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CHANGING POWER RELATIONS IN PALESTINIAN CIVIL SOCIETY UNDER THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the development of power relations in Palestinian civil society. The study adopted the ‘power cube’ approach that illustrates power relations in the public sphere. The study relied primarily on the interview as a tool for gathering information, especially from leaders of the popular committees, participants in the first intifada, and civil society professionals. The study concluded that Palestinian civil society's power relations were changing and evolving through various political stages that affected it in light of its subjugation under the Israeli occupation.

Power relations in civil society during the pre-Oslo stage were "parallel" to the occupying power; because the role of civil society was positive to compensate for the role of the absent Palestinian Authority, and its most prominent components were the popular committees. During the post-Oslo stage, the power relations in the civil society were "confrontational" relations with the Palestinian Authority, due to its opposition to many of its actions. The Popular Committees, its most prominent components, disappeared and were replaced by non-governmental organizations, which were funded from abroad serving foreign agendas so their positive role essentially declined. Post-division between Hamas and Fateh phase, power relations in civil society were characterized by "Domination"; as civil society was dominated by each of Gaza's authority, and by Ramallah's authority. The role of civil society in this regard has become at its most vulnerable.

Keywords: Palestinian civil society, Power cube approach, Power relations, Domination, Parallel, Confrontation.

Introduction:

Palestine today is witnessing rapid changes, especially after the Palestinian political division, which has affected the active forces in society. Perhaps the most prominent of these changes is in power relations in Palestinian civil society through the stages of its development. Therefore, this study aims to know the developments that have taken place in the power relations in Palestinian civil society. To address this goal, the study adopted ‘power cube’ approach, which shows the forms of power in the public sphere¹. Accordingly, the theoretical controversy in terms of civil society's connection to

¹ Brian Schmidt (2007) ‘Realism and facets of power in international relations’, in Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds.), **Power in World Politics**, (London: Routledge), p.p 47-49.

Received: June, 18, 2022 / Revised: July , 27, 2022 / Accepted: 2, September, 2022 / Published: 18, September, 2022

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the public sphere is limited to three relations. Either a “confrontational” relationship with the state based on the experience of the labor solidarity movement in Poland. A “parallel” so that civil society is strong to parallel the state based on the experience of civil society in democratic countries, or it is the relationship of "Domination" (the dominance of the state over civil society) based on the experience of civil society in non-democratic states. Based on this theoretical controversy, the problem of the study is determined by the main question: What developments have taken place in the power relations in Palestinian civil society through its different stages of development?

Despite the importance of the theoretical debate at the global level with reference to power relations in civil society, it specifically dealt with the development of power relations in civil society for politically stable cases or those in which civil society did not develop under occupation. Thus, it did not take into account the change in power relations in civil society under occupation, such as the Palestinian case, which is what this study will take into account. Hence, the importance of this study stems from the fact that it takes into account the cases such as Palestinian civil society, under the Israeli occupation.

This study limited because it address only power relations in Palestinian civil society within the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza, under the Israeli occupation. It will not address Palestinian civil society that was formed during an era prior to the Israeli occupation.

Choosing to deal with the change of power relations in Palestinian society in the Palestinian case, whether it is a “parallel” or “confrontational” or “dominant” relationship is a thorny matter, and it is justified as well, given the specificity of this case; which differs from other cases². Aside from being subjected to Israeli occupation, which represented the "state", the "public sphere", or the "authority" that Palestinian civil society faced, there is another peculiarity of the Palestinian case related to the establishment of a "Palestinian Authority" whose establishment was intended to end up in a "Palestinian state". However, the work of Palestinian civil society continued in the presence of the Palestinian Authority, despite the continued existence of the occupation (the other authority), and then a division occurred over the “Palestinian Authority” between Gaza and the West Bank with the continued existence of the occupation, that is, civil society is dealing with more than one authority.

The specificity of civil society in the Palestinian case reflected itself on the change of power relations in civil society, be it “confrontation”, “parallel” or “dominance” across the very stages of civil society’s development, also according to the authority with which it dealt. The power relations in civil society thus affected the nature of the role it played. It then changed in terms of its association with "authority" or "the public sphere", let alone, being affected by the change in the Palestinian political reality. Correspondingly, the concept of civil society adopted by this study is the definition of (Habermas), which is the most acclaimed definition of the concept of civil society, as it considered civil society as the space between the public sphere and the private sphere³.

