

## Associations without Democracy: The West Bank in Comparative Perspective

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Across the developing countries, a new discourse on civil society has entered mainstream politics. Scholars evaluating the potential for democracy in these developing states and activists seeking to effect democratic reforms have focused much of their attention on civic associations. They argue that civil societies help to hold states accountable, represent citizen interests, channel and mediate mass concerns, bolster an environment of pluralism and trust, and socialize members to the behavior required for successful democracies.<sup>1</sup>

International organizations have also clearly accepted the premise that strong civic groups will promote democratization and political stability and have enthusiastically funded projects they deem useful for enhancing activities leading to civil society. Such organizations have the tools—money, influence, and the backing of the international community—to affect the growth of civic associations around the world. Of World Bank–financed projects approved in fiscal year 1995, for instance, 41 percent involved nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) compared with an average of 6 percent for projects approved between 1973 and 1988.<sup>2</sup> If participation in civic associations grows, the argument goes, so too will democratic forms of government—and all from grass-roots efforts.

In the West Bank, ruled by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) since 1993, Palestinian associational leaders are no exception to the worldwide enthusiasts who have applauded the potential democratizing role of civil society. Leaders emphasize their commitment to achieving social improvement through their associations. As a Palestinian associational leader commented in

1999, “These goals [building civic associations] are important so that we can accomplish an overall development and obtain the building of a democratic society that offers all the opportunities in work and education and the availability of all the services and social equality.”

These leaders are enthusiastic because associational life in Western democracies reinforces patterns of civic engagement that mediate democratic practices and forms of participation.<sup>3</sup> Several key features of these democratic institutions are directly related to the viability of civic organizations. Democratic governments, for instance, do not normally promote their own interests at the expense of the public, and citizens have avenues of political recourse for holding public officials accountable for misuse of public office for personal gain. Citizens of democratic polities, moreover, can participate in both politics and an associational life that is directly political. Implicit in current examinations of the effectiveness of associational life for the promotion of attitudes, activities, and belief systems favorable to the sustenance of democracies, however, is the understanding that associations and their immediate surroundings are supported by existing democratic structures, laws, and practices.

Yet these same Palestinian leaders also express concern about the ability of civil society to influence democratic change. In their accounts, by 1999 the PNA was creating realities that stifled the progress of democratic change. More broadly, many scholars in the rest of the Arab world in general have begun to question whether an active and vibrant civic polity will induce democratic change (Bellin 2000, 2004; Ismael 2001; Schlumberger 2000). This is a difference of practice and context and begs the question whether civic associations in the service of political reform travel well from the democratic West, where states are not embedded in societies as they are in the rest of the world. In states where government extends its overreaching arms into all facets of civil society, as is characteristic of many nondemocratic and state-centralized nations, governments intervene more directly in associational life: They promote specific agendas, fund certain programs, and monitor associational activities. Particularly in polarized nondemocratic nations, such as the West Bank economy and other Arab countries, ruling governments extend their influence by promoting associational agendas that directly serve their political mandate to the detriment of the general interests of the polity and of basic democratic procedures.

This chapter explores the relationship between associational life and democracy in the West Bank. Despite their role in Western democracies, I argue, civic associations—regardless of whether they are church societies or sports clubs—reproduce elements of the political context in which they exist and structure themselves accordingly. Where associational contexts are dominated by state-centralized, patron-client tendencies, then associations too become sites for the replication of those vertical ties.

By examining associational realities in the context of the West Bank economy during the height of the Oslo Peace Process (1993–99), this chapter offers key insights into the political conditions that promote or depress “democratizing associationalism.” In the context of authoritarianism, associational life cannot be expected to yield the types of democratic values and outcomes affiliated with associationalism in Western democracies. This chapter examines in particular the relationship between associational life in the West Bank economy and levels of civic engagement among the Palestinian citizenry. Before we address this issue, however, it is worth examining more closely the argument championing civic associations in the democratic West, especially in the United States.

It is difficult to argue with the proposition that civic associations—the YMCA, the Elks Club, church groups, bowling leagues, trade unions, and so on—form the bedrock of modern Western democracies. The habits of association foster patterns of civility important for successful democracies (de Tocqueville 1956). Civic organizations serve as agents of democratic socialization. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville attributes the success of American democracy to its rich associational life. Associations serve as “schools for civic virtue.” “Nothing,” de Tocqueville asserts, “is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America. . . . [In associations,] feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed, only by the reciprocal influence of men upon each other” (de Tocqueville 1956, 200–01). Scholars who follow de Tocqueville posit that citizens who participate in civic organizations are more likely to learn the importance of tolerance, pluralism, and respect for the law. Associational members learn not only that they have a right to be represented by their governments, but also that they learn more about their potential political roles in society (Diamond and Plattner 1996, 232–33).

