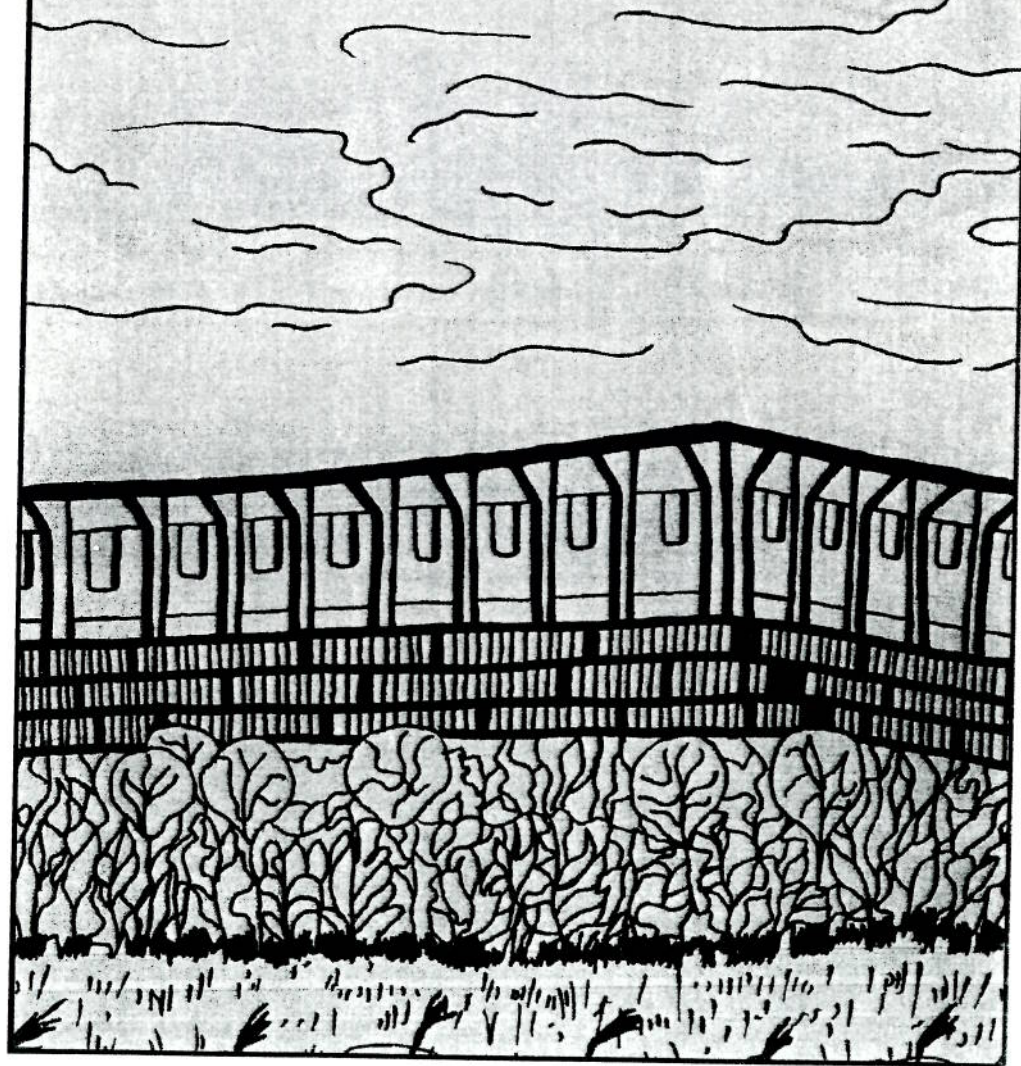


The Elections in Israel

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**Voting without Voice:
About the Vote of the Palestinian Minority
in the 16th Knesset Elections**

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Introduction

The elections held in Israel in January 2003 were the first Knesset elections to be conducted after the October 2000 demonstrations of the Arab Palestinian minority. Relations between Israel and its Palestinian citizens have been undergoing a serious change since these demonstrations which came after the second Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories started in September 2000. We maintain that during this period, a new hegemony has been taking shape in Israel that is redrawing the boundaries of citizenship for the Palestinian minority (Rouhana and Sultany, 2003). In addition, there is a growing sense among many in the Arab minority that the boundaries of citizenship are becoming narrower and that the foundations of their citizenship are growing weaker (Rouhana, 2001; Yiftachel, 2002). Furthermore, their potential influence on Israel's internal and external policies, even policies regarding their own community, has always been minimal. If so, how shall we understand their participation in Israeli parliamentary election?

It has always been difficult to explain the Arab minority's political objectives and patterns of participation in Israel's elections based on models and theories that explain electoral behavior in democratic countries. After the October demonstrations, it is even more difficult to employ such models. Watershed developments such as these require a new perspective: Just as the explanation for the high participation rate during the early period of the military government (1948-1966) was no longer valid for the periods that followed, the same is true for the period following the October demonstrations.

Different theoretical models have been presented to describe the Arab population's relationship with the state and its electoral behavior (see, for example, Al-Hajj and Yaniv, 1983; Ghanem, 2001; Jamal, 2002; Kaufman and Israeli, 1996; Landau, 1993; Lustick, 1980; Rouhana, 1986). One of the models is the "modernization theory," which links the increase in political participation to the rise in the standard of living and education, as well as the rise of new social movements (including pressure groups and protest movements), which was characteristic of Western society (Bell, 1999; Dalton, 1998; Ingelhart, 1997; for a critique of the application of the modernization theory to the Arab minority, see Sa'di, 1997). Other researchers have adopted the "institutional structure theory," according to which the structure of institutions and political procedures in the state (such as granting the right to vote, the electoral system, the laws relating to parties, their registration and financing and the like) are the factors that determine the level of political participation (Jackman, 1987; Powell, 1986). Conversely, some researchers have adopted the "agency theory," which emphasizes mobilization for political participation through classic mobilization institutions (parties, movements, labor unions, religious movements and so forth) and describes these institutions' modes of operation (Putnam, 1995, 2000; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993).

These theories do not provide a satisfactory explanation of Arab participation in Israel's parliamentary elections; in fact, at times reality and theory contradict one another. For instance, this holds true of the modernization theory: The highest voting rates among the Arab minority were actually noted in the 1950s and 1960s, while "modernization" was at its outset. High voting rates were also maintained afterwards, even though the level of modernization did not rise significantly. The institutional structure theory also fails to explain the high participation rates despite the means of state control surveillance used on the Arab citizens—especially political activists and leaders—and despite their inability to influence the decision-making process in Israel. Over the past two decades, for example, voting rates were high despite the particularly low level of political influence. Finally, the agency theory can indeed explain situations where parties and labor unions mobilize citizens to vote for them by promising to serve their interests in the Parliament and *vis-à-vis* the establishment. However, application of this theory to the participation of Arab citizens in the elections disregards central characteristics in the state's ethnic structure, which prevent effective representation of the minority's interests and of different groups within it.

Since Israel's establishment, the ability of Arab citizens to exert political influence on the circles of decision-making has been marginal (if not nonexistent). Due to their national affiliation, the Arab citizens were automatically placed outside the Jewish-Zionist consensus that dictates the boundaries of political legitimacy and state identity. We are aware of the argument that the Israeli regime is characterized by collectivism (Ben-Eliezer, 1993) and thus

the Jewish citizen does not have real influence on the decision-making procedure either, but when applying this analysis it is necessary to distinguish between a dominated minority and the dominant majority. The majority has a greater range of possibilities for exerting influence and enjoying the benefits of the influence its elites exert. Merely by being part of the dominant majority, the Jewish citizen enjoys the benefits of the privileges majority enjoys in an ethnic state (for example land distribution), and by choosing to become affiliated with some powerful groups within the majority, he or she can exert some influence. The possibilities for influence open to the Arab citizen, both individually and collectively, are more limited. Furthermore, when Arab citizens organize and raise demands on a collective basis, they are perceived by the majority and the establishment as a threat to the existing political order or even to the state itself.

