13 A Grounded Theory of Belonging: "All [Jewish] Israelis, Unite!"

My initial research interest was the question of how (and why) young Israelis with an FSU family background become engaged with the Yisra'el Beitenu party. In order to find answers to this initial question, I organised the collection and analysis of data with the help of the grounded theory approach, as initially developed by Strauss and Glaser (Glaser/ Strauss 2011). Against the background of a theoretical sampling, I conducted in-depth interviews about civic engagement with interviewees engaged with the political party on different levels (national vs. local), in different forms (formal vs. informal), in different positions within the party's structure (central vs. peripheral), and in different modes (active vs. passive). In the course of the analysis of the material, I developed more detailed questions concerning the material, such as: How do the interviewees contextualise their engagement against the background of their perceived position in Israeli society? How do they actively position themselves in that society and which are the resources and strategies they apply here? How do the interviewees develop a sense of their *belonging* and which role does their civic engagement play in that process? Finally, what role does their presentation of Israeli citizenship play in that process?

Once *belonging* had emerged as the key category, I suggested applying Bourdieu's concepts of social space, field, capital, and social practice as an integrated framework in order to be able to take the perspective of the interviewees in particular or that of citizens with an immigrant family background in general to understand how they adapt to a new social space and actively construct and make *sense of their place*. I put particular

emphasis on the analysis of how the interviewees a) relate toward the different forms of capital in their possession as resources or the perceived lack of them in order to pursue a particular argumentative strategy, and b) how they apply these power resources strategically when speaking about their engagement with the Yisra'el Beitenu party in particular and about the broader context of their engagement, that is their perception of Israeli society and Israeli citizenship. This means, I paid particular attention to the realisation of power resources in the discursive practice of the interview situation, i.e. how they present the power resources they have at their disposal in their narratives.

With reference to Bourdieu's statement that the existing social order can be challenged, one of the basic claims I made in the present study was that the interviewees are social actors. Within that social order or social space under examination, namely the Israeli society, they pursue a strategy of reinsuring or improving their objective and subjective positions in a particular field—here: the field of politics—as a social group—here: Israelis with an FSU family background, and thus also in Israeli society. In this context, Keller (2011a) points to the "emphasis on the active and interpretative efforts of social actors in the (re-)production and transformation of symbolic orders in [those] discourses" (Keller 2011a: 36).

I was able to make statements about the interviewees' *sense of belonging* at the moment the interview took place and in retrospective. Yet on the basis of interview material I was not able to make statements about the process of the development of their *sense of belonging* or, in other words, from where they had started. As it is often the case in qualitative empirical studies, I had to deal with limited resources of time and money to stay in the field and to get access to it and thus was not able to return to the field in order to re-interview the participants after some time. Besides, the interviews are framed by the particular situation in which the interviews took place and by the fact that I as their interview partner was a foreigner. This has certainly played a role in the way the interviewees make statements explicit or explain them in more detail than what might have been the case with an Israeli, or even more so, an FSU-born interviewer. Conversely, they certainly left things out for the same reasons. In this context, in the process of analysis I sometimes had to use the help of people with knowledge of the language and the Israeli political culture but who were not participating in the process of carrying out the interviews.

In this final chapter, firstly, I will develop a material theory about the interviewees' presentation of Israeli citizenship as a strategy of *belonging*, as it has emerged from the interview material. Secondly, I will critically discuss the findings of the present study with regard to the theoretical part as well as to the findings of previous empirical studies on the issue of immigrant adaptation.

13.1 CITIZENSHIP

The interviewees take their talking about engagement with the Yisra'el Beitenu party as a starting point to speak about their reading of Israeli citizenship. Citizenship is conceptualised in the context of the study as the "membership of a political community" (Lister/ Pia 2003:. 8), featured by four core dimensions in a particular relationship: (political, cultural, economic) *rights*, *duties*, participation and identity (Delanty 1997: 9). The narratives display all four dimensions, yet in a hierarchical order. Citizenship, as the interviewees present it, is conditional and two dimensions are of particular importance to them: *citizen's duties* of *serving the country* and being *loyal* to the *Jewish state* and, in return, the granting of full *citizen's rights* in the form of Israeli citizenship itself. In this context, civic engagement is not presented as active participation in Delanty's sense, but as a *duty* alongside *service* and *loyalty*. Finally, identity or identification with the *Jewish state* are at the bottom line of the hierarchy.