### **Democracy and Associationalism: Revisited**

The argument that higher levels of civic engagement are a product of associational life is the cornerstone of most contemporary literature on civil society. Active civic participation and engagement are necessary to sustain competent, responsive, and effective democratic institutions. Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner argue that “a rich associational life supplements the role of political parties in stimulating participation [and] increasing the political efficacy and skill of democratic citizens” (Diamond and Plattner 1996, 232–33). Hence, in democracies, especially Western ones, associational life helps instill values and practices essential to democratic governance.

Associational life also seems to increase the levels of social capital (networks and interpersonal trust) among members. In *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam argues that trust and norms of reciprocity increase within

organizations, thereby augmenting the likelihood of cooperative ventures among members of society as a whole. This increase in social capital in turn encourages people to “stand up to city hall” or engage in other forms of behavior that provide an incentive for better government performance. In Putnam’s formulation, the density of horizontal voluntary associations among citizens (in contrast to the vertical associations under the dominion of the state) correlates with strong and effective local government: “strong society, strong state” (Putnam 1993, 176).

Associations also foster democracy by mobilizing ordinary citizens in the political process. They and other civic networks can serve as political catalysts, bringing constituents into mainstream politics. The competition among these organized groups in the public arena results in public policy initiatives. In this view, associations are critical in a representative democracy because they funnel constituency preferences to mainstream policy debates (Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978). Civic organizations also reduce the costs of collective action by serving as collectivizing forums that bring citizens together.

Finally, civic organizations with substantial memberships can place the necessary constraints on authoritarian impulses with the government. Civic organizations serve as key sites for political mobilization, recruitment, and expression, serving as counterweights to centralized governing apparatuses and encouraging sectors of society to oppose authoritarian tendencies. Associational life is particularly important in helping to hold states accountable, pressuring them to make more democratic concessions, and checking the powers of authoritarian leaders. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, for instance, civic organizations contributed to the downfall of communist regimes (Evans 1997; Huntington 1993; Przeworski 1991). This idea has been at the crux of much of the literature on mobilization, opposition-regime relations, social movements, and revolutions.

The relationships between associational life and democratic outcomes reveal an underlying theme: a convergence of changes in attitude among individuals at the associational level and increasing political participation within society as a whole, both of which are supportive of democratic outcomes. Associational members with higher levels of social capital exhibit a “self-interest that is alive to the interests of others” and therefore tend to care more about local community affairs. This in turn drives associational members to express their concerns through appropriate political channels (Putnam 1993, 88). Active associational members with high social capital are also more likely to cooperate with others in ways that support democratic forms. When local concerns arise, members are more likely to take their complaints to local government officials rather than develop clientelistic ties. When attitudes and behaviors converge through active civic participation, democratic institutions become more effective.

Associational life, the argument goes, not only promotes and consolidates democracies, but also makes democratic institutions stronger and more effective. Yet little attention has been paid to the fact that most of the research linking associational life to broader and more effective forms of civic engagement relies on evidence from democratic, mostly Western states, where autonomous interest groups already exist and are able to influence government in bottom-up fashion.<sup>4</sup> These studies conclude that in democracies associational life is important in enhancing the generation of specific qualities important for democratic citizenship, such as political efficacy, interpersonal trust, moderation, and support for democratic institutions and forms of political participation. The assumption that democratic institutions and autonomous interest groups *already exist* is embedded in the causal mechanisms linking individuals, at the associational level, to broader and more collective forms of participation that support institutional democratic outcomes. However, how could higher levels of civic engagement lead to more conscientious voters, for example, if the right to vote freely is not already guaranteed?

The causal mechanisms that link associational members to broader forms of political participation within democracies depend on the availability of democratic participatory institutions. The posited relationship between civic associations and democracy is a circular and self-reinforcing relationship. Democratic socialization, the promotion of social capital that enables broader forms of democratic participation, and the mobilization of interests through democratic channels are all based on an unexamined norm of democracy: Associations will promote the attitudes and behaviors important for members to make use of *existing* democratic political institutions.<sup>5</sup> The relationships between higher levels of civic engagement and more effective democratic governance therefore shape and reinforce one another in an endogenous relationship. Democratic institutions shape the way associations link their members to broader forms of political participation. Associations also instill attitudes and behaviors supportive of the available democratic structures in society.

