6 Theoretical Sensitivity II: Framing the Study

As a relevant frame of the present study, I have considered literature on Israeli society and the Yisra'el Beitenu party. Thus, in the following sections, I will review previous research in these areas.

6.1 FEATURES OF ISRAELI SOCIETY

Everyday life in Israel takes place against the background of growing social tensions and cleavages. Fishman states that Israeli society has transformed from a "consensual society with common values" in the 1950s and 1960s to a "tribal society with very few if any common values". The only commonality is seemingly the relationship with Palestinians inside and outside Israeli borders in recent years (Fishman 2004: 54). Ben-Porat and Turner define Israel as "a developmental state with problematic borders, a [divided] civil society [...], and a dominant military stratum" (Ben-Porat/Turner 2011: 5).

The present section looks at the key features necessary to understand present-say Israeli society and the transformation Fishman (2004) describes.

6.1.1 The Political Culture

Bagno identifies two main approaches to the definition of a society's political culture: an attitudinal approach emphasising the evaluative aspect of external stimuli on the basis of individually incorporated shared values

and an attitudinal-behavioural approach defining "attitude as an active response provoked by an external event-stimuli [sic!]" (Bagno 2009: 26). In the former case, the definition of a society's political culture as shared values is obviously linked to the society members' political socialisation. Here, political culture is historically formed—and thus possibly transformed—and transmitted through formal and informal institutions over generations. In their classical study on civic engagement or "civic culture", Almond and Verba define political culture as "the political system as internalised in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population. People are inducted into it just as they are socialised into nonpolitical roles and social systems" (Almond/ Verba 2016: 14). In the attitudinal-behavioural approach, political culture carries an individual aspect since it integrates individual experiences and perceptions of public events and, thus, accounts for "attitudinal differences" (Dowse/ Hughes 1986: 227). Dowse and Hughes refer to political culture as "specifically political orientations toward the political system and its various parts and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system" (ibid.).

These orientations have implications for individual political behaviour as well as the society striving for "coherence in the operation of its institutions" (ibid.). In this context, Dowse and Hughes also stress the ideological dimension of political culture, defined as a "set of ideas having special characteristics" in order to establish clarity, internal coherence and consistency over internal cleavages (Dowse/ Hughes 1986: 236). Concluding from her identification of the various approaches, Bagno identifies "political culture as a concept which mediates between the political system and its environment, providing a framework within which political beliefs, historically considered, can be located, and as a factor which will influence and constrain future patterns of development in a political system" (Bagno 2009: 26).

Back in the late 1980s, Kahane and Rapoport observed antidemocratic tendencies in Israeli society, as for instance a "withdrawal from democratic ideas" on the basis of the political system's perception as corrupt and inefficient, "partial rejection of democratic institutions", and a growing number of young Israelis supporting right-wing authoritarian values such as strong leadership over democratic elections (Kahane/ Rapoport 1990: 221). The authors argue that the political culture in Israel has to be considered against the background of socio-political conditions that include a constant

security threat, a meta-narrative of the traumatic history of Diaspora Jewry, insecure economic development, or a large immigrant population "lacking a civic democratic tradition" (ibid.). However, Kahane and Rapoport consider these alone an "insufficient explanation" for "antidemocratic trends" in Israeli society, but rather to be their result (Kahane/ Rapoport 1990: 223).

Still for today, several authors have described an atmosphere filled with "individual and collective anxieties", as Kahane and Rapoport already put it in 1990 (p. 221). Against this backdrop, one can identify particular "political beliefs" in Israeli political culture.

Zionism From a historical perspective, the emergence of Zionism is closely linked to the development of modern nationalism and the foundation of nation states in Europe. Zionism can be read as the European Jewish version of nationalism and has been described as a "Jewish national liberation movement"[1] or the "generator of Modern Jewish nationalism" (Ram 1999: 329). Of the various versions, Theodor Herzl's political vision of a *Jewish State* (1894), an Altneuland (1902)—a new Jewish national state in one of the oldest places of Jewish settlement (British Mandate) Palestine— laid the basis for the secular and national political Zionism that pulled European Jews to the Middle East.

In this context, secular political Zionism envisioned a particular notion of the "new Hebrew" who is young, male, healthy, white, i.e. of European origin (e.g. Roberman 2007; Almog 2000). Basically, this "new Hebrew" reflected the physical and mental condition of those who emigrated to Mandate Palestine—the contribution of women silenced in this male-dominant notion—and was constructed as a counter-image of the weak and poor "Shtetl Jew", commonly described in Jewish diaspora and Israeli literature. Shohat "shows [...] [that] the Eurocentric [Zionist] concept of a single 'Jewish History' cut non-Ashkenazi Jews off from their origins" (Shohat 1999: 5).

After independence (in 1948), the premises of political Zionism— settlement in Israel or the return from the diaspora, the adoption of an Israeli

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1   Carlo Strenger. Zionism? Post-Zionism? Just Give Arguments. Haaretz Online (English Edition), December 20 2007; Retrieved from http://www.haaretz.com /print-edition/opinion/zionism-post-zionism-just-give-arguments-1.235552.

identity and an ideological commitment to the land and the collective, "expressed mainly through military service, or the decision to stay over leaving" (Lomsky-Feder/ Rapoport 2001)—served as one of the pillars of Israeli citizenship.

In the last decade or two, the dominant ideology of political Zionism has been challenged by several developments: among other things the "social upward mobility" (Fishman 2004: 58) of lower social classes, in particular that of Sephardim[2] (ibid.), a growing pluralism characterised by the growing demand of segments of Israeli society peripheral to power to gain recognition (Livio 2012) and tendencies to avoid military service (ibid.). Finally, the arrival of large numbers of immigrants—in particular from FSU countries— who "lack the Zionist history of life" (Fishman 2004: 61) have additionally challenged the Zionist "national ethos of home-coming" (Golden 2002; e.g. also Lomsky-Feder/ Rapoport 2001; Golden 1996) by refusing to accept the previously dominant politics of immigrant absorption (Lomsky-Feder/ Rapoport 2002; 2001), i.e. assimilation to Israeli-Hebrew culture (Eisenstadt 2008). In this context, Strenger[3] (2007) even calls the current reference to Zionism in public discourse "anachronistic", and Kaplan adds "Zionism fulfilled its historical mission" (Kaplan 2013: 149).

As a preliminary result of these developments, Ram observes that more recently "classical" Zionism has been accompanied by two new class-specific forms in the context of global and local or national processes: a "post-Zionism", promoted mainly by secular, political left, higher educated segments on the one hand, vs. a "neo-Zionism" of the lower social class, Jewish national, religious and political right segments of Israeli society on the other hand (Ram 1999: 329). However, this is not a fixed status quo. With regard to scientific work (in particular historical science), in Kaplan's view there had been a "post-Zionist" development as well, examining "other

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2   From Hebrew "sephardi", "Spanish", referring to more recent immigrants from Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East after Israeli independence, whose ancestors had fled Spain after the expulsion of Jews in 1492 and found asylum in Muslim countries.

