Political Socialization in the Palestinian Society

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Abstract

The present study analyzed political socialization in the Palestinian society. This study was organized into four modules in addition to the introduction, the study purpose and scope, its methodology, and finally, the study conclusion and recommendations. The first component explores the theoretical concept of political socialization, and its two types: direct and indirect political socialization. The second focused on the Institutions of political socializations. The third included the nature of the political parties, and the crisis of political participation for which society is responsible. The fourth highlighted the role of the Military Institution in deepening the crisis of political participation. The study concluded that through political socialization, individual acquires a political culture that helps him/her create a relationship between him/herself and the political system in the society, and recommends, given the concept of political socialization the utmost importance in the teaching curriculum and the different media outlet in the Arab societies in general, and in the Palestinian society in particular taken into consideration the Palestinian division under the on-going Israeli occupation.

Keywords: Political socialization, political participation, political culture, political system, Palestine.

1. Introduction

Political socialization considers an important term in culture in general, and in political culture in particular. Political socialization helps to form the political culture and culture in society, and to explain the differences in thoughts and feelings in society, which vary between groups in the political trends within the state.

The word political socialization was used in the English literature in 1928, and it was intended to prepare the individual to adapt, live and interact within society. Its new use is based on the theories of four scholars who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century. These scholars include Sigmund Freud (1939-1856), who believed that the individual acquires his/her moral teachings in

society through his moral subjectivity. The second scholar is Ji Jade (1931-1863), who focused on a basic problem related to the origin and function of the self in the social process (Ahmad, 2022A, 2022B).

The third scholar is C. Cooley (1929-1864), who believed that primary group relationships are the basis for the crystallization and growth of the basic morals of the individual, such as justice and love. Another scholar, Biaget, believed that the symbolic processes of logical thought always derive from social interaction in a gradual and orderly manner (Denkin, 1981).

Political socialization is the process of inculcating an individual's combined values, standards, and concepts for everyone. The individual is indoctrinated or brought up by the individuals who surround him/her, and he/she acquires from them the social roles that are complementary to theirs (Denkin, 1981).

2. Purpose and Scope

The present study attempts to analyze the political socialization in the Palestinian society, and to clarify hermeneutics of the approach and expected outcomes. It also tries to shed the light on the crisis of the political system in the Palestinian society, since the Palestinian division in the year 2006, under the on-going Israeli occupation.

3. Methodology and Design

This is a qualitative research study using a content analysis, and is appropriate to the exploratory nature of the research.

4. Background

The theory of political socialization revolves around people and the tools that are used in the process of socialization, the ability of individuals to absorb experiences and information, individual differences, and socialization and social control.

As for the Department of Knowledge and Social Sciences, it defines socialization as a formal and informal indoctrination, planned and unplanned, political values and practices, and personal

characteristics with political significance, during each stage of life and through various institutions. According to Shamis (1982) political formation plays three main roles, that are:

1. Transferring political culture from one generation to another.
2. The formation of the political culture.
3. Changing the political culture to suit and support the preservation of the political system

In fact, the individual acquires the experiences of political socialization during the process of his/her exposure to the political system. Political participation is closely related to political socialization whereby political socialization is the process of preparing citizens so that they become qualified to participate in political life. Both the nature of the political socialization and that of the political culture that citizens receive shall determine how citizens understand their political rights, foremost of which is the right to participate in political decision-making. Hence, political participation is seen such that the individual is a member of a group as well as a political citizen (Levine, 1963; Almod & Powell, 1966; Easton & Dennis, 1973; Abrash, 1998; Banat, 2010).

Before going into the topic of political participation, we must address the issue of political socialization.

Almond & Powell (1966) define it as "A citizen's acquisition of attitudes and values expected of him". As for Levine (1963), it as "the individual's acquisition of behavioral predispositions that are consistent with the continuity of groups and political systems thereby performing the necessary functions to maintain the existence of such groups and systems". However, Greenstein & Tarrow (1969) define it as "The formal, informal and unplanned indoctrination of knowledge, values, political behaviors as well as personal characteristics with political significance, at every stage of life through the various institutions of society" (Ahmad, 2022A).

Looking at the multiplicity of definitions and to sum up, one concludes that political socialization differs from one society to another. While it is rather forced and coercive in some societies, political socialization is acquired in others.

4.1. Definition of Political Socialization

Definitions of political socialization can be divided into two categories in terms of methodological considerations, namely direct political socialization and indirect political socialization.

