

## **Empowering the Palestinian Economy: The Role of Palestinian Investors in Israel in Promoting Socio-Economic Development**

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**Abstract.** This study explores the potential contributions and challenges of Palestinian investors in Israel to the socio-economic development and empowerment of Palestinian citizens, within the context of the Israeli occupation and its impact on the Palestinian economy. Using a qualitative approach, the study employs questionnaires and interviews to collect data from private sector institutions and individuals related to economics in the study area. The findings suggest that Palestinian investors in Israel possess significant economic capital, expertise, and networks that can be leveraged to support the development of the Palestinian national economy, particularly through joint ventures, technology transfer, and market access. However, the study also reveals significant challenges and obstacles, such as political and legal constraints, lack of supportive institutional frameworks, and the need for greater coordination and collaboration among Palestinian economic actors. The study contributes to the literature on Palestinian economic development by highlighting the potential role of Palestinian investors in Israel and providing recommendations for policymakers, investors, and civil society organizations to promote economic empowerment and cooperation. Future research could build on these findings by conducting larger-scale and comparative studies, and by using more objective measures of economic performance and impact.

**Keywords:** contributions, challenges, Palestinian investors, socio-economic development, empowerment, Palestinian citizens, Israeli occupation, Palestinian economy

## **1. Introduction**

The Palestinian economy faces numerous challenges that impede its progress and development, stemming from the political, economic, and security circumstances within Palestinian society, largely influenced by the ongoing occupation (Dana T., 2015). Evidently, the policies enacted by the occupying forces aim to foster a complete dependency of the Palestinian economy on that of Israel (Dana T., & Jarbawi A., 2017). Since the occupation of Palestinian territories in 1967, efforts have been made to intertwine the Palestinian and Israeli economies, effectively diminishing the potential of the Palestinian people and their economy (El Zein R., 2017). Consequently, these policies have contributed to stagnation in Palestinian economic growth, resulting in increased unemployment and poverty rates (Farsakh L., 2005). Therefore, it is incumbent upon Palestinian manufacturers and investors, particularly those who are citizens of Israel, to support the Palestinian national economy (Feldman I., 2018). The responsibility of attracting and bolstering investments lies heavily on the Palestinian national economy, ensuring profitable opportunities for entrepreneurs and investors (Hever S., 2010). Palestine, with its plethora of investment opportunities, remains hindered by the harsh conditions and occupation policies, thwarting socio-developmental projects across various sectors (Hilal J., 2015).

The primary objective of this study is to ascertain the contribution of entrepreneurs and investors among Palestinian citizens of Israel to the support of the Palestinian national economy. Private sectors, particularly Palestinian investors from Israel, stand to benefit significantly from the insights gleaned from this study. Moreover, this research will provide invaluable data to Palestinian economic researchers, facilitating informed decision-making processes. By empowering Palestinian citizens of Israel to actively participate in the development of the Palestinian national economy, this study aims to identify key recommendations and strategies to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurs' roles. Ultimately, the findings of this analysis hold promise for advancing economic prosperity and resilience within Palestine.

### **1.1. Problem Statement**

The Palestinian economy has grappled with an external trade deficit and a significant imbalance in the balance of payments in recent years, particularly following the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority and its adoption of an open economic policy closely tied to Israel's economy (Arafeh N., 2018a). This deficit has steadily worsened over time, reflecting the economic structure's failure to foster meaningful economic growth due to limited human and material resources (Arafeh N., 2018b). In light of the challenging economic and political environment, Palestinian policymakers are compelled to seek out strategic partners capable of contributing substantively to economic development (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Among these potential partners, Palestinian manufacturers from Israel hold particular promise, possessing significant untapped potential that could fuel economic growth and development within the Palestinian economy (Qarmout T., 2017).

Despite the presence of Palestinian investors in Israel, there remains a significant gap in understanding their potential contributions and the challenges they face within the context of the Israeli occupation. This gap hinders the comprehensive assessment of their role in the socio-economic development and empowerment of Palestinian citizens. The existing literature lacks a focused exploration of the specific economic capital, expertise, and networks possessed by Palestinian investors in Israel, and how these resources can be utilized to support the Palestinian national economy.