Putnam has found that interpersonal trust is valuable for enhancing behavior that supports democratic rule. Higher levels of interpersonal trust also work to reinforce democratic rule, but they may be less applicable to non-democratic settings. In nondemocratic states, indeed, it is not clear how social capital can enhance the democratic governance of a regime. Social capital in democratic settings may create opportunities for citizens to collectively seek the help of democratic institutions and thus legitimate these democratic institutions. This may also be true in nondemocratic regions, where higher levels of social trust can enable citizens to seek out local public officials through any available avenue—whether formal (directly through the state) or informal (through clientelistic channels). Seeking the help of local public officials in this manner similarly legitimizes authoritarian state behaviors and clientelistic channels. Just as associational life in northern Italy promotes civic engagement

in ways that are important for the efficiency of northern Italy's local governance, so too does associational life in southern Italy promote civic engagement in ways that sustain the inefficiency of local governance in southern Italy. Does the lack of social capital in southern Italy promote ineffective democratic institutions? Or do ineffective democratic institutions promote levels of civic engagement, including social capital, supportive of nondemocratic procedures and institutions? If the latter is true, I posit, then social capital can be important in the reinforcement of any government in power, regardless of whether it is democratic or nondemocratic.

So Western democracies, where states are not embedded in their societies, differ from nondemocratic states in the Arab world (and elsewhere) in important and marked ways. Most notably, in Western democracies, autonomous interest groups already exist, channels of political participation are already guaranteed, and blatant clientelism, patronage, and corruption play a less important role in everyday political life than they do in the Arab world. What, then, is to be said about the role of associations in enhancing levels of civic engagement in nondemocratic settings, such as the West Bank economy, where existing political institutions do not support the types of civic participation associated with more effective democracy?

Open to question, then, is the premise that civic associations will promote democracy unequivocally across the board. Putnam, for one, argues that "those concerned with democracy and development in the South [Italy] ... should be building a more civic community" (Putnam 1993, 185). In Putnam's argument, such community should result from a higher degree of associational participation. Implicit in this is the correspondence of higher levels of social capital with higher levels of support for democratic procedures and norms. Other scholars make the same point, with similar implications. Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner write that "associational life can ... promot[e] an appreciation of the obligations as well as the rights of democratic citizens" (Diamond and Plattner 1996, 230–31). It is inconceivable, however, that Putnam meant to correlate higher levels of social capital with support for antidemocratic procedures and norms—indeed, with anything other than democratic institutions and procedures, if the goal is more effective democratic institutions.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the improvement of democratic governance through civic engagement depends on the existence of associational life within democratic contexts where political institutions are both available and responsive. Otherwise, how would interest in local affairs promote democratic outcomes in areas where the channels of expression or the ability to lobby local representatives is either limited or inaccessible? In these areas, higher levels of interest in community affairs do not necessarily correlate with broader forms of political behavior that advance democracy or shore up democratic norms. The means to do so in each context are simply too different.

## The Importance of Political Context

I am arguing that the overall political context in which associations operate shapes the ways in which associations may or may not produce democratic change. Too often, associations that house civil society are credited with heroic accomplishments without paying specific attention to the ways that preexisting state-society relations mediate associational activities and patterns of operation.<sup>7</sup> For example, in institutions where the survivability of associations is linked to regime endorsement, civil society can and in many instances does reinforce existing political regimes and not democracy per se.

Because political institutions shape both civic engagement and civic attitudes, the content and form of civic engagement will differ across varying political contexts. People engage their surroundings, which in turn shape attitudes and beliefs about civic participation. Although higher levels of civic engagement in democratic frameworks may lead to patterns of participation conducive to or supportive of democracy, in nondemocratic settings higher levels of civic engagement may not necessarily lead to similar trajectories of participation. Thus, the absence of accessible channels of political participation will not only hinder some forms of participation, but also shape one's attitudes and beliefs about participation. Individuals will develop opinions, attitudes, norms, and perceptions influenced directly by the political context in which they operate. Because patterns of political participation differ in nondemocratic settings, patterns of civic engagement should differ as well. Even within similar contexts, variation will exist among members' civic engagement according to associational interaction with the political world around them.