4.1.1 Indirect Political Socialization

It is called indirect because it does not declare political activity as its primary goal. Its main function is a social function, but in an indirect way it turns into institutions with political functions. These institutions are comprised of the family, educational institutions, comrades and colleagues alike.

1. The family as the first channel for social and political socialization: The family is considered the first and primary means where the child receives his/her political socialization, whereby the first period of the child's life, which is the first six years, is where the child acquires the values and ideals that will be reflected in his/her political behavior later.

2. Educational institutions: the child is followed up after the age of six, and after joining school, the student begins to receive political and cultural knowledge through systematic indoctrination. Through educational programs, the individual learns political information related to the state, its president and its political formations. At the university level, political socialization is reflected in political behavior; individuals begin to engage in a political struggle as a result of the information they heard or read such that they begin to demand the reform of the university system or the state's democratic system. Political parties may resort to attracting students to their ranks to use them against their political opponents. In a joint study between Easton & Dennis (1973) on the political socialization of children in American schools, it was reported that the integration of children with political phenomena passes through four stages:

   The first stage: the politicization stage, which is the stage of feeling the political sphere.

   The second stage: Personalization, in which the child associates politics with certain individuals.

   The third stage: the ideal of authority: in which the child begins to carry positive or negative value judgments about political authority, and he/she either loves it or hates it.

   The fourth stage: the institution, in which the child moves from a state of personalizing power to linking it to institutions or political behaviors (Levine, 1963; Greenstein & Tarrow, 1969; Easton & Dennis, 1973; Abrash, 1998; Ahmad, 2022A, 2022B).

   Educational institutions play an important role in developing students' patriotism, their respect for its system, how to be good citizens, and informing them of the most important national and global political issues. However, the dominance of some regimes over the

education system results in a distorted political socialization that relies on traditional transferable socialization instead of a critical mental socialization.

3. Religious institutions: which include mosques, churches, other places of worship, and the people associated with them who employ religion in the political socialization process.

4. Comrades, colleagues and the public opinion: an individual is affected by the opinions of those around him, especially his colleagues at work or his friends. Colleagues or friends may have an influence on an individual's political opinion or on engaging in various political discussions resulting in certain ideals and political tendencies, whether it be with or against (Levine, 1963; Easton & Dennis, 1973; Abrash, 1998; Banat, 2010; Ahmad, 2022A, 2022B).

4.1.2 Direct Political Socialization

1. Media institutions: These include radio, television, auditoria press, written press, cinema...etc. At the present time, the media is of great importance when it comes to political socialization due to the influential position the media occupies in individuals. Hence, governments seek to control the media and recruit it to work for them; for this purpose, they employ many specialists to influence viewers. The expansion and spread of the different media platforms in our present days in addition to the attempt of various media channels, especially the official ones, has influenced political opinion and consequently the political socialization of individuals (Ahmad, 2022A, 2022B).

2. Political Parties: In order to understand the role of the political party in political socialization, one must resort to its definition. There are many definitions and meanings for political parties. We find the organizational approach of the "party" in Robert Michels (1959), Max Weber, and Maurice Duverger as cited in Scaff 1973), whereby Max Weber indicated that the term party is used to denote "organized social relations based on free affiliation such that the goal is to give party leaders power within the organizational group in order to achieve a specific goal or obtain financial benefits for the members". While Maurice Duverger defines the party as follows: "The political party is not a single group, but a group of groups scattered across the territory of the state, such as party committees, delegates, party departments, and local groupings... Linked together by systems that coordinate among them". As for the ideological approach, Lenin referred to it by stating that "without a program, the party, as a political organization, cannot maintain its general purpose every time it encounters unexpected circumstances". The same approach from a

liberal point of view is found in Edmund Burke, who defined political parties as "an organized group of people who have come together to work to achieve the interest of the nation by realizing the principles they embrace". As for the functional approach, we find it in the works of Raymond Aron, who defines the party as "a permanent organization that comprises a group of individuals who work together in order to exercise power, whether that power is working in succession or by maintaining power". This meaning is close to the definition of George Bordeaux which states that it is "an organized group of individuals with the same political vision who work to put their ideas into practice by working simultaneously to include the largest possible number of citizens in their ranks to assume power, or at least to influence the decisions of the ruling authority" (Scaff, 1973; Abrash, 1998).

