

<i>VIII. Political Trends and the New Elites</i>	233
Political Trends and the New Elites in Palestine <i>Dr. Bernard Sabella</i>	233
Partisan Leadership and Electoral Laws: The Israeli Domain in Context <i>Dr. Gad Barzilai</i>	243

VIII. POLITICAL TRENDS AND THE NEW ELITES

Political Trends and the New Elites in Palestine

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The choice of the title 'Political Trends and the New Elites' belies a certain preference to elite theory, which sees a pivotal role for elites in contrast to social movements, political parties and a more open class society. My observation is by no means meant as an attack on the conference organizers and on their political background or disposition; it is simply a thought. The title, however, may actually point to factual developments whereby Palestinian society is witnessing the circulation of elites or the creation of new ones as a means of distribution of power, rather than other social manifestations.

Before proceeding further, a definition of 'elites' would perhaps make an appropriate introduction. The word 'elites' usually denotes a hierarchy or ranking of people according to a structure of positions whether in the political, economic, professional, military, academic or other realms. According to some people, it is the attributes or characteristics of certain the individual that determine how far he will reach; thus, those with the appropriate attributes will eventually reach the top and find themselves in a position of power vis-à-vis others in the structure or in society at large.

Others argue, meanwhile, that the structure of positions is due to the complexity and organizational needs of modern societies. Historically, only a small number of people of any one society exercise political and other powers in society. The question, however, is how these individuals end up at the top of the structure or pyramid of power, wealth, influence, prestige, etc., ... and who are the people likely to become members of the various elites? Another question is whether the elites actually represent the majority of the population or are they

'elites' in the sense that they have their own 'clubbish' tendencies that allow for some circulation of membership but impede the recruitment of members from outside their circles.¹

An important question for us here is whether we can analyze recent developments in Palestine and neighboring countries from an elite perspective? If we can, then we have to be careful not to underestimate other social, economic and political forces that control the society. In addition, we have to admit that by choosing this elite-approach we are in effect taking an authoritarian and conservative view of society.

Political Development and Elite Competition

For the sake of the argument implicit in the title, I would undertake, after a brief historical overview, to examine the development and institutionalization of the PNA as an elite phenomenon that involves competition among various Palestinian political elites. In addition, I would argue that the fragmentation and cantonization of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem limits and constrains the integration of the whole society and hence the ability of the Palestinian political elite to effectively standardize and enforce its power and influence across the three territories. Besides, the trend towards regionalization and the effects attendant on globalization whether in technological, economic or consumer matters constitute forces that serve to further constrain and limit the power and influence of the Palestinian political elite.

Elite Historical Basis

The historical basis for the emergence of the Palestinian elite was religious and it revolved around the **Islamic Fath of the country**. In particular, families associated with the **Fath**, with the holy places in Jerusalem and other localities, with Salah Ed-Din and with other religious personalities, associations and functions assumed traditionally elitist positions in Palestinian society. As a result, these families came to have a special status in the society and referring to them as 'notable' families was an accepted practice. Throughout the centuries, these families were able to use their religion-based privileged status to gain more advantages and power in economic, political, social and other

¹ See William A. Welsh, *Leaders and Elites*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979. The book gives definitions and analyses of elites in different political contexts.

areas. Thus, these families became dominant and assumed the overall leadership of the Palestinians. An outstanding example of this dominance is the family politics and coalition during the British Mandate period.²

With the disintegration of Palestine and the creation of Israel in 1948, the family elite was jolted from its position of power but continued to assume important functions. Jordan integrated the Palestinian family elite into its administrative, political, economic and social structure. Other family elite members made it elsewhere in the Arab World or beyond. The role of the family elite continued to be a phenomenon of Palestinian social structure after 1948, in spite of the fact that it was seriously weakened: first, due to the failure suffered by the leadership of elite families in 1948 and then, due to the shift in the center of power from the West Bank to the East Bank, between 1948 and 1967.

In addition, Palestinian family elites were characterized as self-contained groups whose primary motivation was their own interests and those of their kin rather than those of the society as a whole. This localism and familism, if one wishes, contributed to the weakness of family elites and their potential role as a political and social leadership for the whole society in the 1950s and 1960s.³

The PLO as a Challenge to Traditional Bases of Elitism

With the War of 1967 and the emergence of the PLO, family elites received yet another jolt. The basis for extending influence and power over the whole society became political commitment and involvement. Revolutionary ideology of liberating Palestine became a basis for status, privilege and elitism rather than the old systems and traditional bases. It could be argued that PLO elitism was a combination of traditional and modern bases, of which the latter was related to engagement in the political and military struggle to recover Palestine.

But it was clear that elitism as social manifestation of power relationships in Palestinian society continued and, in one sense, with the hierarchical political and quasi-military organization of the PLO this elitism was reinforced. The PLO, according to another view, sought to be the major

² See author's master's thesis on *Leading Palestinian Families and their Socio-Economic and Political Impact, 1917-1948*.