## Associational Life in the West Bank Economy

The PNA, though ostensibly democratic, in truth mirrors much of the rest of the Arab world and is a classic authoritarian state that reinforces the centrality of the government through a network that includes both formal and informal patron-client relationships. Participatory institutions and strong associations do exist in the West Bank economy, but the PNA rules authoritatively, centralizing its power, and without clear provisions that limit its dominance. During the 1980s, for instance, the strategies of political mobilization employed by local elites dramatically expanded associational life in the West Bank economy. In the 1990s, international donor assistance contributed to the growth of the voluntary sector as well. Although participation in these associations has enlivened civic engagement, the relationships between the main dimensions of civic engagement (political knowledge, civic involvement, and community engagement), interpersonal trust,<sup>8</sup> and support for democratic institutions yield different returns from those anticipated from associational life in democracies. In the absence of viable democratic institutions that separate and decentralize authority, the same patterns of civic engagement that pave the way to more effective democratic institutions in

*already* democratic settings may generate attitudes and behaviors in settings like that of the West Bank economy that either reinforce the prevailing political status quo or distance citizens from the regime in power. Furthermore, where centralized governing institutions, clientelistic ties, and local corruption restrict associational life, civic associations—depending on their relationship to their immediate political surroundings—will shape patterns of civic engagement that reflect an association’s position within its political context. Thus, in some cases associational life may produce dimensions of democratic citizenship, such as support for democratic institutions; however, in other cases it may produce dimensions of engagement that support authoritarian rule, specifically, the ruling authoritarian government. I argue that the way organizations orchestrate and negotiate relationships with the political institutions around them influences the way organizations affect patterns of civic engagement, interpersonal trust, and support for democratic institutions among their members.

The existence of clientelism today “defies the modern notion of representation, where all citizens should be guaranteed equal political access” by mere virtue of citizenship (Roniger and Gunes-Ataya 1994, 9). Instead, clientelism provides clients with paths to exclusive services and influence in return for their support of their patron. It subverts the democratic process: the client who receives money to vote in a certain way, the individual who is granted political access because he or she supports the party in power, the woman who pays lip service to the state in return for benefits. The list is endless (Fox 1994, 151; Kitschelt 2000; Roniger and Gunes-Ataya 1994, 9). The PNA is rife with such relationships, which take the form of a pyramid-shaped clientelistic network characteristic of strong, one-party states. The major beneficiaries of clientelism in these states are regime affiliates. The second arrangement is what I will call the diffused clientelistic model, and it relies on a less centralized government apparatus. In this latter model, clientelism permeates virtually all social arenas. Electoral clientelism, factional clientelism, and business clientelism are examples of scattered clientelistic networks.<sup>9</sup> Power relations in these settings are distributed among numerous leaders. In the diffused clientelistic network, no one centralized nucleus of authority controls political access. In the pyramid model, the state is the premier patron, and secondary and tertiary patrons are directly linked back to the state.<sup>10</sup>

The impact of state clientelism in state-centralized regimes (those that extend to all domains of civil society) on the democratic effects of associational life is multidimensional. The parameters of this political context constrain associational life at numerous junctures. Primarily, state-sponsored associations receive immediate political access and benefits not accorded to nonstate associations. Clientelistic networks further reinforce vertical linkages between state leaders and citizens, at the expense of horizontal linkages among associations. This dual effect of centralized clientelism structures the ways in which associations interact with their political environment and with one

another. Where associations derive resources and benefits from the state, they are more likely to endorse government initiatives—even if those initiatives are nondemocratic. Further, because associations are linked to the state, they rely less on one another.

State-centralized clientelism is characteristic of many states in the Arab world, and not just in the West Bank economy. Many of the regimes encourage “the formation of a limited number of officially recognized, non-competing, state-supervised groups,” extending government influence to all facets of society (Anoushiravan and Murphy 1996). Arab countries tend to fit this category of states that exhibit both control and support of civic organizations. “It is textbook knowledge and hardly contested that Arab socio-political systems are characterized by strongly neo-patrimonial political rule and thus by asymmetric relation of superiority and subordination,” argues Schlumberger. “This is paralleled in society at large by networks of patronage and clientelism that pervade not only the political realm but societies as a whole.” States across the Middle East are so deeply embedded in clientelistic relations that, as Schlumberger goes on to argue, Arab civil societies are “in no position to impose reforms or even exert pressure to an extent beyond the control of the state” (Schlumberger 2000, 114, 117; see also Hamzeh 2001).

