed as they rely on a limited and selective range of variables against which media freedom in Israel is tested.

While it is true that Israel does not employ sophisticated technologies to censor or tamper with online content, the question whether such technologies are required and whether other forms of offline controls can accomplish the same goals has not been adequately addressed in the literature. It can, for instance, be argued that the need for Internet controls has been significantly reduced by the continued underdevelopment of the Palestinian Internet environment. In order to understand this point an important distinction must be made between local media production, on the one hand, and access to media on the other. Having access to a wide range of Internet sites in Arabic often conceals the status and relevance of locally-produced Arabic Internet sites in Israel. Several Palestinian newspapers and political parties in Israel have launched websites in recent years, such as *as-Sinaara* (owned by *as-Sinaara), Farfesh* and *al-Arab* (related to *Kul al-Arab), Arabs48* (affiliated with Balad/NDA), and *Panet* (owned by *Panorama*), all of which have contributed to the pluralistic image of Israeli media and society (Jamal 2009a: 566). However, as Dahan has observed, the only locally produced Arabic daily newspaper in Israel – *al-Ittihad* – still does not have an online version, while the online content of other Arabic newspapers in Israel remains rather limited in scope and coverage when compared with their printed counterparts. The underdeveloped state of 'indigenous Palestinian Israeli websites' has resulted in an increased reliance upon Hebrew and external Arabic websites, which do not reflect the particular local concerns and interests of Palestinian Israelis

(Dahan 2003). This has limited the counter-hegemonic potential of CMCs for the Palestinian Arab minority and reduced the need for online controls.

However, with the growth of increasingly accessible and affordable Internet technologies, the shape and format of political dissent has undergone fundamental changes which have, in turn, introduced a new range of political actors and mediators. Political activity is no longer restricted to traditional political parties and news providers. In Israel, new online political mediators have emerged which not only disseminate counter-hegemonic discourses but which have also become go-to sources for specialist 'hard news' and local information. This is particularly evident with regard to the new political role played by civil society activists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Israel. Using the power of the Internet to promote their political advocacy at home and abroad, their focused political activity has arguably become the media form with the greatest capacity to challenge the political hegemony of the Jewish majority in Israel today.

Following the new Law of Associations which was passed in 1980 and which required all NGOs to register with the Ministry of the Interior (Payes 2003: 62), the number of Palestinian Israeli NGOs (PINGOs) has grown and developed in direct relationship with the pluralization and deregulation of Israeli media. Given the asymmetrical power dynamics in society, PINGOs have focused much of their activities on 'attempting to elevate the civil status of the Palestinian minority in Israel' and on 'redefining the boundaries of political discourse' in Israel (Payes 2003: 61, 81). Serving an important representative and communicative function within Israel, PINGOs have increasingly become an important 'channel of political mobility' and counter-hegemony in Israel (Payes 2003: 64). The counter-hegemonic political discourse of the minority that emerged and gained momentum through the political advocacy of PINGOs is demonstrated by the relevance of four position papers collectively referred to as the 'Future Vision Documents', which were published in a six-month period between December 2006 and May 2007. Developing the political vision originally propounded by Azmi Bishara that the State of Israel become a 'state for all its citizens', these documents called for recognition of the Palestinian Arab minority as a distinct national minority and for full equality between Jews and Arabs to be accomplished by dismantling the Jewish ethnocratic nature of the state and replacing it with either a secular or consociational democracy (Rekhess 2007: 17).

Given that important sections of Israeli Jewish society saw in these documents 'a declaration of war' (Rekhess 2007: 20), it is hardly surprising that PINGOs have since come to be viewed with a heightened sense of mistrust and prejudice. The state has employed a range of measures to offset or limit the counter-hegemonic potential of PINGOs. Of these, legislation remains a major avenue through which this is accomplished. The power to extend, deny or remove legal recognition of associations that are deemed to contradict or challenge the Jewish ethnic nature of the state increases the power of the state and the dependency of PINGOs upon it (Payes 2003: 63). The 1964 decision to outlaw the al-Ard movement established a precedent for exclusion through legal means. With the introduction of the 1980 Law, however, the legal options to exclude Palestinian associations were expanded. It was now, for instance, possible to outlaw any Israeli organization with the word 'Palestinian' in its name as this would 'be offensive to public feeling' (Payes 2003: 67–68).

Another increasingly common strategy that has been employed by the state is the targeting of individual PINGO leaders and activists. The 'personification of institutions and leadership roles' which Jamal has observed to be a widespread phenomenon in the Middle East (Jamal 2006: 16–17) has facilitated the state's efforts to discredit and silence dissenting voices within the minority through targeted legal and extralegal measures on individuals. Physical assaults and intimidation by police and security officers, official investigations (often involving arrest and imprisonment without trial), restrictions of movement and travel bans as well as legal prosecution on various charges relating to national security – experiences that were once restricted to Palestinian political leaders such as Azmi Bishara of the Balad movement and Sheikh Ra'id Salah of the Islamic movement (Cook and Key 2002) – have, since the watershed events of October 2000 in which thirteen Palestinian citizens of the state were killed by security forces, begun to be experienced by wider segments of the Palestinian leadership in Israel, including by prominent PINGO leaders and activists.