Ghanem and Rouhana (2001) have recently explained Arab electoral behavior according to a model of the crisis of the national minority in an ethnic state. Jamal (2002) described electoral participation as an expression of communalism, whereas Kaufman and Israeli (1996) view the Arab national minority as one of many cases where a deprived minority has major differences of opinion with the majority, which can explain its voting patterns. These descriptions shed some light on aspects of the electoral behavior and voting patterns of the Palestinian citizens, just as the models themselves highlight different dimensions of the relationship between the State of Israel and its Arab citizens. However, it appears to us that especially in light of the protest demonstrations of the Arab minority in October 2000, and the kind of force the state employed to suppress them, the various descriptions do not sufficiently emphasize one of the unique elements that is characteristic of the evolving relationship between the State of Israel and its Arab citizens: the hostility—and even enmity, in certain respects—between the state and its institutions and the Jewish majority on one side, and the Arab minority on the other. It is true that describing the relations between the state and the Arab population as being marked mainly by hostility is exaggerated and simplistic, since the reality is much more complex: but ignoring the dimension of hostility would paint an incomplete picture of this relationship. For example, the Or Commission, "The State Commission of Inquiry on the October 2000 Clashes between Security Forces and Israeli Citizens," has already recommended that the police, following its conduct during the demonstrations of Arab citizens in October 2000, should promote the awareness among the force that the Arabs are not enemies (Official Commission Report, 2003). In addition, with regard to the distribution of public land, the Arab is in many cases considered an enemy who must be prevented from "taking over" the land or the homeland (i.e., the homeland of the Jewish people) or state lands (i.e., the state of the Jewish people). The mere increase in the number of Arabs, even through birth rate, is considered by the state and the Jewish public to be a danger. Public opinion polls (Arian,

2001; see also Sultany, 2003) show that a substantial percentage of the Jewish population supports transferring the Arab population out of the country, and an even higher percentage supports encouraging them to leave their homeland.

The growing awareness of the component of hostility results from the increasing public consciousness between both Arab and Jewish citizens of a fundamental conflict between the ethnic constitutional structure and exclusive ethnic identity of the state, and the demands of a national minority that is a homeland minority. The indigenous minority views the ethnic state that was founded on its homeland as a forcible dictate. Such a state precludes the possibility of collective and individual equality as well as the development of a normal relationship between the minority and its homeland (Jabareen, 2001). It is becoming increasingly apparent that the conflict between the state and the Arab minority is due not only to discrimination in distribution of resources, ethnic control, or social and cultural differences—as many social scientists have argued through the years (see for example the review by Rosenhak, 1998)—but due rather to more fundamental differences pertaining to the very definition of the state and homeland in the past, present, and future (see Rouhana 1997). The ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian national movement enhances this awareness; the October demonstrations underlined it.

In light of the preceding analysis, the following questions should be added: How can the influence of the element of hostility be incorporated in an examination of the behavior of Arab citizens in Knesset elections and their voting patterns? Do Arab voters take into account considerations of influencing the political system and the decision-making process as do Jewish voters? Do Arab voters have considerations other than political influence that stem from their status as a controlled minority?

In this chapter, we review the results of the parliamentary elections in the Arab community and try to explain the drop in voter turnout, which is one of the major characteristics of these elections. We also examine other characteristics such as a shift in voting patterns and decrease in voting percentages for Zionist parties. We depend on polls conducted by "Mada—The Arab Center for Applied Social Research" in order to understand the significance of some of the changes in voting rates and patterns. We argue that participation in the elections serves special functions of the Arab population and its leaders, and that these functions should be understood in light of the complex citizenship relations with the state—relations that are being redefined in recent years and have a growing element of hostility. These functions have developed in line with the growing awareness that the Arab vote has no influence on decision-making processes in the state.

Voting without Influence

To a large degree, the dilemma of the Arab voter in the parliamentary elections stems from the crisis of an Arab national minority in a Jewish ethnic state

(see for example Ghanem and Rouhana, 2001; Rouhana and Ghanem, 1998). This dilemma has penetrated Arab public awareness and also found expression in previous election campaigns. What characterizes the 16th Knesset elections is the salience of a new aspect in the relationship between the state and the Arab population after the October demonstrations—the hostility as a major component in a complex relationship. In previous election campaigns, it was already clear to the Arab public and its leaders that they were outside the circle of influence in the Israeli parliamentary game: Representatives of the Arab public in the Knesset are not and have not been desirable partners in any possible coalition configuration. It may be said that the positioning of Arab representatives outside the coalition game is an inevitable joint decision by both sides: On the one hand, Zionist ethnic politics in Israel do not regard any of the Arab parties as a legitimate partner. On the other hand, the representatives of most Arab parties and their voters do not agree to be partners to the coalition without a constitutional and political change with regard to the state's Arab citizens and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Despite their position outside the circle of influence—and even outside the circle of legitimate opposition (since the legitimacy of political opposition in Israeli politics is also limited to the boundaries of the Zionist and ethnic consensus)—Arab voters showed high participation rates in the parliamentary elections starting from the first elections, and these were higher in certain cases than the rates of participation among Jewish citizens. In the first two decades, the high participation rates could be explained as compliance with the mechanisms of control that the state employed through the military government, under the rule of Mapai (Lustick, 1980). In the following two decades, the high voting percentages could be explained by the centrality of the Israeli Communist Party on the Arab political street (Rekless, 1986). Today, the high voting percentages cannot be explained by the same factors, and they have other reasons: In the 1980s and 1990s, national Arab parties appeared—the Progressive List for Peace in 1984 and the National Democratic Alliance in 1996. The rise of national parties contributed to internal Arab competition over the Arab vote, and, consequently, high voting percentages were maintained until the last elections, when voting rates dropped to an unprecedented low.

Citizenship, Political Identity and Self-Empowerment: The Development of New Functions for Electoral Participation

From an historical standpoint, participation of Israel's Palestinian citizens in Israel's first election campaign was an expression of the new political order that was formed after the defeat of the Palestinian National Movement by the Zionist movement in the 1948 war. From the State of Israel's standpoint, granting the Palestinian minority in the Jewish state the right to vote was mainly the result of the international climate that was created following the partition plan

and the UN discussions on recognition of the State of Israel, within which the demand was raised for the minority remaining in the Jewish state to enjoy democratic and civil rights. Whereas from the standpoint of the Arab minority—a small minority that had just experienced a trauma, the remnants of a defeated people, the most disadvantaged group in Palestinian society—participation in the elections reflected the acknowledgement of defeat and the inability to challenge the new order. Beyond this, participation in the elections during the military government period, and especially voting for the “correct party,” were considered a “certificate of good behavior” for the defeated (Bauml, 2002; Lustick, 1980). In addition, the only organized leadership of this minority part of Maki (the Communist Party of Israel), a predecessor of Rakah—supported the UN partition plan from the outset. It viewed the Jewish state as a legitimate expression of the Jewish people’s right to self-determination, and encouraged participation in the elections. The Zionist parties (particularly Mapai, the ruling party, and Maki) thereby found themselves in competition over the votes of a minority that did not ask questions about the meaning of the elections, their political efficacy, or their political goals in a new reality that many believed to be temporary. In the balance of power under the military government, most Arab votes went to Zionist parties, with a minority of votes going to Maki. The attempt made at the end of the 1950s to establish a national Arab movement that would compete for the Arabs’ votes under the military government—the *El-Avd* movement—was blocked by the executive branch, with the support of the Supreme Court (Bauml, 2002; Harris, 2001). The vote for Maki was usually considered a protest against Israel’s policy. The vote for Zionist parties and their affiliated Arab lists, on the other hand, was cast on the basis of parochial identification with the clan, religious group, and area of residence, reflecting a traditional segmented social structure that the ethnic system of control sought to promote (Lustick, 1980; Rosenfeld, 1963; Rouhana, 1986).