Centralization is possible because of the coercive, centralized capacity of the state (Bellin 2004). Kohli argues, “When the polity is organized as a democracy coercion definitely cannot be the main currency that leaders utilize to influence socioeconomic change” (Kohli 1994, 98). In the Arab world, the state is not held accountable because very few mechanisms exist through which non-regime-supporting associations can do so. Opposition is swiftly quelled or defeated. In these formulations, Arab societies are either in government-supporting networks or they are not. Ismael argues, “Throughout the region, states attempted to impose hegemony over civil society through oppressive and coercive measures administered through juridical, administrative, or security channels. In regimes that oppress and persecute political opposition, there is little room for autonomy” (Ismael 2001, 74). Without autonomy, there can be little room for viable and competitive civil organizations outside government networks. Any organizations outside state-centralized relations are economically deprived and cannot depend on formal institutions to represent their interests. Because these associations exist in centralized authoritarian settings, their ability to produce change is next to impossible.

## **Data and Tests**

Does associational life in the West Bank economy promote desirable democratic qualities such as interpersonal trust and support for democratic institutions? What about other civic engagement indicators, such as political knowledge,

community engagement, and civic involvement, considered important for democratic citizenship?

During six months of field research in the West Bank, I gathered data from three sources to test the proposition that associational life is related to civic engagement and civic attitudes supportive of democratic outcomes. In these data, I found evidence indicating that any assessment of the effect of associational life on individual attitudes and behaviors needs to take into account the overall political environment in which associations operate.<sup>11</sup> Using survey data and open-ended interviews with associational leaders in the West Bank economy, I examined (1) the difference in attitudes between associational members and nonassociational members, (2) the role associational leaders play in mediating civic engagement, and (3) whether different types of associations promote varying levels and patterns of civic engagement and civic attitudes.<sup>12</sup>

The Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC) administered the first survey instrument, a random assessment of 1,200 Palestinians. This survey measured the differences in political participation patterns and civic attitudes of both members and nonmembers of civic associations in the West Bank economy. The second survey consisted of 422 associational members in the West Bank economy. A more elaborate and extensive instrument, this second survey builds on the JMCC survey. This survey gathered data on five basic dimensions of civic engagement and civic attitudes: (1) interpersonal, (2) support for democratic institutions, (3) community engagement, (4) degree of involvement in voluntary groups (civic involvement), and (5) political knowledge.<sup>13</sup>

I randomly sampled Palestinian civic associations from a comprehensive list of approximately 1,100 civic associations in the West Bank economy, including women's groups, charitable societies, sports clubs, and youth associations. I obtained this list from the Birzeit Research Center in Ramallah.<sup>14</sup> Visiting more than 100 sites, I carried out more than 60 open-ended ethnographic interviews with associational leaders, observing their organizational functions in Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron, Bethlehem, East Jerusalem, Tulkarrem, and the surrounding villages. I asked leaders a series of questions about their associations, the role of the leaders in the association, why leaders are involved, the types of programs within their associations, and the relationship between the different associations and the PNA. Although some leaders were comfortable speaking in English, I administered the majority of interviews in Arabic. Of the more than 60 associational leaders I initially interviewed, only 42 qualified for the data analysis of this study.<sup>15</sup> I randomly sampled 10 to 15 members from each of the 42 associations included in this study. This sample of associational members answered a survey instrument prepared in Arabic to obtain information on civic attitudes, behaviors, and activities. The associations in this study represent areas from across the West Bank economy, and pertinent control variables include source of funding, socioeconomic status, and proximity to the PNA.<sup>16</sup>

## Findings

An examination of the impact of associational life on levels of interpersonal trust, based on a random sample of 1,200 Palestinians, corroborates what most of the literature on associational life claims (see table 6.1). The expected relationship between participation in voluntary associations and levels of interpersonal trust emerges clearly in some of the polling data from 1999. We can use a logistic regression model to assess the effects of associational participation on trust, controlling for pertinent demographic variables such as education, gender, age, and reported employment status. The results suggest that associational membership has an independent, positive effect on levels of interpersonal trust.