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

- 1: To identify the economic capital, expertise, and networks of Palestinian investors in Israel.
- 2: To assess the potential impact of Palestinian investors in Israel on the development of the Palestinian national economy.
- 3: To examine the challenges and obstacles faced by Palestinian investors in Israel, including political and legal constraints, and the lack of supportive institutional frameworks.

4: To explore opportunities for collaboration and coordination among Palestinian economic actors to enhance the contributions of Palestinian investors in Israel.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

1. What economic capital, expertise, and networks do Palestinian investors in Israel possess?
2. How can Palestinian investors in Israel support the development of the Palestinian national economy, particularly through joint ventures, technology transfer, and market access?
3. What are the main challenges and obstacles faced by Palestinian investors in Israel, and how do they impact their ability to contribute to the Palestinian national economy?
4. What strategies can be implemented to overcome these challenges and enhance collaboration among Palestinian economic actors?

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

This study fills a critical gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the role of Palestinian investors in Israel and their potential contributions to the socio-economic development and empowerment of Palestinian citizens. The findings will not only enhance our understanding of the dynamics between Palestinian investors and the Israeli occupation but also provide valuable insights for policymakers, investors, and civil society organizations. By identifying opportunities for collaboration and addressing existing challenges, this study offers practical recommendations to promote economic empowerment and cooperation among Palestinian economic actors. Moreover, the theoretical contributions of this study lie in its exploration of the intersection between political economy, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic development, shedding light on a complex yet understudied aspect of the Palestinian economy.

## **2. Literature Review**

The socio-economic development of Palestinian citizens in Israel has been the subject of extensive research, with scholars exploring various aspects of their experiences within the Israeli socio-political landscape. Numerous studies have examined the challenges and opportunities faced by this population, shedding light on their economic participation, access to resources, and overall well-being. A significant body of literature highlights the structural barriers hindering the socio-economic advancement of Palestinian citizens in Israel. Research by Abu-Rabia-Queder and Ben-Porat (2018) underscores the systemic discrimination and institutionalized inequalities embedded within Israeli society, which perpetuate socio-economic disparities among different ethnic and religious groups. Similarly, findings from Sayigh (2016) reveal the persistent marginalization of Palestinian communities within Israel, characterized by limited access to educational and employment opportunities, as well as inadequate infrastructure and services.

However, amidst these challenges, there are also studies that point to resilience and efforts towards economic empowerment within the Palestinian community in Israel. Research by Jamal (2019) highlights the emergence of grassroots initiatives and community-led economic projects aimed at fostering self-reliance and socio-economic development. Moreover, studies by Abu-Saad and Haj-Yahia (2020) emphasize the importance of cultural and social capital in navigating economic challenges and building solidarity networks within the Palestinian community. Despite these insights, the existing literature presents several notable gaps and controversies. First, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the specific economic dynamics and opportunities available to Palestinian citizens in Israel. While some studies provide insights into structural barriers, there is a dearth of research that critically examines the role of economic policies, market forces, and external factors in shaping the socio-economic landscape for this population. Additionally, there is limited empirical research on the effectiveness of existing interventions and policies aimed at promoting economic empowerment and development among Palestinian citizens in Israel.

This literature informs the current study by highlighting the complex socio-economic context within which Palestinian citizens in Israel operate. It underscores the structural inequalities and discriminatory practices that constrain their economic opportunities while also identifying pockets of resilience and community-driven initiatives aimed at fostering empowerment. By synthesizing these findings, the study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the socio-economic challenges and opportunities facing Palestinian citizens in Israel and identify strategies for promoting their economic development and empowerment.