² Nadia Abu Zaher (2008) “Civil Society” between descriptive and normative, deconstructing the problematic of the concept and the chaos of meanings, (Ramallah: Citizens of the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy).

³ Timothy Dykstal (2013) “Introduction” in Paula Backscheider ,Timothy Dykstal (eds.) **The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England**, (London: Routledge) 25.

It should be also noted that the specificity of civil society in the Palestinian case, “being subject to occupation and the absence of a “Palestinian state,” sparked controversy among Palestinian writers and researchers after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994. This controversy was addressed by a study published in 1995, in which Ziad Abu Amr defended the privacy of Palestinian civil society because it was a reason for the development of "Palestinian civil society" even before the establishment of the state of Israel⁴. While Azmi Bishara defended that particularity as it was a reason for the absence of Palestinian civil society or its development⁵. This study proceeds from the first vision, not the second one since it does not recognize the possibility of the existence of Palestinian civil society in light of its subjugation under occupation and the absence of a Palestinian state. Subsequently, it will not regard the possibility of changing the power relations in Palestinian civil society that does not recognize its existence.

This study was divided into two main axes, the first addresses: Theoretical framework: power relations in civil society (from the perspective of the global controversy). The second dealt with: the stages of development of power relations in Palestinian civil society, which will be clarified as the following:

1. Theoretical Framework: Power Relations in Civil Society from the Perspective of Global Controversy

Many scholars addressed the power relations in civil society, some relied on defining this relations via the relations of the strategic influence of power, which is determined according to the proximity of the (power-triangle approach) through three active actors who have an influence in power. There is a belief that the actors in the community which determine the power relations in it are: civil society, the state, and the economy⁶, as it clarified by the following figure (1-1)

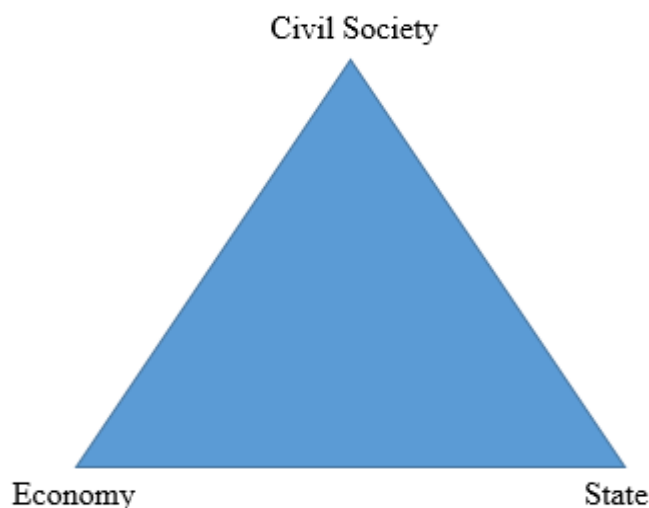


Figure (1-1)

⁴ Ziad Abu Amr, **Civil Society and Democratic Transition in Palestine**, (Ramallah: Citizen of the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 1995), p. 27.

⁵ Azmi Bishara, (1995) “Which civil society?”, in Ziad Abu Amr, **Civil Society and Democratic Transition in Palestine**, (Ramallah: Citizen of the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy), p. 148.

⁶ Bob Jessop (2020) **Putting Civil Society in Its Place: Governance, Metagovernance and Subjectivity**, (UK: Bristol University Press), p.220.

With regard to the tripartite relations among civil society, the state and the economy, there are those who believe that the relations of power is determined by the civil society's need for the economy to protect it from state abuse⁷, and there is a view that claims the opposite; namely, it needs protection from state interference⁸. The third point of view defends the existence of a link between the economy and business in civil society⁹.

