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From the Editor's Desk

This issue of Bayan is published on the eve of the 24th Knesset elections, and it contains two essays. The first essay by Prof. Elie Rekhess discusses the question whether the upcoming Knesset elections are a turning point in the integration of Arabs into national politics.

The second essay, by Mahmoud Shanan and Omri Eilat, analyzes the changes in the voting patterns of the Druze voters from 1996 up to the present, and their historical significance.

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The Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation (KAP) was established in 2004 by the German Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University as part of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. KAP is an expansion of the Program on Arab Politics in Israel established by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and Tel Aviv University in 1995. The purpose of KAP is to deepen the knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel through conferences, public lectures and workshops, as well as research studies, publications and documentation.

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Elie Rekhess * / The elections for the 24th Knesset: A Turning Point in the Integration of Arabs into National Politics?

In the upcoming Knesset elections, the taboo that an Arab party should not join a government coalition is liable to be broken, in view of the crisis in Israeli politics and the balance between the Right and Center-Left.

The Arab camp is showing a historic willingness for political partnership, but the Zionist Center-Left camp is hesitant to establish a coalition based on the Arab parties.

Paradoxically, it is Benjamin Netanyahu who is likely to benefit from the political changes on the Arab street. Although in the past he ran a campaign to delegitimize the Arab parties, today he is embracing the Arab community against the backdrop of a split Joint Arab List.

From a practical political viewpoint, Arab voters are differentiating between the nationalist level and the pragmatic day-to-day level. This is evidence of the increasing "Israelization" of the Arab community, though it is not giving up its Palestinian identity.

During the many years in which the question of integrating Arabs into Israeli politics has been raised in public discourse, the word "exclusion" was usually mentioned in the same breath. The term signified the non-inclusion of Arabs in the political domain and their exclusion from government coalitions. This phenomenon was evident already in the 1999 Knesset elections: Ehud Barak obtained sweeping support from Arab voters, but did not view the Arab parties as possible partners in a coalition. He did not even view them as providing external support to the government as a veto bloc. The Arab parties had fulfilled such a role only a few years previously during the Rabin-Peres government. The observation voiced by Arab politicians during that time accurately reflected that exclusion: "They don't even give us the right of refusal."

Twenty years later, one might wonder whether this axiom has lost its place as the "paradigm of exclusion", if one can call it that. While maintaining the cautionary measure of historiographic perspective, one can predict that the approaching elections for the 24th Knesset—as in the previous elections last year—will go down in the political history of Arabs in Israel as a milestone in breaking the taboo of including Arab parties in the government coalition. We appear to be at the beginning of the process; nonetheless, it is fairly clear that a new integrative trend is emerging.

The background to this change is the current crisis in Israeli politics. Again and again, the election outcomes have produced an almost equal balance between the Right

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and the Center-Left, without either having the ability to build a stable coalition of 61 seats based only on the Jewish parties. As a result, the Arab parties have grown in importance as tie-breakers.

In the two previous election campaigns (September 2019 and March 2020), two important developments occurred:

a) Following endless years of ideological and personal differences, the large parties managed to overcome the factionalism that had weakened them to such a great extent. Thus, in 2015 there was a long-awaited consolidation between Hadash, Ta'al, Ra'am and Balad to form the Joint Arab List. The Arab vote was consolidated and the List won a record 15 seat in the Knesset in 2019, to become the third largest party in the Knesset.

b) The power represented by the Joint Arab List's 15 seats and their ability to determine the fate of the Knesset created a dilemma for the party: whether to support a Center-Left candidate and to negotiate for a place in the coalition in exchange; or to refrain from participation in the coalition. In a historic decision and after a prolonged internal debate, the Joint Arab List expressed willingness to support the candidacy of the head of a Jewish-Zionist party to lead the government, namely Benny Gantz, Chairman of the Blue-White party. In September 2019, only three of the four factions—Balad being the fourth—that make up the Joint Arab List supported him while in March 2020 Balad decided to align itself with the other factions on this issue.