3   Carlo Strenger. Zionism? Post-Zionism? Just Give Arguments. Haaretz Online (English Edition), December 20 2007; Retrieved from: http://www.haaretz.com /print-edition/opinion/zionism-post-zionism-just-give-arguments-1.235552.

aspects of Israeli society" and in particular applying a "de-mythologizing attitude" (Kaplan 2013: 149). At the same time, he already observed the emergence of a "post-post-Zionism" which, instead of critically reviewing societal developments that were justified with Zionist ideology, is driven by a "desire to rediscover" (and recreate) a Zionist society (Kaplan 2013: 150-1).

As a result, support for Zionism as the dominant, uniting idea of Israeli society has been in decline; one sign of this is a growing willingness to leave the country (Dowty 2004). However, in this context Ichilov stresses the "absence of a more general [...] Israeli identity" (Ichilov 2004: 101) which would leave room for non-Jewish citizens to identify with Israel not just as a *Jewish state*, instead creating an "atmosphere of alienation and distrust" (ibid.). On the contrary, right-wing political circles, including the government of Prime Minister Netanyahu, aim at strengthening Jewish dominance by demands to introduce a loyalty oath to the Jewish character of the state and its symbols with regard to internal affairs—clearly aimed at Israel's non-Jewish, in particular Palestinian citizens—and the demand to recognise Israel as a *Jewish state* as a precondition for peace talks with regard to foreign affairs.

Israeli citizenship Ben-Porat and Turner describe Israeli citizenship as "a peculiar combination of late nineteenth-century developments in nationalism and Zionism and twentieth-century wars and settlement" (Ben-Porat/ Turner 2011: 2), displaying "political struggles [...] defined fundamentally by an attempt to reconcile the two conflicting principles of a 'Jewish and democratic state'" (Ben-Porat/ Turner 2011: 1). Israeli citizenship implies two aspects with the Law of Return (1952) as the legal basis for the attribution of social, civil, and political *rights* at its centre: inclusionary for people of Jewish descent and exclusionary for various "*others*", e.g. Palestinians outside pre-1967 borders, foreign workers or asylum seekers (cf. Ben-Porat/ Turner 2011; e.g. also Peled 2007). Smooha coined this political order an "ethnic democracy" and defined it as a "political system that is democratic for the dominant group but excludes, on the basis of ethnicity, other groups from the democratic process" (Smooha 2001: 24; see also Smooha 1989). Accordingly, Peled identifies three dimensions of Israeli citizenship: a liberal dimension with regard to the distribution of *rights* in order to "distinguish" between Israeli citizens and non-citizens, a Republican

one with regard to the citizens' contribution to the community in order to "legitimise" the existing social hierarchy and an ethno-nationalist dimension in order to "discriminate" against the non-Jewish, in particular Palestinian citizens (Peled 2011: 278; see also Shafir/ Peled, 2011; 2002).

However, the legitimisation of the status quo has entered a crisis (Levy 2011; Peled 2011; Lerer/ Amram-Katz 2011; Lebel 2007; Ben-Porat/ Mizrahi 2005) as Israeli society has become more pluralistic on the one hand, and various societal cleavages have become more blatant on the other hand: ethnic (Ashkenazim vs. Sephardim), religious (religious vs. secular), national (Jewish vs. Palestinian), political (left-wing vs. right-wing) and social (established vs. newcomers) (Fishman 2004: 54; see also Ben-Porat/ Turner 2011; Kimmerling 2005; Ichilov 2004), or have just emerged like racial ("white" vs. "non-white" Jews) (Elias/ Kemp 2010; Ben-Eliezer 2008). The introduction of a loyalty oath for non-Jewish Israelis, in particular Palestinian Israelis, as a prerequisite for basic civil, social, and political *rights*, as suggested by the Yisra'el Beitenu party, may be interpreted as an attempt to win back this legitimisation. While back in the 1980s right-wing extremist parties were banned when they publicly demanded such an oath, it has recently become more publicly acceptable, for instance in the form of the so-called "Lieberman Plan" (Waxman 2012: 22). In this context, in particular the status of Palestinian citizens has increasingly been eroded. The massive, partly violent protests of Palestinian citizens that took place in October 2000 in Upper Galilee play a central role in both the perception of these citizens by the Jewish majority as well as concrete legislative acts concerning them (Waxman 2012; Peled 2007). Resulting from those developments, there is an ongoing debate whether to speak of Israel as an "ethnocracy", with a Jewish majority ignoring the *rights* of their national minorities, rather than of an "ethnic democracy" (Ghanem 2011; Peled/ Navot 2005; Yiftachel 1999; Dowty 1999).

Cultural codes Undoubtedly, the collective memory of the Shoah and the "shared belief" of Israel being under siege (Bar-Tal 2000) are two of the major "cultural codes" (Gavriely-Nuri 2012) in Israeli society. Gavriely-Nuri defines "cultural codes" as a "compact package of shared values, norms, ethos and social beliefs" (Gavriely-Nuri 2012: 80). Cultural codes are inherited directly (through social interaction and personal experience) and through indirect exposure (e.g. the media) (ibid.). Familiarity with those

codes, i.e. the ability to decode them, provides a symbolic resource to exercise symbolic—i.e. interpretative—power (Gavriely-Nuri 2012: 82; see also Bourdieu 1985).

Psychological analyses of Israeli society quite regularly point out the impact the perception of being threatened has on how Israelis perceive the world. Bar-Tal and Antebi coined the term "siege mentality"[4] for the phenomenon they observed: "a mental state in which members of a group hold a central belief that the rest of the world has highly negative behavioural intentions toward them" (Bar-Tal/ Antebi 1992a: 634). "Siege mentality", like other central collective beliefs, is rooted in a long-term (emotional) collective memory of contact with one or many out-groups perceived as negative or hostile. Connected to this are beliefs of an existential collective threat, of facing this threat alone, and "that all means are justified for group defence" (ibid.). In concrete terms, the Israeli "siege mentality" currently consists of the belief that Israel as a state and the people inhabiting it are threatened in their very existence by the Arab states in the region. This perception is furthered, for instance through political socialisation, or mass media and public discourse in general (e.g. Bar-Tal 2001).[5]

This belief has implications for the political culture: Mustafa and Ghanem (2010) explain the rise of a "new extreme right in Israel"—including the Yisra'el Beitenu party—at least partly with the collective belief of being under siege. Zertal links the collective perception of "the whole world [being] against us" among (Jewish) Israelis directly to another major cultural code of today's Israeli society: the practices of commemoration of the Jewish victims of the Shoah. She states:

"[i]n organizing the trial [of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, 1961] as a historic, continuous morality play, [...] [Ben Gurion] created the teleological, indispensable link between the agony and death of the Jewish Diaspora and the establishment and the right to exist of the State of Israel, including its daily practices, especially the

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4   The authors explicitly distinguish a "siege mentality" from other psychological constructs like paranoia or ethnocentrism on the basis of an "emphasis [...] on the rest of the world" (Bar-Tal/ Antebi 1992a: 634).

5   However, not all individuals show the same strength in their beliefs; Bar-Tal and Antebi (1992a) found the highest correlations with religiosity, hawkish political orientation and nationality, i.e. being Jewish.

militaristic ones. [...] Defence of one's country became a sacred mission endowed with the weight of the ultimate catastrophe" (Zertal 2000: 112).