All definitions demonstrate that political parties have a function of accessing power or influencing those in power. In view of that, political parties work to collect, unify and mitigate popular demands thereby making them acceptable to the political system, or by stimulating the opposition parties to sway public opinion against those in power. In general, it can be said that political parties participate in political socialization through the following:

1. Influencing public opinion.
2. Formation of political culture.
3. Political education.
4. Social integration, especially in the democratic countries (Levine, 1963; Almod & Powell, 1966; Easton & Dennis, 1973; Abrash, 1998; Ahmad, 2022A, 2022B).

5. Institutions of Political Socializations

It is noticeable that the role of these institutions in socialization is an overlapping one. But differently, it cannot be said that the role of one of them stops at the point where the role of the other begins. To elaborate, it cannot be said that the role of the family, for example, stops at a specific limit or stage, but it can be said that the role of the family decreases or increases at a certain stage in an individual's life. In the first stage of an individual's life, the role of the family appears to be the main and the greatest; the same applies to institutions (Banat, 2010; Ahmad, 2022A).

The social and official institutions that carry out the process of social and political socialization can be divided into three groups (Shurrab, 1998):

5.1 Primary groups: It includes the family and the local organizations such as social clubs. The process of social interaction (here) is based on personal and direct confrontation.

5.2 Secondary groups: These include labor unions and professional groupings, where a large number of individuals are immersed in common institutions, but the relations between them lack a personal element.

5.3 Referral groups: They are not necessarily groups in the strict sense of the word. Referral groups refer to the social classes that an individual use to define him/herself, and to rank social status. These groups may be based on gender, such as discrimination between whites and blacks, or based on ethnic or religious factors (Ahmad, 2022A, 2022B).

Through the aforementioned concepts about political socialization, we note that political socialization is the process that develops emotional, cognitive and evaluative political attitudes in political issues, which work to transfer values from one generation to another, so that individuals acquire political experience and social attitudes (Ahmad, 2022A).

6. The Nature of the Political Parties

Political parties are the main axis in the democratic building, and it is difficult to build a democratic system without the presence of these political parties. Political parties have a role in the political reform process, in a way that leads to laying a foundation that allows the establishment of a democratic system based on political pluralism and the peaceful transfer of power between other parties.

Political parties in most Arab countries are still weak. They deal with the democratic situation with timidness, and if we exclude the ruling party in some of these countries, it is not easy to say that there are effective parties that have a tangible impact on the map of political action. Despite this, political parties in many Arab countries are able to embody an active role, impose themselves, and use their influence in the street and on governments to actively participate in the reform process. In spite of the disappearance of one-party governments in many countries of the world, and the change in the structure of their political systems, this phenomenon still exists in most Arab countries, where their regimes refuse to change their structure, style and tools, and refuse to absorb development and confront the requirements of development and of good governance. At the same time, we find that it insists on the continuous possession of power in a world in which conditions and policies have

changed, until these parties seemed very different and contradictory with their surroundings, and severely unable to solve the difficulties facing their societies and their political and economic systems in general (Al-Zubaidi, 2009; Ahmad, 2022A).

One of the most important features of the so-called semi-democratic, or less-than-Democratic, or limited democratic systems is that they allow a degree of political competition and of democracy, but they fail to fulfill all the conditions necessary for full democratic development. It suffers from restricting competition and ending it at a lower level of power transfer, violations of freedom and integrity of general elections whose results do not accurately reflect popular preferences. Besides, an insufficient level of democratic development usually gives rise to limited political and civil rights and freedoms, and this deprives some trends and interests of expressing themselves, which negatively affect the degree and effectiveness of the elections and political participation in many Arab regimes (Samee, 2010; Ahmad, 2022A).

In most countries of the Arab world, the political party system is based on the hegemony of one party. Therefore, despite the fact that these countries are officially based on pluralism, they actually do not allow the opposition parties to compete seriously.

7. The Crisis of Political Participation for Which Society is Responsible

The community embodies an important role in activating political participation. It has an important role in political socialization, starting with childhood as the most important and first tool for socialization. This role continues at various stages of life, whether at school, university, one's workplace and so on.

The citizen's lack of interest in political socialization for his/her children and the lack of political awareness leads to impeding the political participation process. The low level of political culture, which is the result of the deteriorating economic, social and political conditions, leads to a decrease in the degree of participation (Al-Basrati, 2010, Ahmad, 2022A).

