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FROM THE EDITOR

More by serendipity than by design this is a “special issue” of *IJMES*. All five articles deal with states that might be labeled “bi-ethnic.” More specifically, they examine the ethnic groups within those states which struggle with one another for standing and some share of power. In a broad sense, then, these articles ask about the impact of bi-ethnicity on state structure and political life. Four of them examine the uneasy place of the subordinate group within a political system which this group can influence to some degree but cannot (so far, at least) fundamentally alter. Finally, three papers look at an ethnic group which is not only subordinate but thoroughly marginalized.

One of these states has failed to maintain itself as a viable entity, at least for the foreseeable future: Cyprus became an independent country in 1960, its integrity supposedly secured by an elaborate set of international guarantees, and broke up into Greek and Turkish fragments in 1963. Thirty-five years of negotiations and some fighting have failed to restore the country’s unity, though it continues to exist as a figment of the United Nations’ political imagination. Professor Bölükbaşı asks why these negotiations, conducted under the highest auspices, have failed—and wonders whether they may in fact have made the conflict more intractable.

A second state, Jordan, is in principle an Arab country pure and simple, and it has remained politically intact since achieving independence a half-century ago. But the cleavage between East Bankers and Palestinians is incontestably a basic element of the country’s political life and has been a source of many persistent economic, social, and political tensions throughout its history. In Jordan, the Palestinians are full citizens and constitute some 60 percent of the population, including many of its wealthiest and best-educated sectors. Yet in key respects, the Palestinians remain marginal actors within the political system—a group which must constantly be appealed to (or appeased), but which is never allowed to move to the center of the decision-making process. One of the themes running through Professor Robinson’s analysis of democratization in Jordan since 1989 is precisely how the Palestinians, and Palestinian goals and aspirations, have been simultaneously incorporated within and contained by this process.

The third country is of course Israel—officially a Jewish state, but with Palestinian Arabs constituting a 16 percent minority of its citizens. Unlike their Jewish fellow citizens, the Palestinians are on some level involuntary members of the Israeli polity;

they were awarded, and have accepted, Israeli citizenship *faute de mieux*. In the flood of debate and analysis on Israel, Palestine, and the Arabs, they are surely the group most persistently overlooked—perhaps because they do not seem to pose a major threat to international stability, or perhaps because no one (least of all they themselves) quite knows what to make of them. Three articles in this issue deal with this anomalous group, traditionally called “Israeli Arabs” but perhaps more accurately “Palestinian Israelis.” Each of these articles addresses a particular aspect of the challenges and paradoxes facing Israel’s Palestinian citizens. Taken together, they give us a multi-dimensional view of what it means to be a Palestinian in Israel.

Professors Rouhana and Ghanem take a broad structural approach, asking whether Palestinian Israelis can ever expect to be “normal” members of the Israeli polity; the authors also look at the limited roles open to them within the emerging Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza. Professor Kafkafi comes at the problem from a very different direction: the historical development of an “Arab policy” within the leadership of Mapai (in effect, the Israeli political elite) between about 1930 and 1966. In analyzing these debates, he focuses on the fierce debates between David Ben-Gurion and Pinhas Lavon on the place to be allotted to the Arabs in the new Israel. That Ben-Gurion won these debates decisively during his lifetime is obvious, but we are encouraged to ask whether, and on what level, Lavon’s more nuanced views have influenced policy and attitudes in the three decades since. Finally, Professors Weingrod and Manna^c take a quite intimate approach to the problem, one which lends a human dimension to the abstract structural analysis of Rouhana and Ghanem and the high-level policy debates reported by Kafkafi. They examine the lives of a small group of Palestinian Israelis residing in Jerusalem. Exceptional and atypical this group may be, but the choices and dilemmas that its members face give real meaning to the notion of double marginality.

Given the way the *IJMES* editorial process usually goes, it is seldom possible to assemble an issue quite as cohesive and well-focused as this one. I hope that readers will enjoy the opportunity it provides to focus on a fundamental and persistent problem in the political life of the contemporary Middle East.