³ Shaul Mishal, 'Nationalism through Localism: Some Observations on the West Bank Political Elite', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 17 #4, October 1981 pp. 480-481.

if not only center of power in Palestinian society. Accordingly, it was not interested in the emergence of a competing power in the occupied territories; hence, the passive role allotted to the inhabitants of the territories that focused on non-cooperation with the Israeli authorities. When there was a perceived threat to the influence of the PLO center, as with the autonomy plan of the late 1970s, the PLO hurriedly established bodies, such as the National Guidance Committee in 1978, to consolidate the center-periphery relationship.⁴

Moving on to more recent history, the local leadership and elite of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was not capable of transforming itself into a viable national leadership. To a great extent, the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to the PLO constrained and limited the opportunity for such a transformation. Israeli policies of fragmentation and cantonization of towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza Strip also played its role in limiting the possibilities of the emergence of a society-wide leadership. When the Israelis were looking for a leadership capable of delivering, there was no question that such a leadership existed only within the PLO. Local elites could deliver only at the local level under certain circumstances but they definitely could not deliver at the national level. The Oslo process is the prime example: while the 'local' Palestinian delegation was sitting in Washington to negotiate, the top decision makers in the PLO were conducting parallel secret negotiations. It was clear to everyone that only the Oslo negotiators could deliver.

Palestinian Society: Is it Run by Elites?

The return to the homeland of the PLO and the transformation of power from a liberation movement to a national government necessitates the question of whether Palestinian society is being run by elites? The hierarchical structures whether in politics, security or governmental administration point to the presence of elites that sit at the top of these hierarchies and exercise influence and control. But hierarchical structures by themselves do not necessarily point to elite-hegemony or to the absence of social and political forces that vie for power and influence with those in formal power positions.

⁴ Shmuel Sandler and Hillel Frisch. 'Evaluating Shared Rule Arrangements on the West Bank: The Problem of Palestinian Communal Structure', in *Middle East Focus: Canada's Magazine on the Contemporary Middle East*, Volume 7 #1 May 1984, p. 9 + p. 12.

The institutionalization of Palestinian government also changed the role of grass-root organizations and political groups. No longer is the role expected from these organizations and groups focused on mass mobilization to confront and end occupation. Rather, they are expected to coordinate with the national authority and to transform themselves into organizations that work toward the same political goals as prescribed by the political leadership.

The relationship between the new elites in the PNA and the local elites in various spheres differs according to need and mutual interests. Thus, it is clear that the PLO adopted the policy of co-optation of members of family elites whether in Jerusalem, the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. The relationship is thus mutually reinforcing: the PNA needs these members, who in turn need the PNA to legitimize their position of relative privilege and prestige in the society. Both benefit from the relationship that confirms that power relationships in Palestinian society, under the new conditions, are elite-based.

Another tendency that could be emerging but that needs to be ascertained and researched is how much of a presence does the Palestinian political and governing elite have in parallel economic and entrepreneurial elites? The relevance of this question is with regard to the practical implications it has on the nature of social structure, distribution of wealth in the society and Palestinian politics, in general.

On the other hand, if we assume that elites run the society then how do these ruling elites perpetuate themselves? And what kind of relationships do they have with intellectual and academic elites? The common complaint that intellectuals and academics feel marginalized may in fact be related to the question of recruitment of new elite members and its accompanying problems. It is expected that in elite-based social structures, academics and intellectuals usually play a bridging role between the elites and other groups in the society. In one sense, some intellectuals and academics end up becoming the legitimizing spokespersons for the elites. With the coming home of the PLO, its strongest popular base is in effect the thousands of the rank and file who returned home with its leadership. Thus, there is no apparent pressing need to use the intermediary function of academics and intellectuals in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to win a broader base of potential recruits.

Elites: Are They Best for Transitional Periods?

In periods of transition, the potential for loss of order and control is greatest especially when a whole society is involved. Accordingly, there are pressures, both from within the society and from outside, for social structures that would ensure law and order and that would provide the needed stability. Apparently, elite-based social structures are more qualified to fulfill this function since they do not have to answer for a wider constituency and hence their ability to deal directly and effectively with sources of instability for the society and its governance system.

This view, however, should not be considered out of specific socio-economic and political contexts. If we take the Palestinian case, the history of Israeli occupation and its resistance has meant that there was no legitimate civil authority for almost a third of a century. Accordingly, what emerged during this period were grassroots political, social and economic organizations, which operated relatively freely in the broader context of occupation and the oppression it generated. This accordingly has meant certain expectations of the population with respect to the conduct of government and civil life. These expectations are not necessarily in agreement with the thesis that elite-based social structures are best for transitional periods. In fact, some would argue that the overwhelming participation of Palestinians in the elections for the Administrative 'Legislative' Council and for the President of the PNA, on 20 January 1996, is proof of exactly the opposite point of view: the need for democratic and pluralist systems that would secure the needed stability for the society and for the governing authority. Thus, exit and opinion polls conducted prior to and on election day show Palestinian voter expectations for an open and free system of governance.⁵

The Implications of Fragmentation for an Elite-Based Structure

With the fragmentation and cantonization of the territories, the result of Israel's obsession with security, the elite-based structure would have to accommodate itself to the effects of such fragmentation. Assuming that the structure is indeed elite-based, then the problem becomes how

⁵ See polls conducted by the JMCC, Jerusalem and CPRS, Nablus on the topic of elections and voter expectations.

would the political elite maintain its hegemony over three different territories, each with its own unique characteristics? The tendency to seek a security-oriented answer is strong because, in effect, it is the most straightforward and energy saving answer especially when prevailing conditions are those of transition and fragmentation. But there are limits for the security-oriented answer, as the situation of East Jerusalem clearly illustrates and as the differences in socio-economic, demographic and political contexts between the West Bank and Gaza illustrate. It follows then that elite-based structures that tend to rely on control methods to ensure stability would not necessarily be ideal to a situation as exists in the Palestinian Territories.

