

THE POLITICAL ETHOS OF PALESTINIAN CITIZENS OF ISRAEL: CRITICAL READING IN THE FUTURE VISION DOCUMENTS

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Abstract: In 2006–2007, several Arab nongovernmental organizations in Israel, led by a group of politicians and intellectuals, published future vision documents that summed up the needs, aspirations, hopes, and desires of Arab society in Israel. Despite the fact that the documents did not introduce any new ideas that were not on the Israeli political stage already, this article argues that the fact that the documents were a result of collective effort shows the deep changes that have been taking place among Arab society in general and its leadership in particular. The documents mark the rising tide of frustration and self-confidence, and as a result of oppositional consciousness among leaders and intellectuals of Arab society in Israel. The documents seek to redefine the relationship of Arab society with the Israeli state, demanding the transformation of Israel from an ethnic to a democratic state and calling the Jewish majority for a dialogue. The fact that several documents have emerged is a clear indication that the internal differences within Arab society are still stronger than the uniting forces within it.

Keywords: Arab Leadership, Collective Rights, Future Vision Documents, Indigenous Minority, Oppositional Consciousness

Introduction

Arthur Schopenhauer once claimed that human beings tend to be so preoccupied with their past and future that they seldom frequent their present. Human beings are prisoners of their past and simultaneously are usually engaged in searching for a better future reality. They envision future models that should be aspired to in order to overcome limitations of current reality. Models of the future are not uniform. They result from power struggles on desires, needs, wishes, and interests. The preoccupation with the past and future constitutes a power struggle in the present. The more open the struggle and the more cultured its

implementation, the more likely it is to bear fruit. The more it is based on mutual misperceptions, the more likely it is to drift to violence.

A perusal of the future vision models of diverse human groups and the circumstances and causes of their development at a certain stage of history is a good way of accessing their political desires, needs, motivations, and interests. Such a reading could lead to the deciphering of political and cultural calculations and strategic interests of social groups, in order to understand their behavior and the political processes taking place in them.

These are the objectives that this article aims for when analyzing what has become encoded as “the future vision documents” of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. These documents were published as a collective effort by several groups of Arab intellectuals, politicians, and civil activists between December 2006 and May 2007. They include the Future Vision Document¹ of the National Committee for the Heads of Arab Local Authorities in Israel, the “Haifa Document,” published in the framework of Mada Al-Carmel, The Arab Center for Applied Social Research, and the “Democratic Constitution” published by Adalah, The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Although one could speak of another document published by Mossawa, it will not be included in the following discussion as it is first, a result of an individual effort, and second, it was not ratified or confirmed by a diverse voluntary group of Arab leaders.

The publication of the vision documents raised public outcry in Israel. The very amalgamation of the Palestinian minority’s general concepts in vision documents constitutes an important turning point in this minority’s political behavior, even if, as we will claim, they do not present new principles or ideas compared to what has been previously published by its leaders and intellectuals (Jamal 2006a). It is claimed that the development of the documents reflects the rising disappointment, self-confidence, and oppositional consciousness among the Palestinian minority in Israel, as well as the efforts invested to creating an autonomous political subject able to counter state policies that aim at removing substantive meaning from Arab citizenship. The documents are an effort to utilize the structure of opportunities and to reframe the relationship between the Palestinian minority with the State of Israel and the Palestinian people. They reflect the intensifying effort to challenge the nationalizing character of the Israeli state and to give Palestinian citizenship substantive meaning.

On the other hand, the future vision documents consider the existence of the state of Israel as a *fait accompli*. They differentiate between its existence and identity. Whereas they express their consent with it being an expression of the right of self-determination of its Jewish citizens, they assert that this right neither precedes nor overrides the equal rights of all citizens, especially those of its indigenous Arab population. The documents, which are not always in accord with each

other, demand the transformation of the state character in order to meet the basic and fundamental rights of all its citizens, notwithstanding their national, cultural, and linguistic identities. Each document proposes a different political model that seeks a balance between individual liberal citizenship rights and various forms of collective rights.

In order to make the arguments of this article clear, I set out the sociological history underlying the documents, their political meaning, the causes of the multiple number of documents published in a short period of time, the similarities and differences among the different documents, and their implications on the relationship between the Palestinian minority in Israel and its political and social environment.

The Sociological History of the Vision Documents

It is very important to start the discussion concerning the publication of the future vision documents with the question of their timing. There are short-term as well as long-term factors that triggered the idea of formulating documents. I will begin with the short-term factors.

Short-term Factors

The idea underlying the documents is an initial response of anger at the disregard of the Palestinian minority by particular unofficial, as well as official, Israeli political forces and social institutions while discussing and proposing new constitutional models to be applied in Israel in the future. One example was the “Kineret Declaration,” an initiative launched by Yuli Tamir—a well-known leader in the Israeli secular left—and Effi Eitam—a well-known leader in the Israeli religious right—which aimed at formulating basic principles of conciliation between the secular left and the religious right in Israeli Jewish society. Another example is the initiative of the Israel Democracy Institute “A Constitution by Agreement,” which aimed at drafting a widely accepted constitution for the state of Israel (Benziman 2006). Both projects ignored the elected Palestinian leadership, denying the basic needs of the Palestinian minority. Both projects aspired to maintain the status quo concerning the relationship between the Jewish majority and the State on the one hand and the Palestinian minority on the other. Both projects viewed the definition of a Jewish, Zionist, and democratic State as the only worthy possible formula to be imposed on the Palestinian minority.

Projects of this nature angered Arab politicians, intellectuals, and civil activists, constituting the main trigger for the development of the Haifa Document idea at

Mada Al-Carmel. Therefore, in 2002, work began on the formulation of a vision document that would express the wishes, common views, and political desires of the Palestinian citizens in Israel. For many reasons—some technical, others substantial—the formulation of the declaration and its publication was delayed until 2007.