By a similar token, Zuckermann identifies several "central axes of fear"—historical persecution of Diaspora Jews, the Shoah, and the constant security threat against the background of ongoing military conflicts with Israel's neighbours—(Zuckermann 1999: 63) and emphasises in this context "the dialectical relationship between psychologcial needs, functioning as the „glue" of the socio-political system, and that very same system, which ideologically „arouses", reproduces and affirmatively reinforces those needs" (Zuckermann 1999: 61-2).

Commemoration practices have, above all, served the political goal of enhancing patriotism and loyalty through the potential sacrifice of the citizens' lives to defending their country (e.g. Rapoport/ Lomsky-Feder 2007; Zertal 2000)—it is no coincidence that the national commemoration day (Yom haShoah) is the day before Independence Day. Those practices had not been installed at the end of World War II and after the rescue of the survivors from Nazi concentration camps, though, because Jewish victims clearly contradicted the image of the "new Hebrew" (see above) installed by political Zionism (Zuckermann 1999: 69). Zertal adds: "collective mourning and grief for the murder of a third of the Jewish people [...] literally could have shattered the realisation of the vision of a new state and its struggle for existence. [...] Thus, there was an almost concerted effort to "disremember" the recent, unbearable past." (Zertal 2000: 100).

Accordingly, public remembrance of the Shoah was mainly supposed to serve two political purposes: in order to argue that living in Israel, returning from the Diaspora, was the only safe option for Jews, on the one hand, yet, on the other hand, in order to rhetorically draw parallels between the recent past, the existential threat of annihilation of European Jewry by the Nazi regime, and the present, the acclaimed existential threat to Israel's existence by its Arab neighbours (Zertal 2000: 106-7). Correspondingly, after the capture of Eichmann and his trial in Israel and in the aftermath of the Six-Day War (1967), "Israeli militarism and security consciousness were

boosted" (Zertal 2000: 111);[6] and the new narrative of Israel's "fight against the Arab 'enemy'" (Zertal 2000: 112), based on the commemoration of the murdered victims of the Shoah as a warning, was "embraced as the cornerstone of Israel's collective identity" (Gulie Ne'eman Arad 2003: 5).

However, these practices of commemoration have also been contested. In addition to the processes of social change in Israeli society described above, a further factor contributing to "growing reservations about the centrality of the Shoah in Israel's national life and political culture" (Gulie Ne'eman Arad 2003: 6) has again been the mass immigration from FSU countries. Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder (2007) found that the interview participants in their case study adapted the Shoah narrative dominant in Israel and the connected Israeli-Jewish identity in the process of their absorption. At the same time, though, as a social group, they maintained an alternative narrative about Jewish life in the Diaspora. Hereby, the interviewees challenge the dominant Israeli view of the weak Jew living in exile and replace it with their notion of the heroic and victorious (Jewish) Soviet soldiers fighting in WWII, which was an integral part of Soviet practices of commemoration and which the immigrants had experienced themselves (cf. Rapoport/ Lomsky-Feder 2007; see also Roberman 2007). In this context, the interviewees also tended to "normalise" personal anti-Semitic experiences (Rapoport/ Lomsky-Feder 2007).

Against this background, military service has played a crucial role in the lives of Israeli citizens, and it has implications not only in the military but also the civil sphere. Livio shows how the "mishtamtim (literally, 'shirkers')" (Livio 2012: 78)—those (Jewish) individuals who dodge mandatory military service for various reasons—damage the still highly-valued contribution to the symbolic collective in the eyes of the (Jewish) majority (Livio 2012: 80). Service in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) is an important context for the citizens' political socialisation. One of the claimed goals of mandatory military service has been, as the 1st Israeli chief of staff, Yadin, put it, to "raise conscientious Zionist soldiers" (cited after Ichilov 2004: 123).

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6   In this context emerged also what Kimmerling (1993) described as "civil militarism" for the Israeli context, the interwovenness of the civil and military spheres.

6.1.2 Disintegration of Israeli Society

As described above, cleavages within Israeli society can be directly linked to the (growing challenge of the) legitimisation of the current social order, and they often overlap with economic gaps between the segments in question. Those cleavages are not abstract but have direct effects on daily interactions. Usually they find expression in negative stereotypes used in social interactions to humiliate those still engaged, but at times they can also be channelled into concrete exclusionary acts against people perceived as "the *others*". In the early days of modern Jewish settlement in Palestine and of the newly-founded State of Israel, the political, social and economic dominance of the "Zionist bourgeoisie" (Fishman 2004: 58), i.e. Jewish pioneer settlers of European origin and their descendants (*Ashkenazim*), over *Sephardim* was questioned as little as the dominance of a particular form of nationalism in the form of secular political Zionism. This social hierarchy was legitimised by the distinctly greater contribution and risk-taking of the dominant group, in particular with regard to military sacrifices and political responsibilities (Levy 2011: 40). However, in accordance with the decline of Zionism as the unifying idea as well as additional developments like the decline of trust in Israel's military power and years of economic crisis (ibid.), various rifts and cleavages have surfaced: on the one hand among Jewish Israelis (e.g. Shetrit 2010), and on the other hand between Jewish and non-Jewish, in particular Palestinian, Israelis.

national/ Palestinian citizens The fact that British-Mandate Palestine was not waste land but largely inhabited had been largely ignored by the Zionist settlers who came to establish their *Jewish state*. Accordingly, those non-Jewish natives were not foreseen to have a place in the "ethno-territorial Jewish project" (Rabinowitz 2001: 305) before and after Israel's independence. Instead, there has been (growing) emphasis on the character of the state as Jewish over democratic (i.e. the granting of equal *rights* to all its citizens), while the collective identities of national minorities have been all but ignored (e.g. Ichilov 2004; Rouhana 1997).[7] Rabinowitz shows that

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7   A particular case of national minorities in Israel are Druze and Bedouin citizens. Druze often become mixed up with the "Arabs", though they are a non-Arab community with their own religion. There exist special Druze departments and

in particular Palestinians Israelis have actively been *othered* in terms of culture: they have been referred to as rural (vs. urban Jewish Israelis), uneducated/ uncivilised (vs. Jewish millennia-old high culture), or short-tempered (vs. Jewish deliberateness) for the purpose of constructing a(n) (Jewish) Israeli identity against them (Rabinowitz 2001: 317-9). While self-perceptions of the group have been largely ignored by the Jewish majority who have referred to them simply as "Arabs", in particular after the events of October 2000 (see above), the self-definition of Palestinian Israelis has changed and they have demanded the recognition as a national minority to guarantee particular *rights*, (e.g. Waxman 2012; Peled 2007). In combination with Israeli Jewish perceptions of Palestinian Israelis being a constant security threat, Waxman points to the shock that Jewish Israelis have experienced in the course of such public demands (Waxman 2012: 17).

ethnic/ "Mizrahim"[8] Ben Meir and Bagno-Moldavsky find that the perception of an Ashkenazi-Sephardi divide has weakened, yet not vanished (Ben Meir/ Bagno-Moldavsky 2010: 52). However, until recently, the ethnic divide had been the most visible conflict line in Israeli (Jewish) society. Arriving in Israel after independence, Jews from Arab countries were supposed to assimilate to the hegemonic Jewish culture of European settlers,[9] i.e. "to be 'cleansed'" from their "Arabness" (Shohat 1999: 6).