The security-oriented answer is feasible when relations between the PNA and the Israeli Government are smooth and there is agreement on issues and probable future scenarios. But when, as with the present Israeli Government, there are serious differences and divisions then the security-oriented answer has no legitimization within the Palestinian political context. But the security-oriented answer has one major flaw because its reading of the Palestinian scene is strictly political. Politics is one of the concerns of Palestinians but it is not the overwhelming concern. In fact, there are indications that almost 50 percent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip sees economic issues as most important.⁶

Of interest is the fact that in a survey conducted on a national sample in the first half of 1995, the ranking of influential groups in the society showed popular perceptions of the stratification system that may come as a surprise to the groups ranked. The following list shows in order of frequency the various groups that were selected:

Group	Percentage
University professors	90
Top levels of the security and police systems	83
Government members	78
Local political personalities	76
PLO leaders	75
Industrialists, bank managers, big merchants	75
Religious personalities/heads of religious communities	74
Spokespersons of the various political groups	71
Heads and members of municipal and village councils	59

⁶ Theodor Hanf and Bernard Sabella, *A Date with Democracy: Palestinians on Society and Politics - An Empirical Survey*, Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, Freiburg, 1996 p. 65.

Hotel owners and tourist and travel agents	47
Landowners	43
Heads of families/hamulas	40
Muhktars	31

(Source: Hanf and Sabella, Ibid. p. 67).

According to this list, one can divide the influential groups into a number of 'elites': academic, security, government, political, industrial-financial-commercial, religious, tourist, local-municipal, real estate and traditional-family. Palestinians are intelligent since they assess, outside of the academic elite, who in fact has power and influence in the society. The ranking of the security and police top levels before the political elite makes sense since they are the ones to implement and have immediate access to the tools of power and control. It is clear that leadership at the local level and traditional family leadership no longer carry the influence and prestige they once had. The orientation of the population is towards national elites and influential groups rather than to local groups. The ranking of university professors at the top of the list should be understood with this perspective in mind. In addition, the prestige accrued by university professors is tied to the high value attached to education by the society as a whole.

Open Social Structure: Overcoming Constraints of Elitism and Fragmentation

Palestinians understand well the need for the integration of their society. The ranking of the influential groups in the list above is just one simple confirmation. Another is the fact that almost two thirds of Palestinians perceive themselves and their society as middle class. The tendency among the population is not towards an 'elitist' social structure but more towards an open social system.⁷ Palestinian popular visions of the political order point also to a commitment by the population to democracy, government accountability, independent courts and freedom of the press. In addition, there is a strong desire for social equality among Palestinians, which is seen as dependent on the adoption of a wise fiscal policy by the government. At the same time, there is a rejection of any state-controlled economy.⁸

⁷ Hanf and Sabella, *ibid.*, p. 42)

⁸ Hanf and Sabella, *ibid.*, p. 127.

But where did Palestinians get all these ideas from? Clearly a variety of factors are responsible: the struggle against Israeli occupation and the development of grassroots organizations both internally and externally, the emphasis on education, contacts with Israeli society, technological change and the shop-keeping and entrepreneurial spirit of Palestinians. They are also aware of their limits as over three quarters of Palestinians believe that regional economic cooperation is needed in order for states to survive. Over seven tenths believe that coordination and cooperation will characterize relations with Jordan in the long run.⁹

While some would refer to these processes taking place among Palestinians as de-politicization, I would prefer to designate them as democratization with rising expectations as to economic development, political discourse and to a pluralist and open nature of society and its structures. Clearly it is much more difficult to fulfill these expectations without an open system of governance and institutionalization of power. In the short run, Palestinian society may do without such institutionalization. But, in the long run, there is serious doubt that it will succeed in overcoming the difficult challenges that lie ahead without an open social system and institutionalization.

Conclusion

Elite-based social structures may be convenient for societies that are closed and that are characterized by conservatism and authoritarianism. In the Palestinian case, elite-based structures face constraints and limitations primarily from within the society. Some external factors or actors, such as Israel, are more comfortable with elite-based structures especially in matters pertaining to security. At the same time, these actors weaken the influence and power of the Palestinian elite-based structures by following policies of fragmentation and cantonization in the three Palestinian territories. Palestinian elites thus fall under conflicting pressure from within and without the society.

The way out of the dilemmas confronting Palestinian society is through the adoption of policies that would encourage the development of open systems of social structure, government accountability, economic development and institutionalization of power and influence.

⁹ Hanf and Sabella, *ibid.* pp. 100-101.