To understand the real dynamics of associational life, however, one must disaggregate the evidence and look more carefully at the kinds of associations to which people belong. My survey of 422 associational members in West Bank economy civic organizations, which cut across a wide variety of associational and socioeconomic typologies, indicates that higher levels of interpersonal trust are inversely related to support for democratic institutions and other important indicators of civic engagement.<sup>17</sup>

## Examining Interpersonal Trust

Although current studies on interpersonal trust—such as Putnam’s (1993) *Making Democracy Work*—do capture intrasocietal variations among social capital, they do not underscore the effect that political context has on this variation. Many studies emphasize associational types but do not extend their studies to either the associational terrain or the roles associations play within their immediate political environments. The nondemocratic nature of PNA rule undermines any checks or barriers to clientelism and patronage. That the PNA is not confined or restricted to democratic institutions allows it to

**Table 6.1. OLS Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Demographic Variables and Levels of Interpersonal Trust among the General Palestinian Population**

	Interpersonal trust
Associational member	0.126***/(0.049)
Work	0.051/(0.047)
Gender	0.036/(0.045)
Education	-0.068***/(0.018)
Age	0.001/(0.002)
Constant	3.25**/(0.160)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0157
N	1,022

Source: Author.

Note: See the appendixes to this book for operationalization.

\*\*significant at the 0.05 level; \*\*\*significant at the 0.01 level.

continue to support its clients, granting them special permissions and rights, while denying those basic rights to non-PNA supporters. The current PNA (in 2010) is more restricted by the rule of law but continues to enjoy significant levels of immunity.

The associational terrain in the West Bank economy is highly affected by Fatah mobilization strategies. Fatah has a significant presence on the associational scene, and its associations generate considerable support for the PNA. These associations also access the PNA's clientelistic networks, thus linking their members to the broader institutions of the PNA and reaping rewards, benefits, and political access for their support. Levels of interpersonal trust among these winners are higher than among nonclientelistic members. As supporters of the PNA, they are noticeably less enthusiastic about democratic reform.

The impact that associational life has on trust, therefore, is not equally structured. Levels of trust are shaped by the degree of clientelism (support for PNA) within relationships between associations and the PNA (see table 6.2). Further, levels of trust correspond neither to any of the pertinent indicators of civic engagement nor to support for democratic institutions. This flies in the face of the expectations of the existing literature on civic associations and democracies. Associations that serve as clientelistic gateways themselves provide the context in which individuals trust others, yet these associations do little to promote their patterns of civic engagement or engage support for democratic institutions.

Scholarly works on interpersonal trust link it to active levels of civic engagement; the more one engages in democratic civic life, the more one trusts (and vice versa; see, for example, Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1990; Ulsaner 1999). In the West Bank economy, higher levels of interpersonal trust do not correspond to indicators of civic engagement such as concern for one's community, political knowledge about events and news in one's surroundings, and the degree of civic involvement (see tables 6.3A and 6.3B). Members involved with clientelistic associations achieve political access that

**Table 6.2. Degree of Associational Clientelism and Levels of Interpersonal Trust**

	Low interpersonal trust	High interpersonal trust	Total
Non-PNA-supporting association	72.46% <i>N</i> = 121	27.54% <i>N</i> = 46	100.00% <i>N</i> = 167
Semisupporting PNA association	69.57% <i>N</i> = 80	30.43% <i>N</i> = 5	100.00% <i>N</i> = 85
PNA-supporting association	53.97% <i>N</i> = 34	46.03% <i>N</i> = 29	100.00% <i>N</i> = 63

Source: Author.

Note: Pearson's  $\chi^2$  (2 df) = 7.3652, Pr = 0.025, *N* = 345. Coding for "PNA-supporting associations" category derived from open-ended interviews. See coding in appendix A.

**Table 6.3. Measuring Interpersonal Trust, Support for Democratic Institutions, and Civic Engagement**

**A. Interpersonal Trust and Civic Engagement Indicators**

	Community engagement		Political knowledge		Civic involvement	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Low trust	40.89% N = 85	59.91% N = 127	33.72% N = 58	66.28% N = 114	50.00% N = 112	50.00% N = 112
High trust	35.35% N = 35	64.5% N = 64	29.55% N = 26	70.45% N = 62	41.58% N = 42	58.42% N = 59
	Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 0.6401, Pr = 0.424		Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 0.4641, Pr = 0.496		Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 1.9776, Pr = 0.160	

Note: No significant relationship between levels of interpersonal trust and civic engagement.

**B. Interpersonal Trust and Support for Democratic Institutions**

	Support for democratic institutions		
	Low	High	Total
Low trust	40.61% N = 93	59.39% N = 136	100.00% N = 229
High trust	51.52% N = 51	48.48% N = 48	100.00% N = 99
	Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 3.3367, Pr = 0.068		N = 328

Source: Author.