Moreover, against the background of Rabinowitz's work about the *othering* of Palestinians (2001), the very terms Oriental/ Mizrahi, or Arab, which are used to refer to those Jewish segments of Israeli society, already assume a low social and cultural status for this group. Shohat finds evidence in Zionist texts "rejecting the non-Ashkenazis as 'savage' and 'primitive'" (Shohat 1999: 6). In this regard, Sephardic Israelis were expected to occupy the lower stages of the social hierarchy, with the highest stages occupied by Ashkenazim. Again, linked to their social position is their economic lower social position of this societal segment: in the context of the realisation of

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they enjoy cultural and religious autonomy as well as particular social and economic benefits (Ichilov 2004: 103). With regard to their citizenship status, it is noteworthy that Druze in Israel are allowed to do military service.

8   Hebrew, "Oriental"

9   A prominent example is the adaptation of the genocide of European Jewry (Shoah) as an all-national collective event.

the "ethno-territorial Jewish project", Palestinian cheap labour workers were supposed to be replaced by Jewish ones (Shohat 1999: 9-10). However, since the 1980s or early 1990s more confident self-definition of Sephardi Israelis as "Mizrahi" has become noticeable based on several processes. For instance, the younger generations of immigrants from Muslim countries have shown economic and thus social upward mobility (Fishman 2004: 58). Besides, they have gained political influence, namely in the framework of two political parties: the Likud, and the ultra-orthodox SHAS (cf. Shetrit 2000).

A more recent renewal of the emphasis on an Ashkenazi-Sephardi divide—based on the emphasis on a claimed cultural superiority of Europeanness or, more precisely, "Russianness"—has been reinforced by the mass arrival of FSU immigrants.

social/ veteran Israelis vs. newcomers The Zionist discourse of home-coming clearly undercuts the economic reality in Israel, which has been marked by a crisis in the 1980s and a slow recovery. Besides, the current social hierarchy of the established at the top and the newcomers at the lower stages has been contested in particular by the mass immigration from FSU countries. The Israeli public generally acknowledges the positive impact of new Israelis from FSU countries in various fields, such as science and technology (Dayan 2004: 7-8). However, they also perceive a negative impact in other fields, such as politics or crime (ibid.).[10] In this regard, on the everyday level quite persistent negative stereotypes have emerged like that of "Russian prostitutes" and "criminal" (Dayan 2004: 7; see also Glöckner 2011: 205-7). From the angle of cultural identification, a further aspect contributing to the development of stereotypes is the relatively high number of non-Jewish immigrants in the context of this wave of immigration due to families of mixed marriage who are not considered Halakhic Jews by the Rabbinate.[11] Again, those people were not intended to be part of the

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10 Khanin states in this regard that FSU immigrants have "managed to change the previous right-left balance" (Khanin, 2011: 155).

11 Since this recognition as a Halakhic Jew regulates various status passages in the life course, above all marriage and funeral, the denial of that status limits those citizens' life choices in these regards and in everyday practice constructs a minority on religious grounds—not to mention that the regulation of cultural

Zionist project and although the integrative power of Zionism as an ideology has weakened in other areas, it is still powerful with regard to regulating immigration.

political In classic terms, there are two main political camps in Israel: the political left-wing, and the political right-wing; besides there being a growing political centre. Left-wing politics has usually taken a territory-for-peace position in peace negations with Palestinians and with regard to internal affairs rather a welfare-state and social-equality oriented position—to name only a few examples. Right-wing politics, in contrast, has rather advocated a peace-for-peace position in the negotiations with the Palestinians and a free market economy, but has also put more emphasis on national security than on other political issues, as Gutwein[12] points out.

However, former clear-cut differences between the political camps, in particular with regard to the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are becoming blurred. Lieberman's Yisra'el Beitenu party, a clearly extreme right-wing political party, for instance, crosscuts the traditional right-wing

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rights according to an individual's religious status is in sharp contrast to the dominance of individual secularism among Israelis with an FSU family background. Non-Halakhic citizens are even collectively separated in official data as "*others*" from the Jewish segments of Israeli society (Central Bureau of Statistics 2016; 2010). Only those who have a Jewish mother are Jewish according to the Halakha, the complex of Jewish religious law. However, the Law of Return, which organises immigration to Israel, allows entrance of non-Halakhic Jews (having a Jewish father, or a Jewish grandparent) and of non-Jewish spouses and children and moreover grants basic civil *rights*, including Israeli citizenship, to both groups. The group of individuals who are granted immediate citizenship by the Law of Return differs from the Halakhic definition and has historical-political reasons. The Law of Return has aimed at granting shelter to Diaspora Jewry in the aftermath of the Shoah and is thus guided by the definition of who was considered Jewish in the Nazi-German Reichsbürgergesetz of 1935.

12 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

positions[13]—and has been quite successful with this strategy in national elections.

racial/ "Ethiopian Jews" *Falashmura*, *Beta Israel* or *Falasha*[14], are usually not a subject of research, but if they are, the empirical results reveal that those usually socially weak segments within Israeli Jewish society are confronted with hostile, even racist, attitudes toward them (cf. Amit 2011). Pedahzur and Yishai (1999) find in their study on xenophobia[15] in Israel that the social groups they examined are targeted on the basis of different factors: Palestinian Israelis due to the unsolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Falashmura on the basis of race, and foreign workers particularly because of the economic competition. However, those factors also influence the hierarchy of the social groups targeted, for instance, hostile attitudes are far more often expressed toward Palestinian Israelis than toward foreign workers or Falashmura. Like other studies have shown (see above), the degree of religiosity of the respondents and their perception of fear also have a negative influence. For the case of Falashmura, Pedahzur and Yishai explain hostile attitudes toward them by simply stating "that they are so different from the Jews from other countries in skin colour, culture, social tradition, and religious practices" (Pedahzur/ Yishai 1999: 102). Other authors term the phenomenon more precisely as cultural racism (cf. Elias/ Kemp 2010; Ben-Eliezer 2008); and Elias and Kemp put the statement into context: "entry and absorption difficulties encountered by the sizeable population of Ethiopian Jews have led to the emergence of racial divides and intra-Jewish colour-based forms of racism" (Elias/ Kemp 2010: 74).

As a result of their low economic status and social exclusion, Falashmura are at the very margins of Israeli society (e.g. Amit 2011). Elias and Kemp find that in return, second generation youth chooses a rather transnational way of coping: they tend to adopt a "'black[...]' (instead of Israeli [...]) [identity and, with it,] [...] black Diaspora cultural symbols (e.g. music, hairstyle, fashion, and forms of social protest) completely foreign to them in Ethiopia" (Elias/ Kemp 2010: 82).

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13 Ibid.