In 2006 John Gaventa developed a new approach to power that illustrates the forms of power he called it (the Power-cube approach). Gaventa developed the Power Cube¹⁰ once he divided the sources of power into local, international, and global levels. Thus, Gaventa has taken an additional authority from the power relations related to civil society, which is an external authority that is not confined within society, and this authority represents the fourth force delineated by global civil society and globalization. He explained the forms of the force affecting the authority that are visible, hidden, and invisible, as illustrated by the following¹¹:

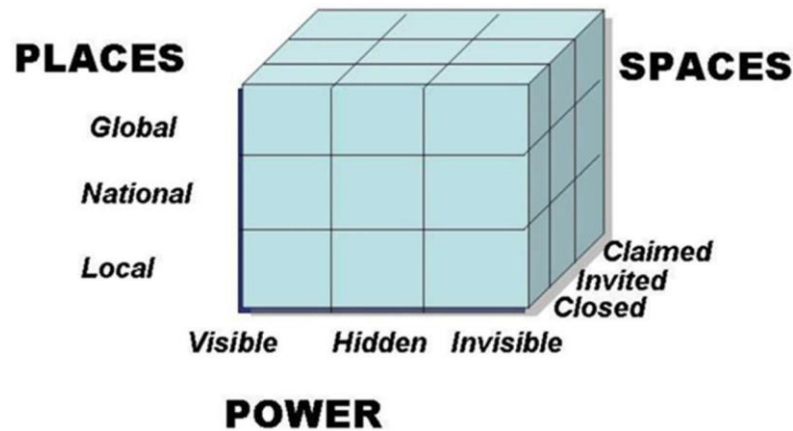


Figure (1-2)

The theoretical debate regarding "power relations in civil society" in terms of its connection to the public sphere, specifically the state, can be summarized into three point of views. **The first point of view** claims that the relations of civil society with the state is "confrontation"¹². This point of view

⁷ Vidhu Verma, (2002) **Malaysia: State And Civil Society In Transition**, (Bolder: Lynne Rienner Publishers), p.2.

⁸ John O'Neill (2002) **Ecology, Policy and Politics: Human Well-Being and the Natural World**, (London: Routledge), p. 173.

⁹ Tomina Saveanu et al. (2017) "Linking Business with Civil Society: The Bridging Role of CSR", in Sebastian Văduva, et al. (eds.) **Civil Society: The Engine for Economic and Social Well-Being**. (Switzerland: Springer) 25-40.

¹⁰ John Gaventa, (2007) " Level, spaces and forms of power: analyzing opportunities for change", in Felix Bernskoetter, M.J. Williams (eds.) **Power in World Politics**, (London: Routledge). P. 223.

¹⁰Necma Kumbura, Vincent Pande (2018) "Decentralization and Local Governance in Tanzania: Theories and Practice on Sustainable", in Kassa Alemu, Mulunesh Albachew (eds.), **Handbook of Research on Sustainable Development and Governance Strategies for economic growth in Africa**, (USA: IGI Global), p.138.

¹¹ Necma Kumbura, Vincent Pande (2018) "Decentralization and Local Governance in Tanzania: Theories and Practice on Sustainable", in Kassa Alemu, Mulunesh Albachew (eds.), **Handbook of Research on Sustainable Development and Governance Strategies for economic growth in Africa**, (USA: IGI Global), p.138.

¹² Marc Morjé Howard, (2003) **The Weakness of Civil Society in Post- Communist Europe**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.38.

believes that the state and civil society are two opposing social forces; civil society against the state. Which means that, civil society derives its strength and build its relations with the state by influencing and confronting the state policies against citizens. This type of "confrontational" relations between civil society and the state has developed in non-democratic regimes. This point of view depends on the labor solidarity movement in Poland, which faced the socialist regime in the early eighties¹³.

The second point of view argues that power relations between civil society and state are "parallelism" relations, because the second point of view thinks that civil society is a force "parallels" the state. This point of view looks at the relations between civil society and the state as two complementary and parallel forces. This "parallel" enables it to object to any policies that the state may take, wherein the "parallel" relations in democratic systems allows civil society to exercise its activities freely and not to exercise repression against it. This point of view depends on what Montesquieu thinks about civil society in United States. Montesquieu when he visited United States he expressed his admiration of the civil society there and its strength¹⁴. Some writers defend the "parallel" relations between civil society and state because civil society can prevent the state's tyrannical tendencies¹⁵. This view depends on what Montesquieu believes that civil society should be in parallel with governments to prevent their tyrannical tendencies. This is why this point of view thinks that civil society must be strong enough to equal the state, and prevent the state from controlling or fragmenting society¹⁶.