The Arab bloc has therefore demonstrated a pragmatic approach and a historic willingness to be part of a formal political partnership. In contrast, the Jewish Center-Left bloc maintained the traditional position of the Zionist Left by turning their back on the Arabs. The possibility of creating a government with the participation of the Arab parties was (again) not given consideration and the end of the story is well-known—Gantz joined a wobbly unity government with Netanyahu and as a result, Israel found itself in its fourth elections in just two years.

What deterred the Left-Center from collaborating with the Arabs? The architect who planned the sophisticated and complex political constellation that created the new reality of exclusion of the Arabs—and paradoxically the possibility of their subsequent inclusion—is none other than Prime Minister Netanyahu himself. I will explain this phenomenon in what follows with the help of the insights offered by the highly incisive Carolina Landsmann.[1]

It appears that Netanyahu has formulated a multi-stage strategy. Its roots lie in the election for the 20th Knesset in 2015, in which politically savvy Netanyahu identified the biggest threat to the continued rule of the Right as liable to originate from a Center-Left coalition with the Arabs. Therefore, in the first stage of the plan he initiated an aggressive campaign of delegitimization of the Arabs. In the 2015 elections, it was his famous declaration that, "The Arab voters are voting in droves" and in the elections in September 2019 it was the introduction of monitoring cameras in the voting stations in several Arab towns, justified by an alleged desire to keep the elections honest. The Left fell into the trap he had laid by continuing to

[1] Carolina Landsmann, "A worrying truth", *The Marker*, June 28, 2019. [Hebrew]

issue conciliatory statements regarding the Arab parties but refraining from cooperation with them.

After reducing the political value of the Arabs in the eyes of the Center-Left and widening the gap between them, Netanyahu began the second stage of his plan: to embrace the Arab public, in a kind of reverse flanking move. The main tool he used—and which he is continuing to apply in the current election campaign—is the famous Decision 922. This is a five-year plan of unprecedented size—NIS 10 billion—for the economic development of Arab society which was approved by the Netanyahu government in December 2015. The plan seeks to provide an overall solution to the needs of Arab society in various areas: infrastructure, the economy, land, education and more.

It appears that Netanyahu is currently—that is, prior to the elections for the 24th Knesset—carrying out the third stage of his strategy, after having identified three basic factors that are working in his favor:

a) The disappearance of the Palestinian issue as a heavily weighted factor in the election arena (thus making it possible to more easily focus on socioeconomic issues);

b) The lack of public interest in domestic nationalistic issues, such as in the "Nation Law" which has the potential for getting the masses out onto the streets; and

c) The continuing—and perhaps chronic—internal weakness of Arab politics, namely internal division and tribalism.

Taking advantage of these factors, Netanyahu sought to drive a wedge between the factions of the Joint Arab List, which from the start suffered from ideological and internal political disunity. Thus, he managed to co-opt Mansour Abbas, the chairman of the Ra'am party which represents the Islamic Movement. The move greatly weakened the Joint Arab List and it appears to be entering the current election campaign like a car with only three wheels—Hadash, Balad and Ta'al—and even those don't seem to have sufficient air. According to the optimistic scenario, the three-way Joint Arab List will win 12 seats. Most of the scenarios are more pessimistic and there is even a forecast that it will get only get six seats. Of course, for Netanyahu this is a huge achievement, since his only goal is to guarantee that he will remain prime minister and will be able to avoid the sword hovering above his head in the form of the court proceedings against him.

Moreover, in parallel to the weakening of the Joint Arab List Netanyahu is in position to attract a significant number of Arab votes, whether indirectly through Ra'am, Mansour Abbas' party, or directly by encouraging them to vote for the Likud. This is evident from his campaigning in the Arab towns in the Negev, in the Triangle and in the Galilee, his declaration of the official government plan to end violence and crime in Arab society, and his frequent visits to the public vaccination centers for the Arab population. And he hasn't yet exhausted all of his efforts.