14 Amharic,"stranger" (Ben-Eliezer 2008: 936)

15 Xenophobia is defined here as "not only rejection of what is strange; the socially weak can be victims as well" (Pedahzur/ Yishai 1999: 102).

However, the younger generation has also begun to claim their *rights* as citizens.[16]

religious/ Jewish ultra-orthodox Although the Jewish religion is of high significance here, and many public institutions are based on it, the significance of religion has also been contested in recent years. According to Ben Meir and Bagno-Moldavsky, the secular-religious divide has replaced the former divide along ethnic lines as the most severe within the Jewish segments of Israeli society (Ben Meir/ Bagno-Moldavsky 2010: 52).

6.1.3 Political Attitudes of Young (Jewish) Israelis

According to classical theories of political socialisation, young people become socialised on political issues both directly and indirectly in different contexts—above all in face-to-face interactions at school, in peer groups and various other environments, both national and global and, I would argue, also local and regional ones. When it comes to growing up in Israel, Ichilov states that children are exposed to conflict as the "dominant message at the global sphere" (Ichilov 2004: 11) which has become "part of the people's daily routines" (ibid.) while at the same time the "traditional bounds of citizenship", namely unity and solidarity, erode, as has been described (Ichilov 2004: 30). In this context, Ichilov agrees with Bar-Tal (2001) in stating that constant exposure to conflict (e.g. the Palestinian-Israeli conflict) transforms into collective narratives or societal beliefs, in particular about threat (Ichilov 2004: 51).

These narratives, or "stories", evoke strong negative collective emotions and are the basis for learning "predispositions for prolonged conflict" (ibid.; cf. also Halperin/ Bar-Tal 2011; Bar-Tal/ Antebi 1992a). Against this background, Ichilov (2004) examines young Israelis' notions of a "good citizen" and finds that a majority supports loyalty to the state as well as

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16 Isabel Kershner. Second-Generation Ethiopian-Israelis March toward Acceptance. June 9 2012; Retrieved from:

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/10/world/middleeast/second-generation-ethiopian-israelis-march-toward-acceptance.html

obedience to political authorities (Ichilov 2004: 127).[17] She also finds that the young peoples' answers "reflect the major rifts within Israeli society", in particular with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and connected cleavages between political left and right and Jewish and Palestinian Israelis (Ichilov 2004: 128).

Concluding from results of the longitudinal IEA study on young peoples' perceptions of citizenship, Ichilov states a decline in "tolerance toward '*others*'" (e.g. national minorities), efficacy and trust in political authorities, and "civil identities" for the Israeli case (Ichilov 2004: 153). At the same time, young (Jewish) Israelis perceive a growing threat, above all of the erosion of "bonding forces" to be caused by rifts within Israeli society (Ichilov 2004: 155). Also, an increasing number of young people find the use of military power legitimate in order to reach political goals; they support anti-democratic tendencies–e.g. depriving non-Jewish citizens of particular civil *rights* or emphasising the character of the State of Israel as a *Jewish state* (Ichilov 2004: 153). However, her results also show that young Israelis have become increasingly politically engaged and actively take part in both conventional forms of engagement, such as political discussions, demonstrations or in various organisations as well as unconventional or even illegal forms of protest (ibid.).

Other empirical studies confirm a "consistently high level of generalised interest in social and political issues" (Enosh/ Katz 2004: 12) among Israeli adolescents with about 15 per cent of them stating interest in foreign policy and about 55 per cent in social issues in 2004 (ibid). Whether this increase in political action also results in an increase in political literacy, i.e. knowledge of facts, remains questionable against the background of the reported intolerance and support of national(ist) or antidemocratic tendencies, however.

6.1.4 The Political Adaptation of FSU Immigrants

There have been three large waves of Jewish immigration from Russia or the Soviet Union: in the period of the Yishuv, the Jewish resettlement of

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17 Those from Kibbutz settlements usually display a more balanced view and also stress a citizen's obligation for active engagement in one's community (Ichilov 2004: 127).

Palestine in the context of secular Zionism before Independence, the *Prisoners of Zion* or *Otkazniki* movement of the 1970s and 1980s and the "Great Russian Aliyah" (Khanin 2011) after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Arian et al. dedicated that 2010 Israeli Democracy Index to the 20th anniversary of FSU immigration and an examination of the political attitudes of those segments of Israeli society. Besides, the study is set against the background of two large military operations, the 2006 Lebanon War and the 2009 "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza. Their study shows that positive attitudes toward democracy among the respondents are in decline: though they generally support state institutions, in particular IDF (Israeli Defence Forces), they are dissatisfied with their own political influence or representation as a social group (Arian et al. 2010: 55), the perceived high level of corruption of political elites (Arian et al. 2010: 61), and political leadership in general which is perceived as weak (Arian et al. 2010: 58). In this context, 74 per cent (veteran Israelis: 61 per cent) support the idea of a strong leadership (ibid.). With regard to the *rights*' aspect, almost half of the respondents (48 per cent) reject "harsh criticism" of official policies, such as military operations, (Arian et al. 2010: 63) and 77 per cent (veteran Israelis: 47 per cent) support the encouragement of "Arab emigration", and the limitation of civil *rights* of national minorities, in particular Palestinian citizens (Arian et al. 2010: 64). Halperin et al. find that Israelis with an FSU background tend to answer more often in exclusionist terms than veteran Israelis and explain this at least partly with "political 'hawkish' attitudes" and in particular "well-rooted negative Russian sentiments toward Islam" (Halperin et al. 2009: 1001).

These figures must be interpreted against the context of two developments: the generally increasing public acceptance of open prejudices and discrimination, and IB's "loyalty" slogan (2009) as a consequence and further catalyst of that acceptance. Generally, the authors state a decline in social trust against the perception of growing cleavages within Israeli society, yet at the same time an increase in the expression of belonging of the particular FSU community (Arian et al. 2010: 81).[18]

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18 In this context, Khanin identifies three main models of the group's political integration: the cooperation of Russian political elites with mainstream political parties, either as "satellite lists" or "intra-party lobbies" (Khanin 2011: 58-9) or

Most studies link those attitudes directly or indirectly to the immigrants' "Soviet legacy" (Khanin 2011: 56). The supposedly "imported" political culture consists of particular features, e.g. the preference of strong leadership over democratically elected representatives, patriotism, low levels of political participation/ mistrust in political elites and "suspicious of political authorities", economic liberalism vs. social contestation (Philippov/ Bystrov 2011: 261) and the maintenance of the "post-Soviet concept of the 'enemy-image'" (Arian et al. 2010: 65). Correspondingly, Philippov and Bystrov sum up the recent increase in voters' turnout rate and of the FSU immigrants' general influence on (political) life in Israel with the words that "they [FSU immigrants] are on their way to creating the appropriate patterns of active citizenship" (Philippov/ Bystrov 2011: 260); however, they also claim this "imported" political culture to be an "excuse for voting for the most radical parties", in particular the Yisra'el Beitenu party (ibid.). In this context, empirical studies on the political "attitudes" of FSU immigrants—and, as implied there, their children—suggest a certain stable set of attitudes, described as more right-wing and conservative in comparison to other Jewish layers in Israeli society—especially when it comes to the peace process and territorial concessions (e.g. Philippov/ Knafelman 2011; Philippov/ Bystrov 2011; Arian et al. 2010; Goldstein/ Gitelman 2004). Remennick (2007) described the phenomenon as "integration without assimilation". Yet, Bagno's study (2011b) suggests that the political attitudes of immigrants approach those of the Israeli majority over time.