The community works to enhance political participation through political socialization. The socialization of individuals cannot take place in one way or in another. Considering that the process of upbringing begins with the individual from birth and continues until his/her death, the individual

during that time consumes information from sources and channels that may differ in their methods and tools of socialization, but in the end these tools have one goal, which is either the upbringing of the individual socially and politically, through which he/she is an active member of the society, or the upbringing process is negative, in which the individual becomes a burden on society, or is between these two extremes (Amer, 2014; Ahmad, 2022A).

8. The Role of the Military Institution in Deepening the Crisis of Political Participation

This does not only comprise the institution seizing power, similar to what happened in some Arab countries, but also its impact on civilian politicians in the direction of considering the army as a model of what the institutions of society should be, especially the partisan institution.

In Samuel Huntington's and Joan Nelsons (1976) analysis of the impact of the military on the potential for democratic development in third world countries, he confirmed this impact with the reservation that it is not independent of political conditions. It increases in cases of corruption, stagnation and poor performance of civil institutions, especially when the military institution is broad and politicized, which makes building and sustaining democracy more difficult (Sayed, 2007; Ahmad, 2022A).

The issue of military intervention in political affairs is a prominent issue in a number of countries, and particularly in the Middle East, whether it be direct or indirect. There is also a disruption of the democratic process as a result of these military interventions, and the impact of this on the delay in the rates of development in civil societies.

As for the relationship of military rule and democracy, it stems mainly from the rule that the function of military does not include ruling and authority, and that the basis for governance is the civil political authority that comes through election, or popular acceptance, based on the foundations of political legitimacy that may vary from one regime to another. In recent times, it has prevailed that rational legitimacy is based on rationality in governance and is away from personalism in governance. It also stems from the fact that military values are based on obedience to orders, which is incompatible with democratic values that are based on political partnership, the renunciation of violence in managing power, and opposing the method of military coups as a means to gain power.

The dilemma is not in the role of the military institution, but in the nature of the political system and its degree of democracy (Shurrab, 2011; Ahmad, 2022A).

The origin of the relationship between military institutions and politics is the subordination of the military institution, because it is the strongest, most modern, most honest and valid compared to the civilian political institution. This is one of the manifestations of the democratic system of governance that preserves for the military institution its role in maintaining state security.

9. Reasons for the Crisis of Political Participation

It indicates the extent to which citizens participate in political life and decision-making. In fact, there are multiple explanations for the crisis of political participation, the most prominent of which can be very briefly mentioned below:

1. The decline of political and social forces.
2. Fragmentation and scattering of efforts due to political and intellectual conflicts.
3. In the modern era, the nature of political participation in some Arab countries is described as being of a military nature and as mobilizing participation by a single party.
4. The high rate of illiteracy and ignorance. The high rate of illiteracy would negatively affect the rates of political participation.
5. The spread of poverty within large sectors of society due to the poor distribution of resources, which contradicts the standards of equitable distribution, and works on the low rate of political participation.
6. The weakness of political parties in urging the masses to participate and open new channels between the masses and decision-makers.
7. The economic crisis worried young people about their future; searching for work, running after providing a suitable housing, taking care of private matters, and dealing with these harsh economic conditions, so that they became reluctant or preoccupied to participate in political life.
8. Lack of political socialization, or negative political socialization.
9. Political indifference (weak patriotism and civil society).
10. Political isolation, which means that individual feelings is marginalized and has no role causing reluctance to participate and withdrawing from political life (Ahmad, 2022A).

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

Political socialization helps to acquire some political attitudes towards the political system. Moreover, political socialization works to preserve the system, its stability and the extent of its existing legitimacy through the formation of values, and through instilling ideas within individuals. These values and ideas become, with time, convictions in which the individual believes and which help in predicting the behavior and the political positions of the society's members, monitor them, and control these positions in the future.

Political socialization is also the way in which individuals become acquainted with the values and attitudes of society to which they belong. Socialization is a process whereby the individual is dissolved into the group, so that he/she qualifies for positive interaction and harmony within it.

Finally, through political socialization, the individual acquires a political culture that helps him/her create a relationship between him/herself and the political system. In addition, political socialization entails the individual's acceptance of the authority of the system, that is, the acceptance of the governed individuals to the rulering authority. Therefore, the study recommends, given the concept of political socialization the utmost importance in the teaching curriculum and the different media outlet in the Arab societies in general, and in the Palestinian society in particular.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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