The Arab politicians claim that the Arab voters aren't blind and that Netanyahu has not changed his racist positions towards the Arabs. Even if we assume that this claim is correct—and in my opinion it is—in practice, many Arab voters will differentiate

between the nationalist level and the pragmatic level of day-to-day needs. In psychology, this phenomenon is known as cognitive dissonance, which is a manner by which an individual deals with an inner contradiction by modifying one's views to fit one's actual behavior (rather than one's behavior being determined by one's views). This phenomenon has already been described with regards to the Arabs in Israel by the sociologist Yochanan Peres at the end of the 1960s. He explained how a mechanism of compartmentalization has made it possible for Israeli Arabs to continue to maintain their loyalty to Nasserism on the ideological level while participating in the State's institutions on the parallel pragmatic-practical level of day-to-day life.[2]

In order to ensure that he remains prime minister, all that Netanyahu needs to do is disrupt the Joint Arab List and to squeeze two seats out of the Arab sector. Will he succeed? Time will tell, but as was stated above, these elections are likely to be a milestone in the process of Arab integration within Israeli politics. Ironically, although Meretz—perhaps the last remnant of the "Leftist Zionist" camp—has included two Arab representatives among the first five candidates on its list, it remains firm in its opposition to becoming a Jewish-Arab list. There are signs that other Jewish-Zionist parties are showing a similar willingness to include Arab lists in a future government coalition. The Likud, in contrast, is courting the Arab sector, is negotiating with the leader of a party that represents the Islamic Movement, is making outstanding promises to Arab citizens and is paving the way to the legitimization of the Arabs. It's almost a role reversal.

In the long run, these efforts will reinforce the process of Israelization of the Arab sector and will help coalesce the Arab middle class, which views its place within the State of Israel and is integrating within it, though without giving up the Palestinian component of its identity. This process represents a synthesis of two elements—the Palestinian component on the one hand and the Israeli component on the other.

[2] Yohanan Peres and Nira Davis, "On the national identity of the Israeli Arab," *The New East*, volume 18 (5728 – 1968), pp. 106–111. [Hebrew]

Mahmoud Shanan* and Omri Eilat** / From a Community to a Society: Trends in Druze Voting Patterns in the Knesset Elections, 1996–2020

The rate of voter turnout in the Druze community has been characterized by a continual downward trend for the past three decades. In deciding whether to vote and which party to vote for, Druze voters take individualistic considerations into account more than collective considerations which are related to the Druze community as a whole.

Like other Druze communities throughout the Middle East, the Druze community in Israel is characterized by a pragmatic approach and political moderation. Therefore, the radical political views that the Arab parties try to promote are unattractive to most Druze voters.

While Labor was the dominant party in the Druze community until 1999, there was no dominant party again until Blue-White in the 2019 elections. The expected collapse of Blue-White in the upcoming Knesset elections will leave a vacuum among the Druze and will lead to a further decline in their rate of voter turnout.

The dispersed voting pattern of the Druze in the elections proves that politically they are not a homogenous community but rather a heterogeneous society.

The voting patterns in Druze society in Israel have changed radically during the past three decades. Although the Druze still vote for parties close to the political center and have not been part of radical political trends, they are currently voting differently than what was commonly observed until the end of the 1990s. An in-depth examination of the quantitative data and the long-term voting trends among the Druze in the Knesset elections shows that the Druze voter supports parties that further the interests he feels are important and in that way he is similar to the Jewish voter. As in the past, he is still guided by considerations related to the status of the community in Israel and its relations with the government, but at the same time—and sometimes to a greater extent—identification with specific candidates and the desire to further personal interests are considerations that he takes into account. This change is reflected in the following trends:

1. A sharp and consistent drop in the voter turnout of the Druze in Knesset elections;
2. A transition from loyalty to the Labor party to a dispersion among the various parties that claim to be furthering the interests of Druze society in Israel;

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*** This article is a condensed version of a larger study carried out by the Research Institute of the Druze Heritage Center in Israel on the voting patterns of Druze citizens in Israel during the past generation. The Druze Heritage Center in Israel began operating in 2019 based on the Druze Heritage Law passed in 2007. It is based in the Druze village of Yanuh-Jatt in the Western Galilee. The Research Institute is currently working to create an archive and a museum that will open on the completion of its permanent building which is currently under construction.

3. A concentration of voter support for parties in the center of the political map which advocate a pragmatic foreign policy and defense policy, religious tolerance and dispersion of administrative power;
4. A transition from voting according to ethnic affiliation to voting according to place of residence (as represented by a candidate in a realistic spot on the party list), which translates into a preference for a party that includes a local candidate in its list.