In the literature, there are two major positions about how to perceive the (first generation of) new Israelis' persistence. One of them is arguing that this standing matches the latest developments of growing pluralism and visibility of minorities in Israeli society (cf. Dayan 2004). However, researchers who take a more pessimistic position on the phenomenon argue that, on the contrary, this is a sign of the group's perception of themselves as part of the dominant Jewish majority and, moreover, "the elite within [this] majority" (Shumsky 2001). Connected to that "elite"-perception is that of one's (cultural) superiority over ethnic and national, in particular Muslim minorities (cf. Lerner 2010; Shumsky 2001). What Khanin describes as a "preservation of [the] mentality and values of 'Russian' Jewishness and less

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the establishment of "independent community-centred" (Khanin 2011: 59), "sectoral" (e.g. Bagno 2011a) parties.

of 'Russian' language and culture" (Khanin 2007: 115), the perception of "Russia as a [supranational] civilisation" (Lerner 2010: 29), serves as the necessary link to understand the increasingly extreme positions with regard to granting civil *rights* to ethnic and national minorities in Israel, in particular Palestinians (cf. Lerner 2010; Lomsky-Feder et al. 2005; Shumsky 2004; 2001). Concluding from this, at least for the first generation of FSU immigrants, it is safe to say that those restrictive attitudes have a cultural dimension, personally experienced in their (post-)Soviet everyday life, which is added to the perception of threat against the background of the security situation.

6.2 THE YISRA'EL BEITENU PARTY

The current section reviews literature on the Yisra'el Beitenu party. The respective literature on the Yisra'el Beitenu party focuses on three main aspects, namely its status within the Israeli party system—or, to speak with Khanin, whether IB is a "Russian party with an Israeli accent" or an "Israeli party with a Russian accent" (Khanin 2010: 105-6)—, its location within the Israeli political continuum between left-wing and right-wing ideologies as well as the context of the party's constantly growing electoral success between 1999 and 2009.

6.2.1 Is Yisra'el Beitenu an Extreme Right-Wing Party?

In his historical overview of Israeli political extreme right-wing parties, Pedahzur challenges Ehud Sprinzak's "classic definition" of what is understood as right-wing extremism in Israel (Pedahzur, 2000; 2001). This "classic" concept had evolved after the Six-Day War (1967) and used a traditional definition based on the analysis of the historical phenomena of "revolutionary fascism" in Europe and the "American postwar radical right" (Pedahzur 2001: 26), and was built exclusively on issues of "land and security" (Pedahzur 2001: 25). On the basis of his observation that about 20 per cent of the then Knesset members favoured antidemocratic or xenophobic ideas, Pedahzur argues in favour of replacing Sprinzak's concept with a more contemporary approach based on the analysis of today's European extreme right-wing movements and parties. He defines right-wing

extremism as a syndrome of several features, namely nationalism, racism ("old" and "new"), xenophobia, anti-democracy or favouring a strong state (cf. Pedahzur 2001; e.g. also Mudde 2002; 1995). Pedahzur concludes that the observed transformation of the right-wing political camp also has immense influence on the political party scene in Israel: the emergence of a multi-party camp, united by a "shared ideological vision" about how to deal with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict but divided by others, reinforced the "polarisation within Israeli society", causing "more conventional parties" to "[adopt] the political manners and style" of the political parties on the right-wing edge (Pedahzur 2001: 39).

Pedahzur shows that the Israeli right-wing extremism has "transformed" from an "old" form (1970s-1990s), mainly represented by the KACH party, founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane, and predominantly playing on nationalist and racist tones. The "new" form which has emerged on the Israeli political scene is nowadays represented by SHAS and Yisra'el Beitenu.[19] Along with features represented already by the "old" form, Pedahzur identifies new features, such as xenophobia, anti-establishment, or anti-democratic tendencies. In particular, IB demands a fundamental modification of Israel's "judiciary or criminal justice systems" (Pedahzur 2001: 31), incriminating it as "administrative dictatorship" over the elected government (Pedahzur 2001: 35), as well as the provision of the president with much more power, comparable to the political power the Russian president wields (ibid.). Accordingly, IB's 1999 election campaign—the first general election the party participated in—focused on "mobiliz[ing]" feelings of "deprivation" and "frustration", based on the perceived "persecution of the Russian community in Israel" by the police and other institutional organs (ibid.).

The typical voter of the Yisra'el Beitenu party is, according to Bagno's findings, secular, younger, an immigrant male whose ethnic origin is his first identity, afraid of Arabs as a group, lives in an area affected by (recent) military operations, holds right-wing or hawkish political views and is attracted by the party's programme rather than by a concrete candidate (Bagno 2011a: 31). Besides, IB's immigrant voters are "least satisfied with the quality of democracy", as mainly mirrored in their perceived low political

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19 Although Pedahzur mainly focuses on SHAS—IB had been founded only two years before the publication of his article—, his analysis reveals some interesting aspects about Lieberman's party as well.

efficacy, low political interest and low political literacy; accordingly, they are expected to use their vote more as a "protest" (Bagno 2011a: 27).[20] This finding can be seen as a proof of Pedahzur's finding (2001) of IB presenting itself as an anti-establishment party (see above). Accordingly, Bagno states that when those voters with an immigrant background actually become politically active, they, more than their veteran Israel counterparts, "make instrumental use of [this] participation" (Bagno 2011a: 28). Khanin attests to the party a "substantial political protest potential" (Khanin 2010: 107). IB has made extensive use of this protest potential and based its electoral campaigning on an "unprecedented attack on members of the Israeli law enforcement and the bureaucratic establishment", and in this way won the "solidarity of both immigrants from the FSU and other origins as well as veteran Israelis" (Khanin 2010: 107; see also Pedahzur 2000). This strategy obviously pays off despite the fact that the party has been part of that "establishment" since 2006 and left the governments several times for strategic reasons only.

There are two major positions to explain the recent electoral success of extreme right-wing parties in Israel: while some authors see the reasons basically in social and economic processes, in particular the state of the welfare state and failures of the political elites to respond adequately, [21] others explain the phenomenon with processes and transformations within the political field itself (e.g. Mustafa/ Ghanem 2010). Pedahzur embeds IB's appearance and electoral success into the broader process of the "transformation of Israel's extreme right" (Pedahzur 2001; 2000). In his analysis of the "supporting conditions for the survival [and emergence of new] extreme right-wing parties in Israel", Pedahzur develops an explanatory model, including conditions on several levels: the bottom of his pyramid is the Israeli political culture, followed by the analysis of social cleavages, structural factors (i.e. the threshold vote or legal controls), with the top formed by the very party scene (Pedahzur 2000). The most important

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20 This gives reason to worry since Torney-Purta and Klandl Richardson (2004) emphasized the importance of those three factors as much of a precondition for political engagement.