However, protracted involvement in the election campaigns and in Israeli society itself brought about a transformation in the attitude of Arab citizens towards this involvement and towards citizenship in general. At first, the agenda of the Arab minority focused on immediate needs and dealt mainly with demands against discrimination, land expropriation, military government restrictions, inequality in labor conditions and social services, and the like. In the absence of an organized national leadership that could present a collective agenda, a consensual demand evolved for “equality” without defining its implications for the minority and the state. There is no doubt that the rise in Rakah’s influence in the 1970s—especially after the first Land Day in 1976 and the parliamentary elections in 1977, when Rakah garnered over 50 per cent of the Arab vote—played a central role in entrenching the demand for civil equality and the concept of equal citizenship, but still without defining the political meaning of this demand. Yet this demand was broadly accepted.

The end of the military government in 1966, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, and the far-reaching social changes in the social and economic structure of Arab society itself (Rosenfeld, 1979) brought about new processes—particularly reinforcement of Palestinian identity, starting in the 1970s. The 1980s witnessed the reorganization of nationalist forces within the Progressive List for Peace. The new social structure made it impossible for the co-opted and traditional leadership of the Arab lists linked to Zionist parties to continue. Two central elements in the Arab political thinking became well established: one emphasizing equal citizenship and the other emphasizing national identity. However, the Progressive List for Peace, which emphasized national identity at the expense of civil equality, disappeared from the political map in the 1992 elections (partly because of the de-emphasis on issues of citizenship). A new national party emerged in 1996—the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which, promoted a new nationalist agenda and worked towards defining the meaning of citizenship and equality in the Israeli context.

The NDA proposed bridging two central demands: equal citizenship as the cornerstone of a long-term political project—turning Israel into a “state of all its citizens” instead of the state of the Jewish people; and an emphasis on an Arab-Palestinian national identity with a demand to grant the Arab citizens the status of a national minority with cultural autonomy. The linkage between national identity and equality reflects the seriousness of the quest for equal citizenship that developed within the Arab public and that was actually reinforced under NDA’s influence.

A third political orientation, represented by the Islamic Movement (which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in interaction with similar ideological streams within the occupied territories, and in response to regional developments) did not challenge the demand for equal citizenship either (Smoocha and Ghanem, 1998), and one faction of the movement became represented in the Knesset by the United Arab List (UAL).

It can therefore be said that all the political orientations represented in the Knesset, especially the Jewish-Arab communist stream and the nationalist stream, view the matter of equal citizenship as a cornerstone of their political ideology. All indications show that before the October 2000 demonstrations and the Israeli response to these demonstrations, the mainstream of Arab politics regarded the matter of their citizenship with full seriousness. Sending representatives to the Knesset, even if their influence is limited, is an expression of the citizenship relationship (although Arab citizens are aware of the inequality of their civil status) between the Palestinian collective in Israel and the state and its institutions. National representation—or more precisely, representation on a national basis—in Parliament, and participation in the elections, became the most distinct political expressions of this relationship. National parliamentary representation became, within the unquestioned citi-

zenship relationship, a goal in and of itself, although the political influence wielded by this representation has been limited. This representation offers a platform for voicing the collective demands of the Arab minority before the Knesset and the Jewish public through civil channels, and grants access to international platforms and audiences to the Arab citizens' representatives. In addition, there are those who believe that the Arab Knesset members can promote the affairs of Arab citizens vis-à-vis state institutions.

Although the direct political influence of the Arab citizens' parliamentary participation is believed to be minimal, there is an indirect influence achieved by having Arab representatives in the Knesset who will not join or support a right-wing coalition. These Arab Knesset members can, theoretically, and in the right Knesset composition, block the formation of a right-wing government or support a minority government of a Labor-led coalition. The "blocking bloc" of Arab Knesset members who thwarted any possible majority against Yitzhak Rabin's government (1992-1995) was one such example. But this influence for a minority has a double bind, because it places it in a no-choice position and can lead the coalition to take its support for granted (see Ghanem and Routhana 1992). While Rabin's Labor-led government was arguably more considerate of the Arab citizens' needs than any government in Israel, Ehud Barak's Labor-led government showed no interest in the Arab citizens. It was during this government's term that orders were given to shoot Arab citizens in the October demonstrations. Thus, assumptions about the magnitude of this indirect influence presuppose significant differences in the policies of Labor and Likud towards the Arab citizens and the Palestinian issue. The more this difference is blurred, the more the indirect influence of Arabs in the Knesset is diminished. A Jewish national consensus, for example, or a clearly expected majority for the right wing, even if the differences between Labor and Likud persist, will reduce this indirect influence.

To sum up, if in the first years under the military government the high rate of participation in parliamentary election campaigns reflected the surrender of the Palestinian minority to the new political order and was a product of the system of control—or in the best case, a protest against Israel and its policy—in the past two decades, it has become an expression of bridging between national representation and citizenship, even if it is not equal citizenship. Until recently, Israel's Arab citizens, including all the political orientations represented in the Knesset, took it for granted; they sought to turn it into equal citizenship.

However, participation in the parliamentary elections served two additional goals beyond gaining direct or indirect influence—which became increasingly questionable. One additional goal was to shape and sharpen political and ideological identity versus other ideological orientations within Arab society itself. Parliamentary participation provides the modern organizational framework of a party and the financial and institutional support necessary to

organize the electorate around a central ideology. This framework is the basis for social and political organization that can become a tool to achieve goals beyond what can theoretically be achieved by parliamentary means, such as constructing national identity or religious identity, instilling ideological beliefs, and mobilizing followers and supporters. Competition for parliamentary representation clarifies various groups' identities within the society itself. The three main ideological streams within Arab society are clearly differentiated by parliamentary activity, since the latter requires sharpening the distinction among the different parties.

The other goal is self-empowerment by building modern social and political organizations that can represent the group's ideology and empower its members. The organization of Arab society is, in and of itself, an act of empowerment that exceeds the boundaries of parliamentary activity. The organizational framework that the party provides can serve as a tool for applying public pressure and for public activity in general by extra-parliamentary means. For example, Rakah's party apparatus demonstrates the success of the extra-parliamentary activity in the Land Day strike of 1976.

In summary, Arab participation in the parliamentary elections serves several goals beyond political influence: (a) it expresses the bridging between citizenship and national identity; (b) it clarifies the groups' ideological identity; and (c) it builds internal strength through modern organizational structures. A discussion of voting patterns must consider all of these goals.

Factors Shaping the Arab Election Climate

In the period between the 15th Knesset elections in May 1999 and the 16th Knesset elections, several developments took place that left their marks, some indelible, on the political climate on the eve of the elections. We will describe these developments briefly below, and then examine how this climate affected the goals of participation in the parliamentary elections, as identified in the previous section. This will also help us understand how this climate impacted on the elections results. We will begin with a review of the developments that influenced the first goal we defined: bridging between national identity and citizenship.

Protest Demonstrations in October and Reactions of the State and the Jewish Public

The 16th Knesset elections were held in the shadow of the violent reactions of Israeli security forces to Arab demonstrators in October 2000, which caused the death of thirteen Arabs in the Galilee and the Triangle, and injury and arrests of hundreds of people in many Arab towns (Rosenberg, 2002). In some cases, groups of Jewish citizens joined the attack against Arab citizens and Arab property and religious institutions.¹

The Arab popular protest began as an expression of solidarity by the Palestinian citizens of Israel with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and against the behavior of the Israeli army and police forces towards Palestinian demonstrations in Jerusalem which had followed the visit of opposition leader MK Ariel Sharon to the Al-Aqsa Mosque plaza on September 28, 2000.² Confrontations between police forces and demonstrators represented a turning point in the relationship between the Arab citizens and the state and its Jewish citizens, and caused the Arabs to seriously re-examine the meaning of their Israeli citizenship (Rouhana, 2001). These clashes also deepened the rift between Arabs and Jews and damaged the fabric of Jewish-Arab relations in general. This was reflected in the accusing finger pointed by official bodies and by the Jewish public towards the Arabs (Ben-Simon, 2001).

The official state response to the October demonstrations raised questions about the status of Arab citizens and demonstrated that, at least under certain circumstances, the State of Israel views the Arab minority as an enemy—and treats it accordingly. In addition, the behavior of the police and the support that it received on the Jewish street demonstrated that for Arabs, citizenship is not sufficient to protect them from the security forces. It was inevitable that this development would have a tremendous impact on the national identity of broad sectors of the Palestinian minority in Israel, and on the Arabs' patterns of political behavior, including on their voting patterns. In this regard, the important question is to what degree did these events damage the relationship with the state and its institutions, and whether the damage affected either participation or voting patterns in the 2003 elections.