The research is based on a quantitative analysis of the ballot box results in ten local authorities of towns with a Druze majority in Israel: Daliyat al-Carmel, Yarka, Beit Jann, Hurfeish, Kisra-Sumei, Yanuh-Jatt, Peki'in, Julis, Sajur and Ein al-Asad. The percentage of the Druze population in these locations is 95% or higher. The villages of Maghar (proportion of Druze – 57%) and Isfiya (proportion of Druze – 75%) were not included because of the different voting patterns of the relatively large Muslim and Christian minorities living there and due to the inability to differentiate between the ballot boxes with certainty. Towns with a Druze minority, such as Shfar'am, Abu Snan, Rameh and Kfar Yasif, were not included for the same reason.[3]

During the sample period—namely, the past three decades—changes have taken place in the political system in Israel, as reflected in the following processes: (1) A clear division between Right and Left, which at first were differentiated by support or opposition to the peace process and which subsequently were differentiated according to whether one supports or opposes Benjamin Netanyahu; (2) the rise of the "stand-tall generation" among the Arab population in Israel;[4] (3) Druze citizens began integrating more intensively into Israeli society, and their identification with the community weakened while their personal interests became more dominant, as can be seen in, for example, the dismantling of the Herev (Sword) army unit (the operated under the name the "Minorities Unit" from the creation of the IDF until 2015); (4) the sharp increase in the number of educated Druze women and their entry into the labor force; and (5) the rising standard of living among the Druze. These factors have led to changes in the voting patterns of the Druze during the past generation.

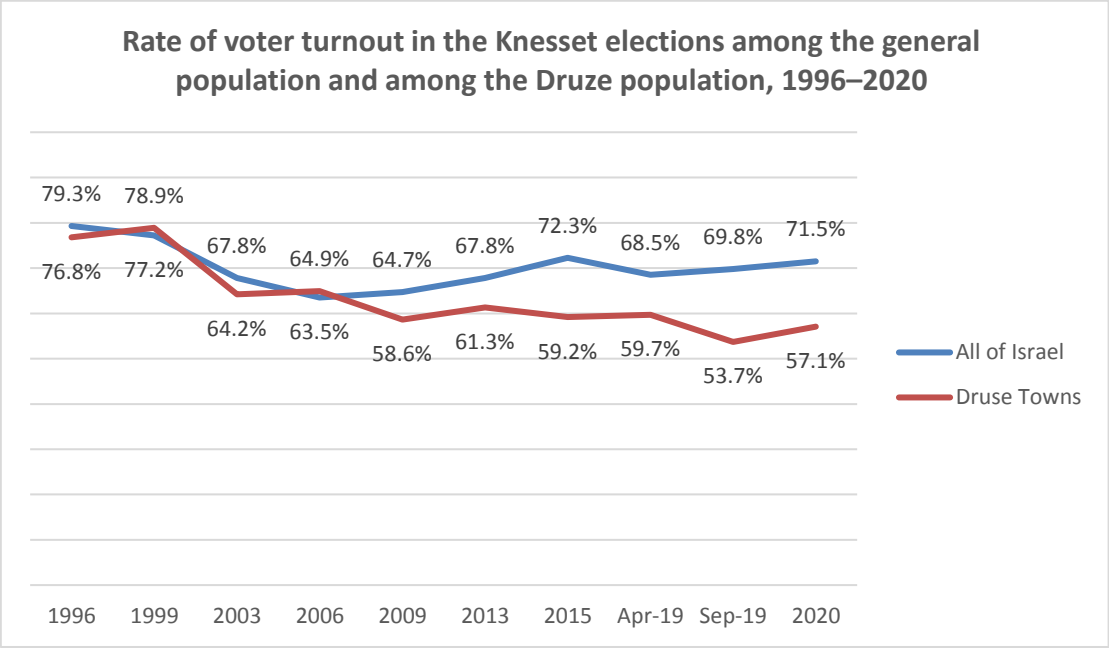
Drop in voter turnout

The main trend in Druze voting patterns in Israel is the drop in voter turnout in Knesset elections. At the end of the 1990s, the rate of voter turnout among the Druze was similar to that of the general population – 76.8% vs 79.3% in 1996 and 78.9% vs 78.7% in 1999. The rate declined in the 2003 Knesset elections both among the Druze (64.2%) and among the general population (67.8%) and in 2006 the voter turnout among the Druze was 64.9% vs 63.2% in the general population.