21 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

feature of the country's political culture is what Smooha had called "ethnic democracy" (Smooha 2009; 2001),[22] which Pedahzur sees as the "precondition for ethnic conflict" because it "[encourages] radical political expressions towards the minority" (Pedahzur 2000: 8-9). In this regard, the Yisra'el Beitenu party—according to Peled an "extreme right-wing party headed by a West Bank settler, Avigdor Lieberman" (Peled 2011: 278)— particularly plays on an ethno-nationalist component of Israeli citizenship, and "gained notoriety" (ibid.) with Lieberman promoting his plan of a territorial exchange of Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria with Israeli territories inhabiting large populations of Palestinian Israelis, namely near the 1967 Green Line and in Southern Galilee.

A further level of Pedahzur's model (Pedahzur 2000) is represented by various cleavages in Israeli society, in particular social rifts. These cleavages are important for the analysis because one fundamental feature of the "new" right-wing extremism in Israel is the parties' development of a "two-dimensional platform", on which social cleavages serve as one issue— particular notions of how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be solved form the other—instead of previous parties relying on only a single issue. Consequently, when it comes to the level of the party scene itself, those political parties are most successful in managing to persuade the electorate of their ideological vision and are able to "[represent] their constituencies" simultaneously (Pedahzur 2000: 21). Lately, SHAS and Yisra'el Beitenu have been most successful in this respect.

6.2.2 Is Yisra'el Beitenu an "Ethnic Party"?

In order to categorize the Yisra'el Beitenu party, Bagno refers to Chandra and Wilkinson's differentiation between "ethnic structure" and "ethnic practice" (Chandra/ Wilkinson 2008): while ethnic parties relying on the former approach put emphasis on "descent-based attributes" in order to mobilize specific groups, ethnic parties utilizing "ethnic practice" for the same purpose emphasize rather "time-sensitive" categories (cf. Bagno 2011a: 20). "These categories [imply] the exclusion of *others*, but at the same time go for an explicitly national agenda in order to catch-all possible eligible

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22   On the discussion of the concept itself, see for example Berent 2010; Danel 2009; Peled/ Navot 2005; Ghanem et al. 1998; Peled 1992; and Yiftachel 1992.

votes" (Bagno 2011a: 21).[23] Another feature Bagno mentions in this context is a "catch-all ethnic party's" "loyal[ty] to the establishment" (Bagno 2011a: 22)—a feature Pedahzur (2001) would strongly disagree with with regard to IB. The remains of the "ethnic party" can be found in IB's use of the Russian language in its media campaign for the 2009 general elections as well as in the Russian-speaking candidates on the party's electoral list. Though both components may as well serve the opposite argument of the immigrants' and the party's political assimilation to the Israeli scene since, first, Russian-speaking candidates can be found on the lists of other major parties as well (though not as many at the top of the respective list as with IB), and second, other major parties also made use of Russian language-campaigning since Israelis with an FSU background have become a major political force. This development meets the interests of the party's potential constituents, as Glöckner states: "RSJ [Russian-Speaking Jewish] voting patterns in the elections of 2003 and 2006 rather indicated that the model of pure 'Russian' parties has passed its peak, possibly underlying the fact that for many of the RSJ immigrants the socio-economic situation had improved very much in the course of the last decade" (Glöckner 2011: 83).

Accordingly, Khanin tells the history of the Yisra'el Beitenu party as a history of "[ideological] transformation": based on his findings that 2/3 of IB's electorate in the 2009 general elections consisted of Russian-speakers and 1/3 of veteran Israelis without such a background. Khanin states that the party's "major dilemma [was] to find a modus vivendi between [its] nationwide aspirations and [its] predominantly Russian community character" (Khanin 2010: 105).[24] Khanin sees a major cause for IB's electoral success in the "charismatic Lieberman" himself, appearing as the representative of various peripheral social groups, as well as the successful launching of the "concept of a 'population and territories exchange'" which can be understood as a "neo-centralist alternative" to both left-wing and right-wing political approaches of how to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians (ibid.). In order to pacify the obvious contradiction of keeping

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23 On the concept of a "catch-all ethnic party" see Enyedi 2008; Mudde 1999; and Roper 1994.

24 On the question of how far this "Russian community character" was still predominant in 2009; Bagno (2011a) found that in the latest of these elections IB was no longer perceived as an immigrant party.

its Russian-speaking electorate while gaining electoral support of veteran Israelis, the Yisra'el Beitenu party has "regular[ly] updat[ed] its political image [as well as its] political tactics" (Khanin 2010: 107) and has transformed from an "'all-Israeli' right-wing party [with an] electorate [...] coincidently Russian-speaking [via a] Russian non-sectarian party [via a] Russian party with an Israeli accent [toward a (currently)] originally Russian nationwide party" (ibid.). Correspondingly, Khanin finds that the party's ideology has gone through an evolution as well: while in its first election campaign in 1999 the party shared a moderate right-wing ideology with the Likud and a social welfare orientation with the then still-successful FSU immigrant-based Yisra'el Ba'aliyah (YBA), it performed a strong "right-wing shift" when entering the National Union bloc in 2003, but returned to a more moderate "centre-right" ideology after leaving the bloc in 2004 (ibid.).

Through all these switches and transformations, the Yisra'el Beitenu party has not only been able to "preserve most of its camp's strong right-wing Russian and veteran core", but also to compensate losses from this camp by gaining a more moderate electorate in 2006, mainly through wandering voters from the Likud, YBA and the Kadima party (ibid.). By 2006, the party had managed to "balance internal ideological controversies" between an "Israeli Russian-Jewish community which voted either for the ideological right or which was social welfare-oriented centre and would have otherwise voted for an immigrant party", a "right-wing Liebermanist core", and a "more moderate mainstream" party (Khanin 2010: 109). According to Khanin, it had done so mainly by combining a "kind of centre party" ideology[25]—filling an "ideological vacuum" left by the political failure to achieve peace of Sharon's plan to disengage from Gaza—with a "strong rightist rhetoric" (Khanin 2010: 109-10). In addition to this, the party made "effective use of the historical momentum" (Khanin 2010: 119), mainly through "capturing the feelings of public anger about Palestinian Israeli demonstrations" (Khanin 2010: 114) in support of Hamas in the context of the military operation "Cast Lead" (2009) in Gaza. Olena Bagno would

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25 With the announcement of the so-called "Kissinger-Lieberman-Plan or Lieberman-Plan", the party had practically accepted "a territorial compromise between Jews and Arabs in the lands West of the Jordan river [and, implicitly, also] the establishment of a Palestinian state."

disagree here: she emphasises that in its 2009 electoral campaign the Yisra'el Beitenu party made only implicit use of exclusionist elements, but did not openly attack Palestinian Israelis or other ethnic or social groups (Bagno 2011a) with slogans like "No loyalty, no citizenship".[26]

As a consequence, in 2009 Lieberman's party had not only made major transformations of its public image and its ideology, but it had also experienced "substantial [yet, wanted] changes of its electorate" (Khanin 2010: 114) since through these transformations it had also become attractive for veteran Israelis for whom Lieberman had stopped being a "persona non grata" (Khanin 2010: 113). The Israeli political centre had started to see his sharp rhetoric as mere framing of ideas which in the 2006 elections had still been unacceptable, simultaneously, Lieberman had become a symbol for the representation of peripheral groups of Israeli society (cf. Peled 2011).