Indications are abundant that Palestinians are an intelligent and hard working people: opportunities should become available to them to prove that they can mold a free and democratic society. In an age of regionalization and globalization, what applies to the Palestinians applies as well to their neighbors. Together, we can all help shape the future of our individual societies and the future of our region as a whole.



Partisan Leadership and Electoral Laws: The Israeli Domain in Context

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Introduction

Elites and leaders are essential elements of collective and individual life in any given sociopolitical fabric. Theoretical approaches in political science and sociology have pointed to that fact, while arguing for the relative importance of the political elite in shaping and generating public life. The issue of who governs was central to modern endeavors to comprehend the essence of politics. Getano Mosca, who is considered one of the main elitist scholars, has defined political power in terms of political organizations in addition to the relations between these organizations and the public. Understanding political leaders and the political elite necessitates the investigation of the co-optation of economic and military power with political power. Organizations are stronger and more efficient than any single human being or individual group.

Yet, Mosca has neglected two important fundamentals of power: first, social bases from which political leaders and ruling groups can emerge, and the pressure groups that can shape or be relevant to the shaping of decision-making processes and that might legitimize political leaders. The first issue was illuminated primarily by Marxist and Post-Marxist scholars who explored the significance of social stratification in modern societies. Althusser, Foucault, and Hoffe are among the more prominent scholars who have emphasized this issue. The second element was underscored by more pluralist oriented scholars, such as David Truman and Robert Dahl. While current social scientists are equipped with those basic studies in order to investigate leadership, the task of accurately defining leadership is still extremely complex. The basic Weberian typology is between charismatic leadership, bureaucratic leadership, and traditional leadership.

Yet, Max Weber presumed that each type of leadership will be relevant to a different historical phase: primordial societies incline to be characterized by traditional leadership and transitional societies by charismatic leaders, while a bureaucratic leadership is a phenomenon of technological and industrial societies. Primordial leaders are legitimized by tradition and religion, while charismatic leaders are legitimized due to their own personality; bureaucratic leaders, meanwhile, operate within the legal and administrative sphere, which strengthens their legitimacy. Obviously, the Weberian typology is far from satisfactory: was Winston Churchill a charismatic leader, a bureaucratic leader, or both? And how should we define Charles De Gaulle or Yasser Arafat? In political reality leaders have different and mixed political traits. Moreover, the Weberian model of leadership does not provide any coherent explanation for the social basis of leaders.

The main theoretical claim of this article is that in modern states that have democratic procedures, political parties and the electoral systems should be the focal point of the study of political leadership. The structure of the partisan system, the parties' social development, partisan ideologies, their internal structure, and how they affect and are affected by the electoral laws can tell us a great deal about the nature of leadership and its social origins. This does not mean that personality and personal characteristics are not a significant part of leadership, but any systematic study of leadership should comprehend the political contexts that generate and eliminate ruling elite. Social sciences cannot predict a future politician, but they can explain political environments that shape leaders.

This method of thinking is applied here in order to understand leadership in Israel, since its inception in 1948 until 1996. In this article we shall explore the sociopolitical sources of Israeli leaders, ruling groups, and non-ruling groups, and all this by looking especially at political parties and electoral laws. In the case of Israel the cultural changes that have taken place, primarily after the 1970s, should be emphasized. The Americanization of the Israeli society affected its partisan apparatuses and electoral laws, and it is accepted that this trend could possibly affect the election of future Israeli leaders.

A. The Partisan System (1948-1996)

The etiology of the party system was sharply divided into two historical periods: the emergence of Mapai in various structural forms as the dominant political party (1932-1973); and, the evaporation of dominance in the partisan system, and the emergence of polarization (1974-1996). The first period was generally characterized by the rather effective control of Mapai leaders. All of them - David Ben Gurion, Moshe Sharett, Levi Eshkol, and Golda Meir, were partisan leaders, who established bases of power within the party apparatus. They used the party machinery in order to control various national power-foci.

The first well organized labor political party was established in 1919 under the name of Hahdut Ha'Havoda. In order to control the labor market it established in 1920 the largest workers organization - the Histadruth. In 1930 the party co-opted other socialist political groups and Mapai was formed as the largest labor political party. Soon it controlled the majority of the financial resources and political bodies in the Yishuv, in addition to an organized military force. Mapai rhetoric was socialist, and it was advocated by most of the Jewish Yishuv at the time. Political parties were the chief avenue of political activity in the Yishuv, and Mapai was the principal force that led most of the Jewish Yishuv. Its social base was the second (1903-1914) and third (1919-1924) wave of immigration from Russia and East Europe. The leaders of Israel from Ben Gurion until Yitzhak Rabin were from those two waves of immigration to Palestine/ Eretz Yisrael.

The dominance of Mapai was articulated in several dimensions. Since 1932 the party has won the elections to the Jewish Agency, to the Histadruth, and the National Committee. Those three bodies, which conducted the domestic and foreign affairs of the Jewish community, were completely under Mapai's command. Such a high level of control induced a great deal of economic power - Mapai was the party that could supply jobs, land, and immigration licenses to its constituency, which enabled it to generate more electoral and cultural support. Its main political rival, the Revisionist movement, established in 1925, was far from being an effective counter-elite. The partisan and the central nature of the Yishuv made the Mapai dominance even stronger. Any counter organization lacked its public power, and no political leader could endanger Ben Gurion.