In the middle of 2004, the Head of the Follow-up Committee, Mr. Shauki Khatib, encouraged by the directors of several civil organizations that had not participated in the Haifa Document project, initiated preparations for a Future Vision Document for Palestinian society in Israel. This project, supported by many academics and civil activists, began intensive work at the beginning of 2005, constituting competition for the Mada al-Carmel initiative. It was completed and published a few months before the Haifa Document with the aim of making it more progressive and representative, despite the fact that it had begun later. In contrast, the Democratic Constitution document developed as an internal concept of Adalah's leadership. The awareness of the existence of a number of work teams devoted to drawing up future vision documents brought about attempts to unite them, while at the same time intensifying the rivalry between them.

Long-term Factors

A longer-term factor that triggered the formulation of the future vision documents was the growing oppositional consciousness among the intellectual, political, and civic Arab leadership in Israel and its activation after the crisis of October 2000 (Jamal 2007a). This leadership demonstrated its refusal to accept the official state policy of marginalization, and expressed its acute growing awareness of the threat to the civil status of the minority. In the beginning of the 2000s, right wing and nationalistic forces took over the center of the political map in Israel, invoking the idea of “defensive democracy” as an instrumental tool for realizing some of their political goals (Pedahzur 2004; Rouhana 2007). Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud, won the elections at the beginning of 2001 and was re-elected in the 2003 elections, which indicated the search in Israeli society for a new “emperor,” who was known for his use of excessive force in clashes with Palestinians (Kimmerling 2003). The Sharon government did not disappoint. It adopted brutal methods to break the Palestinian struggle in the occupied territories and ignored the conclusions of the Or Commission in relation to the status of the Palestinian minority in Israel. This political reality in Israel sharpened the ideological struggle between the Jewish majority, most of which accepts or is indifferent to government policy regarding the occupied territories, and the Palestinian minority, which perceives government policy as being indifferent to its needs and basic rights. This political reality led to a sense of urgency within the Palestinian minority leadership. It

began searching for an alternative model of coexistence with the state to replace the dominant paradigm. Palestinian citizens felt a need for the formulation of a political future vision to show the Jewish community that there are alternatives to the existing policy and that the Arab leadership is capable of representing these alternatives. Similarly, the Arab community leadership had chosen to demonstrate its determination to improve its status by political and civil means, even in cases where it was threatened and accused of contesting the national character of the State.

Another long-term factor that triggered the formulation of the future vision documents pertains to Israel's successful splitting of the issue between a solution of the Palestinian problem and determining the status of Palestinian citizens of Israel. The Oslo Accord presented a possible political framework for solving the Palestinian problem based on two states, and the acceptance of this model by the Palestinian leadership in the Diaspora and the occupied territories. It evoked the urgent need to address the status of the Palestinian minority in the State of Israel as an internal Israeli affair. As a result, the need to consolidate a new political orientation for the Palestinian citizens in Israel was felt. The roots of this need have existed in the writings of Palestinian political thinkers in Israel since the mid-1990s (Bshara 1993; Rouhana 1999). The future vision documents are the practical translation of these ideas into coherent ideas. These documents constitute a recognition of the ideas of the Palestinian minority leadership, which were rejected in the past because they were considered too radical and had become part of the political consensus in Arab society in Israel.

The vision documents are the product of the growth of a Palestinian intellectual class in Israel, a class that refuses to internalize suppressive policies and is conscious of its political and cultural environment and is capable of thinking in visionary and instrumental terms in order to deal with the challenges of its environment (Jamal 2006b). This is a class of public intellectuals, which is not satisfied with a detached academic role and therefore has decided to be publicly engaged in social and political affairs (Jamal 2006a). This intellectual class is neither monolithic nor coherent. Intrinsic to it are great differences leading to struggles on varying issues. Thus, particularly in light of the publication of several documents, these vision documents can be seen as an expression of a will to power of a class of organic intellectuals who see their role as combining thought and political action.² The aspiration for this class to establish its status has increased with the changed structure of opportunities available. Therefore, it saw the establishment of alternative models to the dominant political model in the State as a primary means of mobilizing resources to establish itself on the political, social, and cultural map beside and together with a class of professional politicians

whose resources and ability to influence the reality of the Palestinian minority with the tools of the Israeli political system are extremely limited.

The Self-Constitution of the Palestinian Subject in Israel

Visionary documents tend to be the founding texts that exercise considerable influence on surrounding reality (Foucault 1984). Documents such as Plato's *Republic* (Plato 1941) Al-Farabi's *Al-Madina Al-Fadila* (al-Fârâbi 1988) and Martin Luther King's famous speech "I have a dream" (King 1985; Davidson 1985) expressed their writers' personal views and aims as well as broader social aspirations within society. Their historical impact is tremendous. Their spirit forms the framework to examine the vision documents published by Arab leadership in Israel.

I contend that the documents express an effort of the Palestinian minority to overcome its double marginality and to constitute itself as a political subject with unique interests deriving from its location in the tense sphere between its state and its nation (Jamal 2007b). In light of the political developments of the last decades, the leaders of the Palestinian minority in Israel saw a need to consolidate a "future strategy" as an autonomous player that needs to make itself uniquely heard. Thus, the documents constitute an expression of the development of a distinctive, collective political consciousness. Although the language of the various documents is different, they are similar in resonance, complementing each other. All the documents express the recognition that the Palestinian Nakba has determined different futures for the different Palestinian communities.

On the other hand, the vision documents reflect the growth of a local Palestinian political and intellectual leadership with an "almost" common cultural and political orientation, demonstrated by its refusal to accept what Fanon has coined as a "black skin white masks" formula (Fanon 1967). The writing of the documents was carried out by different groups of politicians, academics, and Arab civil activists. These groups consist of Palestinians who were born in Israel and were educated in its high schools and universities, but who at the same time refused to accept the epistemic violence practiced by the state through its ideological apparatuses (Abu-Asbeh 2007; Al-Haj 2003). Most of them are secular and are affiliated with or close to the secular Arab political parties, the National Democratic Assembly (Balad), and The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash). This class of politicians, academics, and civil society activists is aware of the complications of Israeli and Palestinian politics. Thus, it strives to make its unique voice heard in order to influence the possible agreement that could be reached between the State of Israel and the Palestinian leadership. The vision documents are therefore a self-presenting strategy.