[3] The data on the percentage of the Druze population in these towns were taken from the Knesset website and from the Ministry of Interior website.

[4] The "stand-tall generation" is a term used to refer to members of Arab society who were born in the 1980s and 1990s and who began openly demanding full civil rights from the State following the events of October 2000 and demanding that their national Palestinian identity be recognized. See Danny Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu Baker, *The Stand-Tall Generation* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2002) [Hebrew].

Nonetheless, and in contrast to the general rate of voter turnout, which rose from 2009 until 2015 (while in the three elections during 2019–20 there was a slight decline), the rate among the Druze continued to decline until reaching a low of 53.2% in the September 2019 elections (in contrast to a rate of 69.4% among the general population).



The disappointment with the Israeli political system and the representation of Druze interests within it is due first and foremost to the gradual rise in expectations of Druze voters to a level comparable to the general population. The government ministries tend to neglect the periphery, where all of the Druze towns are located. It can be assumed that as a result young Druze are showing less interest in the political system. Their expectations differ from those of their parents and in view of their ability to integrate within many parts of the Israeli labor market they judge the overall system in a more critical and utilitarian manner. At the same, the phenomenon of "subcontracting of votes" on a family basis is becoming less widespread. As a result, the Druze voter is making his decision according to considerations that are more individualistically oriented, as opposed to the community-collective orientation that was more prevalent in the past.

From the Labor Party to a multiplicity of parties

The identification of Israel's Druze citizens with the Labor movement began with the alliance formed between the Haganah organization and the Histadrut labor union on the one hand and the Druze leadership on the other already during the Great Arab Revolt in 1936–1939. The minority parties, such as the Democratic List for Israeli Arabs, *Kidma ve'Pituah* (Progress and Development) and *Shituf VeAhva* (Cooperation and Brotherhood), often included a Druze member of Knesset (MK) (Jaber Mo'adi or Labib Abu Rukun) during the vast majority of the period between 1951 and 1977. Although the Likud party included Druze MKs starting from 1977 (Amal Nasaraldin

and following him As'ad As'ad) and as a result won support in the Druze villages, the Labor party was still the dominant party in the community. In the 1996 elections, it won the largest number of votes in all of the Druze villages apart from Peki'in (in which Labor came in second after Hadash) with the rate of support ranging from one-third to one-half of the total votes.

The collapse of the Labor Party began in the 2003 elections and left the Druze without a political home; nonetheless, their political representation in the Knesset in fact increased due to the renewed competition for their votes and the fact that the Druze shifted their support to new players in the political landscape. Shas (the Sephardi Ultraorthodox) replaced the Mafdal (NRP, National Religious Party) as the strongest religious party as a result of its control of the religious establishment starting from the mid-1990s and as a result of the support for dispersed administration as promoted by Aryeh Deri and Eli Yishai, Shas leaders who served as Minister of the Interior. Following that, Kadima and Yisrael Beitenu added Druze candidates to their lists and achieved a high level of support in the community as a result. In 2006, MK Majalli Wahabi was included in the Kadima list after leaving the Likud. He was included on its list also in 2009 and was joined by MK Akram Hasson (who joined the Kulanu party in the 2015 elections). Hamad Amar joined Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beitenu party in the 2009 elections. In those elections, six Druze MKs were elected as part of the aforementioned parties along with candidates from Labor (Shakib Shanan), the Likud (Ayub Kara) and Balad (Said Nafa). Thus, Druze representation in the Knesset reached a peak of six MKs from various parties in the 2006 elections, which exceeded their proportion in the general population.