When the stage of state-building began in 1948 Ben Gurion dealt with several challenges. He centralized the military power by the

elimination of other military (Palmach) and terrorist organizations (Etzel, Lechi). In this context, in order to empower his leadership and guarantee the establishment of Israel as a sovereign state he used force against internal political enemies, primarily the Revisionist-led terrorist organization, the Etzel. In addition, Mapai established the army (Israel Defense Forces, IDF), and the security services, ensuring its and Ben Gurion's full control over those organizations.

The party, Mapai, the Histadruth, the generations of the second and third waves of immigration, and the military, were the bases of political legitimacy that strengthened Ben-Gurion's leadership. Using the Weberian terminology it was a combination of charismatic and bureaucratic leadership; but in reality it was a partisan leadership grounded in the nature of the Yishuv as a society of immigrants.

Israel was established as a Jewish state, a fact that was constituted and asserted in its legal fabric. The fading Arab minority was under a strict military regime of surveillance (mainly in 1948-1966). Emergency regulations were imposed on the Israeli-Arabs and deprived them of some of their civil rights. Arabs could vote and be elected to the Knesset, but the military regime hampered the emergence of a national Arab leadership. The national leadership was predominantly Jewish.

Ben Gurion's successors benefited from the same political sources - support of the Mapai/Labor apparatus ensured national leadership. Moshe Sharet was a political rival of Ben Gurion and opposed his emphasis on security and military actions. Sharet was supported by the more moderate groups in Mapai, and was also popular with the socialist Mapam, due to his emphasis on military restraint. Levi Eshkol was advanced by the Mapai apparatus in response to Ben-Gurion's declining power. In a similar way, Golda Meir was considered to be an experienced political actor who acquired her experience in the Histadruth and the party corridors.

Eshkol's rise to power in 1963 was the beginning of a clear decline in the party's public image, mainly because he lacked the military experience and the reputation of a war hero. Hence, in 1967, in the course of the internal crisis in Israel and on the eve of the War of 1967, he was forced to enlarge his ruling coalition. Despite Mapam grievances, the right-wing Gahal, headed by Menachem Begin, joined the 'national unity' government, which remained in power until 1970.

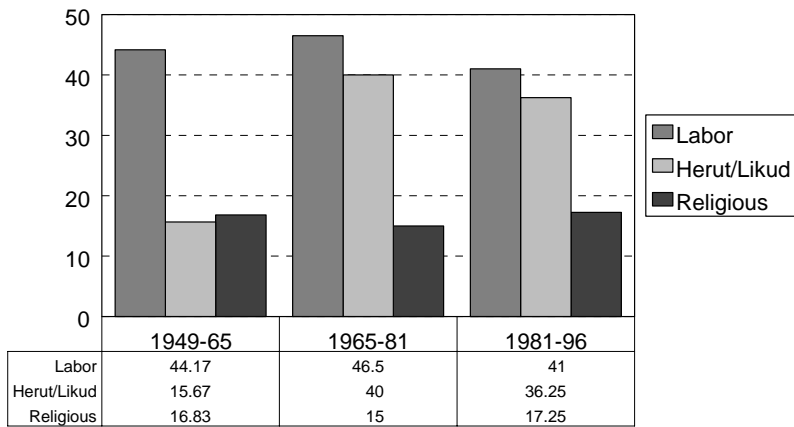
Eshkol was forced to co-opt the counter-elite into the ruling coalition, in order to legitimize his own leadership. This was a turning point in two respects: first, the Mapai leadership was losing its uniqueness in the partisan system; second, by co-opting the counter-elite, the leadership was losing its exclusive sources of popular support. This was, prior to the War of 1973, the main reason for the evaporation of Mapai hegemony in the political setting. It transformed the struggle over leadership to a far more bitter and complex battle. It also contributed to a transformation in the characteristics of the political leaders in Israel.

Since 1974 the political leaders have all come from military backgrounds. While only one leader out of four who governed prior to 1974 had security experience (Ben Gurion), all the five leaders who have governed since have experience in the field of national security, whether in the period prior to 1948 or afterwards. The occupation of the territories generated a much more militaristic discourse in the Israeli political setting, and in turn military or security experience became far more relevant than ever before. The inaccurate image of Levi Eshkol as a weak leader, who could not handle the 1967 crisis, added to that public atmosphere, which apparently condemned leaders without security experience.

More interesting is the fact that three out of the five leaders who controlled the state after 1974 were from the Likud party (Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Benyamin Netanyahu). In the 1950s, Herut was delegitimized as a peripheral and radical political party; in the 1960s it was condemned for its hawkish political views. But since 1967 the party has found more favor with the average Israeli voter, and gradually it became less peripheral and more centrist.

The process that was experienced by Herut/Gahal/Likud reflected the polarization in the Israeli political system. In a partisan system such as Israel's, prime ministers are not expected to be national leaders who mobilize support from various political factions. Yet, in the period of Mapai's dominance leaders such as Ben Gurion, Sharet, Eshkol, and Meir were supported by the majority of the public and by most of the political parties. This was not the case after 1974, and the polarization and the ideological fragmentation made it almost impossible for a national leadership to emerge.