Attacks of the Political Establishment on Arab Parties and Political Movements

Attacks on Arab parties and political movements during the term of the 15th Knesset were unprecedented in their intensity (with the exception of the much earlier period of the military government). From 1999 to 2002, the police investigated Knesset members from Arab parties on twenty occasions on suspicion of supporting the Palestinian Intifada, incitement, offending police officers, and other charges. Some Arab Knesset members were also injured in demonstrations after attacks by Israeli police officers and soldiers, and in seven cases, required hospital treatment.³ Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein led some of the major charges. The leadership of two political orientations was particularly targeted: The extra-parliamentary Islamic movement headed by Sheikh Ra'ed Salah; and the NDA represented in the Knesset by MK Azmi Bishara (Dalal, 2003; Sultany, 2003; Sultany and Sabbagh-Khoury, 2003).

The attacks on the Islamic movement were manifested, *inter alia*, in the police questioning of Sheikh Ra'ed Salah and Sheikh Kamal Khahib following the rally called "Al-Aqsa is in Danger," which the movement organizes

annually; in the bill submitted (by Likud MK Yisrael Katz, future Minister of Agriculture) to outlaw the Islamic Movement and confiscate its assets; in the warning by the Or Commission for Investigating the Events of October 2000 to Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, that it was likely to reach the conclusion—as indeed it ultimately did—that he incited to violence as a means of achieving the goals of the Arab minority, negated the existence of the State of Israel, and described it as an enemy (Dalal, 2003); in preventing Ra'ed Salah from leaving the borders of Israel three times, by an order issued by the Minister of the Interior and at the recommendation of the General Security Services (GSS); and in the wounding of Ra'ed Salah by police fire during the October demonstrations in Umm al-Fahm on October 1, 2000.

The attacks on the representative of the nationalists (NDA) in the Knesset were manifested in the removal of MK Azmi Bishara's parliamentary immunity at the request of the Attorney General and prosecuting him for two political speeches (Sultany and Sabbagh-Khoury, 2003); in the requests of the Attorney General and right-wing politicians, at the recommendation of the GSS, to disqualify Bishara's and NDA's candidacy in the Knesset elections; in the warning by the Or Commission to MK Bishara that the Commission was likely to reach the conclusion—as it did—that he preached and incited to use violence as a means of achieving the goals of the Arab minority; and finally, in the reported intention of Interior Minister Eli Yishai to strip Bishara of his citizenship after he gave a speech in a ceremony marking the anniversary of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad's death at Qardaha, Syria. (As it turned out, the Attorney General notified the Interior Minister that this would not be possible due to Bishara's parliamentary immunity.)

Attempts to Disqualify Candidacy of Arab Knesset Members to Run Again for the Knesset

On the eve of the elections, the Israeli right filed a flood of applications to disqualify the candidacy of Arab contenders and one Arab party—the NDA. Although the requests were not unusual, the involvement of the GSS and Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein in the matter was surprising (Sultany, 2002). In his efforts to disqualify the NDA, Rubinstein included a report from a GSS official indicating that the GSS had put the NDA and its leader, MK Azmi Bishara under state security surveillance. The purpose of these attempts was to threaten to outlaw Arab Knesset members, especially those who declare their opposition to the Jewish character of the state and who express the view that the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples have the right to resist Israeli occupation. The disqualification attempt and the Arabs' political and legal activity against it dominated the political scene in the Arab community just before the elections. Although the Supreme Court ruled against the decision of the Central Elections Committee to outlaw two Arab Knesset members and one Arab party, the attempt

to outlaw the MKs' participation and the Arab opposition to it mobilized voters to participate in the elections despite widespread doubts about its real benefit.

Re-occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

Israel responded to the Al-Aqsa Intifada that broke out on September 28, 2000, by occupying additional Palestinian territories and deploying troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the first half of 2002, the Israeli military forces escalated their activity against the Palestinians: They invaded Palestinian cities, bombed Palestinians within residential areas from the land and from the air, attacked the building of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Palestinian government, put Palestinian President Yasser Arafat under even-tual house arrest, and arrested many other leaders. Over 2,000 Palestinians were killed from the beginning of the Intifada until the end of 2002, and close to 9,000 were arrested. In addition, the Palestinian economy was severely damaged.⁴ Dramatic developments took place in this period, such as the occupation and demolition of part of the Jenin refugee camp and the Old City of Nablus, as well as cutting off contiguity between Palestinian cities and villages and the complete isolation of entire towns. This state of affairs remained in effect until Election Day. Almost every day, Israeli troops were killing Palestinians, demolishing houses, uprooting trees or imposing a curfew.

The second Palestinian uprising made a deep impact on the Palestinian citizens in Israel from its start as evidenced by the October 2000 mass demonstrations. A public opinion poll of Arab citizens of Israel conducted by Mada⁵ showed that 74 percent of respondents believed that the goal of the Israeli army's actions in the occupied territories was to break the Palestinian people's will. The vast majority of Palestinian citizens in Israel reported having great interest in the events taking place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Fully 92 percent of the respondents reported that they followed these events through the media, and 68 percent followed the news regularly.

Palestinian citizens also were aware that the policy against the Palestinians was formulated and conducted by a "national unity government," and that it enjoyed widespread support among Israeli Jews.⁶ The immediate influence of these events on Arab voters might be most clear in their pattern of voting for Zionist parties. It is less clear how these events affect the very participation in the elections whether as a protest against these policies or as a rejection of the legitimacy of the establishment that employs them.

Developments Related to Sharpening Political Identities and to Social Empowerment

In addition to bridging between national identity and citizenship, we have defined two goals of participation in the elections: (1) sharpening of

political and ideological identities within Arab society; and (2) social empowerment.

The political identities of the three ideological orientations represented in the Knesset (communist, nationalists, and religious-Islamists) are sharp and clear. The framework of the political party contributors, on the one hand, to clarifying the political identity of each orientation, and, on the other hand—to social empowerment, by building and running party institutions, party branches, organizational hierarchy, and bureaucracy, and by supporting community activities and training a new generation of leaders. In the following paragraphs, we will review developments that affected these two goals.

Success of the Boycott in the Elections for Prime Minister (February, 2001)

From the moment the elections for prime minister were announced in February 2001, a heated debate started in the Arab community on the question of whether to participate in or boycott the elections. The idea of boycott was raised both as a protest over the behavior of the security forces towards Palestinians in Israel and in the occupied territories, and because neither of the contenders was an acceptable candidate to the majority of Arab voters. The idea of boycott was reinforced by the general loss of trust in the establishment that was prevalent among Arab citizens at the time. The political climate seemed to support a boycott. In order to mobilize popular support for the boycott, the Popular Committee for Boycotting the Elections was formed at the end of 2000 with the support of the "Committee of Martyrs' Parents," which had been founded by families of those slain by police in the October 2000 demonstrations. The slogan, "We will vote when the martyrs vote," became widely accepted.

For the Arab citizen, how participation in elections could bridge between national identity and citizenship was not clear when the choice in the election for prime minister was between Ariel Sharon (Likud) and Ehud Barak (Labor). Moreover, the boycott of the elections for prime minister was not expected to adversely affect the Arab representation in the Knesset because these were not Knesset elections. Therefore, an opportunity emerged for self-empowerment without harming representation or party organization. Despite the hesitation of some political parties over whether to back the boycott up to the eve of the elections, all parties ultimately supported the boycott on election day. One reason for the hesitation was fear that the success of the boycott would create a precedent that would make it easier for voters to boycott the general Knesset elections later on. This was seen as potentially harming Arabs' political self-interest. In the end, the campaign for boycotting the elections for prime minister succeeded: For the first time since the inception of the state, only 18 percent of registered voters participated in the elections.⁷ Later, supporters of boycott for the 16th Knesset invoked the precedent of this success in their attempts to persuade voters to boycott the elections as an act of self-empowerment.