The **third point of view** describes the relations between civil society and the state as "domination," This relation described as domination when the state or (the public sphere) controls over civil society not the other way around. When the relations between civil society and the state is characterized by "dominance" the states in which civil society operate is undemocratic or illiberal and tends more toward authoritarianism¹⁷.

2. Phases of Changing Power Relations in Palestinian Civil Society:

The previous review over the global debate about power relations in civil with the state, will help to understand how to determine the type of power relations formed in Palestinian civil society, whether it is "confrontation", "parallel" or "dominance with the state and how the power relations have changed. It will also help to explain why the issue of power relations in Palestinian civil society is complex and thorny, and poses a challenge to what has been addressed in the global theoretical debate. Hence, determining the type of relations, whether it is "confrontation", "parallel" or "dominance", is easy in different situations in the world because the power relations in civil society is described as being linked to a specific state. While for the Palestinian case it is difficult, because power relations in

¹³ Eugeniusz Górski (2007) **Civil Society, Pluralism, and Universalism: Polish Philosophical Studies, VIII**, (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy), p. 14.

¹⁴ Lars Tragardh, Nina Witoszek, (2013) "Introduction" in Lars Tragardh et al., (eds.) **Civil Society in the Age of Monitory Democracy**, (Oxford: Berghahan), p. 15.

¹⁵ ward Shils (2009) "The Virtue of Civil Society", in Virginia Hodgkinson, Michael Foley (eds.), **The Civil Society Reader**, (London: University Press of New England) p.292.

¹⁶ Helmut K. Anheier, (2004) **Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy**, (London: Earthscan), p. 20.

¹⁷ Jessica C. Teets, (2014) **Civil Society under Authoritarianism: The China Model**, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), P. 180

civil society with the state or the public sphere is undefined, whether it is the occupying authority, or the Palestinian Authority or the divided Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza. Especially in the Palestinian case there isn't any Palestinian state in the first place. It can be said that the power relations in Palestinian civil society have changed through certain phases; it can be described as follows:

2.1 The Phase of Power Relations between the State and Civil Society before Oslo:

The public sphere with which Palestinian civil society interacted or was associated before Oslo phase was the Israeli occupation state or the Israeli occupation authority, as Palestinian society did not have yet a Palestinian state or authority.

The power relations in Palestinian civil society with the public sphere can be described as a "parallel" relations on the one hand, on the other hand, it is a "confrontational" relations. The reason for describing the power relations that developed in it before Oslo as "parallel" because civil society was "parallel" to the Israeli occupation authority. It is also worth noting that by "parallel", means that the Palestinian civil society replace the "absence of the Palestinian state" due to the absence of a Palestinian state¹⁸ and the presence of the Israeli occupation. Civil society, according to the authority cube approach, constituted a force parallel to the Israeli occupation authority and its services. It covered any shortage of services that are supposed to be the prerogative of the public sphere, such as the provision of health and educational services, etc., because "it was the main provider of leadership and social services to a nation deprived of its own state and government¹⁹."

Power relations in Palestinian civil society as a "parallel" force to the occupation authority stemmed mainly from the role it played, and its role emerged through one of its most important components, such as the popular committees. The services provided by the popular committees in the phase before Oslo, specifically during the first intifada, gained them great strength. The aim of their establishment was to establish alternative roots to the occupation authority, as it was established to meet the needs of the people, which the occupation authority was supposed to be responsible for²⁰.

The role that civil society played before Oslo, which gained it a parallel power to the occupation authority, can be summarized through what was done by one of its most important components, the Popular Committees. Jamal Abu Habel summarized in an interview with him, that they were providing aid such as food and distributing it to people, especially during periods of siege and curfew, and offering its services to those affected by the Israeli occupation²¹. In addition to providing services that cover the occupation state by providing their necessary food needs, it also provides health services and educational services by creating popular education to be an alternative to education in schools closed

¹⁸Nadia Abu Zaher (2022) 'Analysis of Indicators to Measure Palestinian Civil Society According to the Civicus Approach', **NeuroQuantology** 20 (7), P. 3195.