A Model of Increased Polarization



B. Non-Parliamentary Political Groups (1948-1996)

The Israeli political system was to a great extent a partisan system. Yet, the significance of political parties has never completely overshadowed the importance of extra-parliamentary political bodies. Left-wing pressure groups that advocated military restraint and right-wing pressure groups that called for a more active military policy were active even in the 1950s. The establishment of Gush Emunim in 1974, however, similarly to the establishment of Peace Now in 1978, mirrored a change in the political fabric. The two popular movements, both of which possessed the power to mobilize the public and enjoyed the support of larger parties (Likud supported Gush Emunim, and Labor supported Peace Now) were mass movements. They could shape the public agenda, create a great deal of media attention, and impose pressure on the Israeli governments.

Gush Emunim influenced the Likud government's plans for Jewish colonization of the territories. The Gush was far from being only an ideological movement; it was in fact a driving force behind the settlement policy of the Likud-led government. Peace Now, on the other hand, was far from being an exclusive idealist movement and

imposed a great deal of pressure on Likud and Labor governments to initiate a peace policy. Whether the movement was indeed influential in any significant way is a matter for future scientific work, but the movement helped to create a public atmosphere of more positive support for future formal negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

Those two extra-parliamentary movements were instrumental in advancing their activists to positions of leadership in the various political parties. Dedi Zucker and Mordechai Bar'On from Peace Now are two examples of activists who emerged as major political figures in Ratz, while Chanan Ben Porat from Gush Emunim became a major figure in Ha'Mafdal. Indeed, mass social movements played more than a small role in shaping complementary sociopolitical messages; they were channels of mobilizing political personalities from grass-roots positions to positions of major partisan activists.

This phenomenon of political transformation from activity in protest movements to activity in political parties was not unique to leaders of mass movements. Shulamit Aloni and Amnon Rubinstein are examples of politicians who developed their political activity by organizing extra-parliamentary activities. Yet, there is a correlation between polarization and the growing effect of extra-parliamentary activities. The political parties are far more dependent than ever before on organizations that can improve their power of political bargaining. There is also a correlation between the evolution of mass-media and the rise in activities of pressure groups. The pressure groups are able to use the media for their own purposes of shaping the political fabric, while the media is always interested in covering non-conventional activities. Therefore, the media will be a crucial domain for the activities of extra-parliamentary groups and political leaders.

C. The New System of Direct Elections for Prime Ministership

Constitutional changes that alter electoral systems were a common phenomenon in democracies after 1945. In general, one may distinguish between parliamentary systems and presidential systems. Israel was cited in the scientific literature as one of the best and most successful democratic regimes with a proportional parliamentary system. Often, students of politics have referred to it as a proof that even in a non-democratic region a representative democracy can flourish.

Abruptly, but not surprisingly, in a legalistic way, but not in a prudent fashion, this PR system has changed. Since 1996, Israel has had a different electoral system. The legislature desired to enact a presidential system, but in fact the new situation can be best described as a quasi-parliamentary, quasi-presidential system. The new system is based on direct, personal, and national elections for a prime minister, and proportional elections for political parties for the Knesset. Apparently the reform is clear and straightforward: the government will not be elected by the legislature, but rather directly by the people. In addition, each voter can enjoy the benefit of split voting: I can vote for party 'X' for the Knesset, and for candidate 'Y' as Prime Minister. Yet, the new situation is much more complex and problematic.

This new electoral system was a result of the weakening of the large political parties, Labor and Likud, both of which were perceived as being incapable of solving the Arab Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition, political corruption, especially that involving the religious parties, was conceived as prominent. Toward the end of the 1980s, a general atmosphere of political dissatisfaction prevailed in the country. Many people felt that in most issues, and primarily in national security matters, the general situation had reached a dead-end. New groups of intellectuals, mayors, and ex-senior military officers were looking for an opportunity to foster changes and to promote themselves, and they were the main force that mobilized the general public to support an electoral reform. Instead of solving the problems, they wanted to reformulate questions. At the end of the 1980s several reforms were suggested, among them a suggestion to change the elections for the parliament, and a suggestion to enact a constitution for Israel. All this failed. The only result was the reform in the elections for the executive. This was the general backdrop for the electoral reform of 1992, and the enactment of the new Basic Law: The Government.

Israel has adopted from the French model the principle of two electoral rounds. A candidate cannot become prime minister unless he or she has won at least 50%+ 1 of the valid votes. It is very clear that in order to guarantee such a decisive majority every candidate will do his utmost to enter any coalition that might help. Hence, the new system will be more corrupt than the previous one.

Moreover, according to clauses 3 and 19 of the new Basic Law, the new prime minister and the new government will require Knesset approval. The Parliament can also cast a vote of non-confidence in the government. If 61 MKs support it, new elections must be held. If, however, 80 will unseat the government by a vote of non-confidence, the elections will be only for the prime minister. Therefore, in order to prevent a vote of non-confidence the prime minister will have to consolidate parliamentary coalitions.