Note: A significant inverse relationship exists between interpersonal trust and support for democratic institutions.

offers them representation, security, and protection, which increases their levels of interpersonal trust. Associational clients also reproduce hierarchical structures within their associations that mirror the hierarchy outside the association. These structures within the association produce forms of interpersonal trust not compatible with civic engagement. Further, in settings not guided by democratic norms of participation, the incentives remain low for members to collectively seek to engage one another to produce change or derive benefits from the state. Their demands and needs are already met through the patron-client network, so why should they disrupt a satisfying status quo?

For these same reasons, levels of interpersonal trust generated in clientelistic associations do not correspond with levels of support for democratic institutions (table 6.4B). Support for democratic institutions clearly undermines the methods of rule of the PNA, which provides its supporters with access, representation, security, perquisites, and benefits. Democratic reforms could undermine the very regime that supports the clients. If the PNA were to fall, what form of government would emerge is not clear, and Palestinians have had enough of chaos and occupation. Sticking with a satisfactory if not ideal situation is far better than risking becoming “losers” in a new political order.

**Table 6.4. Civic Engagement Indicators and Support for Democratic Institutions**  
**A. Associational Clientelism and Support for Democratic Institutions**

	Support for democratic institutions		
	Low	High	Total
Non-PNA-supporting association	38.98% N = 69	61.02% N = 108	100.00% 177
PNA-supporting association	48.17% N = 79	51.83% N = 85	100.00% 164

Note: Pearson's  $\chi^2$  (1 df) = 2.9253, Pr = 0.087.

**B. Levels of Support for Democratic Institutions and Levels of Civic Engagement**

	Community engagement		Political knowledge		Civic involvement	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Low support	43.41% N = 56	56.59% N = 73	40.18% N = 45	59.82% N = 67	51.80% N = 72	48.20% N = 67
High support	33.52% N = 61	66.48% N = 121	26.62% N = 41	73.38% N = 113	39.44% N = 71	60.56% N = 109
	Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 3.1493, Pr = 0.076		Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 5.4458, Pr = 0.020		Pearson's $\chi^2$ (1 df) = 4.8401, Pr = 0.028	

Source: Author.

Table 6.4 further explores support for democratic institutions as a function of membership in a clientelistic or nonclientelistic association. Members in hierarchically structured clientelistic associations are less supportive of democratic institutions than members in nonclientelistic associations. Because nonclientelistic organizations are not linked to the clientelistic networks of the PNA, their participation is based on horizontally dictated exchanges with other members. As such, the face-to-face interactions increase their levels of civic engagement (table 6.4B). Community engagement, civic involvement, and political knowledge are all higher among higher democratic supporters.

## Conclusion

Current studies of the role of associational life in promoting social capital and civic engagement useful for democratic outcomes address cases that have been guided by the democratic contexts of the studies. Most studies, that is, have been conducted from a perspective that assumes democratic preconditions. Whether higher levels of civic engagement and interpersonal trust lead to stronger democratic outcomes, I argue, depends on the intervening variable of an inclusively democratic polity. Such a polity not only guarantees citizens' rights but also restricts clientelism and guarantees that corruption and abuses of power are publicly addressed. In these cases, civic engagement reflects the preexisting democratic environment, and civic behavior is predicated upon established participatory conduits.<sup>18</sup>

Associations do not emerge and function within a vacuum. Where vertical patron-client relations are embedded in state-society affairs, and are further exacerbated by preexisting polarization and politicization, there is no reason to believe that the associational terrain will not conform to the environmental dictates. Based on this evidence, one questions the conclusion that civic associations necessarily promote democracy. In the case of the West Bank economy, the quantity of associations does not appear to be a significant factor in shaping civic attitudes. Rather, the nature of associational ties to the ruling government shapes civic attitudes. An increase in the number of associations in the West Bank economy will not increase support for democratic institutions because the existing political environment will segregate these associations into either pro- or anti-PNA camps.

Clearly, context matters. Only after we understand how different contexts affect patterns of interpersonal trust and their relationship to civic engagement will we have a nuanced understanding of the role of civic engagement in democratic reform. Crowning interpersonal trust with benevolent and unequivocal “democratic” residuals may be applicable in democratic settings, but it certainly is not in nondemocratic ones. Although the high levels of cooperation fostered by interpersonal trust are useful for the efficiency of democratic institutions, this form of cooperation is also useful to support authoritarian settings. Authoritarian leaders depend on their supporters and followers to cooperate to protect the interests of the state and its rulers. The forms of social capital praised in current scholarly discourses as useful for democracy are also useful for authoritarianism.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that not all forms of associational life are useful in promoting the type of interpersonal trust and civic engagement useful for democracy. I demonstrate that an overall assessment of the democratic functions of civic life needs to be juxtaposed with an examination of other pertinent qualities important for democratization, such as support for democratic institutions. In other words, interpersonal trust as a dimension of social capital on its own in settings that are nondemocratic reveals very little about the prospects of patterns of behavior important for democratization.