¹⁹ Mohamed EL-Sayed Said, (2005) "Global Civil Society: An Arab Perspective," in Marlies Glasius, Helmut K. Anheier and Mary Kaldor (eds.) **Global Civil Society 2004/5**. (London: Sage Publications), p.69.

²⁰ Amjad Eran (25/10/2021), one of the contributors to founding the popular committees in Nablus during the first Palestinian intifada, **an interview conducted by the two researchers**.

²¹ Jamal Abu Habel (9/25/2021), General Coordinator of the Popular Committees in Gaza and Head of the Executive Office of the Popular Committees for Refugees, **an interview conducted by the two researchers**.

by the occupation²². Popular committees were formed from all segments of Palestinian society. Thus, it was considered as a democratic form that "represents a party open to the widest popular participation²³." This constituted a strength for civil society relations that developed parallel to the public sphere of the Israeli occupation.

It is worth noting that some confuse the "popular committees" that spread especially in the major Palestinian cities during the first intifada and were "characterized by clandestine work as they were dissolved after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority". Also the "popular committees" that bore the same name and were formed in the Palestinian camps after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to support the steadfastness of the refugees²⁴. In addition to the popular committees, which formed a major component of civil society before Oslo, the reform committees formed relations of power parallel to the occupation authority, to replace the absent Palestinian state. The reason for the formation of the reform committees in Palestine earlier than the formation of the Palestinian authority is due to the absence of a Palestinian state and the absence of a judiciary to which the Palestinians resort to resolve disputes that may arise between them²⁵.

On the other hand, the relations power in the Palestinian civil society before Oslo, characterized as a "confrontation" with the occupation authority. Because during this phase, Palestinian civil society was a force to confront the practices of the Israeli occupation authority against the Palestinians. The majority of the Palestinian civil society organizations involved in one way or another during the various stages of the struggle against the Israeli occupation²⁶" The involvement of civil society in the struggle against the occupation authority at that phase was to prevent the occupation authority from its despotic tendencies and the various violations of the rights of the Palestinians. The political environment, in which civil society lived before Oslo, specifically during the first intifada, led many political movements and organizations to form a confrontational force in their relations with the Israeli occupation authority, in order to deter it from its violations against the Palestinian people²⁷. Civil society was able to constitute a force to "confront" the occupying power when it provided "the support

²² Abu Shamikh (23/10/2021) "Chairman of the Popular Committee for Balata Camp Services," **an interview conducted by the two researchers.**

²³ Hassan Ayoub (2006) **The Prospects of Democratic Transition in the Palestinian Political System: The Problematic of the Relationship Between the PLO and the Palestinian National Authority (1993-2003) as a Pivotal Factor**, Master's thesis, Nablus: An-Najah National University - Graduate School - Planning and Political Development Program, p. 207.

²⁴ Yasser Abu Kishk (23/10/2021) "Director of the People's Committees in the Palestine Liberation Organization", **an interview conducted by the two researchers.**

²⁵ Yasser Abu Hamed (25/11/2021) "One of the Members of the Tribal Reform Committee in Qalqilya during the First Intifada", **an interview conducted by the two researchers.**

²⁶ Yasser Abu Hamed (25/11/2021) "One of the Members of the Tribal Reform Committee in Qalqilya during the First Intifada", **an interview conducted by the two researchers.**

²⁷ Amin Abu Warda (25/11/2021) "The Researcher in Social Media," Amin Abu Warda, **an interview conducted by the two researchers.**

to the Palestinian community²⁸.” This support strengthened the society’s steadfastness in the face of the occupation. It also contributed in protecting the Palestinian identity²⁹.

2.2 The Phase of Power Relations between the Palestinian Authority and Civil Society after Oslo:

Power relations in Palestinian civil society after Oslo changed, the first change that can be observed is the change in the public sphere with which civil society interacted, and this affected the nature of power relations in it.