Empowerment of the prime minister and the creating of more executive efficiency was a major calculation in promoting this law. According to this line of argument, the proportional system had marginalized the ability of the PM to impose discipline inside the cabinet, and thus efficiency was reduced. In fact, the efficiency of heads of state as well as their ability to operate depends a great deal on their personality, the general political culture, and the nature of the problems. Churchill and Ben Gurion could govern effectively within the limits of parliamentary systems. The electoral system by itself cannot guarantee the capabilities of its rulers.

What the law has done, *inter alia*, is to weaken the parliament (the Knesset). The latter cannot supervise the government as effectively as it could in the past. It means that while political leaders will not necessarily become more efficient they will enjoy much more executive power, outside the legislative domain. From a pure democratic outlook it makes democratic constraints over the government much looser. It weakens the parliamentary elite, and makes the executive much stronger. Moreover, it encourages the PM to isolate him/herself from the bureaucracy and the military establishment. The quasi-presidential image of the regime encourages the PM to demonstrate his/her reliance and his/her sufficiency by creating personal teams of advisors. Thus, the personification of the regime reduces the ability of other elites to have any significant impact on decision-making processes.

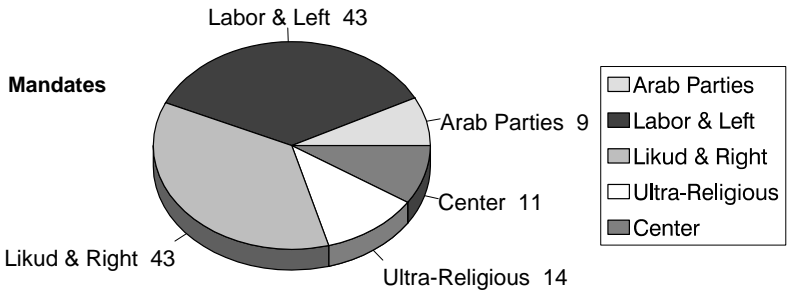
Not only the parliament loses power, but also the large political parties, which (as we have seen) were crucial fundamentals of the regime. The 1996 election results demonstrate this fact. In contrast, religious and ethnic parties gained more electoral weight. The ethnic vote in Israel has traditionally been very fluid, and ethnic groups often evaporated, while their factions were co-opted by the other political elite. The only ethnic success so far was that of Shas. This party

emerged in 1983, and since then has established itself as a permanent force in Israel. Shas became essential to the consolidation of governmental coalitions, which enabled it to obtain a higher percentage of the budget allocations. The rise to power of Shas represented the rise in the electoral power of all the Haredi, ultra-orthodox, political camp and conformed to the sociopolitical polarization in the Israeli political setting. The greater the polarization became, the more weight the Haredi parties gained as veto parties in the political setting.

The Haredi parties have represented a unique type of political elite inasmuch as they rely heavily on internal-communal public support. The leaders of Shas and the Ashkenazi ultra-orthodox mobilized their constituencies, which were based on religious affiliation, religious communities, and educational-religious institutions. Their political power is a result and efficient method of political recruitment. In addition, the Haredi parties reflected general feelings of disappointment among socially deprived groups from the secular population. The procedure of direct elections helped to reflect this trend of greater influence of Jewish religious fundamentalism on Israeli politics.

In addition, the system of direct elections generated the phenomenon of split-voting. The ability of many religious Jewish voters to vote for Netanyahu and also for their religious party and the greater demographic weight of the religious population are the main reasons why the religious parties gained 44% more electoral power. This figure includes the rise in power of the Mafdal (NRP, the National Religious Party). The Mafdal reflected the more prevalent ultra-nationalistic feelings among the religious Zionists in Israel.

Elections 1996 - Israeli Knesset



D. The Arab-Israeli Political Parties

Arab-Israeli political parties could not participate in coalition-building in Israel, and due to the Jewish state's ethnic nature they were severely deprived. Nevertheless, the public emergence of independent political parties among Israeli-Arabs is very clear. In contrast to the 1950s, and 1960s, the Arab parties do not depend on Jewish political parties, and they can express autonomous Arabs' aspirations. In the recent 1996 elections the Arab parties (Hadash and the United Arab List) increased their power in four seats, which is almost an increase of 50%. This reflects several major trends among the Israeli-Palestinians.

First, the Arab political elite became aware that according to the new system of voting, Arabs can vote again for Arab parties, and not for Jewish parties, e.g., Labor. The phenomenon of split-ticket voting might be very beneficial from this perspective. On the other hand, according to the previous PR system Arab lists were close to becoming member of the Labor-Led ruling coalitions. In contrast, under the direct system any prime minister might be less inclined to formally rely on the Arab parties. While the Arab parties accumulated much more power within the Knesset, the new system of elections has reduced the power of the Knesset and sharply increased the power of the PM.