The vision documents are undoubtedly an expression of political self-confidence on the part of the Palestinian minority in Israel. On the other hand, as it is part of the political fabric of the state, and because it is excluded from legitimate political discourse, the Palestinian minority is forced to express its demands by means that do not put its status at risk. The vision documents are a distinctive form of protest. This type of protest is safe in the Israeli reality, where the balance of political power is in favor of maintaining the status quo, particularly after the tragic events of October 2000. The writing of the documents is an expression of the balance between the oppositional consciousness among the Palestinian minority and the endurance mechanisms of the Israeli control system. It is a rejection of the entrapment of Arab political leadership in the Israeli control system without overstepping the narrow margin of tolerance of Israeli politics (Rabinowitz 2001).

On a completely different plane, the vision documents are an expression of the incremental growth of a “general will” that aspires to homogeneity among all groups in the Palestinian minority in Israel. This general will strives for the “common public good” of the minority as a whole, expressing a broader agreement on basic demands vis-à-vis the state. It is a striving that reflects the failure of the ideological apparatuses of the state and their political socialization processes applied to Arab society in Israel during the last five decades. Despite the internal differences within Arab society and despite the State’s politics of suppression and neglect (Lustick 1980), the vision documents express the return of the suppressed and a conscious striving for “public good” that is common to most, if not all, of the Arab public. They express disappointment at the meaning given to their citizenship by the state. The common demands expressed in the documents reflect the successful self-socialization processes taking place within this minority (Jamal 2007b). The oral passing down of historical memory from generation to generation within the family framework, in addition to the daily alienation of the Arab population from the State, constituted a more powerful socialization factor than the state ideological apparatuses. The formal state education system aspires to create an “Israeli Arab,” who is dislocated from his/her past, accepts the dictates of the State, and surrenders to the superiority of the Jewish majority (Mari 1978; Al-Haj 1995).

The vision documents express another general desire prevalent in the Palestinian minority in Israel, which is to resolve the controversy with the state and the Jewish majority and to invite the latter to a constructive dialogue. Contrary to some responses to the documents in the press, particularly those of Jewish observers, some of whom saw the documents as a “declaration of war” (Tal 2006), the documents call for a dialogue with Jewish society. In this sense their language is dialogist and inclusive (Buber 1961). It expresses an intrinsic desire to find a solution that is accepted by Jews and Arabs alike. Even in places where there is

no direct appeal to the Jewish community, the politically unconscious tone of the documents, and their desire is to speak with the Jewish other, seeking to change reality in the direction of an equal partnership (Jameson, 1981; Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). The committee in charge of the Haifa Declaration specifically said:

The goal of our efforts was not only achieving a document but also making possible a free and open public debate, both amongst ourselves as a community, and between us and the state and the Jewish citizens, on our vision for our place and status in our homeland ... We also aspire that the Declaration can spark a democratic, open, and constructive dialogue within our society and with the Israeli-Jewish society, one that might enable us to work together towards building a better future between our peoples. This, we believe, might lay the foundations for creating a society based on justice and equality for all citizens and inhabitants of the state of Israel.³

In the introduction to the Future Vision Document, the follow-up committee also declares: “We ... hope to enrich the public discussion amongst us, Palestinians in the Diaspora, the Jewish society in Israel, and the international public opinion.”⁴ Adalah’s Democratic Constitution also calls both Arabs and Jews to a dialogue, requesting that the document be related to as “a draft proposal open for discussion for a period of one year, in order to allow for public interaction with it. We hope at the end of this process to arrive at a final version of this important project.”⁵ In an article published by *Haaretz*, following the publication of the Democratic Constitution, Asa’ad Ghanem, a leading figure in the preparation of the Future Vision Document, declared, “this vision does not only aspire to change the situation of the minority, but also *to release the majority from a sense of transience and Diaspora, turn the Jewish majority into an integral part of the region, and base the existence of Israel on principles of individual and group equality and on principles of substantial(sic) not only procedural democracy*” (Emphasis added, A.J.) (Ghanem, 2007).

The vision documents express an alternative to the Zionist narrative, presenting an alternative time frame to the Zionist concept of temporality. They rely on a Palestinian historical concept and narrative, whereby the Nakba is declared a constitutive event, while creating a Palestinian dimension of time that begins before the Nakba and continues *ad infinitum*. This is a national narrative that transforms the Palestinian nation, particularly the Palestinian citizens of Israel, from an object of Zionist history into a historical subject with an autonomous concept of time that is normal for a social agent in a nationally divided world (Touraine 1974). The Palestinian concept of time is particularly prominent in the Haifa Document, affording it the nature of a founding text, which gives life to

the essence of Palestinian time, turning the Palestinian person into a conscious historic subject. The significance of the document lies in the effort invested in it with regard to the confusing temporal relationship between Zionism and Palestinian nationalism. Zionism has emptied Palestinianism of cultural-national content in order to justify itself as a national liberation project and to conceal its innate colonial dimension (Jamal 2008a). In contrast, the Haifa Declaration infuses the Palestinian national and cultural being with existential meaning. The historical narrative of the document creates an inherent correlation between Palestinian dwelling (Heidegger 1927)⁶ on the land of Palestine as 'being' with existential meaning and historical truth based on a unique concept of time, which turns Zionism into an act of rape, not only of the physical place but also of its history and temporality. According to the document, Zionism is not "real" because it is not based on an authentic correlation between existential temporal dwelling and being. According to the document, Jewish emigration to Israel is a rape of time, place, and also of consciousness.

In contrast, according to the Haifa Document, Palestinian "being" is real because of the authentic correlation between physical existence and temporal dwelling. This distinction between the presentation of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism has profound moral and ethical implications, which in practice makes them implausible. Thus, since the document is an ethical one, it does not commit to the practical implications deriving from its inherent historical perspective. Instead, it suggests a compromise based on the historical truth created after 1948 as the only ethical possibility. Stemming from this is a profound and sincere acknowledgment of Jewish existence in Israel without committing to Zionist ideology, or its motifs, as a theological framework that justifies this existence.