## Notes

1. Abu-Amr (1996); Blair (1970); Clark (1995); Hadi (1997); Huntington (1993); Ibrahim (1995); Norton and Ibrahim (1995); World Bank (1994).
2. World Bank, “New Paths to Social Development: Community and Global Networks in Action,” Working Paper 22339, 31 May 2000, 8 August 2002, <http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/EXT/epic.nsf/ImportDocs/2CD962F09A155D5F852573BD005EE8F6?opendocum ent&query=VN>.
3. Clientelism and corruption do exist in democracies; however, according to Piatonni, “[e]xisting democracies strike different compromises between the protection of particular interests and the promotion of the general interest, hence represent different mixes of particularism and universalism” (2001, 3).

4. Seminal works in this vein include Putnam (1993) and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995).
5. The fourth claim, that associations can serve as counterweights to the state, is also applicable only in settings where civic sectors will not face harsh retaliation for advancing agendas that contradict or undermine the rule of regime in power.
6. As Fukuyama says, “[a]n abundant stock of social capital is presumably what produces a dense civil society, which in turn has been almost universally seen as a necessary condition for modern liberal democracy (in Ernest Gellner’s phrase, ‘no civil society, no democracy’)” (2001, 11).
7. Berman (1997, 401) and Fung (2003) present discussions on the ways in which civic associations may operate against democracy.
8. In this study, I employ interpersonal trust to include as well a sense of responsibility toward others in society.
9. See, for example, India (Craig 2002).
10. See Hagopian (1994); Kohli (1994); Powell (1970). Discussion of the importance of centralization for clientelistic linkages between citizens and states. This definition largely incorporates Fox’s (1994) definition of authoritarian clientelism. His definition captures clientelistic relations “where imbalanced bargaining relations require the political subordination of clients and are reinforced by the threat of coercion.” My definition extends beyond that of Fox to encompass the centralized nature of authoritarian clientelistic regimes characteristic of many Arab states. Similar patterns are found in patterns of India’s rule under the Congress Party in the 1950s and in Brazil under Arena until the mid-1970s.
11. I spent three months on this project in 1998 and three months in 1999.
12. The collection of all survey data took place in PNA-controlled territories of the West Bank: areas A and B, but not C. During the interim period, the PNA obtained full control and sovereignty over 17 percent of the West Bank; this Palestinian-controlled area was designated area A. Area B, consisting of roughly 24 percent of the West Bank, is under joint Israeli-Palestinian rule. In area B, Palestinians are responsible for all civilian affairs, and Israel is responsible for security matters. Area C, the remaining 59 percent of the West Bank, remains under full Israeli control and jurisdiction.
13. Questions were drawn from surveys that have already been used to measure levels of civic engagement elsewhere cross-nationally. I use survey questions that have been used by the National Election Survey (NES): Almond and Verba (1963), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), the Pew Survey on Trust, and the Public Opinion Service surveys on democratic culture. In some cases, I modified questions so that they address the particularities of the Palestinian case.
14. Because the Law of Associations had not been ratified in 1999, civic associations in the West Bank and Gaza economies were not required to register with any government office. As a result, some associations obtained licensing from the Ministry of Social Affairs, others from the Ministry of the Interior, and yet others from the Ministry of Justice. Once the Law of Associations was passed in August 1999, civic associations were to register with the Ministry of the Interior. Because of these circumstances, I was unable to obtain a comprehensive list of licensed associations from any government office. However, the list I did obtain was far more comprehensive than any of the other independent lists I gathered from the ministries, United Nations offices, and various other research NGOs.
15. The remaining associations not included in this study did not have sufficient memberships necessary for this study or did not operate in PNA-controlled areas. Qualifications for membership include frequent attendance requirements, fee payment, and the right to vote within the association.
16. See appendix A to this book for survey questions.

17. Members in civic associations come from all levels of the socioeconomic spectrum.
18. Not all associations in democracies influence members similarly. The content and form of levels of civic engagement in associations in such areas as inner cities and ghettos, where citizens may feel marginalized, oppressed, mistreated, or discriminated against, will be different in content and form than civic engagement in associations that are not constrained in these ways.

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