Return to the Previous Electoral System (the Coalitional System)

Before the 2003 Knesset elections, the question was asked as to what effect the return to the previous electoral system of voting only for one list of candidates (and not two separate votes, one to a list of Knesset candidates and one to a candidate for the office of the prime minister) would have on voting patterns. On the one hand, the return to the old electoral system was expected to cause a drop in the percentage of voting for Arab parties because it was thought that at least some voters would go back to voting for Zionist parties. On the other hand, the growing competition between Arab parties and the consequent sharpened ideological differences and heightened identities were expected to mobilize supporters and increase their share of the total vote.

Predictions of a Likud Bloc Victory

An important feature of the 16th Knesset elections campaign was the clear expectation before the elections for a Likud and right-wing victory. The predicted loss of the Labor Party, as well as its earlier failure to mobilize the support of Arab voters under the direct system of elections for prime minister—were expected to reduce the party's share among Arab voters to the benefit, mainly, of Arab parties.

The predicted easy victory of the Likud bloc was expected to have another effect. If, by increasing the number of Arab representatives in the Knesset, the Arab voter exercised some kind of indirect political influence by blocking a right-wing coalition, as argued above, these elections reduced this route of influence, too. Therefore, the pre-election predictions were expected to discourage Arab citizens from participation and thus decrease the percentage of Arab voting even further.

The Elections and the Arab Satellite TV Channels

Starting from the second half of the 1990s, there was a constant increase in the number of satellite TV channels viewed by Arabs in Israel. This increase had a clear impact on viewing patterns and leisure time. It also had an effect on the connection between Arab viewers and social and political developments in the Arab world as well as on the Arabs' social identity and attitudes (Rinawi, 2003).

During the elections campaign, the Arab world showed greater interest than it had in earlier campaigns in the vote of the Palestinian minority in Israel and its internal politics. This interest led to the allocation of valuable air time for candidates. Satellite TV and radio stations such as MBC, Al-Jazeera, Abu-Dhabi, Al-Mustaqbal, and others aired many interviews with Arab candidates. Some of them even dedicated special programs to the elections in Israel and

the Arab vote. These broadcasts heightened competition between the Arab parties. The Lebanese station Al-Mustaqbal is a notable example. In the two weeks that preceded the elections, the station played a jingle entitled "My vote is my honor" in order to urge Arabs to vote. In addition, a popular program on the same station hosted MK Azmi Bishara on January 21, 2003. A day prior to the elections, the station devoted an entire program to the elections in Israel, and hosted candidates and public figures associated with NDA only. Pre-announcement of the program's broadcasting aroused resentment among other Arab contenders: The Shas movement, which represents Mizrahi ultra-Orthodox Jews, turned to the Central Elections Committee—perhaps at the recommendation of some Arab candidates—with a request to prevent the broadcast, on the grounds that it would violate the Elections Propaganda Law. Shas withdrew its petition after the NDA candidates made a commitment not to use the program for open propaganda on behalf of their party.⁸ However, at the conclusion of the program, host Najwa Kassem issued a semi-open call from the studio in Beirut to vote for NDA. As a result, Arab Knesset members accused Syria and Lebanon of supporting MK Azmi Bishara (*Ha'aretz*, 24 January 2003).

There is some evidence for the widely accepted premise that Arab satellite stations play an important role in shaping political awareness among the Palestinian minority in Israel. They fill the void created by the exclusion of this minority's representatives from the Hebrew media (and the heavily state-controlled Arabic radio and TV stations). In a highly charged political climate, the Hebrew media presents issues within a framework shaped by and acceptable to the Jewish consensus. Furthermore, the Hebrew media pays little attention to Arab social and political affairs and areas of interest. The satellite stations are an attractive substitute. Broadcasting in a language that all household members can understand, their versions of events and their framing and interpretation of news are closer to those of the Arab citizen. Surveys that Mada conducted showed that 88 percent of Arab citizens in Israel follow events about the West Bank and Gaza Strip through Arab satellite channels. At the same time, 39 percent of them also follow the news on Israeli channels. In 82 percent of the cases, respondents reported that they viewed Israeli channels in addition to Arab channels, not in place of them (Sa'abni, Routhana, and Mahameed, 2003). The noticeable preference for satellite channels over Israeli stations stems from a crisis of confidence between the Palestinian citizens and state institutions including the Hebrew media.

Election Results

At the beginning of 2003, Israel's population reached a total of 6,658,300,⁹ of which 16 percent were Arabs.¹⁰ Palestinian citizens live in over 100 Arab villages, ten Arab cities, and six mixed Jewish-Arab cities,¹¹ as well as more than 60 villages not officially recognized by the Israeli government. 29.3

percent of Israel's Arabs live in Arab cities, 8.4 percent in mixed cities, 56 percent in large and small villages, and the rest (7.1 percent) reside in dozens of unrecognized villages.¹²

On the eve of the 16th Knesset elections, the number of registered Arab voters reached 559,000 out of 4,300,000 registered voters in Israel,¹³ constituting 13 percent of registered voters. In the previous Knesset elections in 1999, the number of registered Arab voters was 437,110 (Ghanem and Ozacky-Lazar: 1999: 36).

An examination of the results of the elections shows three central characteristics: (1) A sharp drop in voter turnout; (2) a change in the internal balance of power between the central political parties in favor of the nationalists and secularists; and (3) a decrease in the percentage of voting for Zionist parties and narrowing the social base of their voters. We now turn to discussing these results.

Sharp Drop in Voter Turnout

The voting rate in the 16th Knesset elections was the lowest, both among Arab and Jewish voters, of all parliamentary elections held in Israel since the state was established. The drop in voting turnout from the previous elections was sharp. In the 15th Knesset elections, the voting rate within the Arab minority reached about 75 percent. In the 16th Knesset elections this rate dropped to about 62 percent, by far the lowest rate ever.

One conceivable explanation for this drop is that it represents a collective act of political will—a boycott. This explanation is particularly tempting in light of the success of the earlier boycott and the deep frustration of the Arab citizens with domestic and regional Israeli policies, as described above. However, this explanation requires some examination before conclusions can be drawn, because the political meaning of boycotting the elections points to major change in political awareness. It represents a change in the perception of citizenship itself and in the possibilities of bridging between Palestinian Arab national identity and Israeli citizenship. Such an act has significant implications for future relations between Israel and the Arab minority. Therefore, we turn to deeper examination of this explanation.

Call for a boycott and abstention from voting: The call to boycott the 16th Knesset elections was one of the developments making this Knesset election campaign. Such calls had been heard in the Arab sector in many Knesset election campaigns, but usually these calls remained marginal.¹⁴ It was not until 1996 that boycotting the elections became a matter of significant public interest, but the interest focused on boycotting elections for the office of prime minister. In 1996, a heated debate emerged on boycotting the elections for the prime minister against the backdrop of Operation "Grapes of Wrath" in South Lebanon, which was ordered by Peres' Labor government. This operation took

place two months before the elections in which Shimon Peres ran against Benjamin Netanyahu. It was in the context of this operation that the Kafir Qana massacre took place. Yet, at that time, the call to boycott the elections did not develop into an organized effort, and did not generate sufficient interest among voters. The Arab political parties did not openly support it or contribute to the boycotting effort. Nevertheless, the number of voters who boycotted the elections or who cast a blank ballot did increase.¹⁵

In the 2001 elections for prime minister, public support for the call for a boycott was sweeping despite the minor organizational work that was invested. The success of the boycott should be seen as a response to Israel's policies toward its Palestinian citizens and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza after the outbreak of the second uprising. The call to boycott the 16th Knesset elections was now supported by many more individuals and groups and was brought to public consciousness. This was the first time that calls to boycott Knesset elections (as opposed to elections for prime minister) gathered some steam. In addition, the call to boycott the Knesset elections fell on more attentive ears than in previous election campaigns.¹⁶

In order to examine why many voters abstained, Mada conducted a survey in May 2003. The survey conducted by Mada included a representative sample of 821 Arab respondents. We held interviews with the registered voters in the sample who did not vote.¹⁷ We found that the percentage of those who abstained from participation in the elections as a political act was 43.4 percent of the total number of non-voters, or 14 percent of registered voters. Thus, we can conclude that the percentage of Arab registered voters who boycotted—as an act of will intended to convey a political message—was about 14 percent among Arab voters. Within this category of non-voters that we consider boycotters, it is possible to differentiate among three different reasons, or driving forces, for this act, each representing a different group of voters.