The very publication of the vision documents by civil organizations indicates an interesting sociopolitical trend that finds expression in the involvement of civil organizations in generating political ideas, thereby taking a political role historically known for parties. The civil organizations of Arab society have become an agent of empowerment, development, and even considerable democratization in recent years (Jamal 2008b). This trend could be viewed as a reflection of the tension between political parties and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) within civil society, an important trend that is worthy of scrutiny because of its special characteristics and implications.⁷ Arab NGOs, particularly those involved in preparing the vision documents, constitute a strong source of social power that is able to challenge the public legitimacy of political parties. The civil organizations of Arab society have financial resources hitherto unknown in Palestinian society in Israel in the past, thus enabling intensive social, cultural, and political activity. This, in turn, contributes to constructing a collective Palestinian vision in the Israeli

context. Civil organizations constitute social mobilization agents drafting the future vision documents as a reframing effort of the Palestinian minority's relationships with its environment. The active role of civic institutions in formulating visionary documents could be also related to the awareness among NGOs leaders as to the limitations put on Arab political parties through the change of the election laws in 2002, which defined any challenge to the Jewish character of the state as illegal (Jamal 2007b). Therefore, one could view the deep involvement of NGOs in formulating the future vision documents as an acknowledgment that they could not take a neutral political position in a situation in which their society's identity and basic rights were constantly challenged.

The future vision documents express the tactical victory of the secular Arab political and civil forces over their religious opponents. The documents, particularly the Haifa Declaration and the Democratic Constitution, are abundant with liberal secular ideas that aspire to universal equality irrespective of nationality, religion, race, language, ethnicity, gender, or sexual preference. Such a vision could promote relationships between the secular and liberal components of Palestinian society and their counterparts in Jewish society. However, secular and liberal values do not necessarily correlate with the vision of the Islamic Movement, which represents substantial segments of local Palestinian society. The first responses from Movement leaders expressed criticism of certain aspects of the documents, primarily those pertaining to gender equality and sexual freedom expressed in the documents. Knesset Member Abbas Zakhur disclosed that the leadership of the southern faction of the Islamic Movement does agree with 90 percent of what appears in the documents but is dissatisfied with the disregard for Islamic tradition in relation to the status of women and the family (Inbari 2007). He mentioned the desire of the southern faction of the Islamic Movement to prepare a vision document that emphasized the social values that are in accord with Islam.

An Islamic Movement vision statement, should it be formulated, raises many questions, particularly in light of the fact that the leaders of the Movement, in all its factions, were aware of the existence of all future vision projects. Sheik Hashem Abed al-Rahman, once a member of the Islamic Movement, signed the Future Vision Document. The lack of intervention on the part of Islamic Movement leaders and their reluctance to influence the course of writing of these documents mirror the difficulties they could have faced in such a project. Despite this, the historical precedence of the documents that have already been published does not necessarily mean a political victory. The early publication of the secular vision documents indicates the immense intellectual power inherent in the secular Palestinian elite in Israel. However, this intellectual power does not necessarily imply political power, and the Islamic Movement document, should it be published in the future, may gain broader

popularity within the Arab public. In this case, the Islamic Movement document would take the wind right out of the sails of the secular documents, particularly in light of the fact that they have met with hostility on the part of the Jewish majority and with repressive cynicism on the part of state institutions.

Dilemmas of Representation and the Personalization of Politics

The Palestinian minority leadership's publication of three vision documents within a five-month period is surprising and raises many questions. A key question in this context is why was more than one document published and why the writers of the various documents did not manage to unite them, or at least publish them as consecutive complementary chapters? A detailed answer to these questions requires more space than is available in this article. Thus, specifying the reasons will not delve deeply into the sociological political background to the controversies or the differences that prevented the integration of a common document. Before we go into the differences, it is important to note that the vision documents, which are written in various languages and for different concrete purposes, are nonetheless very similar in tone, in dialogue with one another, and could at least be seen to be complementary.

The very fact that a number of vision documents were published indicates the rivalry between the writers of the documents and the desire of each group to be the first to publish its document. This is also the reason why the first Future Vision Document to be published is the least integrated, homogeneous, or visionary, thereby indicating the haste of its writers to be the first to publish.

As has already been said, the Palestinian minority in Israel is not monolithic and is highly differentiated. It is differentiated on the basis of geography, ecology, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status. These differentiations have political, cultural, and economical ramifications. On the one hand, they are exploited by the State, while on the other they are also exploited by internal social forces for the purpose of promoting various interests. Thus, within this minority, there are internal conflicts among various group leaders, which are expressed along party lines and recently in civil organizations as well. These conflicts are particularly intensified as a result of the limited public resources and narrow political and cultural maneuverability available to the Palestinian community in Israel.

Since this is a minority whose internal representational conflicts are conducted democratically—by election to local government or parties—the social structure and, primarily, internal conflicts become particularly significant (Jamal 2006b). Political parties, social movements, and heads of families use the

social structure in order to strike clientelist deals to promote interests. Although the political parties, particularly the secular ones, were not directly involved in the writing of the future vision documents, their indirect involvement cannot be ignored. Despite substantial representation of political activists from other parties in the project at various stages, the initiative of Mada Al-Carmel, the Haifa Document, was identified with Balad. Similarly, the initiative of the head of the follow-up committee was identified with Hadash, although activists from other parties and independent activists also participated in the project. Many saw the dominant role of the head of the follow-up committee, a member of Hadash, and the participation of a number of activists identified with the party, as an indication of the affiliation of the project with Hadash. Although identifying the various projects with a particular party is not necessarily accurate, the stigmatization of the projects creates tension among the activists in the various projects. In this context, it is significant to clarify that neither of the Future vision documents was adopted by the secular parties, namely Hadash or Balad.