### **Theoretical and Related Literature**

The real meaning of occupation here is controlling (Khalidi R., 2017). Since 1967, the Palestinian Territories are under occupation, likewise their economy (Khalidi R., 2014). The Palestinian national economy face certain critical conditions which become obstacles by affecting the Palestinian economic growth, in terms of limiting the potential of economic performance by the Palestinian enterprises, commercial activities and traffic of goods and services, due to controlling their borders, cities, roads and controlling foreign trade (Butterfield, et al., 2000). In addition, to the restrictions imposed between cities in West Bank and Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories are under full Israeli control (Clarino A., 2017). As a result, the Palestinian economy dependent solidly on the Israeli economy and policies, as Israel controls economic centers of power, and all the needed components for economic development to growth, such as land, roads, raw materials, natural resources and movement in the Palestinian Territories, through checkpoints or what the Israel calls as "crossing points" (Bishara A., 1989). Israel has made the Palestinian economy dependent on Israeli economy through economic and customs agreements between the Palestinian Authority Government especially the Paris Economic Convention (the so-called 'Paris Protocol'), (Bauhardt C., 2014).

### **Israeli Economy Overview**

After going through an economic crisis in the years leading up to the 1980s, the Israeli economy underwent fundamental reforms in the middle of that decade to position itself for rapid expansion (Khalidi R., 2019). The economy played fewer roles, which freed up the market; meanwhile, the private sector assumed a significant part of the responsibility for guiding the market into a new international level (Khalidi R. J., & Taghdisi-Rad S., 2009). Consequently, there was a reduction in the size of the agricultural sector, while the technology sector, hi-tech, expanded and became one of the main productive sectors in 2004 and after, constituting about 85% of the Israeli industrial output." Even though, the world economy was in recession from 2009 to 2012, Israel's GDP climbed by more than 14.7% (Tartir, et al., 2021). And boosted its investment in human capital, in research and development, where it is currently rated first worldwide, with a ratio of 140 researchers for every ten thousand people (the United States ranked second with 80 researchers for every 10 thousand people), and thus, it is the country with the highest number of researchers per capita in the world. An article written by Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google Co., described that Israel has become the second most important global technology center (Tartir, et al., 2021).

### **Economic Dimension**

Through the utilization of the earth's natural resources, society's overall well-being can be improved to its fullest potential, and poverty can be eradicated. Under this pillar, a number of actions are carried out, including the prevention of the waste of natural resources, the reduction of developing nations' reliance on developed nations, the heightening of wealthy nations' responsibility for pollution and efforts to combat pollution, and the reduction of income disparity, cited in Shtern (2019). This vision or trend was derived from (Svirsky, 2021) where the author argued that economic responsibility reflects the

activities and actions of a firm in taking responsibility caused by the impact that its activities have on society. This vision or trend has since become increasingly popular. In light of this, the company focuses on ethical behavior, respects government laws and regulations, and integrates these elements into its day-to-day operations. This fulfils the company's obligation to minimize and steer clear of any potential harm to the society while simultaneously maximizing the long-term impact of the benefits it provides. The legal, economic, and ethical responsibilities that have an effect on the well-being of society are what constitute the corporate world's social responsibility. Based on an ethical perspective, that places emphasis on the long-term objectives and initiatives of actual commercial organizations, with the aim of meeting these obligations to improve the organization's image in the community.

This literature offers some reflections on the corpus of knowledge that has been built up around the economy of Palestine. It analyses the paradigm shifts that occurred between the most often employed theoretical frameworks. In scholarly studies, Zionist enterprise itself in addition to the considerable differences that exist between the numerous Palestinian populations, that exist (inside Israel, in the occupied territories, and in the diaspora), have figured inconsistently or not at all. The report makes the case that, as a direct consequence of this, the academic research on the Palestinian economy has been quite patchy. There is no enough studies on similar topic and the discrepancy has limited the ability of economists to both explain the failure of Palestinian development and to identify alternative remedies for their economic development.

### **3. Methodology**

This study endeavors to delineate the "Possibilities and Challenges of Palestinians Citizens of Israel in developing the Palestinian National Economy" from a Palestinian perspective. It aims to contribute to the strategic frameworks for economic development, investment attraction, advancement of private sectors, and management of general economic affairs within the Palestinian context.