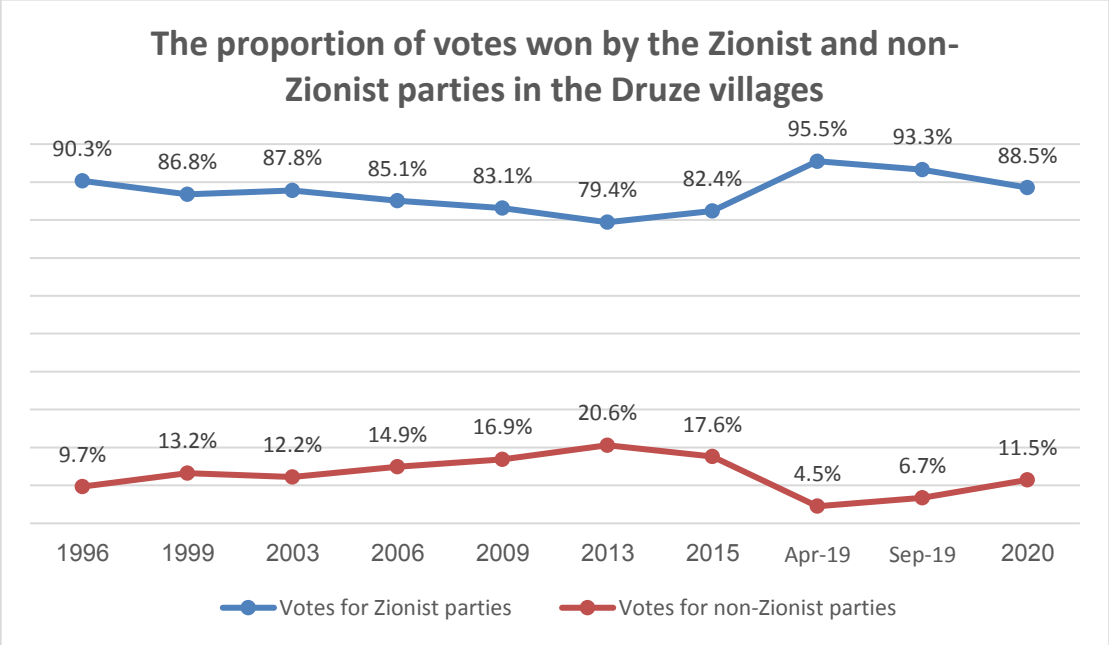
The demand for Druze representatives was not only in order to win votes among the Druze population. While the Druze representatives indeed attracted votes in the community, the parties also wanted to present a pluralistic list of candidates. The desire for a diversified list was also characteristic of Hadash and Balad and later in the Joint Arab List as well.

Concentration of votes in the political center

As in other Druze communities around the Middle East, the Druze community in Israel is characterized by pragmatism and political moderation, a situation that is reflected in its voting patterns. In general, the terms "Zionist parties" and "non-Zionist parties", which are used by critics of the sovereign State of Israel, have little relevance among Druze voters. In Druze society there is a stable core of voters which supports the Arab parties which have included Druze candidates in realistic spots (for example, in Hadash: Mohammad Nafa, 1990–92; Abdallah Abu Marouf, 2015–17; and Jaber Asakla 2019–21 and in Balad: Said Nafa, 2007–13). Nonetheless, the political viewpoints promoted by the Arab parties (which make up the Joint Arab List) are unattractive to most Druze voters. The proportion of votes won by the non-Zionist parties rose from 9.58% in the 1996 elections to 17% in the 2013 elections, in which only one Druze representative was elected to the Knesset (Hamad Amar from Yisrael Beitenu). Despite the creation of the Joint Arab List in the 2015 elections, which included the popular Abdallah Abu Marouf from Yarka, the rate of support for the non-Zionist parties fell to 15%, and following its breakup the rate of Druze support for the non-Zionist parties (Hadash-Ta'al and Balad-Ra'am) fell to a low of 3.75% in the elections of April 2019. In the 2020 elections, following the recreation

of the Joint Arab List and its intensive elections campaign, its rate of support rose to 11.5%, which is similar to the aggregate proportion of votes won by Hadash, Balad and Ra'am in the 1999 elections.