Another level of conflict concerns resources. In recent decades, particularly with regard to the increasing amounts of material resources made available for civil activity, the various groups of intellectuals and social activists are struggling to recruit foreign resources. For civil organizations, this is a battle for their future existence as they have to demonstrate activity in order to gain support. The identification of a considerable number of civil social organizations with the various political parties has reinforced their struggle for resources.⁸

Conflict regarding resources and representation that feed each other have constituted a solid basis for the growth of various projects for the writing of vision documents. As mentioned earlier, the initial idea emerged from the Mada Al-Carmel center; however, after a period of stagnation and promotional delays of the project, the head of the follow-up committee, encouraged by activists from different civil organizations, initiated the Future Vision Document as a continuation of the round table project already in existence in the framework of the follow-up committee. This initiative generated considerable tension among those behind the different initiatives. Despite the fact that several people participated in all projects, they were not able to unite them either to draft one united document or at least to publish them simultaneously as complementary documents.

Each group's confidence in its professionalism and ability to produce a more comprehensive, representative vision document enabled parallel continuation of the projects. Despite the calming comments of project leaders, the rivalry between them continued to reverberate and act as an indirect influence. Every scrap of information concerning the progress of a rival project brought about changes in the system and the desire for progress in each project. This rivalry reflected each group's exaggerated patriotism for its own project and an inability to

generate rational and constructive communication between the groups in order to unite resources and forces. The personal components of the various groups must be added to this. Personal rivalry regarding authenticity, representation, or seniority status, particularly among intellectuals and key civil social activists in each group, blocked any possibility of uniting the projects, constituting an important factor in the publication of the various documents. In this context, it is important to note that the Adalah organization viewed the preparation of a Democratic Constitution for the State of Israel as a professional task that should be left solely to lawyers and the leadership of the organization. This perspective led to the Constitution being published separately despite the fact that prominent figures in Adalah were very central in other projects.

The 'Desire of the Text' in the Vision Documents—Similarity and Difference

That said, it is important to have a basic understanding of the similarity and difference between the various documents. The following pages include a general comparison and contrast of the documents.

The contents of the documents could be compared and contrasted at different levels. I will start with the comparison that will be based on the unconscious *desire* of the texts, while integrating its structural dimensions and internal divisions. The comparison will not relate to all points of similarity between the documents, but will stop at indicating a number of points that appear to us to be particularly important.

All three vision documents are founded on the conscious confirmation that the Palestinian minority in Israel is an integral part of the Palestinian people and the Arab World. This is a minority that suffered historical injustice in the Nakba of 1948 and that must act in varying ways to right this wrong by establishing a Palestinian State on the territories occupied in 1967, alongside the State of Israel. Equal status must be accorded to the Palestinian minority in Israel as an indigenous minority, including the reallocation of public resources and the restoration of land resources, which were taken by force or by means of draconian, discriminatory laws. All three documents insist on the right of the Palestinian minority in Israel to foster its relations with the Palestinian people and the Arab World, calling upon this minority to actively achieve this goal. Similarly, all three documents appeal to Israel to enable this minority to lead a normal life with political and legal status equal to that of the Jewish majority in the State of Israel.

The vision documents, particularly the Haifa Declaration and the follow-up committee document, view the Zionist Movement that brought about the establishment of the State of Israel as a colonial-settler movement. All three documents accuse the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel of years of massacre, displacement, dispossession, and destruction in relation to the

Palestinian nation. Israel is also accused of war crimes against the Palestinians, as well as the killing and expulsion of thousands. Similarly, as Palestinians and human beings, all concerned with the vision documents express revulsion and fierce criticism of this policy. All three documents appeal to the State of Israel to stop this illegal, even criminal policy against the Palestinian nation as a whole and to take responsibility for these crimes, as a necessary condition for resolving the conflict between the two nations and for historical reconciliation between them. They call upon the State of Israel to adopt principles of corrective and distributive justice in order to restore to the Palestinian minority what it has lost through physical, symbolic, and legislative violence.

If the existence of social groups is partially a process of the imagination, as claimed by Benedict Anderson, and if the vision documents express the Arab society's process of self-imagination in Israel, then this process of imagination is taking place within the framework of the State of Israel. The imagined State of Israel includes a Jewish majority that is neither hegemonic nor one that has sole control of the State. Arab society envisions itself within the framework of the accepted political arrangements of two states, while living as a minority that enjoys full, equal rights in the State of Israel. According to the three documents, the State of Israel would stop being a Zionist state, solely controlled by the Jewish majority and constituting a national sanctuary for world Jewry. The State of Israel is envisioned as a civil state with a democratic regime. In other words, the three vision documents use a civic, humanitarian discourse to promote their vision without ignoring the right of the Jewish majority for self-determination. They base their demands on international law and conventions pertaining to indigenous minorities in the world. Although they address serious complaints to the State of Israel and claim that it has perpetrated injustices, the three documents start from the basic hypothesis of the present and continued existence of the State of Israel as a political framework expressing the Jewish Israeli public's right of self-determination. The Haifa Declaration clearly states that "*historic reconciliation requires us, the Palestinians and the Arabs, to recognize the right of the Jewish Israeli nation to self-determination and a life of peace, dignity and security together with the Palestinian nation and other nations in the region*" (12) (emphasis added, A.J.). All three documents, each in its own form, accept the State of Israel within the boundaries determined by the 1948–1949 ceasefire agreements with the various Arab States. Thus, the three documents accept the principles directing the negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which are based on the accommodation of two democratic states. However, they do not accept, and actually even resist, "two states for two nations," since this formula is based on the identity of the State of Israel as solely a Jewish State, which could undermine the basic rights of the Palestinian minority in Israel.

Despite disagreement regarding the desired future formula, the three documents demand the dissolution of the legal connection between the Jewish majority's right of self-determination and its sole control of institutions, resources, and identity of the state. Inherent in the documents is recognition of the Jewish Israeli population's right of self-determination, whereby they aspire to distinguish between the State of Israel and the whole Jewish nation's involvement in what transpires within the state. The documents therefore aspire to democratize the Israeli state and strengthen its sovereign civil character by turning its citizens into the only holders of political authority in it. The documents aspire to create a democratic government system mixing individual-liberal rights and community-group rights. This combination would ensure the freedom of the citizens as individuals and guarantee civil rights for social-national, religious, and other groups making up Israeli society.