The interviewees base their understanding of Israeli citizenship on three pillars: the adaptation of the ethno-nationalist discourse, which emphasises the Jewish character of the Israeli state and, connected to that, the adaptation of the hegemonic discourse, which presents military service as a moral obligation in various contexts of socialisation, personal or second-hand experiences as Israelis with an immigrant background and ways of coping with those experiences as well as the adaptation of the Yisra'el Beitenu party's ideology.

13.2 SERVING THE COUNTRY

In the interviews, *serving the country* means first and foremost military service. Military *service* is presented as mandatory for all Israeli citizens, regardless of nationality. This is the interviewees' reality and their personal experience; against the background of their own experience of having served in the IDF they claim that every citizen has to *serve* and *serve*s. The obligation to *serve* is taken for granted and by referring to their own *service* they prove they have fulfilled their *moral obligation*. The interviewees adapt the hegemonic discourse of *serving the country* also with regard to its ideological basis: on the one hand they speak about the obligation with constant reference to a perceived security threat in the context of the ongoing territorial conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. On the other hand, they present *service* as an integral part of the *Zionist foundations of the State*. Yet at the same time, they know—through public discourse, less through personal experience—that not every Israeli citizen serves in the military; in particular, the interviewees speak about three social groups who do not fulfil their *citizen's duty*: the Jewish ultra-orthodox, the so-called "mishtamtim" (Hebr., "dodgers"), and Palestinian citizens. Their claim must be understood against the background of recent developments in Israeli society: on the individual as well as the collective level, the link between military service as a *civic duty* has been challenged through the emergence of various civil rights movements (cf. Zemlinskaya 2008), political events (cf. Helman 1999) or increasing numbers of individuals dodging their draft (cf. Livio 2012). In the context of those developments, a major argument in the interviews is that *serving the country* is not only compulsory because "this is the law" but because "it's a matter of fairness, [...] there are whole communities that do not take part, [...] but not only minorities do not take part, also an egoistic majority".

However, the interviewees put emphasis on the *non-service* of Israel's Palestinian minority over Jewish segments which do not *serve*. Interestingly, the interviewees do not speak so much about religious or rather ultra-orthodox Jewish Israelis who do not serve in the IDF for religious reasons[1]

1 Only after the interviews had been conducted, the High Court ruled that the Tal law which gave ultra-orthodox Jewish citizens the option of deferring their service in the IDF is unconstitutional (Ettinger/ Cohen 2012).

but first and foremost about secular Jewish as well as non-Jewish citizens who do not do military service.[2] This emphasis has to be read against IB's demand of equally mandatory service of all *Israeli citizens*, if not in the military, then in the form of national service in a *citizen's* community. In this context, the interviewees stress the option of doing national service as an alternative to military service, in particular for those *Jewish* or *non-Jewish citizens* who do not want to serve in the IDF for one or another reason. Yet they do not accept any of those reasons, but rather present the option of an alternative national service as equally mandatory—as does the Yisra'el Beitenu party—instead of an opportunity granted to national minorities. Consequently, Palestinian citizens, who in their majority do not make a demand on that legal opportunity, are presented as a collective which does not *serve their country* and thus does not fulfil their *citizen's duties*.

13.3 LOYALTY TO THE JEWISH STATE

The interviewees' notion of *loyalty* to the *Jewish state* is constructed against their presentation of cleavages within the Israeli society; in particular they emphasise political (left-wing vs. right-wing) and national (Jewish vs. Palestinian) cleavages. The interviewees position themselves as Jewish, political right-wing, secular and middle-class. Against the background of discursive events in the recent past (the Lebanon war in 2006, the Gaza war in 2009, the Gaza flotilla raid in 2010), they claim to be *loyal citizens* on the basis that they criticise or question neither political authorities nor the IDF. Against the background of the same discursive events against which the interviewees display their *loyalty*, Palestinian citizens are presented as *disloyal*. Again, as it was the case with *service of the country*, the interviewees make a qualitative difference between those citizens whom they consider loyal and not *loyal* to the *Jewish State*. The interviewees describe a feeling of betrayal, again followed by the perception of an existential threat to Israel's existence. The political left is accused of being *disloyal* because

2 That the interviewees rarely mention religious Jewish Israelis here can be explained with personal experiences they have made. In the interviews one can find several stories of solidarity the interviewees have encountered with Jewish Israelis of Mizrahi origin who were often featured as religious.

of their different approach to the peace process and critique of government and the IDF during these more recent military operations.