The first driving force is boycott out of protest against the political situation in general and Israel's policies towards the Palestinians in the occupied territories and in Israel. Such a boycott does not raise questions about the legitimacy of the Israeli parliamentary institution in and of itself. This is a practical step, and those who take it may vote again in the future once governmental policies have changed. Our survey indicates that the percentage of Arab voters who boycotted the elections as a protest reached 34.7 percent of non-voters, or 11.2 percent of registered Arab voters.

The second driving force is to use boycott as a conscious political act meant to refrain from conferring legitimacy upon the parliamentary institution in Israel. People who boycotted for this reason believed that the Jewish state and its parliamentary institution are not legitimate and that participation of Arab citizens in the elections turns them into a tool that Israel uses to win legitimacy in their eyes and in the eyes of the world. Those who advocate a boycott on these grounds believe that it is not possible to achieve political

gains through elections in Israel's present political structure, and certainly not at the price of granting legitimacy to the Jewish state. Another aspect of refraining from granting legitimate status to state institutions poses a question, explicitly or implicitly, about citizenship and its value in the existing framework. Certain elements in the extra-parliamentary "Sons of the Country" (*Abnaa al-Balad*) movement are probably the most prominent representatives of this layer. According to our survey, the percentage of boycotters in this category reaches 8.7 percent of all boycotters, that is, about 3 percent of all registered Arab voters.

The third driving force is that some boycotters seek to redefine the Arab citizens' relationship with the state. In this case, the call to boycott the Israeli Parliament does not constitute a *challenge* to the citizenship relationship per se, but rather aims to redefine this relationship in order to guarantee equal rights to Arab citizens, on both the individual and collective levels. This boycott reflects political thinking that takes citizenship with the utmost seriousness and works to strengthen and enrich it with democratic content. Its goal is to negotiate with the Israeli state in order to form a new relationship based on equal citizenship. This boycott does not challenge the existence of the civil relationship between Israel and the Arab minority, but rather its emptiness. For this strategy to succeed, its proponents should develop a clear vision for the civil relationship between the Arab minority and the state, a vision that the Arab minority sponsors and which they seek to achieve through the boycott strategy. No such vision currently exists.

The three approaches to boycotting elections did not coincide with existing ideological or political trends, except for the second, which coincides with Abnaa al-Balad, which was the only organized political group to support the boycott. Furthermore, the three different driving forces did not evolve in practice into differentiated arguments. Therefore, the various political and ideological underpinnings of the boycott became intermingled, and its meanings and goals were never articulated. Yet, the call received some public attention. This receptivity emanates from the consensus that seems to be emerging regarding the limited political influence that parliamentary elections yield.

In summary, although still limited, the legitimacy of the boycott idea seems to be growing, and gradually finding a stronger foothold in the Arab community. However, choosing not to vote does not necessarily equate a boycott. As we have seen, only some of the registered voters boycotted the elections as an act of political will, and it would be an error to surmise that the "boycott movement" (if it can even be called this) has entered mainstream political thinking among the Arab citizens. In addition, it is important to differentiate among the different political reasons why individuals chose to boycott the elections.

New boundaries of citizenship and the discussion on boycotting the elections: In addition to the growing skepticism within the Arab minority and its

elected representatives regarding the possibility of exerting influence through parliamentary participation, there was also a growing awareness that the gap between the political demands of the Arab minority and actual Israeli policy had reached proportions that do not enable Arab parties to influence policymaking in Israel. This awareness has been strengthened by legislative measures taken and government resolutions passed over the last few years (see Sulamy, 2003). In addition to the new legislation, attacks on Arab leaders by the right-wing in the Knesset and the attorney general, and the concessions Arab candidates were required to make, only heightened this awareness. It is possible that the Central Elections Committee's decision to disqualify Arab candidates and the NDA party led many Arab citizens to the conclusion that the boundaries of their citizenship and the limits of parliamentary participation were narrowing to a point that there was not much use in participating in the elections. It was clear that the new boundaries of citizenship had restricted the Arab citizens' ability to achieve their rights on individual and collective levels. For example, new legislation was passed requiring Arab candidates for parliament to accept a constitutional definition of Israel as a "Jewish and democratic state" as a precondition for participating in elections at all and gaining entry to the Parliament. New legislation also limited their freedom to express political opinions regarding the nature and future of the state.¹⁸ Thus, within the new boundaries, the legislature limited the choice of candidates that Arabs can choose to represent them using rules and laws that Arab citizens consider to be unfair.¹⁹

The decision of the Central Elections Commission to ban the NDA and two Arab Knesset members from running again for the Knesset was seen as a critical step in limiting the boundaries of citizenship for Arabs in Israel. Some warned of the repercussions of this decision on the relations between Israel and the Arab minority. They viewed the disqualification of Arab candidates and the NDA as a turning point in the history of these relations, since this meant diminishing the legitimacy of the Arabs' citizenship in the view of the state and the Jewish majority, and threatening the legitimacy of the state itself in the view of its Arab citizens, especially among the political and educated elites.

This climate had contradictory repercussions. On one hand, the Central Elections Committee's decision and its subsequent reversal by the Supreme Court provided support for the call for a boycott, especially for those who supported boycott as a protest against Israel's policies and those who questioned the legitimacy of Israeli institutions. On the other hand, the Central Elections Committee's decision and its annulment by the Supreme Court also provided ammunition for voices that called for participation in the elections and to back the parties whose candidates had initially been disqualified by the Central Elections Committee. The rationale for such calls was to challenge the forces that had sought to prevent them from running for elections. This argu-

ment seemed to have received some support, albeit not enthusiastic support. It was against this background that some people specifically opposed a boycott for the present elections but left room overall for such a move when conditions would be ripe. Their argument was that under the present conditions, a boycott did not serve the goal of internal empowerment and internal organization. The Arab community should prepare for such an eventuality whose conditions of success presently do not exist (Halabi, 2003).²⁰

The low voting percentage and lack of enthusiasm on the part of some of the Arab elites and voters show that the boycott issue has not yet been resolved, and in most likelihood it will reemerge in a stronger form in the future if the current trend of deterioration in the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian citizens does not change. It is possible that the goal of self-empowerment can be reframed and achieved by boycotting the parliamentary elections and focusing instead on building local and (Arab) national social and political institutions.

Changes in the Balance of Power among Arab Parties

Three Arab parties—The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE) at the center of which stands the Israeli Communist party, the NDA, and the United Arab List (UAL)—succeeded in passing the voting threshold and winning representation in the 16th Knesset. The DFPE received the largest number of votes—93,819. NDA followed with 71,299 votes, and UAL came third with 65,551 votes. Despite the gap in the number of votes between the DFPE and NDA, the two parties won three Knesset seats whereas UAL won two. The National Unity Party headed by Hashem Mahameed received 20,571 votes, which was not enough to enable it to pass the voting threshold (see Table 10.1).

The four parties received some 70 percent of the Arab vote distributed as follows: DFPE, 26 percent; NDA, 20 percent; UAL, 18 percent; and the National Unity, 6 percent of the total number of Arab valid votes. The remaining 30 percent voted for non-Arab parties, as detailed below.