The downward trend in voter turnout in Druze society as a result of the disappointment with the political system in Israel and the low rate of support for the Joint Arab List are in fact an indication of the tight bond between Druze society and the State of Israel. In sharp contrast to most of the Arab population in Israel, the dilemma of joining the government is not an issue for the Druze. Therefore, in view of the radical messages of the Joint Arab List and its unwillingness to be part of the government, it is not considered to be a relevant option by most Druze voters. The fact that in 2019, following the passage of the Nation-State Law by the Knesset, the support for these parties dropped to a low that had not been seen for at a least a generation is evidence that the political line adopted by the Joint Arab List does not attract the votes of Druze citizens. Peki'in is the only village in which there is a strong and stable stronghold of Hadash, while its strongest rivals are the Likud and Yisrael Beitenu.



The Nation-State Law—and no less than that the Kamenitz Law—is of far greater concern to most Druze; however, their response in the electoral arena was manifested in their support for the Blue-White Party rather than the Joint Arab List. In the elections held in September 2019, Blue-White won the largest number of votes in all of the villages apart from Beit Jann and Sajur (where it came a close second after Labor) and Peki'in (where it closely followed the Joint Arab List and Yisrael Beitenu). The promise to amend the Nation-State Law and the Kamenitz Law, the positioning of Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh—a young candidate who is not identified with traditional politics—in a realistic spot and the impressive military past of its leaders did not raise the rate of voter turnout, but for the first time since 1999 there was a dominant party among the Druze population. The expected collapse of Blue-White in the upcoming 24th Knesset elections and the resignation of Kamal-Mreeh

from political life will create a vacuum for Druze voters, which will lead to an additional decline in voter turnout and will reintroduce the dispersal of votes among the parties that was characteristic of the previous generation.

A shift from voting according to community to voting according to local-municipal representation

The possibility of Druze candidates entering the Knesset based on both their ability to be elected in parties that have adopted models of internal elections (the Likud, Labor, Meretz, Kadima, Hadash and Balad) and their positioning in realistic spots on the lists of parties without an internal democratic process (Yisrael Beitenu, Kulanu and Blue-White) has been an important factor in the diversity of the community's voting pattern. Almost every party that has positioned a Druze candidate in a realistic position has won the most votes in his home village. Thanks to Salah Tarif, the Labor Party won most of the votes in Julis during the years in which he ran (1996, 1999 and 2003); thanks to Majalli Wahabi, the Likud—and later Kadima—was the leading party in Beit Jann (2003, 2006 and 2009); Balad won support in Beit Jann thanks to Said Nafa, a local resident (2006 and 2009); the Labor party won significant support in Hurfeish thanks to Shakib Shanan (2006 and 2009); Akram Hasson from Daliyat al-Carmel and Salah Saad from Beit Jann delivered sweeping local victories for Kulanu and the Zionist Union in their villages (2015); and Ali Salalha won first place for Meretz in Beit Jann (April 2019).

The only exception is Ayub Kara who did not manage to achieve first place for the Likud in Daliyat al-Carmel. This is explained by the fact that he belongs to a small family in the largest Druze village. The voting in Maghar and Shefaram, two heterogeneous villages, also shows a significant increase in support for parties that placed a Druze candidate in a realistic spot (Yisrael Beitenu – Hamad Amar; Hadash – Jaber Asakla). The most extreme example is Yarka, the second largest Druze village, which went from massive support (more than one-third of voters) for the Joint Arab List (Abdallah Abu-Marouf was elected to the Knesset in 2015) to support of a similar magnitude for the Likud, which had placed Fateen Mulla in its minorities' spot in the April 2019 elections. The two parties were not even among the top three in the village in elections where the candidates were not included on their lists.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Druze citizens of Israel vote in the Knesset elections according to different considerations than those of the previous generation. Overall, individualistic considerations have become far more important relative to ethnic considerations. Promotion of the interests of the individual, the family and the village are becoming more important relative to matters relating to the entire community, which continue to be relevant but not to the same extent. The decline in voter turnout supports the conclusion that Druze voters are not monolithic. It is reasonable to assume that the bitter disappointment with Blue-White will reinforce this trend and greater dispersion among the parties can be expected, as we saw in the previous generation. Due to the strengthening of democratic awareness among this population, greater effort needs to be invested than in the past in order to convince the Druze to vote for one party or another. In other words, the voting pattern of the Druze show that

they are not a community that votes homogenously according to collective considerations, but rather they are a society in which numerous groups and individuals have a clear Druze-Israeli identity but one that is more complex than in the past.