Second, few political trends have emerged among Israeli-Arabs - from Palestinization to Israelization, from secularism to Islamic fundamentalism. At first each one of these trends was represented by a

distinctive political group. Nevertheless, the Israeli-Arab elites were effective in gathering the various sociopolitical groups into two coalitions: Hadash, which presented the more traditional political element of moderate post-communist Palestinization, and the United Arab list with the more liberal demands for cultural autonomy for the Israeli-Arabs. Those elite do not represent the whole spectrum of ideology and political trends within the Israeli-Arab population. The Islamic bloc is still far from expressing itself, due to the ability of the Israeli law to exclude an Islamic list from the national elections (clause 7A of Basic Law: The Knesset). The demand for Israeli-Arab cultural autonomy is also far from expressing itself. There are strong expectations with regard to how the peace process - if it exists at all - will develop. At the moment much of the political attention of the Israeli-Arabs is directed toward clear support for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

E. The Israeli Supreme Court

In the 1950s the Israel Supreme Court, sitting as a High Court of Justice had to deal with 86 appeals, while in the early 1990s the number increased to around 2,300. This is an enormous change even if demographic changes are taken into account. The HCJ has become one of the most important political elites in Israel. Not only ordinary citizens, but pressure groups, political organizations, political parties, and politicians appeal to the Court; thus, litigation has become a crucial public method of conflict resolution.

The judicial elite of the supreme court, composed of 14 judges, is deeply involved in crucial political affairs. For this elite, the adjudication of public matters is an important and legitimate way to be intensively involved in shaping the country's affairs. Thus, the court has ruled in regard to parliamentary rules, senior administrative nominations, gender equality, military affairs, and other issues. In fact, the HCJ has become a major political actor on the political scene and is broadly supported by the public. The HCJ and the army are the two most prestigious institutions in Israel.

The Court's adjudication, and the public support, have some limits. The HCJ has expressed the logic of a liberal but a rather militaristic society, very much concerned with security issues. The Court shares, with the Jewish majority, the security myth. Therefore, the Court has

been very reluctant to intervene in security issues, especially in appeals of Palestinians from the occupied territories. In the 1970s the Court decided to adjudicate with regard to the Israeli operations in the territories. By doing this the Court has in fact legitimized the Israeli occupation, in spite of few cases where the Court has ruled against the government. In general, the Court has tended to refrain from intervening in matters that question the security authorities' actions and tends to presume that the authorities are always right. One clear example was the court's ruling that the deportations of the 400 Hamas activists are legal, despite the obvious illegal characteristic of the deportations.

The Court perceives itself as Jewish; none of the judges in the Supreme Court are Arabs. In its rulings, the Court has emphasized the supreme priority it grants to the Jewish nature of the State. As such, the Court is a crucial organ of the Jewish state, depriving in its rulings not only the Palestinians in the territories, but also Israeli- Arabs. The Jewish public supported this trend, and was broadly in favor of legalizing and legitimizing the governmental actions in the territories. This kind of public support was an important part of the Court's legitimacy.

A much more intensive form of adjudication was taking place with regard to internal issues. Here, when dealing with political and liberal rights, the Court was an extremely progressive force, which reflected and also generated the liberal aspects of the Israeli society. The HCJ also played an important role in privatizing religion and advancing the liberalization of the Israeli society. In its ruling it established freedom of occupation by narrowing the authority of the orthodox establishment. Recently, the Court has also declared its power to nullify the Knesset's legislation. This current development angered the orthodox and ultra-orthodox religious establishment. The latter wanted to preserve its power, and defined the Court as a danger to Jewish Halachic civilization. Hence, the attacks of religious constituencies on the Court's legitimacy.

The HCJ's emergence as an important elite should be conceived in the general context of the Israeli political system. The counter-elite, like the parties and the parliament lost much of their prestige in the eyes of the public. The continuation of the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict, economic and political corruption, and sluggish processes of coalition building, all contributed to the decline in the prestige of the legislature

and the executive. Gradually, the Supreme Court was publicly perceived as a more reliable institution. The polarization of the Israeli political setting, primarily between hawks and doves, caused the Court to be perceived as a more crucial agent for conflict resolution. The growing Americanization of the political culture sharpened public awareness about litigation and generated the belief in adjudication. Israel still lacks a comprehensive constitution, but she has a strong and active judicial elite.

F. Conclusions

The Israeli society is changing. It is becoming a more Americanized society with a stronger emphasis on American rhetoric and property accumulation. The power of the Middle Class is greater than ever before. Individualistic traits, symbolized in the primaries, are more important than before. Israel is also a nationalistic society, with strong elements of racism and militarism. Those mixed characteristics of Israel make it difficult to predict the future. It is rather clear, however, that we are facing the decline of some of the old elites: the Histadruth, the Mapai party apparatus, the apparatuses of most of the secular political parties, and to some extent the military as a coherent organization.

We also see the weakening of the Knesset and parties due to the new system of elections, and partly because legislatures - at a cross-state level - are in a crisis facing the crisis of governability in the modern nation-state.

On the other hand we are witnessing the rise in the power of the prime ministership institution, as the result of the Americanization presidential-like atmosphere, and the new system. In this context the economic elite of the industry and financial institutions are gathering more power, despite the current disengagement from the Netanyahu government. The army is still crucial as a source for personal mobilization for the top of the political setting. Such trends are also mirrored in the media, which becomes a major field for the exhibition of individual and institutional struggles. Those struggles are often resolved by the judicial elite, whiteout gained a great deal of power and almost reached an hegemonic position. The trends, however, are not eternal; elites and leaders, like empires, may rise and also fall.