After the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority was established. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority is characterized as important pivotal stage in the power relations between Palestinian civil society and the public sphere with which it interacts. The Palestinian Authority also represented the new public sphere in which Palestinian civil society interacted. This change led to the declining relations of the “parallel force” with the public sphere, the “occupying authority” in the pre-Oslo phase. One of the reasons for this was the decline in the fields of work of civil society organizations, some of which became the tasks of the Palestinian Authority as a result of the Oslo accords³⁰. There is no longer a need for the role of Palestinian civil society to replace of the absent Palestinian state. This cause declining of the parallel power relation in the civil society because the Palestinian Authority handed many of the tasks that civil society performed in the pre-Oslo phase, such as health, education and other services.

Among the other things that affected the disappearance of the parallel power that civil society gained in the pre-Oslo phase in its dealings with the public sphere, the “occupying power,” many changes happened in its components. Many of the Palestinian civil society components, which gained the confidence of Palestinian society and gave it strength such as the popular committees, were dissolved after Oslo. They were replaced by other components, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in which the confidence of the Palestinian community has declined³¹. Despite the rapid³² increase in the number of NGOs after Oslo, this increase in the number was not able to give civil society organizations, especially one of its most prominent new components, NGOs, a power parallel to the public sphere. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is due to “the adoption of their funding primarily on external funding³³,” the OECD DAC argues that CSOs should not rely entirely on donors³⁴. Adnan Odeh explains, “The civil society institutions operating in the Palestinian territories

²⁸ Nathan J. Brown, (2003) "Palestinian civil society in theory and practice", **Paper for the Annual Meeting of the Structure of Government**, Section 1, International Political Science Association. Washington D.C, p.4.

²⁹ Ibrahim Abrash (2001), “**Palestinian Civil Society from the Revolution to the Establishment of the State**,” State Information Service: Rouya Magazine, p. 6, pp. 60-61.

³⁰ Majdi Al-Maliki, Yasser Shalabi, Hassan Ladado, (2008), **Census of Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip 2007**, Ramallah: Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), pp. 1-2.

³¹ Mohamed Nasr, Jamil Hilal. (2007), *Measuring Social Capital in the Palestinian Territories*, (Ramallah: Palestinian Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)). p. 95.

³² Tayseer Muhaisin (October 2001) “Political Organizations and Voluntary Organizations in the Palestinian Context”, **Rouya Magazine**, p. 13, p. 6.

³³ Majdi Al-Maliki, Yasser Shalabi, Hassan Ladado, **Census of Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip 2007**, previous reference, p. 13.

³⁴ OECD (2007) **DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice**, (Paris: OECD DAC) , pp 229- 230.

are financially linked to the external or party funder and do not have any means to survive without that after the voluntary work is no longer available³⁵." There is a research conducted about NGOs shows that there is a decrease in voluntary work in civil society in Palestine. The research indicates that the total number of non-governmental organizations has decreased from 64,936 male and female volunteers in the 2000 census to 53,622 male and female male and female volunteers in 2006³⁶. "

What civil society did during the intifada to replace of the absent Palestinian state led to its "parallel" relations with the public sphere before Oslo, but the parallel relations with the public sphere disappeared in a phase after Oslo.

The power relations between civil society and the Palestinian Authority after Oslo phase described as 'confrontational' relations, but the 'confrontational' relations before Oslo phase different form 'confrontational' relations after Oslo phase. After Oslo phase, it changed from confrontation with the occupying authority into a confrontational relations with the Palestinian Authority. It can be explained by the effect of political environment on civil society, as civil society after Oslo phase concentrated on the type of the upcoming political system. Thus, "the future of Palestinian civil society is linked to the political developments in the region³⁷."

Civil society organizations after Oslo phase monitor the performance of the executive authority, especially when new indicators emerged about the possibility of achieving a Palestinian state and the requirements it imposes on the authority for democratic transformation³⁸. Thus, the role of civil society after Oslo became limited to exercising control over the performance of the executive authority, and the extent of its conformity with the Basic Law or its departure from it. Civil society also played a role in combating corruption that spread after Oslo and reforming the Palestinian Authority³⁹.

The new role that civil society played in monitoring the performance of the executive authority has resulted in limiting the power relationship between civil society and the Palestinian Authority to a "confrontational" relationship. The confrontational relationship between them can be deduced from what this relationship has been described as "tense as a result of competition over credibility, legitimacy, and resources⁴⁰." The tense relations and competition between civil society and the Palestinian Authority led to more confrontational than parallel relations. Civil society was not strong enough to parallel the Palestinian Authority.