As it is the case with *service of the country*, the interviewees talk about *loyalty* to the *Jewish State* with reference to one of IB's ideological demands; here it is the demand to introduce a loyalty oath for all *Israeli citizens*, a pledge to Israel's character as a *Jewish State*. In the last decade or so, one could observe the growing tendency to emphasise the Jewish aspect of Israel over its democratic aspect. The (Jewish) interviewees do not see any problem in that development, yet at the same time, they do not understand that non-Jewish minorities and also political left-wing Jewish citizens perceive that development as problematic and as a way toward further legal and political exclusion.

13.4 PALESTINIAN CITIZENS AND NON-CITIZENS AS A PERCEIVED THREAT

The interviewees speak about various rifts and cleavages which they perceive as threatening. In other words, Palestinians, citizens and non-citizens, are not the only social group raising the concern of the interviewees. However, the interviewees construct a qualitative difference between the threat perceived from different ethnic, political or religious, but Jewish groups vs. the threat that national *others* impose on them and the Israeli state. I argue that the interviewees consciously target Palestinians, and they do so against the background of the Yisra'el Beitenu party's electoral slogans about *service* and *loyalty*.

This threat is presented as threefold: Palestinian citizens are presented as a symbolic threat to the Israeli culture and the *Zionist* project; Palestinian non-citizens on the regional level or as part of the "Muslim world" are presented as a symbolic and existential threat.

On the local level, the interviewees from Natserat Illit come to speak about a symbolic threat imposed by Palestinian "villagers" who come to the *Jewish city*, which, in return, is in danger of losing its *Jewish character*. Their argument is set against the Zionist discourse of preserving Jewish hegemony in parts of the country with a large non-Jewish, Palestinian population.

On the national level, Palestinian non-citizens are presented as an existential threat with whom Israelis are constantly at war. Additionally, the

interviewees claim Palestinian citizens betrayed their Jewish co-citizens in showing solidarity with those "people beyond the border".

Finally, on the global level, Israel is presented as being jeopardised by the broader process of "Islamisation of the Western world".

Against the presentation of Palestinians as a threat, the interviewees construct who they are themselves and where they *belong*. In this context, the interviewees also contrast their perception of Palestinians as a threat with their own emotions of love for their *Jewish collective*, and, more abstract, the *Jewish State*, as well as of hate and betrayal for the *others*. The interviewees can draw here on deeply rooted negative stereotypes of Palestinians as the cultural *other* in Israeli political culture. As a result, the interviewees actively engage in and reproduce the exclusionary ethno-nationalist discourse about the *non-Jewish other*, against whom the *Jewish collective* is constructed.

13.5 CITIZEN'S RIGHTS

Previous empirical findings about how young (secular Jewish, religious Jewish and Palestinian) Israelis read citizenship display individualistic approaches to *citizen's rights* as well as collective approaches with regard to *citizen's duties*, e.g. mandatory military service (Pinson 2004).

In contrast to those findings, the participants in the present study emphasise first and foremost the aspect of *duties*. In addition, they discursively terminate the link between those *duties* and (Jewish) nationality, which so far has determined the nature of those *duties* demanded of *Israeli Jewish citizens* and demand equal *citizen's duties* regardless of the individual *citizen's* nationality. However, this termination has implications, of course, for the arrangement of Israeli citizenship in particular for national minorities which so far have enjoyed particular *rights*.

The dimension of *citizen's rights* is hardly explicitly mentioned in the narratives. However, one can draw conclusions regarding the *rights* dimension from what the interviewees have explicitly said: against the background of arguing that Palestinian Israelis would be *disloyal* and would not *serve the country* they live in, the interviewees claim they have delivered the proof that they themselves are good citizens because they have fulfilled their obligations. This way, they present themselves as even better than other

Jewish citizens who either do *not serve* or are *disloyal*. Consequently, the interviewees can not only claim their *rights* as citizens to *belong*, but to *belong* to the dominant group within that *Jewish State*. In that position, again, they have the legitimate power to design Israeli citizenship; and in their ethno-nationalist reading of it, there is no room for *non-Jewish citizens*.