The three documents demand cultural and administrative autonomy for Arab citizens in the State of Israel so that they can administrate part of their collective life independently. This autonomy must find expression in institutions of education, culture, higher education, religion, media, etc. Autonomous institutions would be financed by the state as part of its commitment to the promotion of equality among its various citizens. This demand is part of the three vision documents' aspiration to bring about fundamental change in the structure of the State, to create equal institutional structures for Jews and Palestinians with full cooperation and coordination in decision making, and to determine policies on a basis of parity.

Despite the demands and determined language characteristic of the three vision documents, they are pragmatic. This pragmatism stems from the three documents' acceptance of some of the historical facts created as a result of the Palestinian Nakba in 1948. While the documents aspire to meaningful changes, they express no demand to turn back the wheels of historical time. Despite their definition of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel as colonial, and despite their claim that for many years a large part of Israel's policies have been neither legitimate nor legal, the documents recognize most of the historical changes that have taken place since the establishment of the State of Israel. The two-state solution is a pragmatic position adopted by the formulators of the three documents, although some of them personally support more radical political solutions, such as a binational state on the land of the State of Israel or on the entire area of Mandatory Palestine (Osatzky-Lazar and Ghanem Pappé 1999). Moreover, the pragmatic nature of some of the documents, namely the Future Vision Document and the Democratic Constitution, derives from the fact that these two documents are formulated as "temporary" documents. In the case of the Future Vision Document, the temporality stems from it being formulated as a list of demands, which on certain levels contradict its visionary nature. Should the demands in the document be fulfilled,

the document would no longer be relevant. In the case of the Democratic Constitution, the impermanence stems from the “non-ending” of the document as it defines itself. The Democratic Constitution is a proposal that could still change, which is why the version published is temporary, until the required changes are added in accordance with the formulators’ considerations.

Differences Between the Three Visionary Documents

The similarities between the documents led to the differences between them. Each document has its advantages and disadvantages and each one fulfills different needs and interests. It is not our role to judge which of them is the better document. Nonetheless, it is legitimate to point out the important differences regarding the ability of each one to influence the consciousness of the Palestinian minority and the Israeli public, as long as each one has an equal right to compete for this consciousness.

The first significant difference between the documents pertains to the degree of Palestinian presence in each one of them. In the Haifa document, the presence of the Palestinian nation is expressed strongly, comprehensively, and throughout the entire document. Similarly, in a separate chapter on the relationship between the Palestinian minority in Israel and the Palestinian people in its various domiciles is expressed. The Palestinian Nakba and the suffering of the Palestinian people, as well as the striving to resolve its problems, including the refugee problem, are specifically addressed. The Palestinian citizens of Israel are presented as an integral part of the Palestinian nation with all the existential, ethical, and political implications thereof. In contrast, the Future Vision Document and the Democratic Constitution stop short when addressing the existential and political problems of the Palestinian people. Although they note the historical connection between the Palestinian minority and the Palestinian people, they do not establish an inherent relationship between the solution to the latter’s problem and the solution of the problem of the Palestinian minority in Israel. Both documents indirectly accept the position that each part of the Palestinian people must take care of its own interests as it sees fit.

Although the three documents view themselves as ostensibly visionary, the only one that answers the description of a future vision as a founding text is the Haifa document. The Future Vision Document constitutes a collection of “research papers,” as stated in the document itself, connected by means of a brief introduction without any attempt to integrate its various components in one articulate document. It is formulated in theoretical and prosecutory language based on the existence of the Israeli *other* who is supposed to respond to these demands. It is a strategic pamphlet, written in a tactical ordinary style, each part having a different format that does not set and ask for the same political demands. Although

in terms of what it encompasses, this document is the most comprehensive, including different chapters on the different levels of the Palestinian minority's public life in Israel, it does consist of nonuniform parts characterized by constantly repeated expressions.

In contrast, the Haifa document is a visionary document in the classical sense. Its vision does not derive solely from its future orientation, but primarily from the language that reflects an existential conscience on the philosophical, historical, and psychological levels. This statement is, to an extent, formulated in a lyrical style and literary language, giving a sense of historical depth and all-encompassing national consciousness. The Haifa document aspires to connect conscience, consciousness, sensitivity, and reason. The formulators of the document strove to present an in-depth, long-term view of the Palestinian experience, formulating it in a language that is not dependent upon the existence of any *other*, Israeli or otherwise. In light of this, the Haifa Declaration document will stand the test of time, even if its immediate demands are met.

The Democratic Constitution document is formulated in professional legal language, stemming from its definition as a proposal for a state constitution. The Constitution is not formulated in prosecutory or visionary language. Although it is a constitution striving for a different and better future, it is nonetheless not formulated as a vision but rather as a legal document. The language of the document is declarative, aspiring to distribute state power among the various government institutions and formulating a comprehensive bill of civil rights to ensure principles of equality and universal justice for all citizens.

Another difference between the documents concerns their comprehensiveness, depth, and extent of analysis. A comparison, according to these parameters, must necessarily exclude the Democratic Constitution document because of its legal nature and defined purpose. When comparing the Future Vision Document and the Haifa document, we see a significant difference in their comprehensiveness. Whereas the former relates extensively to each social, cultural, economic, and political issue concerning the Palestinian minority, the latter is formulated in a minor language (Deleuze and Guattari 1981). The Future Vision Document suffers from theoretical and political inconsistency and is not uniform in style, each section standing on its own. Apart from an introduction that is coherent, sections of the document are written in an inconsistent style with repetitions and tensions, and lacks internal cohesion.

In comparison, the Haifa document is more minimalist, although no less analytical. It is written from the perspective of a minority and specifies its existential state with the purpose of reframing the prevailing attitude toward it, while forming its world view and marking its main ambitions and wishes. The Haifa document refers to the minority's difficulties and problems, aiming to change the patterns

of thought concerning the Palestinian minority without making the document a programmatic–prosecutory one. Herein rests the power of the document. It is written in a rich style from a more general perception of reality. Its lucidity reflects the considerable effort invested in it as a visionary document, even if certain issues remain vague.