The cases of Ameer Makhoul, director of Ittijah, a union of Arab NGOs in Israel, and political activist, Omar Saeed, who were arrested and sentenced to prison terms in 2010 for 'spying' for Hezbollah illustrate this new turn in policy (Adalah 2010a). The experiences of several prominent Palestinian leaders (notably Ms Haneen Zoabi (Balad MK), Sheikh Raed Salah (head of the Islamic Movement in Israel) and Dr Mohammad Zeidan (chairman of the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel and director of the PINGO Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA)) at the hands of the Israeli press and authorities following their decision to take part in the May 2010 attempt to break the siege on Gaza confirms this shift towards individualized targeting tactics by the authorities (Adalah 2010b). This, together with a wave of new legislation which, if passed, will redefine the boundaries of permissible NGO activity in Israel and limit the scope of political advocacy and freedom of expression available to Jewish and Palestinian NGOs alike in Israel (Adalah 2010c), illustrate not only the growing tension between democratic opportunities and ethnocratic controls but, cumulatively, the continued dynamic range of mechanisms available to ethnocratic states in responding to counter-hegemonic challenges.

CONCLUSION

Through an integrated assessment of ethnocratic theory and state policy towards Palestinian Arab media in Israel, this article has demonstrated the resilient, dynamic and reflexive nature of the Israeli system of control in responding to Palestinian counter-hegemonic challenges through the media. Through a wide range of legal and extralegal, sophisticated and crude as well as direct and indirect strategies, the State of Israel has, thus far, been able to successfully mitigate the democratically available channels of protest that have been employed by the Palestinian Arab minority to challenge its unequal status in society and push for political reform of the system. The future sustainability of ethnocratic controls, however, is not guaranteed. Engaged in a constant struggle between ethnic and democratic tensions, as well as between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces, the future stability of the Israeli system of control ultimately depends upon the continued broad level of support and consensus that it currently derives from the Jewish majority.

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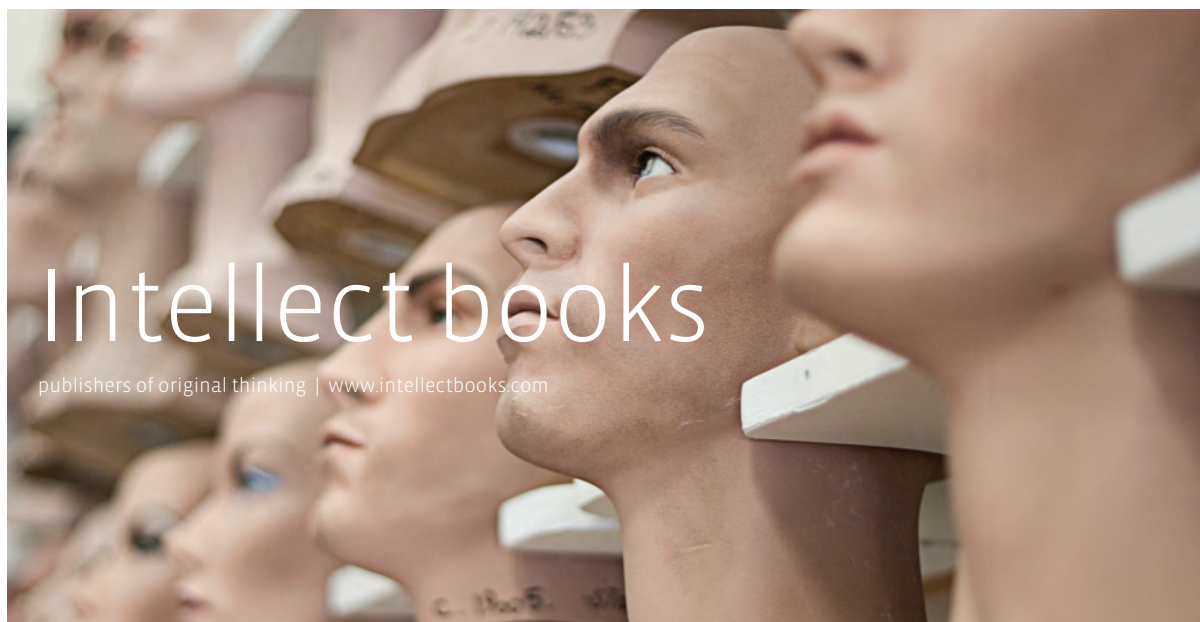
Media and Participation:
A Site of Ideological-Democratic Struggle

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Participation has become fashionable again, but at the same time it has always played a crucial role in our contemporary societies, and it has been omnipresent in a surprisingly large number of societal fields. In the case of the media sphere, the present-day media conjuncture is now considered to be the most participatory ever, but media participation has had a long and intense history. To deal with these paradoxes, this book looks at participation as a structurally unstable concept and as the object of a political-ideological struggle that makes it oscillate between minimalist and maximalist versions. This struggle is analysed in theoretical reflections in five fields (democracy, arts, development, spatial planning and media) and in eight different cases of media practice. These case studies also show participation's close connection to power, identity, organization, technology and quality.