The interviewees claim these *rights* at the expense of Palestinian Israelis. At a first glance, the interviewees present their reading of Israeli citizenship as entirely based on rationality: those who fulfil their *duties* are granted *rights*. Yet they terminate the agreement that national, *non-Jewish, minorities*–minorities apart from Palestinians are not even mentioned in the narratives–need exemptions or are entitled to particular *minority rights*. Instead, they regard an ethno-nationalist reading of citizenship as a legitimate means.

13.6 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE YISRA'EL BEITENU PARTY

The Yisra'el Beitenu party can be understood as a political means the interviewees refer to enforce the power they consider legitimate for their own social group. The interviewees hardly refer directly to the Yisra'el Beitenu party's ideology, yet their presentation of Israeli citizenship has to be read as a constant reference to IB's 2009 electoral campaigns about *service* and *loyalty*. In this context, there are frequent references to the "Zionist character of the Yisra'el Beitenu party" in the narratives by which the interviewees aim at showing that the party's ideological programme is in line with the Israeli political mainstream. In particular, *service* and *loyalty* serve as a link to *Zionism* as the foundation of the state.

At the same time, the interviewees are aware of the public discourse about the party and the party's leader. Against the background of public discourse, they carefully construct a counter-image of public party figures, above all the party leader Lieberman, in order to show that those people are appropriate to represent mainstream Israeli voters, again, instead of the extreme right-wingers in the party. The interviewees especially use the inside and direct knowledge they claim to have gained from several party members they have worked with as a discursive strategy to deconstruct public images of those people.

13.7 CITIZENSHIP AS A DISCURSIVE STRATEGY: THE INTERVIEWEES' SENSE OF BELONGING

By applying the suggested framework to the interview material, I was able to show that the interviewees have particular power resources—particular forms of capital—at their disposal. On the one hand, they have gained these power resources especially during socialisation in early childhood, mainly in their families. On the other hand, the interviewees have more or less consciously reproduced or modified their resources over time in Israel where they have spent most of their lives. Further, I showed that the participants in the present study use their power resources strategically to actively construct a *sense of belonging* to Israeli society. The interviewees' objective position has to be analysed in the context of their migration background.[3]

I conceptualised their objective position as twofold: the interviewees' legal and their social status. In the Israeli context, all of those individuals who entered the country under the Law of Return receive immediate citizenship. With regard to their social status, the interviewees above all talk about personal experiences when their Jewishness and thus their *sense of belonging* was questioned. Depending on their length of stay in Israel, they speak about these experiences as direct and present or past experiences. If these are presented as past experiences, the interviewees have developed strategies of coping. Usually, these strategies include a reference to personal suffering from anti-Semitic incidents before migration and to adopting a "Jewish atmosphere" at home after they had come to Israel. By doing so, the interviewees reproduce the "Israeli national ethos" of home-coming (Rapoport/ Lomsky-Feder 2002). Only individual voices present themselves as "Sabras", or Israeli-born, and categorically reject any impact of their family's migration background on their own *sense of belonging* to Israeli society. In the present study, those voices are represented by Igal. Yet, most interviewees promote a Russian-Jewish identity as a result of negotiating their social status of being "immigrants" and their *sense of belonging*, of being Jewish. The—quite sensitive—issue of being Jewish and, above all,

3 I define migration background in the present study as follows: individuals who themselves have immigrated to Israel from another country or have at least one parent who immigrated from another country.

being a Halakhic Jew is very relevant in the interviews. It is so essential for the interviewees that most of them feel the need to make this explicitly clear to their audience–which is not only me as their immediate partner in the interview situation, but also potential Israeli readers–at the very beginning of their stories. The emphasis on their *belonging* to the Jewish collective must be read against the background of personal experiences in the context of migration to Israel.

However, the interviewees do not make a "qualitative difference" (Bourdieu 1985: 730) in Bourdieu's sense between Halakhic and non-Halakhic or non-Jewish members of the social group of Israelis with an FSU family background. On the contrary, the interviewees do not make this difference concerning the Halakhic status an issue,[4] which can be read as a strategy to further strengthen their position as a social group in the Israeli society through pure numbers.