Table 10.1
Distribution of the Arab Vote in the 2003 Elections

List	Number of votes	Percentage	Seats
DFPE (Communist party)	93,819	26%	3
NDA (Nationalists)	71,299	20%	3
UAL (Islamist coalition)	65,551	18%	2
Unity	20,571	6%	0
Other parties	106,290	30%	—
Total	357,530	100%	—

Data from Mada, based on the official results

A comparison between the results of the 2003 and 1999 elections illustrates the shifts that took place in the strength of these parties. The greatest change was the decline in the strength of the UAL as its share dropped from about 30 percent of the Arab vote to 18 percent. The loss of about 40 percent of its strength can be attributed to a number of factors. First, there were severe internal conflicts within the party, some of which related to competition over placement in the top slots of the party's list. These conflicts became intense and public before the elections and they undermined the party's image and support among its base of voters. The conflicts were fully exposed immediately upon publication of the election results.²¹ Second, the parliamentary performance of some of the list's representatives in the 15th Knesset was not on par with the performance of the other Arab blocs in the Knesset. Third, the increased support of the extra-parliamentary Islamic movement, which emanates from the movement's ideological views as well as its popular methods of operation, came at the expense of the UAL. The extra-parliamentary Islamic movement called for a boycott of the elections, another possible reason for the weaker showing of the UAL in the polls.

The NDA and DFPE increased their strength in comparison with the 1999 elections. The rate of Arab voters for the DFPE rose from 21 percent in the 1999 elections to 26 percent in the 2003 elections. The proportion of Arab voters for NDA rose from 17 percent to 20 percent.²²

It is difficult to determine the degree of influence exerted by political and organizational factors on the changes in the balance of power among the Arab parties. But it is clear that all of the factors—the drop in voting rates among registered Arab voters, the loss of appeal of Zionist parties such as the Labor Party and Meretz among Arab voters, and the effect of the Al-Aqsa Intifada on strengthening the national Arab discourse and on sharpening internal group identities—together played a role.

In the 2003 elections, the Arab parties maintained their overall strength versus the non-Arab parties, despite the change in the electoral system. In the 1999 elections, the DFPE, the NDA, and the UAL together garnered 69 percent of the Arab vote. In the 2003 elections, the same parties together with the National Unity Party won 70 percent of the vote. The change took place in the relative strength of the Arab parties.

Decrease in the Percentage of Voting for Jewish Zionist and Religious Parties

In the 2003 elections, non-Arab parties won 29.4 percent of the Arab vote. The distribution of Arab to non-Arab parties in the 16th Knesset was as follows: 7.5 percent to Labor Party; 5.8 percent to Am Ehad; 4.1 percent to Meretz; 8.4 percent to Likud and religious parties, and 3.6 percent to other Jewish parties. There are slight shifts in the rates of support for Zionist parties, but no significant difference in the overall voting rate between 1999 and 2003.

Table 10.2
Distribution of Arab Vote among Non-Arab Parties
in the Years 1992-2003 (in percentages)

	1992	1996	1999	2003
Labor party	20.3%	16.6%	7.4%	7.5%
Other Jewish parties	33%	17%	22%	21.9%
Total	53.3%	33.6%	29.4%	29.4%

The data in the table for the years 1992-1999 are based on Ghanem and Ozacky-Lazar (1999). The data for 2003 are taken from an analysis the official results of the 16th Knesset elections. The data do not include Arab votes in mixed cities.

A comparison of the results of the last few elections with the results of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Knesset elections shows a decrease in the percentage of Arab votes given to Zionist parties. In the 1992 elections, non-Arab parties (Zionist and fundamentalist Jewish parties) received 53.3 percent of the Arab vote, 20.3 percent of which was given to the Labor Party. In the 1996 elections, a sharp drop took place in the rate of votes for non-Arab parties, and it reached 33.6 percent—the votes were divided mainly between the Labor Party (16.6 percent) and Meretz (10.5 percent). The main factor for this drop was the change in the electoral system in which voters could cast two votes: one for a party and one for the candidate for prime minister. In the 15th and 16th Knesset elections, the downward trend continued: The voting rate for non-Arab parties dropped to 29.4 percent despite the return to the one ballot vote.

There were those who believed that returning to the one-ballot system, which that was in effect until the 1992 elections, would increase the percentage of Arabs voting for Zionist parties, especially the larger parties. We explained the reasons for these expectations above. These predictions were proven wrong, at least with regard to voters who are not Druze or Bedouin, as we will see below. The fact that the voting rate for Zionist parties did not rise despite the change in the electoral system can be seen as a drop in the strength of the Zionist parties.

The gradual decrease in support for Zionist parties stems from several factors. The main factor is the gradual adoption of a voting pattern among Arabs that can be termed *identity voting*, in which the issue of Arab and Palestinian affiliation plays an important role (Kaufman and Israeli, 1996; Rouhana, 1986). This pattern is more noticeable as tensions increase between Israel and the Palestinians and the Arab world. The increasing awareness of the component of hostility in the relationship between the state and the Arab population has also contributed to this result. In addition, identity considerations are fostered by the activity of the Arab parties in the local arena, the continued Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation, and the general mood of confrontation between Israel and the Arab world. As we noted above, the media play an

important role in encouraging voting for Arab parties out of identity considerations.

A pattern of *protest voting*, or abstention from voting for Zionist parties, can also be discerned. It can be hypothesized that factors such as the October 2000 demonstrations and the killing of thirteen Arab demonstrators by police and army forces, the part of the Labor Party in this violent policy, and the silence of Meretz in the face of these actions—all these encouraged this pattern among Arab voters. Protest voting is different from identity voting in that it doesn't necessarily represent a principled position; it is rather influenced by the circumstances in which the election campaign takes place.

The rise in the Arab parties' strength, the improvement in the efforts (not necessarily the achievements) of some of these parties in protecting Arab individual and collective rights, the clarity of their political positions, and the emphasis on the political and ideological identities of each party—increased competition among them and helped mobilize their supporters. This competition drew more Arab voters to the Arab parties. Furthermore, the fact that it was clear prior to the elections that the Labor Party and its traditional allies would fail to win the elections and assemble a coalition motivated Arab voters to distance themselves from these parties.

Who Votes for the Zionist Parties?

A question frequently asked about Arab voting patterns is, why do they vote for right-wing and Jewish religious parties? The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this chapter, but in the context of the decrease in support for Zionist parties, we examined the remaining sources of support in the Arab community.

The results of the 16th Knesset elections show that not all segments of Arab society vote equally for Zionist parties. Voting percentages for Zionist parties in Druze and Northern Bedouin communities are high in comparison with other Arab villages in the Galilee and the Triangle, and also in comparison with Bedouin villages in the Negev. The voting rate for non-Arab parties in the Druze towns reached 89 percent, as opposed to 23 percent in other Arab towns (with the exception of the Bedouin Arabs). The voting rate for Zionist parties in Bedouin towns in the north reached 46 percent; in the south, it reached 32 percent.

These results are not unique to the 2003 elections, and have been observed in earlier elections. The voting rate for Zionist parties in the Druze towns reached 86 percent in the 15th Knesset elections and 81 percent in the 14th Knesset elections. The double-ballot vote in 1996 and 1999 could explain the lower percentages given to Zionist parties during these years. In the last elections, the voting percentage for Zionist parties in Druze villages was similar to the percentage in the 1992 elections, which was about 91 percent. It appears,

therefore, that disproportional support for Zionist parties in the Arab population comes from the Druze community and from the Bedouin in the north. What is perhaps most surprising is that the voting rate for the Likud rose from 8 percent in 1999 to 20 percent of the total vote in Druze towns in 2003, whereas the Labor Party received 27 percent of the votes in these villages, even more than the party received in the Jewish community.

Table 10.3 reveals the significant difference in voting patterns between Druze Arab villages and non-Druze Arab villages. However, a separate study is needed in order to properly analyze and explain this difference. Table 10.3 further shows that the voting patterns in Bedouin villages in the north are different from the voting patterns of the Arabs in general, and they, too, merit a separate study.

These results reveal that the voting patterns of the Druze are different from those of other Arab voters. This difference is not due to religious affiliation but rather to the patterns of the political and economic connection between the state and the Druze minority. From its early years, Israel had adopted a clear policy intended to separate the Druze from the rest of the Arabs and to create an independent Druze ethnic identity (Firro, 2001). Israel also did so with regard to Muslims as opposed to Christians (Neuberger, 1998: 139). At least in terms of voting patterns, this policy seems to have achieved its goals.

