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Name of the Topic: Mizrahi Jews and the Politics in Israel post-1977

Findings

The research finds that the post-1977 socio-political evolution of Mizrahi Jews in Israel is characterised by a profound gap between political inclusion and socio-economic transformation. The study confirms that Mizrahim entered the Israeli state under structural disadvantage in contrast to Ashkenazi elites who monopolised education, bureaucracy, urban housing, and cultural institutions. Institutional exclusion propelled Mizrahim into protest politics in the 1970s and 1980s through movements like the Israeli Black Panthers and the Tent Movement, which exposed systemic inequalities in welfare, policing, and housing. These movements catalysed electoral realignment rather than sustained grassroots empowerment.

The turning point came in 1977 with the electoral victory of Likud, whose anti-establishment appeal made Mizrahim central to Israel's new political coalition. While Likud incorporated Mizrahi politicians and expanded welfare in its early phase, its subsequent neoliberal turn privatization, fiscal retrenchment, and labour market deregulation deepened class inequality. The burden of economic restructuring fell disproportionately on Mizrahim concentrated in development towns, low-wage sectors, and public employment that contracted after privatization.

Parties formed around Mizrahi identity such as TAMI and especially Shas enhanced descriptive representation and advanced religious-cultural recognition. Shas, blending Sephardi religious identity with social populism, secured budgets for welfare and education within its networks. Yet its coalition-dependent role and conservative alliances restricted its capacity to pursue structural redistribution. Thus, political representation functioned largely as symbolic and clientelistic rather than transformative.

The study shows that despite increased visibility, persistent socio-economic disparities remained in education, employment, housing, and capital access. Mizrahim were still channelled into vocational tracks, underrepresented in universities, excluded from dominant business and decision-making networks, and geographically marginalized in peripheral towns lacking infrastructure. Neoliberal housing and labour reforms

compounded inherited disadvantages. Mizrahi women bore a double burden of gendered and ethnic stratification, clustered in precarious, low-income jobs.

In parallel, the post-1977 era witnessed a powerful Mizrahi cultural renaissance in music, literature, media, cinema, and religious identity which challenged Ashkenazi cultural hegemony and redefined public discourse. Cultural revival strengthened political self-consciousness among younger generations and reframed inequality as a historical injustice rather than an individual deficit. The study argues that cultural reassertion became a substitute site for equality claims where formal politics fell short.

The core finding is that political entry did not dismantle structural inequality. Mizrahi presence in institutions did not translate into policies capable of reversing entrenched educational, spatial, and economic hierarchies. The research calls for targeted structural reforms affirmative action in higher education and employment, redistribution to peripheral towns, and institutional anti-discrimination instead of welfare or symbolic gestures. It also identifies political tokenism and coalition constraints as barriers to substantive change.

The Mizrahi case is concluded to be a paradigmatic example of ethnic groups gaining representation without redistribution, illustrating how cultural recognition and symbolic inclusion can coexist with persistent socio-economic marginality in multi-ethnic democracies.