Previous empirical studies have shown that immigrants (of the first generation) construct their *sense of belonging* to the host society in different modes. For the case of Israelis with an FSU family background, studies on *belonging* have revealed that they have found several ways to actively construct a *sense of belonging*. One of these ways is to adapt to the dominant religious discourse: Neiterman and Rapoport interviewed immigrant girls in religious boarding schools and they showed that, on the one hand, teachers at those schools "inculcate religiosity among [those] girls" (Neiterman/ Rapoport 2009: 173). On the other hand, the interviewees actively participate in this process of inculcation by presenting it as something they have actively chosen in the interviews. Schmidt (2006) reports a similar finding for non-Jewish immigrant women in Israel: one empirical type of interviewees converted to Judaism in order to deal with the pressure of being Jewish according to the Halakhah they describe, in order to *belong* to the Jewish community in Israel. Yet in the interviews, these women present their conversion as an act of free will and a process they have actively chosen. Another way of developing a *sense of belonging* reveals Remennick's study on transnationalism among FSU immigrants (Remennick 2002). She finds hints of a transnational or rather virtual *sense of belonging* across immigrant

4 The exception to this rule is Igal. By doing so, he adapts those voices in the ethno-nationalist discourse that doubt the right of parts of several immigrant groups, here: those from the former Soviet Union, to *belong* to the *Jewish collective*.

networks situated in the various host countries of FSU immigration and back in the former Soviet Union. In her study on the political behaviour of Russian-speaking Jews in three different countries—Ukraine, Israel, and Germany—Olena Bagno shows that immigrant adaptation takes place against the background of a particular cultural context (Bagno 2011b; 2009). The participants in her study revealed some similarities with regard to habitual dispositions and displayed a particular understanding of political behaviour. However, depending on their country of residence, the participants highly differed with regard to that understanding.

Against the background of previous studies, the empirical findings of the present study on how young people with an immigrant background construct a *sense of belonging* over time reveal the seeds of a new phenomenon. The interviewees as the younger generation of Israelis with an FSU family background ("1.5th" and second generations) who spent most of their lives in the country, have been able to adapt and have adopted the Israeli ethno-nationalist discourse.

But—in contrast to what existing theories of immigrant incorporation may indicate—the ethno-nationalist discourse is not "inculcate[d] [...] among" them (Neiterman and Rapoport 2009: 173). On the contrary, as I have shown, the interviewees actively construct their *sense of belonging* to Israeli society. Using the presentation of a particular reading of Israeli citizenship, they adapt the Israeli ethno-nationalist discourse in order to make sense of their personal experiences in the Israeli society as a discursive strategy. On the basis of that sense-making, they position themselves in a dominant place in the field of politics. In particular, they adopt the Israeli ethno-nationalist discourse in two dimensions: a) the Zionist foundations of the state in the form of contribution (military service) and loyalty ("love of the *Jewish state*"), and b) Palestinian citizens and non-citizens impose an existential security threat to that *Jewish collective*. Besides, against the background of the former two dimensions, the interviewees can claim that the Yisra'el Beitenu party preserves the Zionist foundations of the state, or rather the *Jewish collective*.

The presentation of Israeli citizenship as conditional serves the interviewees to achieve two goals: First, they present themselves as good citizens who fulfil all their *citizen's duties* and consequently claim their *rights* as (Jewish) Israeli citizens to *belong* to the *Jewish collective*.

Second, they "make qualitative distinctions" (Bourdieu 1985: 730) between good citizens, i.e. themselves, not-as-good citizens, i.e. other (Jewish) citizens who in the eyes of the interviewees only partly fulfil their *duties*, and second-class citizens, i.e. Palestinian citizens, who, again, in the eyes of the interviewees, do not fulfil any of their *citizen's duties*.

As shown above, the interviewees state there are several segments of Israeli (Jewish) society that do not fulfil their *duties* in one of the two dimensions, which condition the allocation of *rights* in their reading of Israeli citizenship. Jewish ultra-orthodox and secular dodgers of military service do not fulfil their *duties* in the dimension of *serving the country*; political left-wing citizens are presented as disloyal to the *Jewish state* because they criticise the government or the policies of other official institutions. In the interviewees' line of argument, Palestinian Israelis fulfil neither one of the dimensions presented as conditional, regardless of the reasons for (not) doing so. They are presented as disloyal and as not showing solidarity with their Jewish Israeli co-citizens. Additionally, Palestinian Israelis are presented as a symbolic and existential threat on different levels.