#### **Research Approach**

A descriptive analysis approach is adopted in this research to capture real and realistic insights into the possibilities and challenges faced by Palestinians citizens of Israel in bolstering the Palestinian National Economy. This methodology facilitates gathering perspectives from institutions within the Palestinian State "1967" focused on economic development, investment attraction, and private sector enhancement. Additionally, viewpoints of politicians and investors who have made significant investments exceeding 1 million dollars across diverse sectors within Israel, and who are poised to contribute to the establishment of the Palestinian economy, are considered. An outcome analytic approach is employed to explore the influential relationships between variables under study.

#### **Reliability and Validity**

The methodology is deemed reliable as it involves rigorous data collection and analysis. Primary research tools include personal interviews and questionnaires designed specifically for institutions, individuals, politicians, and investors involved in economic affairs. These tools are complemented by secondary resources such as literature reviews, research articles, data records, bulletins, and periodical journals. The survey questionnaire, a six-part researcher-constructed instrument, is informed by readings and suggestions from academic advisors and professors, ensuring its relevance and comprehensiveness.

#### **Data Checking**

Stability of research tools is verified using the coefficient of stability (Kronbach alpha), demonstrating good stability factors for the collected data. Additionally, normal distribution and variation of variables

are examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test to ensure appropriate analysis methods. Homogeneity tests of variance between categories of relevant variables are conducted using Levene statistics, confirming consistency across demographic variables and allowing for the application of ANOVA analysis and independent samples T-test for data analysis.

The study employed this methodological framework to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the economic landscape for Palestinian citizens of Israel, facilitating informed decision-making and policy formulation to advance the Palestinian National Economy.

#### 4. Results

This section delineates the outcomes derived from scrutinizing the possibilities and challenges faced by Palestinian citizens of Israel in the endeavor of building the Palestinian National Economy. The examination is conducted through the lens of both institutional bodies and individual stakeholders within the Palestinian State of "1967," actively engaged in advancing economic development, soliciting investments, fostering private sector growth, and overseeing broader economic affairs. Furthermore, it encompasses the perspectives of political figures and investors with investments exceeding 1 million dollars across various sectors within Israel, who are deemed potential contributors to the establishment of the Palestinian Economy. The nuanced effects of each variable within these sampled cohorts are meticulously explored. To fulfill this objective, the study undertook a systematic approach, commencing with the meticulous collection of statistical data, subsequently subjected to rigorous analysis.

Table 1: The contribution of Palestinian Citizens of Israel in developing the Palestinian national economy

	region 48		region 67	
	arithmetic average	standard deviation	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation
Cultural and social factors	4.41	.51	4.20	.41
Geographical factors	4.71	.47	4.73	.46
Integration in industries and markets - there is no competition between them	2.47	1.01	3.07	1.53
Relatively advanced technical industries in 1948 compared to 1967	4.24	1.09	4.40	.83
The possibility of marketing in global markets in 48 territories are better - and benefiting from Israel in free trading	4.47	.80	4.20	1.37
The exposure of the lands of 1967 to the markets of the Arab world	4.88	.33	4.13	1.25
Cheap labor in the territories of 1967	4.82	.39	4.40	.51
Large consumer markets in the territories of 1948 and 1967	4.41	1.00	4.13	.83
The Experience factor from the territories of 1948 are greater than the experience in the territories of 1967	4.41	.62	4.33	.82

The Possibilities and Factors of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in developing the Palestinian National Economy	4.31	.36	4.18	.46
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The results reveal variations in the arithmetic average table concerning the responses of the study sample, with a greater benefit observed for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Specifically, it was demonstrated that the paragraph addressing "the exposure of the 67 markets to the Arab world" attained the highest arithmetic average at 4.88, in contrast to the average of 4.13 for the same paragraph among Palestinian citizens of the 67 territories. Conversely, the paragraph addressing "Integration of industries and markets - no competition between them" recorded the lowest arithmetic average at 2.47, compared to an average of 3.07 for the same paragraph among Palestinian citizens of the 67 territories. These findings elucidate the contributing factors of Palestinian citizens of Israel in the development of the Palestinian national economy, where the overall arithmetic average favored Palestinian citizens in Israel at 4.31, in comparison to an average of 4.18 among respondents from the 67 territories.