Conclusion

Political scientists and sociologists have repeatedly studied the voting patterns of Arab citizens in Israel. A substantial portion of the research on this

Table 10.3
Distribution of Votes between Arab and Jewish Parties, by Community (in percentages)

Type of community	Type of party	Percentage
Non-Bedouin, non-Druze community	Jewish	23%
	Arab	77%
	All parties	100%
Bedouin community in the north	Jewish	46%
	Arab	54%
	All parties	100%
Bedouin community in the Negev	Jewish	32%
	Arab	68%
	All parties	100%
Druze community	Jewish	89%
	Arab	11%
	All parties	100%

Analysis by Mada based on official results of 16th Knesset elections

topic has emphasized aspects of political influence, which stands at the center of democratic theory. Many researchers have explained the changes in Arab voting patterns in light of the development of national consciousness and how the dialectical relations between the Arab minority and the state influence it.

These analyses, despite their importance in highlighting many of the motives for the political behavior of the Arab citizens and in explaining many of the reasons for the constant fluctuations in voting rates, have neglected internal Arab political and organizational considerations. We view these considerations as vitally important in understanding the general picture of the Arab minority's electoral behavior.

The ability of Israel's Arab citizens to influence the political decision-making in the state has been gradually declining. In the past, leaders of Arab political movements may have thought that it was possible to influence the decision-making process, indirectly, by supporting governments led by the Labor Party, serving as a "blocking majority" in the Knesset against the Israeli right. However, the chances of this have greatly lessened in the past decade, for reasons partly related to the change in the electoral system and partly related to a rise in the strength of the Israeli right—a rise that has been shown in the Likud's victories in recent years. The chances of influence also lessened in the wake of the evolving relationship between the State of Israel and its Arab citizens, a relationship in which one of the elements is hostility—and even enmity—between the state and its institutions and the Jewish majority on one side, and the Arab minority on the other. This relationship will make it easier to delegitimize the Arab parties' possible influence in the future.

As the boundaries of citizenship have narrowed in recent years, Arab citizens are increasingly questioning the meaning of being citizens, beyond their formal relationship with the state. Citizenship involves political and social rights, including active partnership in shaping the public sphere and the common good. Stripping citizenship of these rights means turning it into a formal relationship, thereby turning Arab citizens into "citizens without citizenship" (Sulamy, 2003). This situation could lead to one of two contradictory processes. The first is to surrender or accommodate to the existing political order, in light of the inability to change it and out of fear of the powerful majority and its state institutions and apparatus. Obviously, the accommodation can find numerous justifications and can take different forms. The alternative is to search for new political routes to achieve political influence that require developing new political visions and new organizational bases. This search too can take different forms. Political activity in the Arab community, both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, is defined by the competition between these two broad alternatives. The differences between them will become increasingly distinct if and when awareness increases that the parliamentary option has been exhausted.

Notes

1. For example, the attack by a group of Upper Nazareth residents on the eastern neighborhood of Nazareth can be noted, as well as an attack on a mosque in the city of Tiberias on Saturday, October 7, 2000 (*Yedioth Aharonot*, 8 October 2000; see also *Or-Commission* report, which details some of these attacks).
2. In a survey of a representative sample of the Arab population during the first month of October 2000, 84 percent of the respondents agreed that "the reactions of the Israeli Arabs this week reflect their feelings" (*Yedioth Aharonot, Weekend Supplement*, 6 October 2000, p. 12).
3. The Arab Association for Human Rights, *Conditions of Citizenship and Restricted Political Participation* (October 2002); *Silencing Dissent—A Report on the Violation of Political Rights of the Arab Parties in Israel* (October 2002) (at the website www.arabhr.org).
4. See the eighth annual report of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights; at its website: <http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2003/haya.htm>.
5. The poll was carried out by the Survey Research Unit at Mada—The Arab Center for Applied Social Research on April 6, 2003. It included a representative sample of 294 respondents from the Arab minority in Israel and showed that 76 percent of Arab citizens view the Israeli army's policy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as war crimes. See Amid Sa'abni, Nadin Rouhana, and Suleiman Mahameed, "The War in Iraq and the Relations between Israel and the Palestinians," *Series of Public Opinion Polls among Palestinians in Israel*, Haifa: Mada—The Arab Center for Applied Social Research, June 2003.
6. A public opinion poll by *Ma'ariv* on the topic of the military invasion of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, held on April 12, 2002, found that 75 percent of its respondents supported re-occupation (as part of Operation Defensive Shield) and 62 percent supported the expulsion of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. Fifty-one percent of respondents said that Israel must not accept the call issued by U.S. President George Bush to Israel to withdraw from the areas of the Palestinian Authority that it had re-occupied.
7. This figure appears in many articles and studies that deal with the results of the elections for prime minister that were held that year, but we could not find an official source to confirm it.
8. See Central Elections Committee press release from January 27, 2003: www.knesset.gov.il/elections/16/heb/cec/view_announcement.asp?id=61.
9. See the Central Bureau of Statistics' website, www.cbs.gov.il, the Data Update section.
10. According to the latest data of the Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of Arab residents living under Israeli rule comes to 1,271,900. Deducting the residents of occupied Arab Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, the proportion of Arabs in Israel amounts to 16 percent of the total population (see source in previous note).
11. The cities are Haifa, Acre, Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramle, as well as Upper Nazareth, which was originally established as a Jewish city.
12. For data on the distribution of Arab residents in Israel, see the website of Mada—The Arab Center for Applied Social Research: www.mada-research.org. The villages not included in the list of legally recognized villages and cities do not appear on the map, although most existed even before the *Nakba* and the establishment of the State of Israel.
13. Data update notification issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics on January 22, 2003 (www.cbs.gov.il). The proportion of registered Arab voters is smaller than

- their proportion within the general population, due to the differences between Arabs and Jews in age distribution. The data update notification on Muslims in Israel (including Arab Jerusalem) issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics on February 11, 2003 indicates that 42 percent of Muslims are under the age of 14, versus 26 percent of Jews. See also the website of the data bank on the Arab minority in Israel: www.rekaz.org.
14. For example, the "Abnaa Al Balad" movement had called for a boycott of the elections since it was founded in the 1970s. For more information on this movement's position in the last elections, see the movement's announcements at the following website: http://www.abnaa-elbalad.org/mokata3a_48.html.
15. In 1996, 7.2 percent of voters cast a blank ballot. About the call to boycott the elections for prime minister and voting with a blank ballot, see for example Nimer Sultany, "Pragmatism and National Nihilism," *Al-Hithad*, June 19, 1996.
16. For details on the positions of public figures outside the "Sons of the Country" movement on the need to boycott the elections, see the website: http://www.abnaa-elbalad.org/mokata3a_48.tripod.com.yom_dirast.html. See also the article by Sheikh Ra'ed Salah, *Sawr al-Haqq wa al-Horriyya* 608, January 17, 2003, and the article by Sheikh Kamal Khaitib at the website www.islamic-agqa.com/display.asp?FN=makk39&dir=rtl.
17. The percentage of nonvoters in the sample was 32 percent (while in the elections it was 38 percent). Reports about voting behavior after elections are conducted show some discrepancy between actual voting and reported voting behavior. Furthermore, the sampling margin of error contributed to this discrepancy. We used the sample's data to calculate percentages of boycott.
18. See Sultany (2003) for a review of legislations and government decisions and Rouhana and Sultany (2003) on the new boundaries of citizenship.
19. See the statement issued by the National Democratic Alliance party in response to the decision of the Central Elections Committee to prevent Azmi Bishara from participating in the elections, *Farsi al-Magdal*, January 2, 2003.
20. Halabi mentions the absence of representative institutions elected by the Arab citizens, a lack of coordination between existing Arab political forces, and the economic dependency of the Arab minority upon Jewish society and the state.
21. After publication of the results, an exchange of accusations between the leaders of these parties filled the front pages of the weekend supplements in the Arab press on the first Friday after the elections, January 31, 2003.
22. Despite the increase in the rates of voting for these parties, the parliamentary strength of the two parties dropped, due to the decrease in voter turnout.

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