The Future Vision Document, similar to the Haifa document, refers to the social circumstances and genderial relationships within the Palestinian minority. However, while the former document indicates the social problems to be dealt with in general, proposing amorphous general social solutions, the Haifa document takes a braver, clearer stand by adopting a liberal, egalitarian value system while aspiring to empower women, senior citizens, the disabled, and other social groups. From a feminist perspective, the Haifa document is more progressive. It specifically declares that it supports equal individual rights for all members of society, particularly women, and encourages full autonomy for each individual over his/her body, which, in practice, means the full right of a woman over her body, and full acceptance of homosexual relations. Thus, the Haifa document challenges basic social conventions and norms that are considered secondary to the sacred liberal individual rights in the document. In contrast, the Future Vision Document lags behind without any specific ideological commitment beyond a general appeal to deal with the patriarchal social structure.

In this sense, the Democratic Constitution is more similar to the Haifa document than to the Future Vision Document. It adopts a liberal individualistic value system that supersedes community values in cases where there is a clash between the two, and even in cases referring to women's rights. Undoubtedly, this position is a significant step toward the democratization of Arab society, while constituting a source of tension between social groups in Arab society, particularly between the Islamic Movement and its supporters (who have wide public support) and the relatively small group of academics and liberal social activists (for whom public support is limited to small circles concentrated in cities and mixed villages alone).

Another important difference between the three vision documents is with regard to the political regime model to which they refer. While all three documents refer to a democratic political regime, the envisioned democracy is neither liberal in the American sense nor republican in the French sense. The political structure presented is more complex, and here the documents are at variance with each other. While the Future Vision Document prefers consociational democracy, and the Haifa Declaration refers to the democratic regime in general, the Democratic Constitution refers to a multicultural, bilingual democratic regime while maintaining constructive vagueness.

Consociational democracy is a political regime whereby the main ethno-national groups in society proportionately distribute political power among

them, maintaining a mutual right of veto on key subjects agreed upon in advance. A similar model exists in Belgium, Canada, or even Lebanon. Although this model is considered successful in certain contexts, it was found to be problematic in Lebanon and, in recent years, in Belgium as well. The primary meaning of this model in the Israeli context would be that the Jewish majority gives up its political privileges leading to a transition from nationalizing ethnocracy to democracy, where political power is shared equally among all ethno-national groups that make up society. In practice, this would mean the transformation of the State of Israel from a state that defines itself as Jewish and democratic to a state that belongs to all its ethno-national groups. The Future Vision Document is vague with regard to the distribution of power in the State. It does refer to the consociational model and the right to veto but does not elaborate on the division of labor within the structure of the State. The consociational model is a proportional one. According to Lijphart, who devised the former model, there are four components of consociational democracy: broad coalition, the right to veto, proportional representation, and the type of autonomy for each group. In Israeli reality, this means that the Jewish majority would share power with the Arab minority, preserving a larger proportional representation of Jewish society in State institutions. Representatives of the Arab society would be part of the ruling coalition and would have the right of veto on main issues. Arab society would enjoy autonomy regarding primary issues agreed upon in advance.

Despite the radical change in the structure of the State, the proportional political structure of the consociational model would leave a large proportion of the power in the hands of the Jewish majority. Although the Arab society would have the right of veto, in practice the sharing of state power would not mean full equality for both sides. Moreover, since there could be no daily use of the right of veto, which is limited only to issues agreed upon in advance, it would mean that the Jewish majority would have a broad capacity for determining policy according to its world view, exactly as the Anglophiles determine the principles of policy in Canada or as the Christians determined policy in Lebanon during the period of political stability when the consociational method functioned.

The Democratic Constitution aspires to bring about a more complex political regime than that of the consociational system. In contrast to the Future Vision Document, which related to the Palestinian minority and the Jewish majority as if they were homogeneous groups, the Democratic Constitution indicates the innate difference between both groups, regularizing this difference within the structure of the regime. It ensures bilingualism as an integral part of the political culture, while including three levels of rights interwoven within the political structure and defined as multicultural: individual rights, the national rights of both main national groups, and the cultural rights to each religious or cultural group. These rights are

maintained equally among the groups with preference given to individual rights in cases of a clash between them. Similarly, the Democratic Constitution ensures a universal public space in which individuals may find refuge should they decide to desert their affiliation group. This public space is essentially liberal and individualistic, which is necessary for any regime that is also based on group rights.

Political Importance and Implications of the Future Vision Documents

One of the important aspects of the vision documents has to do with their possible implications in the future. The first point to be raised is the fact that despite the differences between them, they reflect the growing consensus in Arab society on fundamental issues, such as collective group rights, the rights of full and equal citizenship, de-ethnicizing state structure, and corrective justice in order to lead to historical reconciliation between the Palestinian people and Israel. These ideas were not widely accepted and openly expressed by all political parties in Arab society in the past. The vision documents reflect the political change that has taken place in Arab society and which has rendered these ideas central to Arab political discourse. Despite some criticism of the documents in Arab society, such as the criticism expressed by several Communist Party members with regard to the emphasis on Palestinian national identity (Stern 2007a), or by leaders of the Islamic Movement with regard to the secular tendency of the documents (Inbari 2007), they do express the political ethos of Arab society. Despite the claim voiced by some people that the documents do not reflect the prevailing attitude in Arab society, the specific surveys carried out in Arab society show that this society identifies with most of the main ideas of the documents (Majali 2007; Rekhess 2007). These facts make the documents important and worthy of attention. They are important as a coherent political statement and as a philosophical--historical development reflecting the *modus operandi* of indigenous homeland minorities operating under political and cultural siege.