Additionally, based on the ANOVA test, the significance level was found to exceed 0.05 for axial averages pertaining to the possibilities and challenges associated with the variable of the number of years of current work. Consequently, no statistically significant differences were discerned. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis that no statistically significant differences exist at the predetermined statistical significance level ( $0.05 \leq \alpha$ ) in the axial averages of possibilities and challenges concerning the variable of the number of years of work for Palestinian investors in the 67 territories.

#### 4.1. Results of interview analysis of Palestinian citizen of Israel

Table 2: The possibilities available for Palestinians citizens of Israel

First Question: The possibilities available for Palestinians citizens of Israel?	Frequency	Percentage
Experience in economic fields, especially technical ones	25	27.5%
Establishing & investing in common areas, Available capital and human resources	13	14.3%
Movement ability & shopping Palestinian products	09	9.9%
The ability to provide beneficial gains in the export & import field	08	8.8%
Contributing to the transfer Israeli capabilities to 67	07	7.7%
Understanding the Israeli mentality more than 67 (the ability to analyze with the Israeli market)	07	7.7%
Manage an economy of about \$ 9 billion and their ability in investment	05	5.5%
Common Investments in the available economic sectors	04	4.4%
Purchasing power and financial resources	04	4.4%
Common denominator between two sides and geographic and cultural closeness	03	3.3%
A young community of 21 years and years of education 13 years	03	3.3%

Creating a bridge with the Israeli and Arab neoliberal economy	03	3.3%
Total	91	100.0%

The data analysis pertaining to potential opportunities for Palestinians in Israel unveils that their expertise in economic spheres, notably in technology, emerged as the paramount factor, accruing a rating of 27.5%. In close succession, the prospect of "establishing and investing in joint ventures, facilitated by the availability of capital and human resources," attained the second position with a rating of 14.3%. Conversely, the findings signify that the concept of "Creating a bridge between the Israeli and Arab economies through a neoliberal approach" garnered the lowest ranking, with a mere 3.3% of respondents endorsing this option, equating with the alternative proposal of "A youthful society, with an average age of 21 years and an average learning period of 13.5 years."

## 5. Discussion

Table 1 presents the contribution of Palestinian citizens of Israel in developing the Palestinian national economy. It compares various factors between regions 1948 and 1967, providing arithmetic averages and standard deviations for each factor. For instance, factors like cultural and social aspects, geographical considerations, and technical industries are analyzed. The table also shows the average responses from the study sample, indicating the perceived contribution of Palestinian citizens in Israel versus those in the 1967 territories. In the analysis, it's highlighted that certain factors, such as exposure to Arab markets, receive higher ratings from Palestinian citizens in Israel compared to those in the 1967 territories. Conversely, integration in industries and markets shows a lower rating among Palestinian citizens in Israel. Generally, Palestinian citizens in Israel tend to perceive more favorable conditions for economic development compared to their counterparts in the 1967 territories.

Table 2 provides insights into the possibilities available for Palestinian citizens of Israel. It outlines the frequency and percentage of responses to various possibilities, indicating the perceived opportunities for economic advancement. Factors like experience in economic fields, establishment of joint ventures, movement abilities for Palestinian products, and contribution to export-import activities are examined.

The findings shed light on several practical implications. Firstly, they underline the potential for leveraging the expertise of Palestinian citizens in Israel, particularly in technical fields, for economic development. This suggests avenues for collaboration and knowledge transfer within the Palestinian economy. Secondly, the emphasis on joint ventures and the availability of capital and human resources signifies opportunities for investment and partnership, contributing to economic growth. Theoretical implications include insights into the factors influencing economic development within Palestinian communities. By understanding the perceptions and priorities of stakeholders, policymakers can devise strategies that align with the needs and aspirations of the population. Additionally, the findings contribute to the literature on economic development in conflict-affected regions, providing nuanced insights into the role of diaspora communities in fostering economic resilience.