³⁵ Adnan Odeh (11/11/2021) "Director of the Social Center, Nablus," **an interview conducted by the two researchers.**

³⁶ Majdi Al-Maliki, Yasser Shalabi, Hassan Ladado, **Census of Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip 2007**, op. reference, p. xiii.

³⁷ Manuel Hassassian, (2002) "NGOS in the context of national struggle." in Benjamin Gidron, Stanley N. Katz and Yeheskel Hasenfeld (eds), **Mobilizing for Peace: Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, and South Africa**, Oxford :Oxford University Press, p.134.

³⁸ Majdi Al-Maliki (1999) "Democracy and Civil Society: A Review of Palestinian Literature," **Palestinian Politics**, p. 24, p. 34.

³⁹ Ahmad Majdalani (16/4/2003) "Basic Responsibilities of Palestinian Civil Society," **Al Bayan Newspaper**, available at: <http://www.mafhoum.com/press5/142S24.htm>, date of visit (November 26, 2021).

⁴⁰ Jamal Atwana and others, (2013) **Preliminary assessment on social accountability in the Arab world: the final report of the Social Accountability Network in the Arab World, and CARE International - Egypt**, (London: Integrity for Research and Advisory Missions), p. 102.

1.1 The Phase of Power Relations between the Authority and Civil Society after the Division:

The division in the Palestinian Authority (one in the West Bank led by Fateh the other in Gaza strip led by Hamas) represents an important phase of the power relations between civil society and the divided Palestinian Authority (the public sphere). The power relations with civil society in this situation, after the division, are considered thorny, as Palestinian civil society in its relations with the public sphere has dealt with two divided powers, one in Gaza and another in the West Bank.

After the division, the power relations between civil society and the public sphere changed. In the West Bank, as well as the power relations between civil society and the ruling authority in Gaza can be described as a “dominance” relations, i.e. the domination of the authority in both the West Bank and Gaza over it. The power relations between civil society and the divided Palestinian Authority can be explained by “dominance” due to the decline in many of the factors that gave civil society a parallel power in the pre-Oslo period or a “confrontational” power in the post-Oslo era. Among these factors that can be considered as indicators of the decline of the power relations of civil society with the public sphere is the divided Palestinian Authority, and its transformation into “dominant.” Some changes have taken place in Palestinian civil society, which are summarized by social researcher Amin Abu Warda after the division with the disintegration of Palestinian society⁴¹. In this regard, a survey confirmed the impact of the division in the decline of ties between families⁴². The Human Development Report also confirmed the decline in the values of cooperation and trust⁴³ in Palestine after the division. Once the Palestinian society is disjointed, it affects the power relations in civil society in terms of its connection to the public sphere. The disintegration of Palestinian society and the decline of these values “threatens civil society and its role in building democracy⁴⁴.” Civil society is the main source of social capital formation⁴⁵ which is based on cooperation, tolerance, and trust, be them values that maintain the cohesion of any society⁴⁶.

Following the division, "civil society organizations became afraid of the Palestinian Authority in many matters⁴⁷." Civil society organization's fear apparently affected the relations of confrontation with the authority that prevailed before the division. The role of civil society in combating corruption

⁴¹ Amin Abu Warda (11/25/2021) "The Researcher in Social Media", Amin Abu Warda, *ibid*.

⁴² **An opinion poll on the impact of the internal division on the Palestinian family. (2008)** Palestinian Women's Information and Media Center, March 22 - April 8.

⁴³ **Human Development Report 2009/2010 Occupied Palestinian Territory: Investing in Human Security for a Future State**, (2010), vol. 5, Human Development Report Series for the Occupied Palestinian Territory., Jerusalem: United Nations Development Program, p. 13, p. 83.

⁴⁴ Charles Tilly (2005), **Trust and Rule**, (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 133.

⁴⁵ Michael Leicht, (2000) **A Reformed European Model: Social Capital as Competitive Advantage**, Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, p 72.