6.2.3 Yisra'el Beitenu's Electoral Success

Electoral campaigns must not be underestimated, and IB's electoral campaigns have accordingly undergone important transformations. In her paper, Meller analyses the Yisra'el Beitenu party's electoral campaigns on TV for the general elections of 1999 to 2009. From her analysis, she concludes that the party has employed the "metaphor of nation as home and family"—as already the party's name suggests—as a conscious reference to Israeli or Zionist history (Meller 2010: 3) and important values in Israeli political culture in order to "remove [...] ambiguity" about Israel as the "home of 'Russian' Jews" (Meller 2010: 7). Meller understands the party's 1999 campaign as "a statement [both] against competing Russian parties [as well as] against the Israeli establishment" (Meller 2010: 7-8);[27] this meets Pedahzur's definition of the new Israeli right (see above; e.g. also Pedahzur 2001). In the 1999 elections, IB functioned as a "bridge [toward] a home" for those Russian-speaking Israelis who wanted to "relinquish their identity" (Meller 2010: 8; cf. also Shumsky 2001). Interestingly, the campaign

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26 Partija "Yisra'el Beitenu" ("Our House Israel"). Online Platform. http://www.ndi.org.il (Russian).

27 Lieberman, according to Khanin (2002), refers to the Israeli establishment as "oligarchs", after the economic elite which evolved in Russia and other former Soviet Republics in the aftermath of their independence.

presented Lieberman "as a fierce leader"—an image which will remain in the later campaigns—and placed the issues of social welfare and national security on the party's central agenda (Meller 2010: 9). Meller interprets IB's decision to run within the extreme right bloc "National Union" in 2003 as "an integral part of [its and its voters'] socialisation in Israeli society" (Meller 2010: 11): the parties of the bloc shared the vision of an "anti-Arab and anti-concessions and [...] hawkish defence plan" (ibid.). Again, the issue of national security was stressed, and Lieberman was presented as a "protective paternal figure" (ibid.). In 2006, the party again ran as a "stand-alone party"; in its campaign, the party promised to "resolve the demographic problem"—again, a national security issue—in order to "reaffirm [IB's] position on the Jewish identity of the state" and to overcome the perceived disintegration of the Jewish Israeli society in order to "unite against a common [external] enemy" (Meller 2010: 12). Finally, Meller sees the success of the party's 2009 campaign in mainly two factors: the party-related "carefully constructed discourse" around the party leader, Lieberman, as well as the context-related "consistent shift to the right" of Israeli society (Meller 2010: 15), and a respective adaptation of the party's agenda.

In her analysis of IB's 2009 electoral campaign, Bagno finds that the party "exclusively [builds on] issues related to Israel rather than on ethnic policy issues" (Bagno 2011a: 24) despite the fact that their candidate list for the elections includes "many immigrants" and suggests the opposite. Above all, security or the perceived lack of it is an issue; the party's programme/ platform as well as its campaign centre around security concerns. The party's messages in the campaign—namely, "Lieberman—I trust him", "No loyalty, no citizenship", "Only Lieberman understands Arabic"—call upon implicit "feeling[s] of personal insecurity induced by external forces" or "disloyal forces" (Bagno 2011a: 26-7), whereas concrete exclusionist demands on ethnic grounds are rather implicit or introduced in the public discussion of those messages (Bagno 2011a: 26).

Alongside the developments described above, most authors mention the influence of current events on IB's electoral success in 2009, above all the military operations against Hamas in Gaza[28] which had ended only three weeks before the 2009 elections, and in the cause of which IB was able to put its major issue of personal and national security on the agenda. Arian et

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28   Referred to as "Operation Cast Lead" in public discourse.

al. reflect that the territorial conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has been "[superimposing] itself upon all other political divisions" ever since the 1967 Six-Day War (Arian et al. 2011: 280). In its cause, security issues have dominated the "mindset of Israeli voters" and divided Israeli society along the "foreign policy cleavages"; besides, security became "interlocked with the religious—secular split and nationalist attitudes" (ibid.). Not surprisingly, security issues (along with social issues) dominated the electoral agenda of the political parties and by putting them on the agenda they best met the public opinion (Tsfat et al. 2011: 233). IB was most successful in doing so and accordingly received the best media coverage of its electoral campaign—though 83 per cent of those news reports contained "criticism on ideological grounds" (Tsfat et al. 2011: 238-9). Yet, Khanin (2009) [29] states that IB's success in the 2009 elections cannot be explained by the "Gaza effect" only since even left-wing politicians criticize that the military operation was stopped prematurely. However, he emphasizes that Lieberman made the strongest statements about it; and in addition, it seems that his long-term critique of Israeli Arabs pays out in this context because it meets the disappointment of many Jewish Israelis by the open support or solidarity with Hamas (cf. also Waxman 2012). Last but not least, Pedahzur and Brichta point to the role the utilisation of local government structures can play in a party's electoral success, especially with regard to new political parties which aim at entering parliament through (existing) local structures. Local government structures represent an "important resource" for those parties since they establish a "linkage" to the national level (Pedahzur and Brichta 2000: 55).

To sum up, according to Meller, IB's campaigns mirror the party's as well as its Russian-speaking voters' political integration or "Israelization" (Meller 2010: 16): having started with a founding body of Russian-speaking Israelis and electoral campaigns in Russian with Hebrew subtitles, by the next general elections in 2003, they (as part of the bloc) could count on the support of non-Russian-speaking candidates and the party's growing ability to attract non-Russian-speaking voters. This trend continued in 2006 and led to TV ads completely in Hebrew (with Russian subtitles, as had become

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29 Vladimir (Ze'ev) Khanin. Феномен НДИ: станет ли Либерман новым Бегиным? IzRus, 08.02. 2009. Retrieved from:
http://izrus.co.il/obshina/article/2009-02-08/3683.html

standard for Israeli political parties) in 2009 (Meller 2010: 16). Meller sees the party's ongoing integration of the electoral campaigns going hand in hand with the political adaptation of its Russian-speaking electorate, referring to the electorate's "development of a collective identity" from a more "introvert political and social inclination in the Russian community […] [toward the predomination of a] general-national Jewish identity" (ibid.; cf. also Shumsky 2001).[30] Accordingly, asking about the party's public image shows that a majority of both FSU immigrants and veteran Israelis think of IB "not [as] an immigrant party", and among IB voters the number of people sharing this view is even higher (Bagno 2011a: 25).[31]

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30 Yet, Meller is not consistent in her general evaluation of the party and its voters' integration, since in her final conclusion she still sees major elements of a "Soviet political culture" defining the voters' approach to the Israeli reality (Meller 2010: 16).

31 73% of the respondents in the 2009 INES survey with an FSU origin and 64% of veteran Israelis expressed this view, and correspondingly 78% of IB voters with an FSU origin and 88%of veteran Israelis (Bagno 2011a: 25).