Comparing these findings with previous studies can highlight continuity or divergence in trends. For instance, Falah, G. W. (2005), this study examines the involvement of Palestinian citizens of Israel in the broader Palestinian national movement, focusing on political and social dynamics. While not directly addressing economic aspects, it provides context for understanding the multifaceted contributions of Palestinian citizens of Israel to the Palestinian cause. By juxtaposing its findings with the economic perspectives explored in this research, parallels can be drawn to assess the interconnectedness of political engagement and economic development. Abdulhadi, R. S. (2018), Abdulhadi's study delves into the economic landscape encountered by Palestinian citizens of Israel, investigating both opportunities and challenges. By referencing this research alongside the present study, one can discern shifts in perceptions and realities regarding economic prospects over time. Furthermore,



it offers insights into structural barriers and policy considerations relevant to economic advancement in this context. Mansour, M., & Alkhateeb, A. (2020), focusing specifically on Palestinian women in Israel, this study provides valuable insights into broader economic dynamics within Palestinian communities. By examining challenges and opportunities faced by a specific demographic, parallels can be drawn with the overall economic landscape discussed in this research. Moreover, it offers perspectives on gender-specific factors influencing economic participation and empowerment.

By referencing these scholarly works alongside the results obtained in the present research, a comprehensive understanding of the economic context for Palestinian citizens of Israel can be achieved. This comparative approach facilitates the situating of findings within broader academic discourse, identifying areas for further investigation and policy intervention.

While emphasizing on technical expertise aligns with prior research, the emphasis on joint ventures and cross-border economic linkages may represent evolving economic dynamics. Discrepancies could stem from shifts in political landscapes or changing economic priorities, underscoring the importance of context-specific analyses.

In a broader context, the challenges and opportunities for Palestinian investors in Israel are intertwined with political, social, and economic factors. Though there are opportunities for collaboration and investment, navigating complex geopolitical realities poses significant challenges. Issues such as access to markets, political stability, and legal frameworks require careful consideration. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of addressing structural inequalities and promoting inclusive economic policies. Enhancing economic opportunities for Palestinian citizens, both in Israel and the 1967 territories, necessitates concerted efforts to overcome barriers and foster a conducive environment for sustainable development. This involves fostering trust, building bridges between communities, and advocating for policies that prioritize economic empowerment and shared prosperity.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study investigates the potential role of Palestinian investors in Israel in promoting the socio-economic development and empowerment of Palestinian citizens, within the context of the challenges posed by the Israeli occupation. The findings suggest that Palestinian investors in Israel possess significant economic resources, knowledge, and networks that can be harnessed to support the growth of the Palestinian national economy, through collaborative ventures, knowledge sharing, and access to markets. The study also identifies significant barriers and challenges, including political and legal restrictions, absence of enabling institutional frameworks, and the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation among Palestinian economic actors in Israel and the occupied territories. These findings have important implications for policymakers, investors, and civil society organizations seeking to foster economic empowerment and development for Palestinian citizens.

However, the study recommends the development of a comprehensive and inclusive economic development strategy that acknowledges the distinct challenges and opportunities faced by Palestinian citizens in Israel and the occupied territories, and that capitalizes on their collective assets and resources. It also calls for targeted policies and programs to incentivize and support Palestinian investors in Israel to engage in joint initiatives with partners in the occupied territories, as well as for increased dialogue, networking, and collaboration among Palestinian economic actors across the political divide.

Nevertheless, the study has some limitations, such as the small sample size, the narrow geographical focus, and the dependence on self-reported data from participants. Future research could extend these findings by undertaking more extensive and representative surveys of Palestinian investors and institutions in Israel and the occupied territories, as well as by employing more objective indicators of economic performance and impact. Comparative studies with other conflict-affected regions and minority communities could also offer valuable insights into the broader challenges and opportunities for economic empowerment and development in complex political and social environments

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