⁴⁶ Although some writers refuse to consider trust as the essence of the concept of social capital and consider trust as a result of it, other writers believe that trust and cooperation constitute the essence of the concept, see: Anirudh Krishna, (2000) "Creating and harnessing social capital", In Partha Dasgupta, Ismail Serageldin (eds.) **Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective**. Washington. D.C.: The World Bank, p. 75.

⁴⁷ George Giacaman(1/7/2021) “Professor of Philosophy at Birzeit University, and President of the Muwatin Foundation: The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, who specializes in civil society and has written several books about it.” **An interview conducted by the two researchers.**

has declined, which led to dire consequences for the reform process of the Palestinian Authority, which began in 2002⁴⁸. All of this led to the disruption of the democratic transition in Palestine⁴⁹.

The power relations in civil society also declined after the division due to the decline in its social role. Instead of contributing to conflict resolution as it did during the intifada, civil society associations, especially those established by Hamas and Fatah after the division, have contributed to their dedication⁵⁰.

Another indicator that illustrates the decline in the power relations of civil society's with the Palestinian Authority and its transformation into "dominance" is its weakness in fronting of the executive authority, as the government closed many civil society organizations. Thus, Instead of constituting a confrontational or parallel force in the public sphere and contributing to Palestinian society's policy-making, civil society organizations have become ineffective⁵¹.

The relations of the dominance between civil society and public sphere, "the divided Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank," can be deduced from the authority's intervention in civil society work. Instead of participating in monitoring and confronting the violations of the authority against the citizens, it exposed itself to violations by the divided authority in both Gaza and the West Bank. According to the Arab Network for Social Responsibility (ANSA), "civil society organizations in Palestine face political interference and obstacles to human rights⁵²." A report by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights also clarified that during the period of internal Palestinian division, after 2007, the frequency of violations against civil society organizations increased⁵³.

Conclusion:

This study discussed the power relations in the Palestinian civil society in order to determine the changes that took place in the power relations in the Palestinian civil society, and how they were affected by the role that it played based on the power cube approach that illustrates the forms of power in the public sphere. The theoretical debate about power relations between civil society and the public sphere, based on this approach, is limited to three power relations. It is either "parallel" so that civil society is strong to parallel the state, or "confrontation" with the state, that is, civil society is strong enough to confront the state in the event that it practices violations against society, or a "dominant" relations, which means that the state is strong enough to dominate and dominate civil society.

The study concluded that the power relations in Palestinian civil society, whether it was a "parallel", "confrontational"; or "dominant" relations, is a challenge to the theoretical debate

⁴⁸ Ahmed Abu Dayyeh, et al, (2009) **The National Integrity System: The Experience of the Palestinian National Authority 2009**, in Azmi Al-Shuaibi (Editor), (Ramallah: Coalition for Integrity and Accountability - Aman), p. 13.

⁴⁹ Khalil Shikaki, et al, (2008), **The Democracy Report in Palestine in 2007**, (Ramallah: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research), p. 9.

⁵⁰ Amaney A.Jamal, (2007) **Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World**, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p.p 94-95.

⁵¹ **Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Report 2013 for the Middle East and North Africa Region**, (2013) USAID, pp. 47-50.

⁵² Jamal Atwana et al, (2013) **A preliminary assessment of social accountability in the Arab world: the final report of the Social Accountability Network in the Arab World and CARE International - Egypt**, previous source, p. 34.

⁵³ **Report on: Palestinian Violations of the Right to Association in the National Authority**. (2009), (Gaza: Palestinian Center for Human Rights), p. 8-12.

according to the ‘power cube’ approach. The reason for that is the fact that it addresses politically stable cases in which power relations develop in civil society with the a specific public sphere, not like the politically unstable like Palestinian situation under Israeli occupation.

The power relations in Palestinian civil society changed through three phases, the first phase before Oslo, when the Israeli occupation represented the public sphere. The second phases after Oslo, when the Palestinian authority represented the public sphere. The final phase after the division. The study concluded that the power relations between civil society and the public sphere changed during these phases. In the first one the power relations was “parallel” and “confrontational. In the second phase, it was confrontational relations while in the final phase it was “dominant” relations.

The study recommends for the future studies to conduct further studies about power relations in Palestinian civil society in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948.

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