By doing so, the interviewees challenge their own objective position in Israeli society—which they perceive as weak in relation to the dominant social group, Ashkenazi Israelis—and position themselves actively not only within that dominant social group, but at the top of it. In other words, the interviewees actively apply discursive strategies to reproduce the symbolic hierarchy between Jewish and non-Jewish segments of Israeli society; yet at the same time they challenge the symbolic hierarchy within the Jewish segment. They do so by reinforcing distinctions between themselves, Israelis with an FSU family background as a social group, and social groups in other objective positions within Israeli society.

Above all, "mak[ing these] qualitative distinctions" (Bourdieu 1985: 730) shall justify social and legal inequalities between the Jewish and Palestinian segments in Israeli society. In this context, the interviewees discursively terminate the threefold notion of Israeli citizenship Peled (2011) defines and do not further distinguish between different (legal) approaches to determine the *rights* and *duties* of Jewish and non-Jewish, in particular Palestinian, Israeli citizens.

For the sake of emphasis on a shared Jewish nationality and the Jewish character of the Israeli state, the interviewees concentrate their argument on the non-Jewish segments, in particular the Palestinian minority. Concluding

from their line of argument about conditional Israeli citizenship, they suggest Palestinian Israelis should be not allowed to claim any *citizen's rights* in any of their areas (economic cultural, political) because they do not fulfil their *duties* as Israeli citizens as presented by the interviewees. As a consequence of their line of argument, Palestinian Israelis cannot be regarded actual citizens. The interviewees openly discuss this with regard to the cultural and economic dimensions of *citizen's rights*, i.e. Palestinians' recognition as a national minority and access to social welfare. They also indicate that the Palestinian minority has not got any basis on which to claim political *rights*, i.e. their right to hold an Israeli passport and to settle within the borders of the Israeli state.

Previous research on aspects of the Israeli political culture have already stated a shift in public opinion, in particular regarding anti-democratic tendencies, in the context of growing societal cleavages and rifts. By arguing this way, the interviewees are in line with the political agenda of the party they are engaged with. For example, they directly refer to IB's suggestion to introduce a "loyalty oath" as a necessary condition to for the provision of basic civil, social and political *rights*. This oath is claimed to concern all Israelis but is aimed particularly at Palestinian Israelis and must be interpreted as an attempt to win back legitimisation on ethno-nationalist grounds in order to reintegrate the Jewish segments. While back in the 1980s right-wing extremist parties were still banned when they publicly demanded such an oath, more recently it has become publicly acceptable. Another example is the growing acceptance of an exchange of territories—for instance in the form of the so called "Lieberman Plan"—of parts consisting of significant Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Israeli core land with major Palestinian settlements along the Green Line of 1967 (cf. Waxman 2012: 22).

According to Bourdieu (2013), the political field is very close to the field of power and directly subordinate to the latter. One can conclude from this that the social group in power is legitimised to define who gains legitimate access to a particular social space in the form of citizenship at a given time. Through their claim of *belonging* to the dominant social group in Israeli society on grounds of their contribution as good citizens, the interviewees claim for themselves and for their social group to have the power to execute symbolic violence, i.e. to deprive those segments of Israel citizenship, and, implicitly, use physical violence against non-Jewish, or, rather Palestinian

citizens, i.e. to deport them. The participants in the present study do so by adapting central slogans of Lieberman's Yisra'el Beitenu party, as expressed in the party's 2009 electoral campaign.

However, these slogans are no longer an extreme right political position in Israeli society. On the contrary, the interviewees do find several linking points in the Israeli ethno-nationalist discourse to which they link their arguments: first, in a historical perspective, they can draw on Jewish nationalism, Zionism, disregarding the *rights* of national minorities in the area.

Second, in a contemporary perspective, the Israeli political culture has been coined by a growing mistrust in the country's Palestinian citizens and its Palestinian neighbours, accompanied by negative stereotyping of that national minority as the others against whom a Jewish-Israeli identity has been constructed. Negative stereotyping of Muslim minorities, or "orientalism" (Lerner 2010), has also been an integral part of the (post-) Soviet political culture and may serve the interviewees as an additional linkage between their individual habitual dispositions and the ethno-nationalist discourse.