Moreover, the importance of the documents stems from the fact that they invite Jewish society as well as the various components of Arab society to a dialogue. The writers of the documents are aware that they cannot impose the content of the documents on the Jewish majority or the State. They know the importance of deliberation in order to promote their goals. Despite the criticism leveled at the documents from various platforms and the attempts of pessimists to confuse the Jewish public and incite it against Arab society (Yamini 2007), the documents essentially invite the Jewish public to a dialogue with representatives from the Palestinian minority. The documents, despite their being visionary, are nonetheless

open documents whose writers specifically declare that they constitute a basis for discussion with Israeli Jewish society. All the documents include the existence of the State of Israel and Jewish society as a reference group that is necessary in order to fulfill the concrete demands arising from the documents.

The importance of the vision documents also stems from the fact that on the axis between segregation and integration, they fall toward integration. The integration to which the documents refer is neither individual nor affirmative. The documents describe a process of transformative integration whereby the structure of the state undergoes meaningful change to enable the formation of structural equality between Jews and Arabs as citizens and ethno-national groups. They create an equation between the civic and the national, between the Palestinian minority as a part of the Palestinian nation while also being an integral part of the State of Israel. This is a call to Israeli Palestinianism that distinguishes between the Palestinian right of self-determination in a state beside the State of Israel and the need to integrate the national identity and culture of the Palestinian minority in the State of Israel.

Despite the contentious character of the vision documents, they are not confrontational. Shauki Khatib, head of the Follow-Up Committee and the Committee of Heads of Arab Local Authorities and the main public force behind one of the documents, maintained: “The fifth section [of the Future Vision Document] refers to activity in the context of Israeli citizenship, of Israeliness. Do you have any idea of how much flack we received from the Arab press? Also because we didn’t write about the relationship with the Palestinians in the territories? But everyone came to a halt at the second section. We will not surrender the struggle for full civic, judicial equality and we will take action only within the democratic framework of the State.”⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, one might say that the vision documents constitute a significant political and cultural phenomenon, although, conceptually, they have not really brought anything new to what has already existed in Arab political discourse in the last two decades. Nonetheless, their significance derives from the very fact that they gather all demands and aspirations of the Palestinian minority in Israel. Similarly, they are important because they reflect the approach of all Arab political trends to a political conceptual consensus that reflects prevailing public opinion. On the level of their influence on Arab politics itself, it appears that, at least in the short term, the documents have not succeeded in changing the behavioral patterns of the Arab elite or of the public. It is significant that since the

publication of the documents, there has been no debate between their writers but a competition for public attention for each separate document. This competition includes reference to the degree of authenticity, originality, and articulateness of the documents, as expressed in public meetings or media interviews.

Moreover, the publication of the documents has brought about no behavioral change either among the Arab elite or among the writers of the documents. The same behavioral patterns based on personal, party and organizational interests continue to characterize Arab political and public space since the publication, and there are no signs of any impending significant change. Initiatives for promoting debate and public interest in the document have been carried out by the individual bodies behind each document. There are not many efforts to unite the lines of reasoning. This is a behavior pattern that negates the meaning of the documents. The documents are evidence of a substantial similarity between the various elite groups in Palestinian society in Israel, which indicates a rising sociological solidity within this minority.

Similarly, the documents prove the level of reasoning and leadership skill of the dominant political elite within the Palestinian minority in Israel. They reflect the assertiveness of this leadership and its ambition to be a formative leadership that influences its environment, even at a high personal or group price. The documents prove that the lack of uniformity within the Arab leadership in Israel does not stem from essentially different worldviews. It seems that the inability of the leadership behind the documents to unite stems from personal struggles for interests of status and seniority and the politics of personal pride, rather than from essential disagreements.

The Jewish majority adopted a negative position regarding the documents and their writers, perceiving them as a living illustration of what was coined by the head of the Israeli Security Services as a “strategic threat” to the State of Israel (Stern 2007b; Stern 2007c). There were a few who perceived the documents as an invitation to a meaningful discussion on a common Jewish-Arab future. However, most of the Jewish population was unable to internalize the fact that a substantial group of Palestinians, particularly intellectuals and senior civil activists, are writing historical documents in which they distinguish between “the right to the country” and “rights within the country,” and acknowledge, unequivocally, the right of self-determination and the right of the Jewish majority living in Israel to a part of Palestine. For those who believe in nonviolent historical and social change, this is a most significant, voluntary change on the part of the writers of the documents. This course indicates the normalization of some of the results of the Palestinian Nakba and an acceptance of some of the historical facts, created by the Zionist movement and the State of Israel. The documents do not include specific reference to the historical rights of Jews over the land of Palestine. Such

an expectation is unrealistic. However, there is sufficient reference to the normal existence of the state of Israel. It is not realistic to expect more than that in a reality where the state daily continues its policies of exclusion, alienation, displacement, and dispossession against the Palestinian minority. Between the true spirit of these documents, their main desire, and their being perceived as “a declaration of war” lies a chasm. Unless these documents become the basis for serious discussion between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority in the near future, they will turn to be another missed opportunity in the tragic history of the Palestinians and Israelis.

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Notes

1. It is important to note that in order to differentiate between the Future Vision Document as a single document and the collective name given to all three documents referred to in this article, the Future Vision Document was capitalized, but when referring to the three documents it was not.
2. On the concept of Will to power see Nietzsche, 1968 and on the concept of organic intellectuals see Gramsci 1971.
3. The Haifa Declaration, p. 4–5.
4. The Future Vision Document, p. 6.
5. The Democratic Constitution Document, p. 3.

6. The term dwelling refers to Martin Heidegger's concept and its primary meaning relates to an approach to being as an historical truth.
7. Several leaders of the NGOs admitted that such a tension exists. Focus group meeting with leaders of nongovernmental organizations, 6 December 2007.
8. This information is based on research conducted for the purpose of an MA degree by Umayma Diab.
9. See his speech at a meeting at Givat Haviva on 18 April 2007, on the website: <http://www.givathaviva.org.il/welcome.htm?page=http://www.givathaviva.org.il/hebrew/peace/welcome.htm?page=http://www.givathaviva.org.il/hebrew/peace/mifgash-30-4-07.htm>)

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