Third, based on the negative image of Muslims in general and Palestinians in particular, the interviewees can put special emphasis on the presentation of non-Jewish citizens, Palestinians in particular, as imposing an existential threat to the *Jewish State* and the *Jewish collective* in general.

Fourth, this perceived threat, again, does not concern Israel exclusively. Rather, it is possible to draw parallels to recent societal developments across European countries, which make anti-Muslim sentiments, or, rather subtle or blatant racism, increasingly acceptable in the "midst of society".

Israel is, of course, still a particular case with regard to the Israeli (and Jewish) history of threat or threat perception, which Zuckermann (1999) refers to as the "central axes of fear". These threats have at least partly been real and of an existential nature aiming at physical annihilation. The interviewees are aware of this basic fear and refer to a perceived threat to their and the country's very existence when they emphasise the necessity of military service on the one hand and of recent military operations to stop that threat on the other hand. However, they also present Palestinian citizens as a social group which collectively imposes a symbolic threat on the Israeli (Jewish) society in terms of differences in "cultural values", and this is where the Israeli case is no longer exceptional. When one compares Pedahzur's

definition of a new Israeli extreme right and his description of the Yisra'el Beitenu party as being one of this new right's representatives with recent developments in other Western democracies, Europe and the U.S. (Pehahzur 2001), one finds similarities in both potential voters' profile, especially with regard to their perception of the (symbolic) threat (to European countries, (e.g. Zick et al. 2011), and the respective parties' emphasis on security issues. In a similar vein, Gutwein[5] describes the Yisra'el Beitenu party as right-wing populist and compares it to "hate parties" of European style like the FPÖ in Austria, Le Pen's Front National in France or Wilder's Partij voor de Vrijheid in the Netherlands.

While the political parties Gutwein lists in his article seem a bit outdated nowadays, the phenonomen is not. On the contrary, the so-called "refugee crisis", as the major influx of Syrian civil war refugees is referred to in public discourse europe-wide, has added fuel to the fire, and in this context new, anti-immigrant, or rather "anti-Islam"-related political parties have emerged in various member states of the European Union. Traditional political parties have not found another strategy to handle the challenge those newly founded political parties pose to their own electorate but to adapt the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the latter.

In both the Israeli and the European cases, demand and supply side meet in their emphasis on a perceived threat of "Islamisation". For the Israeli case, however, the interviewees add a second layer by linking the notion to the ethno-nationalist discourse and thus present the Palestinian *others* as causing both a symbolic and an existential threat to the *Jewish collective*.

Against the background of a threat of "Islamisation", the interviewees can link the emergence of the Yisra'el Beitenu party to right-wing populist developments in those societies and present Israel as being part of a broader process. In times when emotions have become more important than facts, even mainstream democratic politicians feel obliged to respond to the exaggerated and uninformed fears of "worried citizens" and demand *loyalty* from national or ethnic, in particular Muslim minorities.[6]

5 Daniel Gutwein. How the left elevated Lieberman. Haaretz (English Edition), 2009. Retrieved from: http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/how-the-left-elevated-lieberman-1.269990

6 I have in mind here the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who recently demanded just the same of permanent residents or German citizens whose

Argumentum e contrario, Israeli society cannot allow itself to regard the Yisra'el Beitenu party's campaigning as well as their concrete parliamentary initiatives as a peripheral problem. It can also not allow itself to regard the party as "sectoral", representing a very specific and relatively small constituency. The empirical findings of the present study analysis confirm major rifts and cleavages within the Israeli society with regard to national and political issues. Not only the rise of Naftali Bennett's right-wing religious *Jewish Home party* is a concrete sign of a development in which the anti-Palestinian discourse has become dominant—a discourse, which has been fueled by the campaigns and parliamentary initatives of the *Yisrael Beitenu party*. At the time the manuscript for this book has been prepared for publication, the Netanyahu administration passes the *Jewish State Bill* (July 2018), which among others removes Arabic as an official language alongside Hebrew.

Against this background, it is even more worrying that to date there is no loud and powerful public voice reminding this society of their Jewish AND democratic basis, securing first and foremost the *citizen's rights* of ethnic and national minorities in Israel over excluding those minorities first discursively, and legally afterwards, on grounds of their minority status.

families have arrived from Turkey ("Türkeistämmige"), i.e. Muslims in their majority (e.g. FAZ 2016; ZEIT 2016).